# Cape Peninsula University of Technology

**LIVING FORWARDS LEARNING BACKWARDS:**

**A REFLECTIVE TOPICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**EXPLORING THE CONSTRUCTION OF ART TEACHER IDENTITY**

**Sandra Johnson**

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree**

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**Faculty of Education and Social Sciences**

**Mowbray Campus**

**Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

**Supervisor: Prof Gert van der Westhuizen, BA, D Ed.**

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## DECLARATION

**I, Sandra Mary Johnson, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions, and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.**

**Signed:...................................................**          **Date:................................................**

# ABSTRACT

This thesis uses Reflective Topical Autobiography, as an adapted interpretation of narrative methodology, to investigate the influences on the construction of the identity of an art teacher's identity over time. The notion of human identity, and theorists who investigate this notion, initiates the study. The concept of teacher identity, and more specifically, art teacher identity, is explored. Teacher identity is acknowledged to be an integral part of the teaching and learning process, and so meaningful teaching, and more specifically, meaningful art teaching, is discussed.

Questions that arise from this discussion provide the underpinning focus of the data analysis. What influences contribute to the construction of teacher identity? What role does knowledge play? What kinds of knowledge are important? How is that knowledge acquired?

In this interpretive study, which is lodged in the qualitative paradigm of research, social constructionism provides a lens through which to investigate the life and the voice of an art teacher, as an interpretation of her professional identity construction. That life, and that voice, are my own. The purpose for this investigation is to attempt to trace the influences that construct the identity of an art teacher over an extended time, through reflecting on influential people, places and experiences in the educational and professional context,. Although I acknowledge that the personal and the professional are enmeshed, emphasis has been placed on the professional in order to invite greater reader resonance.

Initially, an autobiography provides the broad data, from which incidents are selected that I believe have been important influences in the construction of my own teacher identity over time. Data analysis takes the form of further deep reflection on these incidents, in order to extract their significance and meaning.

The methodology of Reflective Topical Autobiography is followed, reflecting on this carefully selected data, and these reflections are underpinned with a theoretical base. The construction of my own teacher identity over time is plotted, exploring significant educational and personal experiences that have contributed to making me the kind of teacher that I am. An attempt is made to extract principles of art teacher identity construction. The thesis concludes with recommendations for teacher education, in which my work is lodged, and with further recommendations to in-service teachers.

This thesis uses the metaphor of a spiral, which is a process that begins at the centre, and moves outwards in a circular line. The reason for this choice is that reflection is a process that looks back, and with experience and new knowledge, enables one to come to a new understanding of the focus. The looking back, however, is from a different place on the spiral, and may in fact be from several different places on the spiral. Thus, the looking back, or reflection from a different place, offers a different perspective of the focus.

Throughout the thesis, the poem *Little Gidding*, one of the Four Quartets, by T S Eliot (1942), is used and interpreted through the lens of this study.

The use of artefacts, and in this case, photographs and mandalas that I have made over the years, offer a form of truth, a kind of substantiation for the written word.

Education in South Africa has progressed through many years of difficulty, and amended or new curricula with various foci do not seem to address the problems appropriately. Perhaps a closer investigation of the identity of the teacher, and a stronger emphasis on nurturing this identity, will help to address some of the problems that seem to result in the poor preparation, for learners, for a meaningful place in the world beyond the classroom.

# Acknowledgements

**Prof Rajendra Chetty** made me believe that this study was worth it, and that I was capable of doing it. He acknowledged that I am an art teacher, and that I had a particular way of seeing the world. He showed me that I could make that way belong in the world of research, and that it had a potentially valuable contribution to make.

Before I worked with Rajendra as a supervisor, I did not believe that I could ever complete a Ph D thesis. He teased out initial questions, and challenged and encouraged me. Through this process, I have learnt more than I ever believed possible. I have been able to use that learning to enrich my work with the students. It has become deeper, wider, and more meaningful. I have grown in immeasurable ways. My work has changed. My students have benefitted, and my life has been enriched.

None of this would have happened if Rajendra had not been the one who showed me that it was possible, who began this work with me. His good humour, his knowledge of processes, his ability to push and pull, and his determination played a major role in this work. En route, he taught me that a spiral always returns to itself, and that one cannot escape its returning.

I owe him a deep and heartfelt gratitude.

*So I find words I never thought to speak*
*In streets I never thought I should revisit*

*T S Eliot, 1942.*

During the passage of this thesis, **Prof Pamela Christie** generously shared her expertise, her wisdom, and her knowledge of the research process with me, and her mentorship was a meaningful part of the course of this work. I shall always be grateful to Pam for the many valuable things that she taught me, for the time that she was prepared to spend, and for her immeasurable contribution to my work and to my life. She taught me that a spiral is a process of thoughtfulness and reflection, and that, when we feel that we are at the end, it is really another beginning.

*What we call the beginning is often the end*
*And to make and end is to make a beginning.*
*The end is where we start from.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

In the last year of this process, **Professor Gert van der Westhuizen** assumed the role of supervisor.  He was prepared to take on supervision at this late stage, and offered expertise, guidance, and a sense of hope. He never doubted, for a moment, that this thesis would reach completion. He was prepared to embrace an unfamiliar methodology in a field that was not his own, and could offer sane advice and gentle suggestions. He treated me as if I knew what I was doing, which made me *act* as if I knew what I was doing, which made me realise that I *could* know what I was doing. While I was reflecting on the construction of the identity of an art teacher, Gert was constructing the identity of a researcher. Without Gert's belief in this study, and support for this work, it is unlikely that it would have reached a final state. He taught me that the central point of a spiral is stable.

*Quick now, here, now, always—*
*A condition of complete simplicity*
*(Costing not less than everything)*
*And all shall be well and*
*All manner of thing shall be well*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

*I caught the sudden look of some dead master*
*Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled*
*Both one and many; in the brown baked features*
*The eyes of a familiar compound ghost*
*Both intimate and unidentifiable.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Sarah Sharman**, my niece and child of my heart, who shares my home, survived an abnormal life of having an aunt who lived at a computer, and she continued to love and support me through it all. She cooked, she put up with my despair and shared my joy. Her computer skills and knowledge of technology were shared, and when she knew that I could not, she simply did it for me with a beautiful generosity of spirit. Her support is invaluable, and I acknowledge her care with great love and respect. Her belief in me is an immense challenge, and I hope that one day I shall prove worthy.

*At the source of the longest river*
*The voice of the hidden waterfall*
*And the children in the apple-tree*
*Not known, because not looked for*
*But heard, half-heard, in the stillness*
*Between two waves of the sea.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

Three women sustained me through this process. I write of them alphabetically, because there is no other way. **Evelyn Howard, Elske Maxwell** and **Hannsie Visser**, each in their own unique ways, supported, encouraged, challenged, and believed in me. They are women who have travelled with me through a passage of more than thirty five years, and are a part of my blood. If I am anything, it is because of them.

*I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,*
*Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:*
*I may not comprehend, may not remember.'*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Terry, Lynn** and **Richard Johnson** and **Christopher Cameron** did not waiver in their belief that I would complete this work, and gave me a stable family base to return to, and to move away from.

There are friends who stayed with me in my absence, who continued to be in my life although I was very little in theirs, and who, throughout this process, showed me that if a spiral has a strong line, it always returns. I thank **Amber Fouché, Philip Thraves, Shirley Dobson, Tanzi Davies, Brendan Doyle, Harry Bates, Richard Randall, James Small, Paul Hartzenberg and Bradley Rae** for their care and support, and for feeding both my body and my soul.

Towards the very end, **Philip Thraves, Paul Hartzenberg** and **Evelyn Howard** proof-read the document, and suggested changes that were intelligent and important. **Sarah Sharman** stood beside me as I printed, carried extra paper, and ran errands.

*In the uncertain hour before the morning*
*Near the ending of interminable night*
*At the recurrent end of the unending*
*After the dark dove with the flickering tongue*
*Had passed below the horizon of his homing*

*T S Eliot*

Finally, I acknowledge my students, who have challenged me, laughed with me, shared the depths of their lives with me, and who have ultimately taught me what I know about teaching.

*With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this*
*Calling*

*We shall not cease from exploration*
*And the end of all our exploring*
*Will be to arrive where we started*
*And know the place for the first time.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Dedication**


This thesis is dedicated to my own teachers

Evelyn Howard

Elske Maxwell

Hannsie Visser

and

to every teacher who still believes in the calling that first beckoned to them.


*Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us*
*To purify the dialect of the tribe*
*And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,*
*Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age*
*To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

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What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make and end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.

T S Eliot, 1942.
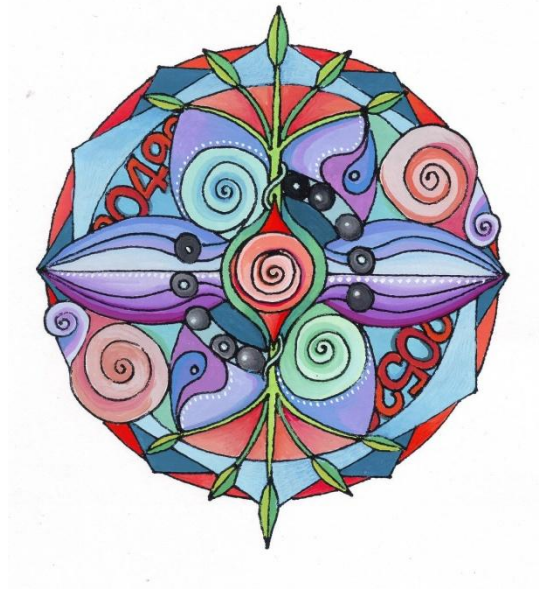
# Chapter One: The intersection of the timeless moment

*If you came by day not knowing what you came for,*
*It would be the same, when you leave the rough road*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

## 1.1 Introduction

Each decade brings its own particular crisis in education. As the world shrinks and time collapses at the hands of globalising technology, these acknowledged moments of educational crisis become more constant. While years of research have gone into the study of the process of teaching and learning, children are still failing, and teachers are still becoming disillusioned. New policies, new curricula, and new approaches to teacher education seem to result in no real change in the process of meaningful education.

In South Africa, the crisis is manifold. Our democracy is still in its infancy, and many years of redress are required before we can call ourselves a truly united and democratic nation. Since 1994, two attempts have been made to change the curriculum in order to address the poor educational results in this country, and yet there remain millions of children who are passing through the hands of an educational system that continues to fail them. The moment is 'timeless' (T S Eliot, 1942) and an intersection is necessary.

Policies and approaches to education can be changed. Curricula can be changed. I believe that none of this will result in meaningful teaching and learning. Teachers are the role players who are most significantly and subjectively engaged in the processes within the classroom. The dignity of this profession needs to be returned to them. They should be invited to be consciously aware of the responsibility of their work.

Teachers should be valued, and their unique ways of knowing should be acknowledged. Each teacher brings with her[1] a subjective way of being a teacher. Many researchers currently acknowledge that teacher identity may be the single most important factor in the

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[1] The feminine form is generally used when referring to teachers in this document.

process of teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998; Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons, 2006). Watson (2006) writes that the power of the teacher's identity, is that who

the teacher believes she is, influences what she does in her professional life. Day et al (2006:601) write:

> "If identity is a key influencing factor on teachers' sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness, then investigation of those factors which influence positively and negatively, the contexts in which these occur and the consequences for practice, is essential".

This aspect of teacher-ness is left largely untouched in most teacher education programmes, where a knowledge of content is stressed and examinations are written that require a knowledge primarily of what is to be taught. An understanding of the developmental stages of children is certainly included, but there is little that encourages teacher education students to understand themselves, or to think of their own personal and professional development, or to consider those factors that influence their practices and ways of being in the classroom.

Children are deeply affected by the identity of the teacher. Content knowledge and educational practices are interpreted and transformed by the identity of the teacher, and Palmer (1998:154) believes that 'good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and the integrity of the teacher.'   Entire schools are influenced by the identity of the teacher. Yet we leave this aspect of being a teacher, the very *essence* of being a teacher, to incidental educational processes in teacher education that may retard or develop it. Law, Meijers, and Wijers, (2002: 432) suggest that in order to develop a professional identity, a person must have the ability to 'draw upon personal feelings, to differentiate self from others, and to develop a personal narrative and represent experience in one's own terms'. Added to this, they should be able to 'focus a point-of-view, build an inner life, and relate all to one's own purposes'. To a large extent, teacher education programmes focus on what the students will be teaching, and how they will be teaching it. These programmes give little weight to developing the person who will be doing the teaching, so that new teachers enter the profession with some degree of personal understanding of the self. Feldman Barrett, Gross, Conner Christensen and Benvenuto (2001) suggest that people who know and can describe how they are feeling are better able to understand their emotional responses, and are therefore better able to deal with them. The act of teaching is charged with emotion (Gross, 1999; Cenkseven-Önder, 2009) and Reyes and Salovey (2010) suggest that teachers face more emotional demands than most other professions. In this respect, beginner teachers are

left largely to their own devices, and are expected to show appropriate and acceptable emotional responses, while masking others. When teachers mask or suppress their emotions, this can result in feelings of depersonalisation (Naring, Briet, and Brouwers, 2006).

It is impossible to separate teacher identity from human identity – most writers agree that teacher identity is a construct that embraces who one is, as a teacher, rather than what one does (Webster, 2005). Considering teacher identity is therefore also inviting the consideration of personal identity; and the enmeshing of both (Rodgers and Raider-Roth, 2006), to arrive at an attempt to examine the influences on the construction of who a teacher is, when she stands before a class of children or students.

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences on the construction of my art teacher identity over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction. This will enable me to make recommendations for art teacher education, and also to in-service teachers of visual art. These findings may possibly be broadened into more generalist teacher education programmes, and may be of benefit to in-service teachers.

## 1.2 Background and the formulation of the research question

My field is visual art education, and over the years, many students have graduated from our institution with a specialisation in this subject. By its very nature, visual art practices require a reflective approach. When it is connected with visual art education, this process of reflection extends to embrace the act of teaching, the nature of the teacher, and the thoughtful processes of art-making as a way to make meaning.

The students keep a journal, and reflect on their art-making and their teaching practices throughout the year. This practice encourages them to think about what they are doing while they are teaching, and about the teaching and learning that is taking place. They are also encouraged to consider the kinds of people they are revealing to the children through their practices as teachers.

For years, class discussions have focussed on the quality of being that each one brings into the art studio or the art room. These discussions have not been formalised into research, but they have shaped my thinking and guided much of my preparation for lectures. When I considered the topic for my study, I knew that I would be spending some years involved in the research process. I knew that my choice would influence my work at the university and in

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broader education. Because my work has focussed to a large extent on the human aspect that we all bring to teaching, I decided to investigate the influences on the construction of teacher identity.

There is no question that the teacher is a significant influence in the teaching and learning process. Great teachers throughout history have been remembered, not so much for what they say, or for what they teach, but for who they are as human beings, and for how they have made us think. Knowledge transforms human beings. It opens a world of possibility. It encourages a different way of viewing the world. It is the identity of the teacher that fosters this early knowledge construction, and that either nurtures it or constricts it. Attitudes to learning, and to ways of knowing, are developed very early in a child's experience of school, and from the very first day of school and the beginning of formal education, it is the identity of the teacher that shapes this attitude to learning (Erikson, 1968; Palmer, 1998; Stillwagon, 2008).

Because my work involves walking beside young pre-service teachers as their own teacher identities are being constructed, I become increasingly aware of the tremendous responsibility that we jointly bear. Our work together will affect countless children in future generations. In a globalising world, it is not within my personal capacity to imagine the educational demands of a world in twenty years' time. Technology and globalisation create changes that must be accommodated on an almost daily basis. What we *can* do together is to be conscious in our search for meaningful teaching and learning. We can be conscious of our teacher identities, so that, although our new teachers may confront unprecedented change, they will be aware human beings who are able to adapt. They will know their strengths as teachers, and will understand the process of conscious knowledge construction. Writers concur that the years preceding teacher education can be significant in the embryonic stage of the construction of teacher identity (Lannegrand-Williams and Bosma, 2006). During their teacher education process, students often emulate their own instructors, or teach to their requirements (Clarke and Drudy, 2006).

In what other ways do we affect our students? How is the identity of a teacher constructed? When are the initial stirrings evident, and what influences contribute to its development? Do teachers teach best when they themselves are good at a subject, or do teachers teach best when they know the content, no matter what the subject? How does subject knowledge influence teacher identity construction? How much do teachers think about what they are doing, while they are in the process of teaching and learning?

These questions shaped my thinking as I formulated and refined my research question. In the field of visual art education there are many areas for exploration: what makes a good art teacher? Why is visual art so marginalised in the South African educational system? Is visual art acknowledged to be important in any other country's curriculum? What kind of person becomes an art teacher? What kind of person becomes a *good* art teacher? What does it mean, to be a *good* art teacher? I realised that implicit in many of these questions is the notion of teacher identity.

Slowly, what I really wanted to research became clear to me: how is the identity of an art teacher constructed over time? There are many studies around the notion of teacher identity. Writers describe teacher identity (Coldron and Smith, 1999; Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006), explore its composition (Walkington, 2005), the influences on its construction and development (Day et al, 2006; Porfeli, Härtung, and Vondracek, 2008) and the effects of teacher identity in the classroom (Palmer, 1998; Atkinson, 2004; Timmerman, 2009).

I can find no research that traces the development of an art teacher over time, which begins with childhood, and continues through a career into late maturity, and which deeply probes either what these influences may be, or how they specifically affect the art teacher. Because there is currently no investigation which specifically explores art teacher identity construction, there seems to be a gap in an important area of educational research. Visual art is a compulsory part of the South African curriculum, and is acknowledged to be a subject offering valuable learning opportunities for children. Emeji (2008: 321) suggests that 'Art education could be regarded as the most fundamental aspect of a child's intellectual development'. Therefore, this study may assist in the exploration of the long-term influences on the construction of art teacher identity. It may offer an indication of how an art teacher's identity matures through years of practice, and may include an examination of how the identity of the art teacher interprets the notion of meaningful practice within the contexts of that particular discipline. Examining the construction of teacher identity over time implicitly gives us an opportunity to observe the developing practice of a teacher, and to understand the influences *on* that practice, and *of* that practice. Within the confines of one life, and one practice, we may observe the beginnings of a career, with its fears (Zembylas, 2002; Malm, 2008) and challenges, and the gradual development of the practice and growth of teacher knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Turner-Bisset 1999). This may offer an insight into the way in which an art teacher's identity grows, develops and is changed and challenged through a process of over thirty years of active participation in the art teaching profession. This could lead to an extraction of the principles of the influences underpinning the construction of art teacher identity, which may be used to make recommendations for art teacher education.

Further recommendations could assist in-service teachers of art to construct their identities with more consciousness.

## 1.2.1 Methodological considerations and an overview of the process

A possible route for the examination of the construction of teacher identity became the exploration of my own teacher identity. My commitment lies in the field of visual art education. What influences contributed to my identity as a teacher, and as an art teacher? How far back in my life story did they begin, and how have they continued to be felt as the years have passed?

In order to begin to answer this question, and the questions that it encompassed, I wrote a comprehensive autobiography, (see addendum 1) based entirely and intentionally on subjective memory. Although this would eventually provide the data for my analysis, it was initially an attempt at remembering, in a subjective and personally true way, the passage of my personal and professional life.

Much has been written about the subjectivity of the autobiographical approach to life history and narrative research. It is a method that allows the reader to access the personal response of the writer, and the writer's thoughts and actions (Krauss, 2005). It is its very subjectivity that answers the truth claim.  There are no claims at generalisations, or at universality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This approach offers an insight into the authentic, lived experience of one person. No one can know the intimate details, the thoughts and responses, better than the one who is living them. The approach requires a preparedness to reveal, and to expose the thoughts and events that have shaped the life and the work of the writer (Levine, 2006).

Initially the methodology was going to be a reflective narrative, based on the work of Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1989, 2002). Underpinned by the heuristic understandings afforded by theories of social constructionism, the personal reflective response would perhaps give me a deeper understanding of the influences on the process of the construction of my personal teacher identity. As I wrote the narrative, I came to understand that something more specific was required, if I was to make sense of my life, and of my life of work. Chase's (2005) suggestion of the reflection on particular phases or incidents offered the beginning of a process. I began to search, within the narrative paradigm, for something that would offer a more particular kind of exploration, perhaps one that would highlight areas and times that were significant, while allowing others to remain unnoticed, and unrecorded.

During the reading process, I came across the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, described in the work of Johnstone (1999). I came to believe that this process would be a good selection for a more personally appropriate version of the reflective narrative.

In reflective topical autobiography, incidents are selected, and deep reflection on those particular incidents affords a new understanding and interpretation of those incidents (Levine, 2006). A close examination of and a reflection on those incidents affords the possibility of a different perspective. One remembers the experience subjectively, and at the same time attempts an objective examination of that experience, of the role players in the experience, and of the influences and consequences of that experience. This process encourages new understanding, new knowledge and transformation. New connections are able to be established, and with the new connections, a new perception (Johnstone, 1999)

While Johnstone (1999) provides the overall approach, writers like Levine (2006) have made use of the methodology in her doctoral thesis, entitled 'Transforming experiences: a reflective topical autobiography of facilitating student nurse development through international immersion programmes'. Ramsamy (2006) wrote a thesis entitled: 'Colonisation. The experience of a psychiatric nurse through the lens of reflective autobiography' in partial fulfilment of a Master's degree. More recently, Myers (2008) has completed a doctoral thesis entitled 'Midwife to Gaia, birthing global consciousness: a reflective topical autobiography'. Each writer had interpreted the methodology in a unique way. I became convinced that this is the appropriate methodology for my own thesis.

The selection of the critical incidents, or the topics on which one chooses to reflect, become important. Which moments, in a lifetime of moments, are significant? Which events, in a lifetime of events, are the ones that shape, that direct futures, and ultimately affect who one becomes as a human and professional being? It is here that reflection becomes an important aspect of this research. It becomes necessary to pinpoint areas that are significant, and that are so significant that if they had not happened, the passage of my life and of my work would have been different. In the course of a lifetime, there are many such moments. It becomes necessary to be more selective, so that only a few are finally chosen. These moments or events will record the influences on the construction of my teacher identity over time, while revealing the incidents, the people and the places that were significant. They will trace the way in which my professional identity was influenced by colleagues, by knowledge development, and by the different contexts in which my work occurred.

### 1.2.2 Theorists and theory

*Over the asphalt where no other sound was*
*Between three districts whence the smoke arose*
*I met one walking, loitering and hurried*
*As if blown towards me like the metal leaves*
*Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

In order to prepare myself to attempt the search for the influences on the construction of art teacher identity, there were preliminary questions that needed to be answered. How is human identity constructed? The work of Erik Erikson (1968) and his psychosocial stage theory of human identity development will be examined, in order to offer an understanding of the theory of human identity development. Although this theory is a modernist construct, it will provide a springboard for moving into post-structural notions of human identity.

Marcia's (2002) identity status paradigm will be explored, in an effort to understand the different aspects of human identity. The work of other researchers, and their interpretations of this paradigm, will also be covered. I anticipate that the theoretical framework in which I will be working will be Social Constructionism, and I aim to explore this through the work of various writers, but more particularly, through the work of Gergen (1985). Teacher emotions will be examined through the work of Zembylas (2002, 2003) and other writers, because they will give an insight into the reasons that responses occur, and the notion of meaningful teaching will be underpinned by the writing of Parker Palmer (1998), and supported by the work of many other educational researchers. In exploring the influences on the construction of my own teacher identity over time, I aim to understand the influences that have shaped my professional being, and the way that I approach my practice. This, in turn, will further influence my practice. My current work is in teacher education.

### 1.3 Subjectivity/objectivity: the theory of the lived experience

By its very nature, this study is a subjective investigation of one teacher's lived experience and the reflection on that experience. Its data is the personal remembering of the way in which my professional life has developed over time. My personal identity, my values and beliefs, my personality and my human nature have affected the writing of the narrative, and

also the selection of the critical incidents or key moments in the development of my professional identity.

In itself, this does not provide the substance for a theoretical study that is an investigation of teacher identity, its influences, its causes and its effects. In order to provide a theoretical base, the topical autobiographical writing that has served as data for reflection will be underpinned by the objectivity of theoretical writing and research. Key areas that emerge from the data will be explored, and this theoretical underpinning will be interwoven with the text during the writing of the reflective topical autobiography, to provide substance to the subjectivity, and to attempt to bring a certain theoretical objectivity into the work.

I have always found the work of T S Eliot, and more particularly, his Four Quartets, important in my life. The fluidity of modern times allows us to give personal meaning to poetry written for different times, and a different audience. The lines in 'Little Gidding' (addendum 2) offered particular resonance for a reflective text about a profession that has become a vocation:

> *With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling*
> *We shall not cease from exploration*
> *And the end of all our exploring*
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
> *And know the place for the first time*
>
> *T S Eliot, 1942*

As I continue to read the poem, more and more meaning emerges that has personal resonance. Phrases acquire new meaning in relation to the work that I am doing. Each chapter will be named from the lines of this poem. For example, chapter two will be named "The eyes of a familiar compound ghost". In keeping with social constructionism, we are affected by the people with whom we live, and by the society and the culture in which we live (Gergen, 2008). The many people who contribute to identity construction are therefore interpreted as having the 'eyes of the familiar compound ghost' – compound because there are so many. Chapter four, the chapter that will deal with the methodology of this research, will be named 'From which the purpose breaks'. The purpose of this study is framed by its methodology, and therefore 'breaks' from it.

Extracts of the poem will be repeated throughout the thesis, and each extract, placed where it will be, can assume new meaning in relation to the work that it will precede. For example, above, the extract begins with the line 'With the drawing of this Love, and the voice of this calling...' In relation to this thesis, that line could suggest the work of a teacher.

The notion of 'arriving where we started and knowing the place for the first time' (Eliot, 1942) gives rise to the metaphor of a spiral. A spiral is a single curving line that moves around a central point. From any place on the spiral, that central point may be observed, because it is fixed, and unmoving. However, the different positions on the curve of the spiral offer a constantly changing perspective, as we circle the central point, and look back at it from different vantage points.

Each chapter will also come to be represented by a spiral, with its own central focus, and its own extending theme.

## 1.4 The use of artefacts

I will use photographs to support the data of this work. While they will be a part of providing the truth of this study, they will also serve as personal reminders for specific incidents, people and places that have been significant in this journey through a career that has spanned over thirty years. The use of artefacts, and in this case, photographs and mandalas, will lend support to the written word. They will become a part of the truth of the narrative. They will document moments and record events in support of the word, and will often carry more information than the written word is capable of. These photographs are not referenced, because they are described with labels, and form a part of the flow of the narrative.

While a written description is limited by words, a visual image includes nuances that are non-verbal and intuitively understood. A photograph includes details of environment, degrees of expression, and qualities of relationship that cannot be described by the written word. They will also frame part of the trustworthiness of the study. One cannot create a photograph if the event or the people did not exist.

Mine is a visual world. I exist in a space where the language is constructed of art elements and design principles. I function between shapes and forms, colours and light. I express myself through non-verbal, symbolic shape, drawn into meaning and crafted by reflection. Instead of talking about my life, I use the symbolic language of mandalas, and tell the visual story. In the process of this research, it will be necessary to use words to describe the critical incidents and autobiographical turning points that have contributed to the construction of my identity as a teacher. Throughout the journey of my work, I have used mandalas as a reflective method of visually representing the process, and some of the moments about which I will write. They are visual symbolic expressions of a particular moment or time. In my mandalas, shape and colour symbolise concrete objects, people or events. The way in which

these shapes are put together in relation to each other, the proportions and the colours, all contribute to creating a visual representation of a particular topic for this reflective process. They are deeply personal, and carry within them the meaning of that moment, and the reflective understanding that has come through the process. They will be used to support the work, and not to explain it. As I will do with the poetry of T S Eliot, I invite the personal imagination of the reader to interpret these mandalas.

**Figure 1: The Mandala of Winged Hope**

The use of artefacts in the research process is documented in the work of other writers. Hays and Wood (2011) include these as a method of data collection, and Mosselson (2010) argues that including artefacts develops the research process. Urrieta (2007) believes that artefacts bring the past into the present, and help to make processes more personal and

more meaningful. These photographs will serve a double purpose. They will serve to remind the teacher of events in her life, and they will provide data for the researcher. In this second role, I shall look at the photographs in a different way. How are they evidence of the construction of a professional identity? In what ways will they provide support for this research?

## 1.5 The aims of this study

There appears to be no research that specifically investigates the influences on the construction of art teacher identity. The purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse those influences over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction. The aims are to make recommendations for art teacher education, and also to in-service teachers of visual art. These findings may possibly be broadened into more generalist teacher education programmes, and may be of benefit to in-service teachers.

Why is it of value to study the influences on the construction of one art teacher's professional identity, especially when that identity has been crafted over many years of a professional history? What gives meaning to this process?

My work is in teacher education. Every year, I lecture to, and therefore affect, more than three hundred students who will one day become teachers. Their own professional identities are in the initial stages of being crafted.

This work is an attempt to understand that crafting, so that my own teacher identity is consciously developed and enriched. This will hopefully impact on the work that I have yet to do with my students. In turn, their teacher identities will be somehow affected by the work that we do together in the art studio, and it is my responsibility to them, and to the children whom we will reach in the future, that underpins this study. There have, to date, been no studies that longitudinally trace the construction of the development of the identity of an art teacher, with its many influences and subtle changes. This study of identity construction over time is important, because there is an intimate web that grows between the student and the teacher. Trust develops, practices are explored, and the process of teaching is investigated. There is a relationship that grows around understanding the professional expectations and the personal demands that are particular to the teaching profession. In the process of sharing that understanding with the reader, it is possible that the reader may take something that is personally relevant from this work, and that resonates with his or her own teacher identity. In

the final chapter of this thesis, I shall share the findings of this process, suggest general principles for the construction of art teacher identity, and make recommendations for the future education of art teachers.

*From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled*
*If at all. Either you had no purpose*
*Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured*
*And is altered in fulfilment.*

*T S Eliot, 1942.*

Teachers affect their students in ways that may not always be understood, and for this reason, influences on the construction of their identities must be explored, their work must be honoured, and its processes respected. Teaching can never become simply a job. It is the indelible work of the future, and the experience of teaching and learning will leave its mark on children long after they have forgotten their teachers' names, or what they think they learnt at school.

Teacher identity is what interprets the learning materials, and at the same time, provides access to that learning material. The choices that teachers make, their emotions, and the ways that they choose to teach, affect the children with whom they work (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006). A further aim of this study is to raise the consciousness of the influences on the construction of teacher identity, and to nurture that identity into becoming conscious, enriched and purposeful. Generalist teachers are increasingly being called upon to teach visual art, and their presence and teacher identity is an important consideration in the teaching and learning of this subject. Who we are as teachers profoundly affects the children and the process of teaching and learning.

I believe that being consciously aware of who one is as a teacher strengthens the attitude to personal practices, and to the way one conducts both personal and professional relationships. When one assumes a dignified ownership of a professional identity, one also acknowledges all that the identity embraces, which includes responsibility to the learners and to the self. As a teacher, one understands being a part of something bigger, and one embraces the pathways of both professional and personal growth. For this reason, the study of the influences on the construction of the identity of an art teacher over time will offer a deeper and intimate understanding of the process of the construction of that identity, taking into account the experience, emotional responses, contexts and growth in professional knowledge, which are acknowledged contributors to the construction of professional identity. It will offer the reader the opportunity to see how these factors affect and construct

professional identity. In time, the findings are hoped to influence my own work with teacher education students, where my practice is currently lodged.

To fulfil the purpose of this study, the aim is lastly to construct a framework of emergent principles of teacher identity construction which may be of general relevance to audiences of teacher education, and to in-service teachers.

## 1.6 Brief synopsis of each chapter

### 1.6.1 Chapter one: The intersection of the timeless moment

In this first chapter, I will focus on introducing this study. I will place my research question in the centre, and I shall spiral around that point, explaining, defining and elucidating. I will describe the formulation of the research question, and the methodological considerations. I will explain the use of artefacts, and their contribution to this work. I will briefly discuss the purpose and the background of the research. The spiral will extend to embrace the theorists, the methodology, and a brief discussion of the chapters that will follow. I will conclude the chapter with a brief statement of the aims of this study.

### 1.6.2 Chapter two: The eyes of a familiar compound ghost

The literature review for this study is comprehensive, and for this reason, I will divide it into two chapters. In order to trace the construction of an art teacher's identity over time, it will become necessary to examine human identity, teacher identity, the enmeshing of both, and the influences that construct the professional identity. The first chapter will place human identity at the centre of the spiral, and notions of human identity will be established, underpinned by the psychosocial identity theory work of Erikson. The first mention of professional identity is found in the work of Marcia (2002), and so the identity status paradigm will be included in the discussion. The chapter will introduce the concept of teacher identity (Palmer, 1998), and will embrace the influences on professional identity, and the interweaving of both the professional and the personal identity.

Longitudinal influences on the construction of teacher identity will be discussed, and teacher emotion, and emotional management will conclude the chapter.

### 1.6.3 Chapter three: The conscious occupation of the praying mind

In the first chapter of the literature review, human identity, teacher identity and its construct will be investigated, ending with a discussion on teacher emotions. That leads into this, the second chapter of the literature review, where the centre of the spiral becomes the process of meaningful teaching (Palmer, 1998; Triana, 2007) as it is practised by teacher identities. Teacher knowledge will be explored (Shulman, 1987) as a contributory factor to meaningful teaching. The concept of teacher knowledge will be investigated, and will include the knowledge bases of teachers, and how these knowledge bases affect and influence the identity of the teacher. This discussion will include formal, informal and tacit knowledge. Teacher stress will be included, with a description of teacher burnout.

This thesis examines the influences on the identity construction of an art teacher, and so the subject and the discipline, as well as the meaningful teaching of visual art, will be included in this chapter (UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006; Emeji, 2008; Eisner, 2009; Campbell, 2011).
.

### 1.6.4 Chapter four: From which the purpose breaks

In chapter four, I will place the research question in the centre of the spiral, and will investigate ways of answering it. A study of this nature will need to be lodged within the qualitative paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) The broad goals of qualitative research will lead to an acknowledgement that there are many approaches to this research methodology. Underpinned by the theoretical framework of social constructionism, which describes human identity as a construction of society and relationships (Gergen, 2008), further qualitative methods will be examined. Within this paradigm, narrative research will be explored. Once again, within narrative research there are several different approaches, and the one that I shall choose to explore more deeply will be reflective topical autobiography (Johnstone, 1999; Levine, 2006). This particular approach will give me the opportunity to extract particular incidents that have occurred along the pathway of my teacher identity construction. I shall be able to reflect on these incidents, and the analysis that follows will lead to the findings for the study, and will be able to find ways to answer the research question. Also within this chapter, I shall discuss the concepts of validity, trustworthiness, and truth as they are found in reflective topical autobiography.

### 1.6.5 Chapter five: The voice of the hidden waterfall

This chapter will begin to record the data, and will include the analysis of this data. It will represent the contemplative phase of reflective topical autobiography. Extracts from the autobiography will be reflected upon, and the analysis of this reflection will be recorded. The methodology will enable me to reflect on particular incidents that have contributed to or influenced the construction of my teacher identity. In chapter 5, the data will focus on the early part of my life, and the earlier years of my teaching career. The incidents will be selected from these years, and the analysis of these incidents will be underpinned with the theory that is investigated in chapters 2 and 3 of this study.

Included in this chapter will be the early decision to teach, influences in formative years, and my own introduction to formal education. Adolescence, role models, significant teachers, and my personal experiences of teacher education will be investigated to find the influences on, and the factors that contributed to, the early construction of my art teacher identity.

My first teaching posts and their influences on my developing teacher identity will be investigated, as well as a significant professional move to an art centre. This will enable me to examine the influences of communities of practice. Further study and its ramifications will be included in this section. I will document my move to higher education, and draw out the factors that have contributed to my teacher identity in the incidents that I extract from this time. The chapter will end with a discussion of the decision to enrol for further study, significant personal changes, and the influences that these wielded on my teacher identity at that stage of my professional life. Throughout this chapter, the writing will be underpinned and supported with theory, so that personal assumptions, experiences and beliefs are either questioned or affirmed. Because of the nature of this methodology, and also because of the inclusion of artefacts, it is anticipated that this chapter will be of extended length.

### 1.6.6 Chapter six: Between two waves of the sea

This chapter will continue to represent the contemplative phase of reflective topical autobiography. I shall examine the incidents that I have extracted, that concern my later professional life, and the focus will be on my work at a Higher Education Institution. The merging of our institution and the effects of this merger on my teacher identity will be explored, as well as my early venture into academic writing and formal research. I shall examine my own work to investigate whether it conforms with the practices of meaningful art education, and will discuss my own teacher identity and how it has been affected by some of

the choices that I have made. As with the previous chapter, theory is interwoven with narrative, in an attempt to provide a base for knowledge construction and reader resonance. Once again, I anticipate that the length of this chapter will also be extended.

**1.6.7 Chapter seven: Reflecting in a watery mirror.**

In chapter 7, which will represent the reflective topical autobiography of this methodology, I shall provide a summary of the theoretical perspectives of this study, and will provide the reader with an overview of the methodology as a reminder. I shall explore the process of data analysis and the findings. I shall place the research question once again in the centre of the spiral, and I will use the analysis of the previous two chapters to reflect on the influences that have constructed my teacher identity over the years of my active participation in the teaching profession. This will take the form of the final reflective topical autobiography, which is the last phase of this methodology. I shall suggest principles that have emerged from the findings that may be applied to the construction of art teacher identity over time. I shall attempt to make recommendations for art teacher education, and will perhaps be able to extend these to some of the aspects to generalist teacher education. I shall include recommendations for in-service teachers. I shall trace the challenges and limitations of the study, and will conclude with a personal reflection of the process of this study.

**1.7 Personal Comment**

I have always believed that teaching is significant work. It happens at the intersection of the present and the future, and has an influence on the human condition that cannot be measured. One 'bad' teacher, or one 'good' teacher, can have an impact on a child's future that can alter the destiny of that child, and perhaps change the history of the world. Perhaps Hitler had a teacher whose identity was constructed on a platform of power. Similarly, perhaps Mandela had a teacher whose identity was crafted around compassion and care.

I had teachers who taught me that I could be more, and do more. They transformed my life and gave me a world view that was richer than the one that would have been mine, if I had not encountered them. Of course, I also had teachers who did not care, and who made no difference to me at all. Their names and their faces have become hazy, and vague recollections of neglect.

Teacher identity is not only constructed in the classroom. It can begin at an early age, and can thrive in multiple sites. It can grow in social relationships, in personal school experience, and can be influenced by teacher education. It is influenced in staff rooms, by colleagues, by the learners whom we teach, and by the managers of our institutions. It is influenced by our own personalities, attitudes and values.

I am convinced that if teachers consciously knew and embraced their identities, if they understood the impact of their presence in the classroom, and if they used their authenticity as educators and human beings to drive the process of teaching and learning, then we would see real transformation in education. The content is important. The ways of turning information into knowledge are seminal. At the end of it all, and really at the beginning of it all, meaningful teaching is a relationship between the learner and the teacher, where the subject becomes the language of love, and the questions are asked and answered by both the teacher who may be the learner, and the learner who may be the teacher, in an atmosphere of respect, care and mutual enjoyment. This study is an attempt to question or confirm my beliefs, to explore the influences on the construction of my own teacher identity, and to expand the findings to possible inclusion in future art teacher education courses.

## 1.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the thesis. I have given the background to the study, and have described the process of formulating the research question, which includes a brief discussion of my current teaching post, and the work that it embraces. Following this description, I have documented the choice of the methodology for this study, which will be underpinned by social constructionism. I have described the route through qualitative research, and how it has narrowed through the processes of narrative research and the personal narrative, until it finally roots itself in reflective topical autobiography.

I have introduced the key theorists and researchers whose work has contributed significantly to this work, including Erikson, whose psychosocial theory is a springboard for the investigation of human identity, and Marcia, who wrote about the identity status paradigm. Social Constructionism was explored primarily through the work of Gergen. I have mentioned Zembylas, and his work on teacher emotions, and finally, the writing of Parker Palmer, whose work underpins my examination of meaningful teaching.

I have discussed the notion of subjectivity in autobiographical research, and have explained the way that I have tried to create a balance between subjectivity and objectivity by

underpinning the data analysis with the work of other writers and researchers. In this section, I describe the use of the poetry of T S Eliot, and suggest a subjective interpretation for the current discussion.

I discussed the use of artefacts in narrative research, and in this approach have included photographs and personally rendered mandalas. I described the making of a mandala, and invited the reader to enter the process by subjectively interpreting the visual image. My use of visual images is supported by Urrieta's (2007) suggestion that artefacts offer a kind of truth to the work, while Hays and Wood (2011) claim that the use of artefacts can become a part of data collection.

I described the aims of this study, and documented that one of them is to consciously explore the influences on the construction of my own teacher identity so that this process can enrich my work with art teacher education students. Further aims include the investigation of the construction of art teacher identity in order to make art teaching a valuable and meaningful experience, for both my students, and for the children whom we will jointly influence in the future.

> *For last year's words belong to last year's language*
> *And next year's words await another voice.*
>
> *T S Eliot, 1942*

A brief synopsis of each chapter is offered, and in conclusion, I offer a brief personal comment about the influence of teacher identity on the learners, and on the process of teaching and learning.

# Chapter Two: The eyes of a familiar compound ghost

**2 Literature Review part 1**

**2.1 Introduction**

**How is the identity of an art teacher constructed over time?**

Because the purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences that construct art teacher identity over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction, a strong theory base is required. Implicit in this investigation are several other questions. What is human identity? What is teacher identity? Is the professional identity of a teacher different from her personal identity? Can they be the same? How does the identity of a teacher contribute to meaningful teaching? What *is* meaningful teaching? Finding the answers to these questions will assist me to complete the reflective topical autobiography, which will, in turn, enable me to suggest emergent principles in the construction of art teacher identity. It may be possible to broaden these principles into more generalist teacher education programmes, and into the professional development of in-service teachers.

This chapter will explore these questions within the symbolic interactionist paradigm. Human beings exist in a social world, and symbolic interactionism suggests that human beings make meaning from their reflective response to the world in which they live, the society in which they function, and the personal significance that they ascribe to this response. Social relationships form a part of this meaning-making, which is a result of personal interpretation (Burbank and Martins, 2009). This perspective is important for this study, because it allows the personal interpretation and subsequent meaning-making of events, relationships and attitudes. To begin the exploration of human identity, which will form the basis for the search that will follow for the professional identity, I shall describe the identity theory of Erikson. Hereafter, I shall present an overview of the current theories and international perspectives about professional teacher identity and its construction, to provide the theoretical underpinning that will assist me to attempt an answer to the research question. The section investigating teacher identity will conclude with an examination of the concept of emotions in teaching in order to clarify the role emotions (and other factors) play in professional identity development.

## 2.1.1 Introductory comment

In South Africa, the search for meaningful teaching has taken many forms since the birth of democracy in 1994. Learner-centred education, greater child participation, a new curriculum and a different approach to teaching was introduced with transformative Outcomes-Based Education in 1998. Although revisions were introduced along the way, it has become clear that this approach is a failure, and a new curriculum, The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, is being introduced from 2013.

In chapter 1 I discussed the research question, and explored its broader implications as they appear significant in the world of teaching and learning in the field of visual art education.

Much has been written about effective, or meaningful, teaching. Writers like Palmer (1998) and Newton and Newton (2001) stress the value of strong content knowledge. Much has been written about the ability of knowing how to impart that content knowledge (Hashweh, 2005; Zohar and Schwartzer, 2005; Deng, 2007a). Resources, the role of the school and the educational context have all been investigated in the search for meaningful teaching. These aspects will be discussed more fully in chapters that follow.

Although I acknowledge and adhere to the importance of each of these factors, I believe that a conscious sense of teacher identity lies at the heart of meaningful teaching, and it is for this reason that the search for the influences on the construction of teacher identity becomes important. Parker Palmer (1998:32) writes:

> "The teacher within stands guard at the gate of selfhood, warding off whatever insults our integrity and welcoming whatever affirms it."

The sense of being a meaningful teacher engaged in the critical process of teaching and learning creates that 'gate of selfhood' (Palmer, 1998:32). How do we explore and nurture the being who is our 'teacher within' (Palmer, 1998:32)? The search for influences on teacher identity gains importance when it becomes clear that the way an educator teaches is a result of that teacher identity (Palmer, 1998; Coldron and Smith, 1999)

To begin this search, I turn initially to the quest for understanding the formation of human identity. This search leads on to an exploration of the construction of teacher identity, and examines the influences that contribute to the construction of the unique being who teaches. These include the school as an early influence, teacher education institutions, the school as

a site of practice, and all that is embraced therein, as well as social and relational issues. Included here is the often unacknowledged area of teacher emotion.

## 2.2 Exploring aspects of human identity

### 2.2.1 Introduction to human identity

What were the thoughts of early human beings who gazed at their reflections in still water, and slowly came to recognise that they were looking at an image of themselves? The human sense of individual identity begins with the recognition that the mirrored image is in fact a reflection of the unique and individual self (Gerdes 1988). With the recognition of this uniqueness, this sense of sameness and indeed difference, the ancient question of human identity arises. A range of different theoretical approaches have debated the topics of the construction of self and identity. Within the breadth of these debates, this chapter explores issues relating particularly to teacher identity.

### 2.2.2 The ways of studying the self

Although human identity has been explored in many ways over the course of history, and is often reflected in the arts, (to mention particularly Shakespeare's play 'As you like it', and his characters Hamlet and Macbeth; the self portraits of Vincent van Gogh, and in the autobiographical writings of the famous, the infamous and the ordinary), the formal study of self-identity is fairly recent in human history. Holland, Lachicotte Jnr, Skinner, and Cain (1998) suggest that the natural self exists as a phenomenon beyond culture, society and theory. In initial studies on identity, two broad divisions existed; those of anthropology, which looks at identity as a cultural phenomenon, and psychology, which embraces what Holland et al (1998:21) refer to as a 'universalist perspective'. These are discussed briefly below.

### 2.2.2.1 Anthropology and human culture

The study of culture is one of the central principles of anthropology. Zaharlick (1992) writes that for anthropologists, culture is interpreted as a common way of being in a particular society. Because this way of being is shared, it is ascribed to the common group, rather than to each member of the group. Anthropologists attempt a deep examination and analysis of behaviour and value in a broad socio-cultural context.  In anthropology, the study of culture is

largely through ethnographic studies of written accounts and artefacts, called ethno-historic research, and ethnographic fieldwork, where the ways of human existence within a culture are studied. Ethnographic research involves the gathering of information from a particular group, whereas ethnological research examines the assumptions made about one group in relation to another, to explore the reasons that each way of being functions (Zaharlick 1992).

For this study, this approach is not ideal, because it relates rather to a group within a particular culture, or a human being functioning within a particular cultural framework, and interpreting events through the lens of that culture. The study of lifespan development is more appropriate for this work, because it can investigate the development and response of one human being in response to society.


**2.2.2.2 Lifespan development theory of human identity**

The lifespan development theory, or psycho-social stage-task theory, and particularly the work of Erik Erikson (1968), will underpin this investigation of the construction of human identity with relation to the construction of teacher identity. Although this theory is rooted in structure, it provides a place from which to move, and offers a base for the poststructuralist notions of identity which follow.

Following the work of Cooley, whose 'looking glass self' theory was an attempt to formalise the study of the self (Yeung and Martin, 2003; Macionis and Benokraitis, 2006), and Mead, whose work gave rise to symbolic interactionism (Macionis and Benokraitis, 2006), Sigmund Freud developed his psychosexual theory of human development (Garcia, 1995; Goodwin, 2005). Jung's (1958) study of the sense of self was lodged in the psychoanalytical framework and was developed at the same time as Erik Erikson did his pioneering work in lifespan development (Erikson, 1968; Schwartz, 2001a).

Lifespan development is the study and theory of human development across a lifespan. It encompasses general tendencies, differences, and human adaptability in development, and is generally framed either within person-centred or function-centred arguments (Baltes, Staudinger and Lindenberger, 1999). Erikson provides us with a theory that is person-centred.

**2.3 Erik Erikson (1902 – 1994)**

**2.3.1 Introduction to Erikson's work**

Erikson was the first psychodynamic theorist to move identity development beyond childhood, and his work in the 1960s was pioneering. His lifespan stage-development theory concerns itself with the healthy individual (Erikson, 1971). For Erikson, identity synthesis means the revising of childhood identity into the ego identity, which represents a sameness of the sense of self to oneself and to the external world. This process includes the multi-dimensional components of the self, and development occurs throughout the human lifespan. It should incorporate a sense of the present, and with self-knowledge, should provide access to an expected future, where preferences and deeds are coherent (Schwartz, 2001a).

Erikson moves beyond Freud's theories of human development. He believes that the biological and sexual developments do not give enough value to the social and cultural factors which influence the human experience. His psycho-social stage theory encompasses a healthy human lifespan, and encourages further research into the continued development of the adult identity (Mussen, Conger, Kagan, and Huston, 1984:510, Gerdes, 1988:65).

Erikson (1971: 23) writes that it is impossible to separate human beings from the society and culture in which they are located, because they are interrelated and mutually influential. He also supports the notion that human development does not have an end point, and that identity is in a constant state of construction. Erikson (1971: 29) refers to identity formation as *generational,* and believes that those who are older have accountability to those who are younger, in their search for their own identities. He believes that the challenge of adulthood is to nurture the identity formation of the younger generation (Erikson, 1971: 33). Erikson (1971: 42) writes of the belief that human identity is firmly rooted in 'sociogenetic evolution', where each member of any particular group, which he terms a 'pseudospecies', believes in the superiority of that particular group, and measures all others as deficient. He suggests that the significance of the interest in identity study could result in a greater sense of global cohesion.

Erikson writes of the personal identity and the social or contextual identity, and, within his theory, attempts to include all aspects of the self. He divides human existence into eight stages of identity development, each encompassing its own bipolar crisis and possible resolution. He speaks of identity as an individual's unconscious response to the way that he or she is perceived by others, whilst at the same time judging that response *from* others. It is never static, beginning with the first significant relationship in childhood, and ending only

when a person's ability to relate to other human beings ends. Erikson (1971:23) clearly states that identity is not to be confused with self esteem, self concept or self imagery, because these can sometimes be assumed by an individual, and may even be a component of influence in the human search for identity.

## 2.3.2 Erikson's stage-task theory of identity development

> 'Evolution has made man a teaching as well as a learning animal, for dependency and maturity are reciprocal; mature man needs to be needed, and maturity is guided by the nature of that which must be cared for' (Erikson, 1971: 138).

In each of Erikson's stages, a resolution of two opposing states needs to be attained in order for the individual to move to the next stage. Erikson (1971 :96) refers to the oppositional challenge as a 'crisis', which is the result of a time of growth and change. For the purposes of this study, the stages are briefly outlined below.

## 2.3.2.1 Early infancy: Trust versus mistrust

During this stage, the infant learns the basic concept of trust through experiencing a dependable and maintained state of having needs met. This sensory experience of the world is the first time that the child encounters the ways of his or her own culture. The sense of trust in the child develops into the adult ability for faith. How can this impact on the later construction of the teacher identity? Erikson describes this stage of identity development as 'I am what hope I have and give' (Erikson 1971: 107).

## 2.3.2.2 Later infancy: Autonomy versus shame and doubt

In this stage, the child begins to experience personal agency, and it is the first moment of independence from the maternal presence. The child functions between expressiveness and submissive conformity. This is the stage that lays the foundation for an individual who can value his or her uniqueness, and who can make and act upon decisions about the future. This is an important stage for the developing teacher identity, because forward-planning and career decisions are a later aspect of the resolution of this stage of human development.

Erikson describes the essence of this stage as 'I am what I can will freely' (Erikson, 1971: 114).

### 2.3.2.3 Early childhood: Initiative versus guilt

During early childhood, the child begins to develop a sense of personal responsibility and initiative. Sexual inquisitiveness begins, and the way in which this is managed by the care-giving adults is significant in the successful achievement of a strong sense of initiative, or a sense of feeling guilty for being explorative and curious. A possible later consequence of this stage is the preparedness to follow an exciting leader. Could this be related to teacher identity, and to following a school principal, a strong collegial mentor, or an educational guru? Successful development during this stage is the child's readiness to practice enterprising behaviour, and to develop a sense of the meaningfulness of grown-up acts which possibly lead to later achievement. Erikson describes this as 'I am what I can imagine I will be.' (Erikson, 1971: 122)

### 2.3.2.4 Middle childhood: Industry versus inferiority

This stage explores the early school-going years of the child, who learns to overcome challenges and to achieve. This is also the stage where formal schooling is first encountered, and where the child experiences the teacher-being for the first time. Erikson believes that children learn a great deal from the commendation of their teachers during this phase, and so the influence of these significant people should not be underrated. The parents begin to lose their singular hold over the child, as the world opens to include other important adults. During this stage, children begin to exercise their abilities to make and do things, and want to make and do them well, thus developing a sense of industry. Wider society and culture also begin to play a larger role in the child's life. Erikson (1971: 125) states that 'the selection and training of teachers, then, is vital for the avoidance of the dangers which can befall the individual at this stage', He believes that a sense of inferiority can be reduced by a good teacher. The role of the teacher appears to be central during this phase, and the very early seed of the construction of teacher identity, which will be developing in some of these children who will eventually become teachers, could possibly be influenced by their current teachers. Erikson (1971: 127) describes this stage as 'I am what I can learn to make work.'

**2.3.2.5 Puberty and adolescence: Identity versus role confusion**

In adolescence, the individual begins to discover the beginnings of an individual identity. The adolescent searches for ideas and people in whom to believe, which revisits the very first stage of identity development. The adolescent searches for the opportunities to have the free will to make personal decisions. This echoes the second stage of identity development. The adolescent searches for adult role models (who may be positive or negative), and this returns to the third developmental stage. The adolescent begins to think about career choices, about the choice of what work will work best for him- or herself, and this builds on the fourth stage of identity development.

Consistency is a key resolution during this stage. Failure to achieve this consistency could lead to role or identity confusion. Erikson believes that vocational, or career identity, which begins during this stage, might differ according to gender. Later theorists argued this point, as the role of women developed into one that is less stereotypical.

Once again, the role of the teacher becomes central, as Erikson (1971: 131) speaks of the adolescent who is 'so eager to be affirmed by his peers, to be confirmed by teachers, and to be inspired by worthwhile ways of being'. The impact on the construction of the emerging teacher identity of the adolescent who will later choose this profession cannot be underrated, as further discussion in this study will show.

Erikson terms later development as phases 'beyond identity' (Erikson 1971: 135).

**2.3.2.6 Young adulthood: Intimacy versus isolation**

During young adulthood, the formation of trusting and intimate relationships is emphasised. Erikson stresses that although included, this discussion is not limited to sexual intimacy, but encompasses all forms of 'psychosocial intimacy' (Erikson, 1971: 135). As we use intimacy and relational understanding to further our identity construction, Erikson describes this phase as being one in which 'We are what we love' (Erikson, 1971: 138).

This is the stage in which teachers are in the making, and working in the early years of their profession. The formation and practice of healthy, caring relationships is an important part of the early construction of teacher identity, as the student ponders questions of career choice, career development, and career initiation.

### 2.3.2.7 Mature adulthood: Generativity versus stagnation

A productive and positive life marks this stage, as the adult becomes active at raising children, or chooses to be dynamically generative in a chosen work. If an adult is not able to achieve a healthy state of being fully functional in this arena, it is possible that the individual will subside into a state of stagnation, and growth will be restricted. Erikson contends that during this phase, generativity includes the ability of the human being to encounter and to attempt to satisfy the needs of a following generation, in a way that is able to rise above diversity and context (Erikson, 1971). This notion is of significance in the teaching profession, and an educator who has achieved a healthy sense of teacher identity will continue to develop the teacher self as an ongoing challenge to stay generative, meaningful and present to the students.

### 2.3.2.8 Later adulthood: Ego integrity versus despair

This final stage offers the individual the opportunity to reflect and evaluate the achievements of a life lived meaningfully, and results in fulfilment and peace. Erikson uses the word 'integrity' to describe the successful resolution of this phase, and believes that it is a time during which one accepts accountability for one's own life, and for all that has happened in one's life.

Erikson describes this phase as being one in which a human being attaches meaning and purpose to one's past in order to achieve a state of wisdom. He concludes his discussion on identity formation with the words 'I am what survives of me' (Erikson 1971:141; Mussen et al, 1984: 510, 511; Gerdes, 1988:65 – 67; Santrock, 1997:38-40).

Although Erikson is perhaps the most widely read of the identity theorists, several others have contributed theories of human development. Erikson's belief that the stages beyond adolescence were also 'beyond identity' (Erikson, 1971: 135) has left an area of research that requires a deeper exploration of adult identity development. This has particular relevance to this study. While it is proposed that the construction of teacher identity does not begin only with the assumption of a teaching role, but in fact begins much earlier in life, it also concurs with the notion that teacher identity construction (like human identity construction) does not have an end point, but is in a state of continuous change and development.

Erikson's work on human identity is significant in the search for teacher identity because it helps to understand the construction of the human being who will become a teacher. Personal identity and teacher identity cannot be separated (Rodgers and Raider-Roth, 2006), and the development of one will impact on the development of the other.

This psychosocial theory could be seen as the focal point in an artwork, or the central point in a spiral. It is within this theory that art teachers can begin to find their human identity. We can begin to understand how the people, our societies and our cultures have contributed to who we are as human beings, when we enter our classrooms. It is within this theory that we, as humans, can begin to find our teacher identity. We can begin to understand how our value systems and our beliefs influence the way in which we practice our crafts. Our interpretations of the theory make it meaningful for ourselves. For example, Erikson's belief that identity formation is generational (Erikson, 1971:21) has particular relevance for teachers, who may understand this notion with the underpinning commitment of a teacher.

## 2.4 A review of the literature on Erikson's theory

> "Reading Erikson can be much like reading the Bible: There is much wisdom to be found; there is much ambiguity; there is much to take issue with; and there is a multitude of ways to interpret the intended meaning of key passages" (Cote 2002:277).

Erikson's work has formed a basis for much further research into the concept and development of human identity (Mussen et al, 1984; Weiland, 1993; Schwartz, 2001a). A comprehensive review of the writing and research that Erikson's theory has generated would be impossible, and certainly too extensive for the purposes of this study.

The metaphor of the spiral is once again used in this chapter, with the search for identity as a focal point. Erikson's identity theory is close to this central point. I have taken the liberty if 'circling the spiral' from a distance, and focussing on specific areas that may be relevant to this study. As the spiral grows and moves out in a circular motion, researchers and theorists are all looking at the same centre, but each one looks from a different position on the spiral, and so each sees the same focal point from a different perspective. .

Schwartz describes Erikson's theory as 'eloquent and artistic' (Schwartz, 2001a). Along with other writers, he believes that, although many theorists have defined his work as being limiting and linear, the philosophical approach adopted by Erikson has left the theory open to

interpretation (Schwartz, 2001a; Kroger 2002a). Kroger (2002b) interprets Erikson's theory in a seamless way, understanding it to mean that personal identity is being established when an individual makes commitments that are unique and personal, and is able to display a sense of sameness through diverse social roles. A sense of stability despite challenge or change, a sense of community with meaningful others, and an ability to remain true to a personal value system are also important. Personally significant work, an inner spirituality, and a personal ease with one's sexuality are all contributing factors to an individual identity (Kroger, 2002.b).


From a different perspective, it is unfortunate that in some cases Erikson's theory has been reduced to a chart showing only the eight stages of identity development. We lose the richness of metaphor, the power of story, and the interpretation of meaning. Erikson himself believes that his chart needs a story, and insists that in reproductions, all sixty four squares be included, so that future researchers use the blank spaces to record their own findings (Weiland, 1993; Slater, 2003).

Hamachek (1990), believing that Erikson's theory is not specific enough in describing the behaviours that indicate identity development, develops a table that expresses behaviours for the last three stages of Erikson's lifespan development, thus removing further opportunities for interpretation. In table 1, he writes that people who have a sense of intimacy are able to establish a sense of their own identity. If Hamachek's (1990) aim was to list behaviours to clarify the status of identity development, then there appears to be a need for greater clarity from Hamachek himself in this point alone. What behaviour does Hamachek see as being implicit in the establishment of a firm sense of identity?

Erikson's theory has been critiqued for its deficient detail and discipline. The linear quality of the stages of identity development, and the lack of clarity about certain terms, for example, 'context', have been broadly criticised. Because he wrote of any society's prevailing beliefs of the phases of life, Erikson has been judged submissive to a society's value system of that time (Weiland, 1993). Erikson, however, said that those who wrote about his work were often more literal and specific than he had been (Capps 2004).


### 2.4.1 The significant stage of adolescence in identity development: the roots of the adult

The changes occurring during adolescence are pivotal to Erikson's theory, and much research has been generated in this area. According to Erikson (1971), the task of adults is

to be generative, and to nurture the development of younger individuals. This includes assisting them to move through the psychosocial stages as described by Erikson, which culminate in the fifth and final stage of childhood, that of adolescence (Marcia, 2002). During adolescence, childhood fantasies and dreams must become more firmly grounded in reality, and the ego identity, which develops during this time, has been intensively explored (Marcia, 2002). The adolescent seeks to develop a state of a sense of being the same person at different times, and through a variety of contexts and relationships. Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002:201) refer to this as 'temporal-spatial continuity'. In relation to this study, this time is important in investigating teacher identity. Teachers could be generative adults, and career decisions could be considered during this time.

Adolescence is a time when young people begin to widen their experiences, and as opportunities arise, a deeper focus on some areas is invited. Sometimes, areas demanding more focus can result in other areas being neglected. What emerges most strongly is that generally adolescents are concerned with leisure activities, with future career decisions and with relational issues, which include both family and social relationships. If an adolescent has managed to integrate these three important areas of development, it is more likely that a sense of well-being will be achieved, and further contexts will be appropriately integrated (Van Hoof and Raaijmakers, 2002).

One of the most important aspects chosen by adolescents as an area that most likely influences their identity development is that of the family and relational issues (Van Hoof and Raaijmakers), and the role of the family has dominated the field of adolescent identity development. Steinberg (2001) reviews research of the preceding quarter century. He focuses on an investigation of 'normative' parent-child relationships, and suggests that conflict between parent and child is not necessarily the norm; in many cases, the conflict that does exist is more difficult for the parent than it is for the child, because the parent makes decisions based on his or her values, which may be different from those of the adolescent. This could have significance in the investigation of the construction of art teacher identity, because parents may want their offspring to follow different career paths from those that the child may choose.

Each of Erikson's stages relates to the others, and Lawford, Pratt, Hunsberger, and Pancer (2005) suggest that authoritative parenting styles and community involvement might assist in developing a social identity, and may prepare adolescents for an earlier entry into the stage of generativity, and of caring for future generations. Steinberg (2001) asserts that

authoritative parents who establish firm relationships with their children, while at the same time granting them the freedom to discover their own attitudes and principles, assist these children to develop with less disquiet, and with stronger senses of their own value. These results exist across multicultural and multi-contextual sites, and can be extended to other figures of authority (teachers or school principals) in the adolescent's life. This notion is of particular reference to this study, and is supported by Lawford et al (2005) and by Matteis and Adams (2004), who state that it is more likely for an adolescent to reach an achieved identity status in a family where minimal conflict is experienced.

Faber, Edwards, Bauer, and Wetchler (2003) also stress the significance of the family in the identity development of the adolescent. Where an imbalance occurs, for example, where there is a role reversal or imbalance in the parent-child relationship, or where families are characterised by stress and unresolved conflict, a moratorium or foreclosure could result in the identity status of the adolescent. Adolescents who live with clear boundaries experience the world as stable, and this affords an opportunity for personal exploration and growth. This notion aligns with the findings of Steinberg (2001).

Differences in contexts can result in variations of type and timing of identity development. In relation to this study, the educational environment is particularly significant. The school, as an important context, is explored by Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006:109) who claim that 'schools provide a framework for identity elaboration'. The ethos of the school plays a role in identity development, influencing scholastic achievement and career aspirations. The general attitude of the student body is likely to influence individual students. Meeus (1993) concurs with the value of the school in the choice of a career during adolescence, and suggests that learners who are high-achievers are more likely to develop strong occupational identities. He believes that relationships with peers and leisure activities during adolescence do not directly affect the choices of careers. Writing fourteen years later, Stokes and Wyn (2007) refute Meeus' assumption, and argue that relationships and leisure activities can indeed influence career choice.

The spiral expands, and the adolescent role model, as observed identity, is explored (Blasi and Milton,1991; Capps, 2007; Hutchings, Carrington, Francis, Skelton, Read and Hall, 2008). This is a significant aspect of this study, because teachers often model their practice on the ways that they were taught (Timmerman, 2009). A role model may be described as the person whom the child would most like to emulate in one way or another (Hutchings et al, 2008), or whose lives and actions result in influencing another person in one way or another

(Quimby and De Santis, 2006). This is a very important consideration for the construction of art teacher identity. Quimby and de Santos (2006) assert that it is critical for a young person to identify with a role model during the period of career choice. According to the findings of Hutchings et al (2008), at least one third of the girls in their study chose their teachers as role models. Their reasons for doing this are grounded in the attitude of the teacher towards others, and the observed relational behaviour. A role model offers the opportunity to observe work in action (Timmerman, 2009), and when that observation is favourable, it can increase the possibility that the observer will choose a similar career.

Some findings have shown that role models affect career decisions, and may even influence these decisions above personal ability (Quimby and de Santis, 2006). Timmerman (2009) states that students who have made an early decision to become teachers may have an 'apprenticeship of observation' as they learn from their role models, and may experience a 'continuous induction phase' (Timmerman, 2009:231).

The spiral extends to gender differences and similarities; during adolescence, girls generally seem to suffer from lower self esteem than boys. Powell (2004) asserts that girls could begin their process of separation from the primary care-giver as early as three years old. They therefore have a more complicated process of individuation, because it is closely bound up in relational issues. Success at resolving the adolescent identity crisis invariably leads to a more stable adult, and early relationships and supportive school environments play a significant role in the development of the adolescent girl's identity.

In South Africa, Thom and Coetzee (2004) assert that adolescents growing up in a transforming society may have to confront two adolescent crises – one that is individual, and one that is cultural. It is possible that the loss of a cultural identity could negatively impact on the construction of personal identity. Conversely, a strong sense of cultural identity impacts positively on the personal identity, and in South Africa, black adolescents generally have a stronger sense of personal identity than their white counterparts. Research supports the notion that adolescents are more comfortable within their own cultural groups and a strong group identity is often formed (Thom and Coetzee, 2004).

Davis, Seider and Gardner (2008) investigate what Erikson refers to as identity moratorium, a time when adolescents explore the range of their possible selves in their expanding societal existence. An online identity offers an opportunity for exploration that has very little consequence, and opens doors to a revelation of the self that is sometimes assumed to be

safer, because in many ways it is anonymous. In healthy individuals, these multiple identities are eventually integrated into a personal, factual identity. Some teachers allow their students to access their Facebook sites, and so this investigation has particular significance to this study of teacher identity construction.

The competitive thrust of recent life encourages young people to succeed by any means, and gaining admission to prestigious colleges, and thus to a particular kind of adulthood, becomes imperative. The identity of the successful individual is of prime importance in western culture, where in other cultures, community is sometimes more valued. Davis et al (2008) speak of the 'moral freedom' claimed by young people today, where they take the right to be, and to do, whatever they believe is right for themselves, even if it involves inauthentic self-representation.

From the above review of some of the literature surrounding the stage of adolescence, it becomes clear that this stage in the development of human identity is regarded as pivotal. Of particular interest to this study is the frequent reference to career decisions and aspirations during adolescence (Meeus,1993; Quimby and de Santis, 2006; Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006; Stokes and Wyn, 2007; Davis et al, 2008; Timmerman, 2009).

### 2.4.2 Beyond adolescence: adult identity studies

Moving beyond adolescence, Studer (2007) applies Erikson's eight stages to the developing relationship between supervisor and student, so that the professional identity of each is enhanced, and Capps (2004) experiments by relocating Erikson's stages into consecutive decades in life.

Erikson's theory has played a significant role in the exploration of adult and aging identity. There appear to be many parallels between the identity transitional phases of adolescence and those of late adulthood. Biological changes are evident during both of these stages. Similarly, both adolescents and aging adults are faced with the challenge of independence, and both may be navigating change in family relationships (Kroger, 2002b). Kroger establishes that an ability to accept change bodes well for the aging adult, and significant relationships assist in the continuance of the identity. Some adults experience positive personality change (an aspect of identity) in their later years, becoming calmer and more accepting. The ability to recollect is also a stabilising effect on identity maintenance. Younger aging adults often find different vocational interests, involving community or voluntary work,

or part-time work in their own vocations. Early late adulthood sees individuals reconsidering identity processes, whilst those who are older appear to be refining their identity processing, and experience being more settled (Kroger 2002b).

### 2.4.3 Erikson and postmodern writers

In postmodern writing on identity development, Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) find that Erikson's theory resonates in the areas of relational issues, historical and social context, and in the extended development of identity over a lifespan. However, they believe that Erikson neglected adulthood and paid too much attention to adolescence, which has emerged as pivotal in his theory. They also criticise the theory for being androcentric, and question its proposed universalism (Phoenix and Rattansi, 2005; Schachter, 2005). Placing autonomy above relatedness once again reinforces masculine dominance (Schachter, 2005).

Erikson's theory seems to present white, middle class, heterosexual values as the standard, (Phillips, 2006) and those who accept Erikson's theory also accept these standards. Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) believe that a stage prediction of identity development is not in keeping with the fluidity of the postmodern identity, where a stable, core self is not acknowledged. They argue that we construct and reconstruct our multiple selves through language, referencing both our inner and outer worlds.

Schachter (2005) suggests that further questions arise when reading Erikson through a postmodern lens. If social context becomes fluid and unstable, and is a major influence on the development of human identity, then the personal sense of Erikson's sameness and continuity is no longer relevant, or indeed, even possible. The concept of the fragmented self replaces this. Technology plays a role in weakening a recognisable world, and there appears to be a nonexistence of collective society, custom and common meaning. Context is also discussed within the twentieth century world of Hiroshima and Auschwitz. How can such a context of separation and powerlessness give rise to human beings who are *not* afraid to ask about their core identities (Schachter, 2005)?

I argue this point in favour of Erikson. If we acknowledge the existence of a fragmented self, then we must ask 'What is the self that becomes fragmented?' If there is no common meaning, then what is the meaning that the self makes, on behalf of itself? And is the act of making that meaning not in fact an act of a self that is continuous?

In relation to Schachter's suggestion that Hiroshima and Auschwitz cause human beings to be too afraid to ask about their central natures, I argue that it is the very question that we must ask, and that it must come from the sense of the collective that he denies. If we do not ask such questions, then we learn nothing, and are in danger of repeating such inhuman acts.

The postmodern dispute with Erikson's theory, with regard to context, focuses on the belief that human beings are adaptive and flexible, and do not need the conditions of sameness and continuity for psychological well-being. Sameness can even become a hurdle to free will and a sense of personal welfare (Schachter, 2005). Levine (2005) concurs, believing that multiple contexts give rise to multiple identities. He states that the self is a social as well as a personal one, and that the individual understanding and the enactment of these give rise to identity. This notion is relevant to this study. The home environment and the school are two different contexts. Is the identity of the teacher different in each one?

Levine (2005) reinforces the value of Erikson's theory in the postmodern perspective by writing that during Erikson's fifth stage, the ego identity emerges and is able to take control, but only as much as the preceding four stages have been mastered. This agentic self continually recreates itself through reflexive understanding, in order to create meaning (Levine, 2005). The work of an art teacher is grounded in dealing with people. Do the personal and social selves merge when they become the identity of a teacher who is relating meaningfully to her students?

Postmodernists argue that it is possible that there is more than one route to more than one kind of identity, and that a stage-progression no longer has relevance. The self-constructed, individual pathway to identity gives way to an interconnected identity created within relationships, and in community with others. Schachter (2005) suggests that Erikson's theory itself should be read in a relationship with postmodernism. This could cause shifts within his theory, de-centering certain foci, and re-centering others, while postmodern theory should also be more fluid. Schachter (2005) believes that in a postmodern reading of Erikson, the universality of his theory would be more loosely defined, and a wide range of culturally-defined identity structures would become possible.

*If you came this way,*
*Taking any route, starting from anywhere,*
*At any time or season,*
*It would always be the same:*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Figure 2: The Mandala of the Mystical Moon: the feminine**

Sorrell and Montgomery (2001) offer a thoughtful feminist perspective, and from this standpoint, they explore the validity of Erikson's theory for contemporary research. They find that the theory remains useful in describing identity development, although they believe that identity research itself must be extended to include the global community. They choose to

interpret Erikson's theory as one that is *not* one-dimensional, and suggest that the notion of embodiment could be central to an extended interpretation. They believe that the omission of embodiment change across the entire lifespan is an important omission in Erikson's theory (Sorrell and Montgomery, 2001, Kroger, 2002c). As feminists, they acknowledge the androcentricity of Erikson's theory, while at the same time giving credit to the context in which he wrote. They stress the need for further research in this area.

Kroger (2002c) counters this argument by suggesting that the influence of gender role on identity development is possibly a more rewarding area of research, because contemporary thinking around gender issues has considerably broadened this arena. Holman (2001), in support of Erikson, asserts that Erikson wrote of being able to love and to work, thus stressing the feminine, relational aspect of identity development.

Sorrell and Montgomery (2001) state that those researchers who explore identity within an Eriksonian framework have the right to interpret that theory with contemporary understandings. Schwartz (2001a) concurs, but holds fast to the idea that all neo-Eriksonian identity research should embrace and extend the principles of Erikson's theories. Other researchers like Marcia and Kerpelman (Schwartz, 2001a) believe that because Erikson's writings are not based on experiential research and have philosophical underpinnings that are drawn from observation, future identity research should not be limited by Erikson's theory. They believe that the study of identity has entered realms that Erikson himself would possibly not have contemplated (Schwartz, 2001b).


**2.5 Neo-Eriksonian theory**

**2.5.1 The identity status paradigm**

Marcia (2002) is a neo-Erikson who endeavoured to operationalise Erikson's identity theory. Although one of many attempts, Marcia's has proven to be one of the most enduring. Erikson, who viewed identity as continuous over a human lifespan, did not acknowledge Marcia's work as an extension of his theory, and remained detached from this paradigm (Phoenix and Rattansi 2005).

Marcia's work describes the four statuses that he has extracted from Erikson's identity theory (Schwartz, 2001a, Marcia, 2002; Bergh and Erling, 2005). He describes these as identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium and identity achievement. I explore these because I believe that they have particular relevance in the construction of teacher identity.

Identity achievement describes a status in which one has explored, and consequently made a commitment. Identity moratorium is a state when one is in a time of exploration, with no commitment yet. Identity foreclosure describes a time when commitments are made with no exploration, and identity diffusion is a state during which an individual is described as disinterested, and indifferent to both exploration and commitment (Kroger, 2000, 2007; Schwartz 2001a; Marcia, 2002). Identity foreclosure appears to be the starting point for the adolescent journey into adulthood. This is usually followed by the moratorium period and finally by commitment. This is the ideal, but may become interrupted by a time of diffusion. Studies over time reveal that identity status moves most commonly from foreclosure or diffusion to moratorium or commitment (Kroger, 2000). The identity formed during the time of adolescence is hardly ever the final state (Marcia, 2002). Kroger (2000) writes that half of the individuals studied at graduate level reveal a state of foreclosure or diffusion over all domains. She suggests that this finding begs further research into this area.

The identity statuses are intended to describe human beings holistically, although Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) suggest that imposing these limitations on youth identity renders them more static than Erikson intended. Initially, Erikson identified the areas of career and ideology, which Marcia developed into the domains of occupation, and religion and politics. The identity statuses were eventually extended into interpersonal domains, and these currently include friendship, dating and sex roles, originally developed by Grotevant, Thorbecke, and Meyer (Kroger, 2000, Schwartz, 2001). There are five identity domains acknowledged by Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen and Kokko (2005), and these encompass religious beliefs, political identity, occupational career, intimate relationships and lifestyle. The occupational domain has particular reference to this study.

Fadjukoff et al (2005) argue that identity statuses are not linear progressions, as originally suggested by Marcia, but that it is possible for an individual to move in and out of statuses in a fairly fluid way, and that even an achieved identity is not necessarily a permanent state. Identity status and identity domains have generated a large body of research (Kroger 2002), and Schwartz (2001) stresses that although these domains may be studied independently, it is important to take into account that each of these domains functions in a 'social and relational context,' a fact that Phoenix and Rattansi (2005) claim was ignored by Marcia.

More mature identity statuses show a tendency towards being able to recall autobiographical memories. Personal memory and identity status are therefore related. Dunkel and Lavoie (2005:350) explore whether information is recalled more easily when it is related to the self.

They cite many examples of research that has been completed on the 'self reference effect', and suggest that findings generally prove that individuals who are 'committed' require shorter times to make decisions.

As with the spiral, identity status studies continue to expand and develop, and in recent years, a body of research has been generated that examines adult identity construction, and the movement of adults through the identity statuses, where before these studies were largely limited to adolescents (Kroger, 2000; Fadjukoff et al, 2005). Studies of the identity trajectory have highlighted issues of adult identity status progression, stability and regression, and Kroger believes that the nature of each status needs to be probed more deeply (Kroger, 2000).

Stemming from this need, and basing her argument on her own and other studies, Kroger (2007), states that identity achievement, the most mature of the identity status paradigm, is seldom reached by late adolescence or early adulthood. Factors affecting identity transitions are explored. Kroger offers that openness to identity-challenging experiences, along with a personal personality style that welcomes potential change, and an ability to accommodate rather than assimilate, will stimulate movement towards an achieved identity status. Kroger (2000), commenting on the changes brought about by technology in Western societies, stresses the need for identity research into the ego identity state of adulthood and late adulthood.

In Fadjukoff et al's (2005) research, no respondents had reached an achieved identity status in any of the domains at twenty seven years of age. Of significance to this study is that by the age of thirty six, most of the respondents had achieved a committed status in the domain of occupational identity.

### 2.6 Future directions for identity status research

Many attempts have been made to measure identity status, using both questionnaires and interviews, but Schwartz (2001) believes that these do not aptly capture the human essence which they are attempting to measure. He urges that a reliable method of testing the identity status of individuals needs to be developed, so that the future of this research can be validated in the research community. Berzonsky suggests that a future research direction in

identity status studies might be to concentrate on the way in which human beings within each status process challenges, make choices, and respond to self-relevant information (Dunkel and Lavoie, 2005).

The influence of context on identity formation and on identity status entered the identity research arena as late as the 1980s, and Kroger (2000) suggests that this area needs further exploration, particularly where multiple and conflicting contexts are experienced by a single individual.

Of particular interest to this study is the identity status of the occupational domain. This area was of value to Erikson as 'career', and was included in Marcia's identity status paradigm. Later, it was listed by Fadjukoff et al (2005) as one of the five key domains of identity status research. A teacher in a diffused identity status will have a different kind of identity from one who has an achieved identity status. This will impact on the construction of teacher identity, and will affect both attitude and practice.

Schwartz (2001) outlines possible future directions for identity status research, and suggests that one of these might be to deepen personal and social identity research. It is in this arena that this study is lodged and extended to include professional identity.


**2.7 A review of the field of identity studies beyond Erikson**

According to Cote (2006), the field of identity studies is one that is experiencing the greatest growth in the Social Sciences arena. In the 1950s, Erikson's work focussed attention on the concept of human identity. Simultaneously, social scientists expressed concern about the phenomenon of 'mass society' and 'its decline in community, the ascendance of anonymous bureaucratic control along with the technological transformation of human activities, and a consequent rise in problems of personal definition' (Cote 2006:4). Consequently, research rooted in the study of human identity has flourished since this time. In some studies, it becomes accepted as a synonym for culture, while in others, identity is described as the definition of what individuals are, measured against what they are not (Cote, 2006).

The term is also used extensively in non-domain specific language so that it encompasses all aspects of identity, instead of the singular aspect of the particular research focus. The word 'identity' is becoming so generally applied that it is beginning to lose its precise meaning (Cote 2006).

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Schwartz (2001) argues that the different approaches to identity research need to be restructured, so that we can achieve a unified concept of identity. He suggests that there are essentially two approaches. The first offered is the 'discovery-creation distinction' suggested by Waterman. The second is the 'structural aspect of identity theory', based on the work of Erikson. The construction of personal identity appears to be receiving increased research interest, and Schwartz suggests that this could provide a platform for integrating other elements (Schwartz, 2001).

Cerulo (!997) argues for the synthesis of identity studies. She believes that there is a potential to link traditional and current research on identity construction, so that findings can be reinterpreted. She also stresses that a blending of cultural and sociologist studies could enrich research into lived experience and could more fully explore the complex relationship between the two domains. On the other hand, Cote (2006:6) describes the current global interest in identity research as being a potential 'Tower of Babel'. He believes that identity cannot be describes as a single unitary phenomenon, and offers a taxonomy based on:

    a) the subjectivity of the individual,

    b) behaviour patterns specific to the person

    c) the individual's membership in societal groups (Cote 2006:8).

Beyond the cultural and universalist debate, the socially-constructed self has entered the arena of identity studies (Mc Laren, 2001). In earlier studies, the self emerged as an 'essential self' (Holland et al, 1998:27), one that developed through a lifespan and was in an unchanging and constant state. However, the socially constructed self is shaped by the discourses of power which it encounters, and this self changes according to those discourses. This debate places the cultural and universalist approaches on one side, and the socially constructed self on the other, although Holland et al (1998) stress that these two should be viewed as a 'continuum' (1998:27) rather than as two separate groups. Because teaching is a social profession, and rooted in human interaction, the notion of the socially constructed self has particular reference to the construction of teacher identity.

Since the 1970s, some identity studies have entered the realms of group or collective identity. Gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and class form central features of the discourse. Technology, to some extent, has removed the importance of physical place, and has introduced the notion of a collective identity, where the members of a group share some kind of common connection (Cerulo, 1997). Some identity studies in the West have

concerned themselves with personal and collective identity studies based on culture, context and society, while some Eastern identity studies, particularly those lodged in the Buddhist philosophy, include a deeply spiritual dimension to the investigation of the self through meditative practices central to the *Cakrasamvara Tantra*. The use of the mandala is emphasised here as a symbol for the body in physical space, and for the identity of the human being who participates in this practice. This process assists individuals to assume a group identity (Gray, 2006).

Researchers have investigated the nature of difference between groups, and of how this difference is sustained, and how it can be changed. The notion of collective identity is central to much research, shifting the focus from the 'I' to the 'we' (Cerulo, 1997).

Collective identity is motivated by the focus of the group, and embraces the notion of an agentic whole. It has a moral base, holding its essence to be one of virtue. Collective action is clearly defined, and group identity is cohesive. In the teaching profession, communities of practice can offer an important platform for teacher identity development and informal knowledge acquisition (Murray, 2005). These communities of practice may be seen as one kind of collective identity. Cerulo (1997) states that a critique has been levelled at collective identity because its politics represents exclusivity and the Western ideology of individualism, a stance which is least appropriate for a globalising world.

Social constructionism frames a large body of work on gender studies, where debate has centred around the fact that earlier identity study, by focussing on males, has reflected a gender-biased approach (Cerulo, 1997; Holland et al, 1998). Gender research often focuses on the representations that socially define roles, like family or educational institutions.

In response to the place on the spiral that perceives the marginalisation of women, a feminist standpoint focuses on the belief that identity is constructed between the experience of the self, and the interaction of that self with others. Race, class, gender and sexuality influence the interpretation of the self, and a reflexive and relational component is strongly foregrounded, where the self is seen as intersubjective (Mc Laren 2001).

Some feminists, rejecting any form of supremacy of one self over another, argue the patriarchal standpoint taken by researchers. They suggest that this offers an inequitable discourse. They also critique the cultural nature of anthropological studies, suggesting that only those in positions of power are adequately represented. Culture itself is no longer a single concept, and studies lodged in any single culture can be problematic. (Mc Laren, 2001).

Socio-historical works explore the ways in which those in power influence national identity, and also the identity of 'the other', frequently through the use of language or the media. National identity remains a focal point of much study, and ideological representation is frequently probed. In many instances, national identity is regarded as the strongest of all collective identities (Cerulo, 1997).

Modernist approaches to identity need a fixed stability, and individual identity is stressed. The assimilation theory governs studies into ethnic identity, and primordialism (where ethnic identity is unchanging) and circumstantialism or instrumentalism (where ethnic identity is fluid) invites debate. Social constructivism suggests that group identity is explored within the realms of frame, position and significance of the group (Hebert, 2001).

Postmodernists critique the constructionist approach, reflecting that it is a simple listing of the course of identity construction, and that it fails to acknowledge power in this process. In the constructionist categorisation of 'women', for example, postmodernists believe that the approach embraces the essentialism which it apparently seeks to deny. Postmodernists deconstruct the identity catalogue, and attempt to explore the wider range of human existence, beyond the constructionist myth of one reality. Important aspects of postmodernist research are time, space and relational issues, and their focus is often centred around gender and sexuality, giving value to multiple truths, duality, and notions of the insider/outsider. Postmodernists take nothing for granted, and question other identity assumptions (Cerulo, 1997, Hebert 2001).

In the last twenty years, concern has also been raised that ethnographic studies can become dated, and could reflect the subjectivity and position of the researcher. Still another concern is that generally identity studies fail to be objective (Holland et al 1998).

Technology has recently entered the field of identity studies, because of its ability to blur the edges between physical and social space. The online/offline border assumes a greater significance than many previously held identity categorisations, and media-constructed collective identity becomes a strong force. Domains with many users offer an opportunity to construct a virtual identity (Davis et al, 2008), and this research warns against placing the concrete self in a position of less importance (Cerulo, 1997).

In general, identity studies have progressed to a state where we have a fairly developed corpus of work studying identity, while at the same time we have still not reached a clear definition of what it is we are studying (Cote 2006). Cote believes that the term 'identity' is too broadly used by most researchers, and that it lacks clarity and definition. The diversity of

ontology and methodology amongst researchers represents strong focal shifts which all contribute to a lack of clarity. He suggests that identity be studied in a theory of 'multidimensionality' (Cote, 2006:8), and that these should consist of 'the subjectivity of the individual, behaviour patterns specific to the person, and the individual's membership in societal groups'.

Holland et al (1998) suggest that there are three emergent and interwoven strands of identity study.

1. Culture and Society contribute to a dynamic self that is constantly in a state of becoming. Here they concur with Cote (2006).
2. The self is an integral part of social practice. Again, they concur with Cote (2006).
3. The location of self-construction should be considered as multiple settings. When the self is investigated as a production of West or East, or of a particular religion or philosophy, for example, the investigation does not take into account other aspects of the self, or the self as it exists in its daily lived experience, whether this is interdependent or independent. Although not stated in these terms, Cote's (2006:8) notion of 'multidimensionality' suggests concurrence with this strand.

In later identity studies, human beings are afforded a greater degree of agency, one that sees them responding to culture and society in more individual ways. The anthropological notions of the relationship between culture and self have shifted into those that simultaneously construct the self, but also present the self with the adeptness and capacity to respond to this challenge. Holland et al (1998:32) suggest that the self is thus a relationship between society and the 'embodied self', and may be referred to as the 'self-in-practice'. Some psycho-analytical feminists concur with this view, claiming that the self is relational, and continually in the process of becoming (Mc Laren, 2001).

> 'This self-in-practice occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and the discourses and practices to which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present' (Holland et al, 1998:32).

This heuristic idiom suggests that the self is an active construction of a participant in a social and cultural universe, and that this awareness affords an extent of personal agency in relation to the way in which that self participates. Holland et al (1998) write of the world which is in the process of becoming, one that is a historical position into which we enter, and upon which we act. These figured worlds take into account the positions of the participants. There

is a social organisation in figured worlds, and the worlds spread the participants across the encompassed vistas of human activity and interaction.

Some studies focus on domains, on context and culture, religious beliefs, political identity, occupational career, intimate relationships and lifestyle, while others focus on particular ages or stages in the development of human identity. Adolescence appears to be foregrounded here, with identity status studies, feminist research on the adolescent girl, cultural influences in adolescence, occupational choice, ethnic and racial identity, and ethnic minority studies (Hebert 2001).

Recently, identity interventions have been developed that support identity construction in young individuals. Such interventions are fairly current; the first reported was developed by Enright, Ganiere, Buss, Lapsley and Olsen in 1983. Interventions are aimed at assisting identity-confused individuals to gain a stronger sense of self, as human beings with a firm sense of their own identities tend to have higher self esteem, and a more positive outlook on life. Although they vary in approach, most interventions appear to focus on self-directed learning, and Schwartz believes that the value of future identity interventions will be to assist identity-diffused and identity-foreclosed individuals (Schwartz, 2001, Montgomery, Hernandez, Ferrer-Wreder, 2008).

Marcia, Cote, Schwartz and Kroger are prolific writers who have contributed significantly to the field of identity study. Marcia, who introduced the notion of identity status in an attempt to operationalise Erikson's theory, first published in the 1970s. Still working today, almost all of his research concerns itself with the identity status paradigm.

Cote, whose first publication on human identity construction appeared in 1988, provides us with an appraisal of the field, comparisons between psychological and sociological perspectives, the influence of culture, the notion of identity capital, and studies of adult identity development. He also comments on the work of Erikson, and joins the debate on the feminist perspective of identity construction.

Other writers make significant contributions. Sneed and Whitbourne (2001, 2005 and 2009), writing in the new millennium, find a place on the spiral by focussing on adult identity development. Sorrell and Montgomery (2001) write of feminist identity, spirituality in identity construction, the family, the body, gender differences and culture.

In general, these studies have explored what it is that makes us unique and human. They probe the many aspects that make up our beings as humans, and create a spiral that is

vibrant and growing. My particular interest is the field of teacher identity construction, which emerges as a fairly recent point on our spiral.

Education enters the field of identity research, and occupies a significant point on the spiral. State-controlled education influences the identity of minority groups, and some researchers explore ethnic and racial identity at school (Wakefield and Hudley, 2007). Peer group identity, early career choices, school uniforms and cultural identity are also frequently examined (Lannegrand-Williams, and Bosma, 2006), and at-risk behaviour and deviance are investigated. The physical space of the classroom and its impact on identity construction, and the development of social identity, occupies significant chapters on the role of the school in identity development. There also appears to be a strong turn towards moral or values-based education to assist in the construction of healthy identities (Diez deVelasco, 2007).

Teacher attitude is also explored (Hebert, 2001), and a large body of work on teacher identity will be discussed later in this study.

## 2.8 The construction of teacher identity

### 2.8.1 Introduction

Why is it important that we examine teacher identity and its construction? How do we define teacher identity, and in what ways does it contribute to or differ from the discussion of human identity? Where does the construction of a teacher's identity begin? What influences this construction? Does the stage-theory of Erik Erikson have any relevance? These questions underpin the following discussion. There is very little specific literature regarding the construction of the identity of the art teacher, and so, of necessity, I have had to draw on research that has focussed on teaching in general, and that can be also applied to the discipline of art education.

### 2.8.2 What is teacher identity?

For the purpose of this discussion, the identity of the teacher is described as that component of the self that acknowledges and acts out *who* the teacher is. It is the compilation of the relationships, the personal and professional history against a social, contextual and cultural backdrop. It includes the formal and informal knowledge, integrated with a set of personal

values and emotions, that all combine to contribute to the identity of the teacher who acts in accordance with, and within, this unique and personal framework of being.

As I have already quoted, Palmer (1998:32) describes the identity of the teacher as 'the teacher within'. He writes:

> 'The teacher within stands guard at the gate of selfhood, warding off whatever insults our integrity and welcoming whatever affirms it.'

Webster (2005) develops this notion further, suggesting that identity is a knowledge of *who* one is, rather than a series of labels that define *what* one is. He suggests that identity becomes clarified when an individual finds personal value and meaning in life. Society and the cultural context within which the self exists, create the environment against which this sense of purpose can be explored (Rodgers and Raider-Roth, 2006; Day et al, 2006). When one is able to speak and act according to one's moral standpoint, Webster (2005) refers to this state as being authentic*,* and believes that this state is an individual choice*.*

When we walk into a classroom, we are not one-dimensional teachers. Our histories, our beliefs, our relationships outside of the classroom, our values and our spirituality, as well as our emotions and the way that we make meaning of each of these aspects of our beings, accompany us. They are as much a part of us as our professional knowledge and attitudes. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) write of the enmeshing of the teacher-self and the social-self, and interpret authenticity as a state in which one is able to bring personal strengths and wholeness to the state of being a teacher, so that one moves beyond the stereotypical image of 'teacher'. When one acts only according to the stereotype of what a teacher is, the unified self disintegrates and personal truthfulness is lost.

Day et al (2006) concur with this notion of personal wholeness, and suggest that an awareness of the self is important in the process of skilful teaching. This self is constructed through a personal interpretation of society, space, place and time, enmeshed with the personal self. This enmeshing of the two selves can take several years to accomplish.

Teacher identity incorporates more than just the skill of the teacher. It includes an aspect that is based on how one relates to being a teacher on an intellectual level, and should encompasses a self-assured cognitive fluidity (Walkington, 2005). It is clear that the teaching space and process is significantly influenced by the teacher identity, making the investigation of the construction of teacher identity a continued important aspect of future educational research.

Teachers need to have a firm sense of their identities as teachers, in order to be able to rise above these challenges, and to stand firm in the conviction of their roles as the generational sharers of knowledge. Palmer (1998:31), quoting Buechner, writes of teaching as 'the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet'. When teachers connect intimately with their personal teacher-beings, they will perhaps remember their 'deep gladness', and will best be able to feed the 'world's hunger'.

Law et al (2002: 432) suggest that in order to develop a professional identity, a person must have the ability to 'draw upon personal feelings, to differentiate self from others, and to develop a personal narrative and represent experience in one's own terms'. Added to this, they should be able to 'focus a point-of-view, build an inner life, and relate all to one's own purposes'.

Most authors agree that teacher identity is a cumulative construct that combines personal history, personal and professional values, social and cultural aspects, as well as context and institutional influences (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006; Day et al, 2006; Diniz-Pereira, 2003).

The body of literature around teacher identity and its construction is vast, and growing. For this reason, I have limited my discussion to those writers who have researched areas of teacher identity that relate directly to this study.

### 2.8.3 The significance of the exploration of teacher identity

> 'If we begin from the premise that the student's attention is initially
> directed toward the teacher, and through the teacher is directed toward
> the purposes of schooling, then some aspect of the teacher's identity
> must be tied up with those educational goals and institutional practices
> that precede her.' (Stillwagon, 2008:68)

Teaching is closely aligned with the seventh of Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages, that of generativity, which embraces a need to care for the next generation. As such, Triana (2007:232) writes: 'Teaching as a form of work is a developmental achievement that is biologically determined through evolution', and believes that the teacher's 'essential purpose' is 'learning to be competent and compassionate' Triana (2007:232). In order to achieve excellence, a teacher must learn to be both passive and active, and allow these states to be

interactive. The active state is the role of competency, and the passive state is the role of compassion.

The teacher is an impactful presence in the lives of the learners, and it is for this reason that teacher identity has significance. The integrity of this presence is an act of identity in motion. Almost every aspect of a teacher's work is influenced by a personal dimension, (Coldron and Smith, 1999: 718) and different teachers do the same things in different ways. Palmer (1998:7) writes: 'The discerning innocence of young children deepens my conviction that at every level of education, the selfhood of the teacher is key'. Erikson himself affirms the value of the teacher, particularly in the lives of adolescents, where the teacher's role becomes one that inspires 'worthwhile ways of being' (Erikson, 1968: 131).The importance of the personal and aware construction of teacher identity increases in significance as we gain insight into the fact that the nature of the educational institution and of the very profession itself makes it difficult for teachers to find a collective identity in which to practice and collaborate.

Coldron and Smith (1999) offer that from the beginning of their professional lives, teachers begin to identify with the notion of 'teacher', and with the idea of being seen as a teacher by society at large. Teacher identity becomes something that teachers enact, and so it is a dynamic and changing phenomenon which develops throughout a teacher's career. When a teacher makes choices, she makes her identity apparent. These choices require a level of awareness, because they are the active manifestation of an identity in process. Although these choices are constrained by the traditions and practices of teaching, they are also evidence of a certain degree of teacher agency. Some teacher identity is part of the nature of the teacher, some is accomplished, and some is enforced by the power relations that function within the profession.

Teacher identity is made evident in the act of the teacher's practice and ways of being both in a classroom, and within a school. Walkington (2005: 54) writes: 'Teacher identity is based on the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher; beliefs that are continuously formed and reformed through experience'.

While teaching may be seen as a vocation of service (Santrock 1997: 437), Diniz-Pereira (2003) suggests that the central nature, or ethos, of teaching, is such that it separates this work from other professions, and results in a subculture on its own. He believes that conservatism, individualism and presentism are the core features of the ethos of teaching, and that these three features combine to create the particular nature of the occupation. Because of the demands made on teachers, much of their work is done in isolation, and this

isolation results in a conservatism and a slowness to change. The concurrent individualism brings about a personal teacher identity construct rather than a shared professional identity across the site of practice. For this reason, individual teacher identity needs to be particularly and consciously nurtured so that teachers become more aware of their own strengths, beyond the stereotype, in order to be able to move into a space of possibility.

In a world that is globalising, change becomes the rule, instead of the exception. In the teaching profession, and particularly in South Africa, education for transformation, educational reform, and policy change have been defining features of education in the past two decades. Moore, Edwards, Halpin, and George (2002) suggest that teachers are required to act in the field between global change and their personal natures, and that this could cause a professional identity crisis. When teachers are confronted by stresses that occur between different aspects of their identities, it is sometimes required to extend that identity to include belonging to 'the membership of different communities' (Hodgen and Askew, 2007:473). Response to this need can be pessimistic. Often, imposed change causes professional discomfort, and the professional reconstruction of the teacher-being can be a stressful process. Authentic teachers may need to adhere to reform, even although they do not necessarily adhere to the underlying principles of such reforms. This could lead to teachers becoming less critical, less political, and less likely to engage in lively educational dialogue (Moore et al, 2002). The consciousness of the value of teacher identity and its process of construction could offer teachers a return to their states of authenticity.

Hodgen and Askew (2007) suggest that deep-seated change in the beliefs and knowledge systems of teachers requires a change in the identity of the teacher. This necessitates changing some aspects of what the teacher has been, while at the same time retaining some of the characteristics that are an essential part of that teacher's identity. Change thus required can be seen as threatening or desirable, depending on the nature of the teacher. These changes may be necessary in one or many of the spheres in which teachers act, and may be viewed as an act of teacher agency, because they represent a teacher understanding new situations in a meaningful way, and changing accordingly.

Teachers need to have a point from which to move, with assurance and confidence, to meet the challenges that lie around them and before them. A conscious and developing strength in the inner security of the teacher identity could offer that sense. This sense of active self-knowledge could present an inner resource that would provide a strong backbone to support the changes that teachers confront in their sites of practice. Blustein et al (1996:436) maintain that we are in an 'era of occupational flux', and that human beings are faced with

professional ambiguity. The ethos of the sites of occupational practice is in the process of immense adjustment to the changing demands of a world in transition. There is a need for us to develop appropriate fresh proficiency and expertise. An understanding of the self in context becomes a primary concern. As human beings seek to preserve a feeling of interior continuity and sameness, there remains a need for them to maintain an ability to adjust to the changing needs of their environments and occupational worlds.

This is nowhere more evident than in South Africa, where policy and curriculum change undermine the confidence of teachers. In the discipline of visual art, tremendous shifts have occurred, with the subject being minimised and incorporated first into the learning area of Arts and Culture, and more recently into a subject called Lifeskills, which incorporates the other three arts disciplines, as well as two further subjects. Time allocation has been minimised, and new demands are exerted on generalist teachers. These must combine to influence the construction of the identity of an art teacher.

## 2.8.4 The process of the construction of teacher identity

Vondracek (1992) states that it is essential to consider personal identity development when one explores occupational identity construction. If this is true, then the construction of teacher identity happens simultaneously, and not entirely separately, from the construction of personal identity, and may start at a very early age. Porfeli et al (2008) stress that middle and late childhood are important times for the notion of career. Children are able to understand and consider various occupations, although these considerations are often based on gender- and career-stereotypes, and this awareness has an impact on their passage through the adolescent stage as described by Erikson (1971). Vocational identity can therefore be seen to have its roots in childhood (Porfeli et al 2008:97). They write:

> 'Identifying those person-in-situation influences that significantly enhance or impede vocational exploration and development will help career counsellors understand how a playful, fantasy-oriented child becomes a goal-directed adolescent who endeavours to remain in school, explore the world of work, define an occupational calling, develop a sense of vocational self, and secure a career that satisfies and is congruent with contextual opportunities and pressures such as parental desires and community expectations.'

This extract shows that some children may have already considered a future career, and could well be in the process of merging a personal with an embryonic professional identity. While earlier biographies may indeed play a contributing role in the developing identity of the teacher, it appears that adolescence, the crisis identified by Erikson as 'identity versus role confusion' (Erikson, 1971), and a time in which the young person considers, makes possible decisions and takes possible steps that will lead to the eventual fulfilling of the role of teacher, may mark the real beginning of a specific kind of self that will develop into the teacher identity (Erikson, 1971; Gerdes, 1988; Wallace-Broscious, Serafica and Osipow, 1994).

Wallace-Broscious et al (1994) suggest that during this tentative time, clarification of a future career choice is an important task. However, they assert that decisions taken during adolescence are not always lasting. It is possible that the individual has made a career decision without reflection and consideration, and this indicates a state of foreclosure. If the identity crisis of this time has been effectively resolved, then the career decision reached seems to show a higher degree of 'career maturity', and it is likely that there will be greater clarity around the decision of an occupation (Wallace-Broscious et al, 1994).

The indication is that adolescent individuals who have made a decision to enter the teaching profession may have already embarked on a process of constructing the young teacher-identity. Vondracek (1992) asserts that it is important to assimilate the study of vocational identity into the study of personal identity. Although there is little current research that links the construction of teacher identity to such an early stage, it appears possible that the adolescent could begin to construct a teacher-self, and that a variety of influences and interpretations that contribute to identity construction could be viewed through this newly-emerging lens. Fadjukoff et al (2005) suggest that as an individual moves towards identity achievement, it is most often in the domains of work and family in which this is initially achieved.

The progression through school and teacher education will also have a marked effect on the developing teacher identity, as will the cultural, social and institutional context in which the newly-qualified teacher lives and works. Some of these influences will be explored in the following section.

**2.8.5 Influences on the construction of teacher identity**

What contributes to the construction of the identity of the 'teacher within' of whom Palmer (1998:31) speaks? Teachers live in embodied worlds, and are influenced by their social relationships, their contexts, their cultures, their belief systems and values, and their personal and professional lives. Teachers are not two selves, one personal and one professional; the nature of teaching requires that a teacher comes fully to the learners, (Palmer, 1998) and is present and active during the process of knowledge construction. Therefore, all that is present in a teacher's life is implicitly present in a teacher's work.

Palmer (1998) suggests that teacher identity is constructed through personal, relational and professional lenses. Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006), describe the teacher's awareness of self as 'an evolving entity, continuously constructed and reconstructed in relationship to the contexts, experiences and people with which the self lives and functions'. Day et al (2006) contribute by asserting that teacher identity is developed through external (institutional and policy) and internal (personal histories, values and perceptions) influences, and that the identity cannot always be constant. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of self is a continuous and developing process, where the individual is able to be both objective and subjective. The school or educational institution is an important cultural and social influence on teacher identity (Day et al, 2006).

**2.8.5.1 The role of the school in pre-professional teacher identity construction**

If it is possible that teacher identity construction begins in the identity-foreclosed or identity-achieved adolescent who had made a decision to become a teacher, then the role that the school experience plays in the initial construct needs to be examined.

Lannegrand-Williams and Bosma (2006) claim that the school is a critical part of the manner in which adolescents perceive themselves, their actions, and their academic accomplishments. This context provides the space for learners to use as an individual foundation for their identity construction, and as a support for their identity expansion and exploration. Adolescents are able to explore occupational options, and to make choices and commitments to these options (Lannegrand-Williams and Bosma, 2006). Initially, the school is a site of learning, social and cultural experience, and relational exploration for the adolescent who has decided to become a teacher. It later becomes a site of practice for the qualified teacher. The school may thus be viewed as the space and the place of one context of teacher identity construction.

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Teachers have a lasting impression on their learners, and for those who decide to become teachers themselves, the practices to which they have been exposed during their school careers often influences their own practice (Atkinson, 2004). Timmerman (2009) suggests that those students who wish to pursue a career in teaching are being apprentices through observation.

## 2.8.5.2 Teacher education and teacher identity

Dollof (1999) writes that teacher education students may already have a clear idea of what teachers look like, and how they should perform. This comes from the years of personal experience with their own teachers, and from the image of the teacher that is built up in society, and in the media. The way that teachers are presented in the press, and more particularly in film, strongly contributes to the student notion of what a teacher is, or should be.

It is, however, in the early acts of teaching that student teachers begin to bring into reality their own construction of self-as-teacher (Smith, 2007).

Dollof (1999) believes that teacher educators should provide a space for students to reflect on their images of teachers, so that they are able to develop their own practice beyond the beliefs that they hold. It is important for students to develop affirmative identities, and these are often grounded in positive educational experiences that the students have encountered, or in response to their own emotional needs as learners themselves (Dollof 1999, Maclean and White, 2007).

Clarke and Drudy (2006) explore the developing teacher identities of students who are tasked with teaching for an awareness of global and diversity issues, and concur that students generally teach to the requirements of their supervisor. They urge an awareness of the insecurity of the developing teacher identity amongst students, and encourage teacher educators to be aware of the values and beliefs held by students upon their entry into teacher training programmes. Insecure teacher identities are not likely to be able to deal with complex issues like diversity and globalisation, because these require innovative approaches.

According to Diniz-Pereira (2003), the emphasis in most teacher education institutions remains on individual development and achievement. Student teachers work alone, and are competitively engaged in formal coursework, or isolated in their teaching endeavours. Within

this isolation, initial values, attitudes and beliefs about teaching are formed. (Diniz-Pereira, 2003).

Student teachers feel limited by the fact that they are often expected to conform to the tutor teacher's methods and standards, and they are not offered many opportunities to be flexible or experimental (Atkinson, 2004; Stevens, Cliff Hodges, Gibbons, Hunt, and Turvey, 2006). Atkinson (2004) believes that initial student teacher identities are formed through the language of pre-existing policies, and that this language is the result of a particular ideology. He questions the value of reflective, reflexive or critical thinking during initial teacher education, because he believes that these actions are controlled by educational ideology.

From another place on the spiral, teaching is often referred to as a gendered profession. Vuorikoski (2001) believes that teacher identity is formed by society, context, and the students themselves, within their gendered roles. Writing as a feminist, Vuorikoski (2001) states that in teacher training institutions and in the primary school, teachers are predominantly women. This fact is so generally accepted that studies on teachers' life history frequently fail to take the gendered being into account. She suggests that student and teacher life history writing should start from the position of a gendered being (Vuorikoski 2001).

Atkinson (2004) states that we are the products of our own and other's imaginations, and that it is in fact the educational discourse that defines the developing teacher identity. However, these discourses cannot capture the wholeness of the teaching student, and so they are bound to fail. When students use methods acquired through institutionalised instruction, and yet do not teach adequate lessons, an understanding of this failure is inevitably lacking; the institutional instruction cannot provide adequate explanations for the fullness of the teaching experience.

An interesting alternative is offered by Maclean and White (2007), who suggest that reflective practice using video footage of student teaching, and carried out in the presence of committed professional teachers, can contribute to the developing professional identities of student teachers. This mentored approach offers students the opportunity to reflect on their practices, and to become agentic in finding their own pathways, while being mentored into the use of appropriate language and mutually-agreed sound educational practice. Parsons and Stephenson (2005) also make a strong case for collaborative reflective practice between the student, the mentor and the qualified teacher. This process encourages student teachers to gain depth in their understanding of their own teaching practice.

What student teachers know, and how they know it, is also an important aspect of the developing teacher identity. Smith (2007) explores pedagogical content knowledge, and its effect on qualifying teachers. He suggests that the field of pedagogical content knowledge and teacher identity should be combined and fluid, rather than viewed as separate parts of the same being. A significant point is that once these young teachers move into their own classrooms, and begin their professional lives, they do not give much credit to their teacher-training experience, and Smith (2007) suggests that the investigation of self-as-teacher should feature more prominently in teacher-training programmes.

Can this mean that the real process of constructing the identity of a teacher only begins when one *is* a teacher? Is it possible that the preparation for the profession is also the preparation for the active association with teacher-ness, and that the role and the actions define the identity? If this is the case, what is the role, what are the actions, and what are the influences that create the teacher-being, the one who guards the gate of the inner self, insisting on integrity (Palmer, 1998)?

**2.8.5.3 The influence of the school in professional teacher identity construction**

The school is the site where the teacher performs, and where the teacher-being comes into existence. Although personal history must, and does, contribute to the identity of the teacher, it is in the context of the school where this identity is played out, where the person finally becomes a teacher, and where the self performs actions that are congruent with the notion of teacher-ness. Elbaz-Luwisch (2004:388) believes that place has a particular importance in the construction of teacher identity. She describes place as 'a given location that is not only specific, describable and distinct from other locations, but that holds meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it'. She believes that a knowledge of oneself is enmeshed with a knowledge and an understanding of the place in which that self functions. Coldron and Smith (1999) concur that once the professional qualification has been awarded, it is the place and the space of the school that gives rise to the beginning of a teacher identity that will continue to develop throughout the teaching career.

Mc Cann and Johannessen (2004) write of the difficulties of novice teachers. Frequently they have to deal with the challenge of confronting the fact that the actual teaching experience is very different from their expectations. The work is often exhausting, and young teachers can feel isolated in an environment that is unfamiliar, amongst a staff of unknown faces. Young teachers frequently do not realise that some older, more experienced teachers experience

similar difficulties, and may have problems with classroom management, curricular issues, or in fact any number of challenges which relate to the full teaching experience. When young teachers are confronting these issues, how is the early stage of teacher identity construction affected?

Diniz-Pereira (2003:4) writes:

> 'The structure and culture of schools have been some of the most powerful factors which have shaped teachers' identity. Social meanings about teaching, once built in conformity to the structure and culture of schools as well as affected by people's social class, gender and racial differences, also influence the way a person perceives reality at schools'.

Because schools generally present single classrooms in which one teacher is expected to function with many learners, isolation of the teacher is affirmed. The school is seen as a collection of smaller units, rather than a unified whole. Teachers function independently, and in separation, within those individual units. Diniz-Pereira (2003) writes of the 'multiple layers of context', and is joined by Coldron and Smith (1999) with the comment that power, policies, cultural diversity and institutional interpretations of these affect the identities of teachers.

Within the smaller unit of the classroom, the identity of the teacher is played out. The differences between classrooms is the result of the individual teacher's way of being as a teacher (Walkington, 2005). Malm (2008) believes that a teacher's ability to be aware of his or her responsibilities is an important aspect of mental health, and that schools should support this development. Teaching strategies and classroom organisation are therefore both examples of teacher identity in space, as the unique self interprets the traditions of the school and the culture of teaching. Coldron and Smith (1999) suggest that some part of this identity is biographical, some is attained, and some is enforced.

Although teaching is an act of communication between learner and teacher, the teacher acts within the confines of the school, the community, and the educational structures that govern this context. Here, power structures frame the identity construction of teachers (Parkison, 2008). Søreide (2007) writes of the construction of teacher identity through 'public narratives'. These are the documents that are attached to schools or educational institutions, that seek to define preferred teacher identity.

In South Africa, the Government Gazette (2000) defines the following roles for teachers:
- o mediator of learning
- o interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
- o leader, administrator and manager
- o scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- o community, citizenship and pastoral role
- o assessor
- o learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist (Government Gazette, 2000).

Søreide (2007) claims that official educational documents include a synopsis of preferred teacher identity, which can frame and guide the developing identity of teachers, and suggests that these 'public narratives' should be taken into account when future teachers are selected for training.

When external structures and regulations conflict with the internal values or personal performance of an educator, the authentic and agentic teacher is reduced to a system, and disempowerment, and the resultant lack of commitment can lead to a professional identity crisis. The options are to acquiesce, or to withdraw. Parkison (2008) offers a third option: when a teacher becomes a dissenter, an authentic identity can be created within a critically powerful space.

Stillwagon (2008:76) believes that although the context of the school is a strong influence on the construction of teacher identity, the 'bodily presence' of the teacher prevents each member of staff from being too precisely defined. In this opposition, the teacher is able to maintain a certain autonomy, and is able to survive beyond the confines of the description framed within the school's context.

## 2.8.5.4 Social/relational influences in the construction of teacher identity

In the school context, relationships play an important part in the construction of teacher identity. Teachers are reflected to themselves through responses from their learners, their colleagues, and members of school leadership (Day et al 2006).

Teachers' relational lives are intricate, complex and diverse, often including a need for self-sufficiency, because of their isolation in the classroom, while at the same time aspiring to

strong collegial relationships and support. Personality differences can dictate which one of these emerges most strongly. (Diniz-Pereira, 2003).

Primary school teachers seem to construct their teacher identities from the personal and professional self, and an element of dedication and enthusiasm remains intact. Secondary school teachers often construct their teacher identities through their subjects or their institutions, and the status of both of these gains importance. In both primary and secondary schools, a foundation of healthy relationships with the learners is central to teacher identity construction. Within this context, learners are often the interpreters and the reflectors of the self for the teacher (Day et al, 2006). Triana (2007: 235) writes that the 'active interplay between student and teacher fosters a bond that potentially can become a source of identification', because what one experiences in the other can become a part of oneself.

The personality of the teacher is an important vehicle for the identity, and Stillwagon (2008) believes that it is this part of the teacher that relates to the learner. The relationship between teacher and learner is central to the learning process (Zembylos, 2003; Stillwagon, 2008), with the teacher acting as the bridge between the curriculum and the learner.

The teacher's identity is what separates the teacher from the *notion* of teacher, and brings the individual into the performance of the unique teacher. This allows each teacher to be a personal interpretation of the role which has preceded him or her, rather than a simple representation of a particular educational ideology. The teacher's performing of his or her role is what reveals the teacher identity to the learners, and the learners' relation to, or rejection of that performance is what gives the teacher a sense of personal identity.  Malm (2008) believes that teaching is an act of emotion, and that the relationship that teachers have with their learners influences their choice of teaching strategy, and their practice as a whole. This 'psychic rewards of teaching' (Malm, 2008:379) are important in giving teachers a sense of value in their work and in their human capacities. Malm (2008) believes that the ability to make decisions, to act independently and to be innovative, are also important. Teachers' and learners' human properties are looked for and defined by communicating with each other. In relationship with others, we come to understand and expand our notions of who we are.

Current interest in teacher identity offers a variety of ways of exploring this concept. Watson (2006:509) describes teacher identity as 'not so much something we have, as something we do' and suggests that in narratives, we construct our identities through a personal interpretation of lived events. The analysis of the narrative gives us a lens through which to examine the ways in which a teacher is in an on-going process of identity construction

(Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Elbaz-Luwisch and Pritzker, 2002; Watson, 2006). Teacher narratives gain validity when we acknowledge that the storied lives provide the space for the enmeshing of practice and identity (Watson, 2006).

In the narrative explorations of teacher identity, teachers often document their emotions, and there is a particular place on this spiral that addresses the importance of teacher emotions in their professional lives, in their concept of self-in-practice, and in the construction of their identities (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2002; Zembylos, 2002, 2003; Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). This will be discussed later in this chapter.

### 2.8.5.5 The teacher's personality and teacher identity

The teacher's personality is an important part of the construction of her teacher identity, and Arnon and Reichel (2007) suggest that the personality is the most important quality of a good teacher. It is her personality, interpreted through her values, her attitudes and her beliefs, that create the atmosphere in the classroom. Omoregie (2007:4) lists the personality attributes that she believes contribute to a globally competent teacher as being 'the ability to care, role of fairness and respect, social interaction with students, promotion of enthusiasm, motivation for learning and his zest towards the teaching profession'. A teacher's personality is the way in which her teacher identity is expressed, and the way that it communicates itself and its meaning to the students. Coldron and Smith (1999) discuss the choices made by teachers and state that these choices are often values-driven. The acquisition of both formal and informal knowledge is also largely values-driven (Ray, 2009), and values are a part of the expressed or tacit personality of the teacher. Each teacher approaches the work of teaching in a uniquely personal way, and Newton and Newton (2001) believe that the relationship that is established in the learning encounter is of equal value to the content knowledge of the teacher. Palmer (1998) concurs, suggesting that good teachers join themselves, their learners and their subjects in the essence of exploring their work together.
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### 2.8.6 Emotions and teacher identity construction

Although the influence of the school and the educational context, and social and relational issues contribute deeply to teacher identity, it is in the *meaning* that teachers ascribe to these influences that is interpretive, responsive and influential. This sense of meaning is derived

from a teacher's personal emotional response. As Law et al (2002:432) state: 'Work is an emotional issue, especially when career identities are shifting'.

Emotion could be described as that part of the self that responds and reacts, and is an active part of the construction of teacher identity *in motion*. When we talk about our work as teachers, we do so with language that is laden with emotion. Our day-to-day experiences of our work are entangled with our emotional responses, and very often, are controlled by them (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). There is a strong link between emotion and performance, and Ashkanasy (2004) suggests that emotions affect our individual and group decision-making abilities.

Sutton and Wheatley (2003) state that there is little research on teacher emotions, and offer a review of the current state of this investigation. They assert that emotions are one of three classes of mental operations, making this inclusion important in any study of teacher identity. Emotions affect memory, problem-solving ability, enthusiasm and a teacher's attitude to his or her occupation. Emotions can dictate the amount of effort that teachers put into their work, and the study of teacher emotions is important, not least because students are aware of and affected by them.

Emotions can often have a long-lasting effect on the work and the lives of teachers, and those teachers who are able to acknowledge positive emotional incidence are also more likely to be able to draw on their own reserves. Van Veen and Seegers (2006) suggest that emotions affect teachers both immediately and in the long-term, and that positive emotional experiences are enabling of unique responses to the act of teaching. They contend that emotions, whether negative or positive, deeply affect the teacher-being, and can lead to functional wellness, or conversely, decline, and eventual burn-out or exit from the profession.

The positive force of emotions in the teacher profession may be called emotional consonance (Naring et al, 2006:303), where an appropriate emotion for any given time or space is actually felt. Chang (2009:204) contributes that 'emotions are a response to interpretations of events, rather than to events themselves'. Emotional consonance results in feelings of emotional energy, competence and accomplishment. Positive emotions may counteract the effects of normal stress, and may contribute significantly to job satisfaction (Reyes and Salovey, 2010). However, when teachers are required to engage in a practice which can be termed 'surface acting' (Naring et al, 2006:303), and which requires them to act an emotion that they are not feeling, or to completely suppress emotions, high levels of

emotional stress can result in burnout. Surface acting, and the act of suppressing emotions, can also result in feelings of depersonalisation (Naring et al, 2006).

If emotion has such a profound effect on the lives, the identity and the work of teachers, then why is this phenomenon, and more specifically teacher emotion, such a proscribed subject?

Zembylas (2005) argues that teacher emotion has been neglected in research because western culture is discomforted by emotional exploration. Emotions are regarded as a weak, female realm, and are therefore not part of the current masculine social structure, where researchers become distrustful of something that cannot be quantitatively measured. Emotions are seen as a threat to scientific information (Zembylas, 2005).

There is an unspoken, unwritten agreement that teachers are expected to behave appropriately, and to feel, appropriately, and to respond appropriately, and any response beyond what is deemed appropriate is unacceptable. The school discourse will often veil this tacit agreement of acceptable emotional response (Zembylas, 2002; Elbaz-Luwisch and Pritzker, 2002), as an attempt to govern the proper expression of teacher emotion. Rage, apprehension and helplessness are not tolerable, whereas compassion, composure and consideration are encouraged. Teachers often unwittingly become 'self-regulating' in an attempt to accommodate the emotional rules of their context, and deny the clarity and the honesty of their personal emotional responses. Hebson et al (2007:681) write of Hochschild's definition of emotional labour which refers to 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' This can result in feelings of being inauthentic and estranged from the intrinsic nature of their work. Bullough, Mortensen Bullough and Blackwell Mayes (2006:196) state: 'increasingly the demands of teaching call forth contrary acts that bruise the teacher's soul.'

The examination of teacher emotions was slow to enter the arena of educational research, and Zembylas (2005: 7) describes the 'first wave' of this research as one which explores the largely negative areas associated with stress, burn-out and fatigue. The 'second wave' examines the relational aspects, and the effect on the lived emotional experience of teachers.

Currently, there is an upsurge in interest and research in teacher emotion, and while several authors write about teacher emotion specifically during a time of educational change (Hargreaves, 2004; Geijsela and Meijers, 2005; Van Veen and Seegers, 2006; Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran, 2006), the writings of Zembylas investigate the emotions of

teachers in their general working lives, and examine how these emotions come to affect identity construction.

The work of teachers exists in the space between the human being and knowledge, creating a unity between the two that should result in a meaningful experience of both. Because this space has no boundaries and no rigidity, and no possible predestined outcomes, it cannot be governed by common conventions. Teacher emotions influence the experience of their work; although their roles may be defined, the enactment of the self that is functioning in those roles is an act of emotion, and a physical manifestation of identity (Zembylas, 2003).

Zembylas (2002; 2003) suggests that teachers are inclined to make sizeable deposits of their personal selves into their professional lives, and that emotions play an adhesive role in the construction of teacher identity because they contribute to meaning-making for teachers.

Emotions operate at the same time as reason; these two apparent binaries are co-dependent. Teacher emotions are politically and culturally-bound, but experienced on a deeply personal level. Although private, emotions are not entirely solitary, because they are socially-constructed and maintained, and are influenced by power relations, which exist at all levels in educational institutions (Zembylas, 2002; 2003).

These subtle power relations may be seen at play in the work of Rippon and Martin (2006), who write about the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland. New teachers are mentored by a staff member, and are given a reduced teaching load to ensure a national regularity in the first year of teaching. These methods rely on structures and processes, and pay no attention to the unique nature of the teacher. The school culture controls this process. Rippon and Martin (2006) believe that emotional exhaustion and feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy prevent the healthy construction of teacher identity during the first year of teaching, and that most teachers only reach a firm sense of themselves as teachers after ten years of teaching.

When these power relations affect or restrict the authenticity of the teacher, they exact a particular kind of emotional toll, and a need for the value of the self is a powerful influence in teacher identity. This becomes increasingly important as schools come under pressure to conform to international standards (Zembylas, 2002). Centralised educational bodies impose policies and standardised assessments that demand heightened administrative commitment. The value for the humanity and the self of the teacher becomes lost in the process, where academic achievement is seen as the ultimate goal for all learners, and where administrative proficiency is seen as the mark of a good teacher (Zembylas, 2002).

Bullough et al (2006) reflect that teachers can only know others as well as they have the capacity to understand themselves, and that this self-knowledge includes an understanding of one's emotional responses. Feldman Barrett et al (2001) suggest that people who know and can describe how they are feeling are better able to understand their emotional responses, and are therefore better able to deal with them. Personal emotional knowledge equips us to deal with a particular emotion in its own framework. Most often, it is negative emotions that require active emotional effort, and this effort is known as emotional regulation. Law et al (2002:433) state:

> 'Especially in turbulent times, career management may be as much about dealing with bad feelings as finding good ones. Sensing when to fight or flee, to calculate risk, to balance reward against effort, to know when to trust—all this feeling-loaded awareness has survival value'.

If teachers are able to be consciously aware of their emotional lives, and to pay attention to this aspect of their work and their lived existence, the inner being of the teacher could adopt a pathway of potential wellness. If teachers could learn to acknowledge their emotions, and to deal with them in ways that deepen and value the teaching experience, while at the same time deepening and valuing the 'teacher within' (Palmer, 1998),  there is a strong possibility that the threat of burnout would be lessened, and stress levels would be reduced. The downward spiral of emotional defeat acts as a warning to the teacher's sense of authenticity.

### 2.8.6.1 Emotional management and teacher identity

Because of the individual nature of human beings, there appears to be no one way of emotional regulation that is effective for all people. Classroom experiences in themselves are not emotional. It is the meaning that teachers ascribe to these experiences that give rise to emotional responses. Gross (1999) suggests that reappraisal can be an effective way of regulating emotions, and that in some cases, suppression might be valuable. This does, however, depend on individual emotional understanding and the ability to differentiate.

There is a new interest in the regulation of emotions, a term which, according to Gross (1999:552) first entered the debate in the early 1980s. Currently, emotional regulation is seen as being important in reducing responses to negative emotions. Whereas previously,  the ability to cope was seen as a non-emotional response to a particular emotion, emotional

regulation includes an emotional aspect, and thus achieves a 'distinct domain' (Gross, 1999:556).

Zembylas (2002) suggests that emotions exist at the interface between language and the lived experience, sometimes challenging a school's ideology, and are created by 'impulse, restraint and tone'. When we begin to engage with 'emotion work', there are three aspects:

- we can attempt to change a thought process by changing an emotion;
- we can attempt to change the ways our bodies respond to emotions;
- we can attempt to change the physical expressions of the way we feel.

When a teacher begins to become consciously aware of emotions in a reflective act that has the potential to increase empathy and transform the self, it is an act of being accountable to the self. It is an agentic act that acknowledges personal and professional identity, and one that refuses to accept imposed and unacceptable restrictions on the work and the life of a teacher. If this can be a collective act, it will be more sustaining (Zembylas, 2003). Zembylas (2003) suggests that by adopting a poststructuralist approach, and acknowledging that identity is not fixed, but is rather in a constant state of becoming, teachers can move to a place where they acknowledge, and where necessary, resist, power relations, culture and ideology.

In order for teachers to change, (Malm, 2008:380) it is important to achieve a state of 'emotional connectedness'.

To this end, understanding emotional needs should be developed between teachers, administrators and agents of change. In such a supportive framework, teachers are able to share beliefs, emotions and values around teaching, and this encourages teachers to become lifelong learners. They are liberated to look both inward and outward, and to learn from their mistakes. This in turn offers the opportunity to construct their own teaching culture rather than have one imposed on them.

But what does it mean, to construct one's own teaching culture, and to teach meaningfully, and more specifically, to teach visual art for meaning? These concepts will be explored in the following chapter.

## 2.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have placed, at the centre of the spiral, the development of human identity, with particular reference to the structured stage-development theory of Erikson. I have offered examples of the literature surrounding this theory. Particular attention is paid to the stage of adolescence, because this appears to be fairly significant in the arena of career choice, and has relevance to this study. This is followed by some investigations into the study of adult identity. I have documented some of the Postmodern writers who have argued for and against Erikson's theory. This discussion prepares the way for the investigation of the influences on the construction of the identity of an art teacher over time.

Spiralling from there, I have explored the neo-Eriksonian theories, with particular reference to Marcia's identity status paradigm, because career choice becomes significant here. This section concludes with researchers suggesting future directions for identity research, and with a brief review of identity studies beyond Erikson. These studies may have relevance for this study, because the construction of teacher identity encompasses and then extends beyond the exploration of human identity.

Extending the spiral, I describe the notion of teacher identity, and its significance in the educational process. Factors which contribute to the construction of teacher identity are explored, and reference is made to the personality of the teacher, which is an important aspect of teacher identity.

Teacher emotions are investigated, and an examination of the influence of teacher emotions on teacher identity is explored. The spiral of this chapter concludes with a description of emotional management, and its value in the construction of teacher identity.

These theoretical perspectives will guide my investigation into the influences that construct the identity of an art teacher over time. This empirical study requires a guiding theoretical framework, and chapter 2 and 3, while representing the incubation phase of reflective topical autobiography, will provide me with an informed base from which to progress into the illumination and contemplation phases of this methodology.

In the next chapter, I shall continue my search for the construction of teacher identity over time by exploring literature surrounding the process of meaningful teaching, teacher knowledge, professional development and professional stress. I shall investigate the visual art discipline in education, and will consider the impact of the identity of the art teacher on the teaching and learning process.

# Chapter Three: The conscious occupation of the praying mind

## 3 Literature Review part 2

### 3.1 Introduction

Why do teachers need to be aware of, and work with, their own emotions? Why do teachers need to be present with their learners? Why do teachers need to strive to construct an identity that is ethically sound and morally intact? Why do teachers, more than any other profession, need to work with a raised consciousness, a heightened sense of possibility, and a delight in their own capacity for lifelong learning?

I believe that it is to enrich the teaching and learning process, and to imbue it with meaning that goes beyond content and context. Meaningful art teaching comes from the identity of the art teacher, and reaches deep into the hearts and minds of all participants, creating a new kind of understanding of the world and of our place in it, as active and worthy partners on this planet.

But what does it mean, to teach meaningfully, and more specifically, to teach visual art for meaning? How does teacher identity impact on the process of teaching? These concepts will be explored in the following chapter. While the purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences that construct the identity of an art teacher over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction, this chapter will investigate those elements that combine to create meaningful teaching as a place in which to lodge that identity. I will begin with an investigation into the concept of meaningful teaching, and move into a discussion of teacher knowledge. Teacher knowledge and its acquisition must surely be influenced by the identity of the art teacher, as it must also influence the identity of that teacher, and it is for this reason that this discussion will be included in this study. This discussion will embrace the knowledge of content, context and the learner, and will examine the concept of pedagogical content knowledge. Formal, informal and tacit knowledge will also be explored, and professional development will conclude this section.

I will discuss the impact of the identity of the teacher on meaningful teaching, and I will conclude this section with an exploration of teacher burnout, which is the result of stress within the profession. I will move on to discuss visual art education, and its place in the school curriculum, because these factors may have a strong influence on the construction of the identity of an art teacher. I will investigate the concept of meaningful art teaching, and will

conclude this chapter with an investigation of the impact of the identity of the art teacher in the process of meaningful art teaching. These topics are important because they are components of the teaching and learning process, and the identity of the art teacher will either enhance or retard them. In turn, her identity may either be enhanced or retarded by them. Once again, because of the dearth of literature that deals specifically with art teacher identity, I rely to a large extent on generic teacher identity research.

## 3.2 What does 'meaningful teaching and learning' mean?

### 3.2.1 Introduction to the concept of meaningful teaching and learning

The seventh of Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages is the bi-polar crisis of generativity or stagnation (Erikson, 1971). Those teachers who rise to the challenge of generativity embrace a desire to 'generate', and to care for the next generation. Triana (2007:232) writes that in their roles, teachers should be both active and passive, competent and compassionate. In the following chapter, I explore what it means to be an active and passive teacher who is competent and compassionate. Teacher identity is an important component of the teaching and learning that occurs in this time of generativity. Who is the teacher who knows how to be active and passive? How does she know when to be each of these? The process of investigating the identity of an art teacher has one purpose, and that is to examine that identity in the place where it functions. If a teacher is to become a fulfilled identity, it must be because the work that she does has meaning for both herself and her students. She must believe that what she is doing is meaningful, and has value.

In the next section, I discuss the concept of meaningful teaching and learning, and investigate literature that deals specifically with this concept.

### 3.2.2 The concept of meaningful teaching

Imprinting the spiral of identity over the search for meaningful teaching, and from different points on this new configuration, I explore what it is that can contribute to making teaching and learning meaningful. The identity of a teacher must be influenced by the esteem that she holds for her work, and by a sense that she is doing that work well.

Perhaps the most elegant description of meaningful teaching comes from the writings of Palmer (1998:31) who quotes Buechner: 'the place where your deep gladness and the

world's deep hunger meet'. If the world's 'deep hunger' is an appetite for more, then meaningful teaching should be able to satisfy this need, at least in part. Palmer believes that it is only when our work stems from our identities that we are able to do it with meaning.

Many researchers have attempted to answer the ways in which teachers work at satisfying the 'hunger'. Triana (2007: 231) believes that good teaching becomes possible when the 'second self', or professional identity, shifts and develops an attitude that moves teaching from being a career to being a vocation. A vocation is a higher level of commitment where 'the need for personal advancement recedes' and intrinsic motivation ensures deeper meaning. Here, the identity of the teacher, as well as the personality and value systems of the teacher, have a strong role to play. Greene (1984b:286) believes that 'excellence is a state of mind', commenting that Dewey believes the mind to be a verb, rather than a noun. Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006:265) describe 'presence' in teaching, which also stems from the identity of the teacher, as:

> '...a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step'.

Coldron and Smith (1999: 715) suggest that the practice of teaching is defined by four social traditions: 'the craft, the moral, the artistic, and the scientific' and they claim that teachers make choices about their work within these parameters. The choices that teachers make are the results of their identities being set in motion. Walkington (2005) adds that the differences that are visible between the choices that teachers make are the manifestations of teacher identity.

Triana (2007:230) describes the role of the teacher as being one of 'function and relationship', and writes that the union between student and teacher is unique. They both bring their pasts, their presents and their goals for the future into the relationship. This alliance is a complex combination of emotions and cognitive awareness, and may become disrupted in a number of ways. The importance of this relationship will be discussed later in this chapter. The identity of the teacher influences it, and is also influenced by it.

Teachers may have a professional identity, or 'second self' (Triana, 2007: 230), but this should not be at odds with their personal identities, and should perhaps be viewed as a different way of expressing that personal identity. Once again, the identity of the teacher, and its impact on the process of teaching and learning, is affirmed. If a teacher has a professional

identity that is at odds with her personal identity, the quality of her work will be undermined, and she will not present an authentic presence in the class room.

How do our teacher identities help us to be connected and present enough to reach our learners, in ways that help to prepare them to reach futures that we cannot yet know or understand? If becoming a 'present' teacher is a way to meet the world's hunger, what do teachers need to know? How is that knowledge, and the acquisition of that knowledge, influenced by our identities, and what knowledge is valuable to make meaningful teaching and learning a strong feature of our work? In the following section, I discuss the broad spectrum of teacher knowledge. Our identities will influence the acquisition of this knowledge and the ways in which we use it in our art rooms. The acquisition of this knowledge will, in turn, influence the construction of our identities as teachers.

### 3.2.2.1 Teacher knowledge

Speaking of the role of teacher knowledge in the act of meaningful teaching and learning, Greene (1984a: 58) suggests: 'The crucial point is to focus energies in such a fashion that different students, taking different paths, are enabled to learn the appropriate language or notation or symbol system". Shulman (1987) describes teacher knowledge as having seven components: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.

It is interesting that Shulman (1987) does not include, in his descriptions of teacher knowledge, any category which includes the self-awareness of the teacher. Surely this has a strong impact on knowledge acquisition? It is Turner-Bisset (1999) who extends this list of components to eleven, including, in addition to Shulman's (1987) list, the concepts of substantive subject knowledge, syntactic subject knowledge, beliefs about the subject, curriculum knowledge, and teacher knowledge of self. She describes substantive subject knowledge as 'knowing that' and 'knowing how', and believes that syntactical knowledge is the term for the way in which knowledge is created and recognised. She suggests that teachers' beliefs about particular subjects have a strong influence on the manner in which they teach those subjects, and that this component of subject knowledge has significance. Teacher beliefs stem directly from the identity of the teacher, and this confirms the assumption that teacher identity is impactful in the acquisition of teacher knowledge.

Deng (2007a:1) does not focus on teacher knowledge, but rather describes a school subject as '*a study or course of study in the curriculum, in which the subject matter is selected, organized, and formulated for the purpose of teaching and learning'.* He believes that it embraces content, a disciplinary theory, the construction of new knowledge, and a subject-specific philosophy. He suggests that an important dimension is the way in which teachers use this knowledge for teaching so that it becomes accessible to context-specific learners, thereby assisting them to critically and meaningfully navigate their roles as social beings. The teacher becomes the mediator between the knowledge and the learner's experience of the knowledge. It is here that the identity of the teacher gains significance. How she does this, and the ways that she uses to mediate this experience, is an act of her identity functioning in the space of teaching and learning.

Like Shulman, (1987) Deng (2007a) includes no discussion on the fact that it is the identity of the teacher that interprets the subject matter for the purpose of teaching. However, as Vulliamy (2004) states, it is the teacher who is the interpreter of policies. Who holds the content knowledge, the disciplinary theory, and the subject-specific philosophy? What is it, if not the inner being of the teacher, that interprets, makes decisions, and finally mediates the knowledge? Conscious, alert and care-full decision-making is required by a teacher who is mindful and self-aware.

Hogan, Rabinowitz, and Craven (2003) argue more simply, and state that teacher excellence includes implicit and explicit subject knowledge. They believe that good teaching should encompass content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Teacher identity impacts on the ways in which individual teachers acquire content knowledge. I believe that art teacher identity cannot be separated from any of the knowledge bases of a teacher, and in the following section, I deal specifically with content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of the learner, and the teacher-context connection. These, although it is not possible to isolate them from other knowledge bases, are significant in art teaching, and I believe that they may have a major role to play in the construction of the identity of an art teacher. This concept is interwoven throughout this discussion.

### 3.2.2.1.1 Content knowledge and teacher identity

Newton and Newton (2001) believe that a strong content knowledge is essential to sound teaching, because it underpins the process of planning, presentation and effective teacher

response. A teacher who is confident in content knowledge is able to interpret text books meaningfully, and to move away from factual recall into an understanding that is more meaningful to the learners. Turner-Bisset (1991) refers to this as curriculum knowledge, because it supports the teacher's own interpretation of the learning material. It affords the freedom to move away from mass-produced teaching materials, and into those which they have personally constructed for their own learners at a particular site and in a particular context. This is principally relevant in art teaching because there are currently few text books in South Africa that offer the length and breadth of the full visual art experience. Turner-Bisset (1991) also states that teachers who do not have an image and a knowledge of themselves in the role of teaching may not cope well, and this will impact on their acquisition of content knowledge that can be meaningfully constructed with the learners.

Newton and Newton (2001) confirm that teachers with sound content knowledge are able to respond appropriately to learner inquiries, and are more likely to support process over product learning. A complex progression of meaningful questioning, based on sound content knowledge, encourages deeper learner understanding and processing. High-order thought processes can occur more readily. Once again, this has relevance in art teaching, where the learning is particularly process-orientated. Of relevance to this study is the fact that it is the identity of the teacher that transforms personal content knowledge into a public space of inquiry with her learners. Although unstated, Deng's (2007a) description of content knowledge as the extent and the system of understanding in the mind of the teacher underpins the need for consciousness on the part of the teacher. A strong teacher identity will make decisions based on that extent of knowledge, and will mindfully employ this extent in the process of teaching and learning. No teacher can know everything; the extent of subject knowledge is as large as the subject itself, and continues to grow and change with the changing world. A conscious teacher will be aware of his or her limitations, but will also be aware of the possibilities for lifelong learning, and for personal and professional development, so as to better feed the 'world's hunger with deep gladness' (Palmer, 1998:31).

According to Schulman, (1987) two questions are central:

    a. What are the important ideas and skills in this domain?
    b. How are new ideas added and deficient ones dropped by those in this area?

These questions are answered individually by the identity of the teacher. Turner-Bisset's (1999) use of syntactical knowledge aligns with Shulman in this point. Teachers need to have an understanding of the way in which knowledge is created, because it in on this that the very act of teaching and learning rests. Unless teachers are consciously able to create

opportunities for knowledge construction, this ultimately important aspect of teaching and learning becomes lost in the quest for covering the curriculum at any cost, and the real meaning of knowledge construction is lost. A teacher with a strong sense of teacher identity and an 'image of self as teacher' (Turner-Bisset, 1999:46) will know that meaningful teaching is more than simply covering the curriculum.

Traianou (2006) develops the notion of teacher knowledge from a socio-cultural perspective, and states that knowledge, rather than being viewed as a commodity, should be understood as a source. The way in which the teacher construes and articulates the action of learning in the classroom is a demonstration of the level of expertise, and also of the identity of the teacher. Content knowledge alone is not sufficient.  It is how it is used (and for this study, it is understood that it is the identity of the teacher that uses the content knowledge) as a dynamic tool in a context-specific site that determines its adequacy.

Turner-Bisset (1999) believes that a knowledge of the end, rationale or worth of the educational process is also an aspect of teacher knowledge, and states that teaching should have a clear outcome, whether it be producing learners who are able to fulfil a role in a future society, or whether it is to instil a moral or spiritual dimension in children. The understanding of the ways to assist learners to reach this outcome has been referred to as pedagogical content knowledge, and this knowledge stems directly from the identity of the teacher. In visual art teaching, the outcome of the lesson should drive every interaction and process during the lesson, because it is on the outcome that the lesson is focussed. A teacher with a strong sense of art teacher identity and with the appropriate content knowledge will know this, and will actively seek to find ways that make this an individual and unique learning process for her learners.


### 3.2.2.1.2 Pedagogical content knowledge and teacher identity

Shulman (1987) was the first to introduce this term into the knowledge bases of teachers, and refers to this form of knowledge as content knowledge 'for teaching' (Shulman, 1987:9). It has become generally accepted that the teacher's knowledge of how to teach content is termed pedagogical content knowledge. Although this term has been debated amongst many researchers (Zohar and Schwartzer, 2005), in principle, it remains an important aspect of teacher knowledge. Hashweh (2005) describes pedagogical content knowledge as a way of teaching that a teacher acquires, as experience develops through years of teaching, planning and reflection. It encompasses private and personal understandings of the content, and can

be based on events or stories. Shulman (1987:9) further describes pedagogical content knowledge as '...the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others. Since there are no single most powerful forms of representation, the teacher must have at hand a veritable armamentarium of alternative forms of representation, some of which derive from research whereas others originate in the wisdom of practice.'

The debate about the exact meaning, and the term itself, continues, with Hashweh (2005) believing that pedagogical content knowledge is a personal and private construction that is the result of the experienced teacher discovering teaching strategies over time, that take into account content knowledge, memories, stories, and to some extent, personal values, that best accommodate the transference of learning. Once again, Hashweh (2005) underpins the value of self-knowledge, which is an aspect of teacher identity.

This description of pedagogical content knowledge implies an alert teacher who is capable of reflection, and who is self-aware. To be able to know and understand one's own capabilities and strengths in the teaching process adds value and authenticity *to* that process. It is clear that the identity of the teacher is a significant part of this process.

Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) stress the significance of pedagogical content knowledge, stating that teachers who have a deep knowledge and understanding of their subject matter are able to create learning opportunities for their learners to develop meaningful constructions of subject knowledge for themselves. Learners are able to make personal connections and sense of the information, and process it in ways that are individually meaningful. Such teachers are able to integrate and seek connections between subjects that will give their learners greater access to this process. Learner-response can direct the amount and direction of intervention, and a skilled teacher is able to identify needs and support learning, without being hampered by poor content knowledge.

The value of pedagogical content knowledge is that it is the pathway that makes learning accessible to the learner. Turner-Bisset (1999) argues that the belief systems of teachers form a strong component of pedagogical content knowledge, and belief systems are grounded in the identity of the teacher. Macintyre Latta, Buck, Leslie-Pelecky, and Carpenter (2007) contend that the teacher's discernment of the perceived knowledge acquisition is a strong factor in the process of acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge. Like Traianou (2006), Deng (2007a) concurs, suggesting that the transference of knowledge is based on the ability of the teacher (which is lodged within her teacher identity) to interpret the subject knowledge through the curriculum so that it can be meaningfully constructed in a classroom.

Schwab (in Deng, 2007b) suggests that transformation can occur only when it is a collaborative effort between the teacher, the subject expert, curriculum specialists, and an unconstrained interpretation of the curriculum. He contributes that there are four essential elements in the process of transformation: the content knowledge, the learner, the teacher, and the context.

Turner-Bisset (1999) agrees with Shulman (1987) when she writes that pedagogical content knowledge is the combination of content knowledge and all other forms of teacher knowledge, because each one contributes to some extent to the teaching process.

According to Deng, (2007a:287) Dewey believes that:

> '...subject matters embodied in various academic studies are special forms of human experience in consummation; they embody the cumulative outcomes of the efforts, strivings, the successes of the human race generation after generation'.

Dewey thus believes that the learner should 'experience' the learning, with knowledge acquisition gaining in depth as the child develops capacity. Macintyre Latta et al (2007) strengthen this belief, referring to the 'learning encounter' as one which is participatory, connected, and involving critical thinking processes. They stress that a teacher with strong content knowledge is better able to assume a dynamic role in the construction of knowledge. However, Poulson (2001) asserts that in the primary school, where one teacher is expected to teach many subjects, it is unlikely that a single teacher will have a strong knowledge base for all of the subjects taught. It is here that the value of pedagogical content knowledge and teacher identity is affirmed. When a teacher is able to use pedagogical content knowledge effectively within the context of a particular classroom, such purposeful use can support learning that is equally meaningful for the student. Poulson (2001) argues that content knowledge is not a commodity that is passed between teacher and learner in the classroom, but is rather a process of construction, and makes a strong case for the merging of both formal and informal knowledge in the process of teaching and learning. Greene (1984a) believes that tacit knowledge is the most important kind of knowledge that a teacher brings into a learning space, and that it is our tacit awareness that gives us access to student response. Tacit knowledge is therefore an important aspect of pedagogical content knowledge, and the acquisition of tacit knowledge, which will be discussed later in this chapter, also relies heavily on the identity of the teacher.

Poulson's (2001) discussion of pedagogical content knowledge appears to be based on the underlying assumption that the teacher's knowledge of self is a part of this process. A teacher who lacks self-awareness would have great difficulty in making appropriate choices about the preferred methods of knowledge construction. It is possible that a teacher who lacks an awareness of her own identity as a teacher will simply adopt what appear to be successful general trends in educational strategies, without being critical in the appraisal of such strategies, or personally convinced by them, for her particular style of teaching, and with her context-specific learners.

Banks and Barlex (2002) also write of the importance of pedagogical knowledge, but include the notion of school knowledge, which will be discussed later as context.

In a globalising world, the knowledge we *cannot* have is that knowledge which will best prepare our learners to take their places as the developing adults of the future. Here, the teaching of thinking skills becomes an important part of their educational growth. Along with content knowledge, a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge should embrace ways of teaching higher-order thinking. Zohar and Schwartzer (2005) believe that the intentional teaching of higher-order thinking should be a key purpose of education, and that teachers need to know how to do this.

Teaching towards metacognition should be included so that learners are given opportunities to think about how they are thinking. A teacher should know how to provide the learners with assignments and projects that are specifically designed to make them think, and should also know how to remediate thinking difficulties. An important knowledge for the teacher is how to 'cultivate a thinking disposition' amongst the learners. Zohar and Schwartzer (2005) term this kind of knowledge '*pedagogical knowledge in the context of teaching higher-order thinking'*.

Creating meaningful tasks for learners does not rest only in the domain of pedagogical content knowledge. A knowledge of the learners for whom the task is being created is of equal importance, and a teacher who knows her learners, their contexts and their general biographies, will be in a position to create tasks that challenge, inspire, and feed 'the hunger' (Palmer, 1998:31) in an enlightened way. These are all elements of the practice of a teacher, and these elements all originate in the identity of the teacher. It is also the identity of the teacher, as shown by her personality, which works with the learner, and a knowledge of the learner contributes in particular ways to a meaningful learning encounter.

**3.2.2.1.3 Knowledge of the learner and teacher identity**

Several researchers (Newton and Newton, 2001; Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006; Deng, 2007a) stress the knowledge of the learner as an important aspect of teacher knowledge. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) believe that the act of teaching explores the relationship between the teacher and the learners, between the learners themselves, and between the learner and the learning content. If any of these relationships is not fully functional, the learning process is impeded. Newton and Newton (2001) go so far as to suggest that the teacher's relationship with the learners can in some cases be of equal value to a strong content knowledge, as this provides a space for a mutual search for meaning. This relationship draws, to a large extent, on the identity of the teacher.

When a teacher is confident in the learning content, she is able to commit fully to the learners and the learning process, and to respond reflectively. Turner-Bisset (1999) states that teachers should know their learners in different ways. The developmental stage of the child should be understood, and the child should be understood in context. These two aspects of knowledge of the learners should influence the teaching and learning process. These aspects are important in art teaching, where the choice of subject matter should be guided by the knowledge of the learner, and also by the learner's context. Bain and Zimmerman (2009) believe that the ability to truly reach learners lies in the teacher's ability to create a bridge between the content and the interests of the learners. This requires a particular knowledge of the learner.

Teaching, and the relationships that it encompasses, happens within a variety of contexts. The context of learning is an important consideration, because the identities of both the learner and the teacher are forged within the contexts in which they live and work (Battey and Franke, 2008). Turner-Bisset (1999) believes that context influences the way that a teacher acts. The notion of context embodies the space in which the teaching occurs, and the broader context of school and community, and will be discussed in the following section.

**3.2.2.1.4 Knowledge of the context and teacher identity**

The school context affects all who people the space. The school philosophy, usually determined and supported by the principal, has a direct impact on the teachers and the learners. Teacher efficacy and learner response are both determined, to a large extent, by the principal's commitment to the school philosophy (Chow-Hoy, 2001). Turner-Bisset (1999)

includes knowledge of educational contexts in her model of pedagogical content knowledge, because she believes that context has a considerable influence on the way in which a teacher practises his or her craft. A broad range of features is included in knowledge of context, and Turner-Bisset (1999) claims that some of these features might include the site of practice, the community of the school learners and parents, class sizes, collegial support and interpersonal relationships, as well as the values and attitudes of the principal. These all affect, and are affected by, the identity of the teacher.

Context is central to all aspects of the learning process and because each teaching and learning situation is different and unique, the process of teacher education cannot prepare each teacher for what she will uniquely confront in her own context when she begins her work (Sandholtz, 2005). Sandholtz (2005) believes that the disposition of the teacher is important in acquiring the context-specific knowledge that will make her practice more meaningful. The identity of the teacher is key in this process. A flourishing context will encourage healthy learning environments, but even where the context is not ideal, it is possible to create a protected space for learning. Although this protected space, created by a teacher in a less-than-ideal institution, can lead to stress for the teacher, it is still possible for the teacher to be intentionally and consciously present to the learners (Rodgers et al 2006).

Banks and Barlex (2002) concur that teaching and learning are significantly affected by a knowledge of the school. They describe school knowledge as an awareness of the values and attitudes towards the mode of practice in and the importance of a particular subject by a particular school.

Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006:284) believe that in an ideal context, a level of trust should exist not only between the teacher and the learners, but also between the teacher and the institution, the policy-makers and all other role-players. Distrust creates a failure in the learning negotiations, and full presence is no longer possible. They state that:

> '...schools need to be safe houses for love, not only for the sake of the
> children they temporarily house, but also for the teachers who are
> their long-term residents'.

For teachers, the centrality of the influence of their contexts directly impacts not only on their practice, but also on their professional development and on their identities. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) believe that each individual is influenced by, but also influences, the context in which they work. The whole person, with a mind and body, as well as a personal biography and disposition, both responds to and acts upon the context, which Hodkinson and

Hodkinson refer to as '*habitus*'. Each site of practice is also a site of learning within a community of practice, and a teacher's attitude to the opportunity to develop professionally is strongly determined by that teacher's disposition, history, and relationships with others within that community. The relationships within that community of practice are also significant in developing the teacher's attitude towards professional development.

It is notable that in Hodkinson and Hodkinson's writing, they state that their site of research was an art department at a secondary school. This is significant for this study. Much of Hodkinson and Hodkinson's writing could relate to my own site of practice. Murray (2005) believes that teacher educators follow a fairly common route, from initially being primary school teachers, and that the change from being a school teacher to a lecturer is often stressful. In this new context, teachers are expected to be able to transfer their subject knowledge into pedagogical knowledge, and the course of this transference is deeply influenced by individual values, philosophies and personal histories. This indicates that the identity of the teacher becomes an important consideration. Induction processes are often too brief, and for the most part, do not fulfil the specific needs of the newly-appointed teacher educator.

In the context of higher education, new teacher educators are also expected to develop their research skills, and to publish as soon as possible. Murray (2005) believes that this need, coupled with the need to understand the workings of the new institution, and the acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge that is appropriate for that context, can leave new appointees feeling deskilled and inadequate.

 Often, a heavy work load precludes the possibility for continuous reflection and awareness of personal learning through experience. Most of the induction courses offered, Murray (2005) asserts, are rather to the benefit of the institution, as they support the institutional norms and introduce the notion of institutional compliance. She believes that 'practical knowledge – developed in suitable settings, for worthwhile purposes, in appropriately reflective ways – can and should form an important part of what it means to be a teacher educator' (Murray, 2005:71). The practical knowledge that is acquired is entirely dependent on the identity of the teacher. Murray (2005) encourages an awareness of communities of practice, where support and a sense of common purpose could offer the teacher educator a sense of renewed professionalism.

Murray (2006) finds that a teacher educator's sense of personal professionalism is often grounded in caring for students, and that the teaching part of their work remains the most significant. Such teachers are more inclined to model an approach to teaching rather than

lecture about it, and are inclined to have a learner-centred approach to their work. Changes regarding group size and time allocations provide the biggest challenge for this group of teacher educators. Changes can result in antagonism and a preparedness to dispute them.

The attempts to satisfy both the demands of the institution and their personal beliefs about teacher education result in inner turmoil for these lecturers, who are often expected to do the silent, underlying work of the institution, which is to care for students. This hidden work is often given little value, as more masculine trends in teacher education become fore-grounded. Murray (2006) states that these lecturers often live in a state of tension between their habitus and the context of their universities. This state must surely affect the construction of teacher identity.

Murray (2005) asserts that teachers in higher education often find it difficult to adapt their skills as school teachers to their new roles as teacher educators, in what she describes as 'second order pedagogy' (Murray:2005:68). She also suggests that research pursuits for teachers new to the context of higher education should be focussed on action research within their sites of practice. This notion is strongly supported by Sandholtz (2005:120) who writes: 'Self-study emphasizes personal and subjective experiences in a particular context. This mode of inquiry offers in-depth descriptions which foster understanding of complexities involved in teaching and teacher education. This can be especially helpful in leading to deeper understanding about the demands that innovative practices place on instructors and students.' This would prove to be constructive, both as a means of gaining access to the research paradigm, whilst at the same time giving the teacher educator the opportunity to gain integrity with the students, and within the institution (Murray, 2005).

I have written at some length about the context of higher education, because this is where my own work is lodged, and because this study explores the construction of the identity of an art teacher who currently works within the context of higher education. This chapter examines the literature that will assist in the exploration of this identity construction. Later chapters will examine this context and its effects on teacher identity.

The notion of context embraces the space and the environment, and I move now to discuss a more confined area of context in teaching, that of the physical site of practice, because this is also an aspect of teacher knowledge, and because the site of art teaching is particularly influenced by, and influences the identity of the teacher. Although all teaching and learning happens within a physical space, I have used the writing of Cannatella (2007) specifically,

because his words are appropriate for the teaching of visual art, and for the identity exploration of a visual art teacher.

### 3.2.2.1.5 The physical site of teaching, and the influence of and on teacher identity

Cannatella (2007) suggests that one's cerebral life requires a site in which to be, and to exist with others. Objective descriptions of space remain remote, whilst our subjective experience of a space is enriched by an embodied experience and interaction with that space. It is the way of being in a space that is of value, how that space is experienced, and not the objective description of the space itself. It is the act of identity within a particular space.

By reducing space to a descriptive site of practice, we limit the possibilities of the experience of our being within that space.  Cannatella (2007) writes that a place has value when it disturbs, when it expresses itself in personal ways, and when it calls for the personal expression of those within itself. This is significant for the space in which art teaching and learning occurs. He writes: 'What a place gives is not necessarily the same as what a place is' (Cannatella, 2007:625). He suggests that, in the world of education, a space that 'gives' (Cannatella, 2007:625) is a space that no longer limits the quality of existence. He speaks of an 'embodied existence' (Cannatella, 2007:623) within a space; one that gives meaning to that space by being in it, exploring it and adding substance to our lives by fully experiencing it. Thus, place becomes defined by our experience of being in it. It is when learners are safe and comfortable within a space that they become able to express themselves in personal ways, and the identity of the art teacher has a particular role to play in adding to the quality of the learners' experience of the space that they mutually create and share. The space is thus able to 'give' (Cannatella, 2007:625) to all participants.

 Cannatella (2007) describes this given-ness as having three aspects: the giving of a self that is content in a space; the giving of a self that is experiencing that space, and  the giving that has a result in that space. He suggests that participation is directly related to the giving, in a space (Cannatella, 2007).

Teacher knowledge of content, context and learner is unquestionably important, and the ways of the identity acting within those knowledge bases and within the physical space of the teaching and learning environment contributes to an art teacher's personal pedagogical content knowledge, which might also be described as 'knowing in action' (Turner-Bisset, 1999:42). Part of this 'knowing in action' is the fact that teachers often act intuitively, basing their decisions and choices on knowledge which is not gained through teacher education

institutions, but that which is acquired through life experience. This kind of knowledge is termed 'informal', and this concept, along with tacit knowledge, will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.2.2.1.6 Informal and tacit knowledge and teacher identity

*And what you thought you came for*
*Is only a shell, a husk of meaning*
*From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled,*
*If at all.*

T S Eliot, 1942

The spiral of teacher knowledge expands to include knowledge that is not learnt in formal situations, and by formal means. Informal knowledge and tacit knowledge are two further dimensions of teacher knowledge which may also be important in influencing and refining their practice. The acquisition of these may rest heavily on the identity of the teacher, and may also influence the construction of that teacher identity.

Informal knowledge is gained in the teacher's social world (McNally, Boreham, Cope, Gray, and Stronach, 2004). It is not part of pre-service training, and yet Shapiro (2003) suggests that it can have a strong influence on the teacher's content and pedagogical knowledge, and therefore impacts directly on her learners. It can influence a teacher's beliefs and attitudes, and therefore her teacher identity, and can affect her behaviour in the classroom. It is an important aspect of the fullness of the teaching and learning experience.

Tacit knowledge is knowledge gained through experience (Carlsson, Drew, Dahlberg and Lützen, 2002; Ray, 2009), and is usually actively gained without immediate assistance from others. Carlsson et al (2002) say that it is an integration of informal knowledge acquired from a variety of experiences, and usually acquired through being involved in the experience of working in the same area over a lengthy period of time. Bordum (2002) describes this as knowledge by acquaintance.

Tacit knowledge does not necessarily lead to expertise, but can inform without conscious deliberation. It is not tested in formal academic examinations, but may be described as knowledge in action (Ray, 2009), and is influential in achieving personal goals. Its acquisition can be influenced by personal values and emotions. This indicates that the ways in which teachers acquire tacit knowledge will be influenced by their teacher identities. Somech and Bogler (1999: 605) believe that tacit knowledge is one of the most important aspects of

achieving success in one's profession, because it includes 'managing self, managing others, and managing tasks'. Once again, this alludes to the identity of the teacher. Usually, those who are in possession of academic knowledge, and who also acquire tacit knowledge, will have more success in their professions.

There is a particularly personal aspect to tacit knowledge (Bordum, 2002). It has an intuitive, subjective quality.  In this subjectivity, the identity of the teacher rises to the fore. It is difficult to bring tacit knowledge to the surface and difficult to articulate, and so the conscious sharing of tacit knowledge is problematic. One way of doing this is through allowing the novice to observe the tacit knowledge in action, and then to recognise and consciously create personal informal knowledge through the practice of reflection (Shim and Roth, 2008).

Teacher education cannot prepare a teacher with all of the knowledge that she will be required to draw upon through her career, and the on-going acquisition of both formal and informal knowledge is an implicit and important part of the development of the identity of the teacher. Professional development thus becomes an important aspect to consider when one examines the acquisition of knowledge bases for teachers, and the influence of these knowledge bases on the construction of teacher identity.

### 3.2.2.1.7 Professional Development, life-long learning and teacher identity

On-going professional development is an important aspect of developing teacher knowledge, if educators wish to keep abreast of current developments in the field of education. It is also an important aspect of the identity of the teacher (Battey and Franke, 2008). Battey and Franke (2008:128) describe professional development as 'a space for acquiring new knowledge, re-crafting identities, and challenging existing cultural and social practices'. Hardy (2009:511) simplifies the concept by stating that it includes 'all the activities in which teachers engage during the course of a career which are designed to enhance their work'.
The acquisition of worthwhile knowledge while working in the field has an influence on teacher identity, and the kind of knowledge that is acquired is also influenced by teacher identity (Battey and Franke, 2008).

The knowledge and skills base of teachers remains undetermined, and Tuomi (2004) believes that teachers are responsible for their own professional development, and could even be responsible for identifying the area of their professional lives that needs to be developed. This practice could keep professional development current, and in some cases,

meet context-specific needs. Battey and Franke (2008) suggest that context has a particular role in defining the identity of the teacher, because it can either impose limitations or provide opportunities.

Professionally networking with other teachers could remove a sense of isolation, and could provide support in the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. Teacher professional development appears to be most effective when it is offered in an environment of respect, when it relates directly to subject matter, when it was of an on-going nature, and when teachers can actively participate. Collaborative learning is an important aspect of teacher professional development, and teachers are more receptive if they are able to work collectively, and if they are able to advance to leadership roles through this practice. When teachers are passive recipients of professional development that is externally driven, with content that is created externally by policy, and by so-called experts who are not working in the field, then it is least likely to serve a worthwhile purpose. Teachers are not convinced when those who are outside of their field assume a better understanding of that field, and who infer that the teachers themselves have deficient knowledge. This can lead to a negative attitude about professional development (Sturko and Gregson, 2007; Torff and Sessions, 2008; Sturko and Gregson, 2009).

As teachers affect and influence the quality of how their learners construct knowledge, and what they construct as knowledge, so student teachers are affected and influenced by their teacher educators, and Koster, Dengerink, Korthagen, and Lunenberg (2008) claim that there is little or no professional development in the process of becoming a teacher educator. This claim has particular relevance for this study. Teachers involved in this career path are expected to take responsibility for their own development in the early years of their transition. Professional development is important if these teacher educators are to keep abreast of current policies and changing practices needs in education, and while Koster et al (2008) suggest that most teacher educators seek professional development in the field of knowledge and skills, Robinson and Mc Millan (2006: 328) suggest that 'any process of change in teacher education needs to be cognizant of the motivations and attitudes of teacher educators themselves.' This would indicate that the identity of the teacher has a role to play.

Battey and Franke (2008) also stress the importance of teacher identity in professional development, stating that it is the identity of the teacher that makes professional development have different effects in every classroom. They suggest that while identity is

shaped by the knowledge that teachers acquire, it also shapes that knowledge. Where new knowledge is acquired in ways that are meaningful, a change occurs in the identity of the teacher, and this change effects a change in the practice of that teacher.

Robinsons and McMillan (2003:26) offer that changes in educational policy impact strongly on teachers, and 'by implication, teacher educators', and that successful transformation requires a positive and personal response, (which requires a response from the identity of the teacher) where teachers are able to construct personal meaning and value for the changes required by the policy. This process can be hampered when a teacher has not previously recognised that the problem exists, or when teachers are required to make changes that are not resonant with their own beliefs and value systems. They believe that a teacher's biography (and therefore subsequent teacher identity) can influence the attitude towards proposed change.

It is possible that meaningful professional development can lead to 'personal and perspective transformation' (Wade, 1998: 714), which is an evolving and expanding process, and can contribute to the construction of teacher identity. This can lead teachers to understand that their previously-held beliefs about their worlds and their work can limit their development of new perceptions. Self-reflection is key in this process, which may be viewed as a fundamental change to previously-held ideas or beliefs. This process of transformation becomes possible when a teacher experiences some kind of disruption, and makes a personal choice to invite and embrace change and new experience or learning.

It is also possible that new perspectives can embrace and encompass previously-held beliefs, to arrive at a new, integrated awareness, and consequently, a new identity (Battey and Franke, 2008). This new identity results because it is no longer possible to return to the previously-held ideas or beliefs. Positive feelings usually accompany this kind of transformation, which results in some kind of change to practice (Wade, 1998).

### 3.2.3 The role of teacher identity in meaningful teaching

On the spiral of meaningful teaching, there is another place from which to look. Although I acknowledge, with no hesitation, the deep value of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, the knowledge of the learner, and the appropriate understanding of context and site of practice, there remains, for me, a further, and equally important consideration. I believe that the identity of the teacher, and the influence of that identity on all of the aforementioned, is what extends effective, and even that elusive and difficult to describe

concept of 'good' teaching, into *meaningful* teaching. I return to the writings of Palmer (1998:31), who speaks of the 'world's hunger' being met by the 'deep gladness' of the teacher.

Palmer (1998) describes teacher identity as the dynamic meeting point of all that influences us both internally and externally. He believes that the identity of the teacher is the only lasting ability that we have that enables us to constantly find solutions to new and emerging educational challenges. He writes: 'Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life' (Palmer, 1998:11). I resonate strongly with his notion that there is not one technique that makes a good teacher, but rather that each teacher should teach from that central place that is their teacher within. The individual act of teaching thus becomes an expression of the identity in motion, and is unique and authentic.

I believe that if a teacher is not in possession of a deep and growing knowledge of self, it will be possible only to know the learners superficially, and thus the learning process will be governed by that superficiality. O'Brien (2010:110) believes that all purposeful teaching involves 'humans in relation', and the quality of those relations depends on the identity of the teacher. She also suggests that to keep those relationships vital, one of the participants must have the ability to understand the other. To be able to understand the other, we must first be able to understand ourselves. Moore and Kuol (2007) write that we can experience our world more deeply when we begin to understand our personal relationship to that world.  True self-knowledge allows the teacher to see the learner in a critical position of participant, (Jeffrey, 2006) and opens deeper possibilities for a mutually constructive and meaningful process of learning. Palmer (1998) believes that in order to improve our teaching, we must learn to both respond to and to ignore the responses of our students, a paradox that is easy to understand for a teacher who seeks connectedness with students.

Palmer (1998) suggests that the telling of a story is often the best way to make sense of our identities, and to try to understand our responses. Clark (2005:237) supports this belief when he states that teachers often uncover their personal values and beliefs by relating them to others. Perhaps the relating of our own stories, through autobiographical writing, or in reflective journals, is a way of uncovering ourselves, and re-discovering our teachers within. Palmer (1998:33) urges that we should find many ways of relating to our own teachers within, and stresses the value of internal dialogue and reflective journaling.

In reflecting on our teaching journeys, it often happens that we recall our own teachers, and the meaning that we gained from their work and their influence. Palmer (1998) speaks of the mentoring roles that have assisted us to develop and thrive, and acknowledges that effective

mentoring occurs at a time when both the mentor and the student are able to grow through the process.

Palmer (1998:26) says: 'I needed to turn around and look for the new life emerging behind me, to offer young people the gift that had been given to me when I was young' These sentiments echo Erikson's (1971) own belief that it is the role of the older generation to nurture the development of the young, and strengthens meaningful teaching. Palmer discusses Erikson's description of adult midlife development, and believes that teachers who choose stagnation as opposed to generativity do so because they are discomforted by their students, and fear a connection with them (Palmer, 1998).

Palmer (1998) speaks of connectedness, and Rogers and Raider Roth (2006:265) use the term 'presence' in teaching, to describe a state of meaningful encounters with the students. Both presence and connectedness are hampered when a sense of fear becomes prevalent, and Palmer (1998:36) suggests that 'from grade school on, education is a fearful enterprise'. These fears, in their various forms, prevent us from having meaningful encounters with our students, and also with our selves. I refer to Zembylas (2002), who writes of the emotional toll that is exacted when the authenticity of the teacher is restricted, and suggests that teachers could engage in 'emotion work' (Zembylas, 2002).

Palmer offers similar advice, suggesting that teachers should reclaim 'the connectedness that takes away fear' (Palmer, 1998:60), and which could return a teacher identity to a state of being authentic. He believes that emotions are powerful enough to either restrict or liberate a mind, and that, when we pretend to be something that we are not, we 'fall out of community with ourselves, our students, and the world around us, out of communion with the common centre that is both the root and the fruit of teaching at its best' (Palmer, 1998:90).

Writing of community, Palmer (1998:97) believes that education requires a community of truth, stating that 'reality is a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it'. This kind of community supports our ability to connect, in a web of many 'knowers', rather than in a straight line of knowledge that flows in one direction only: from the perceived 'authority' to the student. (Palmer, 1998:97). It lacks the structure of scientific fact, and, liberated from these structures, knowledge is free to become central to all participants who are engaged in the quest for truth. Palmer (1998:106) describes truth as '...an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline'. In the passage of education in South Africa, this has never been more important. Things that matter, in our context, should provide the basis for educating our youth, because their futures are complex and require a knowledge that is a part of the quest for truth that is particular to

South Africa. The identity of the teacher, and the influence of the identity of the teacher, is an important consideration as one of the 'knowers' (Palmer, 1998:97) but also as one of the seekers.

Within this web of many knowers there exists the possibility for teachers to engage in their own development through a community of practice, which Seaman (2008) describes as a gathering of individuals who unite around a common activity, and in so doing, learn how to do it better. He writes that such a community 'shares expertise, competence, learning, activities, discussion, information, tools, stories, experiences, and a knowledge base' (Seaman, 2008:270). Members of a community of practice are united through practical, active knowledge, and learning and meaning construction takes place in the active process of this knowledge, and in the social act of sharing it. Teacher identity influences and is influenced by participation in a community of practice (Niesz, 2007).

Niesz (2007:606) states that there are four important aspects of a community of practice: community, identity, practice, and meaning. When a teacher joins a community of practice, it is usual that she initially enters as a peripheral member (Hung and Chen, 2002; Merriam, Courtenay, and Baumgartner, 2003; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, and Unwin, 2005; Seaman, 2008), and as she gains knowledge, experience and expertise in practice, moves naturally to a more central position within the community.

Knowledge, in a community of practice, is a social and active experience, and as members become more actively involved in the acquisition of knowledge, identity within the profession is also developed (Niesz, 2007).The process of gaining knowledge and experience is therefore also an act of developing an identity, because this process embraces learning how to be a particular kind of teacher (Niesz,2007). Being a part of a community of practice changes who we are, as we gain a deeper understanding of what it is that we are teaching, and how we are teaching it.

Palmer writes of the sacred, of those things that are worthy of respect, of the emotional content of teaching and learning. He speaks of 'soft eyes' (Palmer 1998:116) as a metaphor for a widening of vision, so that one learns to respond with captivating interest to new thoughts, rather than to react with the 'flight or flight' mentality. Palmer believes that meaningful teaching does more than deliver the wonder of knowledge that comes from the community of truth. Meaningful teaching involves the active engagement of all participants. In this active involvement, there are three things that matter: the student, the teacher, and the subject (Palmer, 1998).

While it is the subject that should hold the focus of the knowledge conversation, so that it becomes accessible to both student and teacher, in ways that are understandable to both, it is the identity of the teacher that initiates the conversation. When a teacher is passionate about a subject, the subject is placed as the axis around which the community of truth can revolve and evolve. Knowledge becomes real, and the students become involved in a learning community. Meaningful teaching demands that the teacher elevates what the students are offering, so that they can begin to believe in their contribution towards the community of truth (Palmer, 1998). It requires what Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006:265) describe as 'presence' when students answer questions, so that the answers can be connected to create a pattern.

The identity of the teacher is an all-important factor in this process, because there is no single strategy to achieve this spirit of communal knowledge-seeking (Palmer, 1998). The teacher who seeks to make the learning encounter meaningful will develop his or her own approach, and will continue to revise and refine it (Palmer, 1998). Palmer (1998:154) believes that 'good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and the integrity of the teacher.'

What happens when the identity and the integrity of the teacher become threatened by work-related stress? Teacher burnout is a syndrome that requires thoughtful consideration, particularly in a world where Bullough et al (2006:196) state: 'increasingly the demands of teaching call forth contrary acts that bruise the teacher's soul.' These acts may result in feelings of being inauthentic or estranged from the nature of one's work, and can result in stress levels that significantly impair a teacher's ability to function (Bullough et al, 2006).

There are many reasons that a teacher's ability to function may be impaired. One of these is teacher burnout, which may have a significant impact on the identity of the teacher. This will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.2.4 Teacher burnout

Many writers agree that teaching is a profession that embraces high levels of stress (Naring et al, 2006; Chang, 2009; Papastylianou, Kaila and Polychronopoulos, 2009). Embedded in the work of teaching are relational issues, decisions that need to be made quickly, and the long-term consequences of these decisions, all of which contribute to an elevated degree of stress. In art teaching, the marginalisation of visual art causes a particular kind of stress for

art teachers. Coupled with this is the fact that in most primary schools in South Africa, art is taught by generalist teachers who believe that they are not equipped to teach the subject, and who also have no specific interest in developing their knowledge. Cenkseven-Önder (2009:1224) writes:

> 'The work of teaching comprises a complex mix of various factors that include teaching; learning new information and skills; keeping abreast of technological innovations; and dealing with students, parents, and the community. These are demanding roles and there are growing concerns about teachers' well-being and burnout levels'.

Harden (1999) states that a certain amount of stress is necessary to function appropriately, and may even be a motivational factor in improving the performance of a teacher. However, when high levels of stress begin to impact negatively on the work and well-being of teachers, burnout can result (Harden, 1999).

Negative stress may be described as a state entered into when the work that one is required to do, and the way that one is required to do it, is at odds with the values, beliefs or identity of a teacher (Harden, 1999). It is most commonly found where high levels of demand and low levels of control intersect. Continuous pressure related to daily demands and the expectation to perform in a system contrary to one's beliefs and value systems can eventually result in emotional, physical and mental exhaustion, which are three distinctions of teacher burnout.

According to Tomic and Tomic (2008:12) burnout was first labelled in 1974 by Freudenberger, who described it as 'complete mental exhaustion in the helping professions'. In 1981, Maslach described burnout as 'a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a sense of low personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity' (Tomic and Tomic, 2008:11), and developed a scale for measuring these key dimensions for burnout (Tumkaya, 2006; Chang 2009; Papastylianou et al, 2009).

Tomic and Tomic (2008) add their description of burnout, suggesting that it is 'a form of an existential vacuum characterized by apathy, boredom and a loss of interest in relationships'. They suggest that compliance with institutional rules and policies that are at odds with the individual's value system, high self-imposed expectations, loss of personal autonomy and the increased demands off a heavy workload are contributing factors. They concur with

Papastylianou et al, (2009:300), who suggest that ambiguity and role conflict are also high stress indicators. Ambiguity may be the result of unclear expectations and the way in which they should be met, and may also include confusion about expected behaviour. Role conflict results when there are two or more conflicting requirements, or when a teacher is expected to behave in a way that violates her personal values. A common form of role conflict is role overload, in which 'many expectations are addressed simultaneously to the professional' (Papastylianou et al, 2009:301).

Teacher emotions play a significant part in the burnout syndrome. Cenkseven-Önder, 2009:1231) suggests that 'emotions are at the heart of teaching. Good teaching is charged with positive emotion'. Chang (2009:194) writes: 'The emotional needs, labor, and work required for a teacher are significant compared to other professions', and suggests that emotional exhaustion is a key feature of burnout. This notion is supported by Reyes and Salovey (2010:406), who contribute that teachers 'experience intense, emotion-laden interactions on a daily basis and have a great number of emotional demands compared to most other professionals'. Cenkseven-Önder (2009) contributes that the main reason for teacher burnout is the gap between the teacher's expectations and the reality of the lived experience.

Papastylianou et al (2009) suggest that the symptoms of burnout may be similar to and encompass those found in depression. Both states display sadness and social withdrawal, and a sense of personal inefficiency. Teacher burnout results in feelings of powerlessness, and a sense of lack of control. Emotional fatigue is followed by pessimistic attitudes towards teaching and students, and these combine to result in feelings of a lack of achievement. (Papastylianou et al, 2009).

Depersonalisation is one of the symptoms of burnout, which may be described as a state where the commitment to work that was initially meaningful becomes worn down and devoid of meaning. Tomic and Tomic (2008), supported by Pines (2002), suggest that burnout is the result of a loss of meaning. Motivation is stifled and emotional exhaustion is experienced (Tomic and Tomic, 2008). Teachers suffering from burnout withdraw from relationships with colleagues and students, as an act of depersonalisation, and in an attempt to put distance between themselves and those with whom they work (Tomic and Tomic, 2008). In some cases, teachers are able to maintain the relationships that they have with their students, while they withdraw from collegial affiliations (Tomic and Tomic, 2008). They are inclined to feel less capable in their tasks (Chang, 2009). Pines (2002) suggests that burnout in

teachers results when their higher order needs for self actualisation are not met. This must have a significant effect on the construction of the identity of the teacher. These needs include the knowledge that they are being effective, that they are working to their fullest potential, and that they are achieving. Pines (2002:123) writes: 'the root cause of burnout lies in people's need to believe that their life is meaningful, that the things they do, and consequently they themselves, are important and significant'. Most researchers concur that burnout is a combination of physical, emotional and intellectual states (Pines, 2002, Tumkaya, 2006; Reyes and Salovey, 2010).

Papastylianou et al (2009) suggest that teachers who display a higher level of burnout may view their work as the most important factor in their lives. Chang (2009) concurs that teachers who have a high degree of commitment are more likely to suffer from burnout.

How does a teacher recover from burnout, or in fact prevent it from occurring in the first place? Emotional regulation may be one way of combating teacher burnout. Chang (2009:210) suggests that teachers develop the coping mechanisms of initially 'identifying and labelling emotions', and then of 'selecting strategies to enhance or dampen what are you feeling'. This process includes understanding one's personal objectives, and using them as a point of reference, even if a change in attitude becomes necessary. Chang (2009:212) suggests that teachers can become involved in positive emotional management by: 'acknowledging that teaching is an emotional profession, identifying and reflecting on emotions and the underlying cognitive appraisals, regulating their emotions appropriately, and coping with emotions effectively'.

Reyes and Salovey (2010) argue that emotional regulation does not appear effective in combating emotional exhaustion. They suggest that the reason for this is possibly that emotional exhaustion may be the result of factors beyond an individual's control.

In contrast, Tomic and Tomic (2008) suggest that teachers should be encouraged to develop an ability for self-distance, which requires the recognition that one's well-being is not entirely dependent on the external world. Once a teacher is able to achieve self-distance, self-transcendence becomes possible, and this allows for an ability to relate meaningfully with others. Choice becomes possible, as the teacher makes conscious decisions about his or her life. These choices should be driven from an internal locus, and should not be fear-driven. Finally, one is able to take responsibility for one's choices, and to act in accordance

with them. Tomic and Tomic (2008) believe that if this kind of existential health is achieved, the incidence of burnout amongst teachers would be lowered.

This section concludes the discussion on meaningful teaching and teacher knowledge, and how these both influence, and are influenced by, the identity of the teacher.

In the next section, I explore my own subject, visual art education. I shall attempt to describe the nature of the discipline, and shall also discuss meaningful teaching and learning in this discipline. This discussion forms a central role in this chapter, because it is within this subject that my own teacher knowledge base was developed, and it is within this field that my identity as a teacher is constructed.

## 3.3 Visual art education and teacher identity

*It is the supreme Art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.*

*Albert Einstein*
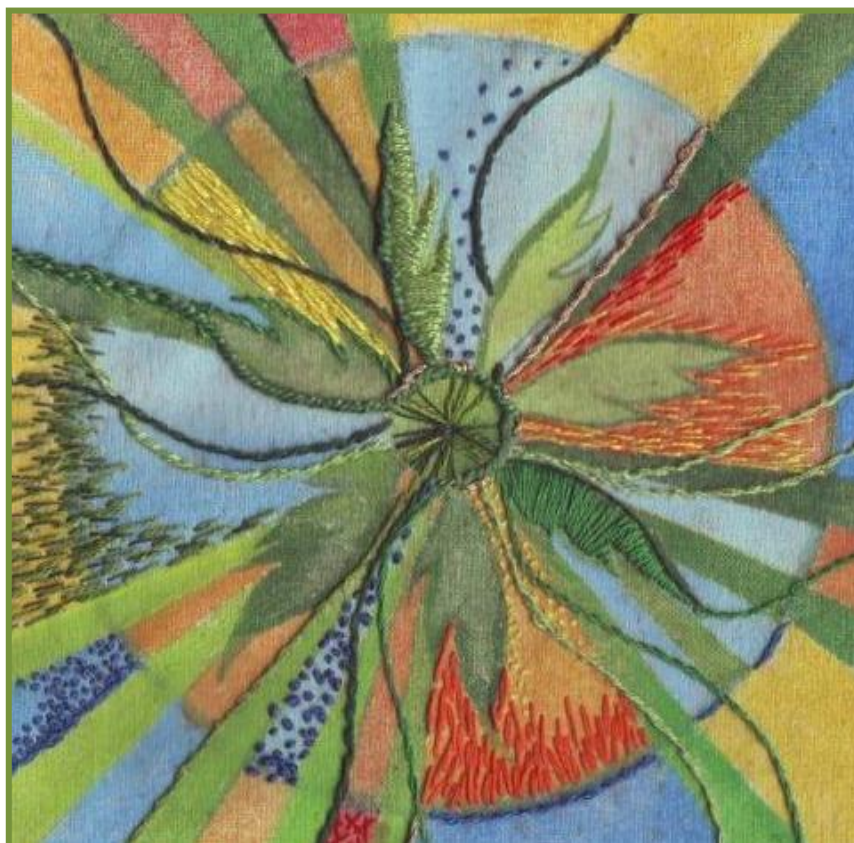


**Figure 3: The Mandala of All Considerations**

### 3.3.1 The place and state of visual art in the curriculum

Although the Arts are traditionally included in the primary school curriculum, Eisner (2000) states that Art education is governed by forces that do not reside in the Arts themselves. Campbell (2011:18) writes that general education is in the process of focussing on 'only those academic skills tested in high-stake assessments while ignoring many other aspects of children's development' and Hausman, Ploof, Duignan, Keith Brown and Hostert (2010) contribute that the state of art education is currently in crisis globally.

Personal expression is usually the stereotypical reason given to include the Arts in a curriculum, and they are not generally regarded as being of value to any particularly cognitive process. Reasons for including the Arts in the curriculum, and reasons for teaching the Arts have ranged from art-for-art's-sake to the process-versus-product debate, with the arts being seen as a vehicle for broader educational ends, or simply presenting opportunities for self-expression (Koopman, 2005). These factors strongly impact on the construction of the identity of the art teacher, because the value of her subject is misinterpreted. Koopman (2005:91) correctly writes that 'Arts educators are engaged in an ongoing battle to prevent the Arts from being further marginalised'. The Arts are generally not given high value in the school curriculum (Hallam, Das Gupta, and Lee, 2008), and Sahasrabudhe, (2006:77) states:

> 'Historically Arts in schools have been neglected in favour of science, mathematics and technology. It is commonly believed that they not only make lighter demands on the human intellect but also take valuable time and scant resources away from more important and serious endeavours, and they are the first to fall prey to budget cutters everywhere.'

This is evident in schools today, as much as it was thirty years ago, and certainly has implications for the construction of the identity of the art teacher. In many primary schools, art rooms have been converted to house computers, and art lessons are abandoned, or taught as filler lessons in the classroom.

Generally, there is a scarcity of teachers appropriately competent to teach the Arts, and Alter, Hays and O'Hara (2009) state that at an international level there is concern about the fact that generalist teachers are expected to teach specialist subjects like the Arts, because they do not possess the necessary subject content knowledge or specific pedagogical skill.

There are even fewer subject advisors to guide and support teachers of visual art in the primary school. In the Western Cape, which is a large province, there is currently one visual art subject advisor, whose work encompasses, among other things, the moderation of, or overseeing the moderation of, matriculation examinations in every school in the province. In the foundation and intermediate phases, there are no specialist visual art subject advisors to provide assistance and guidance in this subject.

Generalist teachers do not feel that they are equipped to teach the arts (Bresler, 1998; Hallam et al, 2008; Alter et al, 2009), frequently because they do not have experience or background knowledge in these subjects. Because generalist teachers are usually overloaded, they are inclined to marginalise the arts even further. This is often the result of inadequate training at their pre-service institutions, and these institutions themselves are compromised because the students regularly arrive with insufficient backgrounds in the Arts. Even if the Arts are included in the curriculum, they are sometimes marginalised by these factors. Alter et al (2009) found in their study that if generalist teachers are required to teach all subjects in the curriculum, then it is the Arts that fare the worst.

**3.3.2 The considerations of the identity of the art teacher when teaching her subject.**

> Our modern-day relationship with Art is detached, intellectual, philosophical, and critical. This relationship is in sharp contrast to the natural relationship with Art that children have. For children, making Art is simply sensually and emotionally pleasurable (Burrill, 2005:37).

Although an understanding of aesthetics, art theory and the study of great artworks is embedded in the process, the experience of art-making offers a unique opportunity to explore the world through the process of a symbolic, non-verbal language, and the identity of the art teacher must embrace this. This language is different from the sciences, and expresses this experience on a deeply personal level (Sahasrabudhe, 2006). Emeji (2008: 321) develops this notion by suggesting that 'Art education could be regarded as the most fundamental aspect of a child's intellectual development'. He writes that the symbolic nature of art combines 'sensation, feeling and reason to create objects', and believes that when children make art, they interpret their experience into observable meaning. Children, according to Griebling (2011), have a need to move towards independence. An active

participation in the art-making processes encourages children to have control over this aspect of their development.

Burrill (2005:38) contributes that art as a 'sideline speciality' is not enough, because it provides the basis for personal development and knowledge construction. In this aspect, Campbell (2011) offers strong support, suggesting that art-making is a means of creating a holistic picture of the self in relation to the world. The identity of the art teacher understands this process, and supports it in ways that make this possibility available to children.

Baker (1990:21) acknowledges that children learn and develop through art-making. Children's drawings give shape and substance to their experience of the world, as they document their responses in an abstract and non-verbal way. He writes:

> 'Picture-making and object-forming activities are increasingly understood to be the primary means with which preschool and primary school children prepare themselves to master sets, beliefs, values and behaviours that make them functional within their culture.'

Visual art practices thus become a way of knowing and understanding the world. UNESCO (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006:7) stresses that the Arts encourage the development of 'imagination, creativity and innovation', and supports the emotional development made possible by art education, stating that the emphasis on cognitive skills, at the cost of emotional development, has contributed to the deterioration of the moral compass in society. When the identity of the art teacher knows and understands this aspect of her work, she is able to teach art with an intention that is deeper than the simple picture-making that many principals expect.

It has been suggested that visual art is to be valued simply because it can increase children's abilities in other areas, (Koopman, 2005), but Koopman (2005) ponders whether simple additional reading activities would not benefit children more. According to Koopman, (2005) there is no evidence that supports the notion that a curriculum that is art-oriented actually does enhance cognitive processes in other subjects.

Art-making encourages the child to process the experience of the world, and then to turn this unconscious processing into a conscious, active answer. Visual art becomes a thoughtful vehicle for developing this interpretive skill (Bresler, 1998). Through art-making, we discover

that the world does not consist of isolated segments, but is rather an integration and an interaction of one part in relation to another. The quality and depth of this interaction is important. Eisner (2009) uses the example of contrast, showing that it is only when we compare one thing with another that we begin to understand it. Without contrast and comparison, objects and experiences remain disconnected and less meaningful.

Hallam et al (2008:269) suggests that art-making encourages children to move beyond their 'physical existence' to create something that is an expression of a personal reality. This act is the transformation of the experience into meaning, and is an act of community. It is possible that both the art-maker and the viewer may be transformed by the artwork (Räsänen 1999).

### 3.3.2.1 Visual art as a way of making meaning

Why does UNESCO (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006) support art education as a basic human right, and how does the identity of the art teacher need to adapt to the needs of teaching this subject? Gude (2008:101) expresses it very simply: 'A core objective of quality art education must be that students increase their capacity to make meaning.' She states that visual art opens a space of possibility in which students can explore the self and the society in which they find themselves. This practice is giving value to time, and Koopman (2005:93) writes that: 'We have to engage in meaningful practices if we are to make something of our existence.' He calls meaningful engagement with visual art 'fulfilled time' (Koopman, 2005:91). Hallam et al (2008: 269) develop this further by suggesting that visual art offers children an opportunity for the 'fulfilment of life'. This notion is supported by Sahasrabudhe (2006), who believes that art education should be at the centre of the curriculum. He refers to art-making as 'mindful activity' (Sahasrabudhe, 2006: 83), because the experience of seeing and experiencing is interpreted into meaning in the mind. He states that through the practice of the arts, we are able to live our lives more fully.

Burrill (2005:35) writes that: 'The end results contain something different and greater than the original intent. If an authentic relationship with the unknown happens, then some kind of an unexpected enlightenment or deeper understanding is gained from the process.'

Gibson (2003) concurs that art education offers children an alternative way of experiencing their worlds, and through this practice, they gain understanding, and can become problem-

solving risk-takers. They also learn practical skills and techniques. Some of what children learn in visual art is only possible through this discipline, and as such, the making of visual art contributes in a unique way to the child's personal experience and sense-making of the world. Art-making offers children the opportunity to engage with their lived experience and to offer a thoughtful interpretation in a process that encourages meaning-making, without the limitation of language skills (Gibson, 2003). Sinner (2008:259) writes: 'childhood artworks offer another way to understand historical conditioning and socially constructed perspectives'.

Pavlou, (2004: 36) contributes: 'Learning in art provides a body of knowledge worth knowing and as such it gives the opportunity to individuals to develop a distinct way of making sense of their world, a distinct way of knowing.' Burrill (2005:37) adds that when children make art, they are using their 'bodies, senses and feelings through physical movement' to express their personal way of knowing the world.

Guided by the identity of the art teacher, this individual interpretation of the world leads to a unique experience of who we are as human beings, as each art-maker grapples with the personal response to making an artwork, while practising the skills and techniques that are an integral part of the discipline. Hawkins (2002) affirms that personal expression is a manifestation of the self, and believes that, as much as the child creates the artwork, the artwork also contributes to the child's construction of self, a notion that Koopman (2005) strongly supports. It is in this space that the identity of the art teacher functions to encourage the particular depth of this experience.

*You are here to kneel*
*Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more*
*Than an order of words, the conscious occupation*
*Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.*

T S Eliot, 1042

**3.3.2.2 Visual art as a way of constructing knowledge**

In few other subjects is the child's construction of knowledge and meaning made clearer than in visual art, where the response is visual, symbolic, and personal. Hausman et al (2010:371)

believe that art-making provides an opportunity for 'meaningful knowledge and methods of unrestricted exploration'. In art-making, the process is often slower than verbal expression, and this allows for perception, which Eisner (2009:8) describes as 'a qualitative exploration of a variety of qualities'. This encourages wholeness, rather than a simple recognition and categorisation of parts. Hausman et al (2010) concur, believing that the process broadens the experience of being aware in the present, and allows for a deeper level of consciousness.

Sahasrabudhe (2006:83) states:

> "Artful making embodies care, intent, purpose, and a desire to make things compelling for self and others. Think of all the dimensions an art object has available for consideration by the intelligent eye - shape, solidity, front and back, proportions, position, materials, play of light, color and style – references to place and time (history), the economics and artistry of making, creative intent and so on. This is one kind of thoughtful looking /thinking artists thrive on and art demands. Art objects invite a range of cognitive abilities into play, including visual processing, analytical thinking, posing questions and testing hypotheses. This kind of thinking can be cultivated in the school art room".

Sahasrabudhe's (2006) point invites us to consider the many possibilities for knowledge construction within this discipline, so that we come to understand the possibilities that are embedded in engaging with the processes of art-making. Learning through art exists in the journey from the experience of the world, through the experience of the art-making process, and then in the return to the world that is possibly transformed. This shifting must include an element of awareness, so that meaning influences the interpretation (Räsänen 1999; Wilson 2003). It is in encouraging this awareness that the identity of the art teacher is key. Hausman et al (2010) believe that art-making is a social practice and should be viewed as an aspect of everyday life. Burrill (2005: 38) contributes:

> '... Art and art making are potentially everywhere. Art is not something separate to be integrated into isolated events. It is the warp and weft of events. Art is the creative play of the elements of our deepest experiences, reflecting our connection with life and with one another'.

As such, art-making offers children the opportunity to explore four developmental needs (Griebling, 2011). These are mastery, belonging, generosity, and independence. Mastery and competence are related, as children use art materials in particular ways to depict their known worlds. Belonging is experienced in the art-making process as children engage in playfulness and working together to achieve the stated outcome of a lesson. Children naturally develop this need to belong by depicting, in their artworks, those human beings who are significant in their lives (Griebling, 2011).

### 3.3.3 Meaningful art teaching and teacher identity

An example of the positive inclusion of visual art is demonstrated by the picture included below. Eisner (2009:8) reminds us that 'the limits of language are not the limits of cognition' and that we are capable of knowing more than we are able to verbalise. Completed more than ten years ago by a five year old patient at an orthopaedic hospital in a city centre, the picture tells an intimate story of the child's experience of being hospitalised, and goes beyond the child's verbal ability in expressing this experience. For example, in an orthopaedic hospital, the legs are not regularly used, and so the child draws the legs as single, thin lines, whereas the arms, used at least for eating and playing, are drawn with double lines, and more substance.

A child confined to bed does not have many opportunities for developing fine motor skills, and so the hands are not developed, and there are no fingers depicted, as there would normally be in an active five year old's drawing (Lowenfeld, 1978).



Drawing made by a child of five who was a patient in a hospital.
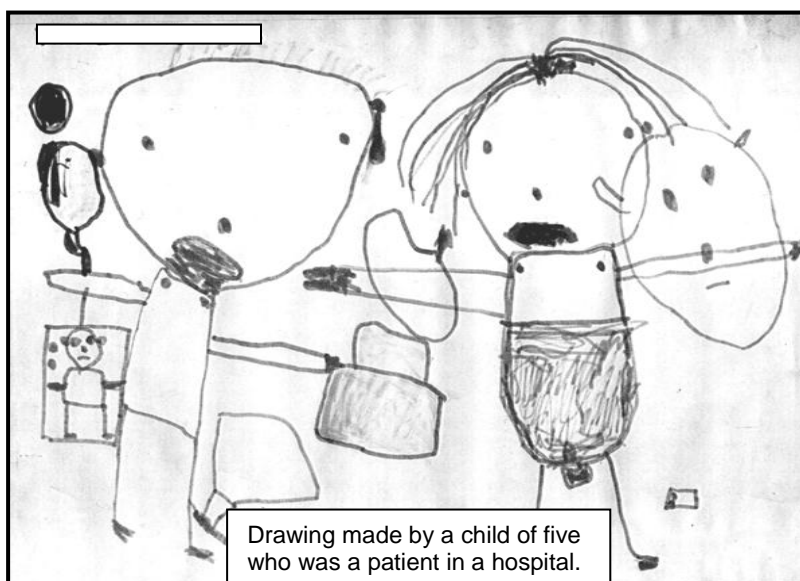
. There are not many mirrors in a state hospital ward for small children, and so the schema of the faces is impoverished, showing only the most basic features of the eyes, the nose and the mouth. The mouth does not reflect any joy in existence, and the child's nipples, which would be seen more

regularly than the eyes, as the doctors or nursing staff use stethoscopes on the chest, are given the same value as the eyes. The little girl on the right, a self image of the art-maker, has a catheter, and she expresses this as a block between her legs. There are no fingers or toes, as the child experiences little activity, being confined to bed. One would expect this impoverished schema to exist across the drawing, but the rest of the illustration contains a wealth of visual information: the carefully drawn crutch, the baby in the cot, and the texture of the plastic diaper around the little girl. These indicate the most relevant current experiences of the child, as is discussed in the work of Lowenfeld (1978).

When we no longer open the pathways for learning through visual art as a part of everyday life, Burrill (2005:37) believes that 'implicit ways of knowing and communicating are devalued and marginalized'. Including quality visual art education in the school curriculum thus becomes an important part of learning and meaning construction, a way of relating to and knowing the world, and a way to make meaning of this knowing.

Meaningful art teaching invites participants to construct a new and personal reality and experience of their worlds. It invites interpretation and meaning-making, and requires a quiet, reflective response. It is within the spaces of silence and reflection that a new consciousness of the world is unlocked, and a personal interpretation is made possible. It is in these spaces that the identity of the art teacher has a major influence.

But how does one unlock a consciousness of the world, so that this personal interpretation through visual art processes is made possible?

I believe that it is the combination of four things: the learning space, the student's motivation, willingness and readiness to participate, the discipline or the subject and the subject matter, and the identity of the teacher. I shall attempt to deal with each one of these separately, although in practice, it is their combinations that make meaningful visual art teaching and learning possible. They overlap and interweave, each impacting on and influencing the other. They construct the whole, which may be described as the individual teaching and learning experience of each participant.

### 3.3.3.1 The learning space for visual art and implications for teacher identity

I intentionally use the word 'space' as opposed to 'place' when writing about the environment that we create, to encourage the learning process.

I have already spoken of the importance of the learning space in meaningful teaching. This is of great value in the arts disciplines, and particularly in visual art, where the student, as well as the teacher, should be encouraged to feel safe enough to risk, expose, and explore often unchartered areas of being. Young children draw easily and naturally, but around the time of adolescence, the child begins to struggle with realism, and a sense of inadequacy develops when there is a lack in the skill for realistic representation (Lowenfeld, 1987). The search for identity in adolescence results in students exploring different roles, and according to Erikson (1971), this time could result in a firmer sense of identity, or can lead to a confusion of roles.

For those art-makers who are experiencing a sense of fear or feelings of discomfort or inadequacy, the visual art learning space becomes one that can engender a sense of safety as they attempt to explore their personal responses. The identity of the art teacher is an important factor that contributes to the creation of the atmosphere of the learning space.

Cannatella (2007:625) writes 'What a place gives is not necessarily the same as what a place is.' The processes of learning through visual art should occur in a 'giving' space; participants should be free to give, and to receive.

Art-making is an active use of space, and Cannatella (2007) suggests that it is the way in which the space is experienced that gives meaning to the space itself. He says that space can disturb, and can require a personal interpretation from its inhabitants. He continues by suggesting that a self that is content in that space is able to give, within that space Cannatella (2007). The identity of the art teacher is largely responsible for the attitudes of all participants in the space of visual art-making. Burrill (2005) writes that a space where creativity is functioning resembles a space of natural play, and that this space includes 'feeling safe, feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance, suspending judgment and threat of failure, and losing self-consciousness in total absorption in the flow of the moment' (Burrill, 2005: 35). When the feelings of being safe are absent, and where the teacher identity herself is insecure, a positive response to creativity and the unknown is not possible.

Many writers define the teaching and learning space as impactful, and most underline its importance. The environment in the art-making space is created by the subjective presence of both teacher and student (Eisner and Powell, 2002). Hannsen (2002) writes of Dewey's belief that a teacher is not able to lead the learning of the student directly, because it is impossible to transmit knowledge exactly as we intend; it is the environment that is the mediator of the learning. Dewey terms this 'the essential moral interest' (Hannsen, 2002:270) and believes that a teacher can cultivate a space that is an invitation to optimal learning. The

importance of the identity of the art teacher is implicitly affirmed. Although there cannot be a fixed design, Dewey defines the learning space as one that is 'simplified, purified, balanced and steadying' (Hannsen, 2002: 272). This kind of teaching and learning space ensures the mutual learning of both teacher and student.

In the art-making space, each student produces a result that is unique, and in an optimal environment, the teacher grows in offering meaningful and thoughtful response. Hannsen (2002) suggests that as the teacher, to some extent, creates the space of learning, so she is created by it. Sandoval (1995) believes that the teacher can encourage 'situational interest' by creating an environment that improves learning conditions.

Students also contribute to the space of learning, bringing with them an expectation, and a set of values, attitudes and interests, and student motivation has an impact on the overall creation of, and interaction within, the learning space

It is important for learning in visual art to happen in a space that is safe, that nurtures personal development and expression, and where students and children feel supported in their endeavours.

Greene (1984b:295/6) describes such a space as one where:

> "... living persons can come together in speech and action, each one free to articulate a distinctive perspective, all of them granted equal worth. It must be a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven, and where a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed."

**3.3.3.2 Child/student motivation in visual art and implications for teacher identity**

In the following discussion, I use the terms 'child' and 'student' interchangeably for learners who are participating in the art-making process.

Even although a space of learning in art-making may be 'simplified, purified, balanced and steadying' (Hannsen, 2002:272), the child and the teacher may yet be unable to grow through this process if the motivation to learn and to change is overshadowed by disinterest or fear. Children have a choice about whether they became engaged in the learning as opposed to simply completing a task (Greene, 1984a), and as teachers, we have to ensure that what we choose to teach resonates strongly with the interests of our students.

In the space of art-making, formative assessment is essential for the motivation and well-being of the student. Working in unfamiliar realms, the child responds to regular critical feedback and dialogue, and is thus equipped to feel more positive and knowing about his or her own work. Simultaneously, the teacher is given access to the student response, to how meaningful her teaching has been, and to areas where she herself may need to develop.

The teacher can contribute to student motivation using skilful teaching approaches, and student motivation can be greatly enhanced in the formative assessment process, if this process is meaningfully used to engage and assist student learning (Sandoval, 1995; Yue Yin; Shavelson, Ayala, Ruiz-Primo, Brandon, and Furtak, 2008; Cauley and Mc Millan, 2010).

Several writers develop this argument, believing that motivation is increased by a teacher in possession of both strong content knowledge and strong pedagogical knowledge (Palmer, 1998; Thornton, 2001; Pavlou, 2004).

If the learning has a clear value to the participants, then the motivation to learn is enhanced (Kowalchuk, 1993, Hootstein, 1994, Sandoval, 1995). Children who are interested are more likely to rise to the needs of the project, especially if it has significance in their lives, and can lead to a sense of achievement. Campbell (2011) urges art teachers to be aware of the relationship that must exist between the child and the curriculum, so that the child becomes an active participant in the construction of meaning-making and knowledge construction through art processes.

Critical questioning can arouse student interest and an active involvement in the learning process, and this task is in the hands of the identity of the teacher. Tasks that fall within the zones of proximal development of the learners can lead to a sense of mastery and achievement. The relevance of the outcome should also be clear (Hootstein, 1994, Sandoval, 1995).

Lying on the cusp between the *place* of learning and student motivation is the power of the mission statement of the school or the institution, and the functioning within this statement by both staff and students. If the focus remains rooted in the mission statement, student motivation can be encouraged through approaches that are both goal- and mastery-related (Ferrari, Mc Carthy, and Milner, 2009).

The mission statement of my university is:

> 'to develop and sustain an empowering environment where, through
> teaching, learning, research and scholarship our students and staff, in

partnership with the community and industry, are able to create and
apply knowledge that contributes to development'.

The core values of the institution are listed as integrity, respect, excellence, democracy, accountability, ubuntu, innovation and equity (accessed 19 March 2010). Along with the mission statement, these have relevance for art teaching, and an attempt is made to practise the core values on a daily basis in the art-making space.

The subject matter or the theme of the learning has value in capturing and holding the attention of the student, and where personal interest is stimulated, the learning is likely to be more enduring (Sandoval, 1995, Hallquist, 2008).

### 3.3.3.3 The discipline and subject matter and implications for teacher identity

Burrill (2005: 38) writes: 'the geometry of forms in nature are encoded in our brain as pure patterns, such as the circle, square, and triangle. These encodings are prototypes of psychobiological experience, generally called cognitive universals'. These shapes are naturally evident in the art-making of children, and Burrill (2005) agrees that they are a part of the natural development of children, and that they are not context-specific.

In the arts, the subject matter is seldom dictated by the curriculum or the course outline, and so these choices are left to the teacher (Vulliamy, 2004; Eisner, 2000). The choice is an important one, because it can capture, challenge and retain the interest of the student, or can result in boredom and lost learning opportunities. The choice is an act of teacher identity.

Greene (1984b) comments that with each discipline, there is a set of symbolic understandings that need to be absorbed, and a subject literacy that needs to be acquired. Following on this, the elements of art, design principles and specific techniques should not be taught separately, but should be an integral part of the art-making process (Walker, 2006). Hausman et al (2010:371) state that: 'the content should draw upon a diverse array of transdisciplinary theories and practices', and art educators should strive towards the holistic education of the child, encouraging the engagement of the mind, body and spirit. They encourage the careful teaching of technique, which enables a child to gain facility in the physical expression of the artwork.

Art-making is an ability to identify with the learning, and to examine meaning, which embraces higher order thinking skills (Wilson, 2003; Walker, 2006). This approach resonates

with Pavlou's (2004) writing and once again calls for a teacher who has both strong content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. She should also have a knowledge of her students and their contexts, because each one of them brings their particular biographies to the learning environment (Greene, 1984b). An art teacher who knows her students is able to bring ideas to their art-making that have relevance to the students' lives, and their interest is more likely to be captured. UNESCO supports this notion (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006), developing it further to stress the inclusion of common morals and ethics.

When the personal interest of the learner is engaged, student motivation to complete a task and attempt the learning is greater (Sandoval, 1995). Sandoval writes of three kinds of interest: cognitive, mastery, and social.

Although there is value in some observational work in the training of the eye and the hand, critical thinking and personal interpretation in the art studio are more likely to encourage the development of conscious thinking processes and perceptive inquiry (Hardy, 2003). Using themes that embrace human nature, and encouraging students to personally interpret these in their artworks, tends to involve students in the learning process. At the same time, this approach requires a critical involvement in the meaning-making of their own lives. A deeper connection to the world around them is also fostered (Hardy, 2003).

According to Greene, (1984a) all new knowledge is a discovery against previous or existing frameworks. Creating artworks that have personal significance captures the interest of the student, and a sustained engagement is invited. The student journeys in the space between the world, the artwork, and the return to the world, creating meaning en route (Räsänen 1999; Wilson 2003). The identity of the art teacher is the guardian of the student during this personal and unique journey.

Greene (1984a) believes that all learning extends beyond explicit teaching, and that teachers do not have real control of this process. She believes that the role of a teacher is to be brave enough to encourage what she terms 'critico-creative thinking' in her students (Greene, 1984a:63).

UNESCO (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006) stresses that art education contributes to the construction of both the personal and the social identity. How does the identity of the teacher make a difference? In the next section, I explore this concept.

### 3.3.3.4 The impact of the identity of the Art teacher

> "If we want students to gain some sort of personal insight, whether
> spiritual or temporal, through Art making, then we must teach in the
> truest sense rather than instruct" (Hardy, 2003:339).

What is taught in art education, and the way in which it is taught, depends almost entirely on the identity of the art teacher (Bachar and Glaubman, 2006). Campbell (2011) concurs, stating that the qualities of the teacher are central in holistic art education. Although UNESCO (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006) believes that art teachers should be given the appropriate training to effectively fulfil their tasks, there is not much evidence of this in Arts education in South Africa. UNESCO suggests the following appropriate training for art teachers:

Fully Articulated Arts teacher education programmes may encourage the development of knowledge and skills in:

- · One or more Arts disciplines
- · Interdisciplinary Arts expression
- · Methodologies for teaching the Arts
- · Methodologies for interdisciplinary teaching in and through the Arts
- · Curriculum design
- · Assessment and evaluation appropriate for Arts education
- · Formal (school based) Arts education
- · Informal (community based) Arts education (Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006:10)

How and what teachers teach when they teach art is very often governed by what they know. Kowalchuk (1993:20) writes that effective teaching in visual art is 'largely dependent on the depth and organisation of the teacher's art and pedagogical knowledge' and stresses that appropriate training to teach visual art enables educators to make knowledge about art and art-making accessible to learners.

There is a particular challenge to being an art teacher. Although underwritten by UNESCO, the discipline is not given high value in schools and tertiary institutions (Eisner, 2000; Koopman 2005), unless it is being studied with a Fine Art degree in sight, a qualification that does not always lead back to the classroom. There is little specialist training for primary school art teachers, and a generalist approach, which places little value on the arts, is followed by most teacher training institutions (Pavlou, 2004; UNESCO, Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006). This places the search for meaningful art teaching in the hands of the art teacher (Eisner, 2000), many of whom are not appropriately trained for the challenge.

Bresler (1998:5) writes that 'Art teachers represent a distinctive subculture within the school, with special meaning to themselves as insiders and to classroom teachers as outsiders.' She acknowledges that many teachers are not allocated the appropriate space for their work, and that children and other staff members often view the art lesson as one that provides a time of relaxation from academic work.

Time constraints impair effective completion of projects, and affect the range of experiences that are possible. The communities of practice that operate within schools exclude art teachers, because there is usually only one specialist art teacher at a school, or art is taught by generalist teachers for whom the discipline is not a prime concern. The general perception of the value of completed artworks is for the decoration of the school building.

It is within these constraints that the art teacher, or the teacher of art, works. If, as art teachers, we are working in the realms of the significance of life, then how do we make this experience meaningful and transformational for our students, especially if the subject is devalued by our schools and colleagues?

Art teaching involves the body, the mind and the spirit of the learner, and Koopman (2005) describes holistic art education as one which draws the whole learner into the practice in a safe environment to explore, in a personal way, the universality of human experience. According to Campbell (2011), it is important that art teachers offer support that is meaningful, while at the same time providing the learners with the tools, skills and techniques which allow for the development of mastery and competence in their art-making.

It is here that a strong self-awareness is important in the identity of the teacher. Those teachers with a consciousness of their responsibility will strive to make the art teaching and learning process one that is deep and transformational. According to Schutz (1999) Greene believes that most of us discover who we are only when we choose to act and make choices within a world that has defined limitations. Inadequate training is one limitation, but a lack of content and pedagogical knowledge is another. How can teachers choose to act within those limitations?

Kowalchuk (1993) suggests that teachers teach only what they already know, and Hardy (2003:340) counters this argument by inviting teachers to enter 'an area where teaching cannot be defined' so that teachers, as well as their students, can learn and develop their knowledge. Campbell (2011) urges open-ended questioning that engages students personally and encourages them to gain self-knowledge through their responses. Art teachers can follow the same route. Campbell (2011) believes that holistic art education has

the potential to encourage a value of the interrelationships in life, and that the teacher is a pivotal force in opening these doors.

Art teachers who actively involve themselves in the learning process, who join 'self and subject and students in the fabric of life' (Palmer, 1998:11) are more likely to know their students and their students' interests, and will be in a strong position to encourage student motivation. Greene (1984b) believes that the work of a teacher is to assist students to re-encounter themselves, and to believe in the personal possibilities that exist.

How can an art teacher do this if she has not re-encountered herself, *as* an art teacher? Schutz (1999) believes that it is in response to our actions that we receive our selves. Therefore, it is the way in which we think and act as art teachers that gives us an idea of who we are, as art teachers. But these actions need to be carried out with mindfulness, with an inner search for a best practice that is personal, and that comes from consciously seeking, in the midst of the chaos of information, the quiet centre of knowledge.

A state of being 'connected' (Palmer 1998:36) and 'present' (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006:265) encourages a meeting point with students that is underpinned by a mutual respect and search for meaning (Greene, 1984a). Such art teachers will use documented techniques like formative assessment in ways that engender respectful challenge and response, and will be able to develop their own practices by learning from this process (Yue Yin et al, 2008).

Aware art teachers strive to develop good questioning techniques, ones that stimulate students to think around the subject and the discipline before they engage in tasks that before may have seemed fearful to them. Questions that engage students on levels that encourage transformation can engender deep learning (Bain and Zimmerman, 2009). Student responses can also broaden the teacher's knowledge of her students, and of their understanding and perspectives.

There are many teaching methodologies and teaching techniques that can add to an art teacher's skill. Many of them are traditionally accepted as the preferred teaching method or style. It is sometimes accepted that, if teachers are trained in methods that are accepted as good practice, then children's learning and their achievements will improve (Coldron and Smith, 1999). None of these methods will prove effective if they have not been carefully selected, practised and personalised by the teacher.

Coldron and Smith (1999:716), writing of the choices that teachers can make about their own teaching styles, state:

'The commonplace but conscientious and thoughtful act of selecting and rejecting those possibilities is a practical articulation and manifestation of a teacher's personal style. A teacher locates himself or herself by each small affirmation and rejection in relation to those possibilities and, by so doing, patterns his or her practice in a unique way.'

The identity of the Art teacher is the thread that can take all of the elements of the art-making experience, and weave them together to create a space of conscious learning and delight. The space, the atmosphere of the studio, and the subject matter and discipline, can either be commonplace or can provide a rich arena of student motivation. Discipline-specific skills can be enhanced, and meaning construction can become transformational. Although student contribution to each of these is acknowledged, it is the teacher who stands guard at the gate (Palmer, 1998), and can either close it to imprison those within, or can throw it wide open, so that her gladness meets with the world's hunger.

'The connections made by teachers are not held in their methods but in their hearts - meaning 'heart' in its true sense as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self.' (Palmer, 1998:11).

## 3.4 Chapter summary

While the purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences that construct the identity of an art teacher over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction, this chapter investigated those elements that combine to create meaningful teaching as a place in which to lodge that identity. I have explored the concept of teacher knowledge as a contribution to meaningful teaching, and have examined the concepts of knowledge of context, content and the learner and pedagogical content knowledge, as well as a knowledge of the self, because I believe that these teacher knowledge bases have implications for the construction of teacher identity. The identity of a teacher is influenced by what she knows, and professional development as a form of on-going and life-long learning was also discussed. I concluded this section with an exploration of teacher burnout, which is the result of stress within the profession.

Because this study is concerned with the identity construction of an art teacher, I have included a brief examination of the subject of visual art as it is placed within the school curriculum. The public value, or the public marginalisation of this subject, will have an influence on the construction of the identity of the art teacher, and so these aspects are examined, and the value of the subject and the discipline itself is explored. This has lead to an examination of meaningful art teaching, and the chapter concludes with a discussion on the fact that the identity of the art teacher is an impactful presence in the visual art teaching and learning environment. It acknowledges that the qualities of the teacher are central to meaningful art education, and that her content and pedagogical knowledge is an important component of the learning encounter. I discussed the choices that art teachers make when they plan and teach art lessons.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influences on the construction of an art teacher's identity over time, in order to develop a set of principles that are relevant and significant in this construction. In this chapter I have attempted to focus more specifically on those things that will be most important in an art teacher's work. The act of making meaning with her practice, and the value of her subject, are two important aspects of the identity of an art teacher, and these are the two core concepts that have underpinned the literature in this chapter.

In the next chapter, I shall examine the possible methods of investigating the construction of the identity of an art teacher over time.

*We shall not cease from exploration*
*And the end of all our exploring*
*Will be to arrive where we started*
*And know the place for the first time.*

*T S Eliot, 1942.*

# Chapter four: Methodology: From which the purpose breaks

*When it comes to central aspects of man's existence, we can only conceptualise at a given time what is relevant for us for personal, for conceptual, and for historical reasons. And even as we do so, the data and the conclusions change before our eyes.*

Erikson, 1971: 43.



**Figure 4.1: The Mandala of Slow Growth**

## 4.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter describes the considerations of process and methods required to answer the key research question, which probes how the identity of an art teacher is constructed over time. Sub-questions include:

- What influences the identity construction of an art teacher?

- What is meaningful teaching and learning?

- How does the identity of an art teacher impact on meaningful teaching and learning?

This study is lodged within the qualitative, interpretivist paradigm, and interweaves the identity theory of Erikson (1971) with social constructionism and symbolic interactionism in order to construct a narrative based on the methodology of reflective topical autobiography (Johnstone, 1999). Erikson's identity stage theory, while being critiqued for being androcentric and claiming universality (Phoenix and Rattansi 2005; Schachter, 2005), still offers a framework from which to interpret the findings of this study.

As I shall illustrate in this chapter, this methodological approach will enable a study which encompasses both personal biography and professional identity construction, allowing an exploration of the interrelationship between teacher identity and teacher practices. Underpinning this study is the belief that our identities are social constructions in response to the unique worlds in which we live. Meaning is derived from the value that the individual places on people, relationships, and events. The challenge, then, is to understand the interplay of the personal and the professional in the construction of teacher identity, through a study of my own biography. This will involve a slow processing as I seek an understanding of the influences that have constructed my own art teacher identity over time.

## 4.2 Qualitative research

For this study, which seeks to understand the influences on the construction of one art teacher's identity over time, it is important to work through a methodology that invites an interpretive, personal response, and the broad decision is qualitative. Lincoln and Guba (1986) define qualitative research as an enquiry that is disciplined, and that seeks to find the answer to a problem so that understanding can be gained, or so that action can be taken. Qualitative research, also sometimes termed naturalistic or interpretive, underpins this methodology, because it invites the investigation and the understanding of the human being

in a lived experience, embracing complexity and unpredictability. It takes into account the contexts, interpretations, subjective experiences, and life-worlds of its subjects. It embraces no particular methodology, and has no theory or practice that belongs entirely to this approach, which may be used in many disciplines and subject matters (Lincoln and Guba, 1986).

Qualitative research will make it possible for me to explore my own sequences, and the 'consequences' that follow. It will be possible to explore complexity, human response, and the social world in which I live and work. Schostak (2002: 23) extends this perspective by saying that 'the case, as a label of convenience for the complex, is a multilayered symbolic network that need not display any internal unity or consistency'. This develops knowledge that is drawn from the authentic lived experience and the meaning that is ascribed to it. Rather than seeking an ultimate reality for all humanity, or a metanarrative, the approach examines the realism of the particular, and for the particular. Qualitative researchers accept the possibility of many realities (Krauss, 2005), and do not try to establish scientific answers. Willig (2001:9) writes: 'Qualitative researchers tend, therefore, to be concerned with the quality and texture of experience', and because of this, qualitative studies offer the opportunity of depth and complexity (Seale, 2001).

The postmodern framework offers me the opportunity to explore a fluid world where there is no single reality, and where it is no longer possible to find a universal answer. Postmodern approaches to qualitative study invite exploratory forms of research, embracing creativity and a sense of playfulness (Merriam 2009). The growth of the feminist perspective in recent times has introduced experimental approaches and creative interpretations of data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), textual manipulation, performance art and graphic representation has linked the personal to the political in innovative ways. In this study, I shall use personally created images, photographs, and a personal interpretation of 'Little Gidding' by T S Eliot (1942). My data will be an autobiography.

This is the value of the qualitative choice for this study. I am not distanced from, or uninvolved in the process, and this study invites subjectivity, immersion and reflexivity, while making no claims about a single objective reality. These are all important aspects of qualitative research (Seale, 2001; Willig, 2001; Golafshani, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

**4.2.1 Social constructionism as a framework/paradigm**

The human being, and in the case of this study, the art teacher, is a social entity, and lives a life that is directed to a large extent by culture, relationships and responses. Silverman (2007:72) writes that 'the social world is articulated through the construction of sequences', and qualitative methodologies offer the researcher the opportunity to explore the sequences of the social world of one or more being. It becomes possible to approach one person's, or many people's, attitudes and values, and to enable rich descriptions of the human being in context. This articulates well for my research, because my investigation is lodged within my own life-world, and within my own context.

**4.2.2  Broad goals of this study**

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences on the construction of art teacher identity over time. I aim to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction. This will enable me to make recommendations for art teacher education, and also to in-service teachers of visual art. The main research question is to explore the way in which an art teacher's identity is constructed over time. Given this question and the fact that I want to focus on aspects of personal meaning that created the reality through which my teacher identity was constructed, I will have to provide full and deep descriptions of people, times and events that have been personally significant, so that I can trace their influence on the construction of my teacher identity. Simultaneously, I will need to offer access to this meaning for the reader. Merriam (2009:14, 15, 16) believes that qualitative research has four key elements: it focuses on meaning and understanding, the researcher becomes a primary instrument of the research process, it is an inductive process, and it offers rich descriptions. The approach is described by Seale (2001) as a craft that requires practice and the development of skills. It explores areas and levels of social practice, from culture and society to personal experience and emotion, searching for participant meaning rather than generalised factual data. It offers a 'fresh gaze at the way we live' (Silverman, 2007:147).

The main research question requires that I explore my social world, and the qualitative approach is particularly suited to the social arena. Silverman (2007) writes that one of the focal strengths of qualitative research is that it enables the study of questions that could not be explored in any other approach. In the intersubjective encounter, interpretive practices

examine the human condition to construct meaning. This is a way of studying the social world in an attempt to understand it. (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; Silverman, 2000; Janse van Rensburg, 2001; Denzin, 2008). My data is descriptive, and translated into qualitative research, the findings can become a re-creation of the *process*, all of which can contribute to the result of the investigation (Krauss, 2005). Bogdan and Biklen (2007:6) refer to this as an 'inductive process', suggesting that theory is generated during the research, rather than imposed at the outset.

This research will explore the way in which, over a number of years, I have become who I am, as a teacher. Qualitative research gives me the opportunity to investigate this process, because this broad research methodology acknowledges the everyday practices of humanity, and it interprets the actions and behaviours of the participants of life in the act of living. The human being is self-elective (Schostak, 2002:24), and qualitative research aims to explore or interpret, in order to understand and possibly change, the meanings that are given to the particular experiences or life-worlds that are elected. Researchers do not uncover scientific knowledge; they construct knowledge through interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

Within the broad research tradition of qualitative research, it will become important to narrow the focus. The spiral must move outwards, and social constructionism (Gergen, 1985, 1999, 2008) provides a lens through which to interpret this study.

### 4.2.3   Social constructionism

I have largely become who I am as a teacher in response to the people, the events and the contexts of my life. I believe that I am a socially constructed human being, and that society and relationships play an important role in the construction of my teacher identity. While there appears to be 'no one authoritative account of social constructionism' (Gergen, 2008:2), this theory generally views human identity as a construction of society and relationships, affording the identity the same fluidity as the constructed world. Fundamentally, it rejects the notion of an external, fixed reality, and supports the fact that human beings create knowledge through their personal interpretations of their subjectively lived experiences; whenever human beings discuss or explain their worlds, they do so from their own perspectives.

With its roots in the writing of Husserl, Schutz, Berger and Luckmann, social constructionism is suggested by Gergen (2008:14) to be a 'specific outcome of postmodernism'. He writes that the individual is framed by personal history, society and culture, and acknowledges the ability of the human mind to create or construct a reality from the interactions of the world. In this study, I will draw from my personal history, and will describe the society and culture in which I live and work. I will write of the reality that I construct from my personal interactions with my world. The meaning that I make contributes to the construction of my identity as an art teacher.

It is my task to make sense of the sequences and 'con-sequences' of my world, to reflect on the influence of past events, people, and the social world, and to discover the ways in which each of these combines to contribute to the construction of my identity as an art teacher. Social constructionism suggests that the mind is naturally sense-making, and seeks to explain and understand the world in which it functions. It seeks closure, and creates bridges where there are spaces in the information it receives. By doing this, human beings do not simply reflect the world in which they participate, but in many respects also create it. Social relationships and relational concerns lodged within social and communal history provide meaning. Because a life-world is experienced differently by each human being, a subjective and personal interpretation creates subjective and personal meaning. This meaning provides an opportunity to alter a construct, and as the construction changes, so does the human being (Gergen, 1999:157; Hosking and Morley, 2004; Zahavi, 2009). Zahavi believes: '...the self is so multifaceted a phenomenon that various complementary accounts must be integrated if we are to do justice to its complexity. We need to aim for a multi-dimensional account' (Zahavi, 2009:567).

Social constructionism is suggested in the writing of Erikson (1971), whose work contributes to the investigation of human development in chapter two of this thesis. He believes that the exploration of human identity cannot be separated from society and culture, and that human identity is in a constant state of development. Human beings respond and change because of the responses and changes of others in their societies, and this development ends only when the ability to relate to others is lost. It is for this reason that social constructionism is appropriate as a perspective for this study. It will help me to see how society, particular cultures and power structures have contributed to the construction of my teacher identity over time. It will give me a lens through which to explore the spiral.

Because society and culture are themselves in continuous states of becoming, this is echoed in the human beings who participate in that society, and the interpretation of meaning is

continuously negotiated. There is no end result, no defined meaning, and the subjective experience is a key factor in the construction of meaning (Whiting, 2007). This is not a world of scientific fact, theories or abstractions, but a world constructed from personal and communal experience and interpretation. There is no universal reality, but rather, a moment in a particular context of time and space which is examined and interpreted within that context. A reality becomes something that is acceptable within the standards that are agreed upon by the participants. This meaning is fluid, and may change as the time, the context, or the role players change (Gergen, 2008). What is known, and how that knowing is defined and expressed, is influenced by relationships, contexts, and the values that are held. Those who are intimately connected to the construction of a particular reality are better able to negotiate within that reality than those who are not direct participants (Whiting, 2007). The qualitative researcher explores this insider knowledge to create academic or wider understanding (Gergen, 2008; Whiting, 2007), and Whiting (2007:141) writes: 'Narratives bring meaning to existence by making experiences communal'.

This notion has particular reference for a study that explores the development of teacher identity, and is discussed in chapter two, where Cerulo (1997), Holland et al (1998), Mc Laren (2001), and Sorrell and Montgomery (2001) state that the socially-constructed self has entered the field of identity studies. Cote (2006) suggests that a theory of 'multidimensionality' should be included on studies around identity, and that these should consist of individual subjectivity, relationships and behaviour.

My primary source of communication in this thesis is the written word. Language is used to create and express a norm, and this expression unites the 'cognitive and social world' (Hoskins and Morley, 2004:321). Language plays an important role in social constructionism, because it provides a means of expressing subjectively lived experiences in order to share them; thus belief, meaning and knowledge can be created and distributed in a social context. Communication may be seen as the act of constructing the world (Flick, 2003; Whiting, 2007, Gergen, 2008).

Gergen (2008) writes that while human beings may be separate individuals, they are so influenced by their social relationships that boundaries between one human being and others begin to blur. Day et al (2006), writing about teacher identity, concur. They state that in the construction of teacher identity learners are often the interpreters and the reflectors of the teacher's way of being. In my case, this will perhaps be true; my students may change or direct my teacher identity. Culture and society influence behaviour, and ultimately influence

the nature of the human being. Once again, language assumes importance, because it is through language that social constructions are passed between family members or members of particular groups. The manner in which the world is described is the result of the relationships that are held. Embree (2009:133) refers to these as 'common-sense constructs', and writes that it is these constructs that enable people to negotiate their ways in their social and cultural contexts. As human beings explain their worlds, they are in the process of creating their futures in those worlds. Behaviour is thus a response, not to the world as it is, but to the world as it is *perceived* to be. Language is not simply descriptive of that world, but may even be partially responsible for constructing it. This study looks at the possibilities of explaining my world, and social constructionism is a possible way of negotiating that explanation. With the human capacity for growth and change, the world, as it is socially constructed, also grows and changes. Along with this, language also changes to accommodate the growth and change that it is in the process of creating. In the process of using language, human beings embrace the 'potential to create new ways of being' (Gergen, 2008).

During the course of this thesis, it is not simply the documenting of events and relationships that is important; rather, my interpretation, my understanding, and the meaning that I ascribed to these things becomes relevant. Gergen (1985:268) writes that 'Human action is critically dependent on the cognitive processing of information, and states that 'reflection on our taken-for-granted worlds is vital to our future well-being (Gergen, 2008:12). It is generally considered that critical reflection is an important aspect of social constructionism (Gergen 1985, 1999, 2008; Hosking and Morley, 2004). Gilbert and Sliep (2009:468) define reflexivity as 'the process of coming to an understanding of how one's actions are formed by and from the world and others, and choose the term 'reflexivity' over 'reflectivity' because they believe that reflexivity has an element of interpretation. Reflexivity is contextually linked, and offers the opportunity to be meta-reflective; it allows the individual to move from preconceived notions and to enter new possibilities of producing meaning. In social interactions, reflexivity is a continuous process.

Following the thread of reflexivity, symbolic interactionism embraces the process of reflection on signs, symbols and language as a means of being in the socially constructed world. The earliest mention of symbolic interactionism comes from George Herbert Mead (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007), whose work also underpins some of the early identity literature reviewed in chapter 2. The human being is an agentic entity, and has a reflexive capability. In this thesis, I will be writing about the influences on the construction of my teacher identity, and will be

intimately connected with that world. At the same time, it will be necessary to stand away from myself, and to attempt an objective interpretation of the events, relationships and society in which that professional identity was being constructed. As Callero (2003:119) states: 'The reflexive process refers to the uniquely human capacity to become an object to one's self, to be both subject and object'. When this response becomes interpretive, meaning is granted.

Tsekeris, and Katrivesis (2008) develop this idea further by stating that meaning-making is only possible through reflection. The self is thus neither predestined nor entirely socially constructed, but is in a continually developing process as an individual's unique response and interpretation of the world. In this thesis, I will attempt to show this development by investigating the influences on the construction of my teacher identity, from a high school learner to a lecturer at an education faculty. Human response is in direct relation to the meaning that one attaches to a person or situation. In the symbolic interactionist approach, human beings are communal and interactive, and are shaped by, but also shape, the society in which they function. The social being develops as an understanding is reached of the symbolic behaviour of others. (Callero, 2003; Jeon, 2004; Lynch and McConatha, 2006; Stryker, 2007; Tsekeris, and Katrivesis, 2008). Holland et al (1998:32), in their writings on human identity, refer to this as the 'self-in-practice', claiming that human beings continue to develop and change in response to their relationship with society.

Because of the nature of this study, the reflexive, reflective process needs to be supported by a very personal approach, and the spiral expands to embrace narrative methodology.

### 4.2.4  Narrative research

Because the purpose of this study is to explore the influences, over time, on the construction of my own identity as an art teacher, I come to consider the inclusion of narrative methods, because narrative understandings of knowledge and content are linked to identity. Clandinin and Huber (2002: 161) state: 'For us, identity is a storied life composition, a story to live by.'

### 4.2.4.1 Broad description of narrative research

The data for this thesis is my autobiography. It is a personal narrative of my life to this point. Narrative research is perhaps the oldest way that human beings have used to construct meaning and to make sense of their lives, and Clandinin and Connelly (1989:4) suggest that narratives are a 'basic form of life'. People connect with each other using stories, and narrative research uses these stories, described and told by the human being who has subjectively experienced them, to analyse, interpret and understand their meaning for the individual. I have always used stories from my own experience as a teacher to connect with my students, and so it was a natural development for me to extend the methodology of my study to embrace narrative research.

Narrative inquiry focuses on the written or spoken subjective lived experience of an individual, and Clandinin and Connelly (1989), along with several other writers, have extensively used this method of inquiry to explore the experiences of teachers across a broad range of foci. Watson (2006) writes that teacher narratives gain validity when they acknowledge that the storied lives provide the space for the enmeshing of practice and identity, and for this thesis, that is what will be investigated. Erkkilä and Mäkelä (2000) offer that the narrative approach encourages the value of autobiographical story in the construction of teacher identity. Diniz-Pereira (2003), Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006), and Day et al (2006) claim that teacher identity combines personal history, personal and professional values, social and cultural aspects, as well as context and institutional influences. In the writing of and the reflection on these stories, challenges identified could be confronted and resolved.

Clandinin and Connelly (1989) suggest that there are central aspects to narrative inquiry, and these include experience, time, personal knowledge and reflection and deliberation. These are all important aspects of my research process. It is important for me to document aspects of my professional history so that I can understand the construction of my professional present. Experiences have both a personal and social nature, because human beings move in a fluid way between the affective and the concrete domain as they tell their stories. This movement summons the past, the present and the future into their lives (Chase, 2005). Clandinin and Huber (2002:162) believe that 'experience is narratively constructed and narratively lived'. Shijing Xu, Connelly, Ming Fang He and Phillion, (2007: 418) write that experience should be interpreted within the framework of the 'narrative structure' in which they take place. Experience has both 'artistic and aesthetic dimensions', embracing emotional content.

Generally, narratives may be focused on deeds, relational issues, communication – both spoken and silent – or on harmonies or disruptions. They may be limited or facilitated by particular resources. These stories may take the form of autobiographies, biographies, autoethnographies, life histories and oral histories, and they may be written, spoken, or even occur as a part of a natural conversation (Chase, 2005); in narrative inquiry, it is what is of importance to the teller that provides the data. In the case of my study, I am attempting to trace the influences on the construction of my teacher identity, over a long period of time, and I have to find what is personally significant in this process. Data may take the form of interviews, life stories, memoirs, journals, letters, autobiographical writing and historical factual writing, or may come from the personal observations of the researcher (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989; Merriam, 2009). My data initially will take the form of an autobiography (addendum 1), starting on my first day at school, and continuing to the present, and will eventually become extracts from that autobiography.

In the writing of the autobiography, I develop 'narrative linkages' (Chase, 2005: 663) which act as bridges between the personal biography and the details of the story. A narrative may be described as meaning-making from the past (Chase, 2005). This meaning is descriptive of the reasons that a person becomes a subjective human being, and may be based on events, emotions, and personal processing. The unique qualities of a human being are reflected, rather than those that may be generalised, and narrators may even adjust their identities as they tell their stories. In the search for the construction of my identity as an art teacher, I hope to come to understand events and people in a different way, and see meaning where before, I have perhaps ascribed none. As I write, I hope to understand how certain events and people had been influential in first, my decision to enter the teaching profession, and second, the kind of teacher that I would become.

I will document my life, and more particularly, my life as a teacher of art, exploring the many factors that have contributed over a passage of time. Clandinin and Connelly (1989:6) believe that an appropriate means of studying education is to study the experience of the teacher in the classroom. This research should not be directed only toward excellence in teaching, because this will lead to a simple listing of pedagogical skills; they believe that the real knowledge of teaching lies in the experience of the teacher. In my narrative, I will attempt to describe failures as well as successes, bad times as well as good.

Human beings combine lives that are both personal and social, and Clandinin and Connelly (1989) claim that when the human being is not studied, research enters the theory/practice debate. Research which is limited to excellence denies the value of the personal knowledge

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and experience of the ordinary teacher, and yet it is in these ordinary teachers that the experiential knowledge of teaching practice is lodged. I am an ordinary teacher. I may have taught some good lessons, but I have taught an equal number of ineffective ones. When teachers gain personal knowledge through the practice of narrative inquiry, theory and practice are balanced (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989).

### 4.2.4.2 Approaches to narrative research

There is no formulaic approach for the analysis of a story in narrative research, which uses various methods to analyse and understand stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1989) suggest that researchers must make decisions about the kind of probing that is needed, and about the depth and breadth that they need to investigate. Because narratives are so multi-layered, researchers should strive to develop methods that continue to reflect on the data. Connelly and Clandinin (1989:12-13) write:

> 'The central task is evident when it is grasped that a person is both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text, and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain it to themselves. More dramatically, for the researcher, this is the smallest portion of the complexity since a life is also a matter of growth toward an imagined future and therefore, involves restorying and attempts at reliving. A person is, at once, then, engaged in living, telling, retelling and reliving stories.'

Chase (2005) suggests that there are several approaches to narrative inquiry. Of significance to this study are the two sociological approaches mentioned by Chase (2005). In the first, issues of identity are examined as I write about the influences on the construction of my teacher identity through particular times, places or relationships. This narrative becomes the telling of life experiences, and may be 'messy and complex' (Chase, 2005: 659). In the second, particular phases or incidents are examined in order to explore the meaning-making methods used by the narrator in relation to a personal history and culture as he or she speaks of individual lived experience. Reflective topical autobiography, a kind of narrative research, is the choice that I made, and this will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Narrative inquiry affords me the opportunity to 'reflect and deliberate', (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989:10) which ultimately provides the platform for method. Both terms are used when narrative research is discussed, because reflection relates to remembering, and

deliberation includes an aspect of expectation. The awareness of past, present and future is an important element of narrative inquiry, and reflection offers personal knowledge that can influence the practice of teachers.

My autobiography, or my narrative, is a description of my human experience, and it requires that I offer an interpretation, which will be based on the available data. Clandinin and Connelly, (1989:17) suggest that in this interpretation, the researcher seeks wholeness, connections and patterns in order to give an 'adequate, telling account'.

My task is to develop meaning, and to create order within the data. The narrative analysis requires a thoughtful, reflective and disciplined interpretation of the thoughts and actions that I will include in the autobiography. The process cannot be linear, because I shall have to move backwards and forwards in time, probing, examining and exploring, in order to find a reflective interpretation. It is possible that this interpretation can offer a new way of exploring the future (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989).

I need to reconstruct extracts from the autobiography (or narrative) around the focal research question, and then to offer an interpretation. Particular disciplines may be selected by the researcher to frame the analysis. Merriam (2009) suggests that some approaches might be framing the analysis using gender, race, family, personal contexts, important events or turning points in life, or by means of the influence of relationships. Of prime concern is how, why, when and where the story was created. My choice is to frame the analysis using turning points or significant moments, which invariably include significant people and events. This approach falls within the methodology of reflective topical autobiography.

Connelly and Clandinin (1986:14) suggest that this reflective process can result in bridging 'the disjunction between subjectivity and objectivity, and can become a method of promoting both personal and social growth'. My narrative will frequently reveal events or incidents that are not cohesive with my own life experience, and it will embrace difficulties that I confront along the pathway of becoming a teacher. As the story unfolds, new meaning could possibly be created, with new insights providing an alternative attitude to the events. This can result in a changed world view.

Narrative inquiry takes into account the 'cognitive and motivational dimensions of meaning-making' (Merriam, 2009:33), and acknowledges that human beings attempt to make sense of their lives through a process that Clandinin and Huber (2002:168) term 'aesthetic'. In searching for the process of the construction of my teacher identity, I am trying to identify the meaning that significant events and people played in that process, and I am allowing the

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personal sense of it to unfold. Contemporary narrative research no longer subscribes to the notion that the particular must be generalisable, and accepts that the scope of personal stories in any community of human beings cannot be limited. Researchers believe that any particular narrative has potential, because it allows an insider view of the meaning that is derived by one human being in a particular place and time. Rather than generalisability, qualitative researchers strive for transferability (Seale, 2001) which should be accompanied by rich description. Readers who find resonance with a story may be encouraged to interpret their own stories in different ways. Connelly and Clandinin (1989:19) write that readers '...must be prepared to see the possible meanings there are in a story and, through this process, come to see possible other ways of telling their own stories.' This approach particularly suits my research question.

### 4.2.4.3 The personal narrative

Given the nature of this study, and the research goals of understanding identity development, the inclusion of personal narratives is necessary, because the story that I will write is a deeply personal one. My data is an autobiography that is based on personal memory and interpretation. This is a further movement along the spiral. Distance has, at times, already given me a different perspective of events and significant people. When I found the following quote, it resonated strongly, because it almost describes my own process:

> 'If you live long enough, your memory leaks right out of you. Before that time, there are ten to fifteen years during which your old memories are almost always shadow memories. Torrent once told him that this is a blessed period because it allows you to look back over your life with a degree of impartiality. "You can't do that," he said, "if every time you fall into a memory you are in the thick of every blessed second of it. You have no hope of standing beside yourself, so to speak."' (Gowdy, 1998: 148)

**Figure 4.2: The Mandala of Memory**

### 4.2.4.3.1 About personal narrative/autobiography

In personal narrative research, the autobiography is termed a life history (Connelly and Clandinin, 1986; Chase, 2005; Merriam, 2009). This approach will enable me to search for personal meaning, description or interpretation (Zammit, 2008). The personal narrative is described by Johnstone (1999) as a method of autobiographical work that produces knowledge through the reclamation of the essential categories of experience, memory, identity, subjectivity and story-telling.

Derived from the Greek language, the word 'autobiography' is drawn from three words: 'autos', which means 'self', 'bio', for 'life', and 'graphos', which means 'to write' (Johnstone,

1999). An autobiography is therefore a written self-life. The story is a narrative arrangement of a personal reality (Ramsamy, 2006).

Originally, my autobiography takes the form of a life story which begisn on my first day of school, and which describes the passage of my life to current times. My data finally will become a topical autobiography, where smaller areas, relevant to the research question, invite focus, reflection and interpretation (Johnstone, 1999; Zammit, 2008). Goodson (2006) writes that the time of the grand narrative is over, because these are no longer able to lead individual thought. Narratives of individual human beings and their stories 'reflect a dramatic change in the scale of human belief and aspiration' (Goodson, 2006:8), and the current aim is to find meaning in the life of an ordinary human being, rather than national or global events. These small-scale narratives are often underpinned in the arts, and sometimes rely on literature from areas like therapy and personal development. The approach is particularly relevant to an art teacher who is exploring the influences on the construction of her own identity over a passage of time, because it invites one person's exploration.

In my autobiographic narrative, the story that emerges will contain elements that allow me access to insights into the reasons for the construction of a particular reality, in this case, the construction of my teacher identity over time. This life history could 'refashion an identity' (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Chase, 2005:668). Connelly and Clandinin (1986:8) call the personal narrative an 'act of reconstruction', because it involves a process of interpreting the past in a new way so that the meaning of the present becomes understood. My focus is not on the details or the incidents, but rather on the subjective meaning that I will ascribe to parts of my story. This meaning can then be shared with others (Wagoner, 2008).

Keightley, 2010:55/6) writes that 'memory is a lived process of making sense of time and the experience of it'. According to Taylor and Tyversky (1997), autobiographical memory is spontaneous, and includes sensory detail. When two or more avenues of memory are accessed, for example, a time and a place, these combine to strengthen recall. Distinctive events are also more likely to be remembered.

Keightley (2008) offers that memory can make sense and meaning of past events, and in this way, it can contribute to the future. In narrative research, memory is often focussed around a particular event or axis. Wagoner (2008:319) speaks of a 'narrative frame' as a term of reference for the subject who is remembering. This suggests that a participant has a particular and personal lens when it comes to what details will be recalled. This lens is influenced by one's personal social and cultural construct. When a particular narrative frame

is suggested at the outset, a participant is inclined to remember and reference the memory through that frame. This notion has particular relevance for this study. In order to explore the influences on the construction of art teacher identity, I applied that narrative frame to my own process of remembering. This frame will certainly influence what I am remembering, and how I will remember it. Keightley (2008:67) states: 'The turn to memory in social research enables the role of the past in the present to be explored'. She believes that memory is always in a particular social context, and as such, in the life-history research paradigm, it '...elicits and analyses autobiographical narratives in order to theorise social life...' (Keightley, 2008:58).

Keightley (2008:57) writes: '...remembering is an active reconciliation of past and present', and believes that the act of giving meaning to the past is also an act of achieving meaning in the present. She asserts that the act of remembering is a selective process, which affects not only what is remembered, but also how it is remembered. Keightley (2008) writes that remembering....'involves selections, absences and multiple, potentially conflicting accounts', and is an individual's way of creating meaning. It aligns the notion of who one was in the past with the awareness of who one currently is. This approach will enable me to return to incidents which apparently had little significance when they occurred, and to understand them within the context of the construction of my teacher identity. Memory, therefore, is an important aspect of constructing identity. Within the choices that are made about what is to be remembered, there is a range of possibilities, and therefore, a range of different identities. Keightley (2008) believes that the meanings made possible by memory are never finite, and may possibly change as one's experience of the present changes. The teller comes to interpret a subjective position in the social world, which is influenced by significant relationships and important events, and constructs a narrative identity. This is an ongoing process, with the reflective component of the narrative raising consciousness which Clandinin et al (2010: 84) term 'wakefulness'. (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; Ter Avest, Bakker, and Miedema, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

**4.2.4.3.2 Approaches to the personal narrative**

Goodson (2006:2) believes that writers use socially accepted methods for telling their stories, and that these become '...archetypal stories derived from wider social forces and the personal characterisation the life storyteller invokes.' In my thesis, the notion of a 'landscape of practice' (Shijing et al, 2007:415) will invite a point of resonance for readers. This is not a cultural reference, but rather a shared experience of the practice of teaching, and the slow construction of a teacher's identity.

My analysing strategy, or the way in which I will negotiate the way through the complexity of my personal story, is described by Cohen and Manion (1994), Chase (2005) and Merriam (2009) as being distinctive to each human being. My data for this life history inquiry is provided as a first-person account, focused on the way that I have used experience to construct my life and my practice. I will make use of artefacts like photographs, personal mandalas and other documentation to contribute to personal meaning.

**4.2.4.3.3 Goals of the personal narrative**

Life history accounts and interpretations can play a substantial role in contributing to the knowledge of the interrelationship between the personal, the social and the public. They offer an opportunity to understand the complexity of an individual response to social life, identity and change. Clough (2002) believes that the personal story has a powerful place in the lives of teachers, because it acknowledges the connections of the personal and the professional, as well as the effects of the past and the present on the future. This is an important aspect of this study.

Ramsamy (2006) believes that, when a personal story is researched, human beings find meaning by interpreting and making sense of their worlds, which they are able to offer the reader. Personal narratives bring historical depth to their revelations, and with the many possibilities offered by this approach, the personal narrative can be used in a broad range of contexts, and for many purposes.

I am a human being, and I live a storied life, as does each human being. As a teacher, my personal biography influences and contributes to my understanding of my 'living teacher knowledge' (Hitcock and Hughes, 1989:188) and of my practice. Palmer (1998:11) writes that 'Good teachers join self, subject and students in the fabric of life because they teach from an integral and undivided self'. The reflective narrative of the teacher thus forms an important

step towards achieving authenticity in the classroom. It will reveal whether I am able to achieve Palmer's description (1998:11).

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:185) believe that the autobiographical approach invites historical depth, as 'individual experience, memory, reflection and interpretation' are recorded, allowing the reader access to one human life in relation to its own social setting. They believe that a thematic process is a worthwhile approach, and this underpins the underlying theory of my choice of reflective topical autobiography.

Also supporting this, Clandinin et al (2010) write of tensions in stories, and suggest that these tensions become focal points in narrative inquiry. Critical moments interrupt the flow, and create the possibility for raised consciousness and learning, new interpretations and understanding.

Leading on from the explorations of these tensions, the particular approach in which I choose to ground this research, within the range of possibilities offered by narrative inquiry, is reflective topical autobiography. The insider view of meaning in particular places and times, or focal points, is the focus.

My task is to identify significant moments, or 'turning points', so that the significance of these past experiences can be probed. This meaning contributes to the change that occurred in my understanding, and consequently in my identity. Chase (2005) writes of such moments as particular phases or incidents. These moments give cause for reflection, and can influence the way in which one sees one's individuality and one's practice. These incidents do not have to occur in the site of practice, but they may have an effect on, or influence that practice. Because the focus of this study is to explore the influences on the construction of the identity of an art teacher over time, there will be particular incidents or phases that are more significant and meaningful than others, in that construction. Reflective topical autobiography will give me the opportunity to examine those incidents and to reflect on their meaning.


## 4.3 Reflective topical autobiography

I was six years old when I decided to become a teacher. I have been a practising teacher for over thirty years. It was an impossible task to reflect on an entire autobiography, and to trace the influences on the construction of my identity as an art teacher through every event and all of those years. When I discovered the reflective topical autobiography methodology

(Johnstone, 1999), it provided a relevant possibility. I realised that this methodology could offer me a framework to interpret those incidents which I reflectively find are deeply significant in the passage of the construction of my identity as an art teacher. It means that I can leave out sections that are simply a part of my life story, but are not particularly significant in the process of becoming a teacher. Through reflection, and careful immersion in the story, I will be able to select people and events that have profoundly influenced my approach to my work, and therefore my art teacher identity.

### 4.3.1 Description of reflective topical autobiography

Within the various approaches to the narrative and the personal story, reflective topical autobiography offers a deep exploration of turning points, pivotal influences or events (Johnstone, 1999). This methodology provides an option for interpreting the narrative in such a way as to probe meaning in a thematic approach. These revelations open a window in the narrative spiral that would offer a new way of seeing (Johnstone, 1995; Levine, 2006). Johnstone (1999) states that symbolic interactionism and interpretive interactionism are both strong traditions in reflective topical autobiography. Zammit (2008) supports this notion, stating that people react to others or situations in response to the meaning that is held, opening the doors of selfhood to allow others to gain access.

Levine (2006:36) asserts that reflective topical autobiography is a 'deeply reflective and contemplative' methodology that provides the opportunity for the researcher to examine the autobiography from a thematic or topical perspective, and this is what I will set out to do. It is no longer the complete story of the whole life of one human being, told chronologically, but becomes an investigation of, and a reflection on, specific themes, topics or incidents that have been significant in my search for meaning and knowledge. This approach is a move away from the positivist research paradigm, where universal answers are sought, and the 'other' is examined (Zammit, 2008), into a postpositivist stance, where interpretation of a subjective experience offers personal meaning which may resonate with the third person reader. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) remind us that the act of interpretation does not occur in a vacuum, and in the process, I must be aware that I shall be influenced by personal values, inter-personal relationships, and influences from the media, literature and film. These influences may assist me to construct meaning in my own context, and it is from this position that interpretation will occur. Reflective topical autobiography will provide an approach to the construction of my narrative of personal and professional identity that specifically enables windows of subjective reflection (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

### 4.3.2 Goals of reflective topical autobiography

Reflective topical autobiography was first explored during the early twentieth century, but its use waned as scientific researchers argued the evident lack of validity and reliability. Second wave feminism in the 70s and 80s reintroduced the notion of the value of the individual human experience (Johnstone, 1999), and reflective topical biography as a research methodology is slowly gaining popularity amongst researchers. Johnstone (1999:24) writes that reflective topical autobiography is an autobiographical method that 'belongs to the genre of testimonial research'. She claims that this method values subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and gives an opportunity to search for the resonance of first-person lived experience. It offers various interpretations of the personal story, allowing the subjective experience of the writer to become more perceptible. Levine (2006:43) offers: 'In RTA one must expose oneself to scientific scrutiny and rigour, to personal exposure of one's true feelings and motivations, and also open to the world of one's personal psycho/social milieu'.

This research is undertaken in my ordinary environment, and the boundary of the interpretation is life as I was experiencing it. The methodology is an acknowledgement of intuitive knowing and the possibility of many realities. My written story offers an opportunity to gain access to a world that is deeply personal and subjective. It is an attempt at an account of one person's lived experience, and the meaning that is placed on this experience. That meaning influences the construction of teacher identity. Reflective topical autobiography allows this subjective approach to be worked with in a conscious and reflexive way (Ramsamy, 2006).

There is no scientific measurement or description of the emotions, which have gained significance in recent research (Zembylas, 2002, Chase, 2005; Levine, 2006).This is particularly so in the case of professional research, and in my own study, where the identity of the human being is at the core of the work. This study will also require an examination of the role that emotions have played in the construction of my identity as an art teacher, initially in my choice of the profession, and then in the personal response to my life and my work as a teacher. Reflective topical autobiography encompasses the notions that I am a human being who has lived and experienced human action and emotion, and that I am possibly the most fitting interpreter of this experience; that I am aware, to some degree, of my personal history; that it is possible to document and interpret my significant experiences in my search for the influences on the construction of my identity as an art teacher. This concurs with the suggestions made by Ramsamy (2006). My emotional connection to my work is strong. My work does not exist in a 'social vacuum', as Levine (2006:31) states. With the inclusion of a description of the emotions, as well as of the actions, a more holistic examination of the lived

experience of the teacher becomes possible. As the researcher, I cannot easily separate myself from that which is being researched, and this approach encompasses a lack of preceding theorising (Ramsamy, 2006). In support of this research methodology, Seale (2001) suggests that transferability and credibility are important aspects, and uses the word 'dependability' (Seale, 2001:133) to replace reliability. He says that it is important for readers to have access to the 'audit trail' (Seale, 2001:133) and for this reason, the autobiography will be attached as an addendum.

Therefore, methodologically I will use this reflective approach to examine the wholeness of the teaching and learning experience, the life that surrounds and encompasses this, and how those experiences have contributed to the construction of my teacher identity. I shall not have to attempt to be an impartial eyewitness who is required to give an objective account of events; it is my subjective, lived experience that is required, opening the way for 'multiple interpretations', as described by Johnstone (1999:25). Reflective topical autobiography encompasses an embodied approach to my personal story, and I will be invited to be subjective in the study of my own individuality. Reflection on values, interpersonal relationships and incidents offers me the opportunity to construct meaning from remembrances, which concurs with the opinion of Ramsamy (2006). This study of how one becomes an individual, as experienced in the present and in the past, and remembered by that individual, provides the data for the reflective and hermeneutic process which follows the writing of the autobiography. I will be literally re-searching in an effort to discover new knowledge. Levine (2006:26) writes: 'The overall purpose of RTA is to use one's own richly subjective experience as a method of studying and understanding some of life's most emotional, psychological, sociological, inter-personal and intra-personal realities'.

The purpose is not to search for universal reality, but rather to offer interpretations of one area of lived experience that might resonate in some way with the lived experience of the reader (Johnstone, 1999; Zammit, 2008). No 'grand theory' or metanarrative can exist in reflective topical autobiography, because it is the single, subjective experience of the writer that is recorded and interpreted, with the writer being the final authority on the reflection and the interpretation of the text. (Johnstone, 1999; Zammit, 2008). Reflective topical autobiographical approaches engender personal growth and intellectual development (Levine, 2006).

During the progression, I will be given the opportunity to re-tell or re-vision aspects of my story, with the possibility of new understandings emerging from the process, a process that is suggested by Koptie (2009). The re-telling and the interpretation into meaning will be guided

to a large extent by my values and my personality (Ramsamy, 2006). In the telling of my story, I shall offer the reader access to a part of the human condition. Levine (2006:38) writes: 'Readers, in turn, may then identify with feelings, thoughts, and events in their own lives as they are triggered, through reading the material.' Levine (2006) offers the example of grief, stating that it is a deeply personal emotion, but that a reader may resonate with his or her own interpretation of the experience. She says (Levine 2006:54): 'RTA calls for personal scrutiny and examination through reflection and one being compelled to address one's very essence through self examination'.

Reflective topical autobiography may be described as a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, where earlier beliefs, assumptions and knowledge are changed after a period of reflection (Levine, 2006). In line with this potential for change, Ramsamy (2006) believes that this methodology is political, because it offers the knowledge to make change possible.

In the hermeneutic sense, narrative autobiography will allow me to see old things anew, to break down old paradigms, and will encourage me to change through this experience. I shall be able to broaden and redefine my perspectives of how I became who I am, as a teacher. The process of writing my autobiography invites me to see anew, and to understand the possibility for change. Using the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, I shall probe particular phases or incidents (Chase, 2005), in search of new meaning. The act will become one of a revealing personal disclosure, where reflection offers the opportunity to see in a different way, and to understand something new (Ramsamy, 2006).  The goals of this methodology align with the purpose of this study, and it will enable me to understand the process of the construction of my identity as an art teacher over time.


### 4.3.3 Limitations of narrative research and reflective topical autobiography

As with the over-arching approach of qualitative research, the subjective role of the researcher can become a limitation for narrative research, because the researcher may impose personal meaning and interpretation on a story that is not their own (Merriam, 2009). The subjective participation of the researcher includes a context, a history, and a set of personal paradigms. The research question itself is influenced by the researcher, and throughout the process, the researcher's own interpretation of the world guides the study (Flick, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). While acknowledging this possibility, Bogdan and Biklen (2007:38) suggest that reflexivity and awareness during the process is important, so that the researcher becomes aware of personal subjectivity. However, they also encourage

researchers to accept the fact that, while they may influence the data, they, in turn, will be influenced. This limitation appears when the researcher and that which is being researched are not the same person. In my study, using the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, it was this very subjectivity that I needed to be able to reflect, interpret, and to build new knowledge.

It is, however, this subjective significance that can provide a limitation for qualitative research; the contexts, conditions and interpretations cannot be repeated in exactly the same way, and so the findings may be singularly appropriate for my particular story only. Generalisations may occur, but only in particular circumstances, and within particular contexts. Critics of this approach seek scientific, unchanging data that provides evidence and answers. They seek a verifiable answer that is capable of being replicated. This is not possible in the reflective topical autobiographical methodology.

A limitation of the personal narrative may be that it focuses so strongly on the individual that it does not take into account the collective experience (Goodson, 2006). This limitation is refuted by other writers, (Connelly and Clandinin, 1986; Connelly and Clandinin, 1989; Chase, 2005) who suggest that the teller of the story may experience personal development and a changed worldview, while readers who find resonance with the story may well interpret their own stories in a different way. This stance is more in keeping with Goodson's (2006) own claim that the narrative has entered the field of the small and the personal.

## 4.4 The process of this reflective topical autobiography

Being inherently heuristic itself, the phases of reflective topical autobiography are similar to those listed as the heuristic process (Casterline, 2004). I shall describe these briefly below, and attempt to show their relevance for this study.

1.  Choosing the topic

    Although this is the first step in a reflective topical autobiography, it should occur before the methodology is chosen. The research question, and therefore the topic, should influence the choice of methodology. This ensures that the methodological approach aligns with the nature of the inquiry (Johnstone, 1999).

Once it has been ascertained that the topic for research aligns with reflective topical autobiography, the following processes should be observed:

2. Immersion

Johnstone (1999:28) suggests that the researcher should plunge 'deeply into an intensive and timeless experience of the self'. During this phase, the researcher should attempt to focus on the data. This phase could also include the writing of the data. In my study, this phase will translate into the writing of the autobiography. Johnstone (1999) suggests that during this phase, the information of the writer's experiences can be brought into focus, and portrayed.

3. Data collection

During this phase, the researcher should attempt to extract the critical incidents on which the study will focus (Johnstone, 1999). Johnstone (1999:28) describes this as 'a rich description of the salient event itself', including both action and emotion. In her sources, Johnstone (1999) includes journals, photographs and visual artworks, to name a few. In my study, this phase will translate into the extraction of those particular incidents from my autobiography that seem to be turning points or critical contributions to the construction of my teacher identity, and photographs and visual artworks will be included in this process as a form of truth. Details of the story will be confirmed with family members, to ensure that they are accurate.

4. Incubation

Johnstone (1999:28) suggests that during this phase, the researcher should withdraw 'from the intense, concentrated focus of the project to enable another level of the expansion of knowledge and understanding to take place'. This time nurtures the development of intuitive understanding of the researcher. In heuristic enquiry, incubation is a time during which 'the researcher relaxes and detaches somewhat from the question, in an effort to gain new visions of understanding through the inner tacit dimension' (Casterline, 2004:4). The researcher becomes removed from the intensity of the experience, giving time to allow intuitive and unspoken knowledge to develop. This should occur in an unconscious space, without the researcher consciously interacting with the data, so that deeper understanding and clarity are slowly able to emerge. In effect, the researcher should attempt to 'clear the mind' (Levine, 2006:50) in order to reach 'the awareness and insights'. During the process

of my research, this time will be allocated to reading literature surrounding the identity of the teacher, and further related topics.

5. Illumination

Illumination occurs when the researcher reaches this deeper understanding, or a moment of clarity that is conscious, and possibly reveals a new insight into the question. Ramsamy (2006:43) writes: 'It was like putting a big jigsaw puzzle together in order to make sense of my entire existence.' During this phase, the researcher reaches a new understanding or a new insight about the topic that is being researched, which follows a period of reflection (Johnstone, 1999:29). This is echoed in heuristic research, and Casterline (2004:4) describes this as a 'clear sense of direction'. This phase will enable the researcher to use this understanding to address the research topic. In my study, I shall attempt to use this phase to understand how the critical incidents that I have selected have contributed to my teacher identity, and the ways in which this contribution has affected my work.

6. Contemplation

Johnstone (1999:29) describes this phase as one in which the researcher 'fully examines what has awakened into consciousness in order to understand its various layers'. This demands a period of deep reflection and an investigation of the meanings that have been ascribed. This new understanding will open the way for the writing of the reflective topical autobiography. In my study, this will be a time when I shall deeply probe and write about the meaning that I have uncovered so that I shall hopefully come to a new understanding of the way in which my teacher identity has been constructed over time.

7. Writing the reflective topical autobiography

In my study, this phase will translate into the writing of the reflective topical autobiography, and will provide the discussion and the findings. Johnstone (1999) says that there are no strict processes that should be adhered to, but cautions that researchers should bear three important considerations in mind:

i.   The researcher is urged to write 'visually' (Johnstone, 1999:29), so that emotion is reflected;

ii.  The researcher should avoid becoming too theoretical, so that the actual experience becomes impersonal

iii.     The researcher should be prepared to accept the challenge of engaging in this experimental approach, and must 'take the risk of writing expressively and creatively, using multiple modes of self expression (for example, poetry, photographs, paintings) and resist the orthodox expectations of academic scholarship' (Johnstone, 199:29). In this study, I shall write a reflective topical autobiography that will explore the reflections from the previous phase, and will present these as my findings. I will make recommendations that emerge from these.

Johnstone says that the researcher should resist referencing others, although I shall choose to deviate from this suggestion, and will include referencing in my own work. She believes that the writer should focus on the topic that is being researched, rather than attempt to be a 'self as producer' (Johnstone, 1999:29).

## 4.5 Planned data collection methods

### 4.5.1. Immersion

In keeping with the methodology of reflective topical autobiography, I have written a comprehensive autobiography from which I shall extract significant moments that appear to be of consequence along the pathway of my professional life. For almost a year, I wrote my story. I became immersed in memories. I interviewed my high school headmistress, and the deputy principal, both of whom were influential in my process through high school, and who contributed to the nature of my being with their own unique qualities. I spent time documenting as much as made sense to me. I searched through old photographs, and watched family videos. I scoured old journals, checking factual information with surviving family members, and sorted through records and artefacts. I worked through the comprehensive version of my Curriculum Vitae, and noted the significance of important professional events and involvements. Almost forgotten moments assumed new value in light of the life that had progressed from those moments onwards. Distance gave new perspective to some things. Some times that I believed were important, and decisions that I had made that had seemed momentous at the time, proved to be insignificant. Others, scarcely remembered, assumed new meaning in the light of their consequences.

I found this to be a particularly difficult phase, because there were events and times in my life that I had hoped to leave in the past. At the time of writing the comprehensive autobiography, they had to be brought out, focused on, and their influence on both my human and my

professional life had to be acknowledged. The immersion of which Johnstone (1999) writes occurred fairly naturally, and I unintentionally withdrew socially during the writing process, attending on the whole only to my professional duties. I became so involved in this study that I could not socialise as normal. I re-lived long passages of time, documenting them as I never had before, writing them down, facing them and their effects. I explored relationships, and how they had influenced my being. I grieved again for the losses. I celebrated the joys.

Before, I had used my work to regain a sense of who I was, or perhaps, even to *lose* a sense of who I was, after a time of crisis. It became clear that, for this time, I could not do this. I had to consciously write about the deaths of loved ones, the changes in my work, the passage of my life. This immersive phase was a time when many crises reawakened, but this time, I had to write through them, documenting, dating, and doing the inner and outer work that was required. It began a process of slow growth, from which the mandala included on the first page of this chapter emerged.

For this study, I have chosen the metaphor of a spiral, a shape which constantly turns in upon itself, widening and circling, so that, from any point, we are able to look back. This 'looking back', however, is always from a slightly different place. So it was becoming with the process and methodology of reflective topical autobiography.

It will become necessary, like a spiral, to return to the initial writing, but from this vantage point, to see it from a different perspective. Once again, the immersive process will occur, but this time with more direction: How is the identity of this art teacher constructed over time?

## 4.5.2 Data collection

After the period of immersion which involves the writing of the autobiography, I shall have to find extracts from the autobiography that, upon reflection, reveal their significance in the construction of my teacher identity. This will involve a process of careful sifting and reflection. I shall have to make decisions that are based on thoughtful processing of the story. While there may be some personal memories that are deeply significant, how have they contributed to the construction of my teacher identity? Which of these memories and stories have had consequences in my professional life, and in what way do they still affect who I am when I do my work? I shall attempt to select those incidents that have continued to affect who I am as a teacher, and will attempt a critical quality during the process of this selection.

### 4.5.3 Incubation

During this phase, I shall work on my literature review. In this way, I shall be preparing for my study by becoming aware of the research that is current in the field of teacher identity. It will also be necessary to investigate the development of human identity. Because, at the heart of this study, there is the assumption that art teacher identity affects the way that a teacher works, I shall also investigate teacher knowledge bases and meaningful teaching practices during this process. This theoretical aspect of the thesis will remove me from the intensely personal involvement with the autobiography, and will afford the time for the process of incubation to occur.

### 4.5.4 Illumination

During this phase of the study, I shall return to the extracts that I have selected, and spend time consciously reflecting on them. I shall attempt to analyse and write about them so that I am able to draw out the meaning that they have had in my life in hindsight, and how they have, in particular ways, contributed to the construction of my art teacher identity. I shall use a process of reflection, and at the same time, I shall use artefacts like photographs and my Curriculum Vitae to support my decisions.

### 4.5.5 Contemplation

To contemplate means to think deeply. This will be necessary as I reflect on the extracts, and probe them intimately to extract the meaning that they have had in my subsequent life. I shall have to analyse the incident using an approach that examines the incident, and then traces how it has affected who I have become as a teacher. I shall have to prove, by writing about the incident and my responses to it, that I am able to transparently source the meaning of that incident, so that I am able to show its significance in the construction of my teacher identity.

### 4.5.6 Writing the reflective topical autobiography

Once I have gone through a process of reflecting on the incidents that I have selected, and writing about them, I shall arrive at a process where I shall be able to write the reflective topical autobiography, and suggest how my art teacher identity has been constructed over

time. This will represent the findings of this thesis, and will lead on to the possible recommendations that emerge from these findings.

## 4.6  Methodological issues

### 4.6.1 Trustworthiness and validity

While researchers grapple with the concepts and processes that may be required to evaluate qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) believe that terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability should replace validity, reliability and objectivity. Clough (2002) and Merriam (2009) agree that quests for reliability and validity are no longer entirely suitable. Researchers need to aim for internal validity by showing that the findings match the reality of the data, and that the findings are in keeping with the process and the intent of the research. Flick (2002) states that in qualitative research, generalisations are sometimes difficult because the research is grounded within a specific or particular context. It is the responsibility of the researcher to state clearly the degree to which generalisability is desired. Clough (2002:92) furthers this notion by writing that all discovery is in some way personal. Therefore, reader resonance will also be discovery. Seale (2001) goes as far as replacing the notion of generalisability with 'transferability' (Seale, 2001:134) and writes that descriptions should be provided that are rich and will provide the reader with sufficient information to make this process possible.

Seale (2001:134) suggests that researchers should leave an 'audit trail', which involves including the data, so that readers have access to this information. This process also assists with the confirmability of the research. For my research, I shall attach the original autobiography as an addendum. Charmaz (2005) adds originality and usefulness to these new criteria, stating that such research should be examined in light of the meaning it adds to social knowledge, and whether it can be interpreted into usefulness for general life by the researcher and the reader. He believes that when originality and credibility combine, the potential for resonance and usefulness is increased. Seale (2001:134) develops this notion by suggesting that qualitative research should be regarded as a craft skill, and he writes: 'Good work sometimes emerges in ways that surprise us, breaking with existing rules of practice.' He believes that good research approaches in this genre should be 'fluid, and always open to human judgement and creativity' (Seale, 2001:134).

In this thesis, I shall present the life and the work of an ordinary, fallible teacher. I shall share my passage through years of teaching, through losses and gains, through confusion and through slow understanding. I hope that there is usefulness for teachers who may, through reading, share the understanding that we are all ordinary teachers, sometimes confronted with extraordinary challenges. I hope that the approach provides internal validity, by offering the reader the extracts through which I shall work, and on which I shall reflect. This clarity is humbly offered as my own personal truth. Silverman (2007:139-142) appeals for standards for contemporary qualitative research, and suggests that these could be clarity, reason, economy, beauty and truth, which he defines as 'not getting things wrong, and not providing false, incorrect inaccurate answers to questions'. He encourages studies that are 'methodologically inventive, empirically rigorous, theoretically-alive but with an eye to practical relevance' (Silverman, 2007:145).

During the process of a reflective topical autobiography, the subjective experience of the writer is recorded and interpreted, with the writer being the final authority on the reflection and the interpretation of the text. The consciousness of the lived experience exists only in its uniqueness (Johnstone, 1999; Clough, 2002; Zammit, 2008). This is not in keeping with the positivist research paradigm, where researchers strive to reach definite answers by means of quantitative approaches, with less or no reflection and possibility of change (Levine, 2006). Of importance in qualitative research is that the interpretation is transparently grounded in the data, so that the reader is invited to share the particular kind of understanding that the researcher has reached (Flick, 2002). In narrative research, and particularly in reflective topical autobiography, an opportunity exists to create many realities, based in part on the consciousness and values of the researcher, and Flick (2002) believes that appropriate criteria for reliability and trustworthiness should be sought.

> 'Subjectivity is defined, then, not by the particular which it dwells in by virtue of its own uniqueness, but by the concern it shows to give that particular a general recognition. Such recognition completes the act, and the particular becomes an object constituted by sharing' (Clough, 2002: 93)

I shall invite readers to share parts of my story, and to read my interpretations and reflections of incidents that have occurred along the passage of my life and of my work. Connelly and Clandinin (1989) suggest that a story is neither subjective nor narcissistic once it is shared, but becomes an object in its own right. It is no longer the property of the teller, but becomes a part of the life of both the researcher and the reader. A reader of a narrative is invited to

play 'the believing game' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989:18) and to suspend disbelief. Whatever the story may be, it has relevance, significance and a personal reality for the teller. In the postmodern idiom, there are so many fluid ways of speaking of the individual realities that certain limitations are created for the narrative researcher. Technology has introduced a range of new ways to tell stories and create identities, with emails, instant messaging, social networks, blogs and online support groups, and this presents a challenge to narrative researchers, who will have to explore innovative ways to research these new stories. Included here are ethical issues that will need careful examination (Chase, 2005).

Earlier in this chapter, the notion of story as object was forwarded by Connelly and Clandin (1989). Clough (2002:89) also refers to this *object*. He writes: '...if consciousness... points out its objects to us, it is our recognition of those objects which recommends it, not the instruments of their discovery.' He believes that morality may be understood as the responsibility that the researcher takes for the attitude to the story, or the object. The interpreter not only questions the object, but is also subject to being questioned by the object itself (Clough, 2002). It is in this area that trustworthiness emerges. It is in the interpretation that the work assumes its own reality. Clough (2002: 95) says: 'The truth of what is interpreted is a dialogue with self.' In this thesis, I make no claim to universal truth. I offer my own truth, emerging from my interaction with, reflection on, and interpretation of my story.

This credibility of the interpretation is grounded in whether the facts offer the possibility for the particular interpretation by the researcher, and whether the version presented by the researcher is plausible. I shall include the record of the critical incidents which I will use as data, and I invite the reader to question whether my interpretation is authentic, and whether they find it possible amongst the many possibilities of interpretation. Flick (2002) suggests that the interpretations should be logical, and that they should be easily recognised within the data. Research methodology should be defended, and credibility should be strengthened by appropriate means, which could include further documentation or the use of artefacts. Transparency during this process is important. This is the social construction of knowledge (Flick, 2002).

The reader's preparedness to accept and believe the interpretation is the act that allows that interpretation to have substance. Clough (2002) interprets external validation of the interpretation to be whether the methodology has maintained its authenticity, and whether it remains what the writer claims. If the researcher enters into the inquiry with a spirit that quests for an accurate description of a personal reality, then the response to the work, by the reader, is in itself, a verification. This can only happen if the reader remains open to the

story; an open response unlocks a gateway for the content to be experienced by the reader. This notion supports credibility and usefulness (Charmaz, 2005). In this study, I shall attempt to increase its credibility by including photographs, parts of the data, and other artefacts. I shall also include the entire autobiography as an addendum.

Metanarratives have no place in reflective topical autobiography. This approach is not a search for a generalisable reality, although this study will draw strongly on the literature surrounding teacher identity. An interpretation of one area of lived experience is offered, with the aim of understanding that particular experience in depth, in the hope that it may resonate in some way with the lived experience of the reader (Johnstone, 1999; Zammit, 2008). In the interpretation, the researcher must attempt both subjectivity and objectivity, in order to reach for trustworthiness, as opposed to a single, universal reality that applies to all human beings. In doing this, readers are invited to play the 'believing game' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989:18), and to enter in to the world of the writer with an attitude of acceptance that this is a particular reality for the writer. The findings should therefore be presented in such a way that the reader willingly participates in believing.

The audience is a concern for narrative researchers because one of the aims of narrative inquiry is to invite readers to reinterpret their own stories. Because of this, I shall attempt to clarify my narrative intent, and to find the most fitting way of interpreting my data, so that the reader is encouraged to 'read narratively' and to play the 'believing game' lodged within that intent (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989:18, 19).

When this thesis is read, I will be unable to control the response or the interpretation by the reader, and neither can I ensure that the reader will find the same meaning in the extracts. Readers have their own stories, and they bring their own personal histories and values to their reading and interpretation. Connell (1996) suggests that the reader and the text are interconnected in the process of meaning construction, and drawing on Rosenblatt's reader-response theory, she stresses that the meaning is not simply transferred to the passive reader, but is rather created in a personal and active participation by the reader in response to the text. Readers add their own cultural and social realities to their interaction with the texts, bringing their personal values and attitudes, their individual histories and their emotional responses, and their personal knowledge bases when they interact with a text. The act of reading and meaning construction thus becomes also one of experience. When a reader enters the world of the text, new experiences are offered, and the possibilities are given for the world of the reader to be broadened, extended or deepened. The reader thus enters the new world offered by the text, while at the same time bringing his or her own world

into the relationship. There is a delicate interplay between the personal, known world of the reader, and the not-known, new world of the text, that invites the reader to become a participant. The reader thus has an active role in the construction of the meaning of the written words. Atkinson and Mitchell (2010) develop this notion, proposing that it is not the transmission of meaning *from* writer to reader, but rather the transaction of meaning *between* the writer and the reader that is of value. This interaction between the reader and the written word offers a host of new meanings that could possibly not have been anticipated by the writer. The text can offer a new world of meaning to the reader, and in return, new meanings can be ascribed to the text.

In this thesis, I shall reach out, particularly, to those engaged in art teaching and learning. The world that I offer is one that, in many places, they will know, understand, and even recognise. Interpretive communities (Atkinson and Mitchell, 2010:11) are communities who have something in common, and who are united by social, cultural, or professional interests. These communities bring their common systems of understanding to the interpretations of a text.

In this dynamic relationship, the quality of the text is important. The written word offers access to the reader, and the stated purpose of the narrative lies within the hands of the writer who shapes and colours the text for the reader. It is not possible for the writer to pre-suppose that the reader will discover the same meaning in the text that the writer intended. This places a responsibility on the writer to be transparent, while at the same time acknowledging the fact that the reader's interpretation of the text is one that is personal and transactional. While writers seek resonance, they should also invite the participation of the reader in ways that are diverse and challenging to both, so that the construction of meaning opens possibilities that are new and diverse (Atkinson and Mitchell, 2010).

The response of the reader is what gives a sense of felt experience, or participation on a more personal level. The reality that is presented adheres more closely to the lived experience of the writer, offering depth on both contextual and descriptive detail. In order to deepen reader response, I shall attempt to provide rich, thick descriptions, and where possible to substantiate these with further evidence or documentation, to show that my findings are plausible and credible (Merriam, 2009). This gives the potential for readers to make their own connections with the findings, so that they, in turn, may make interpretations with personal relevance. Instead of aiming at generalisability, I shall attempt to make transferability and transaction possible, so that the knowledge gained by the reader may be adapted in the future (Merriam, 2009).

Clough (2002) believes that the question of whether the inquiry is object-directed and knowledge-seeking is essential to what he qualifies as verification. A central focus should be on the ways in which deeper knowledge about these objects is sought. Thus, in reflective topical autobiography, where external validity or generalisation cannot be a major concern, it is the trustworthiness of the use of the methodology that in itself becomes the validation of the research process, because it is a demonstration of internal validity (Merriam, 2009).

A question posed by Charmaz (2005:529) is a useful guide for evaluating narrative research: 'What is the narrative's substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexibility, impact and expression of a reality?'

Is it possible that a particular reality that is socially constructed can exist in any other way than in a moment, and for one person? Flick (2002) believes that there is no appropriate answer for evaluating qualitative research, and there appears to be no single method that offers quantitative certainty. Are my realities of today not subject to change, as my worldview changes, expands or contracts? And so rather than seek to establish a general reality in this study, I aim at trustworthiness in the particular. I offer my authenticity. I expose my will to know. I submit that if I did not embark on this process with a will to explore new knowledge, with a determination to come to a new understanding of the influences on the construction of my professional identity, then these thousands of words, and these hours that will become months and years, will be nothing but a worthless passage of time.

Rather, let me write of the concept of trustworthiness as being one which must emanate from the will to know, and from the will to increase understanding. It is a commitment to that search, even before it is a commitment to the reader. It is the sacrifice of glamour and glory, and the acknowledgement of grief and grime. It encompasses a moment, one moment, when a connection is made, and a worldview changes, and in that moment, 'A condition of complete simplicity, costing not less than everything' (T S Eliot, Four Quartets, 1942) there is no space for duplicity.

### 4.6.2 Qualitative research ethics

Clandinin and Connelly (1989:15) urge researchers to consider the 'moral, emotional and aesthetic qualities' of the data.

In qualitative research, the ethics and values of the researcher are a central focus. Ryen, (in Silverman, 2011:420) believes that there are three ethical concerns that are most important

in qualitative research: consent, confidentiality, and trust. The ethics of qualitative research have a moral base, and as such, are very complex. Gray (2009:73) believes that there are four ethical principles that should be followed in qualitative research: no harm should be done to participants, informed consent should be obtained, the privacy of participants should be respected, and the researcher should not seek to deceive the reader. Ryen (in Silverman, 2011) believes that the researcher should consciously explore an ethical practice while conducting the research, and agrees that it is the responsibility of the researcher to protect any interviewees from harm. The researcher should also protect those people described in the data from being recognised by those who may have knowledge of the process. Feminist researchers describe this as the 'ethics of care' (Olesen, 2005: 254). Informed consent (Ryen, in Silverman 2011) was obtained from the people whom I interviewed. To my great sadness, both of them had died before the transcripts were shared with them. However, written and taped consent of the interviews has been received. The photographs that I will use of both of these women were given to me by them, and they knew that I intended to use them in this thesis. Butler-Kisbet (2010) warns against the ethical dilemmas of using photographs and visual material in research production. Further photographs that appear in this thesis will also used, where possible, with permission. In some cases, because of the time that has passed, it will not be possible to contact the people who appear in the photographs. I have obtained written consent from each student whose words I quoted, and other students' names will be changed to ensure further anonymity. I have written permission from two of the teachers whose names I have used. The third died before I could obtain this consent, although she knew about this study, and had verbally consented.

I shall obtain permission for the use of names, and will change the names of other people who will be mentioned in this thesis. Where I have described events and participants without using names, I will attempt to ensure that those people will not be recognised. This is in keeping with Ryen, (in Silverman, 2011) who believes that confidentiality requires that we protect the identity of the people whom we have mentioned in our research.

Possibilities also exist that researchers may intentionally ignore data which may prove to be different from their own views and Merriam (2009) suggests that researchers should keep personal logs which are made transparent. In reflective topical autobiography, these 'logs' or accounts form part of the data and also part of the findings. In this particular study, the entire autobiography will be included as an addendum.

Trust also becomes an important ethical consideration, because to betray the trust of those who have consented to participation means to corrupt the possibility for other researchers (Ryen, in Silverman, 2011).

Butler-Kisber (2010) believes that transparency is part of the ethical concern of the qualitative researcher, because it contributes to the trustworthiness of documents. She believes that one should be able to demonstrate the transparency, as well as being able to discuss the research. I shall attempt to be transparent in this work by including the original autobiography as an addendum, and by including in the body of the thesis the extracts upon which I have reflected, and to which I have responded.

## 4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have broadly discussed qualitative research, and have explored social constructionism as a theoretical framework for this study. From there, I have spiralled out to include narrative research, and more particularly, the personal narrative, and autobiographical writing as a method of conducting research into the influences on teacher identity construction. Moving further along the spiral, I have included the reflective topographical method of life history research, and have examined this approach in some detail, including the processes that it includes, and how they pertain to this study. I have described the process of this particular study through the lens of reflective topical autobiography, describing how I intend to use it in an attempt to answer my research question.

I have included a discussion on trustworthiness and validity, and have included a description of the ethical considerations of personal narrative research which embrace the reflective topical autobiographical method of conducting research. I have included the steps that I have taken in my own efforts at trustworthiness, and have established my wish to be transparent and ethical throughout this process.

# Chapter Five: Contemplation 1: The voice of the hidden waterfall

## 5.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with exploring the influences on the construction of art teacher identity over time. This chapter, along with chapter 6, will represent the contemplation phase of the reflective topical autobiography methodology, which is the choice for this study, and which will be described briefly below. In this process, which is an attempt to understand the influences on the construction of my identity as an art teacher, I shall reflect on extracts from my autobiography. These extracts and the discussion that follows will be supported with photographs and other artefacts. This will result in an increase in the number of pages for both chapters 5 and 6. I remind the reader that artefacts will not be referenced, because they form a part of, and are described within, the text.
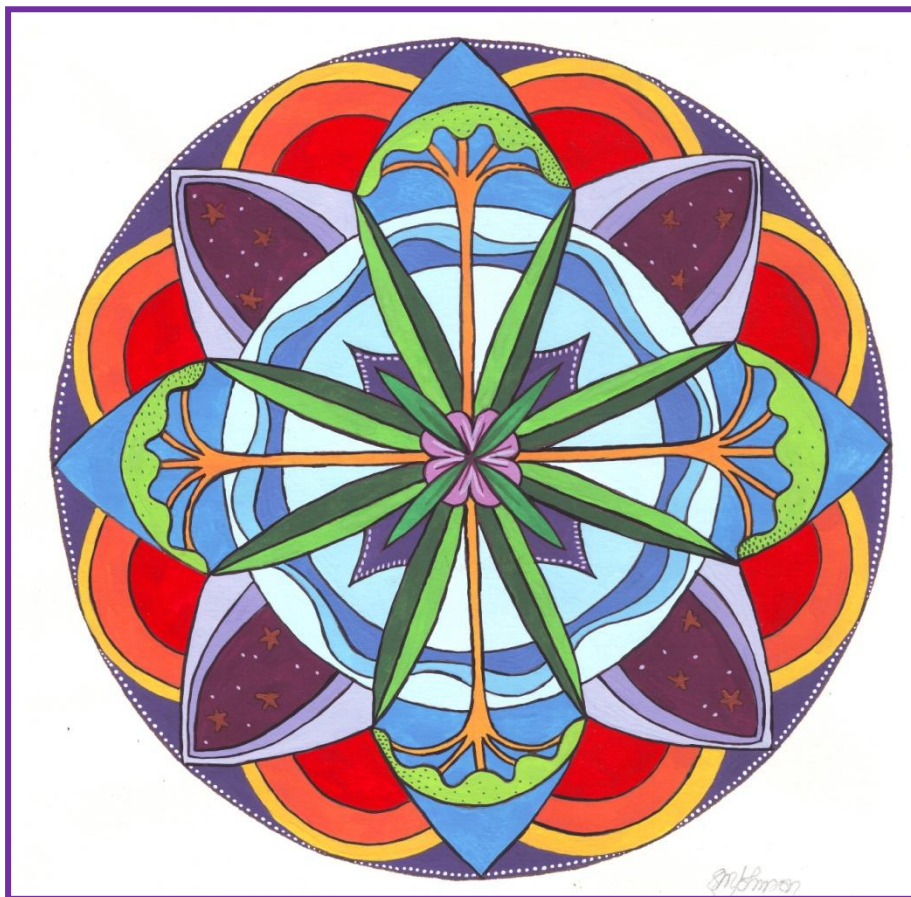


**Figure 5.1: The Mandala of the Beginning of Sound**

This mandala refers to my beginning as a teacher, when I heard the calling, and eventually answered it with my own voice. This chapter will trace the early parts of my life, and I will progress through the stages of becoming a teacher, and first appointments as a visual art teacher. I will chart extracts from my appointment to a higher education institution, and will conclude with the early realities of an institution that is facing a merger. During this process, I shall reflect on and write about the way that each of these extracts has impacted on my identity as an art teacher. Johnstone (1999:29) describes this phase as one in which the researcher 'fully examines what has awakened into consciousness in order to understand its various layers'. Reflecting on the extracts, I shall consider their influences on the construction of my identity as an art teacher, and will attempt to share these new meanings with the reader.

*What we call the beginning is often the end*
*And to make and end is to make a beginning.*
*The end is where we start from.*

T S Eliot, 1942

### 5.1.1 Implementing the methodology of reflective topical autobiography: choosing the methodology

The first stage of reflective topical autobiography is to choose the research methodology, and once I had made this choice, I immersed myself in the writing of an autobiography.

### 5.1.2 Immersion

The narrative writing of an autobiography, which is the immersion phase of this methodology, encouraged me to remember passages of my life, and to record them as accurately as I could. On reflection, these incidents, and the people who participated in them, were deeply significant in the construction of my teacher identity. As will be discussed later in this chapter, giving in to the demands of a high school teacher, because I feared her, became a pivotal factor in my later career as an art teacher.

These details were contained in a story, which was subjective, and contained a wealth of detail and complexity of which I had previously been unaware. This concurs with the writing

of Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) and Goodson (2006). I am now able to become a personal critic and interpreter, and to consider different translations and meanings of past events.

I found artefacts to help me remember, checking through old photographs and school records, and I confirmed details with a surviving member of my family. Writing this narrative provided the story which will be the data for my search for the construction of my teacher identity over time. I had to include as much of my life as I could, because at the time of writing, I did not know what would eventually emerge as significant.

I tried to write spontaneously, and became embedded in remembering. There were many stories and subplots embraced within my life, and writing the narrative still required a certain amount of selectivity. I could not record everything about my life, and certainly, there were long periods when a process was unfolding, although there appeared nothing of significance to record. There were some incidents that were intentionally not selected for recording – some of these were because I had made the early decision that they were not directly contributive to my teacher identity, and some of them were omitted to protect names of people who would have been too easily recognised, even if their names had been changed.


### 5.1.3 Incubation

The incubation phase (Johnstone, 1999) requires that one allows the autobiography to settle, without further engagement with it. I translated this time into preparing myself theoretically for this thesis. I worked on my literature review chapters, and sought the research and the findings of other writers in the field of identity development, teacher identity, and the process of teaching. This included the investigation of the knowledge bases of teachers. I extended my research to include an investigation of meaningful teaching practices, because these must surely emanate from the identity of a teacher. I also read the works of other researchers who had used the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, and unpicked their approaches to this methodology. These included Krishnasamy Ramsamy, who completed her MA degree in 2006. Her thesis was entitled 'COLONISATION: The experience of a psychiatric nurse through the lens of Reflective Autobiography' (Ramsamy, 2006). Mary Anne Levine used reflective topical autobiography in her Ph D thesis, also in 2006. Her thesis was entitled 'Transforming experiences: a reflective topical autobiography of facilitating student nurse development through international immersion programmes' (Levine, 2006). In 2008, Estelle Myers wrote her doctoral thesis using the reflective topical

autobiographical methodology. Her thesis was entitled 'Midwife to Gaia, birthing global consciousness: a reflective topical autobiography' (Myers, 2008).

Each one of these researchers, though following the stages of a reflective topical autobiography, has applied the methodology in a unique way, and has stated an achieved deep learning through the process.

## 5.1.4 Illumination

I returned to the narrative, in search of those significant moments, in a lifetime of significant moments, which could perhaps have influenced the construction of my teacher identity. This would translate into the illumination phase, as mentioned by Johnstone (1999), of reflective topical autobiography. When I was afforded the opportunity to reflect deeply on these moments, with the purpose of examining their contributions to the life that followed, I came to a clearer understanding of their significance, a fact that is also mentioned by Levine (2006) with regard to her own reflective topical autobiography. I was also able to reflect on my own responses to these critical incidents, and so the process of learning was deepened as I came to identify how I shape, and am shaped by, the personal lived experience, and my relationships with others. Ramsamy (2006:43) writes: 'It was like putting a big jigsaw puzzle together in order to make sense of my entire existence.' In order to be able to put that jigsaw puzzle together, I had to examine each piece, and understand how it contributed to the question which underpins this research, which is the search for the way in which my identity as an art teacher has been constructed over time.

Returning to my own metaphor of the spiral, each incident became the centre of its own spiral. During this phase of illumination, I was looking at that central place of the incident, but from a different place on the spiral. It is hoped that, with reflection, this approach may assist me to come to a new understanding of the influences and people who have significantly shaped my professional identity. Looking back through time, I hope to understand the reasons that some events were significant, and the contributions and influences of some of the people who have moved through my life. I may be able to make new connections, and to see relationships afresh.

### 5.1.5 Contemplation

The following two chapters will be the contemplation phase of reflective topical autobiographical research, as listed by Johnstone (1999). I am going to offer extracts from my autobiography, (addendum 1) and then reflect on them, before I discuss their relevance and influence on the construction of my teacher identity. It is also a choice that I have consciously made that I shall interweave the theory around human and teacher identity, and the craft of teaching. This will prepare me for the final stage of this work, that of writing the reflective topical autobiography, or, to use the more accepted research term, the task of reporting the findings.

### 5.2 Arriving at the decision to teach

### 5.2.2 First stirrings of the idea

*Washing machines are a good height for elbows. I am six. I stand leaning, and watch my mother bathing my three-year-old sister. It is the evening of my first day at school.*
*"One day when I'm big, I'm going to be a teacher," I tell her.*
*Without looking at me, she scrubs a soapy foot.*
*"You'll have plenty of time to decide," she answers. In this moment I know that my mother is unhappy. I also know that there are some things that I know more about than my mother.*

This is me in my first year at school

The spiral of this extract reaches deeply into the past of this child, and draws meaning from events and people that were in her life before she could speak. It simultaneously curves into the future, to influence a career that will begin some fifteen years hence, and that will stretch over the entire working existence of that same child. It is the first stirrings of my identity as a teacher.

Is it probable that a six year old child can find and recognise an occupational ideal in a forming identity, and can mould it to the notion of a professional identity that will expand over years to fulfil this decision? As romantic as the notion may be, I do not believe it to be true. The analysis of this autobiography, and this examination of the construction of the identity of the teacher whom that child

would become, reveals that I was simply responding to the challenge of my identity formation at that time. It is this response that, as an act of identity in motion, expands the spiral.

If Erik Erikson's theory of psycho-social development is, as Schwartz, (2001) and Kroger (2002) write, open to multiple interpretations, then, at six years of age, I would have been entering the stage that Erikson (1971) defines as one that encompasses the crisis between industry and inferiority.

According to Erikson (1971), and as noted in 2.3.1.4 of this thesis, during these early school-going years, the child learns to overcome challenges and to achieve. Parents begin to lose their singular hold over the child, as the world begins to expand to include other adults. The teacher is encountered for the first time, and the child


My older sister with me on her bicycle

begins to venture into a world where new experiences give rise to new knowledge and new abilities. Formal schooling provides the opportunity to make, learn and do new things, and a sense of industry can develop if the child learns to overcome the challenges that are thus presented.


Cheryl and I being taught to fish

The role of the teacher appears to be central during this early school-going phase, and Erikson (1968:122) describes this as a time when children 'attach themselves to teachers', a stage where they 'watch and imitate people representing occupations which they can grasp'. He believes that children learn a great deal from the commendation of their teachers during this phase.

My older siblings were a generation removed, and had spent a great deal of time nurturing my early development. They had shown me the meaningfulness of grown up acts, and in their care, I was 'fast-tracked' to read, knit, bait a fish hook and roller skate by the time I

started school. My older sister was recognised in the family as having a particular artistic talent, and so her approval of my early attempts at my own art-making was important. Reference to this may be found in my autobiography, on page 7.

This photograph shows Cheryl, my sister, in the front, and a tall me at the back, with two of our cousins in between. I was 7.

Erikson (1968:127) describes this stage as one that is epitomised by the words 'I am what I can learn to make work'. In keeping with Erikson's (1968) discussion about the role of teachers, I remember that this first teacher acknowledged what I *could* do. On that first day at school, I could draw at a stage beyond my age and I could already read. On page 1 of my autobiography I write 'My teachers seem to like me, and are kind and caring. They are impressed that I can already read, and that I am able to be independent.' These abilities evoked a positive attitude from my teacher. As a very tall child, I was more used to remarks about my physical appearance than about my abilities, and I responded well to the approval. Already in these early experiences of school, it was the relational aspects of teaching to which I related. These were to be reinforced in the years that followed, and were to become a strong influence in my own practice.

Day et al (2006) write that primary school teachers construct their identities from the personal and the professional self, and that an element of dedication and enthusiasm is often inherent in this identity. Newton and Newton (2001) develop this notion by suggesting that a teacher's relationship with the learner can sometimes be of equal value to content knowledge, providing a mutual space for meaning construction. The enthusiasm from my own teacher was evident on that first day, and left a lasting impression. Even now, I remember it. She knew who her learners were, and had an understanding of what was important for them on their first day at school. Although Porfeli et al (2008) believe that career considerations occur only from middle and late childhood, they do, however, forward the notion that children are able to understand certain careers. They write that vocational identity can sometimes have its roots in childhood, although these understandings are often based on career stereotypes. It is possible that on this first day at school, my teacher identity was in an embryonic stage of being constructed. This was in direct response to the relational aspects of my initial school experience.

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At this early stage, it is unlikely that I had any understanding a career in teaching, and had not been exposed enough to develop a stereotypical understanding of 'the teacher'. I did not decide to become a teacher because I understood what the work embraced; I wanted to become a teacher because I liked the way my own teacher was responding to me, and to what I could do. Two important meanings were thus constructed on that first day:

1. the first is that industry wins approval
2. the second, that I wanted to be like the person who was giving the approval.



**CLARENDON PREPARATORY** **SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

EAST LONDON

Name: Sandra Johnson

Class: Sub A          Average Age: 6y 3m

Term Ending: 21. 6. 63     Next Term begins at 7.50 on 16. 7. 63

ELDD—12828

| | REMARKS | GENERAL REMARK: |
|---|---|---|
| NUMBER: Mental | Very good | Sandy is very good at Art |
| Written | | handwork and shows |
| READING: | Very Good | initiative in her work. |
| SOUNDS: | | She has worked hard |
| WRITING: | Good | all term. |
| SPEECH: | Excellent vocabulary | Excellent report, Sandy is keen on all her work. |

Scale: Very Good: 80%     Fair: 60%
Good: 70%     Weak: 50%
Very Weak: Below 50%

J. A. Prost ............Class Teacher

J. Smith ............Principal



The school prefects in Grade 3

In Grade 3, I was awarded a Santam art prize. I record this on page 6 of my autobiography, and mention that this award made me feel like 'somebody' in reference to my father's attitude to his girl children. It is possible that an interest in visual art, which was encouraged at this early age, was to give rise to the beginning of the subject knowledge of which Shulman (1987) and Turner-Bisset (1999) write, and the love of the discipline that would eventually lead to my specialisation in this subject at high school. This possibility may even include the

fact that, on that first day of school, with the encouragement from a teacher, the foundation was laid for my own subsequent decision to become a visual art teacher.



In my teachers, I generally found acceptance, value, constancy, reliability and dependability. This continued throughout the early years of school, where my abilities were acknowledged above social class. The decision to become a teacher was further reinforced during my adolescent years, and once again, it was not because I had any clear understanding of what

the work would involve, but rather because I found role models who were meaningful and impactful in my own life.

### 5.2.3 Reinforcement during adolescence

Erikson (1971) writes that in adolescence, the individual begins to discover the beginnings of an individual identity. She searches for ideas and people in whom to believe, and this revisits the first stage of identity development (Erikson, 1971), offering perhaps the opportunity to learn trust if the earlier stage has not been resolved. The quality of trust is an important part of being a teacher, and is both implicit and explicit. Children are 'entrusted' to a teacher's care, and it is trusted that the various categories of teacher knowledge, as listed by Shulman (1987) and Turner-Bissett (1999) will be in place, so that they can educate with a high degree of competence. They also need to be trustworthy in their relationships with the children and with staff members at their institutions. The very foundations of professional and personal integrity could rest in the quality of the trust that is learnt in younger life.

I learnt to trust my teachers, and to this day, the relationships that have spanned decades, and that have deeply enriched my life, all began, without exception, with teachers who later became friends. Throughout my autobiography, I refer to three women who were all initially my teachers, and who have remained lifelong and significant friends. I refer to Hannsie specifically on page 170, towards the end of the autobiography, to indicate her involvement in my life, and also in my work. I refer to the example on page 173 of the autobiography, where both Hannsie and Elske are mentioned, to show their significance in my personal life. On page 174, I mention Evelyn, also in her capacity as a close friend. On page 175, I mention all three of them in one sentence.

Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002) assert that when the adolescent focuses, out of necessity, on some issues more than others, it can be at cost to a broader development. My relationship with my mother had become a reversal of roles, which I describe on page 10 of my autobiography, where I describe that my mother shares information with me that no daughter should be told. This did not offer the opportunity for an adequate identity exploration in my home environment. This could have lead to an identity status of foreclosure, as described by Faber et al (2003). With my teachers, I had relationships that were authoritative, and where boundaries were evident and practised on a daily basis. This, instead of my family, was the world of sameness and continuity, and I was strongly

influenced, and wished to emulate, the dignity of this kind of behaviour. If, as Erikson (1971) says, I was searching, during adolescence, for ideas and people in whom to believe, this opportunity was provided by my teachers, as is made clear on page 11 in my autobiography, where I write '...the pastoral role played by some of my teachers is the sole factor that encourages my survival.' Erikson (1971) suggests that the adolescent seeks adult role models (who may be positive or negative), and this returns to the third developmental stage. Once more, the role of the teacher becomes central, as Erikson speaks of the adolescent who is 'so eager to be affirmed by his peers, to be confirmed by teachers, and to be inspired by worthwhile "ways of being"' (Erikson, 1971: 131). My teachers were showing me worthwhile ways of being, while at the same time they were offering female role models who were, in my eyes at least, successful, competent, and caring. I admired and respected them, and in their care, I modelled my idea of 'the teacher'. This is clear from a statement on page 12 of my autobiography, where I write 'Betty Chew is the first person to teach me that one does not have to accept what appears to be the reality. She gives me the gift of understanding that our realities are very often what we choose them to be.' This incident will be described in a later extract in this chapter.

Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) suggest that identity development is influenced by context, and they argue that the school environment is an important site for identity construction. They write that '...schools provide a framework for identity elaboration...' (Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006:109), and believe that within this context, adolescents are able to explore their developing identities and occupational options. The values that I established for myself during this time were strongly in keeping with the values of my role models, and were values that were supported by the ethos of the school. These are described on page 12 of my autobiography, where I write about being a member of the debating society and the school choir, the Junior Red Cross Society, and also about
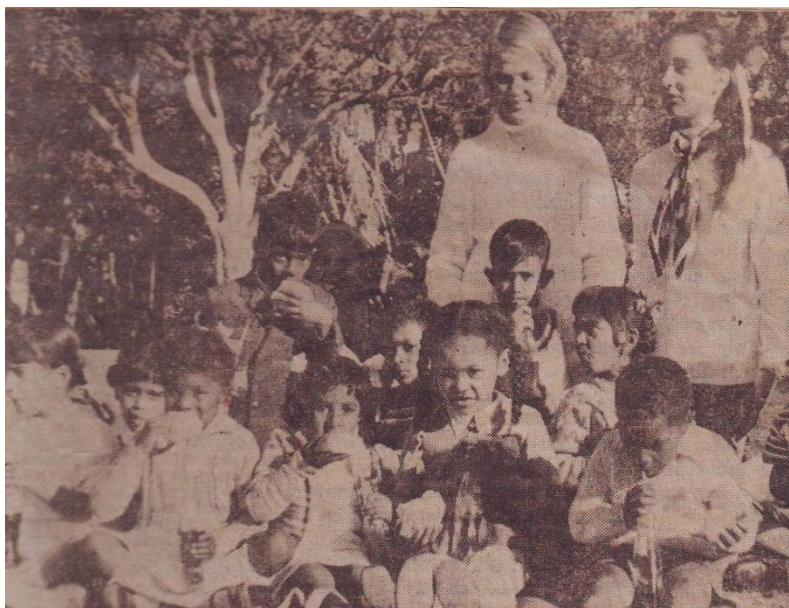


This photograph shows my involvement in the Junior Red Cross Society. It appeared in the Daily Despatch newspaper in East London in 1971

learning to listen to classical music.

In later years, words like 'Victorian' were used to describe the kind of school I attended, but at the time, we were shown how to be dignified, respectful and trustworthy. While, in the late 60s and early 70s, innovative teaching practices may not have been explored, we were subjected to a world of balance and sameness that provided us with a reliable source of good adult role models. Expectations were high, but so was the level of commitment from the staff. In my case, my school was providing a context for identity construction, while at the same time providing role models who were influencing the early seeds of my construction of a teacher identity.

Hutchings et al (2008) describe a role model as somebody who the child is most likely to emulate, and Quimby and De Santis (2006) extend this description to include a person who influences another in one or many ways. Before I started school, my role models were my older brother and sister, who were both doing things well, and were guiding and influencing me. I describe this in my autobiography, on page 1, where I talk about the skills that they were teaching us. During my early school years and adolescence my role models were my teachers, who were mostly strong women, doing things well, and guiding and influencing me.



My mother and father in about 1972

Neither of my parents had completed their high school education, a fact that I record on page 1 of my autobiography, and so the world of formal learning, particularly for girls, was a mystery to them. My father saw a woman's role as being one that was involved with home-making and child-rearing, a role that my mother tried to epitomise. In my teachers, I found women who were reading great works of literature, listening to classical composers, understanding the workings of a world beyond the narrowness of the one I had experienced to that point, and they were sharing this knowledge. They were teaching us about a way of life that was wider, broader and deeper than the world that I inhabited, and I wanted to be a part of this new world. I record this on page 12 of my autobiography, when I write: 'I begin to feel that I belong in this world, that there is a place for me, and that I have something of value to contribute.'

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Erikson (1971) believes that the work of the adolescent is to consider career options, and Quimby and De Santis (2006) write that it is important for young people to choose a role model during their processes of making career decisions. A role model who appears to be successful has a stronger influence, and it is possible that, through example, they offer an opportunity to explore the kind of work that a career encompasses. If their influence is strong, a role model provide a greater encouragement to follow a particular career than self-efficacy.

My early career choice to be a teacher was reinforced by the fact that my role models were all doing this work. On page 22 of my autobiography, I describe Hannsie Visser, who was a strong influence at that time, and who has remained a positive force and a close friend in my life. In addition to their work, my teachers were providing a model of stability in the way that they treated the girls in their care, and I highlight this on page 11 of my autobiography, where the actions of one teacher significantly alter the future pathway of my life. Relational issues are one of the key contexts of the search for identity (Van Hoof and Raaijmakers, 2002). Hutchings et al (2008) state that the reasons that girls choose their teachers as role models are founded in relational concerns, and the way that the teacher treats others. This was particularly strong in my case, because the observed adult behaviour that was evident in my teachers was an important source of appropriate adult communication. This was lacking in my home environment.

Powell (2004) also asserts that girls have a more complicated process of individuation, because it is closely bound up in relational issues. This is affirmed by the fact that, in my own role models, while I was observing what I took for granted to be sound teaching practice and ways of being, relational issues entered the equation. When Steinberg (2001) writes that authoritative parents grant children the freedom to establish their own attitudes and values, he concedes that this role may be extended to other figures of authority, like school teachers. This notion is supported by Lawford et al (2005), and lends extra weight to the value of the teacher. I was drawn to the dignified way that my teachers behaved and treated others, and discuss this on page 16 of my autobiography, where I describe the response of my headmistress to a very uncomfortable incident. The sense of conformity and tradition supported my developing sense of being an individual in the world, and the world to which I gained access through a close observation and emulation of my role models was a world in which I wanted to belong. This kind of behaviour must have influenced my idea of what a teacher was, and what an adult should be. In my early notions of what I wanted to be when I grew up, I wanted to be a teacher *like them* rather than simply a teacher. They were

contributing to my early teacher identity by showing me the way to be, rather than by demonstrating what to do, as a teacher.

Wallace-Broscious et al (1994) concur that during adolescence, clarification of a future career is an important task, although decisions taken during adolescence may not necessarily be lasting. If a decision has been made without reflection or consideration, a state of foreclosure may be indicated. Looking back at my own career decision, it becomes clear that I did not really examine or explore the kind of work that teaching embraced. I simply went along with my own early decision, without really considering whether I wanted to do this work. I knew the kind of person that I wanted to be, because I wanted to emulate my role models, and my role models were all teachers. I cannot remember having a passion for learning, or any commitment to service. I did not really consider other career options, because the role of the teacher was one that I admired, that provided me with a sense of stability, and that offered the option of a worthwhile way of being.

Marcia (2002) operationalised Erikson's identity theory, describing four statuses which he attempted to extract from Erikson's work (Schwartz, 2001, Marcia, 2002; Bergh et al, 2005). . Identity achievement is reached when one has explored and made a commitment. Moratorium is a status where exploration in on-going and no commitment has yet been achieved. Foreclosure includes a commitment without due exploration, and diffusion describes a state where disinterest and indifference deny both exploration and commitment (Kroger, 2000, 2007; Schwartz 2001; Marcia, 2002). Reflecting on that time, from this distance, I believe that I was in a state of occupational foreclosure.

Longitudinal studies reveal that movement through the statuses is generally from diffusion or foreclosure to moratorium or achievement (Kroger, 2002), and it is unlikely that any of these statuses will be achieved during adolescence (Marcia, 2002). This research underpins my statement that I was in a state of foreclosure in the occupational domain. It would only be many years later, when I began to understand the work of teaching and learning and when I was already a qualified teacher, that I reached a status of occupational commitment. Up to that time, I believe that my decision to teach was maintained by a state of foreclosure, and by a strong desire to be a type of person, rather than by a strong desire to have a particular occupation.

### 5.2.4 Further reinforcement in secondary school

> *When the time comes for me to make subject choices for my final three years at high school, I am totally demoralised by what life is doing to itself, and I have lost interest academically. I want the easiest options, the ones that do not need diligent application. In our angry environment, there is no quiet space for homework or studying, and nights are frequently spent listening to my mother, or waiting in our bedrooms for the fighting to stop so that we can have supper. Often, we simply crawl into bed without food, and hope that the voices would soften so that we can sleep.*
>
> *I write 'typing' and 'home economics' in the blank spaces on my form, and hand it in. Although I have never given up my dream of being a teacher, I am hopelessly adolescent, and am prepared to give in, learn secretarial and home-making skills, and survive.*
>
> *Betty Chew, the teacher who terrifies us all, the strict, fearsome spinster, confronts me in the passage. She is shorter than I am, and squint. She teaches hockey, and controls the stock room. She takes no nonsense from the girls.*
>
> *"This form…" she huffs, shoving my subject choice at me.*
> *"Yes, Miss Chew?" I ask.*
> *"It's ridiculous!"*
> *"I'm sorry, I don't understand…"*
> *"You will not be doing these subjects!" she hisses, and manages to terrify me into submission. "Stop being ridiculous. You will be taking English Literature and Art!" She thrusts a blank form at me, and stands over me while I fill it in. And then, without another word, she snatches the form from me, turns and strides away.*
>
> *That action, made by a teacher who, I realise years later, really cared about the girls in her school, influences the rest of my life. It is a significant moment that is to alter the course of my learning, and keep open a possibility that years later will become a reality. I am not going to be a secretary and a homemaker because I have no options. I am going to be what I want to be, because somebody believes in me enough to bully me into being brave. Betty Chew is the first person to teach me that one does not have to accept what appears to be the reality. She gives me the gift of understanding that our realities are very often what we choose them to be.*

The spiral of this extract reaches back to that six year old child at the washing machine, and draws me into a moment when that decision consciously influences a lifetime. It takes a decision made when I was six years old, and turns it into a possibility, one that will eventually become a reality. It curves forward to affect a career that becomes more specifically defined as residing somewhere in the arts. The strands of the spiral of this extract are to influence

the context of my work, the content of my work, the substance of my work, and the nature of who I will become, in both my personal and professional life. There is no doubt in my mind that if this incident had not occurred, both my personal and my professional lives would have followed a very different pathway, and I would not be writing these words on a day more than forty years after it has taken place. If I had taken typing and home economics, there would have been a set of different expectations that accompanied me. I would have been the good wife, the careful home-maker. Selecting Art and English Literature placed me in the academic stream for the rest of the years that I was to spend in the secondary school. This meant that it would have been an automatic assumption that I would proceed to a tertiary institution after I matriculated, and that I would choose a career. The fact that I had already chosen a career was simply reinforced by Betty Chew's actions. My context begins to assume an importance in my search for teacher identity.

There was also a deeply personal response to these actions. Betty Chew made me feel valued as a human being. She made me understand that I was worth something, and that I should be prepared to take the necessary steps to be worth something to myself. She made me begin to believe that I could in fact belong in the


Betty Chew in the garden of our High School

academic stream at this strange high school, where the other girls were so obviously better than I was. Betty Chew changed the way that I thought about myself as a human being, as well as a potential teacher. Her actions and reactions, and the results of these actions call into reality the notion of the socially-constructed self. Earlier studies in identity regard the self as being essential and unchanging, one that is in a constant state. Holland et al (1998) write of human beings who are shaped and changed by the discourses of power that they encounter. This is a world that is lodged in a particular historical and social or cultural context, and a world which changes as it changes us. They write:

> 'This self-in-practice occupies the interface between intimate discourses, inner speaking, and bodily practices formed in the past and

the discourses and practices to which people are exposed, willingly or not, in the present' *(Holland et al, 1998:32).*

The socially constructed self does not have an external, fixed reality; knowledge is created when human beings filter their identities through the lens of their subjectively lived experiences (Gergen, 2008). Social constructionism is also suggested in the writing of Erikson (1971), who believes that the construction of human identity is in a state of constant development, and is influenced by the society and culture in which the human being resides.

On one hand, my patriarchal non-academic family was expecting that I would become a secretary and a home-maker, but my subjective experience of the world was different from that of my family, and the meaning that I was constructing within my own reality altered my identity construct, and therefore changed the position from which I saw my future. This subjective experience of the world is also discussed in the work of Gergen (1999), Hosking and Morley (2004) and Zahavi ( 2009). My school was a much stronger influence, stronger *power,* in my thinking, and therefore the possibility that the school offered, through Betty Chew, was a stronger reality. This notion returns to Lannegrand Willems' and Bosma's (2006) claims that the school is an important site for identity construction, and that the ethos of the school influences career aspirations. In the academic streams at my school, the expectation was that the students would automatically seek tertiary education and an academic qualification towards a future career. Our school was preparing us to be particular kinds of women, and we were carefully moulded by a group of dedicated teachers to fit the pattern. The principal influenced all of us with her insistence on good manners, respect and dignity.

In an interview, two years before her death, she described her ideal scholar as having a good
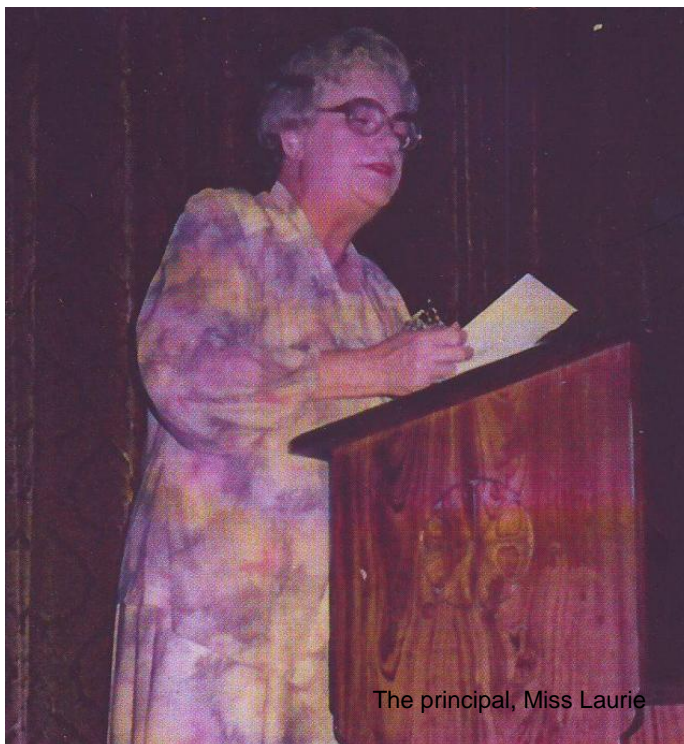


The principal, Miss Laurie

upbringing (Laurie, East London, 2006). She should be well-mannered and selfless. She was modest and humble, she should have a forgiving nature, and she had to be bright. The principal admitted to dealing 'drastically' with girls who stepped out of line. She selected staff for their qualifications, but kept them for their dedication, and for their ability to 'stand hard and fast in their own

integrity'. We were taught to behave well in and out of class, to be responsible about our academic duties, and to conform at all costs. The general nature of the staff at that time was largely the same. They behaved well, they were responsible about their academic duties, and they conformed at all costs. None of them stands out as being teachers who made an impression with their teaching, and I remember learning Latin by rote, poems by heart, and biology by default. What I do remember is their care and commitment.

Betty Chew's actions also call into consideration her own identity as a teacher. Palmer (1998:22) writes:

> 'The power of our mentors is not necessarily in the models of good teaching they gave us, models that may turn out to have little to do with who we are as teachers. Their power is to awaken a truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling their impact on our lives.'

I cannot remember even the subject that Betty Chew taught, let alone how well she taught it. But I do remember the way she directed the girls at school, first into being the kinds of students that fitted the school ethos, and then into being the kinds of women who had meaningful career paths.

Erikson (1968: 131) himself affirms the role of the teacher during adolescence, saying that this has the capacity to inspire 'worthwhile ways of being'. Adolescence is an important time for career decisions, and if the decision taken during this time is a lasting one, adolescence may well also mark the beginning of a specific kind of identity that will begin to intertwine the personal with the professional self (Erikson, 1971; Gerdes, 1988; Wallace-Broscious et al, 1994; Santrock 1997: 436). When one begins to consider professional identity, these writers claim that it is important to include personal identity, as the two are inextricably bound. This would indicate that it is possible that teacher identity may begin to develop at an early age, and is in keeping with the work of Porfeli (2008), who believes that vocational identity can sometimes have its roots in childhood. Teachers can leave a lasting impression on their learners, and for those learners who decide to become teachers themselves, the exposure to particular practices during their time at school can often influence their own practice (Atkinson, 2004), and may well contribute to early notions of teacher identity.

In that moment, the 'deep gladness' of Betty Chew in her role as teacher and mentor, met my 'deep hunger' (Palmer, 1998:31), and my own identity and my future were changed forever. This extract reaches forwards to the time when as a teacher of young people, I remain aware of the strength of the influence of a teacher, and am deeply mindful of its consequences. I

too, have sometimes been seemingly unkind to my young charges, in order to encourage them to extend themselves.

Although Betty Chew's influence was far-reaching, her role here is of mentor of a student rather than as a subject teacher. There were two teachers whose passion for their subjects was so evident that their influence is significant in my own role as a developing teacher. One of them, Hannsie Visser, was encountered in my final year at high school, and the other, Evelyn Howard, lectured history during my years of initial teacher education. Although they taught different subjects, their ways of being as teachers has deeply influenced my own practice. Learning from them and through them gave me an idea of the kind of teacher that I would aspire to be, and so their influence was not only to encourage a love of their subjects, but also to inspire a particular way of being as a teacher. Palmer (1998:23) writes:

> 'What matters is that he generously opened his mind to me, giving full voice to the gift of thought. Something in me knew that this gift was mine as well, though it was years before I could fully trust that knowledge'



This class photograph shows me in the middle of the back row. This was a time when I was beginning to make decisions about what I would do when I completed school.
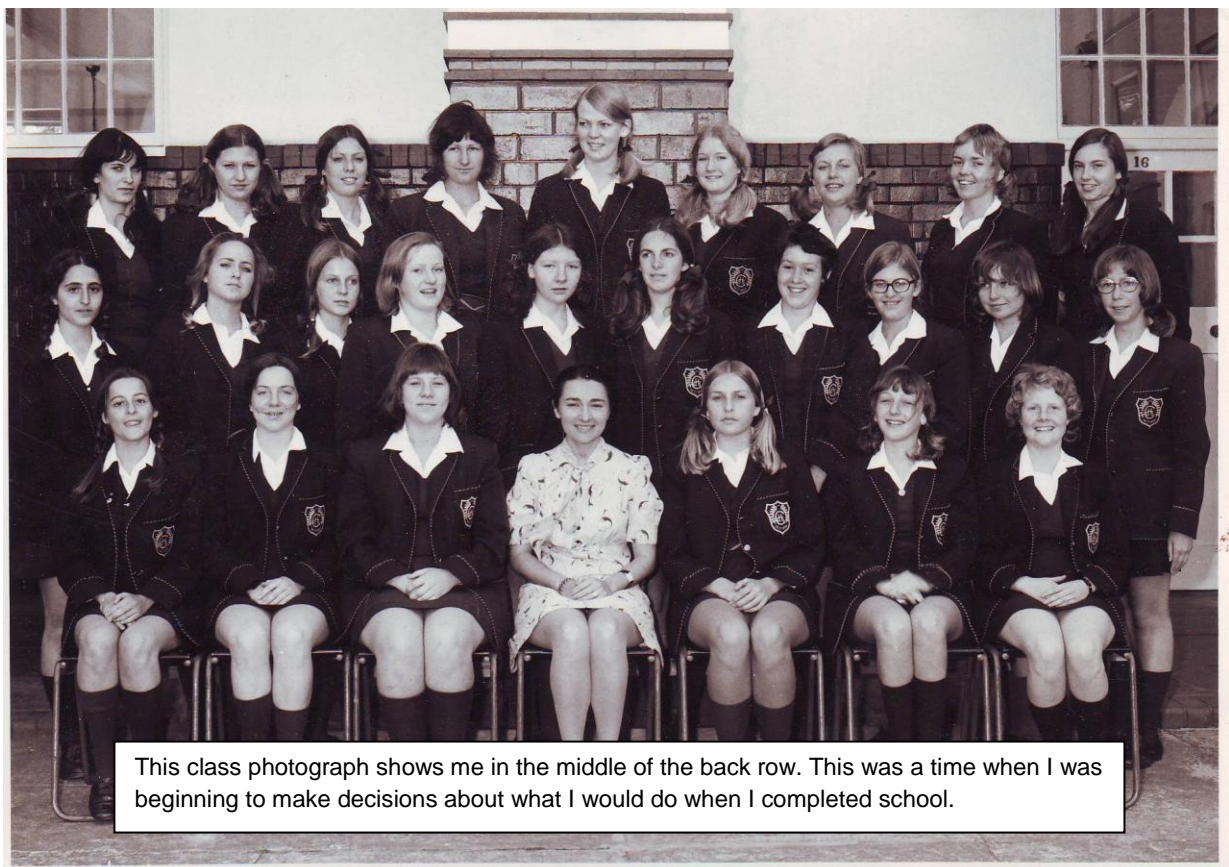
## 5.2.5 A time of observed apprenticeship

*Hannsie is a completely different kind of teacher from the ones who up to now have peopled our hallowed passages. She is young and street-wise, dressed in a flamboyant and individual style, and is very sure of herself. She is not one of the refined ladies who insists on teaching us to be their clones. She is a woman in her own right, and is determined that we will become our own women. Her classes are fascinating and interesting, and we all look forward to the times when Mrs Visser strides into the room, making the air move, making waves, and challenging us to think and be for ourselves.*



Hannsie Visser

The curves of the spiral of this extract reach back to the girl child who has been raised to be apologetic for being female, and draw me into a space where my gender is acknowledged and valued. They encircle this particular time as one where that washing-machine-decision to become a teacher begins to become a conscious awareness, and where various teaching strategies are observed. They reach into a distant future where the teacher who I will become seeks the courage to explore my own, unconventional teaching strategies in an attempt to make teaching and learning meaningful. Hannsie Visser is one of the teachers who has stayed in my life, and after a friendship of nearly forty years, she continues to challenge me, and to make me think.

Into the particular context of my high school, Hannsie entered, teaching from her heart, and insisting that we learn in the same way. Little did we know, but at the time, she was confronting and fighting for her own right to be authentic. Reflecting on who she was as a teacher is best described in the words of Palmer (1998:16), who writes of teaching from an 'undivided self' as:

‘...every thread of one's life experience is honoured, creating a weave of such coherence and strength that it can hold students and

subject as well as self. Such a self, inwardly integrated, is able to make the outward connections on which good teaching depends.

As the deputy principal, she interpreted the ethos of the school somewhat differently from the Victorian principal. In an interview, she states:

"I was amazed and shocked at the prevailing class distinctions in East London, and the snobbery, not based on intellect as in my university home town, but on materialism. I was NOT happy in this environment and milieu to start. In fact, I cried with either rage or frustration on most school nights for the first two years. Only the fact that I had developed into a very determined Taurean by then and refused to be beaten, as well as the fact that I had become hooked on both my subject [Afrikaans 2$^{nd}$ Language] and the need of the students to be exposed to something less smug and insular, as I perceived it, that made me persevere" (Visser, Plettenberg Bay, 2007).



Hannsie was probably the first person who taught me to think critically, and to question the status quo. She is quick to challenge, will not suffer fools gladly, and insists on high standards based on inner integrity rather than on outward presentation.



The vigour with which she taught and lived, and her insistent belief that we could do more, and *be* more, swept us all along in her Afrikaans tide. In experiencing her teaching strategies, I was undergoing an 'observed apprenticeship' as mentioned by Timmerman (2009:231). I was observing and experiencing good teaching practice in action. Quimby and De Santis (2006) suggest that when this observation is favourable, the possibility is increased that the student will



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choose a similar career. I had no idea whether I would be a good teacher, and had not even seriously considered the kind of work that teaching involved. I was not considering my own ability, but was rather, once again, choosing to emulate a role model.

I strongly responded to the relational influences of Hannsie Her support of my desire to become a teacher was deep. She and I became friends, and that friendship sustained for thirty eight years. Throughout my work, she has been a seminal part of the changes, the thinking, the reflection about my work, and the initiatives that I have developed. It would be Hannsie who helped me to plan the first ever experiential learning tour that I did with my students, and she has been a part of every one of them, joining us in the evenings for our reflective discussions, and challenging the students alongside of me.

Because she has been an integral part of these experiences, her critical eye has been of great value to me, and she has often made suggestions about changes to the programme, or to my approach, that has been of lasting value. Hannsie has been a critical ear throughout the construction of my teacher identity. She did not hesitate to argue when she thought that I was wrong about something that I was planning or thinking, and her intelligence, objectivity and wisdom were invaluable to me. Her deep and critical interest in the educational process has been a singular influence in the construction of both my personal and my professional identity.

She read the early writing of this manuscript, also with a critical eye, and gave me advice, support and encouragement. Her recent and violent

death at the hands of intruders in her home has robbed the world of her wisdom, grace and humour, and it has impacted on my teacher identity, as well as on my personal identity, in ways that cannot be quantified.

In the house of my deepest sorrow
there is a room that is named after you;
The door opens
onto a view of stillness and soft-edged mountains against a
sky still wet from the morning;
And I long for the sound of your voice that lifts me into laughter or thought
as if you were just here, in this moment,
reminding me of the realness of those things which we both held dear;
That part of me that once was in complete harmony with you is lost now.
I find spaces missing in the world that I inhabit,
those places that only you and I created, and filled with our own
particular
way of seeing the world.

There is no one else who knows those shadows of my heart
now locked and deserted in the barren space of your leaving.
I could,
by some strange illusion, pretend that you are
still here
But what would that serve me when your voice
cannot ring with its unexpectedness, knowing
always the way to challenge and extend me
beyond what I thought I thought.

Your loss
Is the echo of my own empty space
the deeply entrenched place of being, beside you, is gone now cold now lost
and who but you would understand the terrible longing for
the moment that we thought would always serve us,
unfailingly there and never with an end in sight?
The bright arguments ending with a laugh.
the laughter arguing its way to growth.

Every thing
Every
Thing
is coloured by the fact that you are no longer in it,
as a reference point to my own participation;
music, dance, the state of the nation state of the world state of
the heart
state of the state of all things
you
no longer you being there makes me silent
in the wake of losing so much more than you.

Is there a passage of redemption, a place of understanding,
a way of making sense of this final, finality?

Quimby and De Santis (2006) write that role models may affect career choice even above personal aptitude, and this proved to be accurate in my case. As I have already written, I believe that I was in a foreclosure status with regard to occupation and career, as recorded by Marcia (2002). I had not arrived at the notion of becoming a teacher through careful consideration of what the work entailed, or whether I would be good at, or would desire to do it. From that decision on my first day of school, I had simply allowed the idea of becoming a teacher to embed itself in my occupational planning, and had never reviewed or questioned it. I did not ever explore or examine other career possibilities. Hannsie's way of teaching inspired 'worthwhile 'ways of being' as discussed by Erikson (1971: 131), and I wanted to be worthwhile as well. The fact that my father placed no value in his girl children was strongly challenged by Hannsie's attitude. Women were capable of achieving; they were expected to be bright, academic and creative. What Hannsie reinforced for me at this time, which had been initiated by Betty Chew,  was a belief in my own worth, and in the possibility that I could be something different from the expectations, or rather, the lack of expectations, from my family. Coupled with this same attitude in Betty Chew, I was well-armed to confront a future that would embrace who I was as a human being, rather than deny it.

I completed high school, and moved on to a teachers' training college. The following extract speaks of a time when I was in my third and final year of an initial teacher education qualification. In many ways, in the training that we were given, there was little difference from the kind of teaching we had experienced at school. We were taught the process of a 'good lesson', the content knowledge that we would need, and the appropriate way for a teacher to think, plan, teach and assess. It was all without any individuality or inspiration and certainly without any real thinking about what meaningful teaching might embrace. Sound teaching, sound teaching strategies, and traditional methods of assessment seemed simply to extend the kind of education to which we had been exposed in high school, as I describe on page 25 of my autobiography.


## 5.3 The phase of teacher education

### 5.3.1 Introduction to experiential learning

*e formal word precise but not pedantic,*
*The complete consort dancing together)*
*Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,*
*Every poem an epitaph. And any action*
*Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat*

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*We came with particular beliefs about what teachers should be like, gained mostly from our own experiences of education. We found little to challenge those beliefs, until we encountered Evelyn Howard.*

*For the first time in three years, I am inspired and motivated. In our group, we explore many possibilities, but (ironically, given the events of the previous year,) the development of the Afrikaans language proves to be our topic. My mother's side of the family is Afrikaans, and Hannsie Visser, my grade twelve Afrikaans teacher, has nurtured a deep love of Afrikaans literature. The Afrikaans language monument in Paarl has recently been completed.*

*Thirty years later, I still remember the fun of that learning, the fascination of the exploration and the discovery, and the delight that we had in making it our own. I also remember each of the sites that we visit, the names of the people whom we discover, and the textures on the wallpaper of the Huis Malherbe that we researched in Paarl. Experiential learning is not much discussed in these days, but it makes an indelible impression on me, and is to deeply influence my own teaching. History is laid bare as we climb all over the cultural mounds of the Language monument. We sit on the backs of the Lions at Rhodes Memorial, and stare out across the Cape in the direction that the historical figure points. We make time lines and research historical costume. We play with the ages, and are fascinated. More than anything else, we are given only scant guidelines, and are encouraged to think for ourselves. We are, of course, hesitant and very insecure, but Evelyn is a cheerful foil, and simply continues to encourage and support as we struggle to find our feet, and finally learn to fly.*

*We spend the year thoroughly enjoying the discovery of meaningful time. We have great fun doing it. We laugh and make friends. For the first time, we begin to think very seriously about what it really means to be a teacher.*

The notion of learning through direct experience and deep submersion, which would be reinforced the following year, has directly impacted on my own practice, and has certainly contributed to my identity as a teacher. To this time, it is a practice that I include in my own work, and encourage in my students. Dewey's belief that the learner should 'experience' the
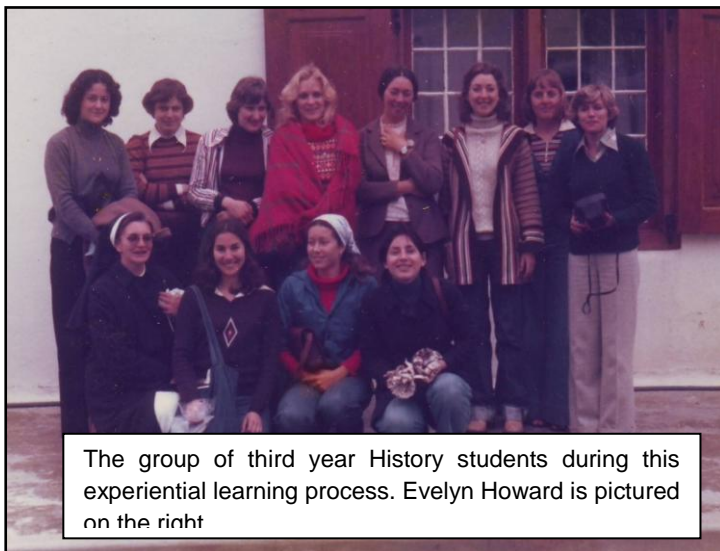
The group of third year History students during this experiential learning process. Evelyn Howard is pictured on the right

learning was given shape in our encounters with Evelyn Howard. We had learning experiences which were participatory and connected, and which encouraged us to be critical thinkers, a notion that is supported by Macintyre Latta et al (2007). Evelyn's strong content knowledge gave her the freedom to be exploratory with her students, and she was confident in her own ability as a teacher. Zohar and Schwartzer (2005) believe that the intentional teaching of higher-order thinking should be a key purpose of education, and we were challenged and pushed to think for ourselves, and to construct our own knowledge in ways that were personally meaningful.





Dollof (1999) suggests that student teachers often have an idea of the notion of 'teacher', which is gained in part from their own many years of experience of this profession, as well as from the stereotypical image of 'the teacher' that is presented in the media, or in film. Lamote and Engels (2010) suggest that the teaching practices and beliefs of teacher educators are strong influences in the lives of developing student teachers, coupled with the many years of 'observed apprenticeship' (Timmerman, 2009:231) to which they have been exposed during their own school careers. Hannsie's contribution to my understanding of 'good teaching' was reinforced by Evelyn Howard's approach. Although they were very different in the ways they delivered their content, they were both dynamic, and insisted on quality from their students. Evelyn's teaching strategies were unique, and she introduced me to the concept of experiential learning. This was a practice that I had not before encountered, and it was to have a deep impact on my own practice, and on the way that I came to view the process of meaningful teaching and

learning. In many ways, the experiential learning encounters that I now plan with my students are a direct result of this early exposure. Over the years, Evelyn has also stayed a close and dear friend, and has shared a sense of family, support and loving that is unique. She has also, in many ways, has influenced the construction of my teacher identity. Because she understands the process of teaching and learning, and has stayed current in this field with her own reading and work, our conversations are stimulating and challenging. Like Hannsie, she is able to be objective and direct, and I place deep value in her opinions and suggestions about my work, and the way that I do it. She has had, and will always have, a tremendous influence on both my personal and my professional lives, and she continues to influence and enrich my life in immeasurable ways.

Generally at the Training College, lectures were delivered to groups of students while we took notes. Examinations were based on factual recall, as I state in my autobiography on page 25. Atkinson (2004) believes that the language of pre-existing policies and particular ideologies form initial student teacher identities, and up to this point, this may have been the case. As students, we certainly taught our lessons according to our tutor's methods, as is suggested by Atkinson (2004), Stevens et al (2006) and Lamote and Engels (2010), and we would not have risked being experimental, or deviating from the pattern, because we were allocated marks for our abilities to conform to our tutor's personal requirements. I write about this practice on page 25 of my autobiography.

The training College Building, 1975

Although positive educational experiences encourage students to develop affirmative identities, (Dollof 1999, Maclean and White, 2007), Diniz-Pereira (2003) claims that the emphasis in most teacher education institutions remains on individual development and achievement. Within this isolation, initial values, attitudes and beliefs about teaching are formed. This represents the beginning of the 'traditional boundary of teacher identity' Diniz-Pereira (2003). On the whole, we worked individually, and were ranked by a system of marks that acknowledged individual achievement. We taught our practice lessons individually, and were assessed for these lessons individually. There was never any question of peer assessment, peer reflection, or learning from each other.

When we were introduced to the teaching and learning approach of Evelyn Howard, we encountered meaningful group work and experiential learning in a powerful way. In our groups, as described in my autobiography on page 26, we contributed our individual interests and strengths to the general pool of knowledge. Palmer (1998:118) speaks of conventional teaching methods that groups teacher and students 'in the same room at the same time' so that the teacher does not have to 'say things more than once'. In these experiential learning experiences, we were hardly ever in the same room, and the process of learning was more important than the technique of teaching. Palmer (1998) refers to this practice in his own writing. Interestingly, it was our content knowledge that we were developing, but by going through these motions of learning, we were assimilating valuable pedagogical content knowledge, as discussed by Shulman (1986) and Turner-Bisset (1999) at the same time.

When we taught history, we were not expected to conform, and this flexibility encouraged a certain creativity in our teaching methods. Unfortunately, the rest of the staff was not as flexible, and so, although we were not aware of it at the time, to a large extent we were still limited by a lack of reflexive, critical thinking about teaching and learning, as is suggested by Atkinson (2004) and Stevens et al (2006). We were still teaching to the requirements of our tutors; one of them was simply expecting us to teach more creatively.

While this year of specialising in history and experiential learning was to influence my teaching approach, it was the year that followed, a deep immersion in visual art and art education, that was to change my direction in teaching, and was to develop parts of my developing teacher identity that had lain unexplored to this time. This immersion in visual art is discussed in my autobiography on page 31, and also on the pages that follow.

### 5.3.2 The early influence of Visual Art Education

*During the first week of the new course, we are each given an apple. The
lecturer, Elske Maxwell, delivers an ultimatum.*
*"Do not eat the apple. Live with it. Draw it. Carry it around with you. Bring it
to class next Friday."*
*We all think that she is crazy, and joke our way through the week. We play
games with our apples. We name them. We offer them cigarettes and coffee
during our tea breaks. We make sure that they have good views when we
travel anywhere by motor car.*
*When we return to class the following Friday, we are asked:*
*"What have you discovered about apples?"*
*"They're round?"*
*"Apples are NOT round. Circles are round!" she hisses at us.*
*"They're oval?"*
*"Let's leave the shape. What else?"*
*"They're green?"*
*"What kind of green?"*
*"Ummm…"*
*"What do they smell like?"*
*"Uhhhh…"*
*"What have you discovered about the essence of an apple?"*

*By then we are completely dumbfounded. We are convinced that she is
crazy. We stare back at her in silence.*

*"It's the appleness of apples!" she announces. "There is nothing but an apple
that is like an apple. Apples are unique. So is everything in life. See it. Taste
it. Explore it."*

*She has us all hooked. We lean forward, and begin to learn about art, about
teaching, and about the meaning in our own lives.*

*For the rest of that year, we are challenged and pushed to think and
stretched further than any of us imagined possible. Jenny Franklin, our
painting lecturer, tells us, "When you learn to liberate your thinking, even
when you are bound by all sorts of things, then you are truly free."*

*Stan Cohen, the three-dimensional aesthetics lecturer, will not accept
mediocre work from us. He insists that we only deliver our best – at all times.
But it is Elske who becomes the mentor of the group, and who takes
personal responsibility for encouraging each one of us to think, to feel, and
to live the best that is within us.*

The spiral of this extract reaches back to the grade 9 school girl whom the teacher, Betty Chew, insisted should take art as a matriculation subject, and brings me to the point where I enter the Higher Diploma in Art Education to specialise in teaching Visual Art to primary school children. It reaches far into the distant future, and finds me as a member of staff at an art centre, and then further forward to the point where I, as a member of Faculty at a university, stand in front of my own group of students, who are themselves being educated to become art teachers.

Rich teaching deepened our lives that year. Palmer (1998:11) writes: "Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life". Once again, Newton and Newton's (2001) suggestion is fore-grounded, that the teacher's relationship with students can in some cases be of equal value to a strong content knowledge, as this provides a space for a mutual search for meaning.  In the art department, we found three teachers who understood their students, and taught to this knowledge. We watched as they modelled meaningful teaching practices, asked us questions that stretched us further than we believed possible, and extended our skills and learning. I write about this understanding on page 31 of my autobiography.  It was here that our 'hunger' was met with the 'deep gladness' of the teacher and the words of Palmer (1998:31) became manifest. While we were the recipients, we were also the 'observing apprentices' as mentioned by Timmerman (2009:231).



In this class photograph of the art students, there is clear evidence that we were a very happy and united group.
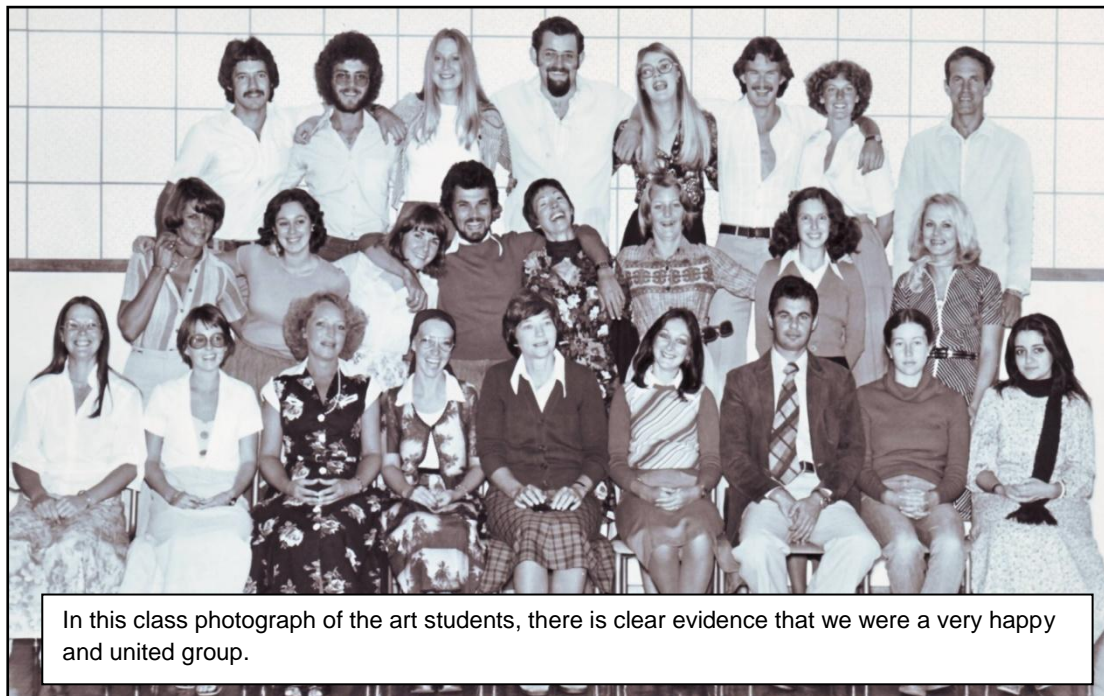
Palmer (1998) speaks of three things that are vital in a healthy teaching and learning environment: the teacher, the student, and the subject. He believes that the subject should be at the focus of the learning encounter, and writes:

> 'Passion for the subject propels that subject, not the teacher, into the centre of the learning circle – and when a great thing is in their midst, students have direct access to the energy of learning and of life.' Palmer, 1998:122).

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With visual art as our centre, we spent the year exploring ourselves as art-makers and as art teachers. Exploring identity during initial teacher education has recently been examined



Some of the art students having fun together

(Palmer, 1998; Dollof, 1999, Atkinson, 2004; Stevens et al, 2006; Maclean and White 2007; Lamote and Engels, 2010), but in the 70s, at our institution, this concept was foreign. In the art department, this exploration became a natural part of what we did, and many of our theory lectures were based on examining and developing our identities as human beings and as art-makers. Elske was fully 'present' during her lectures, a state that is described by Rogers et al (2006) and maintained a state of connectedness with us, as has been discussed in the work of Palmer (1998:36). This encouraged all of us to re-examine our very initial experiences of teaching practice. Palmer (1998) speaks of the value of the mentoring role, and I refer on page 31 of my autobiography to the role of mentor that Elske

played for all of us. Our developing teaching practices, and our developing human encounters were carefully monitored and mentored by Elske. It would only be years later that I came to understand the true quality of the education that we were offered.

We were deeply immersed in the art-making process, and often worked until late at night, exploring the nature of our beings through the non-verbal processes of symbolic representation. The industry to which Erikson (1968) refers, and with which I had worked in my early years at school, and which had been neglected during my high school career, returned. There was no question of 'college hours'. We worked until an artwork was completed. During that year, I learnt about dedication, and about being aware of the task rather than the time, and I discuss this on page 31 of my autobiography. This has been to my benefit, but also to my detriment, and is an attitude that has had a profound effect on my teacher identity. I still do not consider 'office hours', and this often results in a state of inspired exhaustion. When there is work to be done, I learnt, during that year, to do it. I learnt to eat, standing up, using my left hand, while the right hand worked. I learnt to have fun with colleagues, who were working just as hard. We learnt to laugh through the tiredness, and to

emerge on the other side with a feeling of accomplishment. We deeply explored our own abilities as art-makers, relying on each other for critical input, for support, and for friendship when it was most necessary. We explored our creative impulses in a space that expected nothing less.

Writing about creativity, Cannatella 2004:63) believes: 'one has to seek and overcome one's own struggle, find a point of rest, develop one's thoughts in action and determine one's own questions from the inside.' Pavlou (2004:36) concurs, stating that art provides a 'body of knowledge worth knowing', and that through the personal process of making an artwork, we come to know the world, and who we are in that world, in an individual way. The topics that we were given invited this kind of thoughtful introspection: 'paying homage', 'a personal response to a poem', and others. On a daily basis we were involved in giving expression to ourselves, a process that is discussed by Hawkins (2002), while we were learning the techniques and building the content knowledge that would become essential to our teaching.

Sahasrabudhe, (2006: 83) refers to art-making as 'mindful activity, stating that this practice creates new meaning, enabling us to live our lives more fully. This notion is supported by Greene (1984a), who believes that when one is in the process of making an artwork, one travels in the space between the world and the artwork, and then returns to the world. The knowledge thus gained is a discovery against what was known before. During this year, our focus was art-making and art teaching, and as a group of students we were united in this exploration. The 'space between the world and the artwork' was a space to become lost in, and conversely, a space to become found in.

Mediocrity was not acceptable, and for the first time in my life, I understood, or rather, I began to understand, the deeper value of art-making and art teaching. I wrote about this in my autobiography on page 32, where I document the fact that visual art begins to influence my experience of the everyday world.  At that time, I arrogantly thought that I understood it, but now, almost forty years later, I know that I still do not understand it completely, and that there are possibilities which still elude me. Cannatella (2004) believes that creativity is an essential part of being human, and that students who are not stimulated may experience a suspended potential. Creativity encourages the mind to be active and critical, and can contribute to deeper concentration and clarity of thought.  It calls into being new ways of thinking and new ways of doing. The potential for development through the arts cannot be restricted to words. It rests within the response of each individual, and because each individual is different, the responses will also vary in depth and breadth.

I am still discovering this to be true in the students who have become a part of my professional life, and I remain suspended in this space in my own art-making. Palmer (1998:120) speaks of '...the power of a subject that transcends our self-absorption and refuses to be reduced to our claims about it.' So it is when visual art is at the centre of teaching and learning; it refuses to be confined.

Apart from travelling in the space between our artworks and the world, there was another space that provided a more physical sense of exploration. The art department was housed in a separate building, and in that space, we felt committed, protected, and safe to risk. Greene (1984b:295/6) describes such a space as one where:

> '...living persons can come together in speech and action, each one free to articulate a distinctive perspective, all of them granted equal worth. It must be a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven, and where a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed.'



The Art Department of the Training College

Still exploring the notion of the teaching and learning space, Howard Cannatella (2007:625) writes: "*What a place gives is not necessarily the same as what a place is.*" He believes that art-making is an active use of space, and that when a person is at one with that space, one is able to give *in* that space. In many ways, that building, and the space that was created within its walls, provided a home for our souls. We learnt to care for the physical space, scrubbing and cleaning the floors and the art tables, and we learnt to care for the space that was created by the interaction of our artist selves within that space. I write about this safety and the experience of the physical space on page 33 and 34 of my autobiography.

Because of our immersion in art, that year we formed a strong group. We had a very cohesive group identity, and openly verbalised our exclusivity. Fuller (2005) writes that when a member of a group participates fully, the relationships within the group, the actions of the group, and the experiences of the group, all contribute to the quality of learning. Each member of our group was participative and generous in the quality of what they shared. According to Cerulo, (1997) a collective identity has a moral base, and we believed that we were united in a common purpose.


One of the art students with me


Our art group explores shape

Palmer (1998:97) writes that 'reality is a web of relationships, and we can only know reality by being in community with it'. We created a separate reality. We related to each other very strongly, and socialised as a group. We took on new beliefs as a group. We committed ourselves to our work as a group. We went away for weekends as a group. Each one of us changed to accommodate the group, and I document this on page 33 and 34 of my autobiography. Outsiders were not permitted. Within the group, we challenged each other, and also supported each other. Because of the depth of our interactions and inquiries, we believed that we taught better than the students 'across the road'. Although it embraced a certain youthful arrogance, perhaps this could be interpreted as an initial experience of a community of practice.

At the head of it all was Elske, expert teacher, mentor, role model, challenger, supporter, the superb champion of our strengths, the one who pushed us beyond our weaknesses. She was the one who would not compromise.

It was through her that I first began to understand the value of art education as a way of making meaning in life, and it is a direct result of this encounter that I now hold my current position, and also my current values about the discipline. The relational aspects of Elske's teaching have influenced my own approach to teaching art as a subject. She taught me about the importance of the safety of the space, and the safety of the relationships that abound in that space, and about aesthetic worthiness. Elske has remained a close friend and mentor, and has travelled through many passages of my life with me. We have collaborated in several education-related ventures, from working with inset teachers to writing textbooks. In the distant future, I would be invited to write the national curriculum for visual art education for the General Education and Training Phase, and it was to Elske that I looked, and in Elske I found, a critical eye and ear. She has remained interested in the current work that I do at the university, and is able to create a sound platform for discussion.

Elske is a wise and caring friend whose personal and professional contribution to my life is without bounds. She, with Evelyn and Hannsie, represent the pillars in my life, the support without which I would not be who I am. These three women have been deeply embedded in my life for over thirty years, and have been my cosmic family, extended and beloved family to my niece, and integral parts of my personal identity development. They have brought a sense of fun, delight and discovery into my world, and we have shared so much through the passage of the years that they have come to represent my reference points in life.

Without their care, support and challenge, I would have been a different kind of human being, and a different kind of teacher. It is impossible for me to consider who I would have been as a teacher, if I had not been so touched by the quality of being of these three people in the contexts in which I first

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encountered them.

Erikson terms the post-adolescent stage of life as one that is 'beyond identity' (Erikson 1971: 135), and suggests that its resolution should rest on the positive side of the continuum between intimacy and isolation. According to his psycho-social theory, it is during this time that trusting and intimate relationships are formed. Somehow, although I do not believe that I had reached an 'achieved identity status' (Marcia, 2002), by the time that I was a postgraduate student, I managed to form intimate and trusting relationships. It is here that I intertwine Erikson's theory with the possibility of the socially constructed self. While Erikson (1971) believes that one cannot successfully achieve a resolution in one stage unless the previous stage has been favourably resolved, he also writes that it is impossible to separate a human being from the society and culture in which he or she is located, because they are interrelated and mutually influential. Mc Laren (2001) suggests that human identity is constructed through the actual experience of that identity, and through the interaction of that person with other people. A reflexive and relational component is fore-grounded.

Kroger (2000) believes that the influence of context on identity status has not been fully explored, particularly where multiple or conflicting contexts are experienced by one person. In my case, context has proven to be singularly important in the construction of both my professional and my personal identities. Although Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002) write about the spatial integration of contexts, they do not fully explore the implications of multiple contexts on a single individual. In the art department, and in a different city, I was becoming a completely different person from the one I used to be when I was in East London with my family. In reality, I was probably in a time of identity diffusion, with the potential to move to a status of foreclosure or achievement, as documented by Kroger ( 2000). My personal and professional identities were still completely separate, and at this point, neither was consciously impacting on the other. I had a life that was social and involved forging a relationship with a significant other, and I had a separate life that was preparing me for the world of work.

Cannatella (2007) writes of the value of a nurturing context, and in the context of being an art student in a context that was giving, I was learning to be a human being who interacted with other human beings in ways that were important to me. I record this realisation on page 33 of my autobiography.

Richard and me, 1975

Holland (1998) claims that the self is socially constructed, and is shaped by the discourses of power which it encounters (Holland, 1998). Those discourses, in that year, drove me powerfully into forming close relationships. Returning to Erikson's theory (1971), I used relational understanding to further my identity construction. I was emerging as someone who was capable of contributing to a meaningful significant relationship with a potential life partner, and I make my first reference to this relationship on page 24 of my autobiography. I was also a participant in meaningful social relationships, a contributor to a group, and an emerging teacher of visual art.


The close group of art students, 1978

Timmerman (2009:231) writes about students being 'observing apprentices', and in this role, we were participating in teaching and learning processes that were very different from what we had previously encountered; we were submerged into our personal art-making for days at a time, we taught visual art regularly and sequentially throughout the year, and were given rich feedback after our lessons. The new ways of being and doing were creating changes within all of us, and although we were becoming more aware and more sensitised, these changes were also separating us from the worlds which we had previously inhabited, and at the end of that year, it was difficult, if not impossible, to return to them.

This feeling of isolation, and of not belonging, is deepened when it is combined with teaching a subject that is as marginalised as visual art. Eisner (2000) and Koopman (2005) are but two researchers who refer to this phenomenon. It is something that has continued to plague the edges of my educator's mind. If we are educating our students so that the meaning they construct will transform them, can we offer them enough inner security to return to a world that will be foreign to them?

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Reflecting on this time, I can see from this distance, and *learn*, from this distance, that there were other dangers lurking beneath the surface. While we were certainly developing our own art-making in meaningful ways, we were also too confident in our security as art teachers who were 'better', more able to teach, and with more meaning. What we lacked in experience, we gained in arrogance. It did not occur to us, at that time that the real world would be any different, and so my early encounters with teaching in a school proved to be challenging and a frightening and an exhausting experience, as I document on page 35 and 36 of my autobiography. I write about feeling isolated and alone, and about being left to my own devices. I note an attitude from the rest of the staff that art is not a subject of any value.

Walkington (2005) believes that unless pre-service teachers are encouraged to question their personal beliefs, as well as those practices to which they have been exposed, they will not have the confidence to make decisions that are relevant when they become practising teachers. Although, at the beginning of the course, our attitudes towards art teaching had certainly been challenged, the resultant beliefs which we had acquired had become a group doctrine, and we had never considered the possibility that schools would not hold the same beliefs. We had been trained to teach in an ideal situation, and for an ideal situation. The administrative work of a teacher was unknown to me. I had not been prepared to teach one class immediately after another, for seven hours a day. I had not anticipated the preparation that this involved, or the energy that this demanded. Because I had a higher qualification than the other staff members, including my headmaster, the staff presumed that I knew more about teaching, as I note in my autobiography on page 35. In this new and foreign environment, there was no mentor, no assistance, and no support.


My early years of teaching

Perhaps the greatest shock came from the fact that, immediately after a year of exclusive Art education and appreciation, I was in a primary school where Art was not valued. The marginalisation of visual art education has been documented by writers like Eisner (2000) and Koopman (2000), among others, and yet it is still regarded as one of the 'play' subjects for children. In those years, the attitude to the subject was even more nonchalant.

From a space where Art provided our centre, our focus, and our means of meaningful communication, I was suddenly in a different world, in a place where Art was of little value, and little, if any, importance, and I document the effects of this attitude on page 36 of my autobiography. My belief that I was going to change the world through an exposure to the lofty ideals of art teaching was quickly reduced to despair about discipline, keeping order in a chaotic art room, and knowing how to check the number of pairs of scissors that we had in stock.

The choice of the spiral as a metaphor for this study is reinforced by the fact that so much of my life returns to the same place, but from a different perspective. My current post is in that same art department, in Elske's professional role, and the memory of my own first experience as a teacher guides me to offer a warning to the students, and to try to assist them to prepare themselves in appropriate ways for their first post in a school. Because I so clearly remember the disappointment and the exhaustion of my own first post, it seems important that my students become more aware of the realities of the world of teaching, while at the same time remaining open to its gifts, and its joys.

## 5.4 The start of art teaching

> *Who then devised the torment? Love.*
> *Love is the unfamiliar Name*
> *Behind the hands that wove*
> *The intolerable shirt of flame*
> *Which human power cannot remove.*
> *We only live, only suspire*
> *Consumed by either fire or fire.*
>
> *T S Eliot*

### 5.4.1 Learning to teach art

*The school, in the northern suburbs of the city, is a large dual-medium co-educational one, and apart from teaching art to all of the children, I am also assigned to be one of the netball teachers. I know nothing about netball, and have never really been interested in sport. The experience is frightening!*

*The timetable is demanding, and as one large class leaves the art room, another enters. I switch languages and grades and topics and techniques all day long, and the process is exhausting. Once again, the staff is not interested in art. I mount work and hang it in the school passages. The children seems to enjoy what they are doing, and often linger in the art room to help with tidying, washing brushes, and packing away materials. I am once again isolated in my work, alone in my belief in my subject. Staff meetings are taken up with discussions about 'real' subjects, and I doubt that anyone takes my work seriously. I had so wanted to make a difference in the school, and in the lives of the children, but find that most staff members regard my work as a little bit silly, as if I am simply entertaining the children. My youthful passion is indignant, and I am not sure how to continue.*



'My' netball team

Because the school, as the site of practice, is the background against which the identity of the teacher begins to gain substance, Coldron and Smith (1999) believe that the real beginning of the construction of teacher identity occurs when a student qualifies, and takes up a position in a school. In my own first post, and following on the strong group identity of the previous year, I felt extremely isolated. There was no one with whom I could adequately share my fears, my few

successes, or my many failures. This sense of isolation was more acute because of the strong group identity that had prevailed the previous year. I was a stranger on a staff that had already forged relationships. Diniz-Pereira (2003) acknowledges that the demands made on teachers can result in the fact that they are isolated in their work. Classrooms are single units in which teachers work. Because of the isolation within the classroom, teachers often have a need for strong collegial support. In both my first and second posts, as the art teacher at the schools, I was isolated, and there was no collegial support for the work that I was doing.



With some of the children in my first two years of teaching

There was no colleague teaching the same subject or grade, and who could share challenges, and on page 45 of my autobiography, I write of the feelings of isolation that prevailed in my second teaching post as well. There are few colleagues who share a similar interest. Although underwritten by UNESCO, visual art is generally not given high value in the school curriculum, and so art teachers are not highly valued in schools, as I note on page 45 of my autobiography. The subject is frequently seen as having little importance when compared to the sciences. Sahasrabudhe (2006:77) writes:

> 'Historically arts in schools have been neglected in favour of science, mathematics and technology. It is commonly believed that they not only make lighter demands on the human intellect but also take

valuable time and scant resources away from more important and serious endeavours, and they are the first to fall prey to budget cutters everywhere.'

In my first two schools, art education was not valued, which is in line with the writing of Sahasrabudhe (2006), and my work was seen as having little significance. This was to impact strongly on my developing teacher identity. Diniz-Pereira (2003) writes:

'The structure and culture of schools have been some of the most powerful factors which have shaped teachers' identity. Social meanings about teaching, once built in conformity to the structure and culture of schools as well as affected by people's social class, gender and racial differences, also influence the way a person perceives reality at schools'.

At my first schools, the reality was that art teaching was not important. Although I came equipped with the belief that effective art teaching was the most important way to encourage children to make meaning of their worlds, I soon realised that in the world beyond the Art Department, there were few people who held similar beliefs.

Day et al (2006) write that teacher identity can be negatively affected when colleagues do not have the same value for a subject, and this attitude from the principal and the other staff members required a change in my very early perception of who I was as a teacher. Walkington (2005), writing of pre-service teachers, says: 'the experiences that shape their beliefs about teaching are probably far removed from the realities of teachers' work'; for my own survival at the first school, I believed that I had to alter the notion that I was exclusively an art teacher, and concerned only with art education, and move into a realm that included a more general description, so that I could be more acceptable as a staff member. I write about this decision on page 35 of my autobiography, where I describe my voluntary involvement in the after-school programme.  This is in keeping with the work of Day et al (2006) who believe that beginner teachers have a need to fit into their schools.

Years later, at a university, I was to confront a similar attitude in a different site, and had once again to accommodate the notion that art education was seen to be of little significance. At that future time, however, I would be more experienced, and could willingly and knowingly make the change, because I knew how to take the principles of what I was teaching, and the way that I was teaching them, into a more general arena. In my first two posts, which, for personal and geographical reasons were of short duration, my knowledge about teaching in general was limited. In the Art Department, we had acquired deep content knowledge about

art history, art theory and the techniques and materials of our work, but we had gained only theoretical knowledge and scant practical experience regarding the real work of teaching. My understanding of children came from studying the stages of their creative development, but did not include real children in real classrooms. My knowledge about teaching in the real world was only just about to begin.

Teacher knowledge does not include only knowledge of the subject, but includes knowing how to teach that subject and its educational ends, understanding the curriculum, a knowledge of the learners and a knowledge and an understanding of the context in which the teaching and learning occurs (Schulman, 1987; Turner- Bisset, 1999; Hashweh, 2005; Deng, 2007). Turner-Bisset (1999) includes the fact that the teacher's knowledge of self is also an important component of the teacher's knowledge base. Perhaps I had a fair understanding of myself as a human being, gained through my experiences the previous year, but I had yet to discover who I was as a teacher; my content knowledge was intact, but in the other areas, I had no knowledge at all.

Looking back at that time, I have come to realise that the knowledge base of teachers is developed in part through formal teacher education, but to a large extent, it is gained through being conscious in the act of teaching. I have also come to acknowledge that these knowledge bases are an important component of how a teacher views herself and her role in the class room, and that they therefore have a strong influence in the construction of teacher identity. In my current work with student teachers, I bring these considerations into our discussions that prepare them for their twice-yearly teaching practice sessions in schools. This might encourage them, when they are in a school, and in the process of learning about teaching, to consciously include an awareness of the other aspects of knowledge that they can only gain through being active participants at a school.

If our actions are the manifestations of our identities, as Schutz (1999) suggests, then my choices within my first post were to influence who I would become as a teacher in later life. The power structures within any school provide the framework within which a teacher constructs her identity, and Day et al (2006) suggest that teacher emotions are restrained when they take on a role that has been described by their school, and that, in their initial years of practice, they have little control over the construction of their identities. The act of teaching within the roles that are externally defined for a teacher is an emotional-laden one that is an act of identity, and emotions influence the way she experiences that work (Zembylas, 2003).

Even in my first year of teaching, I was aware that the emotions of a teacher should not be displayed. This attitude has been documented in the work of Zembylas (2002) and Elbaz-Luwisch and Pritzker (2002), and so I knew that I could not talk about feeling inadequate or helpless. Palmer (1998:36) writes that 'these fears, in their various forms, protect us from meaningful encounters with our students, and also with our selves'. I would never have admitted how lost I felt, because I was supposed to have come with specialist training. Also, at the school, I did not think that there was anyone who would understand what it meant to feel 'lost' as an art teacher. This was combined with my personal identity. I did not know how to ask for help.

This sense of inadequacy and helplessness was almost crippling for the first few weeks, but I slowly realised that if I wanted to be taken seriously, if I wanted to be seen as a 'real' teacher, then I had to become an active participant in other roles in the school. The sense of industry, which Erikson (1968) believes develops in early childhood, and which I had gained in my early years at school, once again rose to the fore, and I volunteered to take the after-school classes. As previously mentioned, I document this decision on page 35 of my autobiography.

### 5.4.2 Learning to be more

> *There are no such things as indemnity forms yet, or PDP driver's licences, and in the afternoons, I load the school bus with children, and take them to the beach, or to the Queen's Park Zoo in East London. I start extra art classes at the school, and encourage the children to draw and paint and make at every opportunity. I begin to have fun in my work. I begin to love what I am doing.*

Although it was not a conscious part of my decision, this action gave me access to a knowledge of the learners that I would not have gained in the hour a week that I spent with them in the art room, a fact that I acknowledge on page 36 of my autobiography. By coming to know who they were, I was better able to teach them. I could also participate in staff room discussions about the children, and, because I knew them in a different context, could sometimes offer



One of our outings in the school bus

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suggestions, or provide information about individual children.


Being a member of the staff cricket team


'Feeling circles' with Foundation Phase children


An outing to the zoo in East London

This deeper involvement in the school gave me a sense of being a part of the staff, and I began to construct a part of my teacher identity that would develop as the years passed, and this would lay the foundation for the kind of teacher I would become as a member of staff at an art centre some years later.
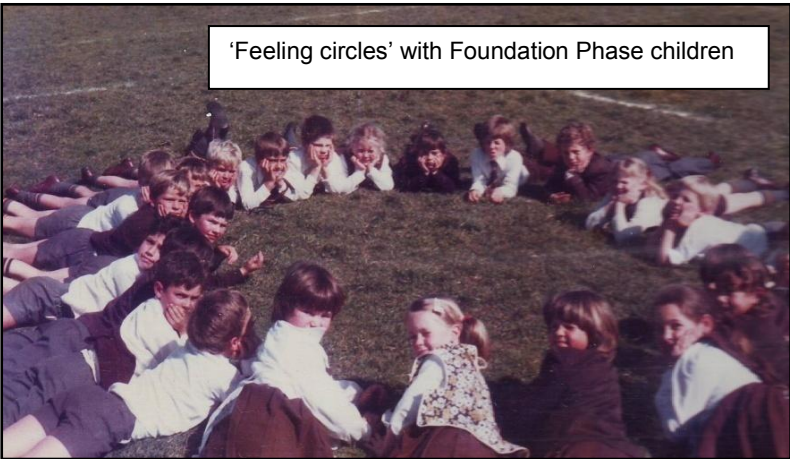
With these changes that I was making, I was beginning to grow into a different kind of teacher. Suggesting that teacher identities change as teachers accommodate new awareness, and construct new meaning, Hodgen and Askew (2007:473) write of teachers becoming 'members of different communities'. I had to move away from the community of art students and become part of the broader community of teachers at my school, in order to learn how to be an art teacher. However, in keeping with Stillwagon (2008), I did not, to accommodate my school, relinquish my belief in the value of art teaching, but rather adapted my personal concept of who I was as a teacher. Because at that time I had no real understanding of who I was as a teacher, this did not require a major shift. It felt more as if I
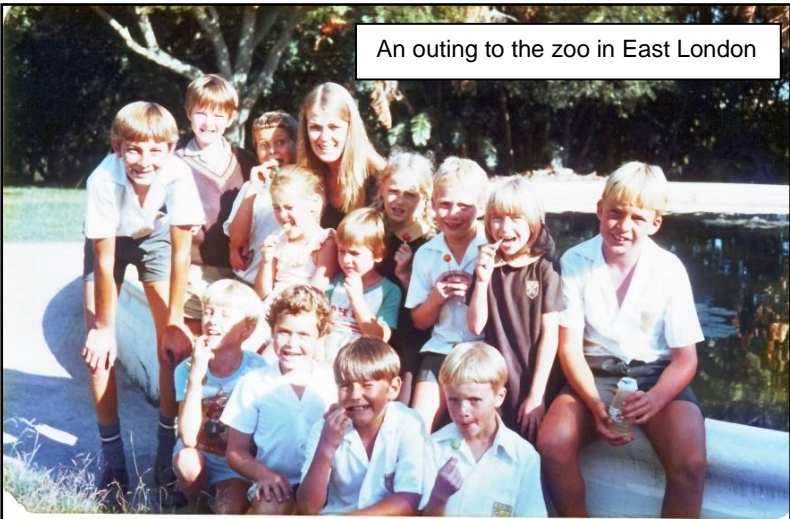
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had been in a world of sheltered ideals, and now I was in the real world of schools, teaching, and the business of work. My second post was back in Cape Town, and was one that I found similarly difficult to adjust to.




Children cleaning after a lesson – note the mess!

In these early teaching years, I was not consciously aware of how I was teaching, or who I was becoming as a teacher, and to a large extent, was simply repeating what I had been trained to do. On page 45 of my autobiography, I write about wanting to make a difference in the lives of the children with whom I was working, but I seem to rely on the subject to do that for me, and do not concentrate on changing or developing my practice as a teacher to accommodate the needs of the children. This is in keeping with Fadjukoff et al's (2005) claim that in the identity status paradigm, it is possible that few people in their twenties have reached an achieved status in any of the domains. In the occupational domain, an achieved status is largely reached at around the age of thirty six.

I did not feel successful in my work. I had come with the very high standards and ideals gained in the Art Department, but found, in the real world, a completely different set of standards, and a school that did not relate to the ideals of art teaching. Mc Cann and Johannessen (2004) concur that novice teachers frequently have to deal with the challenge of confronting the fact that the actual teaching experience is very different from their expectations. In my art room, although I thought that I was teaching as I had been trained to do, the children were responding in different ways, and I was disappointed in the reality of what I was confronting.

The work was often exhausting, and there was a staff of unknown faces who did not believe in what I was trying to do, as I have noted on page 45 of my autobiography. They all seemed sure of what they were doing, and confident in their work, and it would only occur to me years later, that some of the teachers at that school may also have been confronting their own challenges about the experiences of teaching and learning. This fact is also documented in the work of Mc Cann and Johannesen (2004).

Smith (2007) suggests that the field of pedagogical content knowledge and teacher identity should be combined and fluid, rather than viewed as separate parts of the same being. In my own experience, these two are inseparable. With very little practical pedagogical content knowledge, my teacher identity was hardly in evidence. During those years, I paid scant attention to developing any part of my professional knowledge base, and so the construction of my teacher identity suffered the same fate. Teaching was my occupation, but not my career. Pomson (2004) notes this tendency in beginner-teachers. My focus was on my personal life. My relationships were of great importance to me, and teaching was simply my work, the job that I did during the day. My personal and my professional lives were disconnected.

The change that I made, at my first school, was not an internal one, indicative of professional growth. It was rather one that accommodated the power structures of my school. I had no intention of staying in either that post or that city for any length of time, and so my accommodation was consciously temporary. I did not seek lasting solutions, or actively develop my professional life. It did not occur to me. I left my first school because I wanted to live in a different city, and not because I believed that I would learn more, or advance my career. That first post was in my hometown, and was to appease my mother. I knew that it was temporary, and that, as soon as I could, I would return to the city where I had discovered lasting relationships, and where I believed there was a different attitude to art teaching. At that time, my life seemed set on a different pathway from the one I ultimately explored; I was going to be married, and had found the right partner. I was being groomed, and grooming myself, to be a corporate wife. I did not see myself as becoming a dedicated teacher, or staying in the profession for the rest of my life.

After fifteen months in my first post, I returned to the city for which I yearned, and after a brief sojourn at another primary school, where I confronted a similar attitude to the subject, as I have noted on page 45 of my autobiography, I joined the staff of a flourishing art centre.

It was at this art centre, where the staff presented a united group with a common interest, that I slowly began to adapt my teaching, and in fact became more aware of the kind of

teacher that I was becoming, and could become. When I began to feel that I was developing my practice, my practice began to be more important to me, and my work began to have more meaning. When my work began to have more meaning, my teacher identity and my personal identity began to fuse.

### 5.4.3 The real work begins

It was in this 'different community' of which Hodgen and Askew write (2007:473) that change began to take place, and I began to pay attention to developing the professional side of my life. Malm, (2008:380) writes that in order for teachers to change, it is important to achieve a state of 'emotional connectedness'  Understanding emotions should be developed between teachers, administrators and agents of change. In such a supportive framework, teachers are able to share beliefs, emotions and values around teaching, and this encourages teachers to become lifelong learners. They are liberated to look both inward and outward, and to learn from their mistakes. This in turn offers the opportunity to construct their own teaching culture rather than have one that is imposed on them.

Once again, the socially-constructed self, as noted in the work of Holland (1998) entered my equation, and my context, as noted in the work of Van Hoof and Raiijmakers (2002), powerfully influenced both my personal and my developing professional identity.

> *The principal of the Centre, Brian Johnson, is a non-directive boss who expects nothing less than the best from his staff, and although initially we are all a little nervous of him, we slowly realise the value of the professional freedom that we are afforded. Our classes end at 17:00 in the afternoon, and the staff is never in a hurry to rush home. We sit in the staff room or on the veranda of the beautiful Parker-designed building, and discuss our lives, our work and our students. It is an environment that nurtures the development of the spirit, that demands the development of the teacher, and that encourages colleagues to be friends. We share ideas, help each other display work, and there is an atmosphere of caring and common goals that pervades the very walls of the building.*
>
> *The parents knew that their children are being educated through visual art in a creative and dynamic way, and we are a thriving community. In my professional life, these years will always be a beacon of growth and friendship for me; they are a time when I learn a great deal about art education, about myself as a practising teacher, and about the value of collegiality.*

The curves of the spiral of this extract reach back to that child on her first day of school when her own art-making was recognised by her teacher. They curve through a time when I was a

high school learner making a subject choice. They advance to a time when I was a student studying an Art Education specialisation, and reach firmly forward to a time when I will become a  lecturer in Art Education, who will draw on all of these experience as I continue to construct my professional identity with my own peers and students.

I was to teach at the art centre for seventeen years. Kroger (2000) and Van Hoof and Raaijmakers (2002) all acknowledge the influence of context,  and during this time, the context of my work, and the strong group characteristics of the staff came to influence both my personal and professional identity. It was at the art centre that I first discovered moments of real joy in teaching.



An entertaining parents' meeting organised by the staff...

The staff was a very cohesive group, and we became committed to the centre in such deep ways that our personal and our professional lives naturally intermingled; we drew our relationships with others into the centre, and they became 'members on the edge' of our community. Palmer (1998:97) writes that 'reality is a web of relationships, and we can only know reality by being in community with it'. With the art centre as the focus of our community, we learnt from each other, from the children who came to our classes, from the support staff, and from the intermingling of all of these experiences. Each one of us seemed to become more, in the group, than we were as individuals.   In those early years, reflective practice was not a part of the vocabulary of teaching, but we shared our successes and discussed and debated our failures, learning from each other along the way. This was to impact on my growing identity as a teacher in a number of ways. My subject was once again affirmed, and I felt that I was doing meaningful work. I began to identity strongly with the notion that I was an

'art' teacher, and finally to feel proud to be one. I no longer had to feel apologetic for my subject with staff members who could not see its value.

My sojourn at the art centre seems to signify a time of a joining a meaningful community of practice. Initially, I was a member on the periphery, as I communed and learnt more from the expert members of staff. Hung and Chen (2002), Merriam and Courtney (2003), Fuller et al (2005) and Seaman (2008) write about the state of being on the periphery of a community of practice when one enters from an outside position. This was different from my earlier experiences of being at a school; here, all of the members of staff were committed to art education. Some, with years of experience in a particular discipline, were regarded as leaders in the field, while others, with years of experience at the art centre itself, were generous in sharing the centre, its ethos, and its way of being.
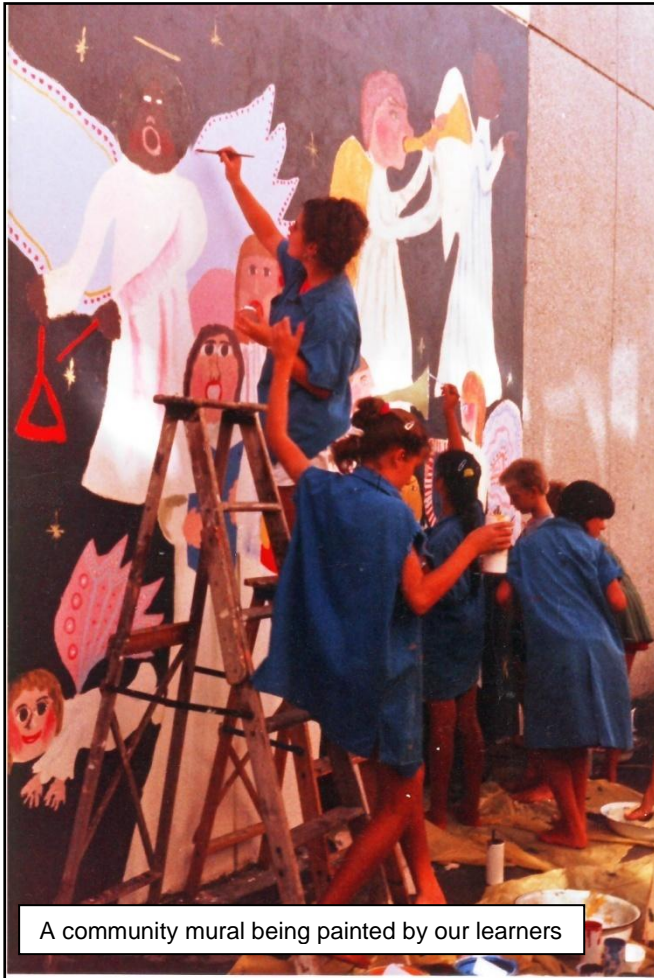


A community mural being painted by our learners

Our common focus and interest was visual art, and visual art education. There were seven full-time staff members, and this population was very stable; no one resigned from the art centre unless their new appointments were to promotion posts in the Western Cape Education Department. This stability provided rich possibilities for the community of practice to develop and expand. It also offered a time of growth for my teacher identity. My knowledge bases were developed, and my confidence increased.

Fuller et al (2005:66) write that 'by bringing their whole selves into that community, new members change the nature of that community in ways which depend on the specific interrelationship between person, community and wider context'. While I was on the staff at the art centre, I moved slowly from the periphery of the community of practice, of being a teacher who was learning on the job, towards the centre, to one who was confident enough to share her knowledge, and to suggest and carry out some new practices. Because we

worked at an art centre, other art teachers regarded us as the experts, and so that is what we had to become.

This was also to influence my teacher identity construct. I began to feel empowered as a teacher who was able to contribute to a broader community of art teachers. I describe this development on page 52 of my autobiography, where I discuss my own expansion into the broader world of visual art education. The art teaching community looked to us for support, and while we provided in-service training for novice teachers, we also held meetings for those teachers who were experienced, but who needed some kind of renewal and a sense of belonging to a broader community. As an itinerant group, we taught at several schools in the Cape Peninsula, and where we did not teach, we invited the teachers to become a part of our growing community of art teachers who were sharing skills and learning from each other.

Merriam and Courtney (2003) suggest that in a community of practice, meaning is constructed through the actions of that community, and Hung and Chen (2002) add that when people actively participate in the actions of a community, their behaviour changes, which leads to a change in identity. Through learning how to teach art purposefully, I was in the process of learning how to be, as an art teacher. As my learning changed what I knew, and what I knew how to do, it also changed who I was, while I was doing it.

I had come equipped with strong content knowledge, which is a knowledge base that is included in the work of Shulman (1987), but had very little practical understanding about teaching meaningfully in the real world. Mc Cann and Johannessen (2004) document that although teachers may have had good training, they are often ill-equipped to confront the actual teaching experience.  At the art centre, discussions about the ways in which we taught were regular occurrences, and I began to change my own practice as I learnt. While I had been teaching in isolation at a school, I thought that there was only one 'right' way to interpret the national curriculum, and to work within the confines of the syllabus. Søreide (2007) writes about the fact that public documents may have an influence on the construction of teacher identity, but at the art centre, I was shown how to interpret these documents in innovative and meaningful ways. While they still defined what we taught, they did not define *how* we taught, and this interpretation was to enrich the way I planned my lessons.

At my previous schools, the classes had been very large, and the only way, as an inexperienced teacher, to keep order, was through rigid discipline. I taught art to each class for one hour a week, and so it took a long time to build relationships with the children. I saw them as large generic groups, rather than as individual children. I learnt little more about children during those two years, because my focus was on teaching art, and not so much on

who I was teaching. It did not occur to me that one might impact on the other in a significant way, although I acknowledged that the children's life stories might impact on their performance, as I document on page 36 of my autobiography.



A drawing class at the art centre

Malm (2008:379) speaks of the 'psychic rewards of teaching' and writes that the relationships that teachers have with their learners influence their teaching strategies. At the art centre, the classes were smaller, and the children were there because they wanted to be. I began to relax into my teaching, and to enjoy the children. I found that I was beginning to plan lessons for particular classes in particular ways. In some cases, as is demonstrated in the following extract, I was able to respond in the moment to a particular class.

### 5.4.4 Learning to teach more intuitively

*"So, you want to build towers?" I ask them.*
*They look at each other nervously. This is usually the point when a regular teacher will punish them for their bad behaviour. But I do not see this as bad behaviour. It is constructive, problem-solving and experimental. They shuffle nervously.*

*"Using stools to build your tower is dangerous. If it collapses, one of you could get hurt."*
*More nervous shuffling. I walk out of the room, and return minutes later with piles of newspaper, and rolls of masking tape.*
*"So, you wanted to build a tower," I smile at them. "Here you are. I dare you to build one. But you can only use newspaper and masking tape."*

*For a few moments, the children are confused. They stare at each other, and avoid my gaze. Perhaps they think that this is sarcasm, and that I will soon gather up the newspaper, consider them chastised enough, and continue with my normal lesson.*

*"Come on," I challenge. "Someone has to be able to work out how to make newspaper strong enough to build a tower."*
*"We could roll it…." says a little boy called Stephen, who has been sent to extra art classes because he is hyperactive, and a problem to his teachers.*
*"Can you show us?" I challenge.*
*Stephen takes a sheet of newspaper, and carefully rolls it into a tight cylinder. One of the other children joins him, and begins another roll. Without a further word, Stephen attaches the two rolls with masking tape.*

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*"We need more," he says.*

*The children suddenly realised that I am serious, that we are really going to build a tower with newspaper, and within seconds, the entire class is busily making tight cylinders of newspaper. Stephen proudly takes charge, and the tower begins to grow. When four cylinders are joined together, it becomes necessary to construct a base, and there is much debate about how this can be achieved. The children form natural groups. There are those who roll, those who construct, and those who plan. When the base is strengthened, the tower grows a level higher, and once again, the base has to be reinforced. I watch with delight as it grows. Suddenly I realise that we are heading for a problem.*

*"Hold on a moment," I laugh. The children all stop, and look at me.*
*"This tower is getting too big for this room." There is a moment's hesitation, and then somebody yells "Outside!"*

*We move the tower into the courtyard, and without further ado, the children continue to build. When the tower lists one way, engineering at its simplest level comes into play, and a solution is found. When it lists the other, another solution is proposed. The tower grows, and we fetch ladders. This is going to be the highest newspaper tower in the world. Other children come and watch us. Staff members join in the fun. The caretaker laughingly asks how we are going to clean it all up afterwards. There is an air of joy and discovery.*



Building the tower

This extract speaks of a time when I was beginning to understand the ways in which children learn. I was also beginning to be confident enough to teach more spontaneously, and from a place that was deeper than a generic lesson plan. My teacher identity was beginning to assume more confidence as I grew into an understanding of who I was teaching, and this knowledge began to enrich my teaching. As I began to enjoy teaching, my personality started to emerge more and more in the way that I was teaching. Stillwagon (2008) believes that it is the personality of the teacher that relates to the learner, and in my case this proved to be true. As I slowly began to construct my knowledge of the learners, which is a knowledge base that Shulman (1987) believes is important, I became confident enough to let the learners know who I was, while I was teaching them. Malm (2008:379) writes that healthy relationships with learners give teachers a sense of value in their work and in their human capacities. The relationship between me as a teacher and the children as learners became important in the learning process, as is noted

in the work of both Zembylas (2003) and Stillwagon (2008), and there were often times when we would explore new techniques together.

This was particularly true when it came to Technology. On page 71 of my autobiography, I write about introducing Graphic Design as a subject at the art centre. With the introduction of this subject, which I taught as a matriculation subject, it became necessary to use the computer as a design tool. At this time, in the 80s, computers were very new as teaching tools. I was aware that most of my students knew more about the technology than I did. Our lessons became a jumble of teacher being taught by learner, learner being taught by teacher, and both learning together, through a process of discovery, trial and error, as I record in my autobiography on page 72. Macintyre Latta et al (2007) speak of a 'learning encounter', and describe it as one that is participatory, connected, and involving critical thinking processes. They believe that a teacher's strong content knowledge enables her to assume a dynamic role in the construction of knowledge. My content knowledge was focussed on the elements and principles of art and design, but it was the learners who assumed the dynamic role when it came to technology. The boundaries between the teaching and learning roles were never clear in those classes.

In this kind of classroom, my knowledge of the learners deepened, a fact which is noted in the work of Newton and Newton (2001) Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) and Deng, (2007). Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) believe that the act of teaching explores the relationship between the teacher and the learners, between the learners themselves, and between the learner and the learning content. Because in many instances I was also a learner, these relationships developed quite naturally, assisted by the fact that my classes were never bigger than twenty students. I did not set out consciously to know my learners. The knowledge grew as we worked together towards our common goals, and the relational aspect of teaching began to be real to me.

This process was made much easier by the fact that we were at an art centre; students came in the afternoons for their classes, which were almost two hours long. They loved being a part of the ethos of the art centre, where everyone knew their names, and where we were interested in them as human beings, and not just as learners who performed well. Often, they would linger after classes, or their parents would come and view the work that they had completed. The art centre was the hub of it all, with a gracious building that embraced all of us.

I came to know the learners very well. I could observe individual children closely while they were working, and could learn to understand their thinking because of the kinds of questions

that they were asking, or the answers that they were giving.  I could spend time watching a single child use his or her hands, and see what each age group was capable of doing. I could hear about the worlds that they lived in, and the things that were important to them. This knowledge of the learners contributed to the way that I planned my lessons, and also prepared me for the writing of text books, which came later in my professional life.

Also within the context of the art centre, because the principal was a non-directive leader who trusted his staff, further aspects of my teacher identity were developed through my level of involvement and my initiation of different events and practices. The principal placed the power of the centre in the hands of his staff, many of whom had worked there for years. In this context, my own leadership skills were honed, and my organisational skills were developed and refined. My confidence in my practice grew, and it was during these years that I came to love teaching, as I developed a deeper understanding of the meaning that art education could make.

The art centre building

Encompassed in this context, I extended the understanding, which had begun in my own student experience, that the physical site of art-making is an important factor in any art lesson, and that it is the sense of safety that the site offered, that directly contributes to the child's opportunity for creativity and meaning-making. We loved the building in which we worked. We cared for it ourselves, and all of the people who worked there were respected and cared for. It was a space in which we all felt nurtured. This understanding was to impact

directly on my fight to preserve the gracious old building in which our current art department is housed, when the bureaucracy of the institution wanted to give it a corporate identity and image. It has driven me to try to create a space of safety for my own students, who are busy seeking their art-making abilities and understandings as they strive to begin the constructions of their own teacher identities.

In the context of the art centre, the relational aspect was very strong, both amongst the staff members themselves, and between the learners and the teachers. I found this deeply satisfying, and it was here that I developed a habit that became a way of life. It was easy to become committed to a work space where one is happy, and my commitment moved from being simple commitment to total dedication. During this phase, a particular kind of art teacher identity was constructed. When my personal life was unhappy or not stable, I retreated into the safety of my work for security, and found that it provided the sanity, the balance and the satisfaction that would distract and restore me. This habit was to last for many years, and initially it was beneficial, as I became immersed in the art centre, and grew to love the building, the people and the work. Towards the later stages of my career this tendency became destructive. The immense value that I placed in my work was so encompassing that it began to limit, and then negatively impact on almost every aspect of my life. I will return to this point later in this contemplation phase.

While I was at the art centre was that I learnt to be a contributive member of staff. I was involved in many respects of the work, and beyond the teaching of my subject. When I later moved into higher education, I found the loss of this part of my identity quite difficult, because at a higher education institution, there are committees or departments that do this kind of work.

Although I was not consciously aware of it, my knowledge base, as described in the work of Turner-Bissett (1999), was being constructed while I worked. Where I had once been fairly confident about my content knowledge, I came to realise that there was still a great deal to learn. My pedagogical content knowledge was being crafted in practice, and through discussions that were held with colleagues, where we also debated the educational ends of art teaching in general. I was quickly beginning to understand, to value and to work within, the ethos of the art centre. Here, once again, I was strongly influenced by the active community of practice that we all enjoyed.

## 5.4.5 Expanding horizons

During the time that I spent at the art centre, I became involved in all aspects of the Centre, from the administration, organisation of various outreach projects, and, twice acting as principal, also in the leadership. We held regular public exhibitions, and while we were mounting and preparing for these, we shared knowledge and teaching strategies, which honed our skills as teachers. In many ways, we were practising and learning through informal peer reflection, as I note in my autobiography on page 72. Writing of a different context, Deng (2007) believes that in order to learn meaningfully, the learner should experience the knowledge, with knowledge acquisition gaining in depth and experience



The foyer of the art centre

as the child develops capacity. I believe that learning about becoming a meaningful teacher is no different.

My teacher identity was being constructed around qualities like involvement, commitment, and purposeful teaching. This resonated with the kind of approach that we had developed as students in the art department during my final undergraduate year, and I began to feel that I was becoming the kind of teacher that we had been trained to be. My notion of what an art teacher could be, and my understanding of who I could be as an art teacher, began to merge. In a way, I began to feel more authentic in my claim to being a teacher. Rippon and Martin (2006) believe that most teachers only reach a firm sense of themselves as teachers after ten years of teaching, and in my case, this proved to be true. Up to that time, I had been too busy learning the work, understanding the learners, and developing my practice, to really arrive at the notion that I was finally a fully-functioning educator.

> *At the Art Centre, Brian's gentle style of leadership encourages us to open new opportunities, and we begin a quarterly magazine, which contains news of the centre, accessible articles to the parents about the value of art education, and copies of graphic works that had been completed by the children. The staff works during spare times to type the articles, produce the layout for the finished magazine, print and collate the thousands of pages to produce the final, finished article, and it is always done with a sense of fun and shared commitment. Sometimes we toss together a quick supper, and then work late into the night to make sure that the magazine can meet our self-imposed deadlines and posting dates.*
>
> *I speak to Brian about starting some adult education classes. I have been teaching calligraphy in the adult education courses at a high school in Pinelands for a couple of years, and the programme is very successful. Brian*

*is delighted with the idea, and within months, we have a busy centre that teaches adults in the evenings. Our secretary takes on the organisation of the courses, and these soon prove to be so popular that we have to bring in part-time staff to offer alternative courses. I introduce Saturday morning classes for children whose names are on our extensive waiting list, and these are also successful and well-supported by our community.*

*I am invited to organise the visual art component of the Seventh International Rainbow Week, which is held in Cape Town. Children from all over the world are brought to Cape Town, where they are exposed to learning that is facilitated by South African teachers. We gather together a group of art teachers who are dedicated and passionate about teaching, and spend weeks preparing for the event.*



This extract speaks of my deep involvement at the centre. With the unexpected death of the man that I loved, which I document on page 64 of my autobiography, I superimposed my work on my grief, and became even more involved in the centre. I mention this personal aspect because it impacted quite strongly on my identity as an art teacher. With the removal of someone whom I had assumed would be a life partner, and who had been in my life for many years, there was an enormous change in my personal life.
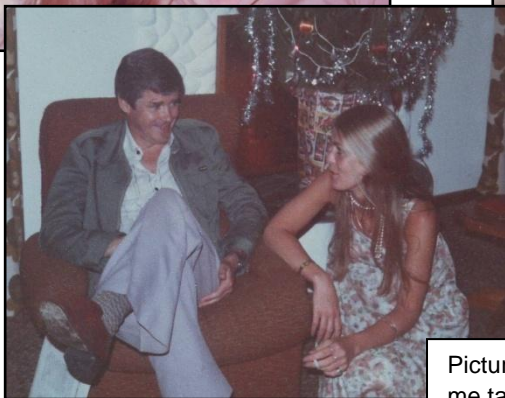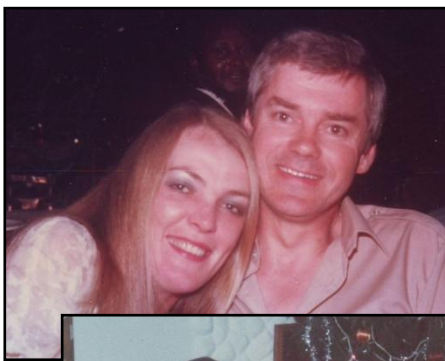






Pictures of Richard and me taken over the years

**You**
Sometimes, suddenly, in the middle
of something or nothing or everything,
I remember what it was like to love you
so irrevocably
and it is as if
everything stops for that moment,
and all that is real,
is you.


**You, again.**
I see you in the way
someone else moves
it proves nothing of course
I know you're dead
it's just a movement,
an angle of the head,
a nuance in the voice,
it's not a choice I make,
it catches me when I think
I'm doing fine,
and then I see you, and
I'm lost again, in time

I turned to my work to fill the space, and was, in this process, opening a doorway to becoming almost totally immersed in my professional life, sometimes to the exclusion of my personal and social existence. I was beginning to develop a habit that would last for most of my teaching career, and which would strongly impact on my identity as a teacher: when my personal life became unstable, it was to my work that I turned for a sense of sanity, for stability and for fulfilment. It was here that I could find a world that I knew, where, to some extent, I was in control, and where I could function effectively. This resulted in a commitment to my work that acknowledged no bounds. Teaching at the art centre was deeply satisfying, and I used this sense of purpose to fill the gaps that had been left in my personal life by the death of someone whom I had thought would be a significant part of my future. Teaching became my focus and my means of survival.

As the years passed and my experience and confidence and immersion grew, I introduced many new practices and changes. I began a quarterly magazine which extended our range and influence and introduced Saturday morning art classes to accommodate our long waiting list. I initiated classes for inexperienced art teachers, and introduced graphic design as a matriculation subject. We introduced an annual arts and craft fair and adult education classes. I took on the organisation of the art exhibitions for the national Diaz centenary, the 150 year-celebrations for the National Department of Education, and the Seventh International Rainbow Week, as I have documented on page 52, and also on page 73 of my autobiography.

Ashkanasy (2004) suggests that there is a strong link between emotion and performance, and argues that emotions affect our individual and group decision-making abilities. Seaman (2008) describes a community of practice as a gathering of individuals who unite around a common activity, and in so doing, learn how to do it better. In our community of practice, we were a cohesive, happy group of people, united around a common activity, which was the teaching of art. It was easy to take risks and to try new ventures, because we had the care and the support of each member of staff.

Masks made by some of my learners

For two consecutive years, I was awarded the Sanlam National Art Teacher award, as I have documented on pages 62 and 63 of my autobiography, and this grew my confidence enormously. It was, for me, an acknowledgement that I was teaching in a sound way, and that my learners were benefitting from their exposure to their art centre. I felt very secure. I had found an effective way of teaching. I was being acknowledged for my work. I was teaching in a wonderful environment. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) believe that schools should be places of safety, for both the children and the staff whom they house, and in these times, the art centre certainly provided all of us with a feeling of being secure, valued, protected and cared for. It was a space that 'gave'. (Cannatella, 2007:625) writes: 'What a place gives is not necessarily the same as what a place is. From its beautiful building to the safety of the work that we did, and the friendships that we held, the art centre sheltered us.


The entrance to the art centre
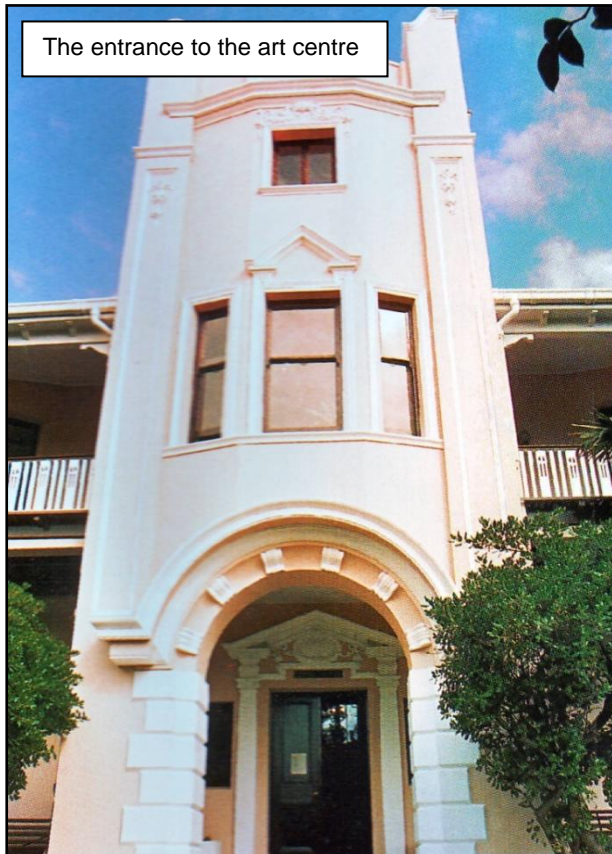
Perhaps it gave too much. Perhaps it was too sheltered. Turner-Bissett (1999) claims that context has a deep influence on a teacher. For her, context embraces the site of practice, the community of the school learners and parents, class sizes, collegial support and interpersonal relationships, as well as the values and attitudes of the principal. We were experiencing what we believed was an ideal context. What we lacked was real challenge.

When I look back at those years of teaching and learning how to teach at the art centre, it is almost with a wry sense of amusement. In reality, we were so insular that we were not exposed to developing our practices beyond what we collectively knew. We

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certainly developed our content knowledge, which is a knowledge base that is discussed by Shulman (1987), Turner-Bissett (1999) and Newton and Newton (2001), and extended our pedagogical skills, as discussed by Hashweh (2005). We manipulated the curriculum wilfully to suit our own ends, but at that time, the proof of, the validation of our 'good' teaching, came from the results that we were achieving, the public exhibitions that we were holding, as I have mentioned on page 61 of my autobiography, the *performance* of the art elements and design principles in our hands, and in the hands of the children.
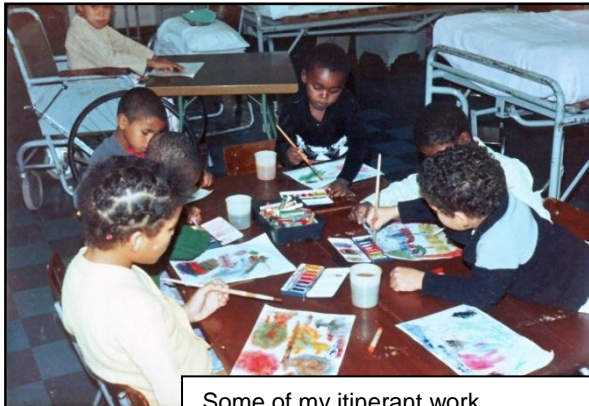


Some of my itinerant work involved teaching art to children in an orthopaedic hospital
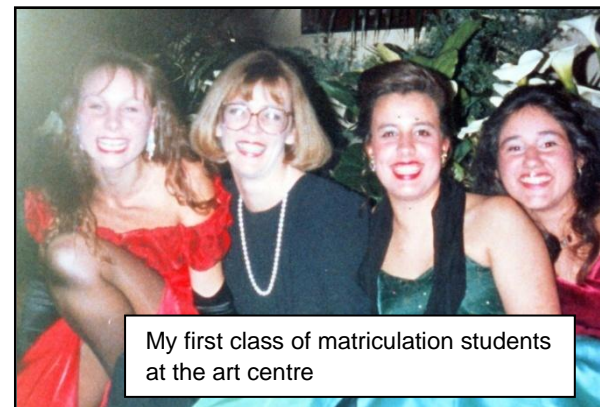
My first class of matriculation students at the art centre

I am intentionally going to stop using the plural in any further discussion, so that the responsibility becomes my own from this point. I knew how to transfer subject knowledge so that my students could work within its confines, but they always worked *within* its confines, and never beyond them. Deng (2007) speaks of converting subject knowledge. I had discovered a successful 'method' for art teaching, and for transforming subject knowledge, and I simply employed it over and over again. It yielded the desired results, the children were doing good work, and everyone was happy. Everyone was a little smug. I had a sound knowledge of the kind of children who we were teaching, and understood what I could expect from them. And that was all I expected from them. I did not extend them further. I did them a great disservice.

Zohar and Schwartzer (2005) stress the intentional teaching of higher order thinking skills. None of these things occurred to me. I did not consciously think about my own teaching in any kind of meaningful way. My teacher identity had reached a fairly static state. I did not reflect to improve my practice, or consider that it could even be improved. My learning about teaching was incidental, and never intentional, never conscious. Upon reflection, it is not surprising that after fourteen years at the centre, I became restless. There seemed no further way to grow the centre, and I was not concerned about growing myself. Our classes were full to overflowing, the staff was all committed to what we were doing, and we had strong parental involvement. Our outreach programmes were in place, and our place in the art teaching community was very secure.

In an ironic way, it was the marginalisation of art education, as discussed by Sahasrabudhe (2007) that gave us our security. We were recognised as leaders in the field of visual art education, and nobody bothered to challenge that idea. There was no one who cared enough about visual art education to encourage us to develop the way that we taught, to consider broadening our visions, to make *us* think critically. Within the confines of the art centre, we had settled into a time of complacency. If we were already the best, where did we go from there? In fact, why did we need to go anywhere at all?



Our group of students during the course of the Diploma in Special Education

At the time, there was nowhere for an art teacher to increase her qualifications or knowledge in the field of art teaching. One option was to complete a B A in Fine Art through UNISA, which Elske and I had started and stopped some years previously, because we were improving our skills as art-makers, but not as art teachers. I began to explore the Diploma in Special Education which was offered by a local university. Although it was not specifically geared towards art education, I believed that I would gain knowledge that would enrich my teaching, and so I enrolled for the diploma in 1993.

Whilst I was a full-time student on this course, I was invited to lecture art education in a part-time capacity to students who were completing a postgraduate diploma in education at the same university. Although these lectures took up only two hours a week, they were to bring about a change in my thinking, and were to open doors that would, within a few short years, change the direction of my working life. Within two years, I had moved to lecture at the Teacher's College a few kilometres away, where I would be training teachers for the kind of work that I had been doing for almost twenty years.

## 5.5 Learning to Lecture

*Through the unknown, unremembered gate*
*When the last of earth left to discover*
*Is that which was the beginning;*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

When I lectured part-time to those students at the university where I myself had so recently been a student, it became necessary, for the first time in my teaching career, to consciously think about what I was doing when I was teaching, and also about what I was teaching. What knowledge did these students need, to be able to teach art? What skills did they have to learn? How could I verbalise what I was doing when I taught art so that the students could also do it?

> *Lecturing at the University and working at the Art Centre at the same time is*
> *an interesting experience, and one that extends me professionally. In effect,*
> *I am training these young students for my own job, and so I have to examine*
> *what my work embraces. It is necessary to unpack the skills that are*
> *required, and I have to think about my own practice, and about the practice*
> *of the colleagues whom I admire, so that I can provide my young charges*
> *with a strong model. This is a significant time for me, because I have to*
> *verbalise what I am doing as a teacher, and for the first time in my life, I*
> *begin to consider, in different ways, my work.*
>
> *Looking back at this time now, I realise that this early reflection was quite a*
> *superficial practice. I sought rather the skills that I believed that the teachers*
> *would need, and tried to find the best ways to quickly, in the limited time at*
> *my disposal, give them the tools to develop these. I remain arrogantly,*
> *blindly confident about my own skills as a teacher. I am doing well, I am*
> *contributing to the growth and development of the Art Centre, my pupils*
> *enjoy my classes, and I have a sound reputation in the art teaching*
> *community. It does not ever occur to me that all of these things can improve*
> *and deepen.*

This extract is significant because it records the first time in my professional life that I consciously began to think about *what* I was doing, and *how* I was doing it. Because I had only two hours a week, per year per group of students, it was important to try to establish what the key aspects of art teaching were, and then to condense these into twenty one lectures. It was a daunting task. My own content knowledge had been built up over nearly thirty years of constant exposure to visual art, first as a school child, then a student, and finally a teacher of visual art. Some of the students with whom I was working had never been exposed to visual art, and those who had a little knowledge were largely negative about their own art-making abilities.

They also needed more than just content; they needed to learn about the particular qualities that separate art teaching from generalist teaching, the demands that make the work more challenging, and they needed to be introduced to the reasons that visual art is such an important discipline for young children.

Although this early 'enforced' reflection was fairly superficial, it did change my practice, as I note in my autobiography on page 71. Clark (2005:237) says that teachers often uncover their personal values and beliefs by relating them to others, and this was exactly what I was doing. In many ways I was creating them, because I had never considered them before. At the art centre, we had a set of established collective values. When I joined the staff at the art centre, I simply accepted them. In that early part-time work with university students, I had to think about these values, and explore whether they were values that would withstand exposure in the real world, in classrooms in other schools, and with teachers who had never before considered teaching visual art. Palmer (1998:11) writes: 'Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life'. Before I could hope to do that, I had to find out what it was about the subject that could join us. I had to find out what it was that I had learnt about being a teacher, about myself in that role, that I could share with them.

This marked the beginning of my understanding that there was much more to good teaching than the simple but effective transference of information, which should lead to sound art-making processes and practical results from the children. This understanding brought about new phase in my identity as a teacher. I was beginning to think consciously about what I was doing, and how I was doing it.

### 5.5.1 A full-time lecturing appointment



After seventeen years, I moved from teaching at the art centre to assume a post as lecturer in Art Education at a nearby teacher's college.

My farewell from the Art Centre, 1997

*Catherine and I are appointed together to run the Art Department at the College. She is a young and energetic teacher with a superb intellect and a deep knowledge of her subject. Together we create a course that is strong on theory and practice. For the first time in my life, I find myself working closely with someone who shares the same passion and belief in Art Education and in the value of critical thinking. Even at the Art Centre, although the staff had all been art teachers, they were working in their particular disciplines or age groups, and none of us team-taught or shared the same classes.*

*The synergy between Catherine and me is quite remarkable. We both have energy and enthusiasm, and the building rings with music and laughter, as the students learn to know their new lecturers. Because Catherine and I are both new, and do not really know what is expected of us, we also have no limits, and in those first years, everything becomes possible. Supported and encouraged by the rector, we build on the strong tradition of the course, and use our own particular strengths to develop it.*

The curves of the spiral of this extract reach back to bring the child, the student, the novice teacher and the recent student all to a point of change. They reach forward to encircle a change in direction, a change in thinking, a change in awareness, and a slow understanding of the kind of teaching that is possible if one is more conscious about one's work. The men who had previously held our posts had both left at the same time, and so Catherine and I were without a mentor or a guide, but also without anyone who could impose what they thought that we should be doing. Both of us were products of the art department ourselves, and so we had both been exposed to the teaching strategies and the mentoring role that Elske had provided when we were students. Together, we discussed the strengths and the weaknesses of that course, as we had perceived them, and built our own course around these decisions. Palmer (1998:26) says: 'I needed to turn around and look for the new life emerging behind me, to offer young people the gift that had been given to me when I was

young.' This is what both Catherine and I resolved to do as we developed the course, and I write about our mutual attitude to our new jobs on page 78 of my autobiography, where I mention that we are determined to 'build on the strong traditions of the course, and use our own particular strengths to develop it'.

My part-time work with the university students had given me a superficial insight into the kind of work that I would be doing. In the art department, the same one where I myself had been a student many years previously, Catherine and I worked together to create a full-time course to educate art teachers in ways that we believed would be most meaningful. We relied on our own experience to guide our thinking.

More than ever, it became necessary to define the key aspects of visual art, art theory, art history, art teaching, and teacher development. We had to ask ourselves questions like: What kind of people did we think art teachers should be? How could we help our students to develop those kinds of qualities? What kinds of art teaching did we want our students to do? How could we best assist our students to teach in that way? What did they need to know about practical art-making, about art theory, and about art history, and how did we engender that knowledge? Palmer (1998:125) writes: '*Each discipline has an inner logic so profound that every critical piece of it contains the information necessary to reconstruct the whole – as if it is illuminated by a laser, a highly organised beam of light. That laser is the act of teaching'.* Greene (1984b) comments that each discipline has a set of symbolic understandings, and writes of subject literacy. We needed to find the critical pieces of information that would provide our students with the subject literacy, and then use them to create a course that would prepare our students in the best way possible. We had to find those answers for ourselves first.

In the late 90s, ours was not a research-based institution. The rector had previously been the principal of a high school, and the staff was largely drawn from high school teachers. Catherine and I relied on our tacit knowledge, acquired over years of teaching art, to guide our planning, and I describe our initial approach on page 80 of my autobiography. Greene (1984a) believes that tacit knowledge is important, and she encourages the merging of both formal and informal knowledge in the process of teaching and learning. In those times, Catherine and I did not have ready access to the internet, and it did not occur to us to consult journals, or international trends in art teacher education, and so it was to our combined formal and informal knowledge that we turned, as I have indicated on page 80 of my autobiography.

It was a time of great learning, but also a time of frightening insecurity. From being in positions where we were both confident in our work, we were suddenly holding posts that made demands that we had not expected. We had no idea what content to include, what the levels of the students would be, even *who* the students would be. While the rest of the staff were busily preparing for the arrival of the students, Catherine and I had no idea what we should be doing.

Although we did not realise it at the time, we were in the process of deconstructing our identities as primary and high school teachers, and re-aligning these to the notions of lecturing in a tertiary institution. Hodgen and Askew (2007) suggest that when the knowledge systems of a teacher change, the identity of the teacher also changes in some ways to accommodate the new knowledge. These changes may be seen as acts of teacher agency, because they represent the teacher's meaningful understanding of the changes and her appropriate response. We knew that we were moving into different ways of being, but at that early stage, we did not yet really understand what those changes would be, and how much we would have to change to accommodate them, as I show on page 84 of my autobiography.

Zembylas (2005:24) writes that the 'constant construction, destruction, and repair of boundaries around the constitution of the self is fraught with emotions', and we were having a difficult time adjusting. Meetings were full of language and processes that we did not understand; the staff was a sea of new and very knowledgeable faces, and our roles with the students and within the institution were not clearly defined yet.

Feldman Barrett et al (2001) claim that people who can describe how they are feeling, are better able to understand their emotional responses, and are therefore better able to deal with them. Catherine and I acknowledged our insecurities to each other, sometimes laughing about them, and sometimes filled with nervous tension. Zembylas (2005) writes that the way we deal with our emotions is in fact also a way that we construct our identities. For both of us, the answer seemed to be action.  We threw all of the furniture out of the office, and painted the walls. While we painted, we talked, planned, shared our fears, explored ideas, and slowly began to construct a course that we believed would be of value to prospective art teachers.

In this process, we were examining the knowledge that we believed that teachers should hold, and in this way were in fact exploring the knowledge bases that Shulman (1986) and Turner-Bisset (1999) write about.  Then we tried, in ways that we believed most suitable, to transfer this knowledge to our students.

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Fortunately, my own belief in experiential learning rose to the fore, and there was much that the students learnt through this approach despite our early methods, which initially closely approached technical rationality. Almost by default, we learnt to be critical thinkers together. It was never a conscious decision or aim, but in our quest for the students to discover themselves as teachers, we were encouraging them to be aware of and question the choices that they made, both in their practical work, and in their practical teaching experiences. Zohar and Schwartzer (2005) believe that teachers should design projects that will make learners think, and we were certainly intentionally doing that. In the process of designing the projects, we were ourselves having to be aware of our aims, the reasons we had chosen those aims, and whether in fact those aims were valid. This contributed to my identity as a teacher by making me more critical of what I was doing, and more aware of what I was doing, while I was doing it. I lost the sense of security that I had felt while I was working at the art centre, and moved into a different kind of professional life. I was learning what I was doing by doing it. I had to be more critical about what I was doing. It was still not very focussed, but the beginnings were there. My practice changed, as a result of these thoughts, and as a result of the move from secondary to higher education. My notion of who I was as a teacher also shifted.

## 5.5.2 Gaining experience in higher education

> *We introduce the students to form by taking them to the beach, and letting them build vast sand sculptures. We take them to exhibitions and galleries, and encourage them to come to exhibition openings with us, so that they can hear the opening addresses. We explore Cape Town through the eyes of developing art teachers, and seize every opportunity for learning that we can lay our hands on. I introduce a Field Study trip to the craft areas of the Southern Cape, and then on to the Karoo, and the mystery of the Owl House and the Outsider artist Helen Martins. This is to prove a significant and deep learning experience for our students, and so the trip becomes an integral part of the course in the years that follow.*

The spiral of this extract reaches back to the teacher education student in her third year at a teacher's college, where, in the history classes of Evelyn Howard, she learned the value of experiential learning. It embraces the meaningful teaching in the art department the following year, and combines the knowledge of art with the possibilities of experiential learning in ways that become personal for the teacher whom that student has become. Like Gude (2008), we believed that art education should assist our students to make meaning of their lived experience. Art theory, and a knowledge of the art elements and design principles, as
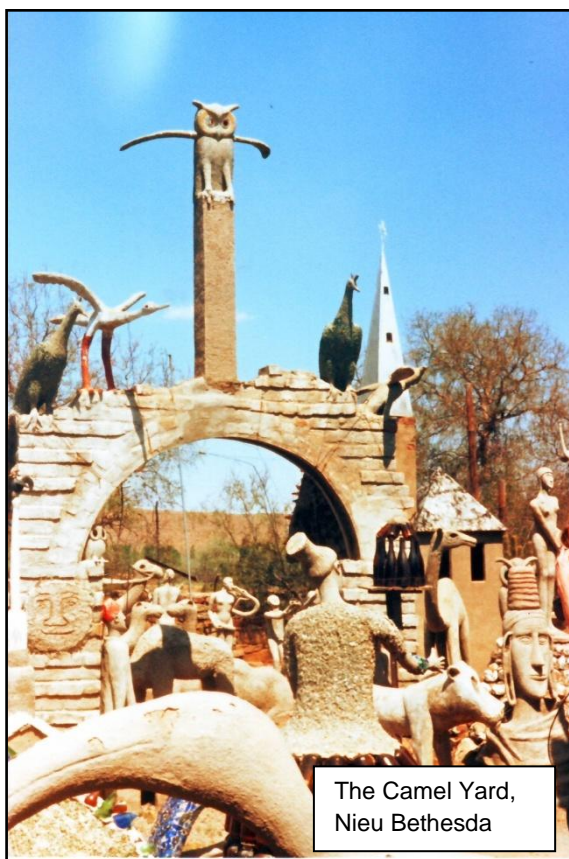
The Camel Yard, Nieu Bethesda

mentioned by Sahasrabudhe (2006), would provide them with the tools, and the language, to explore this meaning, or, as Greene (1984b) calls it, a subject literacy, and they would learn skills and techniques in the process of doing the projects.

We also had to clarify for ourselves what we meant when we spoke about 'making meaning'. Pavlou, (2004: 36) writes: 'Learning in art provides a body of knowledge worth knowing and as such it gives the opportunity to individuals to develop a distinct way of making sense of their world, a distinct way of knowing.' In our projects, we encouraged our students to use the visual metaphors of art-making to express their responses to their own, personal worlds. We tried to make them understand that, where once there had been a blank sheet of paper, there was now a drawing or painting that was their unique interpretation of the project brief, a mark that was as personal as a signature. We let them explore the fact that personal expression did not have to be translated as uncontrolled, and that the most carefully observed drawing of a sea shell was also personally expressive, because it was a personal way of seeing, and a personal way of rendering. Because we had to verbalise these things, our own knowledge became more conscious. They learnt that drawing something enabled them to really 'see' it. Hawkins (2002) writes that personal expression emanates from the individual nature of a human being. Because each child experiences making art in a personal way, the artwork is creating the child at the same time as the child is creating the artwork. For our students, it was no different.

In our theory lessons, we looked at examples of child art, the reasons that we teach art to children, and examined what 'meaning-making' meant for children. Both Catherine and I held very strong views about the importance of child art. Burrill (2005) believes that children are the embodiment of the relationship between nature and culture, and that for them, making art is giving value to the ordinary events and experiences of their lives, representing their connections with their physical worlds and with other human beings. She states: 'Art is the foundation for self-development and learning' (Burrill, 2005: 38). Giving equal weight to the

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These children's works show an exploration of line, using wire, to show the human face, with colour and tonal exploration also included.

subject, Sahasrabudhe (2006:83) believes that art should be at the centre of the curriculum, because it is a particularly 'mindful activity'. Emeji (2008: 321) supports this belief by suggesting that 'art education could be regarded as the most fundamental aspect of a child's intellectual development'. We used to tell the students that we thought that it was the most important subject that they would ever teach. We believed that if small children were given a sound and meaningful art education, they would be prepared for their roles as citizens of life, and would thus be better equipped to acquire knowledge in other subjects. We tried to help them to understand that children receive information about their worlds through their bodies and through their minds. They have conscious and unconscious ways of knowing.

While visual art develops the interpretive skills in children, it offers them the opportunity to move away from the purely physical experience of their lives, and takes them into a realm of personal expression (Hallam, 2008). Räsänen (1999) believes that visual art is unique in offering children this experience, and that it also provides the opportunity for others to observe the process and the result. It is in the act of making the drawing that children make sense of their worlds, interpret them, and present their interpretations in visual symbols. Koopman (2005:93) calls this meaningful engagement with the arts 'fulfilled time'. Hallam (2008) takes this notion ever further by suggesting that art-making is an act

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that fulfils life.

Children's art-making is not the result of talent; every small child is a maker of marks, and an interpreter of the personal world (Sahasrabudhe, 2006). They fill their drawings with what they know about the world, and how they make sense of that world, at any given time. They crowd them with their experience of living. Their marks are signifiers of the state of their understanding of their current social and cultural beings (Sinner, 2008). In the process, they become problem-solvers, negotiating their way through learning new skills and techniques, and risk-takers, as they explore their unique way of experiencing their worlds (Gibson, 2003).

An art teacher's role is not to interfere with this process, and also not to criticise or try to influence it. Art teachers need to have strong content and pedagogical knowledge, because in visual art, the subject matter is seldom dictated by the curriculum, as both Eisner (2000) and Vulliamy (2004) acknowledge, and the selected topic can either engage the child or encourage boredom. Apart from intentionally choosing topics that will motivate children and encourage a creative response, the art teacher's role is to deepen the child's experience of the world through careful, appropriate stimulation, using rich visual resources and skilful questioning, and then to carefully teach the skills and techniques, and to provide the tools to make the children's personal discoveries and interpretations possible. It is important to create the intellectual space for this to happen in a safe and fertile environment. It is not a space in which children are given the materials and may do as they please. It is a communication between teacher and child that speaks of the world, the experiences and the thoughts of both. Sinner (2008) believes that it is a disciplined, thoughtful process that explores society, culture and ways of being.

Kowalchuk (1993:20) writes that effective teaching in visual art is 'largely dependent on the depth and organisation of the teacher's art and pedagogical knowledge' and stresses that appropriate training to teach visual art enables educators to make knowledge about art and art-making accessible to learners.

Although Catherine and I were not actively reading journals at that time, the principles of what we were teaching then were very closely aligned with the above discussion. Our combined experience gave us knowledge that was drawn from being active in the field of child art education, from watching, listening, sharing ideas with colleagues, and being conscious in the acts of teaching and learning. While we were preparing them to be teachers, we were also often exposing our students to their first real, personal experiences of making art themselves, and so the process was in many ways similar to the general principles of teaching art to children. Once these reasons for teaching art to children, and to our students,

were verbalised during our lectures, the knowledge once again became more conscious, and my philosophy about education was strengthened. This contributed strongly to the construction of my identity as a teacher of a particular discipline, and in a particular field, and also in a particular way.

Apart from the specific practical skills, teaching skills, thinking skills and content knowledge that our students would need as art teachers, we also had to prepare them for the realities of teaching this subject in primary schools. Visual art is not given high value in schools, a fact that is noted by Eisner (2000), Koopman (2005), Sahasrabudhe (2006), Hallam (2008) and Alter et al (2009), and they would have to confront the fact that in their communities of practice, they would not find another art teacher at the same school. This point is also made by Bresler (1998).

They would have to work in schools where there were no Art rooms, and within the limitations of a timetable, as described by Bresler (1998). They would have to take on the work of generalist teachers and could expect little support from the overworked subject advisors, as described by Alter et al (2009). If they could learn to work within these constraints, and despite them, could still hold on to the belief of offering children a quality art education, then they would find their work to be rewarding and fulfilling, and would grow in their practices as much as they allowed themselves to become involved.

In our work, Catherine and I tried to go through this process with our students, while at the same time making them aware of these possibilities in their own teaching. Then, we did not name the process; now, we call it meta-cognition.
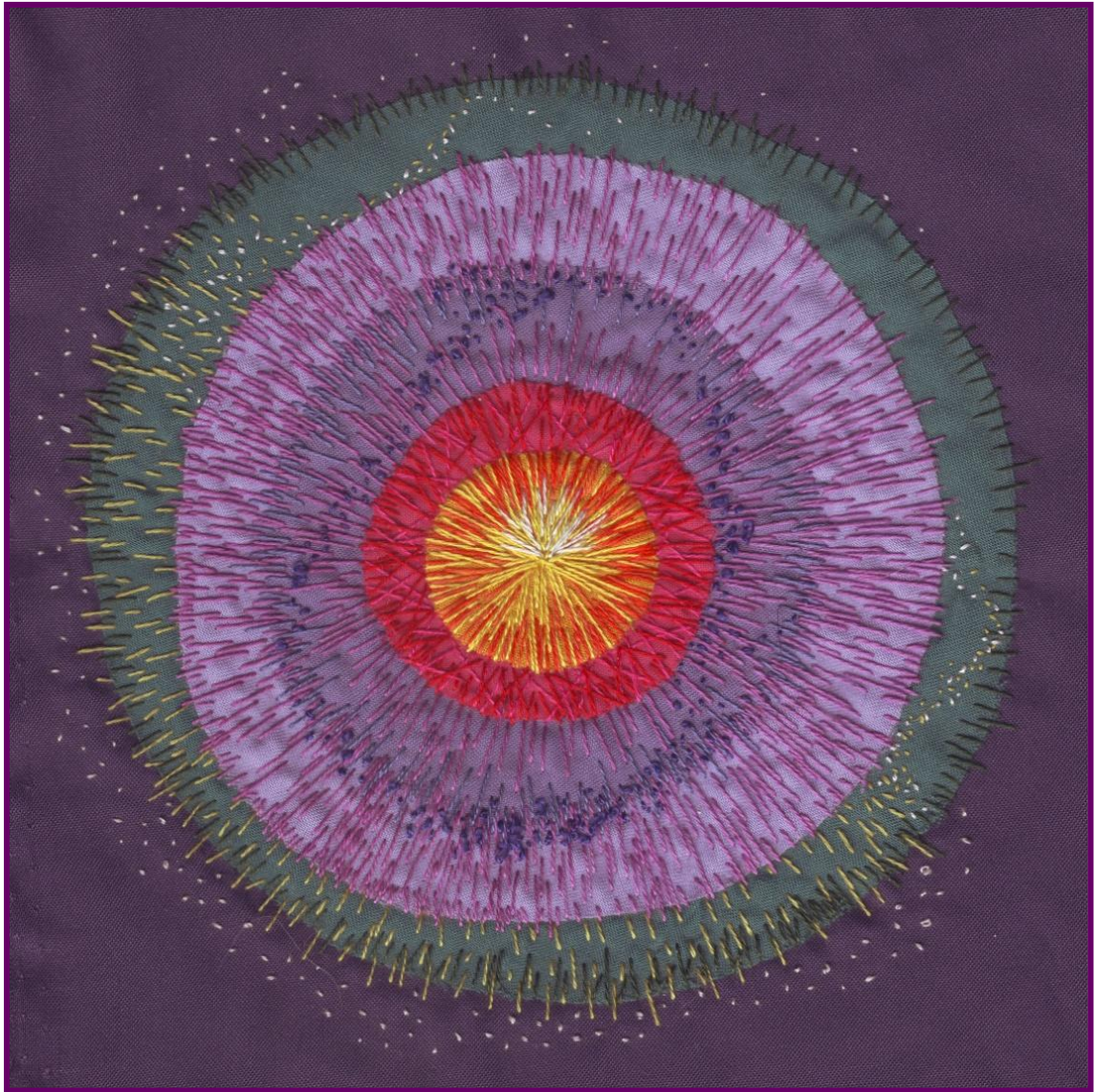
**Figure 5.2: The Mandala of Careful Thought**

### 5.5.3 Learning to value our own past experience

> *Our group of students is a remarkable gathering of young people. We are both looking forward to a promising and exciting time, where we can explore more deeply this strange world of teaching teachers. It is a wonderful time for both of us, because we are bringing everything that we have ever learnt into our work with the students, and it is showing results. The students seem to respond to our determination to have joy and growth on the course, and they present as a happy group who often speak of their delight and enjoyment. We are working more confidently at the college, and with our students, and are beginning to realise that our experience as teachers is adding tremendous value to our work with the students. We had both assumed that we were inadequately academically equipped for the job, but in many ways, our previous jobs had given us the understanding of our work that was perhaps more important than an academic qualification.*

In planning the course that our students would follow, Catherine and I drew on our personal experience to give it substance. This planning influenced the construction of my teacher identity, because I was consciously drawing on what I knew to make learning possible, but I was doing it in a way that was different from when I had been teaching in secondary education. I had to reconstruct my subject knowledge, combine it with my pedagogical content knowledge, and teach these simultaneously. My context was having a strong influence on this particular phase of the construction of my teacher identity, because I was working very closely with someone whose own ideals aligned with mine, and so we stretched each other. We shared similar values about art education. Both of us had been fairly thoughtful practitioners in our previous posts, so our experience and the knowledge that we had acquired about child art, art education, and sound teaching practices stood us in good stead. We both had good content knowledge, and had honed our pedagogical content knowledge over years of teaching art. At the art centre, my work had encompassed teaching children from grades 1 to 12, and I had a fairly good understanding of the kinds of children that my students would be working with. In the mornings, my post had been itinerant, and I had worked across a variety of sights, in different cultures, in two languages, in mainstream education, with children with special needs, in schools for the deaf, and in schools for children with cerebral palsy. I understood how context influenced art-making. We knew the processes, the techniques, the resources and the materials. This importance of these knowledge bases of teachers is discussed in the work of Turner-Bissett (1999), Banks and Barlex (2002), Vulliamy (2004), Hashweh (2005), Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), and Deng (2007).

Our tacit knowledge about art education was important in guiding our thought processes. We also knew that there was a shortage of well-trained art teachers. This shortage is still in evidence today, and has been documented in the work of Bresler (1998), Hallam (2008), and Alter et al (2009). This heightened our commitment. This was an ideal context for my teacher identity to flourish. I was feeling effective in my work, and the sense of achievement was reinforced by the positive collegial relationship that I enjoyed with Catherine. Our work was supported by the rector of the institution, as I have noted on page 90 of my autobiography, where I talk about becoming a meaningful part of the life of the institution, and the students seemed to be thriving. My sense of purpose and meaning deepened, and with it came a strong sense of being a teacher, being an effective teacher. I became aware that I was not only drawing on formal knowledge, but that the informal and tacit knowledge that I had acquired over twenty years of being actively involved in art education was, in many ways, grounding who I was becoming, as an art teacher.

According to Howells (1996) tacit knowledge is acquired in a non-prescribed way. Tacit knowledge is knowledge gained through experience (Carlsson, 2002; Ray, 2009), and is usually actively gained without immediate assistance from others. Carlsson (2002) says it is an integration of informal knowledge acquired from a variety of experiences, and usually acquired through being involved in the experience of working in the same area over a lengthy period of time. Tacit knowledge does not necessarily lead to expertise, but can inform without conscious deliberation. It is not tested in formal academic examinations, but is knowledge in action (Ray, 2009), and is influential in achieving personal goals. Somech and Bogler (1999: 605) believe that tacit knowledge is one of the most important aspects of achieving success in one's profession, because it includes 'managing self, managing others, and managing tasks'. According to Howells (1996), tacit knowledge is not easily transferred, because it comes from experience, and not through structured learning. It is difficult to codify. Usually, those who have acquired tacit knowledge, as well as being in possession of academic knowledge, will have more success in their professions.

Tacit knowledge is closely linked to the values and attitudes of the teacher, and requires consciousness in the act of teaching. When tacit and theoretical knowledge are enmeshed through reflection, expertise can result (Carlsson, 2002). I had not yet reached a place where conscious reflection on my practice was to benefit the construction of my teacher identity, but I was well on the way to enmenshing my tacit and theoretical knowledge, and this was refining and sharpening my practice.

I suggest that tacit knowledge is closely linked to the identity of the teacher, because it is person-dependent, as suggested by Howells, (1996), and that teachers will acquire most of their tacit knowledge in subjects which interest them, and which they enjoy teaching. I did not see myself as a generalist teacher. I saw myself specifically as an art teacher. My teacher identity had been crafted and constructed in teaching this discipline. It was in teaching this discipline that I acquired both my understanding of who I was as a teacher, and the knowledge that would underpin that understanding.

In effective art teaching, informal reflection in action is a natural part of a lesson. While the children, and in my case, the students, are working, the art teacher is watching, informally assessing, noting areas of concern, and being mindful of the process. She is alert to the way the children are interpreting her teaching. If the children's work, their attitudes or their insecurities reveal gaps in her teaching, the conscious art teacher is able to re-teach, re-state or modify the content of her lesson to maximise the opportunities for learning. I propose that it is primarily during this stage of a lesson, although not *only* during this stage, that tacit knowledge about art teaching is optimally acquired. This requires that a teacher is mindfully present during her lessons, a state which Day et al (2006) describe, and is aware of the processes that are at work.

Although this was not knowledge gained through study and research, it was knowledge that provided us with opportunities to personalise our teaching, to offer as the students observed our own ways of practising, and to bring a sense of immediacy into our work with the students. We drew on our practical experiences, we used real examples of child art, and we both had plenty of stories about our own initial shortcomings and early experiences in the art room that could provide humour and debate during our lectures.

Although we did not use these words, we were united on the graduate attributes that we wanted to build in our students. They should have a thorough content knowledge, they should be excellent teachers, and they should be thinking, conscious and self-aware human beings capable of skilfully guiding young minds. They should understand the children whom they would be teaching. Their practical and theory projects built their content knowledge and thinking skills, and the experiential learning opportunities that we provided were designed to deepen their understanding.

### 5.5.4 Learning from new experience

Catherine and I divided the theoretical component of the course between us. She took care of the art history, and I took care of the student development. We studied creativity, child development, and the creative stages of development, according to Viktor Lowenfeld (1978). I included Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, and worked through each of the habits as it applied specifically to teaching. I introduced Maslow and Carl Rogers to increase self-awareness. We looked at what it meant to be a human being and a teacher in current times, and used Erich Fromm's 'The Art of Loving' to examine our relationships and our values. We played around the edges of Jung's 'collective unconscious'. We heeded the warnings in films like 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' and 'The Dead Poet's Society' and watched 'Baghdad Café' and South Africa's own 'Paljas' to discover that one person *can* make a difference. We explored what it meant to live a life of meaning, and used the work of thanatologist Elisabeth Kubbler-Ross to give the discussions substance. Informal knowledge that I had gained beyond the context of teacher education brought the substance to these discussions.

> *My group of students this year is a particularly diverse and interesting one, and I respond to them by pushing them to become more diverse and more interesting. We visit exhibitions all over Cape Town, and spend hours discussing the merits of each artist's work. Although our lecture times are officially from 09:00 to 16:00 every day, the students soon learn that there are no official tea breaks or lunch times, and that when one is excited about something, it stops being work, and begins to be play.*
>
> *This year, I meet all of their boyfriends, who join us in the studio at night, bringing pizza, while we watch current films and debate their merits, pore over artworks in process and decide what still has to be done, and explore teaching and learning in a deep way. They come to my home for suppers so that we can watch films, we travel all over the Peninsula in search of exhibitions, architecture, sand to be sculpted, trees to be drawn, experiences to be shared, and they respond in a magical and dynamic way.*
>
> *At the end of the year, I edit a video that I have been taking of their progress throughout the year, and show it at their final exhibition. In anticipation of the new curriculum that is being introduced, my students integrate their dance and music skills, and hold a presentation on the stage.*
> *"You're making a mistake," Anne, a colleague, tells me. "You make it look like too much fun."*

This extract spirals between the child deciding to be a teacher, the student at a high school being encouraged to take art as a subject, the teacher education student learning about experiential learning, and a lecturer who is learning to teach from her gut.

At the time of this extract, my content knowledge about visual art was fairly deep-seated, and I could draw upon this knowledge base with ease and facility. I had also been lecturing for long enough to feel fairly confident in the way that I worked with the students, and because of the way that we worked, I had a good knowledge of who they were as human beings. It was a time, in my professional life, when I felt confident and secure, and when I really believed in what I was doing. The relationships that I shared with the students and my colleagues fed my teacher identity, a fact that Day et al (2006) include in their work. This response was positive and affirming. Triana (2007: 235) writes that the 'active interplay between student and teacher fosters a bond that potentially can become a source of identification', because what one experiences in the other can become a part of oneself. Although those students did not know it, they were teaching me how to be a good lecturer by demanding those qualities from me. They challenged me, they argued with me and they fed my teaching self with a will to rise to their challenges, and to respond to their need to learn.

Because it was an in-depth course of specialisation in visual art education, there was time to work on a level that required slow processing. This understanding brought with it the further challenge of always doing more, being more, and offering more.

There is a line in this extract that is important. It is the final line that reads: '*"You're making a mistake," Anne, a colleague, tells me. "You make it look like too much fun."'* This was very disturbing to me at the time, and it is a notion that continues to disturb me. It taught me that there were aspects of the educational process that were regarded as being of little value, and that, if I believed in them enough, I should find ways to couch them, when I represented them to my institution, in more formal terms. Experiential learning, and incidental learning, was regarded as 'having fun', and therefore had no 'real' educational value. This brought about a difference for me in the way that I organised these activities, and although I did not realise it at the time, it was my cynical validation of these activities, by providing a theoretical underpinning to them, that contributed enormously to my teacher identity. I gave the students journals that were more focussed, and made them read about experiential learning before we embarked on the process. I insisted that they reflect and talk and write about the experiences. I made them focus on the learning that was happening, *at the time that it was happening*, so that this would be the content of their conversation, rather than the 'fun' that they were having during the experience. Robinson and Mc Millan (2006: 328) suggest that change in the ways that teacher educators work needs to be in line with the 'motivations and attitudes of teacher educators themselves.' Although my motivation in bringing about these changes was not educationally sound, the results, thankfully, were. The students benefitted enormously from this change, and although the element of fun remained, there was also a new element – that

of thinking about what they were thinking about, and thinking about what they were learning. I had introduced metacognition, as discussed by Zohar and Schwartzer (2005), as an indignant response, but the positive results of this exercise soon made a difference to the way that I approached new projects and activities. My teacher identity expanded as I learnt to accept that I was also a learning being, and that I still had much to explore in the realms of teacher education.

McNally et al (2004) describes informal learning as having a social aspect, and in my case, this was certainly true. The content of this course was based on knowledge that I had acquired through being exposed to ideas books, films and the media in my private and personal capacity, as I have shown on page 83 of my autobiography, where I talk about showing students films, and sharing books and philosophies with them, and because my personal and my teacher identities were so interwoven, ideas gained in one place were easily transferred to another. Shapiro (2003) writes that teachers frequently use the knowledge that they gain informally to enrich their classroom practices, and I was not in possession of formal learning that would equip me to teach a class in which the personal and professional development of student teachers was addressed. The knowledge that I had



An art lesson by one of our students.

gained beyond the classroom was being interpreted for classroom use, and into an educational setting. Shapiro (2003) says that informal learning can influence the content and pedagogical content knowledge of a teacher, and that this knowledge can affect their own practices. In this way, a teacher's informal learning has a direct impact on her students.

Catherine and I both acknowledged that, although our pre-service training had been of high quality, we learnt the most about art teaching when we were doing it. We did not know, or even think about, the different kinds of learning that our students would be acquiring. We simply wanted to give them a 'full' teaching and learning experience. To this end, we sent the students in groups into schools once a week throughout the year, to teach art to the same classes so that they could observe their

own development, and learn by watching each other. I have noted this process on page 80 of my autobiography, and it is also the extract that appears below.



An art lesson by one of our students. The results of this lesson are pictured on page 219

It is particularly important for art Education students to have an experience of teaching art to children, because the theoretical component is removed from the complexities of the practical experience of teaching art. Students need this experience to create real knowledge about art teaching. The experience of teaching children practical art-making activities also gives more weight to the practical projects that the students themselves are completing, because they begin to understand the relevance of their own art experiences to their teaching. This fact is noted in the work of Kalin and Kind (2006). Although we did not acknowledge it at the time, these students were also being introduced to their early art teacher identities through this practice.

### 5.5.5 Learning through reflection: the early days

*Catherine and I take it in turns to visit one or two students a week, and to watch them while they are teaching. Afterwards, we examine their 'streaks and weaks' as we called them, and spend time discussing their lessons with the students. Although this discussion is essentially about the lessons that the students are teaching, and the ways in which they are teaching, I find that I am learning almost as much as they are. I learn what I should incorporate into my next lecture, and what I should stress about the art teaching process. I learn what the students do not know and what I should encourage them to learn. I learn about my students, and about who they are, and how it is possible for them to teach. I love this part of my work. After a student lesson, it is just me, and one or two students, and the world of teaching that we are thinking deeply about, learning from, and coming to grips with.*

This extract speaks of the early reflective practice that we were employing at the art department. We did not call it by that name, or even know the term. We were simply trying to build effective teaching practices for our students. At the same time, we were learning a great deal about our own, as this extract reveals. Each week, Catherine and I visited one or two students to observe their teaching, and after the lessons we sat with them and explored

The students teach art



what we called their 'streaks and weaks': what were their strong points, what were their weaknesses, and how they could work on these to improve them during the following weeks. Greene (1984a) writes that purposeful formative assessment can contribute to student motivation, and agrees with other writers who state that this process should be meaningfully used to engage students in their learning (Sandoval, 1995; Yue Yin et al, 2008; Cauley and Mc Millan, 2010). We aimed at developing the students' current teaching practices.

We asked them to look at the possibility of how they could build on what they knew, to teach better. At the time, we were working fairly intuitively, although this practice is documented in the work of Hootstein (1994) and Sandoval (1995).

I suggest that when one teaches with consciousness and awareness, then informal reflection is a natural part of the process. This early reflective practice was of benefit to both the students and to me, because I was also learning on the job, and was able to see possibilities in the process of watching the lessons. By observing the students as they were teaching, I was able to recognise areas of weakness in my own teaching, or lacks in my own knowledge, and I could work on these before or during our contact sessions. This contributed to my teacher identity by making me aware that I could consciously learn from watching my students, and that this learning could improve my practice, and also my understanding of my work.

Dimova and Loughran (2009) write that the reflective thinking process embraces identifying something that is troubling, or something that disturbs. This should be followed by a willingness to resolve this particular disturbance by thoughtfully trying to find a way to

moderate or change it so that it no longer disturbs. An important part of this process involves the application of the change, in an effort to establish its effectiveness. In essence, this is what we were trying to do with the students, and to a large extent with our own practices. I do not claim that we were unique; I am sure that this was and remains a process that most teacher educators employ. At that time, we did not call it reflective practice; it was simply the way we held discussions after each student had taught a lesson for us.

This process, however, was important in developing my own practice. I had to quickly learn to 'walk my talk' if I wanted to model what I believed was good practice. In order to do that, I had to examine what I believed to be good practice. I was aware that my own learning about teaching was growing, and that my own practice was changing. I taught with more self-awareness, because I was acutely conscious of the fact that my students were not only learning content – they were also having a time of 'observed apprenticeship', a state that is discussed in the work of Timmerman (2009:231), while they observed the way that I taught them. Of necessity, and because I was being more self-aware, my practice changed. I was no longer thinking only about what I was teaching; I was also thinking about *how* I was teaching it, and who I was being and becoming at the same time. Turner-Bisset (1999) writes about this process, and it was interesting to discover, so many years later, that we were approaching our work in an effective way.

I found the affective domain of working with adults much more complex, because the contact sessions were sometimes for a whole day; in that space, they often talked about more than their work. Triana (2007:236) writes that the goal of teaching is to 'aid the person to grow to fullest humanness' and this work often embraced more than being engaged in art-making or art education. It often involved being beside young people as they struggled to shape and re-shape their own personal identities.

At the end of the year, these students would leave us as 'specialist' primary school art teachers, and we had to make sure that they carried with them the knowledge, skills and attitudes that equipped them for this work. Strong content knowledge, as is underpinned by Newton and Newton (2001), was essential, because they would be planning and presenting on their own, and would need confidence to do this meaningfully. A growing sense of responsibility began to be a part of my teacher identity construct. I was no longer responsible simply for the people with whom I was working; their own work could possibly affect generations of children, and my sense of purpose and responsibility was deepened by this knowledge. We wanted the students to be innovative enough to design their own lessons, rather than resort to the ones that every art teacher taught, resulting in less and less

meaningful teaching or interpretation. An example of this kind of lesson would be one with the topic 'I am eating a slice of watermelon'. Thirty years after I taught that lesson as a 'standard' in my first year of teaching, because I myself was not innovative enough to find my own way, I still confront this image when I visit schools today.

With sound content knowledge, our students would have the confidence to answer difficult questions, pose more challenging questions, and move in a world where they could concentrate on the process of developing their teaching, rather than on building their content knowledge. Newton and Newton (2001) also stress the value of content knowledge in effective teaching.



A self portrait by one of my students

We also wanted the students to explore and have a thorough understanding of the qualities and the limitations of the media they would be using. Like Deng (2007), we knew that teachers teach from what they know, and that they teach better if they know something well. If students have explored a medium like paint, and know that it can be applied in different consistencies, and in different ways, that it can be used both as a drawing medium and a painting medium, that it can be used flat, or tonally, that it can be applied with different tools, then the students will have an understanding of how paint can be used to teach the elements and design principles in a natural way, and their understanding of the appropriate processes, techniques

and media would be enhanced. An insistent part of my teacher identity was built during those years, and is still very much in evidence today. I insist that my students have a meaningful experience of their own art-making, not to develop their 'talents', but to allow them to understand the potentials and the pitfalls of each medium that they will teach. I insist that the institution affords as much time as we can possibly have for these experiences.

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The Camel Yard, Nieu Bethesda

From our first year, Catherine and I both acknowledged our strong belief in experiential learning, and although art-making is in itself an experiential learning activity, we tried to develop this notion into the other areas of their learning as well, as I have described on page 80 of my autobiography. This was supported by my own experiential learning in my third pre-service year of studying history education at the teacher's college in the early 80s, and I remembered the value and the depth of the learning.

We spent much of our time developing these kinds of opportunities for our students. We took them to the beach so that they could create massive sand sculptures, and explore form, texture and scale in an environment that made this experience possible. We visited exhibitions around the city so that they could see other artists' works, and the application of art elements and design principles in a wide range of styles. We showed them films, took them to the theatre, and absorbed them completely in new ways of becoming teachers. During the year, I took the whole group of students to the Owl House in Nieu Bethesda, and showed them the Outsider Art of Helen Martins. In the mornings, they taught art to the children in the farm school on the property where we stayed. In the afternoons, we visited the Owl House. In the evenings we held discussions that ranged from their teaching experiences, their personal responses to the works of Helen Martins, to their personal responses to life. They kept reflective journals, and drew and painted at every opportunity.

In those times, we had no theoretical knowledge about experiential learning, and I would only discover Kolb much later. In our own way, we were trying to give the students a full experience of teaching and learning, and we were trying to deepen their experiences of their own lives. My teacher identity was being constructed by being deeply embedded in the process of teaching. I was constantly trying to find ways to make the learning of my students

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richer, deeper and more rewarding, and by doing this, I was challenging and stretching myself as an educator.

There was also much that they learnt during these experiences that we could not have planned, but that we acknowledged with delight. The discovery, shown to us by the farmer, of the cochineal beetle on the cactus plant, which led to all of the students spending the rest of the day with dyed red lips, is an image that I shall remember for years to come. McNally et al (2004) refer to the social aspect of informal learning, and this was made evident during these experiences with the students. They taught each other to play the guitar, they learnt how to make fires using screws of newspaper, and they learnt about the climate and the vegetation of the Karoo, the ways of farming, and the vastness of a rural landscape. Each of these incidences contributed to my teacher identity, because I was beginning to understand that learning happens in fullness and wholeness, and that life has its own lessons, if we are able to open ourselves to them. I learnt to embrace, and later, to encourage, the unplanned learning opportunities that happened on these trips. I discuss one such incident on pages 168 and 169 of my autobiography, where being afraid of an animal is able to provide us with a point of discussion about responsibility to one's children in the teaching and learning environment.

The course was full-time, and full-day, and we worked with a common goal, which was crafting teachers of excellence. Our students had already completed their initial teacher qualification, and so on the whole were more mature than the rest of the students at the college. They were also more committed, because this choice to study an art specialisation was optional. Greene (1984a) writes that students have a choice about whether they became engaged in the learning, as opposed to simply completing a task.  To encourage this engagement, we have to ensure that what we choose to teach resonates strongly with the interests of our students. In this course, we were all involved in the art making and art education process, and the students were deeply engaged, as is evidenced in the extract included above.

In reality, the institution ran along the lines of an extended high school experience, and Catherine and I remained more teachers than lecturers. My teacher identity was strongly grounded in the practical aspect of my work. I had not yet discovered the richness that research would contribute. Murray (2005) believes that the change from being a teacher to being a lecturer can be stressful. Teachers are expected to be able to transfer the knowledge of their subjects into pedagogical knowledge, and the course of this transference is deeply influenced by individual values, philosophies and personal histories. Catherine and I did not

really become lecturers; we brought our individual values, our philosophies and our personal histories straight into the training college, and remained teachers. We simply taught to older learners.

We were both engaged in contact lectures with the students for forty hours a week, which left little time for anything else. Catherine was a younger, married woman with a small child, and so I naturally moved into the position of being the one who assumed more responsibility for the organisation of the course, and for the welfare of the students. This latter role was one that suited my personality, and did not require any kind of adaptation. I remembered the relational aspect that enriched my own learning experience, both at high school, which I have written about on page 22 of my autobiography, and in the art department, when I had been a student there, which I have described on page 31, and my teacher identity related to this aspect of my work.

Lovat and Clement (2008) write that students appear to be more inclined to learn when they are nurtured. We certainly found this to be the case. When a student was absent, either Catherine or I would call, with concern, to find out whether they needed anything from us. Absenteeism was consequently almost non-existent in the course, and when students were away, they were genuinely ill. As the year progressed, we found student involvement deepening, and they frequently stayed after hours, or came in to the department to work over weekends. Catherine and I both modelled our art department on the experience that we had enjoyed there during our own teacher education, but we made changes that were significant. We encouraged our students to participate in the student activities 'across the road', and we made sure that they did not develop elitist attitudes about their own education, or about art education in general.

Merriam and Courtney (2003) discuss the value of being a participant in a community of practice, and although I no longer enjoyed the wide community of practice that I had experienced, valued and learnt from at the art centre, my teacher identity was no longer in its embryonic stages, and I was also no longer a novice teacher. I was much more confident in what I was doing, and the way that I was doing it. Catherine and I, and later Elske and I worked closely together, discussing and sharing our successes and our failures, and each benefitting from the other's strength. My teacher identity had developed and thrived on teamwork and collegial support, which was a part of my work that I really enjoyed. The isolation of my initial years, which I have written about in my autobiography on page 35, had disappeared, and I enjoyed the challenge and support that was offered by close collegial relationships. We were also building a different kind of community of practice with our

students, because of the social nature of the course. They were the members on the periphery of the community of art teachers, just as Hung and Chen (2002), Fuller et al (2005) and Seaman (2008) describe in their work, and during the year, they slowly moved in towards the centre. Niesz (2007: 606) writes of four important aspects of a community of practice: community, identity, practice, and meaning. In our own way, we were exploring each one of those.

At the end of our first year, Catherine and I held a reflective session with the students, to enlist their help in improving the course for the following year. After they had given us their suggestions, we unpicked their responses, worked through them carefully, and adapted the course. This is a process that I have continued to use at the end of each year, although the institution, the course and the students are all very different twelve years later.

There was also a broader community at the college, and that was the community of the Arts. There were seven music lecturers, two drama, and one dance. Although in those days the Arts were taught separately, and each lecturer functioned independently, we were called collectively 'the Expressives'. The music department also had a separate building, where each lecturer had a private room for music tuition. We found greater resonance with the drama lecturers, and on page 93 of my autobiography, I describe how my drama colleague contributed his skills to the art course with my students. These lecturers became regular visitors in the art department, and introduced us informally into the ways of being at the college.

Turner-Bissett (1999) writes about the extent of the influence of context, stating that it has a considerable influence on the way a teacher practices. She believes that the values and the attitudes of the principal are important in determining the way a teacher works. In the initial years at the training college, art education was valued and supported by the rector, and consequently also fairly well by the institution. The rector trusted and acknowledged what we were doing and this encouraged us to extend our practices. Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) describe the value of trust and support from school management, and at the training college, this was no less important.

### 5.5.5 Learning beyond lecturing

*There are severe problems surrounding the birth of Catherine's baby, and as a result, she reaches the difficult decision to resign, and to dedicate herself to her baby's care. Elske agrees to extend her time at the College until we can replace her. We do not try very hard. The year seems determined to break us all. The rector, Mac Donald, has recently divorced, and is finding his own new circumstances difficult. The loss of his home and his children is devastating to him, and he begins to spend more time in the art department, where we talk, and listen, and become friends.*

*His support for our work in the Art Department is tremendous, and in a very short time, I feel that I am a meaningful part of the College staff. I serve on many committees, quickly make friends on the staff, and find, to my delight, that I really enjoy working with young adults. The theoretical component of the courses requires more information that I possess, and so I have to read to extend my knowledge base. With little guidance, I drift from one place to another, Jung, Erich Fromm, Steven Covey, and Thomas Harris. I re-read Kubler-Ross, and introduce her into our course.*

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) believe that while a teacher might be influenced by her context, she also influences it. My earlier background of involvement at the art centre saw me rapidly becoming involved in the training college, and from my second year at the institution, I served on many committees. My work had become a way of life for me, and it was no longer really possible for me to separate my teacher identity from my personal identity. This is in keeping with Fadjukoff et al's (2005) claim, that most people, by the age of thirty six, reach a committed status in their occupational identity. Teaching had moved from being my occupation to being my career. This change in a teacher's attitude to her work is documented in the work of Pomson (2004). It was fast becoming my vocation, a word that Triana (2007) also uses in her writing, and I was fascinated by the possibilities of my work in this environment, and with these students.

As the extract above reveals, Catherine's sojourn at the college was short-lived. In our second year, she was forced to resign from her post following complications around the birth of her second child. This was a significant change within a time of many significant changes.

Two years previously, in 1998, the National Department of Education had started the process of implementing a new outcomes-based curriculum, Curriculum 2005. The underpinning principles of outcomes-based education are not very different from those that had always

existed in art teaching, but the documents brought with them new terminology , and included concepts like 'specific outcomes' that had to be unpacked for my own students.

New words replaced previously understood concepts, and the terminology was difficult to come to terms with for effective implementation (de Waal, 2004). Cross, Mungadi, and Rouhani, (2002:81) state that 'curriculum was framed and mystified by impenetrable and obscure jargon. Curriculum 2005 has been criticised for using inaccessible language to teachers who are supposed to implement it'. Jansens (1998 online) frames this criticism by writing: 'First, the language of innovation associated with OBE is too complex, confusing and at times contradictory. A teacher attempting to make sense of OBE will not only have to come to terms with more than 50 different concepts and labels but also keep track of the changes in meaning and priorities afforded to these different labels over time.'

Even the final review report written in 2009 for a curriculum that by that time was named *The National Curriculum Statement*, concludes (2009): '...there is confusion around the terminology referring to subjects, learning areas and learning programmes'. I have chosen to highlight only the complexity of the language in the policy, but there were many other problems concerned with the implementation of this curriculum (Jansen, 1997; Cross et al, 2002; de Waal, 2004), which is in the process of being replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement at this time.

While the National Department of Education was running wholly inadequate week-long training workshops for teachers, there was no specific professional development offered to teacher educators, and so we had to grapple with the principles, the language and the implications of this curriculum. A few of us on the staff took the initiative to run courses over weekends for in-service teachers, who were finding the implementation difficult.  This meant that we ourselves had to understand the process of implementation, as well as the underpinning principles of the curriculum, in such a way that we could guide in-service teachers in this process. My teacher identity was encouraged to accept that I had to emerge as a knower in this field, and that I had to know what I was talking about. Part of my personal identity, which by now had become a firm part of my teacher identity, was that I would cope when a situation demanded it. There was no choice for me. I did not allow myself to even consider that choice. This meant that I had to come to terms with this new curriculum, and with its underlying principles, so that I could be confident when I worked with the students, and with in-service teachers in this context. Initially, my teacher identity had been built in part by my knowledge bases, but now my knowledge bases were contributing to my teacher identity. In this passage of many spirals, yet another one has emerged.

During a training session

Within a short space of time, the Western Cape Education Department heard of the training sessions that we were offering, and requested that I offer similar sessions to a wider group of generalist teachers who were expected to teach the four arts disciplines for the first time in their lives. In preparing for these sessions, I was strengthening my own knowledge about, and understanding of, the curriculum, and having to find ways to incorporate this into my practice, while at the same time making an effort to train art student teachers to be 'curriculum proof'. At this time, my teacher identity was strengthened. I felt effective and knowledgeable, and these two aspects were combining to help me to be able to make a difference to the many generalist teachers who were struggling to come to terms with the new curriculum, and what it meant to them, in their own practices. Reflecting on this time, I am aware that the construction of a positive sense of teacher identity is deeply influenced by the teacher's knowledge base. When I feel secure, or when I feel that I am actively growing my knowledge base, I am aware that my teacher identity is also secure. When I feel that my knowledge is inadequate or faulty, my teacher identity becomes insecure.

The institution was moving quickly towards an amalgamation with a local technikon. Some of us on the staff realised that we would not be appointed to the new institution with our current qualifications, and so we decided as a group to apply to study for a master's degree in teaching at the same university where, years before, I had completed a diploma in special education.

I was once again disappointed to discover that, although there were optional courses offered in this degree, none of them related to art teaching, or in any way to the new curriculum. Koster et al (2008) write that the priority for most teachers is to build on their subject-specific knowledge and skills, and I was no different. It was not one of my goals to change my attitudes or my belief system. It did not occur to me that my own attitude to knowledge construction would influence my students, and that, for that very reason, I should be prepared to at least critically evaluate whether these attitudes were still appropriate. Battey

and Franke (2008:128) write: 'Identity is shaped by the knowledge and skills we acquire and shapes the knowledge and skills we seek to develop'. At that time, my professional identity was bound to the notion of 'art teacher', and my professional interests were narrowly aligned. However, if I wanted to keep my job, which I had quickly grown to love, then I had to choose courses that might be of interest to me in other areas.

There was no obvious professional development that was aimed at developing us as teacher educators, a fact that has also been noted in the work of Koster et al (2008), and because many of us who had been appointed to the college entered through the process of initially being primary school teachers, our academic qualifications were limited to diplomas, specialist diplomas and higher education diplomas. At that time, a degree in primary school education was not offered by any institution, although some did offer a B Ed post-graduate qualification, but not specifically in art education. We did not even consider that our practices would need to change, because we were training students to do exactly what we had done in our own classrooms. The institution might be merging, and would become larger, and more bureaucratic, but if we were able to retain our posts, we would be staying on the same campus, in the same buildings, and working with the same students.

As a group, we acknowledged that we needed to upgrade our qualifications to be more in line with the academic standards of the intended merged institution, and we were being pro-active. None of us were particularly positive about embarking on this course of study.  The demands for this qualification had come from an external, policy-driven directive, and we felt that it was being imposed on us. Similar feelings are documented in the work of Moore et al (2002) and Hardy (2009). Largely, we entered the course with negative feelings, as I have indicated on page 93 of my autobiography, because we were busy and involved in our work, were coming to terms with the implications of the new curriculum, and did not want to have to take on what we considered to be a meaningless post-graduate degree when we would rather have been honing our skills in our specific disciplines. We did not begin this journey because we wanted to know more; we simply needed the qualification so that we could continue doing what we had been doing up to that point. Certainly, at this point, my identity as a teacher was still lodged very firmly in my practice, and in the ways that I was doing my work with the students and with the in-service teachers.

Collaborative professional development is commonly accepted as being more meaningful (Sturko and Gregson, 2007; Torff and Sessions, 2008; Sturko and Gregson, 2009), and teachers are more receptive to new ideas if they are able to work together. Six of us applied for the course, and looked hesitatingly forward to the following year, when our studies would

begin. We supported each other through the idea, the registration, and the initial coursework, because we had all been placed in the same position. We did not even consider the changes that this new learning would bring about.

Robinson and Mc Millan (2006: 328) record the merger by stating: 'The work of teacher educators in South Africa today is further complicated by institutional amalgamations that have brought a number of institutions together into a new configuration'. We could not imagine what demands the 'new configuration' would make on us. Battey and Franke (2008) suggest that the context of a teacher's work is an important influence in shaping professional identity, and that it can either enhance or limit. We were in a time of 'occupational flux', as noted in the writing of Blustein et al (1996:436), and were working in a context that was shifting the very ground from under our complacent feet. I cannot speak about my colleagues, but at this time, my teacher identity was very insecure. I did not know what I would be expected to do, or how I would be expected to perform, or even, whether I would have a job at the newly-merged institution. In my experience, the arts were not valued, and there was no evidence to suggest that the merger would introduce any difference in this respect.

Teacher identity is bound up in personal history, biography, emotion, values and knowledge, (Palmer, 1998; Diniz-Pereira, 2003; Day et al, 2006; Rodgers et al, 2006; Battey and Franke, 2008) and Hodgen and Askew (2007) suggest that deep-seated change in the beliefs and knowledge systems of teachers results in a change of the identity of that teacher. The nature of the teacher will determine whether that change is seen as threatening or enhancing. I was about to embark on a transformative time in my life that would change my identity, my practice, and my future at the institution.

If teacher identity is indeed enmeshed with personal identity, then I pause here to speak of significant changes that occurred in my personal life around the same time. My mother's unexpected death resulted in my father being left in my care. He suffered from arteriosclerosis, which affected his personality, and he had frequent transient ischemic attacks. Five months after my mother's death, my youngest sister was killed in a car accident. Seven months later, my father died.

### 5.5.6 Learning through the personal and the professional

Many writers talk of the enmeshing of the personal and the professional identities of teachers (Palmer, 1998; Diniz-Pereira, 2003; Day et al, 2006; Rodgers et al, 2006; Battey and Franke, 2008). This fact cannot be disputed, and the following extract is not one from my world of work, but rather from a deeply personal area in the autobiography. This personal area, however, has a profound effect on my teacher identity, and at the time, this was not all positive.

> *When I arrive home from the graduation ball, Joanie is standing on the veranda. As I turn from closing the gate, she reaches out her arms to me. She does not have to say a word. I know that Cheryl has died.*
>
> *There is a strange craziness that comes at times like that. A kind of madness, a deep denial that does not know how to accept a truth that is too terrible to comprehend. I do not try to open the gate. I try to climb over the fence, because I know that if I can just get out of the garden, on to the other side of the fence, I will not have to hear the words that Joanie is going to say, and that can never, never be unsaid once she had said them. I break nails, I rip fabric, and yet the knowledge is already there, and by the time Joanie reaches me, I am kneeling on the lawn begging her not to say anything, not to tell me, not to shatter the belief that Cheryl will get better, will be wicked and dangerous in her wheel chair, will be my baby sister forever.*
>
> *Joanie and I kneel together in the wet earth of the garden, and she holds me while I howl like a mad woman.*



Cheryl and me

Although one is somewhat prepared for the death of one's parents, I did not ever anticipate the early death of my younger sister, who had two small children. We shared a close bond, and her death changed my identity in a number of ways; she was my closest connection to family and with her death, I was cut loose from the notion of sisterhood, and all that it embraced.

**For Cheryl, who died in a car**

The Unicorn Girl, with a head full of curls, and with eyes full of stardust and laughter
is riding the skies wearing blood for disguise and with broken bones following after.

Ah, see, candles are lit,
prickle-point light in the dark,
Ah, look, mourners have come,
two by two, riding the ark.

With such joy does she sit, and with outrageous wit, bursts of energy fired by a star,
She was just rushing out, would be home soon, no doubt, in the red, in the red blood red car.

Ah, hear, how we all weep,
Life that is taken so boldly,
Ah, feel, ice in our hearts,
numbing and mumbling coldly.

In the galaxy springs silver light on the wings, bold bright body fluorescent and gleaming,
Did she feel the collision, the shattered division, was she silent, or silently screaming ?

Ah, wait, thoughts all on fire,
No Noah to guide us in prayer,
Ah, pain, remember her joy,
And the spring in that bright curly hair.

So she rides in the night, like a dream out of sight, knees clasped tight round the unicorn's shoulder,
And the white of the light is unfailingly bright, but the world is unceasingly colder.

Ah, girl, whole now and healed,
riding your road to that new place
Ah, horse, horn on your head,
cover her gently with grace.

And the unicorn wings play the notes that she sings as she gallops in gleeful delight
Sweet furls colour the air, starlight sparkling her hair, and she disappears into the light.

**Figure 5.3: The Mandala of the Healing Heart**

As I had earlier done with another significant death, I dug deep into my work as a distraction and a way of making sense of life. My human inability to cope with the profound sadness of these many losses, too soon after each other, needed the regularity and the structure of my work to survive. I lost my sense of who I was as a human being, because I had lost three important and significant reference points. I clung to the structure and the control that my work offered me. I clung to who I was as a teacher, because that part of me was someone that I knew, and that was more stable. My work was ripe to receive this additional input. Oxford University Press approached me to collaborate with Elske on a series of Arts and Culture text books that would assist teachers with the implementation of the new curriculum. This meant that I had to come to terms with the complexities of the new curriculum even

more, and probe its fundamental principles deeply in a way that would let me understand it enough to write about it.
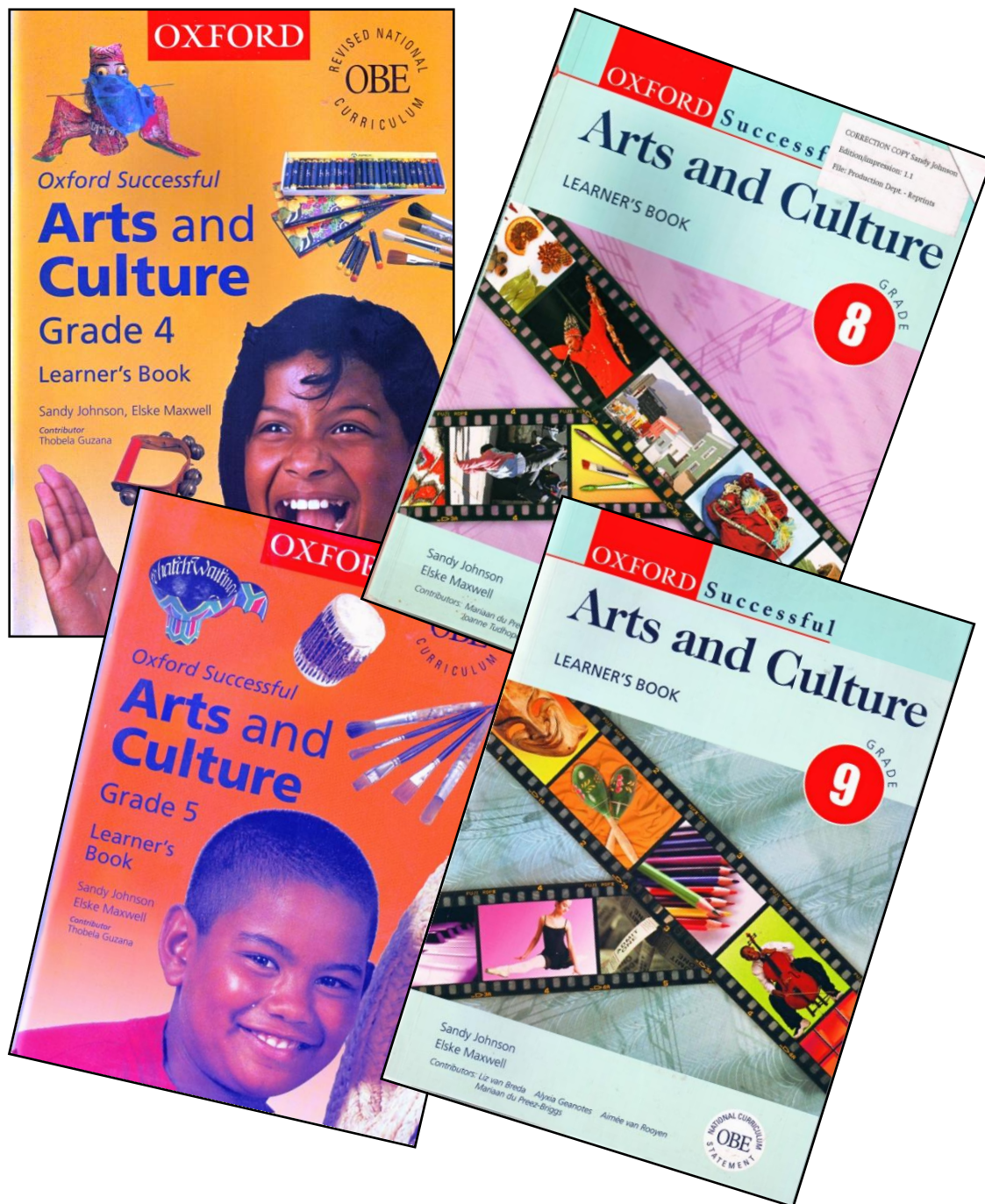
I also had to interpret this curriculum for my own students, and although I embraced the principles of outcomes-based education, it was a difficult time in my professional life. I had to acknowledge that art education was becoming one of a 'basket' of creative subjects, and that the time would be divided equally between drama, dance, music and visual art. I had to accept the shorter time allocation for visual art that had been decided at the institution. In

retrospect, I understand that, because I had buried my personal grief in the work that I was doing, I was determined that the work that I was doing would be important. I had subsumed my personal identity into my work, because I could not face the realities of my personal life at that time. Because of this, I needed desperately to have my work rooted in a stable context, a known place where I could function and feel of value. In order to make this happen, I subconsciously became totally involved in the process of working, at any cost, to make visual art an important subject. I wrote text books as if my life depended on them. I lectured as if I was the only person left who was making any sense. I was desperately connected to my work in a way that defied sense and meaning. I was finding validation for myself through my work. My personal identity was in an unstable and disconnected phase, and I needed the stability of my teacher identity to survive this passage of my life.

At the same time, we were running regular in-service workshops for teachers while we were trying to understand the implications of the new curriculum for our own work. Writing text books was a new initiative, and one in which I had no experience. I was still finding my feet in an institution that was changing very rapidly. I include this aspect of my personal identity in this writing because the tendency to allow my work to become the primary source of meaning and the defining factor in my life has become a habit that in the future would continue to influence my professional identity in many ways. It is a dangerous tendency, and one that I have come to recognise as being detrimental to the health of the process of authentic teacher identity construction. When one locates oneself solely in one's work, one loses the human aspects that make us viable as educators. It is a one-dimensional approach, and brings with it a desperation that precludes the joy of challenge, and the opportunity to learn in the moment. My teacher identity at that time was grounded in sameness. There was no space for growth. I needed the known and the familiar to support my very existence, and by needing this, I could not acknowledge the fluidity of the moment, or the possibility for learning. When I look back at this time, and with the reality that hindsight offers, I understand that it was a time in which I became stunted as an educator, and in many ways, my development as a human being was also limited. By being unable to acknowledge the true emotions of my life, I was becoming inauthentic in all aspects.

I am fortunate that the events which followed were significant enough to lift me from this state, and were challenging enough to affirm the role of learning in my life. This shift was entirely due to my context, which has been acknowledged by many writers to be a significant part of the construction of the identity of a teacher. Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006:109) state that 'schools provide a framework for identity elaboration', and in my case, it was the training college that was fast approaching an amalgamation, as I document on page

94 of my autobiography. Battey and Franke (2008) suggest that context has a particular role in defining the identity of the teacher, because it can either impose limitations or provide opportunities. In my case, my context was actually doing both. While certain limitations were being imposed on the way that I taught my subject, opportunities for further study and enrichment were being provided and supported, and although I did not know it at the time, this opportunity was to become a life-changing experience that would forever change the way that I thought about my role as an educator.

## 5.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I reported on the implementation of the reflective topical autobiography. I have described the process of writing the autobiography (addendum 1) as the first stage, or immersion, in reflective topical autobiography, and proceed to the incubation stage, where I removed myself from the autobiography to concentrate on the literature review to assist with interpretations and analysis of the extracts which provided my data for this investigation. I mentioned the three theses on which I have drawn, which have all used the same methodology, although each writer has offered a personal interpretation. I described the selection of the incidents that have contributed to the construction of my identity as a teacher, and which form the illumination phase of reflective topical autobiography.

The contemplative phase of the methodology followed, and I placed the extracts within their contexts, and reflected on the effect that each one has had on the construction of my teacher identity. It was my choice, although it is not advised in this methodology, to support this writing with a theoretical underpinning, because each of the extracts focused on particular aspects of teacher identity, and each of these aspects has been discussed in international literature. I suggest that this theoretical underpinning might strengthen the work of this thesis.

In this chapter, I drew on extracts that ranged from the early decision to teach, through formal education, and into the world of work. I described the progress from primary schools to an art centre, and the chapter concluded with the higher educational institution to which I had moved facing a merger, and the need that this brought about for further formal study. I discussed the influence that each one of these extracts has had on the construction of my teacher identity. I discussed the development from an isolated young teacher who knew little about the world of teaching, to a maturing teacher whose identity benefitted greatly from being exposed to a community of practice. I showed a broadening and a deepening of my knowledge base, and how this contributed to my identity as a teacher. I reflected on how my

contexts have contributed to the construction of my art teacher identity, and described the ways in which I have personally responded to their challenges and their blessings. The following chapter continues with the contemplative phase of reflective topical autobiography, and will continue to reflect on the influences that have constructed my teacher identity in the mature years of my career. The themes which are beginning to emerge about the influences on the construction of my identity as an art teacher, namely, relational aspects, context and the development of my knowledge base, will hopefully be strengthened.

# Chapter 6: Contemplation 2: Between two waves of the sea

*And so, compliant to the common wind,*
*Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,*
*In concord at this intersection time*
*Of meeting nowhere, no before and after*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Figure 6.1: The Mandala of Emanation**

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter, as with the preceding chapter, is the contemplative phase of reflective topical autobiography.  As with the mandala which opens it, it shows how my teacher identity expands as I learn new things.  I continue the search for the influences on the construction of my teacher identity through reflecting on extracts from the middle and later stages of my teaching career. The chapter will begin with the entrance into the Masters in Teaching course at a university, the merger of our institution, and will describe the consequences of this merger, and the subsequent influences that these times had on my teacher identity. I will document my slow entry into the world of research, and the effects that this new world had on my teacher identity. I will describe the way that my practice has shifted, and will include the issues which I found challenging in this process, like the loss of content time, and how it impacted on my teacher identity.

The chapter will move on to describe the way in which research has influenced my approach to teaching visual art to my first year students, and I will describe my current approach to manifest both this influence, and the way in which my teacher identity construct has shifted. I will examine the value of the identities of both the student and the lecturer in the learning space, and will discuss the value of the physical space in which these identities interact.

Professional development has had a strong influence on the construction of my teacher identity, and I will describe the process of embarking on formally reading for a Ph D, and the influences that this reading has had, both on my practice, and on my identity as a teacher. I will describe the expression of my own teacher identity, and will discuss the choices that I have made, that emanate from that identity.

The chapter will conclude with the description of a shift which occurred in my sense of identity as a teacher, as a result of professional burnout. I will document the process of healing, and will discuss how the construction of my teacher identity has changed to accommodate the new awarenesses about the kind of work that I must do. I resume the contemplative phase as the training college moves towards an amalgamation.

## 6.2 Breaking Barriers

As the training college moved rapidly towards an amalgamation with another higher education institution, it became clear that our qualifications were not enough to assure us of employment in the merged institution. A group of us grudgingly enrolled for the Master's in Teaching qualification at a local university. Within weeks, I was made aware that this series

of lectures was going to make a significant difference to the way that I viewed myself as a teacher.

*The Master's in Teaching course brings new interest, and I enjoy the stimulation of the lectures and the debates that suddenly fill my life. New knowledge and thinking begins to affect my work at the College, and my next intake of students benefit from my own studies. Postmodern philosophy helps me to make sense of so much that is happening around me, and a module on Gender Studies shocks me into realisations about my own life and the world at large.*

*During the first lecture at the university, where I, for the first time in years, was a student on the other side of the desk, I was initially terrified. The world that was being discussed was one to which I had no access, and of which, I had no previous knowledge. The lecture was participatory, and I listened with a growing sense of panic; everyone seemed to know much more than I did.*

*As I became more absorbed in the discussion, and able to pay more attention because my sense of panic was diminishing, I become conscious of the fact that people were discussing their opinions, and offering their personal world views. I realised that I also had an opinion, and also had a world view, and that I could participate, and learn from the opinions of the others in the class. For the rest of that particular course, which was entitled 'Teaching and the Modern Condition' there seemed to be two sides of me in that venue. One was the student, learning and growing and thinking, and the other was the observer, watching this process, thinking about how it would work with my own students, and constructing the knowledge in a particular way so that it did, despite my initial misgivings, have direct relevance to my own work.*

This extract relates directly to the intervention of Betty Chew when I was a high school student. She taught me to believe in myself, and it was a meaningful and lasting lesson. There was nothing in my personal history that encouraged further study. At this stage in my personal life, my mother had recently died, and my father was living with me. His attitude to this degree was that it was a complete waste of time, and quite beyond the bounds of sense, as I document on page 93 of my autobiography.  By this time, however, the power that my work held over me was a very strong driving force, and the fact that I was embarking on this process because of the demands of that work was enough. I no longer needed his approval or his sanction. There were times, when I drove up that road to the university, that I could not really believe that I was doing it. I could not believe that I was a student at a world-famous university, being a part of a postgraduate class that I had always assumed was beyond me. There were also times when I would consciously recall the words of Betty Chew, or Hannsie

Visser, and know that I was simply doing what they had always expected. By this time, Hannsie had become a very close friend, and supported this decision with enthusiasm. The decision to study for a Master's degree impacted on my teacher identity in ways that I had not anticipated. I began to feel more secure in my skin as an educator of adults at a tertiary institution, but at the same time, I began to think about issues in education that were beyond the bounds of visual art. I began to think of myself as a learning individual, and I began to realise the vital importance of this quality of learning, if one wants to be a teacher. Law. Meijers, and Wijers, (2002: 432) suggest that in order to develop a professional identity, a teacher should, among other things, be able to 'represent experience in one's own terms'. These new learning experiences opened up avenues of thinking about teaching that made me consider who I was as a teacher, and changed the way I thought about myself in relation to my work.

When the barrier of complacency broke open, it left a space of possibility. Up to that point, I had limited my own development by limiting my notion of who and what I was as a teacher, and now as a teacher educator. Walkington (2005) writes that a teacher draws her identity from the core beliefs that she has about teaching, and that those beliefs are formed in the act of teaching. I had narrowly defined myself as residing only in the arts, and more specifically in visual arts, and I slowly became aware that my new responsibilities as a teacher educator meant that I should broaden my horizons, and engage more critically with questions about education and teacher education in general. As Law et al (2002: 436) contribute: 'in a changing world all classification quickly dates. A person is therefore increasingly thrown upon his or her own ability continuously to sift experience into new and useful terms of reference.' I was not only engaged with art education; I was busy with the fullness of the world of teaching and learning, and in that world, I was a novice, as I state in my autobiography on page 79. Until I had enrolled at the university, I was still trying to learn about lecturing in a higher education institution, and did not really consider the implications of what this meant. Even the choice to study was not motivated by the will to know, but was rather the right path to choose in order to keep my job.
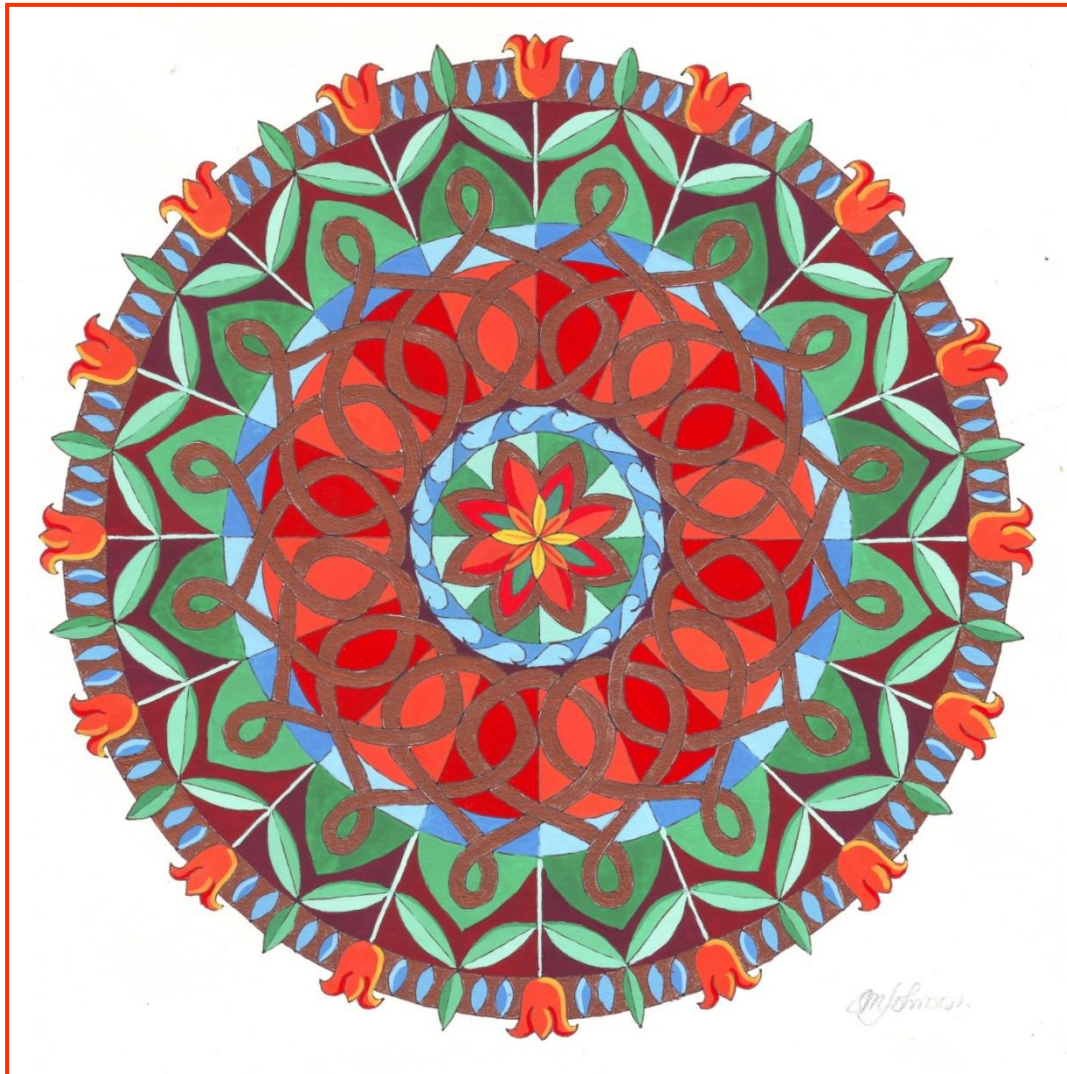
**Figure 6.2: The Mandala of the Second Understanding**

*We cannot revive old factions*
*We cannot restore old policies*
*Or follow an antique drum*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

As indicated on page 98 of my autobiography, I enrolled for a module on gender studies and found my complacency shaken even more. Slowly I became increasingly entranced with reading around teacher education, beyond teacher education, and into areas where before I had never ventured. I discovered the work of Maxine Greene, and realised that she spoke to my profession, and even to visual art education. Postmodernism removed any semblance of sameness. Battey and Franke (2008:128) describe professional development as a 'space for acquiring new knowledge, re-crafting identities, and challenging existing cultural and social

practices' and while I do not want to sound too naive, this is precisely what this course of studies did for my own world, and for my practice as a teacher. I have written about this on page 97 of my autobiography, where I talk of a 'new interest' and 'stimulation', and acknowledge the 'profound change' that was taking place. I was beginning to realise that there was a different world of education that was broader and deeper than the one that I had previously lived in. As a teacher, I was beginning to learn again. I found myself thinking about new things, which made me think about my work in new ways.

As the group of staff members who were committed to this degree, we became united, and as the course progressed, we began to discuss our lectures in meaningful ways, as described on page 97 of my autobiography. We debated issues, and talked about the content of our lectures, and each of us was invigorated by what we were experiencing. Wade (1998: 714) talks about 'personal and perspective transformation' and this is indeed what we were all experiencing. I could feel myself changing as my world view expanded, and the patterns of my thinking transformed. Although I had initially been nervous about embarking on this course of study because it would have nothing to do with my work, I found that it impacted directly on almost every aspect of my work, because my understanding of what my work embraced was being expanded. I write about this on page 97 of my autobiography. My professional development, which had initially been motivated by extrinsic factors and a need for 'functional competency', as described in the work of Walkington (2005:56), because I needed the degree in order to be eligible for my own job, was now wholly intrinsic, as understood by Hardy (2009), and I played an active role in constructing my new knowledge. On page 102 of my autobiography, I reveal this new determination: 'I am aware that my practice is changing, along with my own inner change as a result of my participation in this degree, and I am determined that I will never again allow myself to stagnate, and to become complacent about my work or my life.'

A module based on researching our own practices, and focussing on the work of John Mason, was a defining moment of professional growth for me. I talk about this on page 104 of my autobiography. To that point, I had believed that improving my practice meant gaining more content knowledge, or learning a new skill or techniques. To think of improving the way that I practised was a new concept.

The Discipline of Noticing requires that one gives an account of (rather than an account for) something that has occurred during the course of a lesson. In this process, a teacher becomes increasingly aware of her personal practice and approach, and is enriched by the observations, interpretations and suggestions of those colleagues with whom she is

collaborating. Breen (2001) writes: 'The neutral way in which this story has been told allowed the rest of the class to come in from different personal perspectives to offer multiple ways in which the situation could have been handled differently'. The process allows for peers to observe each other, and then to offer their personal observations, which may contribute to a fresher, new look at the teaching strategies in the course of a lesson.

### 6.2.2 Developing a reflective practice

This course was an introduction, for me, to thinking about reflective practice in a more structured and theoretical way. It was something that I did informally with my students when I observed their teaching, as I have described on page 80 of my autobiography, and even more informally when Catherine and I designed our course. In the latter case, we examined the kind of teaching that we believed our students should be doing, and not the kind of practice that we ourselves should consider changing. My interpretation of these experiences, which I record on page 100 of my autobiography, are in line with Schon (1995), who wrote that if a performer attempts to teach the skills of the performance to someone else, this would be describing 'knowing-in-action', and would require that the performer should know what those actions are. When we reflect on something that disturbs us, we are capable of attempting a new action in an attempt to find a solution. This consciousness was to impact on my own practice, and contributed to my teacher identity by making me much more aware of the shortcomings of my practice. The new knowledge that we gain from this practice falls within our own frames of reference. Schon describes these processes as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Mantzoukas (2008) states that reflective practice is practice- rather than theory-based. It is contextual, and our subjective knowledge is constructed.

From the analysis of the description on page 101 in my autobiography (addendum 1), it is clear that reflection was, and remains, a major contribution to the construction of my professional identity. I understand this now, in terms of Schon (1995). Reflective practice embraces not only the way a teacher practises, but also a consideration of the educational ends towards which she practices (Pollard, 2005). As an art educator, this was particularly relevant to me. Did the way that I taught a project justify the reason that I was teaching it? How could I improve it? Was there a better way? How were the students responding? More importantly, why were they responding in that way? It was a revelation for me to realise that I had never really thought about improving how I was teaching, but had only sought to increase my knowledge about what I was teaching. Pollard (2005:13) states that reflective teaching 'involves a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development'. By engaging with this process for myself, I became critically aware of making choices about my

way of teaching that before I had not even considered. Once again, I became aware of two levels of awareness – there was one who was teaching, and there was one who was watching the teaching, and reflecting-in-the moment of that teaching.

On page 104 of my autobiography, I describe how I began to encourage my students to become reflective as well. I discussed the discipline of noticing with them, and encouraged them to use this process in their own lives, but more particularly when they were teaching art lessons. They seemed to grasp the concept, but I was concerned to discover that the students wanted a recipe for reflective practice. It seemed that the students needed to build on their own experience before they could adopt a truly reflective teaching approach.



A student teaching her very first art lesson

They were too new at art teaching to have a repertoire of strategies to experiment with, and often, their attempted responses to their reflections were more problematic than the original disturbance. I discovered that with pre-service art teachers, collaborative peer reflective exercises were more successful than individual attempts. Of particular value in this area were video recordings of students teaching. We could then, as a group, watch the video and discuss the way forward. Peer reflective practice became a way that my students and I navigated our ways through their teaching, particularly when we were on our field study trips, which afforded more time for this process to unfold in a thoughtful and collaborative way. Pollard (2005:21) writes that 'collaborative, reflective discussion capitalises on the social nature of learning' and that this kind of work helps to establish outcomes, share experiences, and refine the way that we think about our practices. Such peer reflective exercises, he believes, also encourage creative problem-solving, and build on a community of teaching that aims at good practice. He notes that such exercises can be fulfilling for both the individual and the aims of education. This was an important lesson to learn about my own practice. I had to acknowledge that there were limitations to what my enthusiasm could achieve with the students. I had to learn to meet the students where they were, instead of where I wanted them to be. Together, we had to find a pathway that could make it possible for all of us to learn. It is a natural part of my personality that I want to share things that I find of value. I

learnt that I had to wait until the students could find their own value, before they could truly absorb the discipline of noticing, and reflective practice, into their own practice. In terms of my teacher identity, it taught me to be more aware of who my students were. This understanding, in itself, was an important learning process for me. There are no generic students. There are only my students, in this place, in this time, and I need to know them, in order to best be able to work with them. This is what makes our meeting point of value, and our mutual learning a place of greater integrity.

This practice of peer reflection *with* my students moved into my own practice, and has resulted in the fact that I will sometimes, when I experience a moment of disturbance in a class, actually stop and ask my students to tell me why they think that disturbance is happening. For this practice to work in this way, it is necessary for a certain level of trust to exist between us, but because we have come to understand that we are all travelling on the same road, there is a sense of fellowship that exists in such a learning environment, often coupled with a sense of discovery, and sometimes even with humour. I once heard a student say, when she knew that I could overhear her: 'You had better do it properly, or you'll give Sandy one of her moments!'

This is a very useful exercise, because it means that the moment can sometimes be addressed with a sense of immediacy. Always, it has the result of raising our consciousness to be aware of what is happening in the learning space, and sometimes that is all it actually needs. At other times, there are real problems that need to be dealt with – a language level that needs to be addressed, an assumption that I have made, or confusion about expectations. This practice has contributed to the construction of my teacher identity, because I began to teach in a much more *aware* way, and became conscious of the fact that the way that we teach can be as important as knowing content. Close interaction with students meant that we were involved in this process together, and that while they were learning themselves, they were also contributing to the construction of my teacher identity with their comments and suggestions, as I have described on pages 104 and 105 of my autobiography, where I write: 'In the beginning, this kind of question makes them uncomfortable, but when they start to answer it for me, and see that I really want them to tell me what they are thinking, it makes a difference. This deepening of our work together is very rewarding...' Once this consciousness became a natural part of my practice, it was impossible to close it down, and this awareness has continued to change and transform the way that I work.

Reflective practice has generated a vast body of literature in the field of education, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to write extensively about the current nuances and interpretations of this practice. It was, however, a discovery that was to teach me, over a period of many years, that there is no end point to professional development.

The course of study at the university was, for me, an introduction to research, and to the way that research can influence a teacher's practice. Even at this stage of my life, years later, I remain amazed that I thought that I was a 'good' teacher before I had ever become involved in research around teaching and learning. This knowledge continues to contribute to my teacher identity. I have become more aware that, as an educator, I am 'in process', whereas before, embarrassingly, I thought that I had 'arrived'. It is not easy for me to admit to this.

Sturko and Gregson (2009) claim that when teachers become researchers, they extend their identities to embrace the notion of learner, and in earlier writing (Sturko and Gregson, 2007) they state the complexity of changes brought about by professional development results in a re-evaluation of a teacher's belief system, and a subsequent change in practice. This was certainly so in my case. I began to feel differently about being a teacher. I began to question notions of how much one needs to know, of responsibility, and of the quality of one's being.

While the process of reflective practice was to affect my own practice, my thinking was deeply affected by the readings that I discovered through this course. I was exposed to educationalists like Maxine Greene (1984a, 1984b), who challenged me to shift from a complacent position, and to discover the dynamic world of possibility within my work with the students. Theorists like Merleau Ponty (1962) resonated strongly with, and extended my own beliefs about bodies, space, and learning. Although these ideas may not all have been new to me, it was a wonderful discovery to have them framed within a theoretical context, and broadened and extended into a language that I could use in my own work.

### 6.2.2 Anticipating a merger

The processes of the merger pressed on, and during this time, the security of who I thought I was as a teacher, and the context in which I practised as a teacher, were both on shaky ground. My emotions were completely destabilised. I was growing and learning and constructing new knowledge through my studies at the university. I was dealing with the deaths of people that I loved. I was finding new approaches to my own practice. I was trying

to understand the process of academic research and complete my dissertation. And in my place of work, the stability which I had enjoyed was changing with the processes of the merger. I had always tried to be a contributive staff member, but there seemed to be no place for that in the new institution. I had always valued my subject, but it was once again threatened and marginalised by the process of the merger. I had always grounded myself in my practice, and we were regularly told that when the new institution took over, there were going to be major changes to class sizes, to the way we delivered our lectures, and in the time that we had to teach and to interact with our students. In almost every aspect, my identity as a teacher was being threatened. Van Vuuren, Beelen, and de Jong (2002: 639) suggest that 'To give meaning to their work life, people need to make sense of what is happening around them'. It was difficult for me to make sense of the perceived changes that would be required during the merger, and in fact, the permanent changes that would be required of us all once the process was complete. In retrospect, I have come to understand the importance that context has on the construction of teacher identity. Many years before, when I had been a teacher at the art centre, with much less knowledge, and certainly with much less wisdom, I had felt more secure in my work, and in who I was as a teacher. With the grounds of my context shifting under my feet, and with the different demands that were

> Bureacracy
> There's a road sign at the corner of an incubated heart
> And the arteries leading from it show you where to make your start.
> You can travel there all winter without knowing where to go,
> and the coldness in your body does not always come from snow.
>
> In the springtime there are flowers that remind you of your lust
> and they dot the thickened pathways with their lines of broken trust
> Each direction has an obstacle to block you in the end
> And the clay that builds the mountains becomes dust as you descend.
>
> And if seeing is believing and believing is what's true
> Then your eyes are cataracted now with misdirected hue
> And those figures that you seem to think are smiling as you pass,
> Are mocking you with shadows from the carefully scripted farce
>
> And you think this is your journey, and you think you make your life
> but the mindless little bureaucrat is sharpening his knife,
> And he cuts just where the blade falls, there's no justice with the stroke
> And the power has no face or form, no rule you can revoke.
>
> The road that lies before you has a start but not an end,
> And the shadow walking next to you will never be your friend
>
> Because the light will make that shadow either in front or behind
> And when only one of you can win, the other is not kind.
> And the institution grinds on with its righteous blind contempt
> Leaving dreams and hope and joyousness, we somehow are exempt.
> Throwing passion on the pavement, mocking love from office space
> And destroying individual thought, it falls, like rocks, from grace.
> And the incubated lifeless heart keeps beating without blood
> all the troubled foetal flowers fall like failures in the mud
> Where there once were dreams and promises, and futures bright with trust
> There now lie the steadied hardbeats of some bureaucratic lust.

being placed on us, I began to doubt my own validity, and question whether I should stay in the profession.

There were more changes than we had anticipated. I write about this time on page 106 of my autobiography. Colleagues who were friends had to compete for the same jobs. Colleagues who seemed indispensible were not appointed, and posts were collapsed to accommodate the re-structuring. Initial teacher education courses became restructured into four-year degree courses, and we were told that our art course, the Further Diploma in Education (Art) was to be discontinued, a fact which I record on page 112 of my autobiography. This was devastating news for us, and we naively tried to validate the course by working even harder to produce teachers of excellence. The value of visual art was so clear to me, and I began to feel out of place in an institution where the very core of my work was marginalised. This makes me realise, now, how significant context is when one considers the construction of teacher identity. When the training college had been fully independent and functional, I had felt secure in who I was as a teacher, and when the work that we did was valued. When the context changed, and with it, the attitude to my subject, and to the way that I delivered it, also changed, I became insecure, and largely felt inadequate. I was not entering this world of academia with anything to recommend me except experience and enthusiasm, and a deep belief in my work. None of those things seemed to be of value.

### 6.2.3 Coping with the consequences of the merger

> *I remain involved in writing the Oxford series of text books, and spend most of the year spinning from one hectic activity to the next. I begin to feel that I am losing ground at the Technikon, but I am too busy to do anything about it. I am also too tired. I do not have the energy to start the age-old fight for the arts. I have been caught off-balance by the attitude that is coming across very clearly from the Technikon management. Finally, a member of management verbalises it. "There is no longer an Art Department," he tells me. "There is only the B Ed course." I am effectively disempowered, and put in my place.*

> *But my real place is with the students, and when we are working and growing together, there is nothing that can touch us. I am sustained by the knowledge that my students are making meaning of their learning in a deeply significant way, and they are showing this development in their practical work, in their thoughtful essays and responses to our theoretical lectures, and in their delight at teaching. My own doors have been opened, and I am beginning to think about reflective practice, and my own practice in general. I know that, in an environment of so much change, I have to change as well, but I am not sure where, or how, or even in which direction.*

On page 105 of my autobiography, I write about some of the stress that the staff suffered during the early process of the merger. We were insecure, threatened by a possible job loss, and all of us were facing futures that we could not anticipate. We could not know what awaited us during the process of the merger, and even ten years later, when I think back to that time, I think of it as shrouded in darkness. Insecurity descended on the institution, and seemingly key positions were nullified. Looking back at it now, I can understand that, for the sake of the merger, there were certain actions that needed to be taken. For the people who were involved, it was a ruthless, professionally terrifying time, and the personal feelings of many staff members were destabilised. It was a time of anger and helplessness, a time of betrayal and pain, and a time of insecurity. Traditions that had been carefully nurtured were eroded. Values that had been built were broken down. A new set was imposed, and because it was such a top-down approach, the imposition remained an imposition.

Research into the processes of mergers has shown that most staff members will identify with the norms and standards of their pre-merger institution (Wallace, 1996; van Knippenberg et al, 2002). The staff members were generally defined in terms of particular groups, and these definitions were threatened by the process of the merger; our identities also required a change. A great part of a professional identity is context-bound, within an existing cultural framework, which includes the accepted practices, values, perceived beliefs and relationships within an institution (Wallace, 1996; van Knippenberg et al, 2002). Simply stated, a professional identity is largely created by belonging to a particular group or subculture. When a group is dominated in the takeover, then the accommodation of a new identity requires a greater change (Van Vuuren et al, 2010). This can often lead to feelings of being threatened, because it is perceived that the less dominant group is expected to adopt the values and practices of the dominant group. If staff members cling too strongly to the values of the pre-merger institution, further tensions can arise (Wallace, 1996). We were completely dominated by the takeover, and I clung to the values of the pre-merger institution, because it had valued both my subject and who I was as an educator.

I had played a significant role in the institution, and my identity as a teacher was grown by the fact that I was meaningful to the students, and meaningful to the institution. When the merger proceeded, I became an unknown person in a large bureaucratic institution. I taught a subject that was not given high regard, and the impact on my teacher identity was great. Once again, context is important, as it reveals that my work, and my attitude and concept of who I was as an educator, was influenced by the changes that were occurring.

As indicated in my autobiography, on pages 103 and 104, and also on page 105, for a long period after the official process of the merger had been completed, I felt insecure and unsure of what my role would be in the new institution, and whether the new institution would come to value visual art education. In the new institution, there seemed no role for me to play, apart from lecturing in a subject that was not currently given high value. I was told, more than once, that because the Arts and Culture Learning Area was not viewed as important, I was fortunate to have been given a permanent post. We were required to make sense of the new institution, in order to understand and construct our identities within that definition. A part of that understanding was what we stood to *lose*, rather than what we stood to gain. This feeling of loss is documented in the work of Van Vuuren et al (2002). None of us had a clear understanding of what the identity of the new institution would be, and so the notion of shaping our futures there, and the futures of who we would be, within that institution, had to be put on hold.

My identity as a contributive member of staff shifted radically, when it became clear that the learning area of Arts and Culture was not a priority. When I was told that there was no longer an art department, as I have recorded on page 107 of my autobiography, I found it even more difficult to find my place in the new institution. I expected, at any time, to be told that I would be lecturing in another discipline, or that my own subject would be phased out. My work paled into insignificance for me. The process took a long time to stabilise, and with it, the emotional content of my professional life. As I have mentioned earlier, I am slow to adapt to change, particularly when I am not able to understand the change. In this instance, I seemed to be losing much more than I was gaining. Although my job security was never really threatened, the meaning of my work was much more important to me, and that aspect came under threat. I even went as far as actually applying for another job, although when I was interviewed for the position, I realised that I did not want it.

The music staff was reduced to one, drama suffered the same fate, and neither of the positions offered to these lecturers was permanent. Dance as a discipline was phased out. Because of the specialist diploma, which was still in process, there were two posts in the art discipline, although one of them was temporary. My own post was permanent, but this security also felt temporary. We had no idea what would happen when the course was discontinued, and we were not in positions where these matters were discussed with us. The

building in which the Art Department was housed came under threat, and I record this on page 106 of my autobiography, where I write '...the new plans for the building include the removal of the exhibition wall claddings in the foyer. I try to stop it, and to make management aware that this area is essential for exhibiting our work. I am ignored, and the renovations go ahead'. Although it was a battle that we won temporarily, waging it was time-consuming and exhausting, because we knew that we could not rely on any sense of permanence. There were changes within the building, as exhibition space was eradicated and studios were transformed into lecture venues, to bring the physical space into line with the corporate identity of the institution. The Art Deco fencing was removed, thrown on the back of a truck, and replaced with metal railings. The marble steps were replaced with brick paving, a fact which I record on page 136 of the autobiography. We were overcome with a sense of helplessness.

At this time, so much in my life was shifting and changing that I could neither make sense of it, nor know how to venture into this environment. I had no idea what my role would be in the new institution, whether in fact I would have a role to play, and ultimately, whether I would want to play that role.




The students nervously handle a python

My sense of professional self, and to a large degree, my personal self, had been lodged within a busy, productive art department, where we were committed to meaningful teaching and learning encounters with the students, experiential learning opportunities, and extended contact sessions that sustained a level of trust in the relationships between lecturer and student. This is evident in the fact that my students would literally put their lives in my hands, as I have recorded on page 111 of my autobiography, where I write about taking the students abseiling so that they could experience the value of life. They would launch themselves down cliff faces if they believed that it would teach them something. We travelled miles to find

exhibitions and life experiences, to teach lessons in rural schools, and to discover more about ourselves as human beings and as teachers. Examples of such activities may be found throughout my autobiography, but I mention pages 113, 120 and 132 as references. In such a space, we were prepared to risk, and grow. On one hand, my teacher identity was being fed by the meaningful interaction with the students, but on the other, it was being starved by an institution, and a context, that was consistently telling me that what I was doing was not important. This art specialisation course was being discontinued because diploma courses were being phased out. The value of our work was being de-stabilised. We did not know what would replace it.

Hall and Schulz (2003: 370) state 'Caught up in redefinitions of professionalism within the university context, teacher educators experienced disjunctions between the university and the professionalism they themselves wanted to model as teachers.' I had recently been introduced to the notion that research was a vital part of my own professional growth, and needed no convincing that this would form an important part of my future at the new institution. However, it appeared that research was being fore-grounded, and that the institution placed little value on the practice of meaningful teaching, or on the affective domain of relationships with students. Kreber (2010:173) acknowledges that the balance in teacher education has been 'tipped towards research', and I found this concept very difficult to integrate into my thinking. Did it have to be one or the other? Could it not possibly be both?

My own experience in the research arena was extremely limited, as I have recorded on page 106 of my autobiography, and I had no idea how to write an academic article. There also seemed no way to find out – there were certainly no research courses offered for novices. I felt deskilled, as Murray (2005) records in his work, and not able to perform in this new world. During a merger, a sense of continuity in one or many aspects is desirable (Van Vuuren et al, 2010), and where staff members are expected to accept the practices of the dominant institution, then a certain disruption in the process of identity construction can occur. My sense of continuity, and a world that I did know about, and one in which I felt adequate, was the world of teaching, and so it was to that world that I chose to look for my identity during this strange time of change and restructuring.

During this time, I was given the Distinguished Teacher Award by the newly-merged Technikon, but at the award ceremony, I was told by a member of senior management that I would have to modify my practice to accommodate larger classes. I record this discussion on

page 114 of my autobiography. Even the very practice for which I was being acknowledged would have to change if I was ever to 'belong' to this new institution. Van Vuuren et al (2010) claim that many staff members of merging institutions select a position of holding on to their current practices, rather than choosing to change for the institution. In this way, they choose the profession, rather than the institution, as a source of meaning and sense-making. This could be seen as self-serving, but when the institution itself does not yet have an identity, the options are limited.  I clung to my work in the art department, doing more and more to highlight the value of the work that the students were doing. We held exhibitions, took part in displays and performances on the main campus of the institution, as I have described on pages 107 and 108 of my autobiography, and taught art classes to children from surrounding schools. When I reflect on that time, it is clear that I was trying to prove the value of my own 'group', because its value was so evident to the students and to me.

Emotions may be described as a sense of meaning that is derived from a teacher's personal response to her work (Zembylas, 2002) and it is that part of a teacher that responds and reacts. The way that we experience our work is often through an emotional lens, and the way that we perform in our work can be dictated by emotions (Ashkanasy, 2004). My emotions were in a state of upheaval because my subject, and subsequently my belief in my work, was under threat. At the same time, the merger was resulting in feelings of insecurity, and of my subject being devalued and threatened as never before. Zembylas (2005) believes that western culture is discomforted by emotion, and during the process of the merger, the emotions of the lecturers from the teacher's college were not considered, as I have recorded on page 103 of my autobiography. The process of change was externally-driven, and we had no place in the negotiations about our own futures, or the nature of our work. I did what I had always done when my world was out of rhythm: I retreated into my work.

## 6.2.4 Coming to terms with the new context

The influence of this new context on my shifting professional identity was sharp. Coldron and Smith (1999) suggest that some part of teacher identity is imposed, and I was having a particular kind of identity imposed on me. Law et al (2005:443) write that 'recent careers work has become focused on 'skills', at the expense of 'feelings'. Yet it is motives, needs, stereotypes, fears and hopes which constitute much of the way in which a person sees self at work'. In addition to this, in the world of visual art, the world that I inhabited, an ability to express emotions, and therefore to recognise them, is important.

Parkison, (2008) suggests that power structures frame the identity of the teacher, and the power structures that were reframing mine were difficult to anticipate, and even more difficult to understand. At the training college, I had become confident, enthusiastic and pro-active, but as the technikon imposed its norms and standards on the way we behaved as a staff, and the way that we did our work, I became less confident, and found that I withdrew more and more into the relative safety of the art building. Hodgen and Askew (2007) offer that a professional identity crisis can result when external structures and regulations conflict with the internal values or personal performance of an educator, and that is certainly what I was experiencing. In this changing, evolving institution, I did not yet know what I had to become.

My initial teacher training and early teaching experience had been in the primary school. Murray (2005) records the fact that this is often the case with teacher educators. My identity as a teacher had been crafted around a personal self, as is suggested in the work of Day et al (2006), with strong roots in the affective domain. I saw my work as being firmly lodged within the student body, with my practice being a priority. I interpreted everything new that I learnt through my teacher lens and found ways to either apply new knowledge in my teaching, or use it to improve my practice. At the new institution, the practical knowledge described by Murray (2005), and which I had developed over twenty years of teaching, seemed inadequate and undervalued, while the practice of research and publishing articles was quickly fore-grounded. I had no knowledge at all in this arena, and did not know how to acquire it – it appeared that it should happen through osmosis. I write of this despair on pages 107 of my autobiography. It was literally a language that was different from my own. There were terms that I had never heard before, that were not defined adequately in a dictionary. It wasn't only a language, I soon realised, it was a way of being, an entirely new culture, one that had its own rules and traditions, and it seemed that only the 'insiders' had access to it.



As a human being, part of my nature is that it is important to cope, and where I am not coping, at least I must be *seen* to be coping. Hung and Chen (2002), Merriam and Courtney (2003), Fuller et al (2005) and Seaman (2008) write about novices who enter a community of practice by being on the periphery, and instead of sitting on the periphery of the community that was formed around research practice, where I felt inadequate and not very welcome, I

doubled my efforts in the art department, trying to prove the value of our work. Clandinin et al (2010:141) write that 'knowledge is entwined with identity,' and my knowledge was about teaching, about students, about trying to create meaningful teaching and learning spaces to explore art-making. Therefore, that was where my identity was very firmly lodged. It was a place of security, and the place in which I sought refuge.

When, in my personal capacity, I was offered funding to use for an educational venture, the final year students and I decided to develop a tour for children.

I record this event on pages 132 and 133 of my autobiography. The learning possibilities for all of us who were involved could not be measured, and the potential was limitless. I approached a school for deaf learners, and we embarked on a process of reciprocal learning. My role was to oversee the planning and process of the trip, while my students navigated their way through the process, but I was really learning about it all the way.

Once we were settled in the environment, the students mentored the children through four days of seeing, doing, making and experiential learning. The experience was one of deep learning and joy. It was a time when Palmer's words (1998:31) about 'the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet' were made manifest. At night, when the children were in bed, the students, the teachers and I would gather for reflective sessions, and the learning curve about children, teaching and *being* was steep. When the students reflected on the value of the experience, they were united in their understanding of the deep learning that it encompassed. Avital Rabinowitz (Cape Town, 2011) writes:

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'I feel grateful and blessed to have been a part of this experience, far beyond what I could have learnt in a lecture environment, classroom setting, or out of a textbook. Hands on, practical experience made us feel like we were a part of something bigger, something life changing and something that was contributing to the greater good. We felt like we were actually making a difference to these children's lives. I don't think our enthusiasm and words conveyed how much it meant to us as future teachers at the time, but it will always be a part of us, always be something we look back on and feel proud of in our final year and something we will hold close to our hearts."





Images from the tour

I felt a sense of security returning to my notion of who I was as a teacher. We had managed to create a very meaningful space of learning in the lives of all who participated, and there was a sense of purpose coming back to my work. Returning to the institution with a sense of achievement and delight, I was asked to justify the trip in terms of its research value, and to give it worth in terms of funding for the institution. I found this hard to accommodate in my thinking. The initiative had brought about immense learning opportunities for the students, and they were better prepared, in so many ways, for the work



With the students on our return from a children's tour

that they would take on the following year. I had learnt about the students and the way that they approached this kind of activity, and the reflective sessions at night had given me valuable insights about the young people with whom I was working. I struggled with the concept of further

justification for this experience, and did not yet have the depth and breadth of the understanding that would encompass both worlds – the funding and research, and the learning and value as well. I felt as though I was functioning in two different contexts – there was one where I was doing deeply meaningful work, and there was another where I had no purpose at all. Clandinin, Aiden Downey and Huber (2009:142) speak of the 'the multiplicity of each of our lives' and say that 'Part of sustaining teachers and ourselves as teacher educators is knowing how to navigate, to live on and in, shifting landscapes.' My landscapes were shifting and in that space of insecurity, I knew that I had to learn to navigate, and make some changes to my own work, and to the way that I thought about that work. I had to try to understand the nature of my new context, so that I could function within it.

At the same time, however, I was determined not to lose contact time with the students, and not to allow the quality of the course to degenerate. When a new Head of Research was appointed to our Faculty, the context once again changed for me, because he was prepared to spend time teaching me to be a part of the world that I had to belong to. I record this new attitude to research on page 123 of my autobiography. He encouraged me to believe that the process of a Ph D would be of value, convinced me that my work would benefit from the process, and offered great support when I hesitatingly embarked on this journey.

In terms of the construction of my teacher identity, this context was ironically to prove deeply significant. In preparation for this merger, I had embarked on a postgraduate degree that I had not personally sought. The knowledge gained from this venture proved to be of strong value in the way that I thought about myself as an educator of young minds. The research/practice debate also destabilised my professional identity. I felt de-skilled. There was a choice that I had to make. I had to choose to become 'dead wood', which was a term that was liberally applied to the 'college staff' who had been appointed, but who had chosen not to change, or I could embrace this new world, and try to become a part of it. Dead wood is not in my personal vocabulary. This study, and the tremendous knowledge that I have acquired that has been a part of the process, is a direct result of that decision.

## 6.3 Learning to merge research and practice

> *It is a lovely time, and one in which my thinking shifts tremendously. Before, I have given up on any idea of doing research. My earlier experiences of trying to become involved in the research department at the Technikon have been thwarted, and I also believed that my practice was far more important than any research that I might complete.*

*Slowly I come to realise that research should form the very fabric of my practice, and as I read more, and start to expand my horizons, my practice also shifts, and become more meaningful. I retrieve Maxine Greene from her file, and discover Schon, and the real value of reflective practice. I pore over the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela, the biography of Helen Martins, and the theory of Narrative Research. I watch films with a different eye. I talk with Elske and Evelyn and Hannsie about different things. New purpose is beginning to emerge.*

This extract speaks of a time when my understanding of who I was as a teacher shifted tremendously. This process began when I enrolled for the master's degree in education. Through this introduction to expanding my knowledge, I had come to understand the value of research. During the process of the merger, I felt disempowered, because I was not sure how to become a researcher within my work at the institution, and was also a little desperate because research seemed to be more important in the institution than our core business, which I believed was the practical and contact work of educating the future teachers of our country. After the official merger, a new Head of Research had been appointed to our Faculty, and this was an important event in the way that I began to understand myself as a teacher/researcher. He did not 'belong' to either of the merged institutions, did not share a history with either of them, carried no baggage, and did not belong to any 'groups' on the staff. He suggested that I consider creating a research poster about the MAGIC tour. There was tremendous institutional support for these kinds of endeavours, and within a few short weeks, we had located a suitable conference, and I designed a poster which spoke of the mentorship and the learning experiences that had taken place during the MAGIC tour, (Making Art Grow In Children) as it came to be called. I decided to take it further, carried out some additional research, and wrote a paper about the different forms of mentorship that this exercise had involved. I was nervous and hesitant, but presented the paper at a conference the following year. I document this process on pages 133 and 134 of my autobiography.

This added a new dimension to my sense of art teacher identity. I learnt that I was capable of representing my subject and my work in the research arena. I had learnt a great deal, through reading and preparing the paper, about mentorship, and this would influence further planning for future trips. I began to see that I could, in fact, belong at this new institution. I could merge research with meaningful teaching and learning. I record this new thinking on page 134 of my autobiography.

Clandinin et al (2009:152) believe that teachers should be in a constant process of self-discovery, and that lifelong learning, reflection and peer relationships helps them to

determine new sides of themselves. They write: 'Each "for now" needs to be open to its next configuration, as a future 'for now'. But every 'for now' needs to emerge from the complex experiences each person is facing and it needs to be lived out and respected, no matter how similar or different it might seem, by those whose lives shape its design'. My teacher identity was shifting to accommodate a new side – that of the teacher as a searcher for knowledge. I began to realise that research could be a meaningful part of my processing, and that I could, in fact, function, albeit on the edges, of this new world. My 'for now' was changing, as I began to accommodate the new institution into my way of thinking, and my teacher identity was being constructed into another dimension; while I remained the hands-on teacher in the studio, I was also becoming a novice researcher, which was strengthening that very practice.



A student pensively involved during a contact session

My determination to continue providing meaningful contact sessions for my students resulted in a particularly heavy workload; although the management of the institution tried to lighten it, I would not give up the time that I believed was so important. My personal investment in my work was too important to me. I was teaching to a full timetable. I was acknowledged for my work outside of the institution and was heavily engaged in writing text books about my subject. I was running workshops for the Western Cape Education Department to assist in the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education, and also for the staffs of the newly-formed 'Focus' Schools. These activities are recorded on pages 122 and 148 of my autobiography. It had become a way of life, a very full way of life, and I was afraid of losing it, because I did not know what I would replace it with. At the time, I did not acknowledge this, even to myself. It was a source of security in a world, both public and private, both personal and professional, that was providing me with safety, and a sense of meaningful self. I could not relinquish it. I used to joke about the fact that I had become one of those spinster teachers who has her work and her dog. Publicly, it was funny. Privately, it was true. By this time, my teacher identity was enmeshed very strongly with my personal identity, and I gained tremendous personal satisfaction from my work. As I reflect on this time, I realise that the

institution was beginning to settle, and with this more stable context, it was beginning to offer positive support to its staff members. My teacher identity was also able to stabilise. It was also beginning to grow in different directions, because of the new knowledge that I was acquiring through reading, and the subsequent new ways of thinking that this reading engendered.

While many of us on the staff believed that our priority was meaningful engagement with the students, Robinson and McMillan (2006:329) write that the new dean of the Faculty experienced 'frustration that very full teaching timetables allowed lecturers little time outside the immediate classroom situation' for engaging with research. They note that each process of change is affected by the 'different visions' of the role-players, and that these belief systems are generally grouped into communities (Robinson and McMillan, 2006:330). What the dean could not know at the time was that those of us who were rooted in practice did not initially know how to engage with research, because this was a practice that was foreign to us, and one whose worth had yet to be proven. It was a time when we all had to learn about each other, and when we all had to find a new way to be, within the 'shifting landscapes' which  are described by Clandinin et al (2009:142).

When I look back now, I can see that the transition into a deeper framing of my work, within the broader context of education, was very important, and that the knowledge that I was gaining was contributing to my teacher identity. The passage is a difficult and often painful one, and by choosing to try to 'navigate' it, I give up the last vestiges of 'knowing' what I am doing, or feeling secure in my work. I no longer have such a strong sense of being a capable, experienced teacher. The ground is constantly shifting, as we all try to find our ways through a space that is defined by change, challenged by a multitude of choices, and always seemingly just out of reach. Certainly, I have no idea what the end point of this journey may be, or if, in fact, there is an end point at all. My spiral continues to move outwards. Clandinin et al (2009:152)'s 'for now' is perhaps what we have, and what we have to make meaning in the moment. And in my moment, all I am able to do is to attempt to notice significant encounters with people, and with knowledge construction, along the way.

My commitment to contact time and trying to find meaningful ways to address student learning was rewarded when, as I have written earlier, I was awarded the distinguished teacher award by the newly-merged institution. It validated the efforts that I was taking in the art department, and affirmed the role of teaching at the institution.

# A distinguished art teacher for life

YOU can't actually miss her. Sandy Johnson, Head: Arts and Culture at the Faculty of Education (Mowbray) is tall, passionate about teaching, her students and life, outspoken and an individualist. And she has just received the annual Distinguished Teacher Award for which she is thrilled "because finally arts and culture are being recognised and not seen as some 'fluffy' subject". This excellence award was introduced in 1999 when it was received by Dr Paul Marais (Applied Sciences), followed by Greg Leigh (from the same faculty) and last year it was shared by André du Toit (Business Informatics) and Arthur Barker (Built Environment and Design).

"I didn't stand a chance. The first day I went to school, I came home and said to my mother: You know what, I'm gonna be a teacher. And since then I haven't even thought about anything else," Johnson explains her love for teaching.

But why art? "That was also a natural process. In Grade 3 I won an award for a painting, and art was one of my high school subjects. After obtaining my diploma from the then Cape Town Teachers College (the same building in which she now teaches), I specialised in art education for another year." She taught art for two years at schools and then joined the well-known Frank Joubert Art Centre in Newlands. During her 17 years there, she worked as an itinerant art teacher at primary schools, started the adult education project at the Centre, presented art workshops to African teachers, and offered graphic design and extramural art classes to matrics. In 1998 she joined her alma mater as a lecturer. "Teaching art is not about teaching people how to make beautiful paintings. It's about teaching people about life, by using art as a medium. There are so many things inside us that remain untouched and those things are the qualities that make us rich and noble beings. When you are involved with art, you begin to touch those things."

When you ask her about her teaching philosophy and what gives her work satisfaction, she looks at you for a while, almost as if she is not going to answer. "I train teachers. That is a massive responsibility. They must be trained to be superb educators and meaningful human beings, who are deeply aware of their own gifts and values so that they can pass them on. It is important to me to inspire my students to get excited about their own potential as learners of life. Once they are excited, they want to share. So when they leave here, they know it's only the beginning – something opens up for them that can never close again. And it's wonderful to be part of that in a small way. We try to work with students on an individual basis which is

based on mutual respect and I think that my colleague, Rika van Zyl, and I know more about our students than most of their parents. When I see what students write to me about how this course has changed their lives, I feel that we really do make a difference."

Paging through those notes, it's clear that she's not exaggerating. Every second student thanks her for being a role model, her friendship and making such an impact in their lives.

Johnson is also involved in community outreach projects such as regular workshops for learners, and does several voluntary projects with her students. "We recently took some children to build ice sculptures and every single student showed up for the project, after finishing their exams and getting their results," she says with obvious pride. Johnson is currently busy with her Master's at UCT on the creative stages of schematic development of children, and has also co-authored several GET phase arts and culture text books for Oxford University Press.



*Photo: Bennie Karlie*

*bulletin – 1*

The irony is that the award opened questions for me that can only be answered by becoming more involved in the research process, as I have indicated in my autobiography on page 114,

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more absorbed in the thoughtful processing of information that is only accessible through this avenue. In many ways, this study is a direct result of that award.

*...unless restored by that refining fire*
*Where you must move in measure, like a dancer*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

## 6.4 Finding the meaning

*The award also opens a question for me that I still seek to answer: what is a distinguished teacher? External judgements matter very little to me. How does one sustain being a distinguished teacher? What must one do to stay good? Can I manage to stay 'distinguished' for myself? How do I do this? While I am grappling with these thoughts, I turn to the process of reflective practice. If I can find one place in my professional life where a change occurs, where a lasting difference happens, it will be here.*

With this award, I began to think about my teaching in ways that acknowledged who I was as a teacher. Teaching, for me, is an affair of the heart. Whether it is right or wrong, whether it is good or bad, I am defined by my work, and my personal identity and my teacher identity has become so enmeshed that it is impossible to separate them. My work has come to represent a relationship between human beings and a world of possibility that has the potential to be flat and factual, or round and robust. Learning becomes the inter-subjective matter of meaning, of making sense, in our own ways, of the world that we inhabit. I record this in my autobiography on page 132, where I write 'All I have to do is make sure that, within the small physical space that is left to us, we can create a world where art education is respected and thrives. It does not really matter what anyone else thinks. Or even how much anyone else understands about what we are doing'

With some students in the studio

Drawings by fourth year students exploring line and tone
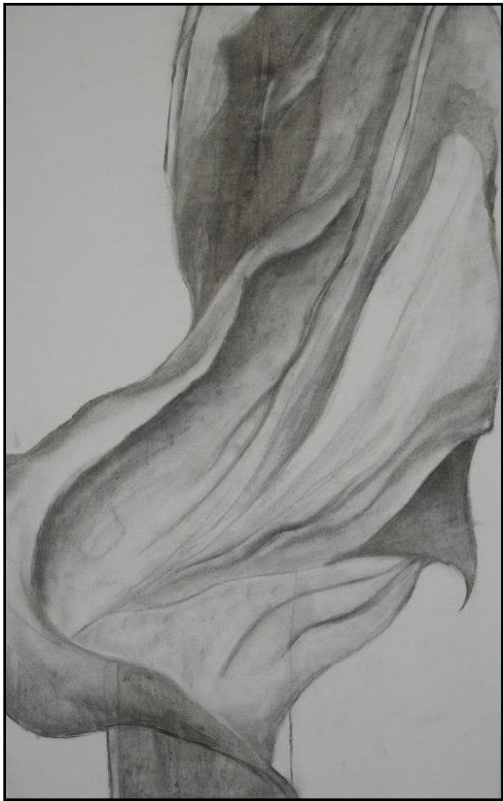
There is a physical world of matter, that exists, and that will continue to exist, beyond who we are. Learning, for me, is the personal way that we make sense of that matter, the way that we absorb it into the fabric of our day to day existence, the way that it changes us, and we change it, with each new thought or understanding that we experience. These understandings are a strong part of my teacher identity, and are the lenses through which I view my work.

There is the potential to know many facts. These are easy to teach. There is also the potential to become a personal interpreter of those facts, and a permanent explorer in the possibility of an expanding world of meaning and relevance. When I came to this belief about knowledge construction, my teacher identity shifted to accommodate it. I became more of a listener during my own lectures, and gave myself to small moments with the students, rather than trying to create the big moments by myself. I began to understand that the small moments with the students were actually far more meaningful and significant. I had to give up the belief that I was in control of the learning. For a teacher identity that has been so rooted in being a 'successful' teacher, 'knowing' what I was doing in my subject and with my students, this process of letting go of so much that was familiar was a difficult but rewarding one. I record this realisation in my autobiography, on page 143, where I write: 'That night, I sit for a long time alone in my room, and think about this old self in this almost new institution, and the clash of values that is making my work so difficult. I have already come to see the

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value of the research process in my own work, and I am beginning to be inspired by the possibilities that are opening up in my thinking. I am learning more than I ever thought that I could, at this late stage of my life, and am aware of the support for this learning from the institution'. With time, I slowly came to accept that there was a world of knowledge about teaching that I could access if I was open to it, and that I could learn from colleagues, from my students, and from the process of research.



**Figure 6.3: The Mandala of Many Pathways**

There is no longer such a strong need for factual information. Technology and the world of the instant access of Google and Wikipedia give us that information in an instant; it is what we do with that information, the way we interpret it, the way we give it meaning in our lives, which has relevance. Teaching and learning, therefore, has to do with relevance (Jeffrey, 2006). It is about transformation and growth. There can no longer be presumptions, assumptions, or certainty. There can only be a space that we explore, a space of becoming, in a world of options, where we choose, for a moment, who we can be, what we want to interpret, how we want to interpret it, and how we will give that interpretation meaning.

Students learning in different ways

Looking back at the time of tremendous upheaval during the process of merging with a large, bureaucratic institution, I remember the pain, the insecurity and the fear, but I am also aware of the tremendous growth that took place in many aspects of my identity as a teacher. On page 120 of my autobiography, I write about a student excursion that has since been funded, in part, by the institution, and what I learnt through that experience. On page 121, I talk about the permission that was granted to have an artist in residence, and how much this contributed to my own knowledge. On page 123 I speak of the ceramic artist, Joe Faragher, who gave us all lessons and improved my skills in this field. On the same page, I write about the influence of beginning to read for my Ph D. Much of this had to do with choice, and on page 127 of my autobiography, I talk about a decision that I make to take children away with my students. On pages 142 and 143, I write of the conscious decision that I make not to leave the institution, and to acknowledge the value of my students in their process of learning. My identity as an art teacher has grown because I have chosen to stay

determinedly true to the value of visual art education. On page 143 of my autobiography, I write about trying to establish a B Ed Honours course that specialises in visual art education. Every time I had to validate my subject to others, I became more convinced myself.

Within every discipline there are the tools for discovering a way of living more meaningfully, and because visual art is my discipline, I examine this relationship on a daily basis. These are the tools that offer us a way to understand our worlds, to make sense of events, facts and moments in the broad basis of living that contribute to the big and the small scales of our humanity.
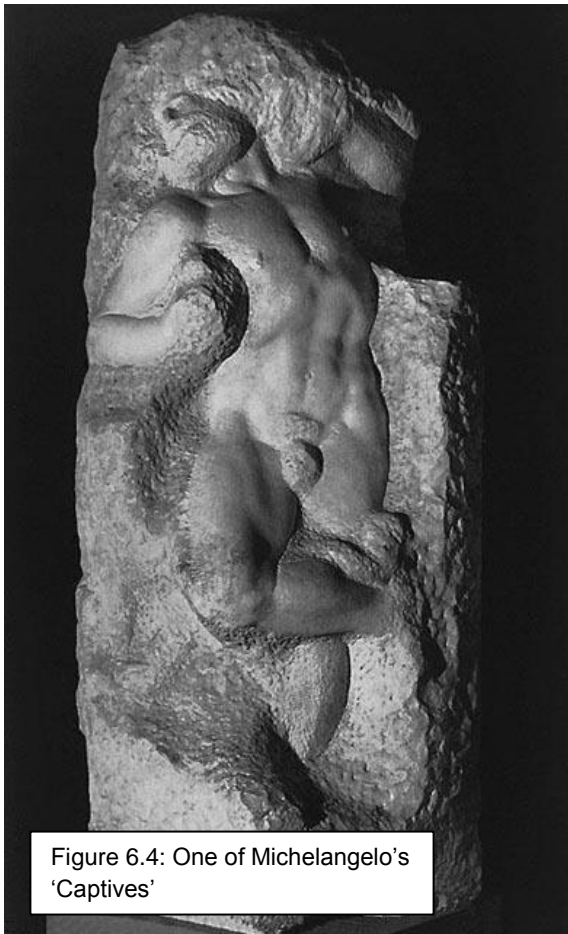


Figure 6.4: One of Michelangelo's 'Captives'

I have come to understand that, as a teacher, and as an art teacher, my role is to explore a possibility that is wide and varied. There is a physical framework of art elements and design principles, of aesthetic appreciation and discernment. There is a tradition of great masters and a history that tracks movements and practices. These are the 'tools of my trade', and they construct the world in which my teacher identity functions. Within these traditions, it is my work to help my students to extract the personal.

The meaning of Michelangelo's 'captives' is lost until it becomes personal, until we begin to extract its relevance for our own lives; until we begin to understand a vibrant, massive life force that is trapped, that has the potential to escape, that has the possibility to be. Until that moment, the sculptures remain unfinished works that were incomplete at the time of the artist's death.

If I had to find a metaphor for the teaching and learning experience, it would be a Michelangelo Captive. This understanding came to be real to me during and after the process of the merger, when I initially believed that I was being held captive by the new institution, and then eventually discovered that the choice was really mine. I could choose to hold on to the 'old' way, or I could try to belong to the new, a decision which I record on page

143 of my autobiography. Michelangelo's 'captive' suggests that there is the potential for another way for the stone to be. As teachers and learners together, we simply have to find it. It took a long time for me to see this because, as a human being, I was so invested in my work that I was threatened by the change. I record this on page 132 of my autobiography, where I include a conversation with a friend about my personal feelings about my work at that time. It took a long time for me to feel positive about the institution, and about the changes in my work that the merger brought about. It took me a long time to embrace the process of research, and to no longer be threatened by it. I had to give up the security of the known, and this was very threatening for me. For my whole life, I had used my work as a point of reference and a point of stability. I had to learn to let this go. I am still learning that lesson. It has been very difficult, but also very rewarding. My teacher identity has grown and changed along with this understanding of my new context. I have become determined to become more knowledgeable about my work, and about the aspects that before I had not accessed or considered.

### 6.4.1 Linking knowledge bases and teacher identity

During these times, my content knowledge provided a place of stability. Through all of the many changes that I was confronting, this, at least, gave me a sense of the known, a sense of balance, and a sense of coping, and even, of coping fairly well. Strong content knowledge provides the essential framework for the search for knowledge (Shulman 1987, Turner-Bisset, 1999; Newton and Newton, 2001; Hogan et al, 2003; Deng, 2007). If a teacher has a robust content knowledge that extends beyond static factual recall, it becomes possible to engage in a process that brings the subject into the centre of a lively encounter of learning. Palmer (1998) speaks of the subject that holds a fascination for both the teacher and the learner, and that provides the focal point of their learning relationship. When a teacher is in possession of a thorough and meaningful grasp of the material, the learning encounter is enabled. The teacher is able to interpret the subject matter in a way that is both meaningful and enticing for the students, so that they enter the relationship as active participants. This active participation embraces both their will to know, and their will to construct knowledge that will have relevance for them in their own lives. While I was engaged with my students, the rest of the world receded a little, and we made meaningful discoveries together. I record such engagement on page 133 of my autobiography. The content knowledge base, which Shulman (1987) also highlights as being important, gave me the security to function in a world where the parameters were shifting on a daily basis. I learnt to be more thoughtful

about what the students were actually learning about their own engagement with art, rather than insisting that they should learn what I wanted to teach them about art.

Newton and Newton (2001) suggest that content knowledge explores an expanding web that enables a teacher to plan, present and respond effectively, so that meaning construction is a joint venture between all participants. Teacher identity is an important part of this process. A teacher with a fascination for content knowledge is able to interpret the curriculum in a more relevant way, and can move beyond the confines of mass-produced learning materials. I am one of the writers of these mass-produced learning materials, having written text books for many years. On page 102 of my autobiography, I write about how this process impacted on my practice, because I had to come to terms with the intricacies of a new curriculum. I had to separate the core content from the vastness of the field, and this has contributed to my teacher identity; I understand the limitations of a text book, the page extents and word counts that confine the content to a publisher's boundaries. I also understand that beyond the page, there is a world of possible interpretations, processes and techniques that might better serve learners in a particular context, with particular needs. It is in this space that my teacher identity comes into being. For example, when one writes a practical activity for a text book, there is a generic learner in a generic school that is significant. When one actually teaches that lesson, one has to know the specific learners, and the possibilities of the context, in order to adapt it. Thus, knowing what to teach provides the focal point of any learning encounter, and may well be the destination, but knowing how to teach it provides the vehicle for the journey.



Student brush drawing 'after Matisse'
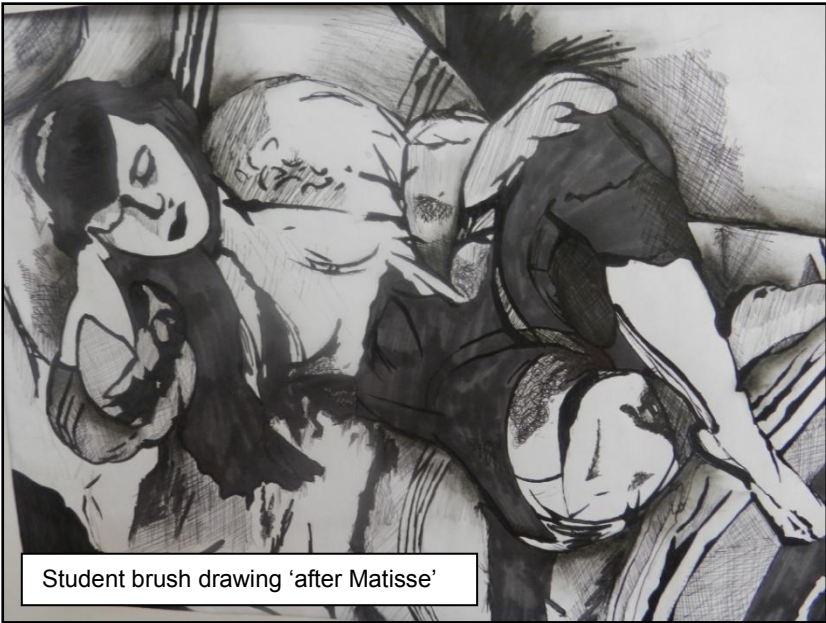
Encouraging the students to personally construct what they are ready to learn, and to make sense of that learning in their own terms, while they work with a mentor who has the content knowledge to be able to support their process, has been an important part of my journey. My identity as a teacher had to learn to let

go of the control, of the 'expected outcomes', and I had to learn to feel secure enough in my own content knowledge to let the students explore the construction of their own.

Over time, experience has given me the opportunity to develop consciously a set of skills and strategies that are personal and private, and that has enabled me to transform my content knowledge to attempt to make a meaningful learning encounter possible. This process was affected, all along the spiral, by who I was as a teacher at that point. As my reading and experience at the institution progressed, my pedagogical content knowledge also changed, and this change in turn affected my teacher identity. This is in keeping with the research of Hashweh (2005), Traianou ( 2006) and Deng (2007). The identity of the teacher directly contributes to her acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge. Turner-Bisset (1999) believes that the personal values of a teacher impact on her pedagogical content knowledge in a number of ways. Thus it appears that there is an interplay between the construction of teacher identity and the acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge – one impacts on the other.
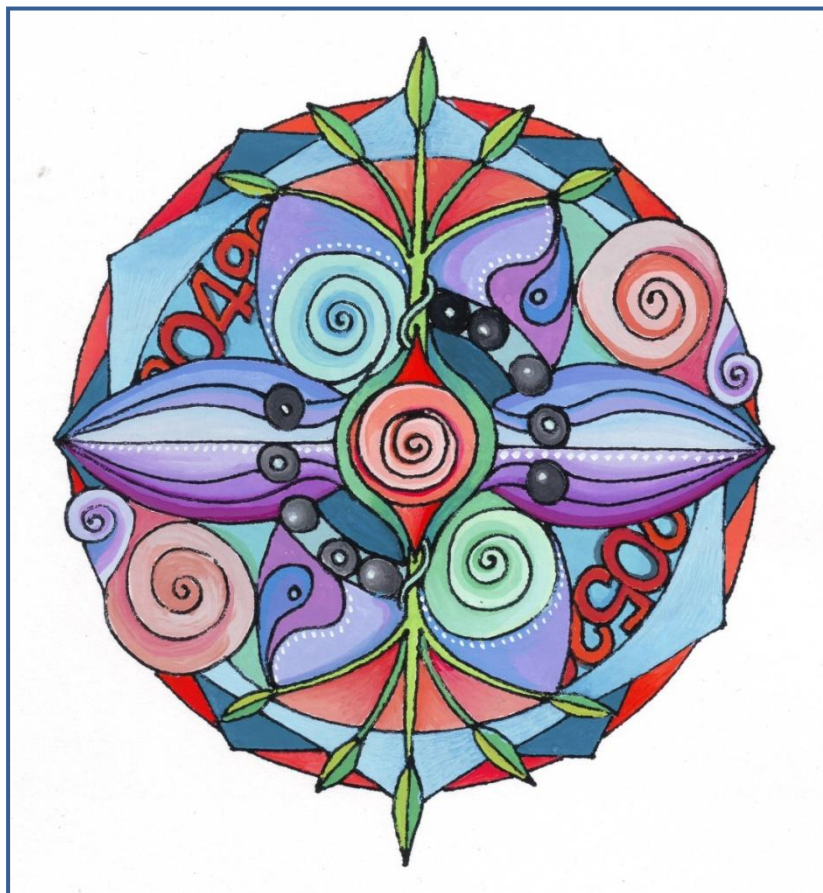


**Figure 6.5: The Mandala of Process**

In my autobiography, one of my personal values is made clear when I write regularly about the kind of contact that is established between the students and me. I quote the example on page 80, where I talk about the work that we do together to improve the students' teaching practice. On page 93 I talk about helping them to decorate the hall for their graduation ball. On page 101, I write about the way that we work together into the night, and how we involve their boyfriends in our processes. On page 120, I write about a particularly meaningful student trip. There are further examples throughout the autobiography. Knowledge of my students is a strong part of my teacher identity. I have learnt that before one can begin to encourage students to want to know, they have to be given the opportunity to understand the relevance of this knowledge in their own lives, a fact that is also noted by Ejsing (2007). The passage of uncovering this relevance is to make it personal, and to make it a choice to want to know. If students can choose to want to know, then their commitment to the learning is deeper, and more meaningful.



Talking with a student during a contact session



A student group on tour

In my own development as a teacher, I have come to understand that my relationships with the students can encourage them to 'want to know'. When we are away on a field study trip, they are removed from their known environment, but because they feel safe with me, they can explore with a sense of excitement and openness. At the same time, my relationship with them makes it possible for me to be more experimental, and to take more risks in my practice. In my autobiography, on page 127, I write about the fact that we planned to take away thirty hearing-impaired learners. This implied a risk on many levels, from the safety and well-being of the children to the learning

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content of the programme. It was also a risk to expose my own students to this kind of demanding experience. However, because I knew them, and because we related on levels other than content, I felt safe enough to explore this venture with them. It was highly successful, and made a significant difference to all of our lives, as I have noted on page 133.


'Being' with my students





It is interesting to note that during these times of change in the context of my work, which coincided with large changes that were simultaneously occurring in my personal life, my teacher identity was more stable than my personal identity. This is, in part, I believe, due to strong content knowledge, my knowledge of my students, and my strengthening pedagogical content knowledge. I could draw on these knowledge bases to achieve stability, while personally I was afraid, threatened and insecure. On page 107 of my autobiography, I write: 'But my real place is with the students,' and in many ways, this is an indication of my attitude to my work that has sustained me through the mergers and the amalgamations that we confronted, and also, to a large extent, the personal losses and disappointments that have occurred.

## 6.5 Personal values and making art matter

My identity as a teacher is firmly rooted in my subject, and even when I am lecturing now in other fields, visual art creeps in, and is evident in the examples that I use, and the comparisons that I draw. Visual art helps me to make sense of my own world; I find it difficult to meditate, and I am not able to 'empty' my mind. However, when I am making mandalas,

then my mind, although not empty, travels on its own journey, and through the process returns with a new consciousness. When I was appointed to my post at the training college, it was to run a specialist art course for students who were voluntarily choosing to remain at the institution for a further year of in-depth study. As the nature of the institution changed, my work embraced lecturing to the first year students, many of whom had never been exposed to visual art before.

My teacher identity had to adapt to these new demands. I had to begin at the most fundamental level, of teaching the five art elements, which the current national curriculum statement suggests for grades 1 and 2. I had to do this for adult students who were nervous, disinterested or afraid.

> *I work more consciously with my first year students, because I want to entice them into the world of visual art, and to convince them of its value in the class room. Where before, I have always concentrated on my senior students, who have already proved their commitment, I start to work more consciously with my first year students, who come to art for a brief spell. I have very few lectures to make any difference to their attitudes. I know that the task is almost impossible, but I am determined to try. I use the full force of my personality. I make them laugh. I make them enjoy their sessions with me. I consciously manipulate them into being fascinated. I tell them stories about the 60s, about Woodstock, and about op-art. I show them examples and play them the music of the Beatles. I come more and more to understand their insecurities about being in an art class. I too, have been exposed to the unknown. I come to understand more and more that my work has changed, and my practice must change with it. I have been used to working with students who are committed to art education, and who are willing to work to that commitment. My work now embraces large student groups who are compelled to take my subject. Their choices happen at a later stage of their academic careers. I try to make their engagement with the subject, however brief, meaningful for them. In a way, I suppose, it is just another step in my acknowledgement of the way that my work is now, the nature of the institution, and the things that I must accommodate, if I want to stay in a space where my work has meaning for me.*

Reflecting on this extract is interesting for me, because I had forgotten that I had ever consciously taken the decision to 'manipulate' my first year students into loving visual art. It is interesting for me in another way; I no longer try to manipulate them. Through working with these students, my identity as an art teacher has come to embrace them, with their fears and insecurities, and I genuinely want them to take what they can, in the short space of time that we have together, so that their lives can be enriched by their knowing more. When I show them the slides, or play the music to them, as I record on page 146 of my autobiography, I invite them into the process with questioning. Their experience of the Beatles' music is different from mine, and I want to make sure that we are probing its relevance for all of us. This change is a personally important one, and brings an awareness of growth in my teacher identity. What my students can learn, through the subject, is something that I have come to

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value. This is not to suggest that my subject is losing significance. It is rather an acknowledgement of my knowledge growth about the student body with whom we currently work.

The extract that opens this section shows an aspect of my teacher identity that is fairly recent; when there is a change imposed in my work, it takes me a while to understand that change, because I place great value on the stability of my work. Once I have either understood, or simply accepted that change, then I try to work with it to the best of my ability. Moving from a place where I had been lecturing to a specialist group of graduate students to a place where my work encompassed huge groups of disinterested, bored students was very difficult for me. In the beginning, I paid more attention to the senior students, and was not particularly motivated by my work with the first year students. I hardly mention them in my autobiography. I slowly came to understand that if I wanted students who were committed and interested by the time that they reached their third and fourth years at the institution, then I had to start by enticing them to want to know, right from the beginning. I had to take away their fear of art, and their fear of exposing what they believed was personal inability.

Research into the art anxiety of my first year students gave me further insights, and I used these to strengthen and adapt the first year course. I write about this process on page 149 of my autobiography. What follows is an outline of my interactions with the students when I introduce them to the possibility of the learning through visual art, and is an example of the way that my identity as a teacher continues to develop and shift from a didactic approach to a more discursive one.

### 6.5.1 Describing my approach with first year students

In my first lecture with new first year students, (and I have only five sessions of one hour each) I try to make their encounter with visual art fun, personal and relevant, as I have recorded on page 146 of my autobiography. I show them that they are wearing art elements. I give them the opportunity to test the proportions of their bodies by proving that their feet are as long as their inner forearms. I show them slides of their own local natural and urban landscapes to encourage them to recognise line, tone, shape, colour and texture in their personal worlds, in the common experience of their own lives. I use questioning rather than statements, so that they can engage with what we are talking about, and learn from their own answers, rather than from what I am saying. I try to help them to realise that although they

may not have been consciously relating to visual art, it has been a part of their natural lives on a daily basis. They begin to understand that visual art is a reflection of the human being and society.

These personal accounts of their own ways of seeing the world, bring us all into the space of teaching and learning, because their opinions have value and meaning. They are invited to play music for each other from the playlists on their cell phones, and in groups, they discuss how the music is a reflection of our society. I play them the music of the Beatles as a starting point, because the music of this pop group is still known by most young people.

When I explain to them that 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' is actually about LSD and its hallucinogenic properties, they respond with fascination. Palmer (1998:108) writes: 'We say that knowing begins in our intrigue about some subject, but that intrigue is the result of the subject's action upon us', and I use the moment to expose them to the role of musicians and artists as they reflect society. I start with the art of the 60's, stemming from the Beatles' music, with particular reference to Op Art, and show them examples.

'Blaze', 1962, by Bridget Riley, is created entirely of lines. This is an introduction to the art element 'line', and at the same time, we recognize the role of the artist as a social observer.
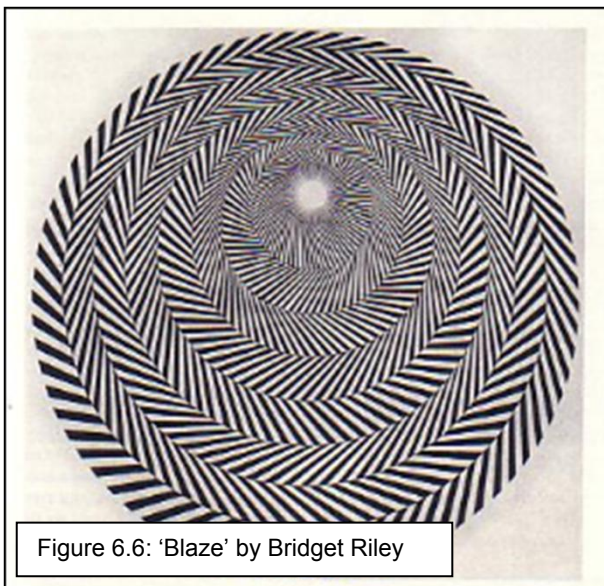


Figure 6.6: 'Blaze' by Bridget Riley

The students are invited to 'enter' the artwork by talking about the effect that it has on their eyes, and then we discuss the fact that the point which attracts their eyes is the white dot just above the centre. They have just found their first focal point.

As they gain in confidence, and with a sense of shared exploration, we examine further artworks, finding the simple art elements in the works, and the students are encouraged to work in small groups to discuss their responses to the works. I encourage the students to sit with friends, so that they are able to use their own languages and cultural references for discussion. I believe that this will give them more confidence in this early stage of their exposure to formal visual art.

Towards the end of our first lecture together, I show them the work 'Guernica', 1937, by Pablo Picasso. This is a moment that disturbs, because the artwork is not easy for them to

assess. Most of them have never heard of Picasso, and certainly not of a small town in Spain called Guernica, where there was a civil war in 1937. I do this intentionally, and with a conscious hope that they should feel disturbed. Initially, we discuss the art elements found in this work, and the way that the artist has used them. We look at the monochromatic nature of the work. I wait for them to begin to lose interest, as I discuss the composition, draw from them the fact that the artist has used geometric shapes to draw our eyes into the work, and ask them to identify images from the work, and discuss how these images make them feel.



Figure 6.7: 'Guernica' by Pablo Picasso, 1937

When they have made their contributions, I ask them to suggest how this work has relevance in their own lives. We discuss social violence, with student contributions providing the substance of the discussions. We look in detail at sections of the painting.



Figure 6.8: Fragment of 'Guernica' by Pablo Picasso, 1937

Fear and pain are emotions that are shared amongst all human beings, and the images give rise to discussion about Township violence, about violent crime, and the society in which we live in South Africa. I remind them that this artwork was created in Spain, in 1937, and slowly we begin to arrive at the notion that visual art has a universality that can open doors to many new thoughts. As they make suggestions, I affirm them with the language of visual art, while at the same time encouraging them to acknowledge that they are entering a world that they believed had no access point for them. As Palmer (1998:138) writes: 'My students lacked that language, and so it was my task to reframe the scattered pieces of our

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conversation. But I needed to wait for the moment when my students could experience it as their own, as a way of naming a discovery that they had made for themselves but were not yet able to put into words.'

Slowly the students come to understand that their opinions have value, and that their responses to the works are not 'wrong' or 'right', and that every human being has a right to interpret an artwork, and give it meaning. We also explore the fact that there are often similarities in the human experience, no matter what our history or culture, and that it is this resonance that makes an artwork come to life. Then we return to a fragment of the painting that I have prepared before the lecture, and I show them a slide of that section in isolation. When they have responded, I place beside it a famous photograph from South Africa's turbulent history. It is a photograph that every student recognises. The similarities are uncanny. It is the iconic photograph of Hector Pieterson, taken by Sam Nzima in 1976.



Figure 6.9: Fragment of 'Guernica' by Pablo Picasso, 1937



Figure 6.10: Photograph of Hector Petersen, Sam Nzima, 1976

We discuss and compare the relevance of, and the similarities between, these two works, and the students are generally thoughtfully fascinated during these discussions.

I have discussed this introduction to Visual Art in detail, because it embraces the approach suggested by Jeffrey (2007), and also underpinned by Haberman, (2010:85) who writes that 'whenever students are involved with issues they regard as vital concerns' and 'whenever students are being helped to see major concepts, big ideas, and general principles and are not merely engaged in the pursuit of isolated facts, good teaching is going on'. Palmer

(1998:124) expresses similar thoughts when he writes: 'Rather than tell my students everything practitioners know about the subject – information they will neither retain nor know how to use – I need to bring them into the circle of practice in that field, into its version of the community of truth.' I use it to demonstrate how my teacher identity has grown, from the art teacher who worked at an art centre, who could tell her children what to do, to a lecturer who hesitantly questions her students, and delights when they offer their own answers to questions that have no possible 'one right' answer.



First year students explore shape and colour using the letters of their own names
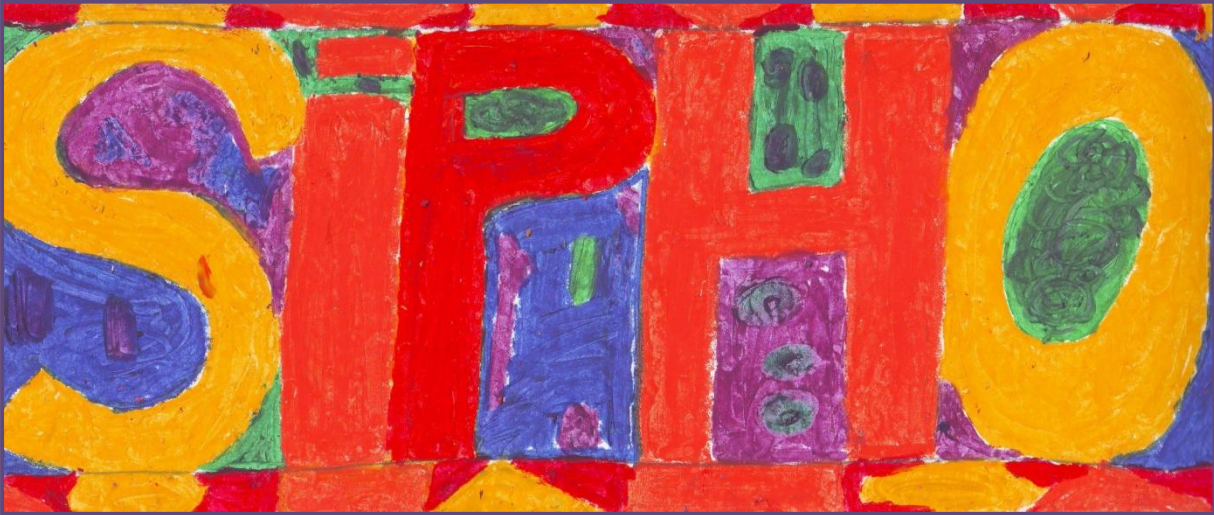
**6.5.2 Teacher identity, relevance, engagement and questioning to teach and learn**

Because I am so deeply embedded in investigating teacher identity construction, I have become very aware of the way that my teacher identity influences and is influenced by my interactions with the students. I notice more. The decisions that I take during my classes are all based on an aspect of knowing; it may be content knowledge, knowledge of context, knowing the most appropriate way to try to reach a particular group of students. There is also the knowing that I do not have – and that is a knowledge that continues to intrigue me. I can never know everything, and can never be entirely secure in what and how I teach, because the students are not static. They change all of the time. They mature. Their own knowledge develops. And all of this happens at different times, and at different rates.

I have come to realise that my role is really that of facilitator. I am also in the process of learning, because each discussion that is held with the students gives me new insights into their worlds, their ways of thinking, and their understandings of society. This helps me to know my students better, and to continue to try to find ways to make their exposure to visual art relevant for them, in their lives, and in their times. This is a process which continues to shape my identity as a teacher. As the students change, so must I, so that I can remain the kind of facilitator that they need.

Teaching with the students, instead of at the students, helps me to know them more, and this knowledge keeps changing with the nature of the students. It helps me to adapt my approach so that I accommodate my students in ways that best facilitate their active participation in their own learning, so that, as Jeffrey (2006:401) writes, 'something new is created' and they leave the space of our work together feeling, at least, different from when they entered it.

Ejsing (2007: 235) writes that good teaching 'creates engaged students', and one way of doing this is through asking questions that provoke and entice. Palmer (1998:4) believes that 'a conversation is only as good as the questions it entertains' and Newton and Newton (2001) believe that a teacher with sound content knowledge is able to ask meaningful questions that will encourage deeper learning. These questions need to draw the participants into the circle of wanting to know more.  I came to understand the value of questioning when I realised that our student population was changing. I no longer had such a firm grasp on knowing who the students were, as I have indicated in my autobiography on page 156, and so I had to let them lead the learning. This understanding was to alter the construct of my teacher identity forever. Content knowledge gives me the freedom to ask good questions, but my pedagogical content knowledge takes away the freedom to impose *my* facts.

Although good questions have their foundations in sound content knowledge, they seldom have their answers there. The answer to a good question is found when a student enters a state of wonder, or finds a moment of relevance, or even one of discomfort. It is often revealed in an altered body posture, when a student literally leans forwards, becomes more alert, or changes a sitting position. It is revealed in a change of the quality of attention, and the way their eyes move. It is a moment when a student is enticed to become more present in the space of teaching and learning. It was during my encounters with my first year students that I came to realise this, which I have noted in my autobiography on page 156. Smaller groups of committed students create a more conversational space, but when I was working with large groups of students who were insecure in the process of art-making, the only way to really reach them was by inviting their involvement through questioning. This questioning needed to involve and engage the students so that there was no space for disinterest. I learnt to watch them keenly to see when the questions were good, or when they were not enticing.



Informal conversations give the opportunity for relaxed questioning and thinking.

I learnt that when an answer to a good question is verbalised, it can often be hesitant, because it reveals a new way of thinking; it is a tentative testing of a new idea, a possibility that before did not exist for her, a concept that suddenly makes sense of an aspect of her world. When a good question finds resonance, it is a moment of learning for all participants. I had to strive to find the good questions. This was an important influence on the construction of my teacher identity. I had to learn, very specifically, to stop 'telling' the students, and I had to start listening to what they were telling me, as I reveal on page 156.

Knowing how to ask good questions is lodged, in part, in sound content knowledge, but an important aspect of good questioning is knowing the student. Triana (2007:230) describes the teaching role as being one of 'function and relationship' and believes that the union between the student and the teacher is a unique and complex alliance that encompasses both emotion and cognitive awareness. The space of healthy relationships can provide a ground for a mutual search for meaning. I think that questioning also helps one to come to know the student. It is very important to be flexible in the kinds of questions that one asks. Sometimes I prepare questions, and within minutes into a lecture, I am aware that those questions will not work, for this particular student group, on this particular day. I have to find new questions, in the moment. That process of finding is also a process of learning for me.

## 6.6 Teacher identity and student identity

Ejsing (2007) suggests that in these times, many students are non-traditional, and at our university, this is certainly the case, as the extract below reveals:

> *I become deeply aware that our student population is changing, and I know that I must change, with it. I do not really know who these students are, and what their lives are about beyond the studio. They come from rural areas in other provinces, from areas where gang warfare is the order of the day, and their backgrounds and their contexts are new and foreign to me. My heart aches when I see the naked fear on their faces, their desperate needs to do the right thing in an institution that is new and foreign to them. There is nothing in their own backgrounds that has prepared them for these challenges. Asking them questions during our interviews has taught me that I need to use these questions to teach me about these students. I have to get them to be more participatory, so that I can learn from hearing what they have to say. I also try to encourage them to talk to each other more, so that group discussions can reveal different ways of thinking, and open up possibilities for knowing, and different ways of looking. I remember my own experience of feeling safe in this very same building, when I was a student, and I try to make sure that these hesitant young people have that same feeling of safety. Always in front of my eyes, I keep those faces – Bandi's[2] eyes softening when he began to talk about the colours of morning in the Eastern Cape, Badisa's[3] determination to remember the art elements by writing one on each of her fingers, and Thembisa[4] playfully teasing me about 'contrast' in conversations. I want our work to have meaning for them. I want their lives to be enriched. I begin to consciously look for ways to reach them in their own places, and then draw them into a space that we can mutually create.*

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[2] *Not his real name*
[3] *Not her real name*
[4] *Not her real name*

This extract acknowledges the fact that post-apartheid South Africa has provided us with a body of students who, in many instances, are first-generation tertiary students. Indeed, many of our students are first-generation matriculants, and do not have a family tradition of tertiary study to guide them, as I have noted on page 156 of my autobiography. Some of our students have families who live in rural villages on the other side of the country. The majority of our students are economically challenged, and rely on bursaries and student loans to fund their living and student expenses. In many of their lives, the computer remains foreign, and few of them own one. There is little hope of family assistance or support in their academic endeavours. English is not the first language for all of our students. Within our student body, Xhosa and Afrikaans are the first languages for many. For some, the prevailing western culture of the institution is at odds with their own. The majority of our students is not used to being asked what their opinions are, or what they think. They are more comfortable with being told what to do, what to learn, and with being given a step-by-step guide on how to teach.

Our institution is a microcosm of the broader South African society, and it can be difficult and challenging, but it is also enriching and exciting. Sharing these differences prepares our students to confront the societies in which they will work, and broadens my own understandings of the rich tapestry of humanity that makes up our social and professional worlds. I learn about my students through questioning, and through listening to their answers to really *hear* what they are saying, as I reveal on page 156 of my autobiography.

As I become more aware of who they are, I try to adapt my practice. This has been an important influence on the construction of my teacher identity. I have learnt that good practice is only possible when one has engaged students. This means knowing who they are, and knowing what kinds of questions are likely to engage them. Knowledge of the learner is an important knowledge base for both Schulman (1987) and Turner-Bisset (1999), and is stressed in the writings of Newton and Newton (2001), Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) and Deng (2007). Turner-Bisset (1999) describes this knowledge more fully, believing that teachers should know their learners in different ways; they should be aware of the developmental stage, as well as the contexts in which their learners reside. I was finding this to be very relevant in my own situation, and have come to understand that knowledge of the students is an important part of the construction of my identity as a teacher. It helps me to know the human beings I am doing my work with. It gives me an understanding of the most appropriate ways to do that work.

Working with these students requires a particular kind of approach; they generally lack the apparent sophistication of traditional western culture, and bring with them the complex diversity of different ways of knowing. By coming to know them better, I have come to understand that teaching them visual art from the west, and in the western way, cannot fascinate them. It has no relevance to their lives, to their interests, and to their daily business of becoming teachers. Relevance is key in my attempts to reach them. My teacher identity has had to expand to embrace this notion, rather than to work against it. I can no longer use my comfortable way of teaching because that is what I used to be secure with.

Haberman speaks of the Pedagogy of Poverty (2010:83), describing such a teacher a 'directive authoritarian' who insists that students learn basic skills. In this way, students can achieve 'without becoming involved or thoughtful' (Haberman, 2010:84). He believes that in order to change the attitude of the students to their own learning, a patient educator must practice good teaching on a consistent basis, so that the students are convinced to collaborate with this kind of teaching and learning. A creative approach is necessary, and Jeffrey (2006:401) describes such teaching as having direct relevance to the student's life, so that the student is 'in control of the process', and has a sense of 'ownership' about knowledge construction. When these things are in place, then a sense of innovation accompanies the learning, because 'something new has been created'. It became necessary to seek this sense of relevance with the students, and to do that, I had to learn from them. My teacher identity had to learn to listen much more carefully, and to listen, sometimes, beyond the words.

Coupled with this is the world of technology in which some of these young people function with such facility. While many of them are not able to own computers, they all own cell phones, and the world of social networking is one in which they move with consummate ease. Their communication is a system of short sentences, or quick messages, of spelling without vowels, and words that have meanings that are different from what the dictionary defines. If they are bored, they can terminate a conversation, or 'convo', as they call it. If they want a piece of music, they can instantly download it, and listen to it on the cell phones. If they face a conflict situation, they can effectively 'delete' a human being from their contact list without ever having to confront or resolve the conflict. On their 'phones, they have playlists, Google, different kinds of social networking, and instant access to any information they might require.

My methods of communicating with the students have had to change, and this change has certainly brought about a change in the construct of my teacher identity. I use text messages on my own cell 'phone, or social media networks like 'Facebook', to communicate with my students, as I describe on page 157 of my autobiography. These social networking sites expose the personal lives of my students to me, but also my personal life to the students. We have come to know each other in different ways. Because of this engagement, I am available to the students beyond university hours, and they are able to contact me, sometimes late at night, to ask about assignments, arrangements for the following day, and sometimes even to request assistance or support in their personal lives.



Examples of 'posts' and photographs that my students have put on Facebook

My students generally have a very limited visual art background, and come into the studio with hesitation and often even with fearful apprehension. Anxiety about their own art-making can inhibit their attitudes, and they sometimes display a sense of bored bravado, or even a

determined acknowledgement that they are not going to be able to attempt or complete their work. Engaging them in the teaching and learning process is a challenge, but once engaged, they bring their wider, more instant selves into the engagement, and the boundaries between teacher and student become blurred.

Over time, my teacher identity has developed to embrace the notions that these students bring to their understanding of art theory, and art-making, and I have come to understand that if they can see art in their everyday worlds, then that is a good starting point. I aim to expose them to this relevance, starting with immediate and concrete examples as discussed earlier – the design and colour of their clothing, their experience of the view through the window, and the design of their own cell phones. We discuss the role of the artists as social commentator, and I ask them to tell me about their own experiences of society. In the words of Palmer (1998:25), 'dialogical methods of teaching help keep me alive. Forced to listen, respond and improvise, I am more likely to hear something unexpected and insightful from myself as well as others.'

Fitzmaurice (2008:343) believes that morality is an important aspect of teaching in a higher education institution, and 'should be studied as it is lived and learned by adult members of society'. Fitzmaurice (2008) appears to place emphasis on the human aspects of the teaching and learning relationships, and this echoes my own belief; students learn better when they feel comfortable in the learning space, when they are able to trust their lecturer in that learning space, and when they are challenged to think critically in a world of learning that has relevance for them. Fitzmaurice (2008:343) believes that the lecturer should have a deep obligation to help students learn. Lecturers who care about the quality of their students' learning strive to develop learning materials that are capable of truly engaging the students. These materials should encourage deep student involvement and understanding. I learnt to do this by consciously trying to know my students, and by trying to create a space of safety for them in the art department, which I describe on pages 158 and 159 of my autobiography. When I came to know them better, I came to care about them as human beings. I was more able to define how I could reach them, and how visual art could assist them with a meaning-making process in their own lives. Walkington (2005: 54) writes: 'Teacher identity is based on the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher; beliefs that are continuously formed and reformed through experience'. My experience has shown me that our students respond to the more personal approach. They are more stimulated and contributive when they are invited into a discussion about art teaching, or teaching in general, than when they listen to a formal lecture on the theory of teaching art. Their understanding and confidence

grows visibly when we attend exhibitions at galleries, rather than find similar pictures in books. They seem able to question work that is hanging on a wall, whereas they simply accept a work that is published in a book. Watching as they learn has taught me, and my teacher identity has grown to embrace this new aspect. I have come to understand that these students have a world that is governed by immediacy; they can access anything at any time. This is a visual world of photographs, YouTube, and shared experiences. They no longer need to pore through books seeking information. A few key words typed into a computer can give them exactly what they need to know. Taking them to an exhibition feeds that sense of immediacy. They can see and 'experience' the work in real time, instead of looking at a reproduction in a book. They feel more confident about expressing their personal opinions.

Second year students show their ease at an art exhibition

The first visit to a gallery for a group of students is always similar; they stay close to me, and ask my opinion about the works. In response, we discuss the work, and they slowly find their own opinions. Subsequent visits reveal growing confidence, and within two or three visits, they leave my side, and are confident enough to move through the exhibition on their own, only seeking my company when they 'discover' something that they particularly want to question or share. My teacher identity construct has had to shift to accommodate this.

Before, it was important to me to guide the learning, to point out to them what I believed they 'should' notice in a work. Now, I wait for their personal discoveries, and then feed into that

space what they want to know. I use questions, but this time, it is their questions *and* mine, rather than mine alone, that guide our mutual learning process.

In our particular context, the students respond more and learn more through practice, through experience, and through being actively involved in the construction of their own knowledge. I have learnt, once again, that I cannot, and should not seek to control that learning. Fitzmaurice (2008:343) believes that a teacher should have a desire to create a space for learning and encourage student voice. Students should be encouraged to be creative as thinkers, and to develop their critical capacities, because this better prepares them to cope with a changing world.

My time with the students is now spent in a dialogical mode, and when I prepare lectures, they are based on questions, as I have mentioned earlier. My handouts are often simply lists of questions that we may or may not cover during class time. I have learnt that when students are involved in offering their own ideas, they are inclined to be more engaged in their knowledge construction. Group discussion is also an important part of our time together; this gives the non-English speakers time to argue, debate and think in their mother tongues. My teacher identity and my practice have both shifted enormously to accommodate these changes, and I constantly have to remind myself to move a little more slowly, and to give a question more of a response time before we continue. I have come to understand that hesitancy does not always mean not knowing. When I think back to the kind of teacher that I used to be when I taught at the art centre, I am a little ashamed. I have an image of a woman standing in front of a silent group of children, confidently telling them what they needed to learn. I am, of course, aware that it was not so bad, but the difference in the way that I approach my work now, is so vast, that it might well have been the case. Then, I talked and the children listened. Now, we talk together.

*Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us*
*To purify the dialect of the tribe*
*And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight*
*T S Eliot, 1942*

Fitzmaurice (2008:348) writes: 'Teaching is more than just the transmission of information or skills. The good teacher seeks to support students to develop to their full potential as human beings'. The notion of caring for the students and developing the whole person is fore-grounded. Trust and respect are important considerations for student learning, and providing a space that is 'safe' for the students is valuable. Teacher identity and integrity are important

considerations here, as are sincere and just student relationships where the development of the whole student is nurtured. When I became aware that my focus had shifted away from the 'fine art' of visual art, and had moved into the meaningfulness of visual art in the lives of my students, it was an important acknowledgement for me. The importance of the subject had not waned, but its relevance had swelled. My knowledge of the students, and caring for them, as well as caring for my subject, taught me this. Vogt (2002:262) writes that 'caring is seen as an integral part of teaching' and although I reject the notion of 'mothering', I have discovered that my students respond well to the fact that I am interested in their lives. I will listen, will sometimes challenge, and will encourage them to develop their own capacities. Often, when they tell me that they are finding something particularly difficult, I respond with a smile and say 'Good. Now just imagine how much more you are learning!'

The ways that I do my work directly affects student learning, and so reflective practice *must* influence the quality of my teaching and learning interactions. When I know and understand what I am doing, I can strive to do it in ways that better facilitate student interaction and learning. Fitzmaurice (2008:348) supports the notion that reflection on practice is important. Human beings live life on two levels – the first as active participants, *doing* the work of living, and the second as emotional, introspective beings with an inner life. It is in the act of reflecting that meaning is ascribed. In our faculty, the act of reflection is prescribed for our students at the end of every lesson that they teach, and they have admitted that they usually fill in these spaces just before they return to the campus after their bi-annual teaching practice sessions. When they shared this information with me, it was important in my understanding of the student attitude to prescribed reflective practice. With so little experience of teaching, it is difficult for them to realise the value of developing as reflective practitioners. We spend time doing this together, and I consciously build reflection into our class time, so that they are able to reflect, not only on their practices as teachers, but also on their artworks. We speak about being 'reflective practitioners of life'.

This brings an important question into focus for me, and is one that I constantly grapple with: if the act of reflective teaching requires at least an early understanding of the process of teaching and learning, do my students have enough of an initial understanding, and enough experience of art teaching, to facilitate meaningful reflective practice? The schools where they complete their sessions of practice teaching very seldom have established and structured Arts and Culture lessons, mainly because very few current in-service teachers are able to teach these subjects with a degree of confidence.

In reflecting on the reflective practices of my students, I have come to realise that there is a need for the students to participate more actively in teaching visual art, and have resolved to bring this work on to our campus in the near future, and to make it an integral part of our class work. This will enable us to complete peer reflective sessions after such lessons, and will hopefully provide the students with a deeper understanding of this process. This was also important in the further construction of my teacher identity; I was reflecting on what my students needed to experience to improve their practice, rather than on telling them how to do it.

> *This is the use of memory:*
> *For liberation – not less of love but expanding*
> *Of  love beyond desire, and so liberation*
> *From the future as well as the past*
>
> *T S Eliot, 1942*

Fitzmaurice (2008:348) stresses professional values and morality, and writes: 'The teacher/learner relationship is seen as very important and there is evidence in the statements of a clear commitment to values such as care, responsibility, respect and trust and the relevance of virtue ethics can be seen.' She believes that 'accuracy and sincerity' are the most important values of a moral educator, and should be at the core of every teacher. Teachers are urged to be aware of the responsibility that they hold, so that their relationships and their interactions with the students are authentic and underpinned by integrity. I have learnt that students, as much as children, examine the person who is teaching them, and I am aware that I must at all times present an integrated human being to them, so that they can trust who they have come to know. This extends even to my personal profile on Facebook, to which the students have access. We have had many discussions about the personal and the public faces of teachers, in relation to our Facebook profiles. We have all come to realise that in a world that is governed by technology and forums that are as public as Facebook, who we are as people is constantly exposed, whether we like it or not. Our choices are limited to who we are as human beings, and no longer to what we want the world to know about us. Integrity is key in this process.

Vogt (2002) also writes of the ethic of care and justice, and I relate strongly to this. For me, caring means that I have to step beyond the role of the front-of-studio lecturer, and help my students, as prospective teachers, to develop their own professional identities. Williams, Massaro, Airhart, and Zikmund (2004:181) write that 'the vocation of a teacher is always communal, not private and detached'. I have to model a professional and personal teacher

as a rounded human being, one who pays attention to the people with whom I interact. I remember my teachers doing this for me, and how these memories have impacted on my own teacher identity. I have learnt that the way I speak, the way I handle my professional relationships, the way that I dress, and the way I relate to my students must show that I respect who they are as human beings. In return, I ask the same from them, and we share a healthy community in the arts building. The students know that they are valued.





We often congregate for 'balcony meetings' outside our studio

## 6.7 Considering the learning space

*I know that my students come to the art building feeling secure, and that they want to be there, because they often speak about the fact that they 'feel different' when they come to the building. They use our studios to socialise in, when we are not using them for lectures, and I often find a student or two working there in the late afternoon. They come to know the other staff members who work in the building, and the relationships are friendly and secure. The other staff members, and particularly Melanie and Philip, often come into the studio and look at the work that the students are doing, or engage with them in conversation. We laugh a great deal. We tease each other. Our cleaning staff is a part the closeness, and we often share stories about our personal lives, sometimes silly, and sometimes serious. Sometimes students just pop in to my office to say hello, and I give them a hug, and send them on their way, because work has its own demands. Sometimes I am aware that they are there for other reasons, and I make them a cup of coffee, and we talk. Often, I hear stories that shock me into a place of deep awareness about the trials that these young people face.*

Our art building


Busy in our space
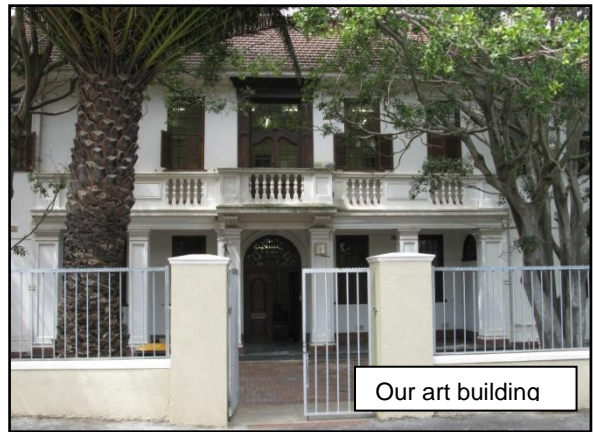


In this extract, I write about the physical space of my work, and the place where my teacher identity functions. I have a strong belief that the site of the learning affects the quality of that learning. It also has a very direct impact on teacher identity, as I have revealed in several instances during the contemplative stage of this reflective topical autobiography. The art department at our university is housed in a separate building, and in that building, we intentionally create an ethos to make the students sense a different kind of learning. My colleagues and I share healthy collegial relationships, based on trust and support, and this is shared with the students. Functioning in this immediate context, which is housed within the arts building, has a very strong influence on my teacher identity. The staff is respectful of the students, and genuinely cares about their well-being. We are supportive of each other, and although there are severe time

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constraints, we will sometimes have a cup of coffee together, usually standing up, because we do not really have the time to sit down, and in those moments, the conversations are always meaningful.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) argue that the relationships within the teaching and learning space significantly affect the attitudes of the people who function within that space, and the sense of community in the arts building runs deep. Turner-Bisset (1999) writes of a protected space, and we strive to create such a space for our students, because we acknowledge that in the field of the arts, they are often apprehensive and insecure. In striving to create such a space for our students, we unwittingly also create such a space for ourselves. Cannatella (2007) suggests that one's cerebral life requires a site in which to be, and to exist with others. He offers that space is experienced in a subjective and embodied way. In my early experience of learning to be an art teacher, I had such a space offered to me, and this memory has continued to affect the construct of my teacher identity, even after the passage of so many years. The spiral turns upon itself, as I try to offer my students that same space, so that they, too, can experience their early teacher identity constructions in a safe environment. Our students often speak about the difference that they encounter in the arts building, and the fact that they feel secure when they enter its doors. Their work adorns the walls, and the sense of collegiality and shared purpose touches them. Canatella, (2007:625) writes that 'What a place gives is not necessarily the same as what a place is' and we consciously attempt to make our art studios a 'giving' space. Students congregate there in between their lectures. They sit in the sun on the steps outside, or work in the studios, sometimes completing tasks that have little to do with our disciplines. They share stories and opinions, they talk of their personal lives, and they invite us into their circle of trust, as I have revealed on page 159 of my autobiography. This requires a particular way of being for the lecturers in the building, and this once again underpins the notion of conscious and intentional teacher identity construction.

Teacher identity will be discussed later in this chapter. The knowledge bases of teachers certainly impact and have an influence on the way that they think, and consequently on the ways that they do their work. I have discussed some knowledge bases earlier in this chapter, along with their relevance to the construction of my teacher identity. It has become clear to me that, as my knowledge bases in various areas have developed, my identity as a teacher has adapted and changed. When I think back to my knowledge base at the end of my formal teacher education studies, and compare it to what I have learnt and am learning about teaching, I come to realise that on-going professional development has had a significant role

to play on the construction of my teacher identity. The kind of teacher that I was, and the way that I thought about my work, have both been influenced by my studies for a Master's degree, and currently in the process of this thesis.

## 6.8 Professional Development and its influence on my identity as a teacher

I turn now to reflecting on the ways in which professional development have influenced my sense of identity. As an art educator in an Education Faculty, formal professional development opportunities in my discipline appeared to be scant, and it seemed that I was always the one doing the developing. I wrote text books, ran courses for in-service teacher training, and had branched into lecturing in the Honours degree course, the Advanced Certificate in Education, and the Post Graduate Diploma in Education courses in our Faculty. I held workshops for the Western Cape Education Department, and for some time had travelled around the Western Cape over weekends to develop the Specific Learning Pathway approach to teaching in the Senior Phase, and to assist with the teacher training for the visual art staff from the newly established Focus Schools.

### 6.8.1 Breaking new ground

When the new Head of Research was appointed at our Faculty, he encouraged me to start thinking about reading for a Ph D. Although I was initially hesitant, once I had decided on a topic, I became fascinated by the literature. A new world slowly opened its doors to me. Before, I had seen myself as a visual art educator. I slowly realised that in fact, I was primarily a teacher educator. As this idea took hold in my thinking, I began to think, and read, much more seriously about the process of good teaching and about teacher identity. The extract below occurred some three years after I had started the process of formal reading, and came at a time when I had realised that the research was important for me as a human being and as a teacher educator. It became something that I wanted to do, rather than something that I felt I had to complete.

> *Being mentored through the supervision process of two of our students by our associate professor results in my thoughts returning to my own research, and the dean suggests that I ask her whether she would consider becoming my supervisor. She immediately agrees, and I begin to work on my Ph D again. Her input is invaluable, because she understands my limited research background, and she guides me gently and carefully through the process of re-evaluating what I am doing, changing some approaches, and supporting my work with a strong theoretical background. I enjoy the challenging discussions, the new thinking that I have to do, and the way that my thesis is evolving. I begin to read all of the time. Instead of books and magazines, I*

*take journal articles to dental appointments. I read them in my car, while I am waiting for Sarah to finish her shifts in her part-time job. I take them to bed with me at night. I spend hours doing searches on my computer at work. I become thoroughly fascinated by what I am reading. I begin to see myself as a Ph D student, as one who is seriously engaged in research. Sometimes I laughingly think of the person that I used to be, when the institution first merged, and I am amazed that I have changed so much.*

Battey and Franke (2008: 128) describe professional development as 'a space for acquiring new knowledge, re-crafting identities, and challenging existing cultural and social practices', while Hardy (2008) simplifies the concept by stating that professional development embraces everything that enhances the work of teachers during their careers. Being involved in the process of this research has had a profound effect on my teacher identity. I have become aware of the value of consciously constructing who I am as a teacher, and because I am more aware, I am also more able to make choices to the way that I respond to the influences. Before embarking on this course of study, I had narrowly thought that my professional development should take place in the field of art education. Others regarded me as an expert, and looked to me for guidance, but I come to feel that there was something missing. Contrary to the way that I had felt when I was younger, I did not, could not, any longer regard myself as an expert.

Battey and Franke, (2008) believe that teacher identity has a profound effect on professional development. It is the identity of the teacher that makes professional development have different effects in every classroom, and in my case, in the studio. Teacher identity is both shaped by, and shapes, the knowledge that teachers acquire. When personally meaningful new knowledge is acquired, the identity of the teacher changes and this brings about a change in the practice. For example, I understand now that my work on text books contributed to my teacher identity, and developed a certain kind of professional knowledge. I had to find the core knowledge that my subject embraced, and extend it in a way that made it accessible to thousands of people. In this way, my own knowledge was being refined, and my teacher identity was being constructed.

When I came to be acknowledged for the quality of those text books, which I have recorded on page 116 of my autobiography, my professional development occurred on another level. Because our books were generally accessible in schools, my students came to see another side of me, and they respected that I was acknowledged by people outside of the university. This resulted in a subtle change in our relationship; they believed that I was able to 'walk my

talk'. All of these things constructed my teacher identity in a healthy way, and also changed the teaching and learning quality that occurred in our art studio.

Murray (2006) writes that a teacher educator's sense of personal professionalism is often grounded in caring for students, and that the teaching part of their work remains the most significant. They are more inclined to model an approach to teaching rather than lecture about it. This was certainly true in my case. I found it difficult to embark on research only for the sake of raising my research profile, but when I discovered the world of the combination of research and practice, an involvement in each, with each one impacting on the other in a meaningful way, I began to feel more whole as an educator, and more integrated as a teacher. I had previously touched on this, but the research was not focussed enough, and so the impact was not lasting. Now that I had a central issue around which to conduct a large body of research, my reading and learning expanded. I began to explore the theoretical world of effective teaching, of teacher identity, and of meaningful knowledge construction, and this immediately brought changes into my practice, which I have recorded on page 160 of my autobiography. I often discussed my readings with the students, and sometimes we held informal discussions while they were working on art pieces. While we were away on our field study trips, we examined their own early teacher identities. They entered into my world as much as I entered into theirs, and they were fascinated by what I was reading. We delved into Social Constructionism, and they were entranced, as I have revealed on page 140 of my autobiography. Sometimes I gave them sections of papers that I was reading, so that we could discuss the content.

Murray (2005:79) suggests that teachers in higher education often find it difficult to adapt their skills as school teachers to their new roles as teacher educators, in what she describes as 'second order pedagogy'. She correctly writes that a heavy work load precludes the possibility for continuous reflection and awareness of personal learning through experience. When I began my involvement in research, I made the space to think and to read, because there was a purpose to these activities, and this new thinking changed the way I planned my lectures, the way I worked with the students, and also impacted on what I was encouraging the students to read. When I found articles that I thought would interest them, I shared them. I began to bring journal articles into my formal lectures, and tried to teach the students how to read them without being afraid of the language levels or the words that they did not understand. We went through journal articles together, and I describe this process on page 164 of my autobiography. I encouraged them to understand, and to put the complicated language into their own words. Robinson and Mc Millan (2006) believe that in teacher

education, the link between research and practice needs to be strengthened, and I was living this statement.

This was a time of real professional happiness for me. Although there remained concerns around art as a viable subject in schools, and consequently, the university curriculum, I began to understand that I was not isolated in this plight; my reading exposed me to the writings of others who were examining and arguing for my subject, and who had similar beliefs. I was reading into the field of active and process-orientated teacher education. I was thinking about new approaches, exploring new possibilities, and making sense of them by inserting them into my own practice, refining, absorbing or rejecting as I went along. Slowly, the world from which I had felt excluded, and the language which I had not previously understood, began to become familiar, and then to be comfortable.
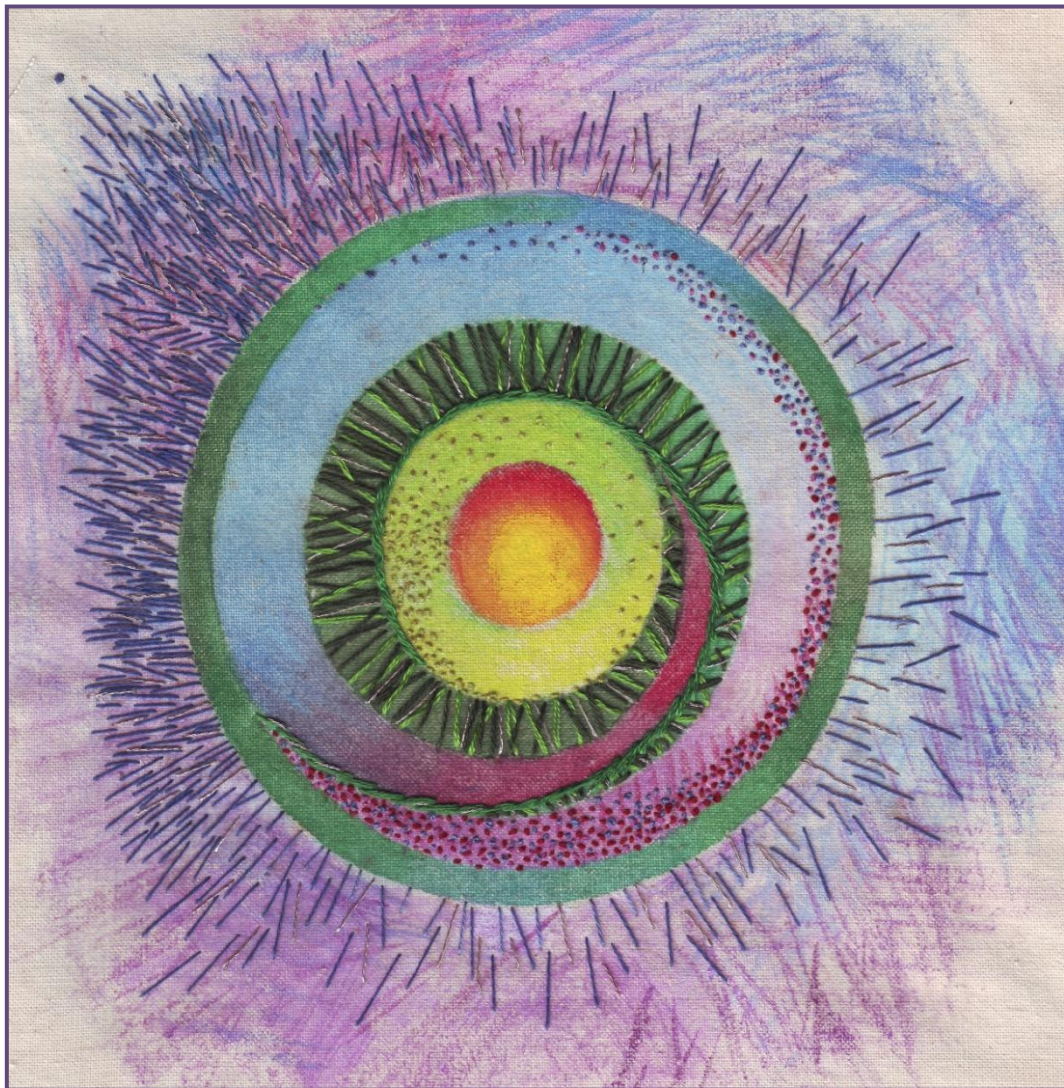


**Figure 6.11: The Mandala of the Spreading Light**

This impacted strongly on my personal self esteem, and gave me more confidence at the university. I realised that, unwittingly, I had been drawn into the community of research practice, and while I was still functioning very much at the outer edges, I was at least a functioning member, and was slowly beginning to move away from the outer perimeter. I was called upon to offer advice to those younger people who were beginning this journey for themselves, and on page 152 of my autobiography, I write about the fact that I was hesitant to supervise the two M Ed students who have been placed in my care, because I was not sure that I was yet able to do this properly.

The knowledge and skills base of teachers remains one that can never be fully described or quantified, and Tuomi (2004) writes that teachers are responsible for their own professional development, and could even be responsible for identifying what part of their professional lives needs to be developed. This practice could meet context-specific needs. The change from a college of education to a university had placed new challenges on all of the staff members, and I knew that deepening my research involvement was expected of me. Initially I was resentful of this change, because I felt that it was imposed, but when I began to understand the value that research could offer in strengthening my knowledge base and my practice, I became convinced, and to my amazement found myself becoming a strong advocate of practice-based research, and research-based practice. My teacher identity grew in this acknowledgement, and its construct is constantly changing as I read more, write more, and wonder about more.

This process, however, brings its own challenges. Battey and Franke (2008) suggest that context has a particular role in defining the identity of the teacher, because it can either impose limitations or provide opportunities. While the institution was providing support for my research pursuits, I was determined not to relinquish a moment of contact with my students, and this challenge proved to be a difficult one that I have not yet entirely resolved.

Simultaneously, this time of mid-life teaching was bringing additional challenges. Williams et al (2004:187) write that 'this is a new season of academic life with a different level and structure of accountability'. While my involvement in research was making a meaningful difference to my teaching, the additional demands that it was making on my time, as well as the expectation to produce a thesis, and to publish, were beginning to make demands that I was not often able to meet.

At heart, my identity remains that of a teacher, and the involvement with students and the engagement with active learning and knowledge construction lie at the core of my work. This is the essence of my teacher identity. The production of written research is not easy for me, because the formal academic research process is so bound by convention and 'theoretical frameworks'. It seemed that I was not only becoming involved in seeking new knowledge, but simultaneously having to learn new traditions of presenting that knowledge, and an entirely new terminology and language. I was still fairly insecure in this new place in my professional life. Williams et al (2004:190) write that being prepared to embark on something new in a teacher's mid-life 'provides learning that is vital to generativity at mid-career'. The literacy of being a good researcher requires a slow commitment of time, a delving into, the luxury of reflective time and thought that was an additional requirement of time for me. It did not come in place of anything else, but in addition to everything else, and I found it difficult to assimilate into the hours of my day. As the process unfolded, my belief in myself as a member of Faculty slipped several notches.

Palmer (1998:13) writes: 'Identity and integrity have as much to do with our shadows and our limits, our wounds and our fears, as with our strengths and potentials.' This was a time when I had to confront my fears of not succeeding, or not 'making it' in the field of research, and of having to come to terms with my own limitations. In order to improve my research skills, I had to consider sacrificing some of my commitment to teaching. In order to maintain my teaching skills, I had to allocate more time to research.

> **Alzheimer's Disease**
>
> I will pick you up from the back of every crucifix that has ever been carried,
> but the sharp nail of your forgotten indifference
> does not sever the threads of longing between your soul
> And the sacred place of your belonging.
> Your Golgotha eyes are blank in the charisma
> Of your  timeless movement through a hill
> That is too steep for your technological hips and knees
> And the frame you use for walking is
> Like a dying palm leaf fanning your own
> inevitable loss amongst the sacred masses
> Who somehow understand your journey
> Better than you and I.

During this time, my personal life was ironically also imposing additional demands; I was caring for a very close friend who was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, and I write about this heartbreaking diagnosis on page 147 of my autobiography, and refer to it several times thereafter. From one day to the next, I did not know what would await me on my return from work. It was, however, in my work that I still managed to find meaning. It offered me a kind of stability in a world that was shifting with the progression of this strange, unpredictable and devastating disease to which there is no cure, and from which one can only expect a deterioration, and an ultimate decline into nothingness.

**Figure 6.12: The Mandala of the beginning of The Loss**

**6.9 The influence of the identity of one of my own teachers**

Early in my search for the roots of teacher identity, and for the influences that contribute to its construction, I travelled to East London to interview the principal of my own high school. During the time that I spent with her, we discussed much more than the questions that I had prepared for the interview, and I became once again deeply aware that the influence that she had exerted over her students, and over her staff, had come from who she was as an educator and as a human being.

> *The interview with my headmistress is significant in my early understandings of what I am researching. In the days of her early training, and throughout the many years of her professional life, she worked intuitively, doing what she believed to be right in the midst of great busy-ness. She has never considered curriculum development, has never pondered her own practice, and has not remained current by reading. And yet she had been a significant educator, and a great leader at our school. I spend many hours considering her way of being. What is at its centre? What made it affective and effective? And what, of these qualities, would still be relevant currently?*
>
> *It was, I believe, her humanity. The quality of her being.*

This extract reaches right back to the school girl who was supported by this headmistress, and who now is a lecturer at a university, partly as a result of that support. It spirals to a place where that school girl can sit at a table with that headmistress, some thirty years later, and they can compare notes about their work. Palmer (1998) speaks of the mentoring roles that have assisted us to develop and thrive, and acknowledges that effective mentoring occurs at a time when both the mentor and the student are able to grow through the process. Gergen (1999) believes that human beings give value and personal meaning to their interactions with others in their environment, and they respond and change as a result. Like Palmer, I was fortunate enough to have wise mentors through my early years. My principal was one of them, and she taught and modelled a particular way of being. The memory of this mentorship, (and I write about one example of this on page 16 of my autobiography), has influenced the construction of my teacher identity in a number of ways. This preparation has encouraged me to offer mentorship to students who wish to be part of a mutual journey of understanding and growth. I believe that teaching is closely aligned with the seventh of Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages, that of generativity, which embraces a need to care for the next generation. Palmer (1998:26) says: 'I needed to turn around and look for the new life emerging behind me, to offer young people the gift that had been given to me when I was young.' At this stage of my career, I understand this to be my role, and my teacher identity has adapted to become gentler in this pursuit. Triana (2007:232) writes: 'Teaching as

a form of work is a developmental achievement that is biologically determined through evolution', and believes that the teacher's 'essential purpose' is 'learning to be competent and compassionate'. In the quest for good practice, a teacher should embrace both passive and active roles, and allow these states to be interactive. The active state is the role of competency, and the passive state is the role of compassion. Before I ever read Triana, I had become determined to be a competent teacher, and also, by coming to know the students better, that I should be compassionate with them. Some of them have lives that are more challenging than I will ever know.

The extract describing the practice of my headmistress highlights, for me, this quality of compassion and care, and I believe that it was people like my principal who modelled this for me in my early and formative stages of deciding to become a teacher. A great part of the meaningfulness of my work is the acknowledgement of the tremendous responsibility that I have, and in turn, I try to impress on my students the depth of their own responsibility. If this, as Erikson (1971) suggests, is my stage of generativity, then my quest for quality, for meaningful teaching and learning, must have a deeper and more urgent sense.

My students are beset with alternatives, and with being spoken *at* by the media, and by a world that seems to be embracing a sense of instant gratification and superficiality. I respond to the sense of community that is shared when students and teacher are consciously engaged on a mutual journey. As my principal and other role models inspired me with their worthwhile ways of being, I have a sense of responsibility to my young charges to offer them the same option.

## 6.10 The expression of my teacher identity

In the preceding extracts, in both chapters five and six, I have reflected on the extracts from my autobiography that have given me access to understanding the ways in which my own identity as an art teacher has been constructed over time. In the concluding part of this chapter, I am going to reflect on my teacher identity as it appears in its current state, in an effort to observe it from this particular place on the spiral. I am aware that even as I do this, my place on the spiral shifts, and with it, my perception of my teacher identity.

### 6.10.1 Choices as an expression of my teacher identity

Palmer (1998) describes teacher identity as the dynamic meeting point of all that influences us both internally and externally. He believes that the identity of the teacher is the only lasting ability that we have that enables us constantly to find solutions to new and emerging educational challenges. The individual act of teaching, and of all that being a teacher means, thus becomes an expression of the identity in motion, and should be as unique and authentic as the individual self of the teacher.

Schutz (1999) writes that we discover who we are when we make choices and act upon those choices within a world that has defined limitations. The values of the teacher influence the kinds of choices that are made. Coldron and Smith (1999:716), writing of the choices that teachers can makes about their own teaching styles, state: 'The commonplace but conscientious and thoughtful act of selecting and rejecting those possibilities is a practical articulation and manifestation of a teacher's personal style. A teacher locates himself or herself by each small affirmation and rejection in relation to those possibilities and, by so doing, patterns his or her practice in a unique way.' In the process of making choices, my identity as a teacher is revealed, as is the level of my teacher agency within the constraints of the traditions and practices of my work.

The choices that I make about my work and the way in which I do my work have developed over years, and are made based on the values that my identity as a teacher embraces. One of my choices is that I disregard the notion that, as tertiary students, our young charges should not need emotional support or a personal element in their relationships with me. As I have written earlier, I bring the ethic of care to my work, a notion which is also described by Vogt (2002) and Williams et al (2004). This care embraces the human aspect of teacher, the human nature of all of us involved in the process of teaching and learning. It holds trust at its centre. This care, however, also has its limitations. I do not consciously seek to befriend my students, and they share only as much as they wish to about their lives. We have established healthy relationships that do not intrude. These relationships have natural boundaries; they shrink in times of student need and grief, and they expand when the students are coping well, and are able to negotiate their lives as independent young people. This is a part of my teacher identity that began its construction in my own school days, when the relational aspects of teaching were very significant to me. This has continued to influence the way that I do my work.

The extract below shows my teacher identity when it is taken out of a formal teaching and learning situation. It relates to my students, to meaning, to compassion, and to the fact that being a teacher is not always about being in a formal learning situation.

> *We are all devastated by the tragic death of a student. She has been an art student, and close to all of us in the art building. A motor car accident in the early hours of the morning robs thousands of children of the brilliance of what she would have become as a teacher. Life stops as my office becomes a space of grieving. My own heart wants to break, because she was one of those students who became dear to me, whom I loved. I hold the other students as they sob in shock and dread, not wanting to believe this death, not wanting to acknowledge that this lovely girl has gone from us forever. I make coffee and tea. Parents come and spend days in my office, in shock and disbelief. This child was their family friend, their niece, their daughter. We weep through the days that follow, making funeral arrangements and buying flowers. Three days later, yet another student, from the same group of friends, dies tragically in a car accident. There are no words to describe the terrible grief. This second student had taken time away from her studies to be with her father who had terminal cancer, and so she is not currently on campus, but her death, coming so soon after the death of the first student, shocks the group into silence.*

This extract speaks of a part of my teacher identity that has nothing to do with teaching, but that is grounded in care for the students. Because I wish to nurture trusting relationships with my students, I have had to give up the professional and private space of offices. A student death created a room of grieving in my office, and the students and I congregated there to speak, to weep, to comfort each other so that we could come to terms with this loss.

> *Knowing myself yet being someone other –*
> *And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed*
> *To compel the recognition they preceded.*
> *And so, compliant to the common wind,*
> *Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,*
> *In concord at this intersection time*
> *Of meeting nowhere, no before and later,*
> *we trod the pavement in a dead patrol.*
>
> *T S Eliot, 1942*

In such a space, the boundaries between personal and professional break down, become blurred, and identities are exposed for who they are. In the face of grief, as in the face of joy, passion and learning, we all have to be who we are, with integrity and honour. In these kinds of relationships, students have expectations of a different kind, and I have a sense of obligation to honour that.

I also choose to allow my students to join my profile on the social networking site, Facebook, which I use to contact them as groups, to pass messages to them, and to be available, should they need me. This requires a special kind of *intentional* integrity, both in my personal and in my professional life, and has also contributed to my identity as a teacher; although I may be able to control the content of my profile to a certain extent, it remains a public forum, and so it is open to anyone who knows me, to 'post' photographs or comments on my 'wall'.



My niece Sarah, with me

This means that I have to ensure that both my personal and professional lives are aligned, so that the students do not encounter difference when they access my profile. I have a niece who studies at the same university and lives in my home, and many of her friends who visit and socialise with her are my students. Once again, who I am at home must align with who I am at work.

This makes it necessary to model a lifestyle and a behaviour that demonstrates a worthwhile way of being, and requires a particular kind of mindfulness in my social practices. I sometimes fail to provide the students with a good role model; I have a personal identity that embraces many faults. I try to retain a sense of being mindful that, in my work with the students, what I say and what I do must align, and must also align with who I am, when I am working with them, and being with them.

Another choice that I make is to I act within the time constraints of our curriculum, and still use time to take the students to galleries and exhibitions. The value of the process of their learning during these visits makes this choice one that is important. This contributes to my teacher identity because it underpins the fact that the choice that I have made, sometimes at the cost of their practical work, is worth it. It reinforces the value that I place in experiential learning, and confirms the belief that I have in attempting to contribute to the education of the

Second year students examining a piece of work at an art exhibition

whole person. This aligns with Fitzmaurice (2008:343) who believes that we have a 'deep obligation to help students learn'. What the students absorb during these visits is often made manifest in their contributions during lectures, and in their general conversation in the art building. Their life-worlds are expanded by their exposure to galleries, and the benefits extend beyond the studio. These visits are time-consuming, and even when time allocation for 'soft' subjects is constrained, the choice to continue with these excursions is deliberate.

My own student exposure to experiential learning has continued to influence my teacher identity, and this has been richly reinforced by the wealth of positive feedback that I have received from students after our own expeditions. For this reason, a further choice that I make is to take the final year students away from the city on an extended experiential learning experience. This trip offers a rich experience of art-making, life experience and deep reflective discussion. Although visual art forms the basis for the tour, the students study the night sky, notice the change in climate and vegetation, and are









Experiential learning trips

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given intimate experiences with primates and elephants. They sometimes, if our tour falls within the school term, teach some lessons at a rural school in a township close to where we stay. For the time that we are encapsulated, there is no socio-economic difference between any of us. The student needs are catered for, and they are encouraged to bring their oldest clothing, because of the nature of the work that we do while we are away.



The students are given journals with questions to guide their reflective processes during these excursions, and at night, we hold 'Crags Conversations', which include topics encompassing teaching and learning and personal development. When we return, the students talk about these tours as 'life-changing' events, and this change is evidenced in the levels of their commitment and enthusiasm. I understand now that a part of my teacher identity thrives in this kind of experience with my students. Rooted in my own early exposure to experiential learning, I maintain a belief, which is strongly supported by student feedback, that these trips nourish their development in ways that a studio environment could not. The opportunities for deep, albeit 'informal' conversation, group learning and shared knowledge, have convinced me that learning is not always formal, and that each student carries within a knowledge that simply needs to be unlocked to be unleashed.

Crags conversations and journals

My teacher identity is fed in other ways by the responses from the students. They confirm my beliefs in the kinds of relationships that I build with them. Palmer (1998:11) writes: 'The connections made by teachers are not held in their methods but in their hearts - meaning 'heart' in its true sense as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self.' Because they expect a heightened experience on these trips, I am extended by my determination to meet these expectations. I learn more about young people every time I take them away. I extend my own learning by continually updating my knowledge about

reflective practice, mindfulness practices, and the educational practices embraced in experiential learning.

As a result of my reading, I have also chosen to become more involved in the whole student experience, and to lecture beyond the confines of visual art. A recent intervention,



encouraged by a phase head at my university, is a module that I have developed to give the first year students the opportunity to reflect on their own developing teacher identities. This module breaks new ground for me, because it is not in any way involved with visual art teaching, but rather with an in-depth approach that encourages the students to become aware of their own values, and to consciously explore their attitudes to knowledge construction.



Students collaborating and discussing.

The module has been interesting for my own professional growth, and has influenced my teacher identity in a number of ways. It has removed from me the 'tools of my trade', and relies almost entirely on my teacher identity for its effectiveness. In a visual art practical lecture, the students and I will spend the first twenty minutes or so looking at artworks, discussing the aims of a project, or exploring a particular technique, and then they work on their own, while I move amongst them to offer whatever support or guidance they might need. Even in a lecture that is theory-based, we have slides that encourage discussion, or exhibitions that invite debate.

In the module on Teacher Identity, the circle exists with the subject, the students and me. There is only dialogue, debate and the space for knowledge construction that I have to ensure is open, inviting and non-threatening.

I have to think on my feet, be aware in the moment, and rise to challenges with large groups of students who do not know me as well as the art students do, and whom I do not know. I

have to work harder, and read more, in areas that are new to me, so that I am more prepared for whatever directions these lectures might go. My teacher identity is constantly being challenged.

*I said: The wonder that I feel is easy,*
*Yet ease is the cause of wonder. Therefore speak.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

A further choice that I have made is to design and deliver of a module for our first year Curriculum Studies programme, which aims to encourage students to come to grips with issues such as exploring the meaning of the acts of teaching and learning, understanding the process of a lesson and various assessment strategies, and finding practical ways to deal with classroom management. Once again, my teacher identity is stretched and extended, because there are no paints or brushes or great works of art for me to use to fascinate the students, and I have to invite the students into the space of learning with my words, with my own sense of commitment, and with my belief in what we are doing.

Choice in teaching is not only about courses and relationships. Choices are made every day, when the curriculum is interpreted into lecture content, and about the way in which that content is delivered. Even within the space of a lecture, choices are constantly being negotiated, sometimes without a conscious awareness that there is an on-going process of choice happening. Timing and pace is mediated, and the amount of deviation from the core content, when students become enthusiastic, must be carefully monitored. In the field of visual art, further choices need to be made: what topics and materials will best suit a particular group of students in a particular context, and will provide the students with the deepest opportunity for learning? What resources will best enrich them, what format should they work in, and how will the project be assessed? My teacher identity influences each one of these choices, as I navigate my way through a day.

In my case, there is also a further consideration: how can I make these decisions, and my teaching strategy, transparent enough so that the students can become aware of these considerations in their own teaching? Triana (2007: 235) writes that the 'active interplay between student and teacher fosters a bond that potentially can become a source of identification', because what one experiences in the other can become a part of oneself, and I write about such times on page 164 of my autobiography. Although I consciously try to model an example of good practice, I discourage my students from teaching in the way that I do, because I try to encourage them to teach from their own, fullest selves, and to find their

own integrity as teachers. My teacher identity was constructed into doing this by wise mentoring in my teacher education process, as I have discussed on page 31 of my autobiography, by the community of practice that I enjoyed at the Art Centre, which I have discussed on page 49, and by the slow discovery of the effectiveness of reflective practice.

The manifestation of these choices is an act of teacher identity. Teacher identity, as Palmer (1998:13) writes, is 'my genetic make-up, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffering – and much, much more'. As I am in this process of being constructed, so are my students. I had wise and caring mentors in my pathway, and their contribution to who I am cannot be underrated.

Both Palmer (1998) and Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) speak of consciousness during the act of teaching, and I attempt this, so that I come to the choices that I make with full awareness to the act, and to the relationship.

*The intolerable shirt of flame*
*Which human power cannot remove.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

### 6.10.3 Learning to let go

In the section below, I write about a recent influence on my teacher identity, which began with negative implications, but which resulted in a time of greater understanding about my professional identity. Contact time for visual art with students is being cut to a minimum, while at the same time emphasis is placed on quality teacher education. I struggle to accommodate these paradoxes quickly. In the field of visual art, the process of learning and accommodating new ways of being is a slow and sometimes painful one.  Everything that is embraced in my identity as a teacher cries out for the appropriate time, and the appropriate space, to increase the potential for learning.

*I begin to feel that there is little value in what I am able to do with the students. There is too little time, and there is too much work to cover. I do nothing properly. Everything is simply budgeted down to money. Our ACE courses, which are run on a Saturday, allocate so little time that I leave every lecture feeling desperate, as though I am cheating the students, as though I am not really preparing them for the thinking that they will need for their worlds of work. I see our postgraduate students twenty four times a year, and in this time I must take them from practising artists to wise, thinking teachers. Can it be possible, I ask myself, as I drive home from work in the gathering autumn? I feel as if I am failing on every level.*

As the above extract demonstrates, the biggest challenge to my identity as a teacher, in the many challenges that we have all had to confront as our Faculty finds its feet and grows, is the loss of contact time in the discipline of visual art. After twelve years of working at a tertiary institution, my teacher identity is still bound to the act of teaching, and to the individual, rather than to 'lecturing', and the collective mass. Because I am aware of the needs of my non-artist students, and because I know that their slow awakenings need time, I despair when contact time is cut. It is difficult for me to acknowledge that, after all of these years, I have still not managed to bring real value to visual art education, in the eyes of those who hold the power to make the decisions about time that is allocated on a timetable.

Hodgen and Askew (2007) write that deep-seated change in the beliefs and knowledge systems of teachers requires a change in the identity of the teacher. This necessitates changing some aspects of what the teacher has been, while at the same time retaining some of the characteristics that are an essential part of that teacher's identity. I did not know how to change so that the discipline of visual art could become less.

As my reading and research developed, and with it my awareness of the importance of making every lecture count with the students, I came to understand that my particular approach was not at one with the teaching and learning practices that were generally fore-grounded in teacher education. Research holds a particular place, but it is research for publication, rather than research for developing practice, or for adding meaning and relevance to student learning. In my own Faculty, changes and growing demands on space resulted in a constant threat to the art building, and the place and importance of visual art further diminished rapidly.

**Figure 6.13: The Mandala of Letting Go**

With a sense of hopelessness and failure, rather than with a sense of joy, I once again worked harder. I became aware that my work was driven by desperation, rather than by a sense of purpose. Simultaneously, in my personal life, I was facing a change that brought an additional sense of hopelessness, and was also a time of loss. The final void of Alzheimer's disease was being felt in my personal life, and I describe this process on page 155 of my autobiography. It was one for which I was not prepared, practically or emotionally.

Where before, I had used my work as an escape mechanism, and could retreat to a place of meaning when my personal life became painful, that place of meaning and security was also at risk.

At the same time, I was invited to write the visual art curriculum (see addendum 3) for the National Department of Basic Education, which had finally realised that Outcomes-Based Education was failing our children. Initially, this challenge was one that inspired me, even although the time constraints were inhuman, because there was an opportunity to make a meaningful difference to visual art education in our country. My teacher identity was strengthened by this national acknowledgement. However, as the months passed, and the possibilities became watered down and reduced to format and word count, I became aware that this too, was hopeless work. This challenge consumed me for months. When my work on this document was reduced to a regulated, limited, word-counted text, and when the content was shifted from being a meaningful and lively encounter with the aesthetic world, to a documented, standardised insistence on product, my emotional world spiralled out of control. My submissions to the National Department of Basic Education were changed beyond recognition, and the careful, thoughtful time that I had given to this work began to lack value. Aware of the great responsibility of producing a sound and meaningful country-wide curriculum for both the children who would be learning, and the teachers who would be facilitating, I despaired at the lost opportunity, and finally, although illogically, saw it as a personal failure that I was too constrained to produce a document of real worth and meaning. Willliams et al (2004:190) write that towards the end of a teaching career, one should begin to be aware that the discipline, which has shaped our practice over the years of life, will sustain us and keep us focussed. The discipline to which I had committed my life was being eroded even further, and I had been drawn into the very process of its erosion. My identity as a teacher was at risk. I had been prepared, through a passage of over thirty years of being involved in art education, to meet this major challenge, and when I tried to meet it, I felt and believed that I was failing.

Some of my email correspondence during this time

Just a quick question on time allocation for Creative Arts in FP. We planned for 20 hours per term, 2 hours per week - 10 hours for Performing Arts and 10 hours for Visual Arts. Looking at Grade 3, I see 4 hours have been allocated to PA and 4 hours for VA per term. Is this correct? Could you please let us know?

Just to let you know that I have re-worked the grade 1 and 2 visual art. I have no idea who did what you have sent me, but if it goes out in the document, it will cripple our children creatively, and confuse our teachers. Whoever wrote it has no understanding of the creative and IMAGINATIVE needs of the foundation phase child, and also little or no understanding of the difference between 2D and 3D. I wonder what happened to my original document????

I am attaching the overview with Visual Art inserted. I sent it some time ago, but there have been so many emails that it probably was lost. I have highlighted the visual arts in red.

Please would you let me know very precisely what changes you would like me to make to the visual art document, and in what format you would like it to be. I am happy to work within these boundaries, but really need to know exactly what it is that you would like me to change.

We have discovered two **MAJOR** mistakes in the Senior Phase Creative Arts CAPS document:

· Page 74 (Grade 7 Term 4) should move to p 68. At the moment the order is incorrect – Grade 7 Terms 1 – 3, Grade 8 Terms 1 -4, **THEN ONLY GRADE 7 TERM 4**, followed by grade 9 terms 1 -4.
· Assessment: pp 86 and 87 – **Grade 8 Term 4** has been swopped with **Grade 9 Term 4** – it should be the other way round. See Sandy Johnson's e-mail as well.

. This means that assessment in grade 8 is based on something that is not even mentioned in the grade 8 document, but that the learners WILL do in grade 9. The assessment for grade 9 is based on something that the learners HAVE done in grade 8. This is, I know, the most recent copy of the document . I know that we are the only people who think that the Arts are important, but this is a HUGE calamity – there are many, many text books being written currently, and each text book, from whatever publisher, will carry the incorrect assessment, thereby making this disaster even bigger!!!! Is there anything ABSOLUTELY URGENT that can be done? This is a national disaster!!!!!

Williams et al (2004:181) write: 'Meaning is how one expresses the value of that portion of life spent in teaching and scholarship, as well as the integrity of one's career with the rest of life'. For a teacher whose work is lodged in purpose and meaning, the collision of a sense of hopelessness and loss of purpose in both my personal and professional worlds was overwhelming. Before the curriculum had even been officially published, Elske and I were contributing to the first in a series of fourteen text books for Oxford University Press.

It was only when I became aware that large segments of time were completely disappearing from my life that I began to realise that I was experiencing some kind of shut-down. Teacher identity and personal identity are closely interlinked, and when there is a crisis in both of the worlds, there is bound to be an impact on both. Both of my worlds were closing down.

*There are three conditions which often look alike*
*Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:*
*Attachment to self and things and to persons, detachment*
*From self and things and from persons, and growing between them, indifference*
*Which resembles the others as death resembles life,*
*Being between two lives – unflowering, between the live and the dead nettle*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

**Pieces of me**

Pieces of me are falling off,
Like some kind of thick passage in a
panorama of an unwanted dream,
Words blur and I forget how
To read the small print of the contract of
a life
Where there is nothing that calls
meaning into being
I weep for nothing in a
hollow space where time is vacuumed
into shapes of colours that have sounds
that I cannot remember
and faces that I cannot forget have no
names
to connect them to the syllable of silent
security.
I am the unheard voice speaking to itself
when there is
no comprehension of sound,
I am bent repentant for unknown sins
before a god that does not exist I am
madness in a world forsaken in sanity I
am
nothing in the everything that I know
and all around there are people who
make sense of
what I find incomprehensible and
unfathomable and
fearful and unwanted
in a place where I reach out and find
that all along
I have been using atoms of time
in a universe of undeniable and
unmentionable
pain and I am
afraid that if I try to understand this
barren field I will be
wasted on the edge of all .that is
abandoned when the
last aching call has faded into silence.

Although Williams et al (2004:191) claim that at this stage of a life, one should feel that one has achieved, that one has been recognised and valued in the field, and that, if all is well, one should be achieving some kind of 'professional fulfilment', in my case, the opposite was true. Although I was being acknowledged to some extent by the National Department of Basic Education, I was not able to produce the curriculum that I believed was the right one for visual art for the children in this country, and my identity as a teacher was demoralised. I lost faith in my work, and in what it meant, as I record on page 167 of my autobiography.

I felt that the curriculum work had not resulted in a planned, careful statement, as I record in my autobiography on page 172, and I came to believe that my work with the students at the university no longer felt meaningful and of value, to anyone, and least of all, to me. Williamson et al (2004:192) suggest that at this stage, teachers should be moving beyond the identity that was influenced by early developments, so that one could feel responsible, and personally accountable for one's own life. I began to feel that my work was no longer grounded in meaning, in real contact with my students. I was bound by guilt about the new curriculum, and was feeling crushed by the fact that I had been so

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intimately connected with the national process, but had failed in my task to create something that was worthwhile.

> *First, the cold friction of expiring sense*
> *Without enchantment, offering no promise*
> *But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit*
> *As body and soul begin to fall asunder*
> *Second, the conscious impotence of rage*
> *At human folly, and the laceration*
> *Of laughter at what ceases to amuse*
> *And last, the rending pain of re-enactment*
> *Of all that you have done and been; the shame*
> *Of motives late revealed, and the awareness*
> *Of things ill done and done to others' harm*

> *T S Eliot, 1942*

I became overwhelmed by a sense of failure and loss. As the academic year ended, I consulted my doctor, who prescribed professional burn-out, and suggested extended leave. I was able to spend the December vacation time trying to heal, and shortly after the beginning of the new academic year, could return to work.

> *I decide to return to work, but my doctor advises me to go in for half days. This is impossible, but I return only for my lectures, and attend no meetings. It is hard to be there, and I find that I can get through my lectures by remembering the motions of how to lecture. I am exhausted by this process, and come home immediately after my last lecture every day. I am on anti-depressants because burnout lowers the serotonin levels, and they leave me feeling even more disconnected, and physically floating. I get lost in a shopping centre that I know well, and stand aimlessly looking at the alien beings who are shoppers, and become desperately afraid.*

> *Elske, Evelyn and Hannsie carry me through this time as if they are pall bearers. Amber and Christelle at work become gentle and supportive. The ground slowly evens out beneath my feet, and I can walk with more steadiness. I still have no enthusiasm for my work, but I continue to do it, and the students are content. Some, who have come to know me well, express concern, and are supportive and particularly helpful. They hug me and I feel invaded.*

> *I have used my work to dull the ache of being human, and by doing this, have lost the human quality of my work. I have an image of a core that is burnt black and used up, as if burnout is really burnt out. I feel used up, as if there is nothing left of me to offer, on any level, and to anyone. I don't want to talk to anyone, see anyone, be anywhere.*

This passage of time was a difficult one for me. I realised that something important had changed within me, although I could not yet identify what it was. The strength of my identity as a teacher diminished, and I lectured with no lust. I had been warned about burn-out before, but had always shaken it off, and somehow moved through the process. This time, it was not possible. Bullough et all (2006:196) state: '...increasingly the demands of teaching call forth contrary acts that bruise the teacher's soul.' They suggest that this may result in feelings of being inauthentic, or being at odds with the nature of one's work. Harden (1999) concurs, stating that when the work that one is required to do is at odds with one's personal values and beliefs, then the resultant stress levels can have a significant and negative impact on the teacher's ability to function, especially when there is a high level of self-imposed expectation (Harden, 1999; Tomic and Tomic, 2008).

All my life, I had been fighting the marginalisation of visual art, and at this stage of my life, I felt that I had actually contributed to this process by producing an inferior curriculum document that was too restricted by imposed constraints. This document would be influencing every child in this country for at least the next ten years, and at its heart, it was flawed. And I had flawed it. Coupled with this was the belief that I had been working against my personal values and beliefs when I accepted the shorter contact hours with my students, when I gave up the meaningful use of the building, and while I allowed arts and culture to be reduced to an insignificant discipline at our university, because I was tired of being labelled 'difficult'. Because of all of these things, I had neglected my personal life. Joanie was in an institution, my niece was not happy, and I was no longer coping with the simple task of being a human being in the process of life. The impact on my identity as a teacher was significant, because at a time when I should have been feeling as if I had achieved something of value in life, I had reached a state where I thought exactly the opposite. Chang (2009) writes that emotional exhaustion is a key factor of burnout, and I frequently heard myself saying 'I don't care', and then did not care that I was saying it. Papastylianou et al (2009) write that burnout and depression display similar symptoms. Both states display sadness and social withdrawal, and a sense of personal inefficiency. Tomic and Tomic (2008), supported by Pines (2002), suggest that burnout is the result of a loss of meaning.

Papastylianou et al (2009) suggest that teachers who view their work as the most important factor in their lives are more likely to suffer from burnout. In my case, this had been true, but my work had suddenly become meaningless. I was out of contact with who I was as a teacher, and that part of my life that had sustained me, and given me the most meaning, had become a part that I could not do on even the simplest level. I did not want to be at work. When I was there, I could not wait to leave. The students suffocated me. Medical advice was

that I should exit the profession or take extended leave. I was afraid to make such important decisions at a time when I acknowledged that I was not functioning properly, and so I elected to continue working. With the support of my Dean and my line manager, I took on less, and attended fewer meetings.



**Figure 6.14: The Mandala of Broken**

*There are other places*
*Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,*
*Over a dark lake, in a desert or a city –*
*But this is the nearest, in place and time*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

Perhaps what sustained me was the ability to rely on years of experience, and because I did not lose sight of my responsibility, first to the students, and then to my institution, I discovered that I could lecture from memory. There was a part of my teacher identity that was still intact, and that could act out what it could not do naturally. I did not have to feel the passion, but I knew how to behave it. I could act out the role of being a good teacher, and I could act out the role of being a productive staff member, and I could survive this time by doing what I knew how to do.

Because of time constraints, I continued to work on my study, and in many ways, it was this work that slowly brought me back. Reading about burnout helped me to understand what had happened, and also to understand what I needed to do in order to be able to re-claim my identity as a teacher. Reyes and Salovey, (2010:406/7) suggest that 'reappraisal, acceptance, and mindfulness practices are useful strategies for managing unwanted emotions'. I tried to be aware of what was happening to the student group in that moment. I no longer felt so close to them, or so involved in their lives, but they did not comment. Tomic and Tomic (2008) encourage teachers to practice the ability to self-distance. I used both of these strategies. At the same time, I openly acknowledged the value of friends in my life, spent more time with my niece, and actively cared more for my physical health, resting more, and becoming more aware of levels of tiredness. I stopped pushing beyond them, and allowed myself to say 'I can't do this,' or 'I can't do this now'.

It took almost a whole year, but it was a year well-spent in the acquisition of a certain kind of wisdom. It was also a year in which a different kind of teacher identity was constructed. I acknowledge that my work is important to me, and as Evelyn once said to me, it defines who I am. I have had to acknowledge that this definition is not complete unless there is another part of that definition, and this must be the definition of a woman who is living her life fully on other levels as well. My work cannot sustain me if I cannot sustain my work. Perhaps because it is the most recent, it feels as if this has been a very important factor in the recent construction of my teacher identity. I can no longer rely on my work to provide stability in my life. I have to use who I am to bring stability to my work. I can no longer look to my work to sustain me. I must find resources that can sustain my work. Teacher and personal identity are enmeshed, but in this profession, neither can exist without the other. It is the enmeshing of both that enriches each.

As I approach the end of this chapter, I reflect that this is not a story of a phoenix rising from the ashes, or a story of difficulty overcome, challenge well-met, and triumph at the end. It is simply a story of acknowledgement that the work of teaching is messy, difficult, and unpredictable. At the same time, it is joyous, fulfilling, and full of possibility. A teacher identity that is constructed within these parameters will have the same qualities.

I look back at myself as a child deciding to be a teacher, who learnt the lesson that hard work is the passage of success. I see how the years at the art centre reinforced this notion, and constructed a particular kind of teacher for that context. I observe that teacher entering higher education, and trying to apply the same rules. I see that teacher becoming bigger and more, but also smaller and less.

At the end of this particular passage in my life, I come to understand two things: that change is inevitable, and that it brings with it pain and loss, but also growth and joy; that the identity of a teacher is constructed *by teaching*. It is constructed by teaching with consciousness, with acceptance, with acknowledgement of what our work is, and of who we are, and of who we are becoming, while we are doing it. It is also constructed by teaching in a particular place, and the places that I have taught in have taught me to be the kind of teacher that I am. I think back to the words of Wilhelm Hahn, a South African artist who spent the last functional year of his life working as a resident artist in our art department. He was dying of cancer, and we frequently discussed this knowledge, and the effect that it was having on his thinking. I record his significant words on page 139 of my autobiography: "'I don't mind dying,' he tells me. 'But there is still work left in me. I don't know when one knows that one's work is done. What is one's work, after all? I mean, one's *real* work?'"

My work is to teach, and my work at the moment is to teach in this place, and with these students. In claiming that work, and that particular kind of identity, I acknowledge that it encompasses awareness, acceptance, and a determination to grow on a personal level, and to develop professionally. These things enable the fullness, and the wholeness, the failures and the successes, those moments of unbridled joy and those moments of unrepentant pain. This is the work of the teacher. It describes who we are, while we are doing it.

*For last year's words belong to last year's language*
*And next year's words await another voice.*

T S Eliot, 1942
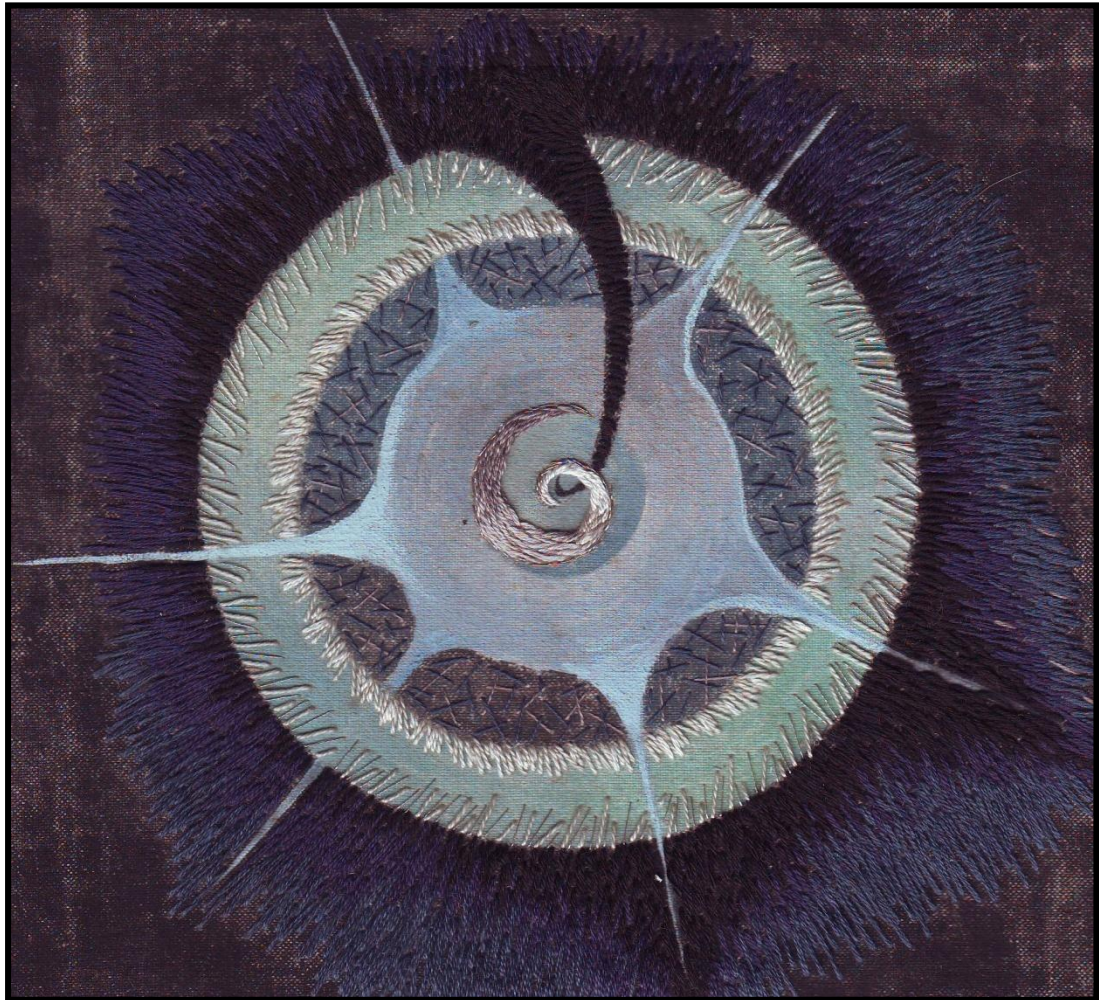
**Figure 6.15: The Mandala of Hope Triumphant**

## 6.11 Chapter summary

This chapter discusses extracts from the later part of my teaching career. As with the previous chapter, it uses extracts from the autobiography, and, guided by the strategies suggested for a reflective topical autobiography which are described fully in chapter 4, and listed in the introduction to chapter 5, represents the continued contemplation phase of this methodology.

Searching for the ways in which the construction of my teacher identity was influenced through the mature years of my career, I discuss the influence of further study at a university, and the re-awakening of formal learning. I probe its influence on my thinking processes, and the changes that this brings about in my work. I discuss the beginnings of the awareness of reflective practice, and the ways in which it began to influence my own practice, and consequently, my identity as a teacher.

I have discussed the process of a merger of two higher education institutions, and the effects that this process had on my identity as a teacher. The changes that are brought about in this new context are examined, and the effects of these changes on my sense of who I was as a teacher are discussed. I move on to elaborate on the way in which my identity as a teacher responds to these changes in both negative and positive ways, and describe my venture into the practice of formal research. This, in turn, was to have an effect on my teacher identity, and also on my practice, and I discuss how my knowledge bases shifted, and how this change influenced the way in which my teacher identity was being constructed.

I acknowledge the change in the decreased value of my subject, and explore the effects that this had on my teacher identity. I explain how and why my teacher identity is so bound to my subject, and acknowledge the influence of research on my practice. I offer a detailed discussion of the way in which I attempt to use visual art to introduce first year students to a more meaningful experience of their worlds, which has developed as a result of research that I have conducted with the first year students themselves.

I described how my growing understanding of the student body changes and refines my practice, and how I accommodated and changed my personal way of being and my ways of relating to the students because of this new understanding. I include examples like the social networking site 'Facebook', and describe the ways that this kind of communication has changed the way that I relate to the students.

Following on the above, I examine how the teacher identity of my high school principal has influenced my own, and ponder what it is in a teacher identity that influences the learners or the students. I move on to describe the expression of my own teacher identity, and the choices that I make that emanate from that identity.

In this chapter, I include the events that lead to a personal case of burnout, and examine their effects on my teacher identity. I describe the process, and the outcome, as well as the ways in which my teacher identity has changed as a result.

The chapter concludes with a reflection on the process of healing, and how my teacher identity has adapted to new awarenesses about the kind of work that I must do. It confirms the themes of influences on the construction of teacher identity that were beginning to emerge in chapter 5, and extends them.

In the next chapter, I will write the reflective topical autobiography that will provide the findings of this study. By drawing on the new understandings that I have gained during the contemplative phase of this methodology, I will attempt to answer the question which has underlined this research: How is the identity of an art teacher constructed over time?

# Chapter seven: Reflecting in a watery mirror

*This is the use of memory*
*For liberation – not less of love but expanding*
*Of love beyond desire, and so liberation*
*From the future as well as the past*

*T S ELIOT 1942*
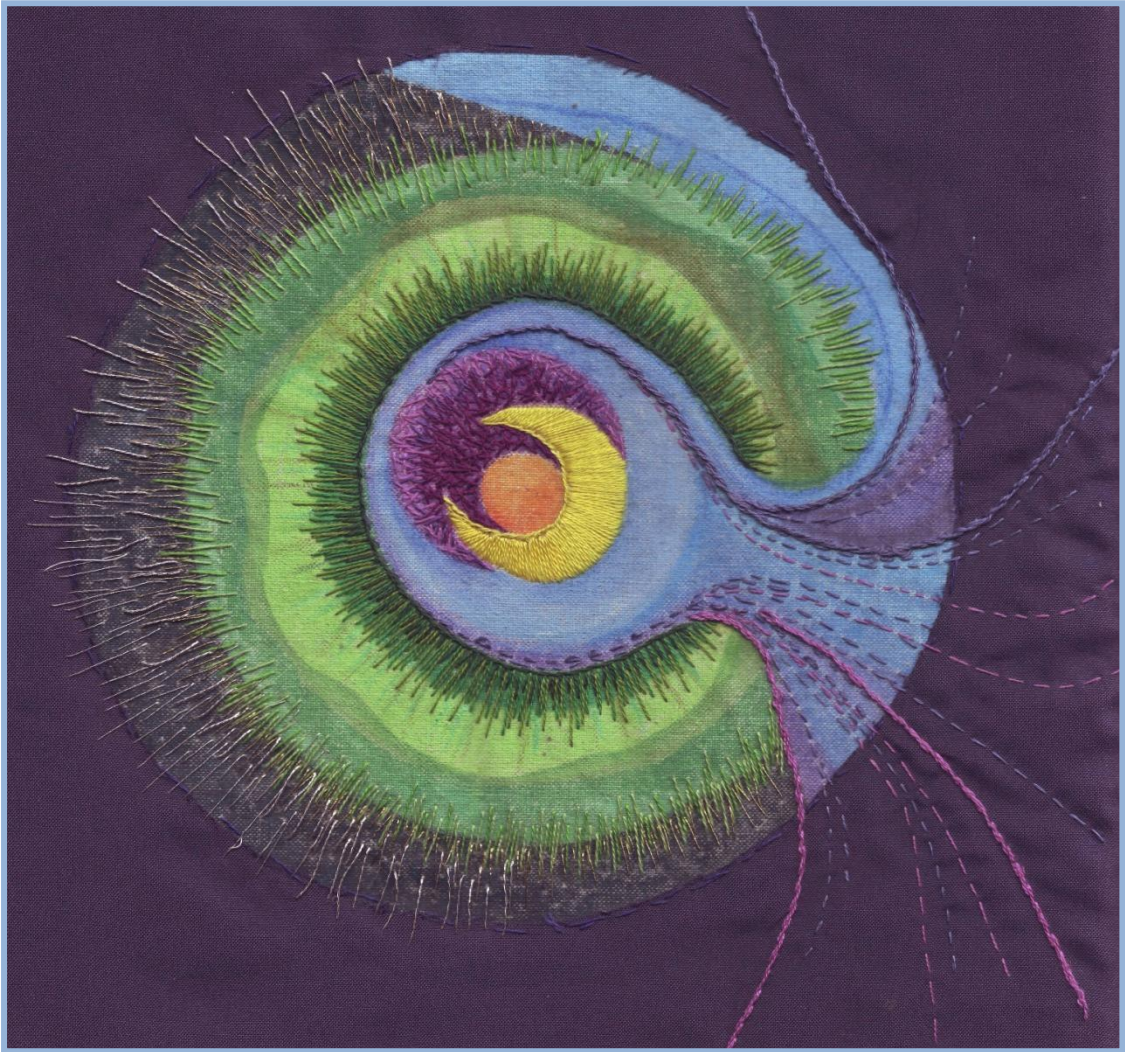


**Figure 7.1: The Mandala of Light Embraced**

## 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis has been to describe the processes and influences on the construction of teacher identity over time. I have used the methodology of reflective topical autobiography to explore this process. It *is* a process. There is no finite answer. Identity is never in a complete or 'finished' state.

This chapter has been introduced with the words of T S Eliot (1942), whose work forms a continuing motif throughout this work and this chapter involves reflecting in a 'watery mirror'. I include a summary of the theoretical perspectives that have underpinned the study,  an overview of the methodology, data analysis and findings. I will briefly discuss the ways in which I have applied the methodology of reflective topical autobiography to enable me to understand the influences that have constructed my own teacher identity.

This will be followed by the final stage of this methodology, which is the actual writing of the reflective topical autobiography, which, in this study, translates and progresses into the findings of the study. I will stress the role that context has played in the construction of my teacher identity, and will discuss this notion in its various interpretations. Before moving on to the recommendations, I will conclude this section by extracting what I believe to be the principles of art teacher identity construction and will discuss them, with support from relevant literature and theoretical perspectives.

The chapter will conclude with a reflection on the process of this study, with recommendations, and with implications for further research.

## 7.2 Summary of theoretical perspectives

In order to provide a theoretical underpinning for this study, human identity and the work of Erik Erikson (1968) was initially explored, and then the work of other writers in this field aws reviewed. I investigated the work of Marcia (2002) and theorists who examined the identity status paradigm. I offered a brief survey of identity studies beyond Erikson, including the work of Schwartz (2001), Kroger (2002), Cote (2002, 2006) and others.

Teacher identity became the focus of the next section of the study, and the work of Palmer (1998) underpinned much of this investigation. Teacher identity is described in the work of Palmer (1998), Webster (2005), Raider-Roth (2006) and others. The significance of teacher identity was examined through the writing of Coldron and Smith (1999), Hodgen and Askew (2007), Triana (2007), and further writers. Because teacher identity is the focus of this study,

the process of, and the influences on, professional identity construction were traced through the research of Vondracek (1992), Day et al (2006) and Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006), to name but a few. Once some of these influences had been established, teacher emotions were investigated, and this section was largely underpinned through the work of Zembylas (2002, 2003, 2005).

An investigation into the process of meaningful teaching followed, because this notion is entwined with teacher identity. A discussion on the knowledge bases of teachers was investigated principally through the lens of the work of Shulman (1987), Turner-Bisset (1999) and Deng (2007), although the work of others was included. I chose to focus on content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of the learner, and knowledge of context and examined the work of Newton and Newton (2001), Poulson (2001), Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006), Traianou (2006) and others. Cannatella (2007) guided my investigation of the physical site of practice.

I probed the role of formal and informal knowledge in the identity construction of teachers, exploring largely the work of Bordum (2002), Carlsson (2002) and Ray (2009) and then moved on to an investigation of professional development. Tuomi (2004), Sturko and Gregson (2007, 2009), Battery and Franke (2008) and Koster et al (2008) provided substance for this discussion. The role of teacher identity in meaningful teaching concluded this section, and was explored largely through the work of Palmer (1998). Teacher burnout was investigated, underpinned by the research of Naring et al (2006), Tomic and Tomic (2008), Chang (2009), and Papastylianou et al (2009).

A discussion on visual art education, my own discipline, was important to include in this study, and I explored this through the work of Koopman (2005), Sahasrabudhe, (2006), Emeji (2008), Hallam (2008) and Alter et el (2009). Gibson (2003), Burrill (2005), Sinner (2008) and Eisner (2009) underpinned the investigation of meaningful art teaching.  I explored motivation and assessment through the work of Sandoval (1995), Hannsen (2002), Yue Yin et al (2008) and Cauley and Mc Millan (2010). I concluded this theoretical examination by investigating the role of the identity of the art teacher in meaningful teaching, and referenced here, among others, the work of Eisner (2000), Hardy (2003), Bachar and Glaubman (2006) and Campbell (2011).

**7.3 Overview of method, data analysis, and findings**

The purpose of this inquiry is to describe and analyse the influences on the construction of art teacher identity over time, in order to develop an understanding of the principles that are relevant and significant in this construction. Visual art is a compulsory part of the national curriculum in South Africa. However, there are no studies that specifically examine the influences on the construction of the identity of an art teacher. In order to explore these influences on my own professional identity construction, I elected to use the reflective topical autobiography methodology, as described by Johnstone (1999). This proved to be the ideal methodology, and the way in which I applied this method will be illustrated briefly hereunder. I describe, through each phase, how this process assisted me in exploring the influences on my own professional identity construction.

**7.3.1 Applying the methodology to understand the influences on the construction of my teacher identity: Introduction to the process**

**i. Choosing the methodology**

I had initially settled on narrative research as a broad methodology for my research, but felt that the process needed something more specific. Once I had read about reflective topical autobiography in the work of Johnstone (1999), I became convinced that this was an appropriate choice of methodology for this study. This completed the first phase of a reflective topical autobiography, which is that of choosing the methodology.

**ii. Immersion**

During this phase, I wrote the autobiography (addendum 1). I used artefacts like photographs and records, family accounts and letters to ensure accuracy, and I confirmed details with my older brother. During this writing, I became aware of connections that I had not previously made, and could see causes and effects where before none had appeared to exist. Even as I wrote, I began to become increasingly aware of my own teacher identity and of the influences that had been at work, and that were still at work, in its construction.

### iii. Data collection

During this phase in a reflective topical autobiography, the writer should offer 'a rich description of the salient event itself' (Johnstone, 1999:28). In my own work, this translated into the careful selection of the particular incidents, from the vastness of the autobiography, which I believed were most influential in the construction of my teacher identity. These extracts provided my data. Laid separate and bare, they represented the skeleton of how I had become who I had become, as a teacher. It was at this point that I decided to use the spiral as a metaphor for this study, because it occurred to me that I was spiralling in on events and people who had always been in my life, however, at this time, I was looking at them from a different place and was therefore seeing them from a different perspective.

### iv. Incubation

According to Johnstone (1999:28) the researcher should withdraw 'from the intense, concentrated focus' of the project, to allow intuitive understanding to develop. In the course of my research, this phase translated into a time when I was consciously reading about the construction of teacher identity and doing the theoretical work that would underpin this study. These readings contributed to the literature review which may be found in chapters 2 and 3.

### v. Illumination

This phase marks the time when a researcher reaches a new understanding or a new insight. This translated into the beginning of the writing about the extracted incidents in order to make sense of them, as I sought the answer to my research question.

### vi. Contemplation

Johnstone (1999:29) describes this phase as one in which the researcher 'fully examines what has awakened into consciousness in order to understand its various layers'. After I had completed the first draft of the writing, my supervisor was changed, and I had to return to the work with a different kind of focus. This was beneficial, because the time in between had afforded me the opportunity to use the understanding that I had gained during this contemplation phase to examine the meanings which had emerged. Where before I had listed the various influences and grouped them into what I had believed was a sensible order,

I suddenly came to see that there was one that was of particular significance, and that, in my case, it is context that is the overriding influence. This transformation in my thinking affected the way that I had viewed all of the previous work, and resulted in a major change in the way that I decided to approach the findings of this research.

## vii. Writing the reflective topical autobiography

I will translate this phase as providing the findings and the recommendations that conclude this research. Johnstone (1999) urges that there are three considerations: researchers should offer rich descriptions and allow emotions to be reflected; they should avoid using too much theory to prevent the experience from becoming too impersonal, and they should be prepared to risk all that this research embraces.

Once I had spent a long time reflecting on the extracts and writing about their significance as influences in the construction of my teacher identity, the pieces all returned to the whole. It is on the whole that I am going to concentrate in this final section. I am no longer looking at the incidents from different places on the spiral. Finally, I am going to discuss the spiral itself.

This will mean that I write the reflective topical autobiography which follows, using all of the



insights that I have gained during this process, and connecting the extracts into one meaningful whole. It is in the writing of this final reflective topical autobiography that I shall bring together all the pieces of the puzzle, of which Ramsamy (2006:43) writes, and in my own metaphor, it will be looking back at the central point, from outside of the spiral. What follows will represent the final phase of the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, that of writing the actual reflective topical autobiography, which will progress to a discussion of the findings. It will include a suggestion of the principles of art teacher identity construction and will conclude with a reflection and with recommendations.
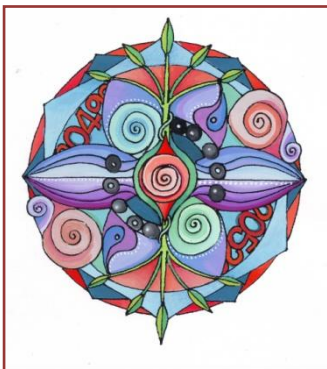
**7.4 The Reflective topical autobiography: How is the identity of an art teacher constructed over time?**

**7.4.1. Introduction**

Because of the nature of who I am as a human being, I was not prepared for the realisation that, in my case, context was to emerge as the singularly most important influence in the construction of my teacher identity. In my reading, I had come across many writers who had suggested that context is an important influence, but I still believed that human beings and their relationships with each other were the defining factors in the construction of any kind of identity, whether it was personal or professional.

During the contemplative phase of this process, I awoke one morning to the astounding realisation that it was always my context that influenced my art teacher identity construction. If I had not been there, I would not have.... I wrote 'context' on a yellow 'post it' note and stuck it onto my computer. I lived with this realisation.

I re-read journal articles that had examined context with a sense of excitement and discovery. Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) define the school as being significant to adolescents in their process of discovering who they are. Kroger (2000) suggests that the area of context needs further exploration, particularly where multiple and conflicting contexts are experienced by a single individual. Palmer (1998), Vuorikoski (2001), Diniz-Pereira (2003), Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) and Day et al (2006), to name a few, all write about the importance of the influence of context. Perhaps it was Elbaz-Luwisch (2004), whose notion fitted so well with my own, that opened the doors of this understanding for me, when she wrote about context as a place '...that holds meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it' (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004:388). I realised that the meaning of my contexts has defined who I am, in both personal and professional ways. I reconsidered my own teacher identity construct. I began by thinking: 'If I had not been there...'

**7.4.2 Exploring the operative significance of context**

For me, context represents much more than a particular time and space. It embraces the physical and geographical site, the culture of that particular site, the human beings who

participate in the events which occur on that site, and the powers that function within that site, and within those events. For each one of us who participates in that context, the influence that context has over us is related to the amount of meaning that we ascribe to particular areas of that context, and depends heavily on our own values and responses to the powers that are operative. Context will clearly therefore influence different people in different ways.

And so I write: If I had not been located in that particular family context, with a dysfunctional and unhappy mother, I would not have made my teachers my role models. If I had not been at that particular school, within that particular ethos, the actions of Betty Chew, a grade eight teacher, might not have influenced me take art as a subject to matriculation level. I would not have come across Hannsie Visser, whose influence on both my personal and my professional identity is unique. I would not have heard about the city to which I escaped, and which has since become my home, and the place where I express my being.

If I had not followed the work of my role models at that particular school, I would not have come to this city for my initial teacher education diploma. I would not have developed a relationship with the man I loved, which made me resolve to return to this city as soon as I had repaid my 'debt' to my parents. I would not have been exposed to the practices of experiential learning in my third year as a History student, and I would not have experienced the meaningful teaching practices that I encountered in that class, in the hands of Evelyn Howard, or in the year that followed, in the art department of the same institution. I would not have enjoyed the meaningful friendship with her, which has contributed to my life for more than thirty five years.

If I had not been in that art department, I would not have explored the wealth of meaning that visual art education can offer and I would not have discovered the mentorship of Elske Maxwell, whose life and friendship continues to inspire my own world to the present time. I would not have been so restless in that first school and could possibly have stayed in my hometown for the rest of my life. I would not have learnt the value of working in a team, and of commitment to one's work.

If the context of the first school in my home city in which I taught had been more supportive of visual art education, I might not have felt so isolated as a beginner art teacher. I might not have been driven to leave after such a brief sojourn. If the second school, on my return to my current city, had not held a similar group attitude, I might not have applied so quickly for a post at the art centre. If I had not worked at the art centre for a period of seventeen years, I would not have discovered the informal professional development that came from the rich

community of practice in which I worked, where relational factors strongly influenced the construction of my art teacher identity. My knowledge bases would not have been developed and deepened. My identity as an art teacher took hold at that art centre, and my confidence grew enormously. I became integrated as a teacher, whose life was connected to her work and whose work was connected to her life.

If I had not worked for so long at the art centre, I would not have learnt about so many aspects of teaching and would not have developed the skills that a teacher needs, that are beyond her activities in the classroom. I would also not have become restless, and I would not have studied the diploma in remedial education at a local university, which resulted in the fact that I was offered a part-time lecturing post at that same university.

If I had not accepted the post which initiated me into teacher education on a formal level, I would not have been prepared for the permanent appointment at a training college, where I was to move from basic education into higher education and where I would learn to educate art teachers myself. If I had not been at that training college, I would not have had to confront the process of a merger, nor to understand that my current qualifications were inadequate for an appointment at the merged institution. I would not have embarked on a process that deeply and significantly altered the construct of my teacher identity – that of a Master's Degree in Education.

If I had not been a postgraduate student at that university, I would not have been opened to the new thinking that this degree encouraged, and would not have had my own academic windows thrown wide open. I would not have been appointed to my current position. If I had not been in my current position, I would not have gone through the process of a merger, or learnt its bitter lessons and its blessings. I would not have had the experience of working with a dean who understood the value that I place in contact time. I would not have worked with colleagues who supported and challenged me, who argued and agreed with me and who contributed to the construction of my teacher identity in numerous ways. I would not have developed in this way as a human being. I would not have been invited to write the national visual art curriculum for South Africa, nor would I have been equipped to do this work. I would not have encountered adult students, who have stretched me, challenged me, taught me more about teaching than I shall ever be able to acknowledge and who have nourished my teacher-being, with their own.

If I had not been at this institution, I would not have encountered our Head of Research, who was prepared to spend time teaching me the basics. I would not have embarked on the process of this research, which has influenced the construct of my teacher identity in so

many ways that I have yet to discover them all. I would not have worked closely with the associate professor whose contribution to this work is immeasurable. I would not have encountered my current supervisor, whose understanding of this work has given me a sense of hope and courage.

In all of these stages and phases of the construction of my teacher identity, whether it has been the construction of it through the 'observed apprenticeship' of teaching (Timmerman, 2009:231), the academic qualifications that have made it possible, the human relationships that have nourished it, the acquisition of informal knowledge through the act of teaching that has grown it, or the challenges that have threatened or refined it, it has been the context that has defined it.

This understanding has come to me through the contemplation phase of this reflective topical autobiography and has made this final phase possible. It has changed the way that I think about my work with the students. It has made me more aware of my responsibilities to them. If context has powerfully influenced the construction of my own art teacher identity, how am I acting, as a part of their contexts, which may influence the constructions of their own? How am I enhancing their experience of that context, and what am I contributing to it?

Each context has brought its own set of relationships and each set has been meaningful in contributing to the ways that I view my role within that context. The responses from those relationships have powerfully constructed my identity as a teacher. I have come to understand that relational factors within educational contexts strongly influence the construction of my art teacher identity.

The work of teachers is an emotion-laden endeavour, because it thrives in contexts where human beings connect and dies in contexts where human beings fail to meet. We view ourselves as teachers through the lenses of our emotions and judge ourselves through these same lenses. We become empowered and confident, or disheartened and disillusioned. These emotions have a significant impact, not only on the way that we view our work, but also on the way that we *do* our work. One only has to be in a staff room at break times to hear just how many emotions are experienced by teachers in the course of their working days.

Context has had a profound effect on the emotions that I have experienced in my work. I now understand that this has influenced the way in which my teacher identity has been, and is being, constructed.

Each context and site of practice in my professional life has required that I develop my knowledge bases appropriately. These knowledge bases have grown through particular needs that have emerged in each context, and would perhaps not have developed in the same way if I had been teaching in a different environment. I therefore understand that context exerts a strong influence on the way an art teacher acquires and develops her knowledge.

I have also come to understand that it is my own personal response to my educational context, and to all that this context embraces, which has been a defining influence in the construction of my identity as an art teacher. The kind of person that I am responds in particular ways, and with particular emotions, to particular contextual factors. It is the way in which I have inter-reacted with that context, as a human being with personal values, flaws, failings, beliefs and competencies, that has enabled that context to be such a strong influence. Therefore I come to acknowledge that the interplay of personal identity with the educational context of the art teacher is an influence on that teacher's professional identity.

## 7.5 Discussion of findings of the study: How is the identity of an art teacher constructed over time?

During the contemplation phase, the reflection on the selected extracts gave me an understanding of the way in which particular influences have constructed my identity as an art teacher, over an extended period of time. This understanding enabled me to write the final reflective topical autobiography, which provided the answer to my research question. The principles which emerged most strongly as influences in the construction of the identity of myself as an art teacher over time are as follows:

- Professional context is a strong influence in the construction of an art teacher's identity;

- human relationships within the educational context are influences on the construction of an art teacher's identity;

- emotions within and in response to the educational context are influences on the construction of art teacher identity;

- knowledge acquired in the educational context is an influence on the construction of an art teacher's identity;

- context and personal identity interplay to create the teacher's individual response, which influences the construction of her art teacher identity.

**7.6 Making the personal less particular: Fore-grounding the emergent principles**

This study has used reflective topical autobiography as a careful reflective process of uncovering the influences that have contributed to the construction of my own teacher identity over time. Extracts from my autobiography provided the data for the process and, through reflection on these extracts, I have offered a discussion on how these particular incidents, times or contexts were significant in the construction of my professional identity. In the final reflective topical autobiography, which may be found in 7.4 of this chapter, I followed the process suggested by Johnstone (1999) and discussed the fact that context was singularly significant in my own life and that further influences were, to a large extent, also experienced through the lens of context.

When one acknowledges that personal biography and nature are a part of teacher identity construction, it becomes impossible to generalise about the pathway of that construction. Individuals are unique, and they bring their own unique life stories into their professional encounters. Where one teacher may be indelibly influenced by an encounter or event or influence, another might remain untouched. The passage of the construction of each teacher's identity is as unique and personal as the teacher herself. There can be no descriptor that positively charts the construction of teacher identity that is applicable to all teachers.

However, while this study has concerned itself with using reflective topical autobiography to investigate the influences on the construction of my own identity as an art teacher over time, the findings suggest that there are principles that can be applied to all art teachers, and perhaps, even to teachers in general. Through further reflection, I believe that it is possible to suggest that some of these influences may be applied to all art teachers as they construct their teacher identities, although the personal nature of the teacher may regulate the extent of these influences.

Because each teacher is a unique individual who brings to the nature of her work her own personal identity, and a set of beliefs and values that are intrinsically personal, these findings may not be applied to the same degree, and in the same significant order, to all teachers. However, I remain convinced that each factor that I have mentioned, and will mention in the discussion below, will have a personal influence on the construction of art teacher identity. The extent of that influence will depend on the personal nature of the teacher, and on the

unique way in which she responds to the influence. It is the very nature of her responses to these personal encounters that will ultimately define the construction of her teacher identity. In the following discussion, I suggest ways in which these principles may be experienced.

### 7.6.1 Personal response to educational context is an important influence on the construction of art teacher identity over time

In the reflective topical autobiography in this chapter, I have explored the ways in which my own educational contexts have contributed to the construction of my teacher identity. I have become increasingly aware that context has not only had a singular role to play in that construction, but also that it is not the isolated notion of context. Context embraces all that is mentioned in the early part of this discussion, but overriding all of these factors is the personal response, and the personal meaning that is given to these contexts.

Context, alone, cannot influence anything. The description of any given context can be fairly static. It is the way in which we respond to our contexts, our interpretation of them, and the meaning that we ascribe to this interpretation, that grants context its singular influence over us. Therefore, although context influences teacher identity, it is the *interplay between the personal human response and the context* that actively constructs it.

Our biographies intervene in the objective response and make it subjective, our personal histories influence our interpretations, and our value systems play a role in our judgements, choices and decisions. All of these bring a certain power to the ways in which we view and respond to our contexts. Where one teacher may feel inhumanly pressurised and disempowered by her context, another may feel challenged and inspired to succeed. Where one teacher may feel that her autonomy, and therefore her sense of self worth as an educator, is eroded beyond a state of effectiveness, another may be unaffected by the same pressures, and may be able to perform her work with ease and equanimity. Teacher identity is actively being constructed in this response to context, and in the way that this context affects the way that a teacher feels about her work, and about herself as an active participant.

This process of acquiring context-specific knowledge is also a process of understanding the self in practice within that context; a context which embraces the possibilities and the limitations, and the active interplay of the power relations within this context as the self perceives them.

Art teachers may find this process one that is particularly challenging. The general marginalisation of the arts, and the specific disregard for visual art as a subject of deep and

lasting value, is a powerful force in the process of art teacher identity construction. Art teachers also have a need to have the value of their subject and discipline acknowledged, because it is within this value that their own professional identity is lodged. The values of the teacher, and the belief system that drove her to commit to this subject, may be at odds with the power structures within an educational context. If those power structures place low priority on the subject and on the teaching of visual art and accommodate the needs of the discipline with little regard, this response will negatively affect the identity construction of the art teacher.

When a teacher is committed to her discipline, and aligns herself closely with the values that are embedded in that discipline, her task of professional identity construction is more complex. It requires a willingness to be present, and to commit to a context in which she, herself, does not feel specifically valued. However, because of her commitment to the educational value of the subject, it is possible that she could seek meaningful interpretations of her subject within the student group, and this may even contribute to sharpening her practice. This process will, in itself, influence the construction of her teacher identity. This aspect is also discussed later in this chapter, when the personal identity of the art teacher is fore-grounded.

### 7.6.1.1 Personal response to educational context as discussed in my data

My data offers evidence to show that the personal response to educational context has a singular influence on the construction of art teacher identity. I refer to 5.3.1 in chapter 5 of this thesis as an example of the strong influence that my response to educational context had on the construction of my art teacher identity at that time. In 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 this concept is once again fore-grounded. In 5.4, in a different educational context, the personal response to that context and the influence on the construction of art teacher identity, contributes to the findings. These finding run throughout the reflective exploration that comprises both chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, which contain the contemplation phase of this reflective topical autobiography.

### 7.6.1.2 Educational context in literature on teacher identity

The principle that teacher identity is shaped differentially by educational contexts over time is in line with current literature exploring teacher identity. Many writers speak of the role that

context exerts on the identity of a teacher and confirm that it is one of the influences in constructing this identity. Shulman (1987) includes a knowledge of context as one of the important knowledge bases that teachers should acquire. Turner-Bisset (1999), whose work also investigates the knowledge bases of teachers, contends that context exerts a considerable influence on the construction of teacher identity.  She believes that context influences the way that a teacher acts. Stillwagon (2008) believes that the context of the school is a strong influence. Battey and Franke (2008) concur that context has a particular role in defining the identity of the teacher, because it can either impose limitations or provide opportunities. Vuorikoski (2001) believes that teacher identity is formed by society, context, and by the learners with whom that teacher interacts. Diniz-Pereira (2003) writes that the school is one of the most powerful forces that define teacher identity, although she does not speak specifically of the teacher's personal response to that context. Turner-Bisset (1999) includes knowledge of educational contexts in her model of pedagogical content knowledge, because she also believes that context has a considerable influence.

Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006:265) describe the teacher's awareness of self as 'an evolving entity, continuously constructed and reconstructed in relationship to the contexts, experiences and people with which the self lives and functions.' Here, they do not give context the exclusive influence, but rather speak of the self in relationship to that context. Sandholtz (2005) believes that the disposition of the teacher is important in acquiring the context-specific knowledge that will make her practice more meaningful. He acknowledges that the disposition of the teacher, in contributing to her acquisition of context-specific knowledge, is also active in constructing that knowledge. The disposition of the teacher includes her values and beliefs and her personality, and these are played out in her emotional responses to the world around her.

Although some of this work supports the findings of my own data, which is that the personal response to context is an important influence in the construction of teacher identity, none of it suggests that personal response to context is the singular significant influence in the construction of teacher identity, which my own data has revealed. Most of these writers believe that context is important and many of them also acknowledge that each context is unique. Most of them acknowledge that it is one of the influences, coupled with many others, in the construction of teacher identity. While I acknowledge that there are certainly, and undeniably, many other influences that construct the identity of an art teacher, my personal findings suggest that the personal response to context is the one that emerges as the most significant contributory influence.

**7.6.2 The interplay of relational factors and educational context influence the construction of art teacher identity**

Within their new educational contexts, young teachers need the support and relational care that comes from more experienced colleagues. Teacher education cannot adequately prepare pre-service teachers for all of the challenges that they will confront in the real world of teaching. If art teachers find support and guidance during their initial years of active practice, they will feel more secure as they begin to construct their own identities as teachers in the educational context. My data reveals that, in the early years of teaching art, the subject was marginalised, and my art teacher identity did not develop appropriately.

Frequently, generalist teachers with very little adequate teacher education in the discipline are expected to teach visual art with little professional preparation. Visual art has a set of pedagogical principles that are specific and unique, and a content knowledge system that is particular. In educational contexts, a teacher who is supported and guided through the early years of teaching this discipline will feel more secure and will approach her work with a more positive attitude. Her perception of herself as a teacher will expand to include the discipline of visual art teaching. She will begin to grow her own practice through being more aware of the value of that practice. This support and care can be offered in the form of collegial concern and interest, professional communities of practice and management support.

Conversely, in an educational context where the discipline is under-valued, and there is little support offered to teachers in their initial years of teaching this discipline, the new teacher will lose confidence, will cope inadequately, and her perception of herself as a teacher of visual art will shrink. This clearly emerged in my data, described in 5.4.1. She will pay less attention to herself as a visual art teacher, because that part of her teacher identity is not valued, and is not given high priority. It is unlikely that new generalist teachers will rise to the challenge of accepting the isolation that a commitment to the discipline of visual arts brings. It is unlikely that they will be determined to develop the skills that are necessary to teach this discipline with meaning, in an educational context where relational aspects do not support the values that are embedded in visual art education.

Thus, it emerges that relational influences are particularly important for new teachers, although they remain important throughout a teacher's working life. The support, debate and challenge from colleagues and management, within the educational context, act as a spur

and a barometer of one's growth and change as a teacher, and these influences continue to contribute to the construction of one's identity as a teacher.

A further important relational influence is the relationship with one's students that one engages in, and that one learns from. In the latter part of my teaching career, this has emerged as perhaps the most significant relational influence on the construction of my teacher identity, and I suggest that it would be an equally significant influence for any teacher as she gains experience in both her practice and in her ability to be reflective. It is in the learner response that we are able to find our effectiveness and the meaning of our work.

When learners respond positively, and when they become actively engaged in their own knowledge construction, it is a strong contributory influence on the construction of teacher identity. The converse is also true, although a reflective teacher may be able to use the negative response from learners to positively change her practice and thereby actively construct her professional identity in a new way. Learner response is possibly the most immediate barometer of the current state of our teacher identities, because their responses and reactions are often unguarded and spontaneous. The learning encounter is one of the most personal and critical of all human encounters, because it entails so much that is of significance. I have documented many of these encounters in my autobiography, for example, on page 164. Self concepts can be broken or built, attitudes can be created or destroyed, and knowledge construction can be vital and enlightening, or dull and reduced to insipid information-sharing episodes. When a teacher becomes aware of the gift of learner-response, she can begin to use this knowledge reflectively to improve her practice, and to intentionally construct her identity as a teacher in ways that are worthy of the ancient work in which she is participating.

None of the relational factors that I have discussed and described would have been possible without being grounded in their very particular educational context. They may certainly have occurred, but their influence would have been different. I therefore suggest that educational context interplays with the relational factors in a teacher's professional life, and that it is this interplay that provides the strength of the influence on the construction of professional identity. Each teacher experiences a particular set of possible relationships within an educational context and, because of her educational context and her personal nature, she is influenced by these relationships to a lesser or greater degree. It thus emerges that relational factors and the interplay of these relational factors with the educational context, are strong influences on the construction of teacher identity.

**7.6.2.1 The influence of the interplay of relational factors and educational context as discussed in my data**

In the construction of art teacher identity, relational influences cannot be ignored. In my data, these emerged in the form of those people who had supported and encouraged me while I was at school myself. I mention particularly three women, whose influence in the construction of my professional identity cannot be quantified. These three women are mentioned consistently in my data, and in chapter 5, their initial influences are individually described in 5.2.5, in 5.3.1, and in 5.3.2.

Relational factors were also important after I had qualified as a teacher, in those colleagues who shared the breadth and the depth of their personal and professional knowledge with me, and in the communities of practice in which I participated. This is discussed in 5.4.3, and is a thread that continues throughout the data. Relationships with colleagues are also strong influences in my own professional identity construction, and this aspect is discussed in 5.4.4. Strong relational ties with students are important influences in my professional identity construction and this is discussed in 5.4.4, although it is also a discussion that continues through much of the data. Relational work with my students has had a strengthening impact on the construction of my teacher identity and this influence has increased as I have gained in experience, so that, towards the end of my teaching career, it is possibly the strongest influence within my current educational context. I have discussed this in 6.6.

Running parallel to the professional relationships discussed in my data are the personal relationships that affected the construction of my teacher identity. Although I have chosen intentionally to concentrate on extracts that discuss my professional life, I have included 5.4.5 as an example of personal relationships and incidents that impact on professional practice and identity construction. In my data, it has thus emerged that relational factors within particular educational contexts are a strong influence on the construction of teacher identity, and that some of these relational influences can also occur beyond the confines of the educational context.

**7.6.2.2 Relational factors in literature on teacher identity**

Atkinson (2004) believes that teachers have a lasting impression on their learners and that this influence could impact on later practices, should a learner decide to become a teacher.

Mc Cann and Johannessen (2004) suggest that young teachers should be supported and nurtured by care from their colleagues, because teacher education cannot adequately prepare pre-service teachers for all of the challenges that they will confront in the real world of teaching. Diniz-Pereira (2003) believes that collegial relationships are important in the construction of teacher identity. Day et al (2006) believe that teachers come to know their professional selves through being reflected through the lenses of their learners and their colleagues, as well as though members of school management. Day et al (2006) also believe that primary school teachers construct their identities from the personal, as well as the professional self, and that healthy relationships with the learners are important factors in professional identity construction. Zembylos (2003) and Stillwagon (2008) concur that the relationship between teacher and learner is central to the process of professional identity development. None of these writers talk about the interplay of relational factors in particular educational contexts, and speak rather of relational factors within the general context of the school. They also address relational issues in general terms and do not focus on particular kinds of relationships, nor give much credit to relationships that occur beyond the confines of the school environment.

### 7.6.3 The interplay of the personal knowledge base and educational context influences the construction of art teacher identity

Educational context can strongly influence the acquisition of the teacher's knowledge base, and thus the interplay between educational context and the acquisition of a personal knowledge base directly influences the construction of her identity as a teacher. For example, in a context where content knowledge is viewed as the only important knowledge base, staff development will be stunted because other areas of growth in practice will not be encouraged. In a context where it is presumed that teachers arrive with a knowledge base that is intact and has no need of further development, any individual efforts at on-going professional development will be viewed as interference in the course of daily duties. This will impact on the construction of teacher identity.

However, in a context where life-long learning is valued, the management will be supportive, and even directive, to this end. Communities of practice will be encouraged and professional growth will be acknowledged and rewarded. Staff members will be encouraged to bring their full selves to their work and a sense of commitment and shared purpose could result. The influence of this professional development as a deepening and expanding of a teacher's knowledge base is significant on the construction of teacher identity, as is revealed in my

data. As a teacher's knowledge base broadens and develops, so does her identity as a teacher. In educational contexts where life-long learning is valued, the management will make efforts to secure an attitude of on-going personal and professional development within the staff body. Active communities of practice will support the acquisition of both formal and informal knowledge. As the teacher's knowledge base increases, her perception of herself as a teacher also grows. She will begin to understand more about the complexities of the work of a teacher and will come to see that teaching encompasses much more than information-sharing.

The acquisition of an actively developing knowledge base means that a teacher's practice is never static and this directly influences her identity as a teacher. She learns to see her learners as participants, rather than recipients, and this will affect the way that she approaches her work. She learns that knowledge is not static and that there is no final destination in the quest for knowing. This will also affect the way that she approaches her work. Perhaps, more importantly, as her knowledge base increases, she will come to view herself and her role differently. She will come to understand the responsibility of her work. This emerged very clearly from my data. This understanding has a tremendous impact and influence on the identity of a teacher because it removes her from complacency, and places her on a pathway of intentional personal development and conscious professional growth.

For a teacher of visual art, this pathway is no less significant. Once a teacher has understood the intimate value of art teaching and the possibilities that are offered by this discipline, the influence on the construction of teacher identity cannot be denied. In order for this shift to occur, the context in which the teacher works must be supportive of the discipline and must encourage and enhance the professional development of the teacher. As far as possible, the ways in which she does her work must be supported, and this includes the supply of materials and resources. When an art teacher is able to acknowledge and respond to the positive support in her educational context, she is also able to feel encouraged to develop her professional art teaching identity in ways that go beyond guiding her learners to make beautiful pictures whose purpose is simply to adorn the school passage walls. In a supportive environment, an art teacher is able to commit to the kind of meaningful visual art education that will broaden and deepen her learners' lived experience. This emerged clearly in my data, and I cite section 5.3.5 as one in which visual art is valued and the influence that this had on my own professional development and, subsequently, on the construction of my teacher identity. The impact of support and value for her discipline will influence the construction of the teacher's professional development as an art teacher and her teacher identity will be

enriched. She will know that she is engaged in meaningful work that is valued in the educational context in which she is engaged.

The interplay of the knowledge base of a teacher and the educational context in which she works therefore unquestionably contributes to her identity as a teacher. It is this personal knowledge base that enables her to perform in a space of uncertainty, and it is this context that encourages or discourages the acquisition of the knowledge base. Because of the human nature of its interactions, a space of uncertainty is a natural definition of any educational interaction. A teacher with a strongly supported and continuously developing and refreshing knowledge base will be more secure when she works in that space of uncertainty.

### 7.6.3.1 The interplay of the personal knowledge base and educational context influences the construction of art teacher identity as discussed in my data

Initially in my data, in chapter 5, section 5.3.2, I discuss my arrogance that came from presuming that good teaching is entirely dependent on a secure content knowledge base. This arrogance created a specific attitude to my first teaching post in a particular educational context. The real acquisition of meaningful knowledge occurred within another particular context, and this is documented in 5.4.3. This had a very strong influence on my identity as an art teacher. Within that educational context, I grew to be confident about teaching art. My identity as an art teacher expanded and was strongly influenced as I came to know more about what I was teaching, and about the way in which I was teaching it.

In the data, I discuss the way that informal knowledge acquisition through professional development and through being a member of a community of practice, has contributed to the growth of my identity as a teacher. In 6.2, I discuss the acquisition of formal knowledge through studying for a Master's Degree in Education. In this extract, it is clear that research and the acquisition of formal knowledge had a marked influence on my professional identity. In 6.3, I document the process of beginning to read for this study, and I explore the significant influence of the enmeshing of research and practice, and of purposeful reflective practice as a means of developing my own professional practice.

In 6.6 I discuss the effects of learning through research and of coming to understand my student population better. In 6.8.1 I describe the difference that research is making to my practice and document quite clearly the arrival at the understanding that I have changed as an educator.

My data thus reveals that the knowledge base of a teacher and the informal and tacit knowledge that she acquires through experience in the classroom, have an influence on the construction of her teacher identity. Once again, my data reveals the influence of educational context on the acquisition of both formal and informal knowledge and on professional development. The consciousness that I had to extend my formal knowledge base, and to develop professionally, was determined by my educational context. If I had been a resident art teacher at a primary school, it is unlikely, that I would have embarked on any form of formal study in the mature years of my career.

### 7.6.3.2 The value of a personal knowledge base as discussed in literature (although not specifically on the identity construction of the teacher)

I could find no literature that directly and explicitly linked art teacher identity construction with the acquisition and continuous development of a knowledge base. In more general terms, Shulman (1987) acknowledges the importance of the teacher's knowledge base and Turner-Bisset (1999) strengthens this discussion. Vulliamy (2004) states that it is the teacher who is the interpreter of policies and who carries these interpretations through into her practice. Newton and Newton (2001) argue that teacher excellence is not possible without implicit and explicit content knowledge and this notion is strengthened by Hogan et al (2003). Deng (2007b) fore-grounds content knowledge, but includes in his discussion the system and extent of understanding in the mind of the teacher.

Traianou (2006) suggests that the way in which knowledge is negotiated in the classroom depends on the identity of the teacher, thus highlighting the importance of a sound knowledge base in the process of practice. Hashweh (2005) and Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) contribute to Shulman's (1887) discussion of the importance of pedagogical content knowledge. Poulson (2001) believes that pedagogical content knowledge is particularly important for generalist teachers who cannot possibly support sufficient content knowledge in each of the many disciplines which they are expected to teach.

Several researchers (Newton and Newton, 2001; Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006; Deng, 2007a) stress that the knowledge of the learner is an important aspect of teacher knowledge. Some believe that this knowledge of the learner may be of equal importance to content knowledge. Jeffrey (2006), Moore and Kuol (2007) and O'Brien (2010) stress the relational aspect that comes from strong knowledge of the learner. Battey and Franke (2008) believe

that the identities of both the learner and the teacher are constructed through their content work together.

The knowledge and understanding of context has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, but I stress its relevance in the learning encounter and its influence on teacher identity construction.

Shapiro (2003) and McNally et al (2004) underpin the value of informal and tacit knowledge in the process of teaching and learning and suggest that a teacher's values and attitudes, which contribute to her professional identity, may be influenced by the acquisition of this kind of knowledge. Bordum (2002) believes that the acquisition of tacit knowledge has a particularly subjective quality, which depends on, and also contributes to, the identity of the teacher.

Important further knowledge development, beyond the knowledge bases listed by Shulman (1987), is acquired through professional development and this aspect is discussed by Battey and Franke (2008) and by Hardy (2008). Robinson and McMillan (2003) suggest that a teacher's attitude can influence her professional development through times of change.

Although some of these writers discuss teacher identity, it is not explicitly stated that the acquisition of a knowledge base within a particular educational context contributes to the construction of art teacher identity. My emphasis remains on the influence of the interplay of a particular educational context and the acquisition of a knowledge base. Educational context exerts a considerable influence on the kind and extent of the knowledge that is acquired by in-service art teachers. This has, to my knowledge, not been highlighted in the literature surrounding the acquisition of both formal and informal teacher knowledge, or in the literature surrounding the construction of teacher identity.

### 7.6.4 The interplay of educational context and personal nature influences the construction of art teacher identity

Acting on her personal responses, a teacher interprets her context in a particular way and works in a particular way. This interpretation acts on the construction of her teacher identity. This is clearly borne out by my data. In principle, therefore, I suggest that educational context, and a teacher's unique response to that educational context, which is influenced strongly by her emotions, has a singular and significant influence on the construction of teacher identity. A teacher's response to context is also an emotional consideration. When a

teacher feels distressed or uncomfortable in her context, the context may appear less favourable to her. If she feels nurtured and valued, then the context may appear more favourable.

A teacher's way of being with her learners affects every aspect of her interactions with them. Her values and beliefs influence the choices that she makes and these will impact directly on every learner or student with whom she comes into contact. It is her personal nature that dictates the attitude with which she approaches her work and the way in which she views that interaction. It is her personal nature that interprets her context and that will recognise its limitations and its potentials. Her responses directly align with her personal nature.

Before I discuss the act and the process of teaching, I pause to highlight the role of the teacher's personal identity in her response to the educational context in which she finds herself. This response results in a direct influence on the construction of her teacher identity.

Within each context, whether teachers are conscious of this fact or not, they are able to make certain choices about the ways that they will respond to the opportunities and to the limitations and challenges that confront them. To a large extent, the choices that they make define the way that they act within that context and are therefore influential in the way that they construct their teacher identities. Highlighting the agency of choice is an important aspect of teacher identity because it offers each teacher the opportunity to be an active participant in her own sense of being in an educational context and takes away the potential for feeling disempowered.

Because the work of a teacher happens between and among human beings, and is essentially a profession that encompasses significant relational considerations, teacher emotion cannot be ignored in any study about the essential nature of the work of teaching. In the process of teaching and learning, a teacher who allows herself to feel negated and disempowered by her context will not be able to practice meaningfully. This, in turn, will negatively impact on the construction of her teacher identity because she will have a sense of frustration in her work. However, an active knowledge of self offers the teacher the agentic opportunity to make choices about the way that she acts within that context that will empower her to construct meaningful lessons for her learners, whatever the context. She will understand that the real work of teaching rests on her teacher identity and not on the resources or advantages that may, or may not, be found in the particular context in which she is practising.

When a teacher is consciously aware of her own emotional responses, she is able to regulate them so that they are appropriate within any educational context and, particularly, where young children are concerned.

Using her conscious knowledge of herself as an active agent of change and transformation within the learning context, a teacher is able to acknowledge the responsibility of the work that she has chosen. If a teacher is able to acknowledge that the ways in which she deals with her learners are significant in their own knowledge construction, then she is able to plan and act accordingly. Palmer (1998:7) writes that '...at every level of education, the selfhood of the teacher is key.' This strengthens the suggestion that teacher self-awareness is an important part of the construction of her identity as a teacher. Added to this, in the educational context of the learning environment, the response from her learners to the way in which her personality makes learning accessible to all participants, will be a strong influence on the construction of her identity as a teacher. Once again, the context, as well as aspects of the personal knowledge bases of the teacher, combined with her personal nature, emerges as an important factor to consider in the construction of teacher identity.

For art teachers, this personal identity is no less significant. Making art can be a frightening venture for children because there are no right answers. Children must feel safe enough to risk allowing their imaginations to interpret the learning material. When the personal identity of an art teacher understands this, she will strive to make the context one that is supportive for her learners. Their response will impact on her identity as an art teacher because the response from her learners will be positive, and their work and attitudes will reveal their connectedness with the art-making process. This response is a part of what Malm (2008:379) terms 'the psychic rewards of teaching' and it is important in giving a teacher a sense of her own value in the learning encounter. Being secure enough to interpret her learner response will encourage her to change or to maintain the atmosphere in the art-making context, depending directly on that learner-response.

How well a teacher knows herself, and recognises the role that her personal identity plays as it interacts with the educational context within which she works, becomes an important consideration. If knowledge of self is indeed to be included in the knowledge base of teachers, because it has an active and important role to play in the process of teaching and learning, and therefore in the construction of her teacher identity, then this knowledge should be overt and encouraged. Conscious personal development contributes to the health and ongoing positive construction of an art teacher's professional identity.

Extending context to include the global world of education, Blustein et al (1996:436) maintain that we are in an 'era of occupational flux'. This is nowhere more evident than the world of art education, both in South Africa, and internationally. In South Africa, the focus on the sciences, technology and mathematics marginalises the arts. In the space of two generations, we have introduced two new curricula, and teachers have had to accommodate the failure of the first, as well as the demands of the change to the new. Art teachers in this country have had to accept that the arts have a low status and that the visual art discipline is generally given low regard in schools, in other educational institutions and by the National Department of Basic Education. This is a global trend, despite the urging of the UNESCO, (Road Map for Arts Education, 2006), that every child should have a quality arts education.

Often working against power structures in their educational contexts, art teachers have to strive to make their own work meaningful. This requires a particular kind of personality. It requires a teacher whose value system is firmly lodged in belief in her subject and who has the strong desire to teach art, despite the negative or indifferent responses that she may meet in her educational context. It requires a teacher who knows herself well enough to maintain stability and who does not need the acknowledgement of school management or other power structures. It requires a teacher identity that is firmly rooted in belief in the subject and one that is determined to grow, and even flourish, despite the constraints that she might encounter within her context.

### 7.6.4.1 The interplay of educational context and personal nature as discussed in my data

I acknowledge that my personal identity has influenced the way that I see my work, the way that I do my work and the way in which I interpret my educational context. This is evidenced in my data in almost every extract, but I mention particularly an early example in 5.2.4. My personal identity at that time was crafted around the need to please, and if I had not 'needed to please' Betty Chew, I would not have signed that form, in that educational context, that was to change the course of the rest of my life.

A later example of my personal identity is revealed in extract 5.3.1, where I describe my enthusiastic response to experiential learning. My personal learning strength is visual and activity-based, and so experiential learning, a method that was to deeply influence my own practice, had a strong appeal for me, and has continued to be an aspect of my teaching practice.

Still later, my personal identity is revealed in 5.4.1, where I experience difficulties in my initial posts, because my need to belong is not met. This same need is adequately fed in the extract mentioned in 5.4.3, where a sense of being a part of a community broadens my knowledge about art teaching and constructs a particular kind of teacher identity, in a particular kind of educational context.

As I write, I realise that each one of these extracts is in some way a revelation of my personal identity at work in, and responding to, a particular educational context. Each extract talks about what I am doing, but also reveals who I am, while I am doing it. If I had not been who I am as a personal identity and human being, I would have responded to my educational contexts in different ways and my teacher identity would have been constructed in different ways as well. Perhaps section 6.10.3, where I describe my personal response to the writing of a new visual art curriculum, is a very clear example of the effects of my personal identity interplaying with an educational context. Together, these influenced my professional identity in a way that was unique. A teacher with a different personal identity would not have been affected in this way. A teacher in a different educational context would not have faced these same personal dilemmas. This supports the finding that personal identity interplays with educational context to influence the construction of teacher identity.


**7.6.4.2 Personal nature and teacher emotions as discussed in the literature on teacher identity construction**

Arnon and Reichel (2007) claim that the personality of the teacher is the most important quality in the learning encounter. The personal identity of the teacher is the essential nature of what and, more importantly, who she brings to her work. Webster (2005) concurs by suggesting that teacher identity is a knowledge of *who* one is, rather than a series of labels that define *what* one is. In a profession where human interaction is central, the personal nature of the teacher is significant. Day et al (2006) support this notion and suggest that an awareness of the self is important in the process of skilful teaching.

Turner-Bisset (1999) includes a knowledge of the self in her knowledge bases because she believes that an understanding of the self in the process of teaching and learning, as well as in the process of making decisions about teaching and related issues, is an important influence in the construction of teacher identity. When a teacher understands and acknowledges that her values and beliefs, as well as her personal biography, make up the person who she is when she interacts with her students, she is able, to some extent, to

control and to adapt her behaviour. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) write of the enmeshing of the teacher-self and the social-self and offer that when a teacher brings her whole self to the act of teaching, she reaches a state of authenticity. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) believe that the personal identity of the teacher is an important part of her professional identity, and that it is almost impossible to separate the two.

Law. Meijers, and Wijers, (2002:432) suggest that, in order to develop a professional identity, a person must have the ability to 'draw upon personal feelings, to differentiate self from others, and to develop a personal narrative and represent experience in one's own terms.' Elbaz-Luwisch (2004:388) connects the personal nature of the teacher with her context, when she writes that context is a place that 'holds meaning, that matters to the persons who inhabit it'. She believes that a knowledge of the personal self is enmeshed with a knowledge and an understanding of the place in which that self functions. Malm (2008) believes that a teacher's ability to be aware of his or her responsibilities is an important aspect of mental health, and that schools should support this development. The understanding of the self as it functions within contexts can be an emotional matter, and teacher emotion plays a significant role in the meaning that is ascribed to educational contexts. Teacher emotions and their effects and consequences must certainly be considered when the construction of teacher identity is being investigated. Law et al (2002:432) state: 'Work is an emotional issue, especially when career identities are shifting'.

Teacher emotion has recently entered the arena of educational research, and has been investigated by Elbaz-Luwisch (2002), Zembylas (2002, 2003) and Sutton and Wheatley (2003). Ashkanasy (2004) supports the idea that emotions affect decision-making abilities and Sutton and Wheatley (2003) claim that emotions affect memory, problem-solving ability, enthusiasm and a teacher's attitude to his or her occupation. Emotions also influence the way that teachers respond to their contexts. Stillwagon (2008:76) believes that, within any particular context, the 'bodily presence' of the teacher enables her to maintain certain autonomy and that she is able to survive beyond the confines of the description framed within the school's context. The level of that autonomy will depend on the conscious awareness that the teacher has of her identity interacting with the educational context. When teachers believe that they are disempowered by their contexts, they allow themselves to lose energy in their work and in their emotional responses to their work.

Most of these writers acknowledge that the personal identity of the teacher is key in the educational encounter, and some of them discuss the emotional nature of the work of teaching. Although some of them certainly allude to the teacher's personal response to

context, there is not significant discussion around the notion that the interplay of educational context and the personal nature of the teacher is a strong constructor in professional identity.

## 7.7 Separation or consolidation of influences on the construction of art teacher identity

It seems unrealistic to separate the principle influences on the construction of teacher identity into a list of points and to discuss each one of them as if they occupied a place on a hierarchy. Teacher identity is a complex and complicated construction that occurs at the interface of the personal and the professional. It rests on personal biography, professional experience, and the contextual integration of the two. It draws on attitudes, opinions, values and knowledge, and is in a fluid state at all times. It can lie dormant for a number of years, and then be active in a moment. Particular educational contexts can bring their particular challenges and blessings, which will influence different teachers in different ways. Educational contexts offer a background for each teacher to explore her sense of self, the development of her formal and informal knowledge bases and the relational aspects of her work. These interplay with her personal identity and gather to construct a teacher identity that is unique, personal, and wholly individual. It is in the conscious knowledge of this identity that real growth occurs because, when we become more aware of our teacher identities, we also become more aware of our responsibilities and of the immeasurable task that this identity must embrace.

Ultimately, the construction of teacher identity is the storied existence of the personal relationship that a human being has with her context, with her work, with her colleagues, with her students and with the notion of herself as an active participant in knowledge construction. I believe that the identity of the teacher is the defining factor in the teaching and learning encounter that occurs in the educational context.

## 7.8 Summary of findings

This study has shown me that over time, the interplay of educational context, as well as a teacher's response to that educational context, is a strong influence on the construction of an art teacher's identity. Relational influences within particular contexts are also important contributory influences. A teacher's knowledge base, which is strongly influenced by her educational context, also contributes to her identity as a teacher and all of these factors are in fact moderated by the teacher's personal identity. I have discovered that teacher identity is a complex combination of personal identity combined with an interpretation of educational

contexts, supported by relational influences, and honed by the quality and the depth of the teacher's knowledge base. It is fluid, and interacts with the context and the influences, so that it is actively constructed throughout a teacher's working life, and possibly even beyond it. The quality and depth of a teacher's professional development on formal as well as on informal levels also actively contribute to the on-going construction of her identity as a teacher. A further important consideration is the active and conscious knowledge of a personal sense of teacher identity, and a conscious commitment to develop and strengthen this fundamental aspect of our professional lives.

Professional development may also be regarded as an important contributory influence on the construction of the identity of the teacher; both align as processes that are on-going, active and fluid.

Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006:265) describe 'presence' in teaching, which also stems from the identity of the teacher, as:

> *"... as a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to*
> *the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and*
> *the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability*
> *to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step'.*

It is within this response to the next best step that teachers are to be found constructing their identities. It is within their personal and unique contexts and, more importantly, it is the active interplay between the self of the teacher, and her emotions in, and responses to, that context, that enable the decision that accounts for that 'considered and compassionate next best step' (Rogers and Raider-Roth, 2006:265) which are the actions of her teacher identity in her context.

The personal biography, the personal values and the self of the teacher cannot be ignored in the active interplay of the context, the self and the combination of these in the process of teaching and learning. The response to the contextual opportunities or limitations, the interplay of the personal and the professional, the combination of value systems, beliefs, experience and response to perceived power, are all part of a human being *acting within a given context*, and *responding to that context* in a way that is unique. When personal identity is combined with a growing professional knowledge base and is exposed over time to particular educational contexts, teacher identity is continuously constructed.

## 7.9 Recommendations

### 7.9.1 An awareness of teacher identity should be consciously developed in pre-service art teacher education

In the process of preparing for this study and in the reading around teacher identity and knowledge bases, the construction of my own identity as an art teacher has been fore-grounded. This new awareness has heightened my sensitivity to my ways of being, in the studio, and with my students, and has contributed to my practice in meaningful ways.

Perhaps an awareness of teacher identity and its careful construction could be introduced from the beginning of the process of pre-service teacher education. Some of these students may arrive with an idea of what they want to be as a teacher with perceptions gained from their own teachers (Hutchings et al, 2008). Some of them may not even have considered the kind of work that they will be doing and may have decided to enter the profession for a variety of personal reasons, which may include that one or both of their parents may be teachers, or that they did not know what else to do.

The active awareness of the process of the construction of their teacher identities could assist students to have a clear, rational and realistic idea of who they are, as human beings and as student teachers, and also of who they can become, as practising teachers. This early understanding of how they are developing their teacher identities could encourage them to consider that these identities affect all that makes up the personal and professional lives of teachers. The active awareness of the identity could alter the construct, contributing in important ways to the attitude that students have to their knowledge acquisition, both formal and informal, their personal behaviour and the responsibility of their future work as teachers.  It is that identity that will take them forward into a future where change is certain, and the challenges will be great. It is also that identity that will give them access to a sense of joy and meaning in their work.

An awareness of the response to context could be built into this work, so that new teachers are not so shocked when they enter the world of professional service and encounter it as one that is vastly different from the one that they imagined, and even, to some extent, from the one for which they have been educated. There is little research that investigates the knowledge base of general educational contexts that exists within the body of teacher

educators. One may presume that on the whole, they do not have immediate access to the current state of education across the many sites of practice to which their own students will be actively exposed.

Little attention is paid to the construction of the identity of teachers, in pre-service teacher education, and certainly in in-service professional development. Teacher identity is largely regarded as an incidental process that happens unconsciously while teachers do their work.

However, it is the identity of the teacher that is active in the process of the ways in which that work is done, and greater attention could be paid to the construction, maintenance and nurturing of this construction. To this end, a module on the awareness of the self-as-teacher could be introduced into pre-service teacher education, so that students enter the profession with a greater degree of awareness of the self as an active and agentic role-player in the educational process, rather than believing that the act of teaching is a series of documented strategies that need to be effectively implemented.

### 7.9.1.1 A model for the aware construction of pre-service art teacher identity

A way to achieve this process of conscious personal development could be the inclusion of a module in which students are encouraged to consider and establish their own values and belief systems, so that they come to a greater degree of self-awareness. The module could include exploring the self in society, building healthy social and professional relationships and developing and understanding the acquisition of informal knowledge bases, which the students could consciously investigate during their teaching practice sessions. Different contexts and personal responses to these different contexts, could also be investigated. The conclusion of such a module could be the exploration of the students' own developing art teacher identities. This module could be introduced in a variety of ways, from participatory workshop sessions to experiential learning encounters.

### 7.9.1.2 Process for the aware construction of pre-service art teacher identity

**Session 1**
- Looking at identity: What is your personal identity? What is your social identity?
- Exploring your values: What values are important to you?
- How do your values influence your thinking and your attitudes?
- How did your values influence your decision to become a teacher?

**Session 2**

- Your self in practice: What are your personal strengths and challenges?

- How do your values influence the way you see yourself?

- How do your values influence your behaviour?

- What face do we choose to show the world, and how many faces are there? (Consider the way you are in different relationships, your social media identity, etc)

**Session 3**

- Your self in society: How do you reflect yourself in your relationships?

- How do relationships, context and your social world influence and construct you?

- How do you influence and construct them?

- What makes you different, in different relationships?

- Let's look at social constructionism

**Session 4**

- Constructing knowledge: How do we acquire knowledge, both formally and informally?

- How do your values influence the way that you acquire knowledge?

- Looking at knowledge: formal, practical, informal and tacit.

**Session 5**

- Your art teacher identity: How is your art teacher identity constructed?

- How do your values influence the way that you see yourself as a teacher?

- How does your perception of yourself as an art teacher influence the way that you do your work?

- How does it affect your knowledge construction?

**Session 6**

- Teacher knowledge: What kinds of knowledge do art teachers need to acquire?

- In what ways is it possible to acquire this knowledge?

- What makes this knowledge meaningful?

- How does a knowledge base affect your teaching?

**Session 7**

- Meaningful teaching: What is the difference between effective teaching and meaningful teaching?

- In teaching, why is the relational aspect important?

- How does context affect us?

- What do you need to consider when you seek knowledge of your learners?

- How does sound content knowledge affect your teaching?

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**Session 8**

- Meaningful art teaching: What is the value of art education?
- How do we translate the art elements and design principles into meaningful art encounters?
- What does visual literacy mean?
- How does your teacher identity create a space of 'giving' in an art lesson?
- How do you continue to grow your knowledge as an art teacher?

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Thoughtful art-making during this process could enhance and deepen the meaning of such a module, which could lead to 'personal and perspective transformation' (Wade, 1998:714). Participating in this module could result in potential changes in the knowledge bases of these students. These changes could, in turn, affect the future practice of these pre-service teachers. Battey and Franke (2008) suggest that a change in the knowledge base of a teacher can have a direct impact on the practice of that teacher. Pre-service teachers could come to understand that a large part of valuable informal knowledge acquisition, that could deeply enrich their art teaching, lies in the conscious understanding of the value of professional development that is self-driven. Tuomi (2004) agrees that, when professional development becomes self-driven, it has more value than professional development that is enforced.

I believe that it is never too early to encourage pre-service teachers to develop professionally and to become aware of the tremendous responsibility of their future work. A part of this responsibility lies in discovering, acknowledging and nurturing their own teacher identities. Once again, my belief in the relational aspects of teaching enters this discussion. If we ignore the humanity of pre-service teachers, we cannot expect them to trust us to be participants on their journeys into their own futures.

As teacher educators in a world where technology speeds up time and where the planet shrinks and expands beyond our control, we cannot possibly anticipate what our students will need to know to equip them to be meaningful teachers and, in my case, meaningful art teachers, in the future. We cannot know the unique contexts in which they will practice, or what their personal responses to those contexts will be. What we *can* do is facilitate spaces of learning and reflection that will open doorways for them to their own critical thinking processes, to their own awareness of the importance of their reflective progression of

personal teacher identity construction, and to their own understandings of what it means for them, to become meaningful teachers.

<div align="right">

*Knowing myself yet being someone other—*
*And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed*
*To compel the recognition they preceded.*

*T S Eliot, 1942*

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## 7.9.2 The value of conscious communities of practice could be encouraged

Having made recommendations about pre-service teacher education, I turn now to in-service teachers and their own professional development. My data has shown that, although I was not consciously aware that my teacher identity was being developed, my sojourn at the art centre, where I participated in a rich community of practice, was a time during which my identity as an art teacher was positively influenced and constructed.

In part, this was because my knowledge bases were being developed, and this added to my confidence. A large influence on the construction of my teacher identity came from the belief that I was being a meaningful part of a system that was geared towards sound art education, in a context that supported and nurtured the teachers who practised there. This atmosphere, and this context, was largely determined by the principal.

It appears that most teachers believe that professional development means the acquisition of new content knowledge and skills (Koster et al, 2008) This is also revealed in my autobiography, on page 60, where I discuss the way that we viewed art education at the art centre.  Little, if any time, is devoted to the development of informal knowledge about teaching and learning within particular sites or contexts. Communities of practice, as suggested by Seaman (2008), could play an essential role in the growth and development of teacher knowledge and teacher identity construction, within particular contexts, where different identities have different perceptions and consequently ascribe different meaning to events, people and practices. This notion is supported by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003).

In a school where a meaningful community is consciously nurtured by management (and this could include senior staff members as well as the principal), staff members could be encouraged to increase the depth of their knowledge bases, which include formal, informal and tacit knowledge. The focus could be not so much on increasing content knowledge, which is particular to a subject, but could rather centre on meaningful teaching strategies,

questioning techniques, and personal development. Seaman (2008) reminds us that, in communities of practice, there is a social aspect to the fact that staff members are united through practical, active knowledge, and learning and meaning construction takes place in the process of knowledge-sharing. This practice will positively impact on the construction of the identities of the teachers within that context because they will feel united in the pursuit of knowledge, as well as in exploring the purpose and meaning of their work. I use the personal experience of the community of practice that I enjoyed at the art centre to ground this argument, and to strengthen its proposal. Even those staff members who choose to remain on the periphery of the community of practice, as discussed by Hung and Chen, (2002), Merriam et al (2003), Fuller et al (2005) and Seaman (2008), will benefit from the discussion and the sharing of knowledge that is gained through experience. In such a context, teachers who teach 'marginalised' subjects will gain access to a full and meaningful participation in, and membership of, a staff and school. Content-specific professional development can be left in the hands of publishers, who have increasingly rigorous demands placed on them by the National Department of Basic Education in South Africa. Currently, text books have to pass through a selection committee that is appointed by the National Department of Basic Education, before they may be accessed by teachers. The content of these books and their adherence to the curriculum is carefully monitored. It is assumed that teachers can thus rely on these text books to provide them with the necessary additional content to teach their lessons. However, it is stated categorically in this thesis that this should not be the *only* content on which teachers rely, but rather that it should provide them with the additional content that encourages professional development.

Meaningful in-service staff development through conscious and intentional use of communities of practice could ensure that staff members at a school are reminded of the responsibilities of their work, and of the reasons that they chose that work in the first place. The student with stars in her eyes and the belief that she will change the world and will make a difference should not have disappeared into a teacher whose life revolves around effective classroom management and sound administrative techniques, coupled with delivering content at the appropriate time. The meaningful work of teachers remains about transformation in its true sense.

### 7.9.2.1 The principal should strengthen communities of practice

Too often, staff rooms are used as dumping grounds for dissatisfied and exhausted teachers who are barely coping with the demands of their jobs. These teachers would benefit

enormously from the kind of support and knowledge that could be gained in an informal community of practice. The role of an alert principal could be to encourage professional development in staff members. Working intentionally and collaboratively, as suggested by Sturko and Gregson (2007, 2009) and Torff and Sessions (2008), staff members could be guided into positive professional development sessions where they, themselves, are the active participants in knowledge construction for their own growth and in, and for, their own sites of practice. These agentic practices are supported by Murray (2005). This sense of relevance and immediacy of the practical knowledge that they are constructing collaboratively will enhance their practices and could bring about a positive shift in their teacher identities.

If school principals could be encouraged to become more aware of the complex organism that is a living staff, which is made up of individual and unique human beings, all with their own insecurities and strengths, then the process of staff development could shift a little from being entirely content- and curriculum-related, to move closer to the development of the whole person.

Within this kind of context, staff strengths could be acknowledged and given meaningful places of expression and challenges could be carefully and meaningfully addressed. When teachers begin to feel that they are a part of something that is bigger and more meaningful than the simple act of delivering content, their identities could flourish and they could commit more solidly to this process. The principal, in the ultimate role of leadership in the school, could assume responsibility for the development of the whole teacher, as well as for ensuring that the content of the curriculum is delivered on time, and that the staff administrative tasks have been completed. In such a staffroom, the members of that community could be encouraged to assume a joint commitment to the common goals of meaningful education, so that staff members become connected to a process that can remind them of the reasons that they initially entered the teaching profession.

The benefits of informal, practical knowledge could impact on the practices and on the attitudes of the staff members, so that the teacher identities of the staff population could be enriched. Principals have a leading role to ensure the active participation in a lively community of practice. Such a context could become a school that enjoys a healthy professional development of its staff members. This will impact on the ethos of the school, and could have a direct effect on the teaching and learning practices of the entire community of the school.

### 7.9.2.2 Art teacher communities of practice could be established across several sites

In a mainstream school, it is difficult to find or create a community of practice with art teachers as its focus. Traditionally, there was one art teacher at a school. In South Africa today, with the generalist approach to teaching in the primary school, it may be possible to gather all of the teachers of visual art into a specific context or community, and hold them there with visual art as a focus. Alternatively, an intentional community of practice could be established across several sites, so that teachers from different schools and contexts, who teach art as a part of their workload, are able to learn from each other, and may develop valuable knowledge and skills in this particular discipline. Once again, this process would need to be initiated and encouraged, and nurtured by principals who understand the value of professional development to both the school and to the individual staff members.

Technology makes new methods of communication available that could make this process fun, exciting, and could extend it to beyond the walls of a particular staff room. Creating 'groups' on social network media, or using the world wide web in innovative ways could encourage staff members to stay committed and collaborative as they enter into the spirit of learning and professional development. Such an approach could ultimately change the ethos of a whole school and possibly even a whole district. It could result in staff members who are re-invigorated by their work, and by their personal ability to do their work meaningfully.

> *From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit*
> *Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire*
> *Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'*
>
> *T S ELiot, 1942*

### 7.9.3 The value of visual art education should be acknowledged

In a country like South Africa, where there are eleven official languages, non-verbal rendering offers children an opportunity to make significant meaning of their worlds, in a space that is uninhibited by language. Visual art is an essential process for all children (UNESCO, Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006), giving them a space to experience fulfilled time (Koopman, 2005) and the personal interpretation of their life-worlds (Pavlou, 2004). Purposeful and meaningful art teaching and learning makes this process possible. Pre-service teachers often lack the basic content knowledge of art-making, and may personally

have experienced very little of this discipline in their own formal schooling. Therefore it therefore becomes essential for teacher education institutions, each within its own context, to consider the practical nature of the subject, and the time that it takes for the meaningful acquisition and the application of the content, skills and techniques that comprise this discipline.

The marginalisation of visual art and its place in the curriculum continues into the twenty first century, despite a growing body of research that acknowledges the importance and the significance of learning through this subject. Currently, the pendulum has swung across to the sciences and mathematics and, when it returns to a more balanced and central position, it will be necessary to have art teachers who have thorough content knowledge that is grounded in thoughtful and visionary art teacher education. This should not only be be considered as a future option. It is more important that this practice is encouraged in current times. In the context of teacher education institutions and in schools, visual art should no longer be regarded as a 'sideline' activity (Burrill, 2005:38). When children are given the opportunity to make meaning of their own life-worlds, through careful, thoughtful processes that are guided and encouraged by meaningful art education, they are in the process of creating their own unique responses to those worlds. In this way, they are constructing their own identities (UNESCO, Roadmap for Arts Education, 2006). This does not only give value to their presence in the art room, but also gives value to their presence as human beings on this planet.

Pre-service teachers need to experience this process to understand its value. Given that they frequently arrive with limited personal experience of the discipline, they need to be nurtured through their own 'giving' space, as described by Cannatella (2007), so that they emerge with a unique experience of the opportunity for meaning-making and personal expression and interpretation. This process cannot be accomplished in a few hours or a short module. It is developmental, and should be deep enough to change the perspective of the participant pre-service teacher. When a pre-service student teacher experiences the capacity for meaning-making through her own experience with visual art, she will be more able to participate in this process with children.

Contextually, if the credit allocation at the institution is low, and this translates into reduced contact time, then this opportunity will be impeded and the student teacher will emerge with a poor understanding of the capacity and the value of meaningful art education, and subsequently with a poor acknowledgement of her identity as a teacher of visual art. This attitude will travel with her into schools, where it is most likely to be confirmed.

On the other hand, pre-service teachers who have had a transformative experience with visual art, as is suggested by Wade (1998) and have arrived at a shift in their perspectives, will be more likely to enter the teaching profession with a positive art teacher identity. Such teachers are able to encourage their learners to have an attitude of respect, enjoyment and discovery in the process of their own art-making experiences, which will impact on their meaningful lived experience.

## 7.9.4 The acquisition of a knowledge base for art education should be encouraged in pre-service teacher education

The knowledge bases that can be acquired through theory-based art teacher education have limitations. I cannot expect my students to teach visual art meaningfully unless they themselves have experienced the potential for beauty and elegance that a line may offer, the expressive use of colour and mark-making and the visual impact of emphasis. They come to understand the creative power of the imagination by exploring their own. They study the artist as a reflection of society and understand their own roles in constructing their worlds. Through careful facilitation, formal teacher education can in many ways ensure that students emerge with a sound content knowledge.

Although content knowledge may be gained, and a certain understanding of the aims and educational ends of the learning processes may be understood, the majority of the knowledge bases remain theoretical. We may introduce students to child development, but it is only once they are actively participating in a classroom that they begin to have knowledge of specific learners, in a specific context, both of which impact enormously on their practice. We may share teaching strategies with them, and suggestions for classroom and behaviour management, but their own developing teacher identities will interpret these theories into practice, in ways that are appropriate for their own contexts, and will adopt, adapt, or discard them. The practical, informal and tacit knowledge that teachers acquire in the process of art teaching is seldom possible in formal teacher education. This knowledge is slowly acquired through the practice and the craft of teaching, with an *awareness* for that developing craft.

Once again, I stress the relational aspect of the learning experience. Paying attention to the holistic development of the student, and giving them the guided time and the space to reflect on their quality of being and on their own developing teacher identities, could encourage students to begin to consider their own responsibilities for personal professional development. They could begin to understand that part of their realities, as teachers, is that

every day and every encounter in a classroom offers a unique opportunity for learning something of value, something that could change a perception or a life view, and something that could contribute to a more meaningful practice. Their developing teacher identities could become aligned with the notion of lifelong learners, rather than with the idea that they are 'qualified' to teach and that therefore they know enough.

In South Africa, we have a population of students who are emerging from the years of Apartheid. Many of them are first generation matriculants and, certainly, many of them are first generation students at a tertiary institution. They have little previous informal knowledge of the ways of tertiary education. They have not spent time exploring their belief systems, or the real reasons that they want to enter the teaching profession. Many of them state simply that they have decided to teach because they love children, or because they want to make a difference. It is important to extend their knowledge bases about teaching, and the real work of teaching. It is important to give them a sense of value for the informal and tacit knowledge that they can acquire through their art teaching practice sessions. More than anything, it is important for these aspirant teachers to come to understand that they are able to acquire knowledge by being interested and committed to their own development as human beings and as art teachers.

They do not enter the tertiary institutions as empty vessels, waiting to be filled. They bring with them a wealth of indigenous knowledge, and a capacity to construct further valuable knowledge from their social experiences at the institution, and from their experiences of teaching art during their visits to schools. They need to be carefully nurtured through this process, so that they begin to respect their own abilities to construct personal and meaningful knowledge with a purposeful awareness and on an on-going basis.

A way to achieve this process of conscious personal development could be the inclusion of the module which I suggested earlier in this chapter.


## 7.9.5 Conscious in-service teacher identity should be developed through reflective practice and research

This work has given me a deep awareness of the concept of teacher identity, of my own teacher identity and of the awareness of the developing teacher identity in my students. I have become convinced that a personal, conscious awareness of a teacher identity is a vitally important aspect of being a teacher and that this awareness can transform a practice

and can contribute to a fundamental, meaningful element in the process of teaching and learning.

Teacher identity is not separate from personal identity. It is closely bound to who we are as human beings, and is influenced by the same things that influence our personal lives. It is manifested through our personalities as the values that we hold and the attitudes that we display. When a teacher brings her whole self to the act of teaching and learning, in an authentic and agentic way, it is an act of identity that is both personal and professional.

The conscious acknowledgement and development of this aspect of teachers *cannot*, and *should not*, be left to chance. When a teacher does her work, it is an act of her teacher identity in motion. This identity affects every decision, every action, and every lesson with which a teacher is involved. It is the identity of the teacher that relates to her learners within the educational process. It is the identity of the teacher that accepts or rejects the potential of professional development through the acquisition of practical, informal knowledge.

A teacher can also become a role model for her children, and can be responsible for teaching them 'worthwhile ways of being', as described by Erikson (1968:131). The way she speaks, acts and even the way she dresses can have an impact on her learners. They respond to her moods, they mimic her habits, and she creates the climate in the classroom. The way that she treats others is often a guide to her young charges.

Her attitudes, values and emotions will form the dominant atmosphere in the shared space of learning. While she is actively constructing formal knowledge with the children, much of what she does and who she is will be absorbed through informal learning by the children. Who she is will be remembered by the children long after they have left her classroom and progressed through their school careers. Who she is may sometimes be remembered throughout their lives. I have described in detail the teachers who have influenced me, and whose influence continues to be felt, more than thirty years after my initial exposure to them in a classroom.

A recommendation is that in-service teachers should be encouraged to become more aware of their teacher identities. This could be accomplished in a number of ways, from professional development seminars to staff room discussion. Teachers could be encouraged to reflect on their practice, and to document their own journeys through this process, as a form of action research. Teachers are not generally actively encouraged to participate in research. University staff and researchers use teachers to gain access to practical teacher knowledge, teacher attitudes and the like, but the teachers themselves rarely benefit from that research. Journal articles do not regularly appear on the tables in staff rooms, and if they

do, they are seldom written in a language that is accessible to mainstream staff members. Staff members are concerned with their immediate practices, with the challenges of the current curriculum and with the children in their care. Words like 'epistemology' and 'ontology' have little direct place in a teacher's thinking.

A further recommendation included under this heading is the introduction of a journal for teachers, that publishes articles written by teachers and that makes new knowledge accessible to teachers. This journal could act as a stepping stone between the practice of a teacher and her ways of being and doing, and the work of academic researchers, who are more concerned with the analysis of these things. The teacher as researcher could make a valuable contribution to the knowledge bases of practising teachers by addressing concerns that are real for teachers, instead of those concerns that are identified by seasoned educational researchers. Findings and new directions would thus also become immediately accessible to teachers, for reflection and, where appropriate, immediate application and implementation in their work.

Embedded within this recommendation is the notion that teachers, like students, embark on a journey to consciously discover their own teacher identities. The module that I suggested for students earlier in this chapter could be extensively adapted and documented as a book, encouraging teachers to explore the constructs of their professional identities, and reminding them of the meaning that is embraced in their daily work in classrooms.

When I became consciously aware of the ways in which my teacher identity was being constructed, I paid more attention to the responsibilities *of* that teacher identity, and was also more responsible *to* that teacher identity. I took my own learning more seriously. I reflected on my practice, and adapted and adjusted, or changed radically where I thought that it was necessary. I believe that if teachers become consciously aware of their teacher identities, and of the ways in which these are being constructed in the contexts in which they work, this will result in transformation in the educational process. Perhaps it will result in the changes that this country desperately needs, that will make education a meaningful process in the lives of all of those who are participants.

## 7.9.6 Personal development should form a part of both pre-service and in-service teacher education

Human identity and teacher identity are enmeshed. The teacher's personal response to her context and all that it encompasses appears to be a defining influence in the construction of

her teacher identity. For these reasons, I would strongly suggest that some form of meaningful personal development is offered to both pre-service and in-service teachers. If teachers could come to understand and acknowledge that their values influence the choices that they make on a daily basis, and that these choices will define their teacher identities, they will be more aware of the ways in which they make those choices. They will also become more aware of the consequences and implications of those choices, for both themselves and for their learners. Palmer (1998), Day et al (2006) and Rogers and Raider-Roth (2006) all write of the enmeshing of personal and teacher identity. A teacher who is able to manage her emotions appropriately and who is aware of her personal strengths and challenges, comes into the teaching and learning process with more assurance and dignity, and is able to offer a state of presence and meaningful engagement to her learners.

## 7.10 Implications for further research

- Research done about teachers, using teachers to provide data, but that does not reach teachers, will not make a difference in the lives of those teachers. When teachers become involved in the knowledge acquisition offered by the research process, then the research will be more meaningful and of deeper significance. I strongly support the notion that teachers should be encouraged to participate in the research process, on levels that are meaningful and *useful* to them. They should be encouraged to complete research in ways that are meaningful to their practice, and for their practice. I include this under this heading because it is an implication and a challenge for further research, rather than simply a recommendation.

- The notion of context as a significant influence in the construction of teacher identity needs to be further investigated, defined and refined. This awareness can contribute to the teacher's understanding of her own professional identity construction, and can be offered to the academic community to assist stakeholders to become more aware of the deep influence of context on those involved in the educational process.

- The personal identity of the art teacher, and of the teacher generally, could provide an important area of research into teacher identity construction. This could deepen the academic understanding of the essence of teacher identity, and remove from it the distanced approach that ignores that fact that teaching and learning are interactions between human beings, who all make choices that are based on their personal identities.

## 7.11 Reflection on this study

This study uses the metaphor of a spiral, and as I have travelled along the curves, I have become more and more aware that the extending arm of the spiral can also represent the growth that one undergoes through an extended and conscious process. In the beginning, I was fascinated by the notion of art teacher identity, and believed that it was an important component of the art teaching and learning process. As I travelled along the spiral of the study, and through exposure to what I was reading and thinking about, my practice benefited enormously, and my own teacher identity expanded to accommodate the new knowledge. This study has been of tremendous value to my professional growth, and to my general understanding of the notion of teaching and learning. With the growing consciousness of my own teacher identity that this study has evoked, I have become more aware of my actions and thought processes, and have learnt a new attitude and responsibility to the bigger processes that underpin the work of a teacher. I have become more tender with my students, and more nurturing of myself. I have rediscovered that meaning is the most important aspect of the work of a teacher and that, without it, her efforts are stale and lifeless.

I have also come to understand that research should create the backbone of a teacher's professional development, not only because it keeps her practice current, but also because it increases her critical thinking skills, and encourages personal knowledge growth. I have resolved that I shall encourage this process in my work with both in-service and pre-service teachers, and that it will be research for meaning, with direct application to the work that teachers do, every day, in their classrooms.

My final reflection on this study is that I have come to believe that every practising teacher should, after a period of some experience, be given the opportunity to write her own reflective topical autobiography. The consciousness that this process promotes is an important aspect of teacher development on both personal and professional levels. I believe that its contribution to teacher identity construction, and therefore to meaningful teaching and learning, is immeasurable.

## 7.11.1 Challenges and limitations

This process has embraced many challenges, and has many limitations. One of the biggest challenges that I faced was a time constraint. It was difficult to focus on this study, while I

was actively involved in my own processes in the teaching and learning situation. It was my decision not to take extended leave during this process, because the study influenced my work, and my work influenced the study. This may have been wise or foolish; while each benefitted from the other, each also detracted from the other.

Another challenge was the change, twice, of my supervisor. Each expert brought a different set of skills and knowledge to the process, and although at the time, I found this to be particularly challenging, I have come to understand how their individual contributions enriched the process and added to my own understanding of the study.

A further challenge was my personal limitation in the world of technology. Inserting the visual images into this document proved to be far from simple. Each time something changed, it seemed that every image had a mind of its own, and would shift to a different space on the page. This resulted in major frustration towards the end of this process, where time was an important consideration.

There are many limitations to this study. In a field that is expanding on a daily basis, it was difficult to know when to stop exploring literature, so that I could concentrate on my own writing. As I concentrated on each aspect, I experienced real frustration at the knowledge that the field was so much wider and deeper than I could possibly hope to probe. I have resolved to return to each of the areas that I investigated and to continue to research within them.

A further limitation that I must acknowledge is my limited exposure to the world of writing for research, which has impacted on the facility with which I have approached this study. This meant that while I was learning about the content of my study, I was also learning about the *process* of research and writing. The unusual methodology also brought its limitations and challenges. There were no other studies similar to mine, that had used the same methodology in the field of art education, which I could investigate, and from which I could learn. I was feeling my way in the research process, as well as feeling my way in a methodology that was unfamiliar even to my supervisors. There were moments when it felt as if the spiral had unravelled, and was not actually going to take me anywhere. I am still unsure in this process, but am growing more confident in the determination to make a contribution.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study is that, by its very nature, it concerns itself with the professional identity development of one art teacher. Each teacher brings her own values, her own biography, and her own knowledge to the context and the process of her

practice. Interpreted through this lens, each teacher is a unique individual, with a unique process of professional identity construction. There are common factors, for example, context, that influence that professional identity, but it is the *unique* response to context that influences the construction. It was difficult to offer principles that might be of value to all teachers, particularly because my own professional identity is so defined by the discipline in which I work.

It is my hope that the contribution of this study will be to increase the awareness of the value of a conscious sense of teacher identity, along with an awareness of the way in which the personal response to context influences its construction. If we can become more aware of the way in which our personal responses to our contexts influence and construct our teacher identities, we will be able to be more agentic in our roles and in our work. That work is to nurture the knowledge construction processes in the children who will be the holders and generators of knowledge for the future. It carries deep and lasting significance.

## 7.12 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I re-stated the aims of the investigation of this study, and provided an overview of the theoretical perspectives that were necessary for the investigation of the construction of art teacher identity over time. I gave an overview of the methodology, which embraced the process of data analysis, and findings. I included, as contribution to the findings of this research, the reflective topical autobiography, which is the final phase of this methodology, in which I described the influence of context in the construction of my own art teacher identity construction. I extended this by making suggestions about the principles of the construction of art teacher identity over time. These included that a teacher's personal response to her context is a significant influence in the construction of her professional identity as an art teacher and that relational factors within her context are also important. The personal knowledge base of the teacher, which is influenced to a large degree by her context, was also cited as an influence in the construction of art teacher identity. Finally, the personal identity of the art teacher, as she acts within her context, was given as a further contributing influence in the construction of professional identity. These findings were supported with references to my data, and were underpinned by relevant literature.

I concluded this section by suggesting that it is impossible to separate into a hierarchy the influences on the construction of art teacher identity and suggested that art teacher identity construction it is a holistic process that is influenced by personal biography, professional

experience, and the contextual integration of the two. The values of the teacher have a role to play and the professional identity construction of an art teacher is, in fact, in a fluid and unique state that is not defined by an end result.  This section was followed by a summary of the findings.

I then made recommendations which were based on the findings of this study. I recommended that pre-service teacher education give more value to the conscious development of art teacher identity construction, and suggested a module that could be included in pre-service teacher education. I included suggestions for the content of this module. For in-service teachers, I recommended that a more conscious participation in communities of practice could improve an awareness of teacher identity and could also assist in professional development. I suggested that the role of the principal could be of immense value in this process and that educational context could also be influential.

I suggested that pre-service teachers be given sufficient time to consider the value of art teaching, and to acquire the knowledge, skills and techniques that this discipline requires. I included the suggestion that pre-service teachers could benefit from an exposure to visual art processes.

Finally, I recommended that all in-service teachers could benefit through a more conscious awareness of the process of their own teacher identity construction. I suggested that professional development could be extended to include this aspect, instead of concentrating only on content knowledge. A further recommendation was that a journal could be established which could focus on research completed by in-service teachers, and for in-service teachers.

I moved on to reflect on this study and discussed the spiral as metaphor. I recorded my own professional development as a result of this study, and my understanding that research should form the backbone of every teacher's professional development.  I included my belief that every teacher should be given the opportunity to reflect on her own professional identity construction through the process of a reflective topical autobiography.

Hereafter, I traced the challenges and the limitations of this study. Personal challenges included time constraints, the change of supervisors and my limitations in the world of technology. The limitations of this study were described as an inability to include the vastness of the literature in each field that I investigated, and the fact that my own background in research prevented me from approaching this study with facility. The methodology was a specific limitation, because there were no precedents on which to draw.

A further limitation was that it was difficult to suggest principles for art teacher identity construction, because all teachers are unique, and bring their own personal biographies, value systems and contexts to their work.

Ultimately, I have been deeply enriched by the process of this research. It is a gift that I wish every in-service teacher could experience, so that her identity construction may become an aware process that influences and contributes to her work, thus making the value of her commitment to knowledge generation deeper, wider, and infinitely meaningful.

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**Teaching and Learning**

In this thing, this teaching and learning time,
we are like rivers that flow to the sea,
you and me.

Neither one of us the sea, but both rivers,
flowing our different courses,
sometimes through vast valleys, past mountains bent with time
and roaring over waterfalls and down into deep pools of contemplation;
sometimes soft through forests
where silent trees hold secrets of ages past
and promises of springs to come,
and wild birds call to make music for our way.
There are still plains when we
flow quietly, like quiet water
slow and still.

And all the while, we gather, we learn, we grow,
we harvest and collect,
we discard, discuss, assimilate, we make new, and we understand the old,
you, from your course,
I, from mine.

And we are tributaries of the larger water, flowing
into each other, and then out,
giving and sharing and growing and going back to our source,
until we finally flow, united, into the vast sea,
holding all things and small things
and great things between us, no longer yours or mine,
but ours, in our own ways.

We are like rivers, flowing into the sea.

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**Figure 7.2: The Mandala of the Spiral**

# References

*I caught the sudden look of some dead master*
*Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled*
*Both one and many; in the brown baked features*
*The eyes of a familiar compound ghost*
*Both intimate and unidentifiable.*

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**Photographs from the public domain**

Figure 6.4: Michelangelo's 'Captive': http://iconoclasticwriter.com/day-1-easy-day-2-resistance/michelangelos-captive-slave/  29 April 2010.

Figure 6.6: 'Blaze' by Bridget Riley: http://poulwebb.blogspot.com/2011/04/bridget-riley-op-art-part-1.html  26 June 2009.

Figure 6.7: 'Guernica' by Pablo Picasso, 1937: http://faculty.txwes.edu/csmeller/human-prospect/ProData09/02WW1CulMatrix/WW1PICs/Cubism/Picasso1881/Pic1937Guer355.htm  26 July 2009.

Figure 6.10: Photograph of Hector Pieterson, Sam Nzima, 1976: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hector_Pieterson 28 July 2009.

ADDENDA

1. Autobiography
2. Little Gidding, T S Eliot, 1942
3. Letter from Dept of Education
4. Letters of permission

CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

# Autobiography

## Immersion

**Sandra M Johnson**

Washing machines are a good height for elbows. I am six. I stand leaning, and watch my mother bathing my three-year-old sister. It is the evening of my first day at school.

"One day when I'm big, I'm going to be a teacher," I tell her.

Without looking at me, she scrubs a soapy foot.

"You'll have plenty of time to decide," she answers. In this moment I know that my mother is unhappy. I also know that there are some things that I know more about than my mother.

We live in East London. My father has been transferred here from Port Elizabeth, and although financially we are barely coping, he has decided that his children will attend the best state schools that are available. He is not an educated man. He left school at the end of grade ten to help support his six brothers and sisters. My mother, although an only child, shared the same fate. Her father died when she was thirteen. My grandmother, a traditional Afrikaans Calvinist, was born and raised in a large family on a farm in the Adelaide district where her father was a worker. She had no formal schooling, although she can read and write. She has no skills and has never had a job. When my grandfather died, it was taken for granted that my mother would leave school and work to support her partially-sighted mother.

My mother is not very involved in our upbringing, but we do not miss the maternal presence, because we have an older brother and sister, much older, who delight in teaching us about the world that we live in. They teach us to knit, shoot, roller skate, build the biggest sandcastles in the world, and it is to them that we look for guidance and from them that we get the firm approval of our ways of being.

In our own family, the three girls are sent to Clarendon School for Girls, and my brother, the son and heir, goes to Selborne College.

During the early years at school, I bounce between being delighted and ashamed. My delight comes from the fact that I love school, and do well. My teachers seem to like me, and are

kind and caring. They are impressed that I can already read, and that I am able to be independent. My shame comes from the fact that we are too poor to pay school fees. Our names are written on the chalk boards as children whose fees are still due, until my father can find the money, and our names can be removed. I seem to spend time hiding behind my desk, hoping that I will not be noticed and connected to the name on the board.

It is a dazzling, wayward time. Both my parents work, and my brother and older sister are a generation removed in age. Cheryl, my youngest sister, and I explore our neighbourhood like adventurers. We are cared for by a blind, grieving grandmother, whose second husband has died just before we moved to East London. She has no idea where we are during the day, and as long as we are home by the time my parents come home from work, we are safe.

In the absence of my mother, it is from my grandmother that Cheryl and I absorb our first understanding of God, and gender. Her Calvinist God is an angry, violent man who punishes every misdemeanour. His is a rule of fear and retribution. When there are Eastern Cape thunder storms, she visibly shakes, because God is angry with the world, and we are being punished.

Her attitude to men is similar. They are the angry rulers and providers, and we are at their mercies. She is terrified of my father, and when we misbehave, she threatens to tell him when he comes home from work. Although we are seldom beaten, she manages to instil in us a fear of his authority, a fear of his male power, and of his total domination. I suppose, because we are so young, and because we have no personal experience of God, we manage somehow to confuse the two, and fear them both. For years, "I'm going to tell your father," is not the threat of punishment, but the punishment itself. It only becomes clear to me, when I am much older, that both my mother and my grandmother are too afraid of my father to ever tell him anything that we do. This could set off his mighty anger.

We all remember the consequences of "telling my father" when he comes home from work. Our domestic worker is a tall Xhosa woman called Lillian. These are the early sixties, and no one knows the surnames of their workers. As long as they are in possession of a legal *dompas* any further details are not important. When Lillian uses red polish on the front

veranda, she sings hymns in a strong, beautiful voice and a strange language. I am only seven, but I remember the way the sun falls on her shining dark arms, and the power of her voice in the warm suburban afternoon. Our neighbour complains to my mother that the hymns are disturbing his afternoon rest. When my father returns from work my mother reports this complaint to him.

It is, unfortunately, a day when he comes home late, and he does not want to be bothered with complaints. He slowly builds up a rage during the evening, and by the time he should go to bed, he is ready to explode. My mother simply asks him what they should do about the neighbour, and within seconds, he descends into madness. He finds a large transistor radio, turns the volume up as loud as it can go, and uses wire to tie it to the fence between the two properties. Sometime during this process, he cuts his foot severely on the fencing wire, but he is so consumed by anger that he does not notice. He storms inside, and telephones the neighbour, spitting insults and shouting into the receiver. Cheryl and I are woken by the noise, and come in terror from our room to see what was happening. We are confronted by a raging father, blood all over the floor, and a mother standing silently weeping in a corner of the room. I fetch a cloth, and clean the carpet, and then clean my father's foot with the same cloth. Years later, we manage to make the incident seem funny. But as small children it is terrifying, and reinforces the fact that our behaviour should never be reported to our father.

Despite this fear, we manage to explore our environment with a sense of careless awe. What God and the Father do not see, they will not punish. We just have to be home before they are.

We discover storm-water drains and travel through entire neighbourhoods without ever coming to the surface. We find all of the children who live within five blocks, and I herd them into our dining room, and force them to play school with me. We are wild and wonderful, climbing trees and making tree houses, digging swimming pools in the middle of our back lawn, raising hundreds of white mice illegally in our garage, stealing leaves from mulberry trees to raise generations of silkworms, and trailing through the vast halls of the nearby museum until we know by heart the contents of every dusty case.

And we continue with the business of growing. At school, my teacher asks the class which religious de-nom-in-ation we belong to, and I hide under my desk, because I have no idea what she is talking about. When she calls my name, I stammer "English," on the verge of panic, and she simply makes a mark in her big book, and moves on. I am relieved, but puzzled. What does de-nom-in-ation mean? Is it language? But she knows that I speak English. That night, I ask my mother to explain it to me.

"It's about what church you go to," she answers.

"But we've never been to church."

"But if we did, it would be Anglican. Your Daddy and I got married in an Anglican church."

"I didn't know what to say," I tell her. "I said 'English'."

"Well, that was also right," says my mother. "It's sometimes called the Church of England."

"How many churches are there?" I ask, fascinated by the aspect of religion.

"Lots." offers my mother. "There are Methodists, and Presbyterians, and Catholics, and Lutherans, and lots of others, too."

"Why?" I ask. "What for?"

"For different things." my mother answers.


This answer does not satisfy me at all, and I begin to take a new interest in churches. Every time we pass one, I peer through the back window of the car, and ask: "What kind of church is that?"

My brother, Douglas, ten years older than I, has joined St Albans church, and is a server. "What do you serve?" I ask him.

"Nothing," he answers. "They just call me that because I carry a cross. I am serving the Lord."

"What cross?" I ask, determined to get to the bottom of this church thing. "And why do you have to carry it? And how are you serving the Lord by carrying a cross?"

Douglas speaks to my parents, and the following Sunday, Cheryl and I are told to put on dresses, because we are going to Sunday school.

"There IS no school on a Sunday!" I protest.

"It's at my church," says Douglas. That is enough for me. I want to see my big brother serving the Lord.

We are dropped at the door, and told to go inside. Douglas says that he has to go through a different door. Cheryl and I stand clutching hands, and watch as my parents disappear in their car, and Douglas disappears into the church. Children are running through the doorway in front of us, and tentatively, we walk inside.

A pretty lady comes towards us and bends down to speak to us.

"Are you new children?" she asks, and smiles kindly. I decide that she must be one of the angels who lives in the church.

"Yes, we've come to see my brother serve."

"No," she answers gently, "He will be in the big church. He doesn't serve here."

Suddenly, I am gripped with panic. We are in the wrong place.

"Come," she says, taking each of us by the hand. "We'll find the right place for you."

She asks us our ages, and then delivers Cheryl to a group of children sitting in a circle on a mat.

"This is for pre-schoolers," she tells us.

"My Mom said that she has to stay with me all of the time," I lie, feeling betrayed by this angel. "I have to look after her."

"It's all right," she smiles. "We will just be over there."

Cheryl settles happily on the mat, and Miss Hazlehurst, (she tells us this is her name) takes me over to her own group, who greet her enthusiastically. I am shy, and out of place. I am aware of being too tall for these children. I am always too tall for every class. The other children stare at me with open curiosity. It lasts for seconds only. Then I am simply one of the group, and we settle to hear the story.

It is about somebody called Jesus, who got nailed to a cross. I am horrified. We are told that he died for us. I am even more horrified. I don't want him to die for us. Then she tells us that he came alive again, and that makes it all right. I really do not want to get into trouble with my father because I have made somebody die for us. My brother even has to carry his cross every Sunday.  I did not know that I had any sins, but I decide that from now on, I am going to be perfect, so that no one else will ever have to die for us. Then we have to make a drawing of Jesus on a cross, and Miss Hazlehurst holds mine up for the other children to see. I fold it up to take home to show my older sister. Maybe I can be an artist like her after all.

Afterwards Cheryl and I have to wait for Douglas to come out of big church, and we sit on the pavement, and show each other our pictures. Cheryl says she had heard a story about all of the animals in the world going for a ride in a big boat, but that it was called something else, and God made it rain so that the whole world was full of water, and everybody drowned except the people on the boat. I think that they tell very sad stories in the Sunday school of the Church of England, and am a little nervous of going back to my other school on Monday. I do not want everyone in my class to know that my family has made someone die for us.

For the next couple of weeks, I draw pictures of Jesus on the cross for everyone I know. I try very hard to be good. Even perfect. One day, I am called in to the principal's office. She tells me that my parents have not paid my school fees. I do not know what school fees are. She tells me that they had to pay them, or I would be in trouble. She writes my name on the board in the classroom.

I am terrified. I am not perfect any more. I have made trouble. Somebody else is going to die for my sins. That night, I cry as if my heart will break, and beg my father to pay my school

fees. I am really afraid that he will find out that we have already made someone die for us, and that it is about to happen again. He is furious, and that makes me even more afraid. He yells about the principal having No Right, and said that he will see her the next day. He slams doors and shouts at all of us. We sit in a line on the couch, and watch his rage.

The following day, the principal, Mrs Smith, comes to our classroom, and calls our teacher into the passage. I am so afraid that I begin to shake. But when the teacher comes back into the room, she smiles directly at me, and simply continues with the lesson. After break time, when we return to class, she had erased my name from the board. It is the most wonderful release for a six-year-old. I have not killed anyone this time. In fact, it seems that I can even be bad, and nobody will die. I return to my old ways with delight. Being perfect is not for me. And God and the Father are certainly more powerful than the women in my life.

Although I am afraid of my father, I also adore him. He is a strange mix of chauvinist, tyrant and benevolent dictator. He places no value on his three girl children, and I long in vain to be acknowledged by him. He and Douglas have collected a group of friends who go rock angling before dawn on Sunday mornings, and I beg to be allowed to go with them. I love the feeling of being part of this exciting expedition, when we move in whispers through the sleeping house, creep out to the car, and drive for miles to a place called *Bulugha*. It is lovely to doze in the car on the way there, and to hear the men talking together in the dark and icy coldness of early morning. I feel secure in my father's arms, as he carries me from the car to the rocks, and teaches me how to bait a hook, cast a rod, and scale and gut a fish once we have landed it.

They build small fires on the sand, and boil kettles and make coffee with condensed milk, and nothing tastes better. Mostly the men talk about stuff that I cannot understand, but I do not care. I remember only the gentle, warm tones of their voices, the sight of the faces close together and coloured by firelight in the darkness, and the sudden appearance of the sun on the horizon, pale yellow and gentle, with clouds that looked like wisps of christening lace for the new day.

We drive home slowly in the early morning light, and once we are there, I become invisible again, but I hold on to the knowledge that the following Sunday, we will be back on the rocks, and I will be somebody.

## 1964

I am somebody again, although very briefly, when I am awarded a prize in the Sanlam art competition. But this is my brother's matriculation year, and my older sister is not happy at school, and the family, although Cheryl and I remain blissfully unaware, are struggling to survive financially. Our world does not really care about one small certificate.

## 1966

My father finally decides to start his own business, and so the following years are even more lean. My mother continues her job for a while, and then resigns to become my father's totally unskilled secretary. My father manifests his stress by becoming more of a tyrant, and the evenings in our home are frequently punctuated by violent outbursts of temper, which leave my mother broken and cowering, and Cheryl and me scuttling to our room, where we hold on to each other and pray to our new-found friend Jesus to make the yelling stop.

We move on through primary school, coping academically, but behaving badly. My school reports constantly comment that I should concentrate more, and I seem to spend many break times outside the principal's office. Although our success at school is judged by a system of examinations twice a year, both Cheryl and I manage to survive on good luck and memorising sections the night before an examination.

I had always been inspired by art, a subject in which I achieved with minimum effort. My older sister, Anne, has a great and acknowledged talent, and because I want to be like her, I draw and make at every opportunity. She encourages my attempts, and we often sit and draw together. I think she is beautiful and clever and funny. At school, during this time, we have a disinterested part-time teacher who is vastly overweight and does not move from her

table once during any given art lesson. It makes no difference to her whether we make beautiful pictures or whether we simply sit and talk, and so mostly we sit and talk. There is a girl in the class who draws horses beautifully, and we ask her to draw us pictures, and then copy them carefully while the teacher sits and glares at us from her table. She does not look at our pictures, and so we are free to practice our horse-copying skills until we become bored, and the class degenerates into noise. The teacher yells until we are quiet again. We are all completely disinterested.

During these years, our English teacher makes a tremendous impression on me. She reads us stories, even though we are old enough to read ourselves, and exposes us to a wonderful world of good writing. Although she has fiery red hair, she is warm and kind, and she has a beautiful speaking voice. In Margaret Mitchell's English classes, we are encouraged to read, to hear stories, and to write our own. I am delighted when I find myself in her class for the grade seven year. She becomes a strong role model for me, and after I have moved on to the high school, I visit her in her small flat in East London. She sustains an interest in her pupils, and continues to offer guidance and support long after we leave her class room.

My mother is not a large part of our lives. She is trying to cope with her own, and has no time for homework assistance, attending PTA meetings, or offering any kind of academic support. Although I will always be grateful to my father for choosing our schools with such determined arrogance, it is, in many ways, very difficult for us. Socially, we do not belong with the kinds of children who are our peers. They come from wealthy homes, and have mothers who are always available to them. The girls are pretty and smart and clever, and live in good areas in East London. Cheryl and I have holes in our shoes, do our own hair in the mornings, and lack the polish that the other children have. We are aware of this, and never really feel as if we are good enough for anything.

And so the interest and support from our English teacher is especially important to me. The fact that my compositions begin to achieve high marks, and are generally read out in class encourages me to write even more, and by the time I leave the primary school, I have established for myself that I am good at English, and that I am not destined to be always at the bottom of every class. It is interesting that this love of language has developed over the years, nurtured first in the primary school, and has become an important and enduring part of

my life. Even now, when other people spend recreational time watching television, I sit in front of my computer and write.

When I am in grade six, we are given a handout to take home. It is notification of a school tour to the Kruger National Park, during the mid-year school holidays. I know that there is no possibility of my parents being able to afford to send me on the tour, and so the notice languishes in my suitcase, and is never given to my mother. One Sunday evening, she finds it lying on the floor in my bedroom. She shows it to my father, and he decides that I will go. I have no idea where they find the money, but it is a week that I shall never forget. I am ten at the time, and now, more than forty years later, I still remember the vegetation in the Park, our first sighting of a lion, the swaying elegance of the giraffe. I remember the fun, the sense of excitement at the journey, and the fact that I was loaned the family box camera to record special moments.

The other girls all have instamatics, and I am a little ashamed of the bulky camera that I carry, and the length of time that it takes me to focus, but my delight soon overrides my embarrassment. We are instructed to keep a diary, and I record every moment of experience with the keen eye of one who is seeing for the first time. When we return, I am awarded the first prize for my diary, even although my photographs are taken with the box brownie camera, and are black and white. I begin to understand that one does not have to be limited by limitations.

When Douglas matriculates, there is no hope of the family affording to send him to Onderstepoort, where he has dreamed of studying to become a veterinarian. He enters the business world in preparation for joining my father's firm. Anne drops out of school, and goes to work at a local fashion store as a window dresser.

My father refuses to allow her to continue seeing her long-term boyfriend, and Douglas introduces her to one of his friends from the East London rowing club. He is skilled at this sport, and often represents the Border region in championships. Cheryl and I worship Douglas. Because he is so much older than we are, he really is our 'big' brother, and he looks after us as if we are his own children. He takes us hiking, teaches us to shoot with

pellet guns, and helps us with our homework. He takes me to school on the back of his motor bike, and often, over weekends, he and his girl friends take us with them when they go to the beach, or to some of the lovely picnic spots in the East London area. In the summer, Douglas takes me surfing with him in the early mornings before school, and I almost learn to stand on the board. But then my courage fails me, and I flop back on to my tummy, and ride the waves in to the shore.

## 1968

Within a year, Anne has to break the news to the family that she is pregnant, and she and Michael are quickly married at a small ceremony in the local Anglican Church. She moves to live in the Orange Free State, where Michael is contracted to work on the construction of the Hendrik Verwoerd Dam. Two years later Douglas marries his girlfriend, and moves to the suburb of Nahoon in East London. This means that Cheryl and I are left even more to our own devices at home, while my grandmother becomes quieter and older and more withdrawn from the anger that seemed to be the dominant emotion in our house.

## 1970

The transition to high school and grade eight is very significant for me. The principal, Mary Ogilvie, rules over her girls with a distinctly Victorian hand. She insists on proper behaviour, and we are dressed in gym slips that are four inches from the floor (when kneeling), garters under our knee-high socks, and girdles that have to hang to the correct length down our backs. Once we leave the school grounds, we are to wear our school hats or face detention. We are taught that young ladies behave appropriately at all times, and in the environment of a school for girls only, we are fine-tuned to be the women that Miss Ogilvie believes society demands.

Although the academic stream of English Literature, Latin and the Arts is encouraged, subjects like Home Economics, Typing and Needlework are also taught. Those girls who are destined to be secretaries, and then wives and mothers at an early age are gently encouraged to pursue these challenges. In grade eight, we all have to take needlework, and we are taught how to hem, do blanket stitch, running stitches, and how to iron seams. We also have to knit garments from patterns.

12

Those of us who are encouraged to take Latin are taught by rote, so that we wander around the quadrangles chanting '*porto, portas, portat, portamus, portatis, portant.*' We dissect frogs and look at their beating hearts as we cut them from their bodies. We learn to dance like the *Voortrekkers.* We are given what is considered to be a well-rounded education for young ladies. We are not encouraged to think for ourselves.

Initially, I feel out-of-place in this new high school environment. The Parent Teachers Association is an active body, and my parents still do not attend meetings. I feel excluded by my impoverished home environment, and by my parents' lack of involvement. The 'rich' kids have new uniforms that fit properly, while mine is bought from the second-hand clothing exchange. I am tall and plank-like. Nothing fits properly. I have never heard classical music, and our family holidays are not in Europe, but in wood and iron shacks on the Transkei coast. I feel like an outsider, pretending to fit into a place where I do not believe I can belong. I miss being on the same campus as Cheryl, and desperately miss the caring eye that Margaret Mitchell had cast over all of us. To make it even worse, the art teacher is the same one who taught Anne, my older sister, who has an exceptional creative talent. I am constantly compared to her, and found lacking.

<span style="color:red">1971</span>

During my second year in high school, the grade nine year, my father has an affair, and the family is shattered forever.

I come home from school one day to find my mother sitting at the dining room table, weeping. When she tells me that my father is having an affair, I can hardly believe it. At fourteen, it is always difficult to think of one's parents as sexual beings, and the notion that my father is courting another woman, is *bedding* another woman, is hard to grasp. My mother has no one to whom she can talk, apart from me, and so I am spared no detail. I learn that this is just the latest in a long line of similar affairs, and that our family has left an affluent lifestyle in Southern Rhodesia, where I was born, because of similar misdemeanours. The night-fights become worse, more accusatory, more ugly. Even more violent, as my father seeks solace in alcohol. Cheryl and I become shadows in a war-zone.

13

During the following years, the pastoral role played by some of my teachers is the sole factor that encourages my survival. I am even more displaced from my peers because of this secret knowledge of my father's affair, and my unhappiness shows. A new art teacher at the school encourages me to talk to her, and her kindness and support is of great value.

When the time comes for me to make subject choices for my final three years at high school, I am totally demoralised by what life is doing to itself, and I have lost interest academically. I want the easiest options, the ones that do not need diligent application. In our angry environment, there is no quiet space for homework or studying, and nights are frequently spent listening to my mother, or waiting in our bedrooms for the fighting to stop so that we can have supper. Often, we simply crawl into bed without food, and hope that the voices would soften so that we can sleep.

I write 'typing' and 'home economics' in the blank spaces on my form, and hand it in. Although I have never given up my dream of being a teacher, I am hopelessly adolescent, and am prepared to give in, learn secretarial and home-making skills, and survive.

Betty Chew, the teacher who terrifies us all, the strict, fearsome spinster, confronts me in the passage. She is shorter than I am, and squint. She teaches hockey, and controls the stock room. She takes no nonsense from the girls.

"This form…" she huffs, shoving my subject choice at me.

"Yes, Miss Chew?" I ask.

"It's ridiculous!"

"I'm sorry, I don't understand…"

"You will *not* be doing these subjects!" she hisses, and manages to terrify me into submission. "Stop being ridiculous. You will be taking English Literature and Art!" She thrusts

a blank form at me, and stands over me while I fill it in. And then, without another word, she snatches the form from me, turns and strides away.

That action, made by a teacher who, I realise years later, really cared about the girls in her school, influences the rest of my life. It is a significant moment that is to alter the course of my learning, and keep open a possibility that years later will become a reality. I am not going to be a secretary and a homemaker because I have no options. I am going to be what I want to be, because somebody believes in me enough to bully me into being brave. Betty Chew is the first person to teach me that one does not have to accept what appears to be the reality. She gives me the gift of understanding that our realities are very often what we choose them to be.

Betty Chew also discovers my debating skill, and encourages me to join the debating society. My self esteem begins to improve as I realise that I can represent my school against other schools in East London, and our team will frequently win!

Joy Huggett, our music teacher, tests our voices, and encouraged me to join her choir. We practise at break times, and become known in East London for the complicated harmonies that we proudly sing at school functions. We even perform with the East London Philharmonic Orchestra in the Orient Theatre once or twice. We sing Handel's Messiah with diligence and purpose.

The principal introduces a time when we are taken to the library, and exposed to Beethoven, Mozart and Bach. This music is played at all times in the library, and I begin to spend time there, trying to understand, trying to listen, and finally, wanting to hear more. I begin to take vinyl Classical records out of the library, and make my own reel-to-reel recordings, so that I can listen to the music when the rest of the family goes to bed. My father does not support this new discovery. Once, he comes home from work and finds me lying on my back on the floor listening to Mozart's twentieth piano concerto, and before he has put down his brief case, he asks in a loud and irritable voice: "Do we have to listen to that shit now?" I never play music again when he is home.

I join the Junior Red Cross Society, and within a short time, with the assistance of teachers from school, we are organising fund-raising events and taking underprivileged children on outings in and around East London.

During these years, I am sustained and developed, not by academic achievement, but by the support and encouragement that I receive for my other skills. I begin to feel that I belong in this world, that there is a place for me, and that I have something of value to contribute. As I become more involved in the extra-curricular activities at school, the meaning that I am gaining offers strength to survive the onslaught of the domestic battleground.  Cheryl and I are of no significance in our home, as night after night the anger boils and erupts, but at high school, I find a place to belong.

It is also at high school that I first hear of the quality of the city of Cape Town. Our lives have been confined to trips to the Transkei coast, and weekends in Port Elizabeth, to visit family. We have never had a 'real' holiday, where strange and exotic places are explored. Cape Town is mentioned frequently at high school. It is one of the places that my peers go for school holidays. It has huge theatres and symphony concerts, where one can hear classical music played on the stage. The Shakespearean plays that we study in our English language classes are actually produced there. It has a huge and world-famous mountain. The name of the city holds magic for me. It is a place I long to visit, but it is out of the question.

The financial situation in the family begins to improve after my father starts his own business, and he is making a success of it with hard work. When the house that we are renting is sold, he buys a property in Beacon Bay, a new suburb that is some way out of East London, and plans are developed to build a house.

By this time, Anne has produced a second son, and she and her family return to live in East London. Her husband has joined my father's firm, which is doing well enough for my mother to stop working. This does not entirely suit my mother, because she has used her presence

to monitor my father's moves during the day. Although he denies it, he continued with the affair, and it continues to influence all of our lives on a daily basis.

Anne and Michael invite us to stay with them while the new house is being built. This means that my parents' war has to go underground, and although Cheryl and I are released from much of the fighting, there are times when we have no option but to become a part of it. There are also times when we are able to see the ridiculous, and it is these times that bond Cheryl and me in an enduring way.

And so the weeks pass, and our new house begins slowly to take shape. Sometimes in the early evenings when my father comes home from work, he loads us all into the car, and we drive out to Beacon Bay to see the progress. When the walls are still wet with cement, Cheryl and I push coins into the spaces between the bricks, making wishes that it will be a house filled with love and laughter. We wander through the roofless shell, and try to imagine what the house will be like once it is painted and surrounded by a lawn and a garden.

One evening, my father comes home and goes straight out to their bedroom, a room in the garden of Anne and Michael's home, where he has taken to keeping a whiskey bottle. A while later, he calls for my mother. She joins him with resignation. Cheryl and I think that we will probably not see her for the rest of the night, and so we are surprised some time later when she comes back into the house, and tells us that our father wants to take us for a drive.

"Where to?" we ask.

"Probably to see the house." she tells us, but her face speaks a different story. Full of apprehension, we join my father at his motor car. As soon as we pull away from the house, he begins yelling at my mother, telling her that she is ungrateful for all that he has given her, and that he works hard every day for her, for us, and what thanks does he ever get? It is a story that Cheryl and I know by heart, and we sink into the back seat, watching the lights of East London flash past the windows. When we can catch sight of each other in the dark, we roll our eyes back in our heads, and make silent yawning actions with our mouths. Cheryl is beginning to be rebellious as she nears thirteen, and will sometimes raise her thin middle

finger behind my parents' backs in the car. Then we collapse in silent mirth, and feel united in our plight. Somehow, it is always better when we are together.

That night, when we arrive at the house, it is immediately clear that extensive work has happened during the previous days. Huge mounds of earth line the perimeter of the plot. My father furiously drives his new Mercedes Benz up onto one of the mounds, so that the whole shell of the house is illuminated in the headlights. He flies out of the car, and starts ranting in the light, as if a spotlight has been set up for his drunken performance.

"Oh, God, how dramatic," I say, brave and adolescent, now that he is out of the car.

"Shhh, don't let him hear you," whispers my mother.

"He never hears anything but the sound of his own voice," I fling back.

"Look what I'm doing for you!" bellows my father. "This brick and mortar has all been paid for with my own hands!"

Cheryl giggles.

"Every brick has been paid for with sweat!" he continues.

"Now the bricks will smell…!" Cheryl provides the in-car entertainment.

"And what do I get for it?" my father throws his hands wide, picking up the light on his upturned palms. "*What* do I get for it?"

And then he disappears. One moment he is there, and the next, the lights of his car pick up the outline of the house, and nothing more. We sit in total silence, not yet being able to process his disappearance. My mother is the first one to understand what has happened.

"Oh my God, he fell in a hole!" she says. "They've been digging the holes for the sewerage pipes!"

She opens her door.

"Don't you dare get out of that car!" My father's voice is disconnected but strong.

She closes the door. Cheryl and I begin to laugh. We give way to uncontrolled giggles.

"Stop it! Don't let him see you!" begs my mother, but we can hear the laughter in her voice too.

My father pulls himself up out of the hole. He flings himself into the car, and furiously reverses away from the mound of earth. He drives all the way back to Anne's house without saying a word. Cheryl and I hold on to each other in the back seat, and tears of laughter roll down our cheeks, but we make not a sound. Every now and again, my mother looks over her shoulder at us, and we can see that she too, is having a problem keeping a straight face.

The incident is never mentioned in public, but for years, when my mother, Cheryl and I want to cheer ourselves up, then one of us says, "Do you remember the night when Dad fell in the sewerage pit?" It is a moment of shared laughter that keeps us connected for many years.

When the house is finished, we move in with a sense of renewal and excitement. Staying with Anne and Michael has been a strain for all of us, and we are grateful to be away from them, and delighted to be in our own environment again. For the first few weeks, the newness keeps us close, and in the evenings, my father busies himself with putting up shelves, hanging light fittings and hooks, and setting up the kitchen. He drinks to celebrate his success rather than to escape from his failure. My mother takes out her sewing machine and makes new curtains for all of the rooms, and Cheryl and I help where we can.

Anne has been diagnosed with macular degeneration, and as her eyesight fails progressively, she comes to lean heavily on my mother for support with her two young boys. We spend most afternoons at Anne's home, where she and my mother discuss their husbands with tight, irritable lips, and Cheryl and I amuse the growing boys.

If before we lost our mother to her struggle to survive, we now lose her to her absorption into Anne's life. Homework is not possible until we return home in the early evenings. If there is anger and argument between my parents, it is very often not done at all. Neither Cheryl nor I function well on an academic level, and Cheryl has to repeat grade nine during these years. I rely on late-night studying and a good short term memory. My parents still show no interest in

PTA meetings, and when we have functions at school in the evenings, Cheryl and I are always the last to be fetched, because our needs for lifts interrupt some or other argument.

## 1973

Cheryl and I catch a bus to school in the mornings, and we are fetched by my mother in the afternoons. During examinations, my father collects us at lunch times, and takes us home. One day I delay my father by having a meeting with the headmistress about the school magazine. I am involved in the process and love the work that I am doing. He is an impatient, irrational man, and he strides into Miss Ogilvie's office, swears at her for delaying him, and strides out again, dragging me behind him. I am shocked and angry with him. School is important to me. It is the only place that I feel safe. In one moment, he has destroyed that. He has insulted a woman whose life is based on appropriate behaviour and good manners. He has exposed all that we are, and all that we are not.

When we arrive home, I tell my mother that I will no longer be going to school, and lock myself in my bedroom. Some hours later, she tells me that Miss Ogilvie has telephoned, and that I have an appointment with her at 08:00 the next morning.

We walk around the hockey field, and she tells me that I should try to understand and forgive my father. She tells me that people react to stress in different ways, and that he is basically a good and caring man.

She speaks about love, and compassion.

For two weeks I grapple with the incident, trying to understand how to forgive when I am still so humiliated, and still so angry. Although I am afraid of my father, I keep my distance, speaking only when spoken to, and I avoid being in the same room with him. At the end of this period, he finds his own answer. One Saturday morning, he comes into my bedroom.

"Get dressed," he orders curtly. "I want you at the car in fifteen minutes."

My heart thumps in my chest, but before I can respond, he has walked out of the room. I dress in frantic fear, pretending to be brave, but with a pounding heart and shaking hands. I clean my teeth, and pull a brush through my hair. By the time I reach the car, my father is waiting in the driver's seat. There is no sign of my mother or Cheryl.

"Get in," he tells me, starting the engine.

We drive into East London in silence. Down Oxford street. Left at the bottom, and into an industrial area. He stops at a service station, and turns off the engine. He climbs out of the car, and leaves me sitting there, alone and unsure of what to expect. After a while he returns with a man whom I have never seen before.

"This is my kid," he tells him, indicating to me.

"Hello," I nod my head. It is the first word I have said this morning.

"Hi," he answers, and gestures with his hand. "It's around here."

"Get out." My father instructs me. "Come with us."

I climb out of the car, and follow the two men into the sudden darkness of a workshop. As my eyes adjust, I see that they are standing next to a small motor bike.

"That's yours," says my father casually, looking at me. "You won't have to hold me up any more, when you leave school."

I stare at him in disbelief, overcome with feelings of guilt and shock. I have totally ignored him for days, whilst he was in the process of buying me a motor bike.

"Thanks Dad," I say awkwardly.

"Have you got a licence?" asks the jovial mechanic.

"No," I mumble. "I've never even thought about having a motor bike before…"

"Well, they're easy to drive. Come, I'll show you."

For the next hour, I am taught how to kick start, how to rev the engine by using my wrists on the handlebars, and how to distribute my weight when I turned a corner. I am shown where to put in petrol, and where the lights are. I practise getting on to the bike, throwing one leg over the saddle, and how to get off of it, so that it stands on its own foot, and does not fall over.

"Get your licence on Monday afternoon, and then you can come and pick it up," the mechanic tells me.

"Thanks," I say.

And so my father has won our war. Or rather, he has once again bought his victory. How could I stay angry with him? How could I continue to refuse to talk to him, when he has presented me with such a gift? For him, conflicts in the family are never discussed. There is no point to resolving issues, or in people trying to understand each other. He simply buys his way out of difficult times. My mother gets jewellery, and we get gifts.

My final years in East London are times that I come to call my years of the night. We are all so caught up in our own struggle for survival that Steve Biko dies and none of us notice. It is happening right under our noses. Donald Woods is simply the editor of the newspaper that lies on the table in our home every day, and my father says that he is a fool, so we do not pay much attention. We are not allowed to discuss politics at school, and my mother is an ardent admirer of Verwoerd. We are taught that anyone who goes against the government is wrong, and we think no further. We are simply aware that if we go into town, we should stick to the Oxford Street side, and avoid Buffalo Street, where the Xhosa people do their shopping.

We have a Xhosa woman who runs our home. Her name is Beauty Mpini, and she has worked for us for years. It is Beauty who sees us off to school in the mornings, with coffee

and cleaned shoes, and Beauty who makes us more mugs of coffee when we come home in the late afternoons. She knows more about the internal mechanisms of Bird Street than anyone else, because even when she is in a room, because she was black, she is invisible.

I am grateful for the independence that the motor bike affords me. After school in the afternoons, while my mother visits Anne and her boys, I can come straight home.  I sometimes sit on the cupboard in the kitchen, and chat to Beauty while she prepares vegetables. She tells me about her two little girls, Thelma and Monica, who are being raised by her mother in the Mdantsane township, just outside of East London. She tells me about her life in the township, and what she does with her precious spare time. She has a husband who sometimes visits her at night, and I remember my father telling her "Beauty, I want no trouble. Tell him to bring his *dompas*." I have no idea what that means.

Sometimes at night I sit with Beauty in her tiny, airless room. She and I sit on her high bed which is balanced on bricks so that she is protected from the *Tikolosi.*

"What is it?" I ask.

"It's a bad spirit."

"Yes, but what?"

"Just a bad spirit. It is what we believe."

Although I try hard to befriend her, I realise that Beauty is not comfortable with my familiarity. When I ask her to stop calling me "Miss Sand", she refuses, telling me that it was the right way.

"Well then," I tease her, "from now on, I am going to call you Mrs Mpini!"

On Thursday afternoons, her free afternoon, Beauty's little girls come and visit. They dress especially for the occasion, and they are brought inside for a brief visit when we arrive home.

"Hello *Gogo*", they say to my mother, and dutifully give her a hug and a kiss. My mother always makes a point of having sweets or a small toy for each of the children.

My parents describe Beauty as being 'a part of the family". She is always on duty on Christmas day, and so the children have to travel all the way from *Mdantsane*, the township on the outskirts of East

London, to see their mother. They marvel at our boundless food and the lights on the Christmas tree. They retrieve their gifts from the pile on the floor, and then they play quietly on the back lawn while their mother serves us until late in the afternoon.

My mother prides herself on the way she treats our maid, because when one listens to the neighbours, and their complaints about their maids, we are very lucky.

When I think back on those days, it is with deep shame at my mindlessness. Beauty is not treated as a member of our family. We all use her shamelessly. While she is cooking and cleaning and washing and ironing and polishing shoes and making beds for us, her own children are growing up without their mother. She cooks countless meals that dry out in the oven while my parents hurl insults at each other, and waits nervously in the kitchen to serve them, until someone finally tells her, usually very late at night, that she can go to bed. Then she is expected to be up and dressed and ready to bring tea to my parents to wake them the next morning.

Through all these years, she remains loyal and gentle, and is devoted to my mother. After I leave home, she becomes much more 'a part of the family', but only because my mother needs the company. They sit together and watch television at night while they wait for my father to come home, drinking tea and eating chocolates. But the moment that his car is heard in the driveway, Beauty is expected to rush out to her room, so that there is no evidence that she has spent the evening with my mother.

I often wonder what Beauty's story of those years would have been, if she had written it down for us to read.

The drinking, constant arguments and sometimes violent outbursts that are the norm in our home mean that Cheryl and I never develop the easy habit of bringing friends home. I worry about my parents all of the time. My mother's state of mind is a constant source of deep concern. She behaves erratically, and her desperate need to track my father's movements means that she unwisely telephones his business associates to check his appointments. If he lies to her about his whereabouts, she frantically seeks people who will act as detectives for her, and begs them to drive

past his mistress' home to see whether his car is parked nearby. She is consumed by a need to know where he is at every moment of the day, and nothing else matters to her.

One night when he is supposed to be working, he does not come home. I go to bed very late, homework once again undone, because I have been sitting with my mother, listening to her complain about my father. At about 02:00, she comes into my room, and wakes me.

"Bring Cheryl, and come with me," she says.

"Where are we going?" I ask.

"To find your father."

"Why do we have to come?"

"Because I am not going by myself, and I'm not leaving you here."

Without bothering to change, Cheryl and I tumble into my mother's car, and Cheryl immediately goes back to sleep on the back seat. My mother drives through the icy black streets of East London, to an address that we have passed so many times before. My father's car is parked around a corner.

"Wait here," she hisses, slamming her door. She disappears into the garden of the house, which suddenly lights up. Loud voices follow, and within moments, my mother is back in the car.

"The bastard!" she swears, as she slams the car into gear. "He's not doing this to me again!"

At home, we have barely arrived when my father's car swings into the driveway, too fast, and screeches to a halt. Cheryl and I are completely forgotten, and take ourselves back to bed, while my parents rage through the night. The following day, my mother's car will not start, and she cannot take Cheryl to school. My father has removed the rotor to punish her for her actions of the night before.

During these years, I shamelessly use the boyfriends that I have. My parents do not impose curfews on us, and so, as we grow older, I insist on dates where Cheryl can come along, so that we can both escape the tension at home. Even during the week, we sit in the *Papagello* coffee bar, drinking cappuccino, until it is late enough to go home to a quiet house. David

Rawlson[*], who is a steady beau through grades eleven and twelve, talks about his plan to marry me as soon as I had finish school, and I am horrified. But I do not tell him, because I need him too much in my life at that time.

There are suddenly good times. My father shares his love of music with me, because I am the only one who will listen. My mother is not interested, and Cheryl calls it 'old stuff', but I want to please him. I sit with him and try to be interested. His is the music of the forties and the fifties, and he plays it when there are temporary breaks in the fighting, over weekends and in the early evenings. I learn to love Nat King Cole, Vera Lana, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Junior. I learn to sing along with Judy Garland and Harry Belafonte. Whenever we travel any distance in the car, we sing from musicals like Oklahoma, or Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. My father loves music, and he loves singing and dancing. When I was little, he taught me to dance by putting my feet on top of his own, and counting the beats as we swung around the room. I could waltz by the time I was six.

The seventies are a time of the late Folk music era, when Cat Stevens is singing about morning breaking and Moon Shadows, and Simon and Garfunkel are canticling Scarborough Fair. I cling to meaning in this music, learn the words by heart, teach myself to play them on a guitar, and sing the songs every time I am alone, drawing strength from their meaning.

1974

Finally, my matriculation year dawns, and with it, the possibility of escape. When the time comes to decide on tertiary institutions, there is no real choice. It will be Cape Town, the city of magic. The city where nobody knows my family, my father, or my sad, desperate mother. I want to belong somewhere, and I believed that Cape Town will give me that possibility. I choose the Mowbray Teacher's College, the furthest site possible from East London. It means that I will never be expected to go home for weekends. Because it is a College, and because I am white, I am assured of a bursary. I know that there would be no money forthcoming for university fees. I broach the topic with my father.

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[*] Name has been changed to ensure anonymity

"I'd like to go to Cape Town next year, to study to become a teacher."

My mother beams. "We used to go to Cape Town when I was a little girl." she says. "I always loved being there. My father used to take me to…"

"That's ridiculous," interrupts my father. "Why do you want to go and study something after school?"

"Because I really want to be a teacher," I tell him. "I've always wanted to."

"Why?" he asks. "You could start earning a living in January next year. If you go to Cape Town, it will take you another three years."

"It's not always about money," I tell him. "This is what I want to do for the rest of my life."

"Ah, bullshit," he retorts. "Within two years you'll be married and pregnant, just like you sister."

"I will NOT!" I am appalled.

"Well, I am not repaying any bursary if you are," he says. "I can't understand why you have to upset the applecart."

I am not brave enough to tell him then, that I did not care for apples.

And as far as he is concerned, the subject is closed. But for me, it is not.


In this same year, I have a laminectomy, a spinal operation that required the removal of inter-vertebral discs. I am hospitalised for six weeks, and miss the entire second term of school. Miss Ogilvie, my headmistress, visits me in hospital, bringing me books to read, and frequently discussing them with me. Jane Austin and I are in hospital together. Hannsie Visser, my Afrikaans teacher, does the same, and once I am discharged, visits me at home, or invites me to her own home, where we pore over the nuances of Afrikaans, and explore the Afrikaans texts that are the set work books for that year. *Raka*, by N P van Wyk Louw, is one of the books that we study, and Hannsie is passionate in her need to make sure that we scrape every nuance from the text.


Hannsie is a completely different kind of teacher from the ones who up to now have peopled our hallowed passages. She is young and street-wise, dressed in a flamboyant and individual

style, and is very sure of herself. She is not one of the refined ladies who insist on teaching us to be their clones. She is a woman in her own right, and is determined that we will become our own women. Her classes are fascinating and interesting, and we all look forward to the times when Mrs Visser strides into the room, making the air move, making waves, and challenging us to think and be for ourselves.

When the orthopaedic surgeon suggests that I take the rest of the year off to allow my spine to heal properly, it is Hannsie who tells me not to be so indulgent.

"You'll never regain the time," she tells me. "If you can possibly do it now, do it." And she redoubles her efforts at making sure that I am on target with the Afrikaans part of my course, giving me even more of her time so that I am prepared for the final examinations. I am inspired by her dedication and commitment, and even more by her care, and by her preparedness to give her own time to one pupil, and so I am determined not to let her down.

During the term of my absence from school, Miss Ogilvie sends an application on my behalf, to the Teacher's College in Mowbray. The bursary covers the tuition fees and the residence accommodation. When the acceptance letter arrives I am jubilant and terrified, but my father capitulates with very little counter argument.

I write the final matriculation examinations trying desperately to find a quiet space to study, and await the results with a great deal of trepidation. Although my teachers support me enormously through the term that I miss from school, and they continue to offer encouragement throughout the examination period, I do not believe that I will make the grade. My back is a constant source of pain, with muscles that freeze into spasms when I sit for too long. There is no quiet space to study in our home, and no support for this practice anyway. Matriculation is not important for the girls in our family. My parents would not turn a hair if Cheryl or I decide to leave school after grade ten to work in a bank or become secretaries.

The school, however, has other ideas, and leaving school without a firm matriculation certificate is not an option that one ever discusses with the likes of Betty Chew, Mary Ogilvie,

or Hannsie Visser! However, the fact that my success or failure as a scholar is going to be judged by a single set of examinations in circumstances that are impossibly beyond my control impacts negatively on my state of mind. I do not believe that I will be successful. I begin to face my father's alternative. I will work as a secretary, marry David, and stay in East London forever.

On Old Year's Eve, the night that the examination results are due to be published, my brother waits at the newspaper offices to see whether my name will appear. Five minutes after midnight, he telephones me from a call box.

"You've made it, kid!" he shouts excitedly. "You've passed! We're on our way there now, with champagne."

My mother finds me standing holding the telephone receiver, weeping.

I am still there when Douglas arrives, making it real with a cork that hits the ceiling, and laughter and hugs and shared delight.

During that December holiday, I meet Richard Hampshire[*], the son of the surgeon who has operated on my back. Many years before, during his university holidays in the late sixties, he worked in the toyshop that my mother managed for a short time. During one of my post-operative consultations with my surgeon, my mother establishes that Richard is in fact the surgeon's son, and then extends an invitation to him, to come and have a drink the next time he is in East London.

 I find him old, pompous, and downright boring, and dismiss him completely. He lives in Cape Town, and promises to look me up once I am studying there. I pay scant attention to a man who wears three piece suits and is in his thirties, when I am not yet eighteen. As far as I am concerned, he does not warrant a second thought.

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[*] Name has been changed to ensure anonymity

My parents decide to drive me to Cape Town at the beginning of the academic year. I pack my clothes for a term, and they pack a week's necessities. We tow the caravan through to Cape Town, a city that I have never seen, but where I have decided to live for the next three years.

As we come over Sir Lowrey's pass, and I catch sight for the first time of the Mountain with its tablecloth, a flat, paper-cut shape in the distance, I know that I have crossed an edge, and my heart begins to feel again.

We stay at the caravan park in Muizenberg for a week before the College opens. It is a lovely time of exploring Cape Town, a city that is not known to any of us. Even my parents are infected by the excitement of this new beginning, and they are easy with each other, as if their East London life has been put on hold for a while. When they finally deliver me to the gates of Theyshof, the College residence, and drive back to East London, I cannot wait for the academic year to begin. I feel as if my real life is starting, and that I have left all that was bleak and terrible behind me, and I am excited and joyful and happy.

Being in Cape Town fascinates me. These are the very shores that Jan van Riebeek explored. This is the garden that he planted. This is the river along which the Free Burgers settled. It is all here. False Bay and Table Bay. Stellenbosch and Kirstenbosch and Rondebosch. The National Gallery and the South African Museum. I visit Maskew Miller, the publisher whose name has been on every text book I have ever read. I am a part of. I am home. I make friends for the first time in my life, because I will never have to take them home. I catch trains and hitch-hike and feel like a normal human being. I become light.

Before the real work had starts, I am called downstairs one night for a gentleman caller. I am intrigued. I know no one in Cape Town. The visitor is Richard. The boring, pompous Richard. I use delaying tactics, telling him that I am too busy to go out for coffee. The following night he is back, and this time insists that I come out for supper. "If you worked so hard last night," he says knowingly, "then you deserve some time off tonight."

Within a week, I am devastatingly in love.

The institution proves to be disappointing. We study thirteen subjects, and are taught recipes for being 'good' teachers. On the whole, the lectures are delivered by people who themselves have not been in primary school classrooms, and who have scant knowledge of children. We are not challenged to think, to explore, to debate or to question. We are treated like large school children, are given uninspiring assignments, and are governed by a well-regulated system of rules that cannot be broken. The lecturers speak. We take notes. We repeat what they say in examinations. Our learning is based on good recall. It is simple and regulated. We are all white girls, being white girls together in an institution that is parochial and boring.

The only highlight comes from our teaching practice, when twice a year we visit schools for three weeks at a time. These weeks are confirmation for me that I have chosen the right profession, although the times of teaching are limited. We are visited by lecturers who come to observe our developing teaching skills, but we are coached though the lessons beforehand, and are penalised if we deviate from the Lesson Plan. There is no room for creativity, for difference, or for developing our own styles of teaching. We are herded into a pen, closed in, and force-fed with what other people believe to be good practice. At the end of every session in the schools, I feel vaguely disappointed, as if there is something more to be discovered. I feel that I have not really reached the children.

If I think that I have escaped the damaging war zone in East London, I am mistaken. My mother takes to using my father's business telephone, and makes extended calls to me during the afternoons.  I am totally captive, as I stand in the small telephone cubicles in the residence, my forehead against the cold glass, listening and listening and listening, while she hisses her anger about my father. The family unhappiness invades every space of my life, once again threatening to separate me from what is normal. Richard is supportive, but views it all as a bit of a joke. He did not return home after his years at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, and did not have a strong family connection. "Your father is a rogue peasant!" he tells me. "A nice one, though…"

The following year is 1976, a year of turmoil in South Africa. My background of domestic battlefield has given me no insights into the political battlefield in our country, and the little group of white girls in Mowbray is warned about being out after dark. Cars are being stoned along the N2 Highway, and tyres are burning. None of these issues are addressed at the institution, and when I think back to that time, I am appalled at our deliberate ignorance. Our ignore-ance. We are learning to be teachers, but are totally unaware of what is really happening in education in our country.

I have a part-time job at the chemist next door to the residence, and we are so oblivious to the real world that when his driver does not come to work because he fears for his safety, the pharmacist secures burglar guards over the windows of his delivery vehicle, and I drive into the areas of unrest to deliver emergency medication. It is exciting and daring, and none of us even really know the cause of the unrest, or that we are, by the very nature of our chosen profession, deeply involved.

## 1977

In my third and final year, I choose Art and History as major subjects. History is to be taught by a new lecturer, Evelyn Howard, and when we arrive for the first session, a vibrant young woman who radiates energy and enjoyment of her work confronts us. One of the first things that she invites us to do is to develop an assignment around an area of local history that we are interested in, and then to research and explore it. We are encouraged to work in groups, and to travel to sites along the way. Finally, we are invited to bring our new-found knowledge back to share with the rest of the class.

For the first time in three years, I am inspired and motivated. In our group, we explore many possibilities, but (ironically, given the events of the previous year,) the development of the Afrikaans language proves to be our topic. My mother's side of the family is Afrikaans, and Hannsie Visser, my grade twelve Afrikaans teacher, has nurtured a deep love of Afrikaans literature. The Afrikaans language monument in Paarl has recently been completed.

More than thirty years later, I still remember the fun of that learning, the fascination of the exploration and the discovery, and the delight that we had in making it our own.

I also remember each of the sites that we visit, the names of the people whom we discover, and the textures on the wallpaper of the *Huis Malherbe* that we research in Paarl.

Experiential learning is not much discussed in these days, but it makes an indelible impression on me, and is to deeply influence my own teaching. History is laid bare as we climb all over the cultural mounds of the Language monument. We sit on the backs of the Lions at Rhodes Memorial, and stare out across the Cape in the direction that the historical figure points. We make time lines and research historical costume. We play with the ages, and are fascinated. More than anything else, we are given only scant guidelines, and are encouraged to think for ourselves. We are, of course, hesitant and very insecure, but Evelyn is a cheerful foil, and simply continues to encourage and support as we struggle to find our feet, and finally learn to fly.

We spend the year thoroughly enjoying the discovery of meaningful time. We have great fun doing it. We laugh and make friends. For the first time, we begin to think very seriously about what it really means to be a teacher.

During my years of training, it is expected that I return to East London for the holidays. Although I do so reluctantly, these times are important for Cheryl and me. She has met and is dating a boy from our brother school, and a strong bond is developing between them. Initially, leaving her alone to deal with the home situation was a dilemma for me, but when she and Sean start dating, his family almost adopts her, and she takes to spending almost every afternoon after school, and most weekends, with the Mitchleys.

When I return for the holidays, we use the time to catch up on our lives and our dreams. It is really only with her that I feel a real sense of family, and her wicked sense of humour often has us laughing outrageously at shared and secret knowings. The fact that I have a driver's licence frees us from having to be with my mother and Anne all of the time, and we drive

through East London, visiting the places that we had not seen in years, or spend time sitting in coffee shops, and talking, and talking, and talking. Although the things that we want from life are very different, we can share and understand each other's longings.

Cheryl is much more of a survivor than I am, and she is able to disassociate herself from my parents and their unhappiness. Perhaps it is because she was initially too young to be a part of it. Our three-year age difference has protected Cheryl from becoming my mother's confidante, but has not protected her from being exposed to the rage and the ugliness. While I escape to Cape Town, Cheryl escapes to Sean. Her biggest ambition is to marry Sean as soon as possible after she completes high school, and to build a home and a family of her own. I think that I want meaningful work, to marry Richard, but not to have a family. It is interesting that even as I write this, I am aware that I placed meaningful work first.

When I return to Cape Town after the holidays, I always wait for that first sight of the mountain, as I drive over Sir Lowrey's Pass, before I begin to relax, and feel safe again. I know that there will always be telephone calls, claiming me back, but while I am in Cape Town, they are just telephone calls in a public call box, and when I close the door at the end of a call, they lose some of their power.

One day, during a telephone call from my mother, she reveals to me that Douglas and his wife are having serious problems. "He's just like your father!" she hisses angrily. I am appalled at the news, but not particularly surprised. We all know Douglas should never have married the girl in the first place. He was desperately in love with the daughter of the mayor of East London, but was decreed by her parents to be not good enough for their child. For months Douglas held on to the hope that they would relent, and allow him to marry Glynis, but her parents were determined to separate the couple, and she was despatched to Durban. The separation worked, and the relationship slowly ebbed.

Linda is the kind of girl that all parents want for their son. She cooks well, she is kind and gentle, she has a good job in a bank, and she is humble and well-behaved. She has no hobbies, does no sport, and is uninspired by life.

Douglas enjoys hunting, fishing and rowing. He is the life and soul of any party, tells countless jokes, flirts outrageously with women young and old, and has a wicked reputation in East London.

Neither of them changed when they married, and it did not take long for the cracks to show. Both tried very hard to make their union work, but it was foiled by circumstances far beyond their control. I never really came to know Linda, but I did know my brother. Douglas is the oldest child in our family, and the only boy. The pressure on him is enormous. He is the one who taxies my mother on her detective trips around East London when my father first begins his affair. He is the one who has to cope with my mother's countless telephone calls to his place of work during the day, when she begs him to drop what he is doing to find out where my father is.

It is also while Douglas was an adolescent, trying to carve his own place in the world, that my parents went through their worst financial times. In those days, Douglas used to collect refundable glass bottles and return them to shops so that he could take his first girl friends on dates. More than anything else, he had to cope with the bitter disappointment of not being able to study at Onderstepoort to become a veterinarian, a dream that he had impossibly cherished throughout his high school years.

When his marriage ends, none of us are surprised. What does surprise us was that he re-marries in September of the same year, to a woman whom he seems to love with a fire that his first wife never kindled.

My parents are bitter about his new wife, because they both loved Linda, and took her into the family as if she was their own. My mother loved having yet another daughter to tell things to, particularly things about my father, and Linda was a trustworthy and sympathetic ally. The new wife is an unknown person, not yet to be trusted, not yet to be a member of the family. She might be Douglas's wife, but that does not automatically make her one of us.

Shortly after they marry, Douglas and Lana move to live in Durban.

At the end of 1977, I qualify as a teacher in the senior primary school, but am not ready to return to East London. My relationship with Richard is too important, and I cannot bear the thought of returning to the nightly arguments at home. There is only one option open to me: I have to continue studying.  I apply, with scant enthusiasm, for the Higher Diploma in Art Education, run by the same institution. It is a way to remain in Cape Town. My bursary is extended, and I meet with little opposition from my father. My mother is deeply disappointed in me, and makes me promise to return to teach in East London when I complete that qualification.

Early in December, my parents and I head for Durban, to spend Christmas with Douglas and Lana. During this holiday, I turn twenty one. It is not a happy time, as my mother's resentments surface and cause an underlying tension that makes us all feel stressed and uncomfortable. The heat in Durban leaves everyone feeling enervated, and Lana is pregnant with her first child. We have always been led to believe that a twenty-first birthday was special, but I am celebrating mine without the man whom I love, in a place that I do not know. It is a relief for everyone when we return to East London. My mother has a particular way of showing her displeasure without saying a word, and being in a different environment does not mean that my parents treat each other any differently.

Richard and I spend the last part of the Christmas vacation in East London, he with his family, and I with mine, and then we drive back to Cape Town together. I am still staying in the residence, but now, as a fourth year student, have many more privileges than before, and no longer have to be in by 21:00 every night. As Art students, we no longer have to wear skirts and stockings to our lectures, although formal dress is still expected at meal times in the residence.

1978

During the first week of the new course, we are each given an apple. The lecturer, Elske Maxwell, delivers an ultimatum.

"Do not eat the apple. Live with it. Draw it. Carry it around with you. Bring it to class next Friday."

We all think that she is crazy, and joke our way through the week. We play games with our apples. We name them. We offer them cigarettes and coffee during our tea breaks. We make sure that they have good views when we travel anywhere by motor car.

When we return to class the following Friday, we are asked:

"What have you discovered about apples?"

"They're round?"

"Apples are NOT round. Circles are round!" she hisses at us.

"They're oval?"

"Leave the shape. What else?"

"They're green?"

"What kind of green?"

"Uhhh…"

"What do they *smell* like?"

"Uhhhh…"

"What have you discovered about the essence of an apple?"

By then we are completely dumbfounded. We are *convinced* that she was crazy. We stare back at her in silence.

"It's the *appleness* of apples!" she announces. "There is *nothing* but an apple that is like an apple. Apples are unique. So is everything in life. See it. Taste it. Explore it."

She has us all hooked. We lean forward, and begin to learn about art, about teaching, and about the meaning in our own lives.

On another day, she tells us to work in groups, put money together, and to buy something of exceptional value for R10. Our group buys a bunch of ten long-stemmed red roses. Others buy glorious collections of fruit. Some buy small beautiful objects from second hand shops. We think long and hard about what we buy. In class, she makes us justify our purchases.

"We have bought roses because they are beautiful, and because they symbolise love," we tell her.

"We have bought fruit because it can feed us, and because it is lovely to look at"

"We have bought these two cups and saucers because they are fine porcelain, and because they are beautifully decorated."

"Good," she approves. "Now go out onto Mowbray Main Road, and give them away."

We stand still, and stare at her. We have pondered over our purchases, we have collected hard-earned money to buy them, and we want to keep them near us. We think she is joking.

"Go on," she tells us. "If you are going to be part of this Art Department, you have to learn to give. Go, and learn to be generous." She strides out of the room.

Elske herself is one of the most generous people I have ever encountered. She has two small children, and if we babysit for her, we are treated to the most wonderful home-cooked meals. She gives her time endlessly to her students, and is never too busy to invite us into her office for a cup of coffee if she sees that we are not coping with work, or with life.

For the rest of that year, we are challenged and pushed to think and stretched further than any of us imagined possible. Jenny Franklin, our painting lecturer, tells us, "When you learn to liberate your thinking, even when you are bound by all sorts of things, then you are truly free." I imagine that I am bound to and by my family, because of their unhappiness. I begin to think that I can be free to grow and develop despite them. Maybe even *because* of them.

I begin to wonder about the quality of freedom, the real meaning of the word, and how I can grasp it, and hold it in my own life.

Stan Cohen, the three-dimensional aesthetics lecturer, will not accept mediocre work from us. He insists that we only deliver our best – at all times. But it is Elske who becomes the mentor of the group, and who takes personal responsibility for encouraging each one of us to think, to feel, and to live the best that is within us. We learn the value of commitment. We learn to ignore 'work hours', and timetables. We work as we have never worked before. We think as we have never thought before. We become totally immersed in the process of art-making and art teaching. We explore our own minds as if we are discovering them for the first time. For many of us, this is exactly what we were doing.

As the months pass, Richard begins to be uncomfortable with the changes that he is seeing in me. I am beginning to assert myself, and to challenge the way that our relationship is developing.

"I can't cope with all of this Woman's Lib stuff that you are quoting," he complains.

"It's not Women's Lib," I argue. "I just happen to be a thinking human being."

"But it was so easy before. What was wrong with that?"

"It was so easy before because I was too scared to argue with you. You were the man. You were always right."

"But I *liked* being right all of the time!" he teases.

"You weren't right all of the time. I just let you think that."

"Don't you want to let me think that again?" he begs.

"Never, never again!" I yell, punching his arm. "Sir Richard, I hereby declare that you will never again be right!"

And so difficult moments pass, but our arguments become more frequent, and I know that I am the cause of them. They are also never resolved. I spend a great deal of time feeling guilty, and backtracking, and then being angry with myself, and taking it all out on Richard. During these times, he simply absents himself for two or three weeks, and then, when I am thoroughly miserable, and prepared to behave in any way to make him come back, he

suddenly reappears, and behaves as if nothing has happened. I am twenty one. He is thirty seven. I find it hard to believe that he gave me so much time to grow up.

At the same time, however, he was behaving in ways that echoed my father. Whenever there is an argument, nothing is ever resolved, and so issues simply keep arising.

Douglas and Lana produce a daughter in May, and call her Natalie. She is the first girl grandchild, and is a petite delight. This goes some way towards healing the distance that has developed between Douglas and Lana and my parents, and my mother flies up to Durban to offer assistance with the newborn. When she returns to East London, her telephone calls about Lana are full of criticism. Although I initially liked Lana, I did not have time to come to know her before I came to live in Cape Town and they moved to Durban. My mother's portrayal of her is all that I have as a foundation for my relationship with her.

The year is unfolding in such an exciting and stimulating way that I do not dwell on Douglas and his wife, or give too much energy to the East London side of my being. I am being stimulated and challenged, and am discovering so much about myself as a human being that I give no time or energy to concern with the nature of my brother's wife. I am involved in the process of art-making in a way that influences my thinking about almost everything, and I am changed by this process. I think like an artist. I interpret my world through the art elements. I see films that are constructed from design principles, that use light to create contrast, that shape scale and balance with tone. I think about what I am drawing, painting and making, and that these are a manifestation of my world. I am entranced at my own learning. I become so aware of the value of visual art, and of the way that it is affecting my life, that I can no longer believe that there is any other way to be. I know that this is the subject that I want to teach. I know that it is the only subject that I want to teach.

During one of our Art Appreciation Lectures, we are introduced to a guest lecturer, Dorothy Reyersbach. She frequently travels to the Himalayas to barter with the Mountain tribes, and discusses their exquisite embroideries with us, showing us examples of their fine stitching, and of their silver jewellery. She makes a tremendous impression on all of us, and before she

leaves that day, she asks us all to keep contact with her, and to write and tell her where we go at the end of that year.

Evelyn Howard, the History lecturer from my previous year, and I have become friends, and she and her husband regularly invite a group of us to their home for Sunday night suppers, where we play cards and talk until it is time for us to rush back to the residence before it is locked for the night. Evelyn encourages me to push my own boundaries, and to challenge the beliefs that I hold about my family. I have never thought of standing up to my father before. He is, after all, the head of the family, and we have been raised to fear and respect him. We would never dream of challenging his authority. Suddenly there are other options. His word does not always have to be law. His behaviour does not have to be right. His demands do not have to be met.

For the first time in my life, I begin to think about what I really want. What I want to be. Where I want to be. How I want to be. My father's power slips a notch. My mother's power is much stronger than I realise, because she uses her weakness to keep me at her side. But I am subconsciously surrounding myself with strong women who are providing me with insights and skills for dealing with what I will find in East London when I return at the end of the year.

As the months pass, and I grow into myself more and more, I begin to dread my return. I no longer belong in the Eastern Cape. For the first time in my life, I have made friends that are real, and honest, and loving. I love Cape Town, with its wind, its bad weather, and its glorious scenery. I love Richard. He belongs to a space inside of me that is untouchable.

In the art department, we have discovered the kinds of friendships that can only be the result of mutual exploration. We share the space, and are safe in it, because we know that we are nurtured and protected. We share the work, and the exploration of the work, because we know that we are all committed to it. Our sense of belonging to the group makes us invincible, and we have a personal space in which to express that sense. We laugh and weep together, share each other's successes, share in-group jokes, go away for week ends together, eat together, share what we have, share what we know and share who we are. There are no barriers between us. In the art department, which has become the physical

home for all of this, we exist as if the world was a bubble, our private bubble, and a safe bubble in which to explore our innermost ways of being. When we move away from the physical space, we carry the notion of the safety with us, and we teach, exist, and develop from that notion.

In October, Elske calls me into her office.

"Your job is here." she tells me, showing me the Education Gazette. She has underlined an advertisement at George Randell Primary School in East London.

"I don't want it," I tell her, feeling the world tilt.

"You will apply," she says. "You have to go so that you can come back."

"I can't," I weep. "I'm not strong enough."

"You are, and you will."

I write the application and post it with my heart in my mouth. I get the job. I am distraught.

My mother is delighted.

"Oh, just think," she says into the telephone, "It'll be like old times…"

"I know, Mom," I say, trying to keep my voice buoyant as the tears run down my cheeks in the bleak telephone booth at the residence.

Richard makes the leaving easier. He decides to apply for a job in Johannesburg. "Life is short," he tells me. "I'm going to go to the Golden City, make a lot of money, and retire when I'm fifty!"

"And what about me?" I ask.

"Oh, you can retire when you are fifty too!" he laughs.

We drive to East London together at the end of that year, and spend the December holiday there. It is a quiet, gentle time. Richard and my father both enjoyed motor cars, and as he is a very frequent visitor, there was little time for family argument. In the middle of January, he heads for Johannesburg, and I begin teaching. I miss him, Cape Town, my people and my space of being more than I think possible, and sometimes it is like a physical ache. I avoid speaking about it. It upsets my mother, because she wants me back in East London with no strings attached.

## 1979

At the new school, although the staff tries hard to make me feel welcome, I feel that I do not fit. I do not want to belong anywhere in East London, and I make no effort to befriend the staff members. I teach a subject that, as far as they are concerned, is of no value, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. I mount work and hang it in all of the passages, invite the staff to come and look, and am met with gentle blank stares. How can anyone take art seriously? I feel isolated and alone, and certainly not equipped for my work. I am too new to ask for advice and assistance, and the staff regards me as an art expert, because I have a specialist qualification, and leave me alone. Nobody imagines that as a first year teacher, I might need support or encouragement, or simply practical advice. I am left to my own devices. Nobody will even know if I sink or swim.

I had thought that teaching would be something different. I had thought that everyone would share my belief in the value of the arts, and that they would understand the tremendous importance of this subject in the lives and in the learning of children. I come to realise that the staff at the school sees me as someone who is a little different from the rest of them. I realise with a feeling of isolation and despair that they do not regard what the children are doing with any kind of serious attitude. In their opinions, the children are simply having fun, and having a break from the real work.

Art classes are scheduled for the last lesson of the day, when the children are tired, or for the lessons immediately after break, when the children are unruly.

This starts a battle for me that is to last throughout my teaching career. Visual art, and the arts in general, are given scant value in the school curriculum. Content subjects, which can be assessed by means of rote learning and examinations that require the recall of factual information, are considered important, and the arts are marginalised. Dance and drama are not taught in schools, and music is simply taught as class singing.

I am determined to make a difference in the lives of these children, whose respect for their own art-making is scant, and a direct result of the attitude of the rest of the school. I volunteer to work in the after-school care programme. This programme is newly-established, and essentially it is to care for the children of working parents, and to make sure that they are safe in the afternoons. I make a point of involving them in making art. We draw and paint and have a great deal of fun. Sometimes I take them out to sites around the city.

By doing this, I come to know the children in a different way, and their stories become known to me. There is little Louis, who is so thin that he is almost see-through, whose parents are divorced, and whose mother gives him no attention at all. Stephanie has no parents, and lives with her grandparents. Shannon has a mother who is terminally ill. The staff and I share stories about the children, coming to understand them better, coming to know how their lives impact on their performance at school. Because my time with the children in the after-care programme is essentially more relaxed than when they are in their class rooms, they tell me more, and I am able to share these details with the other staff members.

This is also a way that will keep me gainfully employed, so that I will not have to go home, and spend yet another afternoon listening to my mother tell the same stories that she has been rehearsing for years.

One evening there is a particularly violent outburst at home. My father hurls his brief case across the room, spilling its contents as it flies. He becomes hysterical, throwing papers at my mother, as she cowers in her chair. Cheryl is in her bedroom, and I stand before my father, and take the papers from his hand.

"You're going to need those tomorrow," I tell him. "Stop this now."

He cannot believe what has happened. He turns his full rage on me.

"How dare you!" he yells, scarcely able to get the words out as he battles to control his rage. I know that he would strike me if I was younger.

"How dare you! After all that I have done for you! Get into your bedroom right now!"


"Please leave it," begs my mother. "You're only making it worse."

"Jesus Christ," rages my father. "Now the whole lot of you are siding with your mother. I've had enough of this!"

He grabs his car keys, and storms out of the door. We hear his tyres screech as they hit the gravel.

"Why do you let him treat you like this?" I ask my mother, who weeps in her chair, cowed and small.

"Oh, you don't understand." she answers.

"Mom, I've had years of watching this. What's left to understand?"

"He's had too much to drink," she answers, as if this excuses everything.

"He always has too much to drink. Why do you let it happen?"

She turns her red-rimmed eyes on me, and her lips quiver. She is miserable and unhappy. I am not cruel enough, or strong enough to pursue it. I give in, and go into the kitchen to make her some tea.


We sit, almost in silence, and wait for his car to turn into the driveway. This is a common pattern. When my father thinks that he is losing, he leaves the house in anger. Sometimes he is gone for five minutes, and sometimes for hours. We sit and wait, and drink tea, until he comes home. I no longer drink tea. Ever.

On that night, when we hear his car, my mother hastily picks up the cups, and carries them to the kitchen. "Don't start on him when he comes in," she begs. "It will only start him up again. Go to bed."

I look at my watch. It is after 02:00. I have to teach early the next morning.

"Perhaps you should go to bed too," I tell her. "If you are asleep, he couldn't start on you again."

"Don't be so sure," she says. "But go, now, please."

I leave, and stand in the passageway, waiting for my father to come inside. He erupts through the front door, still carrying his rage, and comes straight towards the passage. I barely make it into my bedroom before he strides through the house.

"I have to work tomorrow," he bellows. "I'm going to bed."

My mother follows him through to the bedroom. He slams the bedroom door, and continues to rant. I close my own door, and go to bed.

When I come home from work the next day, in the early evening, because I have been busy with the after-care children, my mother's car is not in the driveway, but my father's is parked in its usual spot. I am surprised, but do not really pay attention, because I have brought a pile of children's work home to mount, and am unloading it from my boot. As I open the front door, it knocks against something, and putting down the work, I peer around the door.

There is an ashtray in the entrance hall, with a note stuck underneath it. I pull it out and read it.

"I can't take any more," my father's bold handwriting sweeps across the page. "I've decided to end it all."

For a moment, I am confused, not knowing what it means, and then I look up to confront the chaos in our lounge. My father lies prone with empty beer bottles scattered around him. An empty pill bottle lies beside his head.

My first aid training kicks in, and I take his pulse. It is strong and regular. I check his pupils and his breathing. He is not about to die. I telephone Mitch, the family doctor. He is the father of Cheryl's steady boyfriend.

"Don't do anything. Call an ambulance," he tells me. "I'll meet you at the hospital."

"Mom and Cheryl are missing," I tell him. "I have no idea where they are. I don't know what has happened. It's unlike them to be away from home at this time."

"Just call an ambulance," he responds.

My father stirs as he is loaded into the ambulance. "Where's your mother?" he asks.

"I don't know, Dad," I tell him.

"Find her," he mutters.

Following the ambulance in my own car, I race through the bleak streets of East London, and watch while they rush my father through to the casualty section of the Frere Hospital.

"Wait outside," barks the doctor. "We are going to pump his stomach."

After what seems like a very long time, he calls me.

"Your father wants to see you," he tells me.

I enter the room, and take my father's hand.

"How are you feeling?" I ask.

"Where's your mother?" he responds.

"Dad, I don't know,"

"Bitch!" he hisses at me. "You bitch! Tell your mother to come here now!"

The doctor steps between us and guides me away from the bed.

"Perhaps you had better go," he says.

"I don't know where she is," I tell him. "She and Cheryl are both missing. I don't know what to do."

"Go home," he says. "I'll 'phone you if there is any change. We'll sedate him and keep him here tonight."

In a daze, I walk towards my car, and drive home. I let myself into the dark house and clean up the mess of bottles and straighten the furniture. Then I start telephoning to try to find my mother. Anne, my older sister, is viciously angry. "Pity you found him in time," she tells me. "You should have let the bastard die."

Hours later, after fruitlessly, frantically trying to find Cheryl and my mother, I hear her car pull into the driveway. I open the door, prepare to tell them what has happened, and am shocked to see Cheryl and my mother get out of the car, followed by my father.

"We were at Mitch's place," says Cheryl, as she came into the house.

"All the time?" I ask, in shock.

"They had a huge fight when he came home," she answers, indicating with her head that she is talking about my father. "We just got in the car, and went to Mitch."

"How come he's here…?" I ask, as my father stumbles through the door, and makes his way to the bedroom.

"He walked from the hospital! Mitch says that he should have slept for three days, but he got up and left the hospital without his shoes, and found us at Mitch's place!"

"Why didn't somebody let me know where you were?" I ask.

"We didn't want him to find out," she responds.

"But I've been frantic with worry," I tell her. "You could have let me know…"

"Sorry," she shrugs. "We just really didn't think…"


I stand and watch another crazy scenario unfold in front of me. Cheryl goes through and starts to run a bath, and my mother walks into the kitchen.

"I'm just going to make him a cup of tea," she says, as she switches on the kettle. I pick up my car keys, and leave. I drive to the Orient beach, and park, and walk along the Esplanade, watching the black waves break angrily against the sand. I gasp great breaths of air, and weep along with the sea. This way of being is not my way of being, but I have no way of being anything else while I live in East London. Suddenly Cheryl is there. I have no idea how she knows where I am. She leans against the rail beside me, not touching.

"You can't stay out here all night," she says. "It's cold."

We stand in silence for a long time, watching the night sea.

"Come on," she says finally. "You need to sleep. You have to teach tomorrow."


The next day I spend half my salary on an air ticket to fly to Cape Town for the March school holiday.


There are no such things as indemnity forms yet, or PDP driver's licences, and in the afternoons, I load the school bus with children, and take them to the beach, or to the Queen's Park Zoo in East London. I start extra art classes at the school, and encourage the children to draw and paint and *make* at every opportunity. I begin to have fun in my work. I begin to love what I am doing. The staff at the school begin to pay attention, and to ask me about the artwork that is hanging on the wall. They start inviting me to their homes for dinner, and I start to make friends in a city where I did not want to belong.


A week before I fly to Cape Town for the first school holiday, Richard calls from Johannesburg with news that should have been joyous.

"I've taken a week's leave," he says, "and I'm coming to East London."

"But why didn't you tell me before?" I ask. "I'm flying to Cape Town on Saturday morning. Evelyn and Bruce have booked a week at the Bontebok park"

"Oh well," he says, "if Cape Town is more important, then…"

"Richard, I didn't know that you were coming. How can you expect me to…"

"It's fine," he responds curtly. "It'll give me plenty of time to see my folks."


For days, I agonise. Should I cancel my ticket and stay in East London because Richard is coming for the school holidays, or should I stick to my plans, and fly to Cape Town? What was right for everyone? How could I keep them all happy?


During this time, there is yet another eruption at home, and I make a decision. I have to get away. I want the loving normality that I know that I will find amongst my friends in Cape Town. I long for the level of conversation, the ability to laugh, the opportunity to be myself, the self that I had discovered that I could be, when I was not being forced to be somebody, or something else.


I am angry with Richard for not letting me know earlier that he is coming to East London, and so I decide not to call him and tell him that I am still going to Cape Town. If he bothers to call when he arrives, he can find out then.


I am miserable.


I fly to Cape Town, and spend the week with Evelyn and Bruce at the Bontebok Park in Swellendam. It is a strange time of realising how far away my life in East London is, and how it is affecting my thinking, and my ability to function normally. Bruce, Evelyn's husband, is significant during this time.

"Just leave," he tells me. "You don't owe them anything. You need to think about yourself now."

But I have been raised to believe that I do owe them something. Not just something, but everything. And my mother uses all of her manipulative tools to keep me at her side.

"I could never cope without you," she says, all of the time. "You are my rock. I don't know what I would do if you were not here. I don't know what he would do to me."

When I return to East London, I am unsettled and unhappy.

"You're always like this when you come back from Cape Town," my mother says. "You want to fight with everyone."

"I don't want to fight, Mom," I tell her. "I just don't want to spend the rest of my life like this."

It becomes clear that both of my parents feel that I owe them everything I am, because they had supported my wish to be a teacher. This power keeps me in East London for that year, bowed in gratitude and guilt for all that they have given me. It never occurs to me that I would have cost them more if I had stayed at home, because the state bursary paid for my tuition and residence fees. I continue to believe that I owe them so much.

One night, there is yet another late night battle. My father disappears once again in his motor car, angrily driving his latest Mercedes Benz across the verge. My mother decides that she is not going to stay for this round of abuse, and so she asks us to come with her to Anne's house. This is a new game that she is playing. I am fully aware that she will be back tomorrow, and am too tired to play along.

"I'll stay," I tell her. "I have to work tomorrow, and I haven't got the energy to pack up for a night away from home."

"Well, I've had enough," she says. "You can suit yourself."

She and Cheryl throw their clothes into bags, and leave hurriedly. I fetch a book from my room, and settle to read in a chair. I am subconsciously doing what my mother always does. I am waiting for my father to come home.

When he does, his temper is not improved by the fact that my mother and Cheryl are not there. He begins to rant at me.

"Dad," I tell him. "This has nothing to do with me."

"Oh yes it has," he yells. "You're just as bad as the rest of them."

"Okay," I say, rising, and walking into my room. "Then I'll go and join them."

I start to take clothes out of my cupboard, and he bursts into my room, ripping the clothes from my hands.

"Don't think you are going anywhere in that car!" he yells. "And you're not taking any of this stuff. I bought it all. It belongs to me. If you leave this house, you take nothing with you."

"Keep it all," I tell him, surprising even myself. "I don't need any of it."

I stride out of the house, barefoot, and start to walk up the road.

The area where we live is a still a fairly new development, and the roads are not yet tarred. Once a day, a truck comes and pushes the gravel into mounds along the sides of the road. The surface cuts into my bare feet, and slows my progress, but I am determined to reach the brightly lit tarred area, so that I can hitch a lift into the centre of town. What I will do once I arrive there, I have no idea, but there is no way that I will return to Bird Street.

Suddenly, the bright lights of a car rear up behind me. I cannot get out of the road, because the mounds of gravel prevent a quick hop onto the verge, so I clPenny clumsily up one of the mounds of sliding gravel. The vehicle sweeps past, and then just beyond, turns and starts heading back towards me. I realise with a sense of unreality that it is my father. I turn, and start to walk in the opposite direction. He brings the car right up behind me, and forces me to walk back along the road. Every time I start to move away, he revs the engine, and nudges

the back of my legs with the bumper of the car. I know that I will have to go home again. If I try to get away, he will follow me, and force me back.

In this way, we return home, my father and I. When I turn into the driveway, I do not hesitate. I simply walk into the house, go into my bedroom, and close the door. I do not come out again until the following morning, when I leave for work. My father is still in his room. The incident is never referred to again. The following day, I stay at work later than usual, and then return home, expecting more anger.

My parents are sitting together drinking tea. Cheryl is draped over a chair talking on the telephone to Sean, her boyfriend. Nothing can be more normal. Nothing can be more abnormal.

Richard has made no contact since my March trip to Cape Town, and as a woman, I have been trained never to make the first move. I am cut off from where I want to be. I am not doing my work properly because I am exhausted and cannot function normally. I stop looking for a job in Cape Town. I feel trapped and hopeless.

In October Elske calls me at school. "There is a job in the gazette," she says.

"I don't know," I tell her. "I can't leave them now…"

"You will apply for this job," she tells me. "You have to get away."

Without energy, I find the gazette, apply for the job. Days after the closing date, I receive a telegram telling me that I am successful. Even the knowledge that I am leaving East London cannot rouse me. My mother knows that I have applied for the job, but she does not think that I will get it. When I show her the telegram, she is devastated. She weeps so much that I almost telephone the school and turn down the offer.

"I have to go, "I tell her. "This is not where I want to live."

"But what will I do without you?" she asks, turning reddened eyes towards me.

"You'll be okay," I say.

"How can you say that?" she asks, almost angrily. "You've seen how he treats me."

"You let him treat you like that. I can't really help you anymore."


Finally, Richard calls, acting as 'though months have not passed since our last contact.

"Oh good," he says, when I tell him about the job. "I have also changed jobs. This one has a lot of stuff for me to do in Cape Town. I'll get to see you quite often then."


My new job is at a primary school in Milnerton in Cape Town, teaching Art to children from grades one to seven. I write to all of my Cape Town contacts, telling them that I am coming back. Dorothy Reyersbach, the woman who had addressed us when we were students, responds immediately.

"I have a flat for you," she writes. "Let me know when you are coming. Soon, you will have your very own front door."

"April," I answer. "I am coming in April."


In December, Richard comes to East London, and we spend a glorious summer re-discovering the wonderful beaches along the East coast. Finally, because I am leaving, I can allow the space to become beautiful, and the lovely clean sand, the deep blue waves, and the calm, gentle sunsets are all a part of my extended farewell to the place where I have grown up. When Richard returns to Johannesburg, I know that nothing will ever be the same again. The next time we see each other, I will no longer be living in East London. I will be a Cape Town resident. I will be free.


Until the time that I leave East London, I alternate between joy and guilt. I save every cent that I can, so that I can put some furniture behind that front door that is going to be my very own. As the last days of the first term draw to a close, my mother's eyes are constantly red from weeping, and she follows me around as I begin to make plans for my leaving.

The last day at my school dawns, and the staff give me a farewell party. I have been so eagerly thinking about where I am going that I have stopped paying attention to what I am leaving, and I am moved beyond words by the kindness and the sincerity of my colleagues. I have not realised how much they have allowed me to become a part of them, because I have always known that I would be leaving. But they have not known that, and their warmth is a very moving experience for me.

It is a shock to me, that day when I leave the school grounds, to realise how much I have come to care for the children, some more than others, and how my heart aches at the knowledge that I will never see them again. I linger with them in the playground before I leave, knowing that I will not find the words to tell them how much they have taught me. I have come to them as a qualified teacher, but they are the ones who have taught me to love my work, and who have shown me how small children draw, how they absorb new skills, and how they think and explore new meaning. I did not think about what I was doing while I taught, and because I was the only art teacher at the school, the principal and staff simply accepted what I was teaching. There are pictures on the walls, and the children enjoy their art classes. I have come with good training, am more qualified for the primary school than most of my colleagues. I enjoy my work. I have just completed my first fifteen months of teaching. I am arrogantly complacent.

## 1979

Finally, the day comes when I load my worldly possessions on to the back seat of my Volkswagen Beetle. I have bought a silver sugar spoon in an antique shop, have saved one thousand rand, and have my clothing. I also have a dream, and the deep inner knowledge that I am doing the right thing.

I drive away from the house, with my parents and Cheryl waving from the veranda, and I cross the Nahoon River. I drive through the centre of town, and cross the Buffalo River. Just beyond the outskirts of the city, I pull my car off the road, and weep in great gasping sobs. And then I drive across the southern tip of Africa to Cape Town.

After seven weeks of staying with Evelyn and Bruce, my flat is finally ready. I buy a brand new bed, two carpets, a second hand stove and fridge, and a pot plant. Evelyn's garden furniture graces my lounge. I finally have my own front door.

The school, in the northern suburbs of the city, is a large dual-medium co-educational one, and apart from teaching art to all of the children, I am also assigned to be one of the netball teachers. I know nothing about netball, and have never really been interested in sport. The experience is frightening!

The timetable is demanding, and as one large class leaves the art room, another enters. I switch languages and grades and topics and techniques all day long, and the process is exhausting. Once again, the staff is not interested in art. I mount work and hang it in the school passages. The children seems to enjoy what they are doing, and often linger in the art room to help with tidying, washing brushes, and packing away materials. I am once again isolated in my work, alone in my belief in my subject. Staff meetings are taken up with discussions about 'real' subjects, and I doubt that anyone takes my work seriously. I had so wanted to make a difference in the school, and in the lives of the children, but find that most staff members regard my work as a little bit silly, as if I am simply entertaining the children. My youthful passion is indignant, and I am not sure how to continue. But I am back in Cape Town, with my mountain, my people, and my quietness. I play Mozart as I open my eyes in the mornings, and until I close them at night. I walk on the mountain with friends. I teach my heart out, becoming even more convinced that art teaching is the real way to reach children. I still do not think about what I am doing, because I am simply doing what I have been trained to do, and I am doing it as well as I believe that I can.

In December, Douglas and Lana produce a son, much to the delight of both families, and they ask me to be his godmother. I have not seen them for over a year, and I feel that my connection with them is very thin. I write a letter to Lana, telling her that she should not feel obligated to ask me to be her son's godmother, just because I am Douglas's sister. I say that if she wants to ask one of her friends, who are close to her and the children, and whom she feels would be a good godmother, she should do so with freedom and understanding on my

part. I hear nothing from them, and when my parents travel to Durban for the christening, my mother calls me.

"Oh my God," she says, in her quiet, gossip voice. "You have caused so much trouble up here!"

"What on earth are you talking about?" I ask.

"Lana says that she never wanted to ask you to be godmother in the first place. She and Douglas have had a huge fight."

"But what on earth brought that on?" I want to know. I am completely dumbfounded.

"Apparently you wrote a letter…"

"But I didn't say anything that could have upset them in any way," I assure her. "I just wanted her to feel free to ask a friend if she would rather."

"Well, she thinks that you don't want to be the baby's godmother, and she is very angry with you."

"Should I say something? Should I speak to her, or Douglas?"

"No, just leave it," my mother tells me. "You'll only make it worse."

I hear nothing from Douglas and Lana for a long time, and eventually write another letter, trying to explain what I have said, and repeat my reasons. Instead of resolving the situation, it does, in fact make it worse, and for the next three years, Douglas and Lana will not speak to me. If we meet in East London, the tension is strong between us. I am angry that Lana has caused such a rift between Douglas and me. According to my mother, no one seems to feel comfortable when Lana is in company. But I am physically separated from all of the tension, and do not pay it much attention. I am beginning to build the kind of life that I want to have, with people whom I can relate to and share my thoughts with. It is a time when I am seeing Richard regularly as his work brings him to Cape Town, my work is going well, friendships are being cemented, and when thoughts can be aired around dinner tables. In a strange kind of way, I am discovering the potential of being a human being in a world where I can finally put down intellectual and emotional roots, and not have them damaged. For the first time in

my life, I am also free to ignore the trouble-making and tension in my family. I determinedly put it out of my head, and live every day in gratitude.

## 1980

The next year, Elske and I decide to study for a BA degree in Fine Art through Unisa. We apply, are accepted, and begin to work in earnest. Richard comes to Cape Town for a few short weeks, but I am too busy frantically teaching, doing research, and completing Unisa assignments to give him any kind of quality time, and we argue before he leaves.

"Why can't you just be happy with what you've got?" he asks me. "You're well-qualified, you've got a job, and you're where you want to be."

"I'm very happy with what I've got," I tell him. "I just don't want to stagnate. I'm enjoying what I'm doing."

"Oh, well, suit yourself," he says, barely masking his anger, and I know that I will be punished with a period of no contact. But I am too tired to care. I also know that he is right. I am permanently exhausted, and am not able to function properly on any level. One morning, I leave my flat in the Tamboerskloof to travel through to Milnerton, and only realise that I have missed the turn-off when I am ten kilometres from Paarl, the next town on the map. I consult a doctor, and extremely low blood pressure is diagnosed. Nothing seems to help. I am tearful and depressed. I am angry with myself. I have finally come to Cape Town. I am doing work that I love. I am surrounded by caring friends. And I am miserable. Exhaustion is beginning to drain my enthusiasm.

One Sunday when I am busy making a senseless painting that holds no value for me, but is demanded by UNISA, I suddenly realise that I do not want to have a BA in Fine Art. I do not want to be an artist. I want to be a teacher. Making art for a degree through UNISA is not making me a better teacher. I am learning about the art-making process of an adult, but I am learning nothing about the art-making processes of a child, and that is where my heart lies. The product, or the artwork, holds little value for me. It is the thinking and the learning that goes on during the process that fascinates and inspires me.

This realisation is important, and although I do not act upon it for many years, the awareness lies waiting to be nurtured.

Earlier in the day, a friend has telephoned me to invite me for lunch, but I have declined, telling him that I have to work. With a new determination, I clean my brushes, pack up the painting, write a letter of withdrawal to UNISA, and then telephone Arthur.

"Is that invitation to lunch still open?" I ask, "Because I am suddenly not busy anymore!"

It is a good decision. It coincides with a visit from Richard, and we have a wonderful time.

"Cape Town is good for you," he tells me. "You should never have left."

"I had to leave so that I could come back," I answer.

When Richard comes to Cape Town, he does not enjoy socialising with my friends. He prefers for the two of us to spend time alone. He misses being near the sea, and so we look for restaurants that are close to the water, and that look out on the waves. One evening during dinner he absents himself several times from the table.

"Are you okay?" I ask.

"I should probably have myself checked out." He answers. "I'm sure it's nothing to worry about. I just seem to be having a problem with salad and things like that."

"Shall we make you an appointment with my doctor?"

"No, I'll see someone when I get back to Jo'burg." he answered. "I'm sure it's nothing to worry about."

Elske is busy doing a Lifeline course, and I babysit her children for her while she is attending the lectures. The course, on Death and Dying, is based on the work of Elisabeth Kubler-

Ross. Elske shares her readings, and the books from the course, and I am fascinated and inspired by the philosophy which underpins the lectures. Kubler-Ross is a thanatologist who has made a study of the process of death and dying, and her ground-breaking work is thought-provoking. I read as much as I can of her work, and she continues to influence my thinking. She believes that the ability to die with dignity means that one should die in character. She writes that in order to die well, one must live well. She emphasises life, and finding its value, and creating one's own meaning. Her theories help me to make sense of the passages of my own life, and of the processes that I have moved through, and am still confronting. My understanding deepens. So much begins to make sense. There is a shift in my thinking that remains strongly with me today.

Life is its own meaning. And its meaning is in the present. I learn for the first time about the real significance of living in the present, and of making sense of time.

One of my parents' recent neighbours in East London is a Buddhist nun, and she and I share our philosophical interests just before I leave the city. I am introduced to the idea of reincarnation, and although I can not quite grasp the full meaning of it, it makes more sense to me than my rather vagrant Christian upbringing. At school, in Christian national education, I had gained a good knowledge of the bible, but it had never become a personalised knowledge or belief for me. I need to find some philosophical lens through which to view my own life, and the Buddhist notion of Karma seems to offer a chance for me to understand and make sense of so many things. However, I do not know enough about it, and nor do I have a burning need to explore and learn more about it. It sits behind my thinking.

When I begin to read the simple philosophy of Elisabeth Kubbler-Ross, a great deal about life makes sense. There is purpose, there is challenge, and there is the beginning of the understanding of the concept of forgiveness. The long road of taking responsibility for one's own life slowly begins to open to me, and although there are no visible changes, no huge shuddering conversions, I am irrevocably changed.

One evening, Elske brings a friend home with her from the Lifeline course. Joan Malherbe is recently divorced, and has been a counsellor for some years. The three of us sit and talk and

drink wine until late into the night. After that, Joan comes home with Elske once a week after their lectures, and the three of us eat dinner together. Joan works in Cape Town, and catches the train to and from work to her home in the Southern Suburbs. My flat is in Cape Town, and I mostly travel through to the Southern Suburbs in the late afternoon to visit friends. I begin to give her lifts home on a fairly regular basis, and we become friends.

## 1981

I am very happy in my work, although my subject remains unacknowledged. When a job is advertised at an Art Centre in Newlands, I apply, and am successful. In October 1981, I join the staff of the Centre, where I will work for the next seventeen years, and where I will begin my real learning about art teaching.

I move into a bigger flat in Tamboerskloof, one with a balcony and an astounding view of the mountain. My work at the Art Centre is going well. In an environment where every member of staff shares the same belief about the value of Art teaching, and where the passages in the building are a constant display of new and exciting work produced by the hundreds of children who come to the Centre each week, we all thrive.

The principal of the Centre is a non-directive boss who expects nothing less than the best from his staff, and although initially we are all a little nervous of him, we slowly realise the value of the professional freedom that we are afforded. Our classes end at 17:00 in the afternoon, and the staff is never in a hurry to rush home. We sit in the staff room or on the veranda of the beautiful Parker-designed building, and discuss our lives, our work and our students. It is an environment that nurtures the development of the spirit, that demands the development of the teacher, and that encourages colleagues to be friends. We share ideas, help each other display work, and there is an atmosphere of caring and common goals that pervades the very walls of the building.

The parents know that their children are being educated through visual art in a creative and dynamic way, and we are a thriving community. In my professional life, these years will always be a beacon of growth and friendship for me; they are a time when I learn a great

deal about art education, about myself as a practising teacher, and about the value of collegiality.

Joan's house in Harfield Village begins to need some extensive maintenance, and her salary is not able to cover these repairs. I suggest that she comes to stay with me at the flat, puts tenants into the house, and use the rental money for the work that needs to be done. It is an arrangement that makes sense to both of us, and one that becomes even more viable when Dorothy Reyersbach informs us, in her typical 'taking charge' way, that the house beside her is soon to be vacant, and that we will be moving in there!

Aunty D, as we all come to call her, is a modern-day fairy godmother. Her relationship with her own daughter is fraught with problems, and so she simply adopts Elske and me. She knows that I am a calligrapher, and asks me to teach her the Italic style of handwriting. During the many hours that we spend poring over the correct angles of her pen, or the correct slopes of her letters, we forge a loving bond that would last until her death.

And so Joanie and I move from my flat into the house in Albert Road, high on the slopes of Signal Hill, and apart from having my own front door, I now have a garden, and a home that parents can come and stay in, family can visit, and friends can enjoy. Joanie has five children – four boys and a girl – and although they are all younger than I am, we initially became very close, as they visit regularly for lunches or evening suppers on the balmy front veranda, with the mountain on our doorstep, and guinea fowl on the pavement.

I begin to explore Cape Town all over again, and discover the joys of places like Jonkershoek, near Stellenbosch, where we frequently gather friends to spend Sundays lazing beside the river, reading and laughing and playing the guitar, and singing the songs of the sixties and seventies. I love having a real home, and make a garden of lawns and plants. I paint walls, began to learn to cook properly, and feel myself settling more and more into my own life.

Richard's work keeps him from Cape Town for much of this time, and when he comes, he simply arrives on a Friday afternoon, and expects me to be available to him for the whole week end. Although it makes me feel devalued, I am always so delighted to see him that I make sure that I am absolutely available, and frequently break arrangements with friends so that we can go out alone for supper. The problems with his stomach continue, and he finally consults a doctor, returning with a diagnosis of a hiatus hernia.

"You see," I tell him, "All of these months of feeling awful, and you could have been cured by now!"

"Yes, Ma'am," he smiles. We are holding hands like children, and walking along the sea on the Camps Bay beach. We have buried a coke in the sand so that it would still be cool, from the icy Atlantic waters, when we return. We sit and watch the sun go down, and then decide to walk a little distance along the Pipe track, so that we can see the view from higher up.

"Do you ever think about coming back to Cape Town?" I ask.

"Do you ever think about leaving?" he asks in reply.

"No," I answer emphatically. "But that's not fair. You hate Jo'burg and I love Cape Town."

"I do think about coming back, but not yet. You know my plans to retire at fifty. It'll take a few more years before I can come back here."

"I know," I say, feeling the colour begin to fade from the day.

"You could always…"

"No, I can't," I interrupt. "I can't leave Cape Town. Not now."

After a seven-year relationship, Sean finally asks Cheryl to marry him, and we all look forward, with delight, to the wedding. Cheryl openly admits that she wants nothing more from her life than to be a wife and a mother, and she and Sean have been inseparable since she was fourteen, much to the bemused concern of both families. The wedding is planned, dresses are made, and excitement prevails. By this time, my father can finally afford to

provide a proper wedding, and for a daughter who is not pregnant, and he becomes benevolent and proud.

Cheryl's wedding is a very happy time. The family work together to decorate the hall in which the reception will be held, and Douglas and his wife make huge string balls that will be suspended from the ceiling. Anne and I trail ivy through these, and have great fun sliding through long grass to steal pieces of ivy from walls all over East London. Cheryl and Sean leave on honeymoon, and the rest of us return to our lives. At the airport, my mother tells me how much she is missing me, and how much she longs for me to come back to East London.

"I'll never come back, Mom," I tell her. "My work is in Cape Town. I have really good friends there. I am happy there."

"Your father will never change," she responds.

"It's your choice to stay with him, Mom. You could have gone years ago."

"But where would I have gone to?" she asks, and it was a question I can not answer.

At the Art Centre, Sebastian's gentle style of leadership encourages us to open new opportunities, and we begin a quarterly magazine, which contains news of the centre, accessible articles to the parents about the value of art education, and copies of graphic works that had been completed by the children. The staff works during spare times to type the articles, produce the layout for the finished magazine, print and collate the thousands of pages to produce the final, finished article, and it is always done with a sense of fun and shared commitment. Sometimes we toss together a quick supper, and then work late into the night to make sure that the magazine can meet our self-imposed deadlines and posting dates.

I speak to Sebastian about starting some adult education classes. I have been teaching calligraphy in the adult education courses at a high school in Pinelands for a couple of years, and the programme is very successful. Sebastian is delighted with the idea, and within months, we have a busy centre that teaches adults in the evenings. Our secretary takes on

the organisation of the courses, and these soon prove to be so popular that we have to bring in part-time staff to offer alternative courses. I introduce Saturday morning classes for children whose names are on our extensive waiting list, and these are also successful and well-supported by our community.

I am invited to organise the visual art component of the Seventh International Rainbow Week, which is held in Cape Town. Children from all over the world are brought to Cape Town, where they are exposed to learning that is facilitated by South African teachers. We gather together a group of art teachers who are dedicated and passionate about teaching, and spend weeks preparing for the event. I include in this group a teacher from a coloured school who has attended workshops at the Art Centre. It does not occur to us that we are doing anything irregular. Veronica is a gifted teacher, and we need her skills in this group. Years later, Veronica tells me that this experience was one of the highlights of her career. As a coloured teacher, she is excluded from these kinds of opportunities, and her link with the art centre opens up a new world for her. When we invite her to teach on our Saturday morning programme, she admits that on her first morning in a studio, she stands and stares at the children, and can scarcely believe that in apartheid South Africa, she is a coloured woman teaching white children in the Southern Suburbs.

In many ways the art centre breaks new ground. Although these are golden years for white art education, we extend our reach into working with black teachers, and teaching coloured children. The Centre is expanding and thriving. Our pupil number is growing, our staff is growing, and we have to install prefabricated buildings to accommodate our expansion. We decide to start to raise money for extensions to our beloved building. We hold a Living Arts Fair, highlighting the crafters from our community, and it is so successful that we decide to make it an annual event.

Our children come from families that support creative art education, and we are free to explore and experiment with our teaching methods, as long as we do so with integrity, and with the learning of the children at heart.

One afternoon I walk into my studio, prepared to teach a painting lesson on complementary colour to a group of eleven-year-old children, and I am confronted by a tower of stools. While the children are waiting for me to start the lesson, they use the stools to build a structure. As I enter the room, they, caught red-handed, hurriedly return the stools to their rightful places, but I stop them.

"So, you want to build towers?" I ask them.

They look at each other nervously. This is usually the point when a regular teacher will punish them for their bad behaviour. But I do not see this as bad behaviour. It is constructive, problem-solving and experimental. They shuffle nervously.

"Using stools to build your tower is dangerous. If it collapses, one of you could get hurt."

More nervous shuffling. I walk out of the room, and return minutes later with piles of newspaper, and rolls of masking tape.

"So, you wanted to build a tower," I smile at them. "Here you are. I dare you to build one. But you can only use newspaper and masking tape."

For a few moments, the children are confused. They stare at each other, and avoid my gaze. Perhaps they think that this is sarcasm, and that I will soon gather up the newspaper, consider them chastised enough, and continue with my normal lesson.

"Come on," I challenge. "Someone has to be able to work out how to make newspaper strong enough to build a tower."

"We could roll it…." says a little boy called Stephen, who has been sent to extra art classes because he is hyperactive, and a problem to his teachers.

"Can you show us?" I challenge.

Stephen takes a sheet of newspaper, and carefully rolls it into a tight cylinder. One of the other children joins him, and begins another roll. Without a further word, Stephen attaches the two rolls with masking tape.

"We need more," he says.

The children suddenly realised that I am serious, that we are really going to build a tower with newspaper, and within seconds, the entire class is busily making tight cylinders of newspaper. Stephen proudly takes charge, and the tower begins to grow. When four cylinders are joined together, it becomes necessary to construct a base, and there is much debate about how this can be achieved. The children form natural groups. There are those who roll, those who construct, and those who plan. When the base is strengthened, the tower grows a level higher, and once again, the base has to be reinforced. I watch with delight as it grows. Suddenly I realise that we are heading for a problem.

"Hold on a moment," I laugh. The children all stop, and look at me.

"This tower is getting too big for this room." There is a moment's hesitation, and then somebody yells "Outside!"

We move the tower into the courtyard, and without further ado, the children continue to build. When the tower lists one way, engineering at its simplest level comes into play, and a solution is found. When it lists the other, another solution is proposed. The tower grows, and we fetch ladders. This is going to be the highest newspaper tower in the world. Other children come and watch us. Staff members join in the fun. The caretaker laughingly asks how we are going to clean it all up afterwards. There is an air of joy and discovery.

Finally, just before it is time for the children to go home, they declare the tower to be finished. We all stand back and examine it with great pride. It is at least ten feet tall, and stands straight and strong.

"What are we going to do with it now?" asks one of the children.

"What if it rains tonight?" asks another.

"How long do you think it will last?"

In every class there is a smart Alec. The child who tries to have the last word. The one who is usually the most insecure, with the lowest self esteem. In this class, it is David.

"And who gets to take it home?" he asks in a serious voice. I draw him towards me, and whisper in his ear.

"David," I say, "I have a secret plan."

I lean forward, and in one movement, set fire to the lowest rungs of the tower. We stand and watch while it burns to the ground, the children excitedly proclaiming that there are particular parts of brightness. We watch to see which parts will collapse first, and which parts will last the longest. The children whoop in delight. Some of them spontaneously dance around the burning pyre. And then it is nothing but a pile of windy ash. We fetch three brooms, and sweep our afternoon's work into a bin. And it is all over. We return to the studio, and wait for the parents to come to fetch their children. The noise level is high, and excited.

When the parents arrive, they are told in exciting, breathless voices about what we have done in art. In the children's imaginations, the tower has already grown to be twenty feet tall. I suppose when one is little, and one needs a ladder to reach the top, then the top *must* be twenty feet tall.

As Stephen walks passed me, he says awkwardly, "That was such a cool lesson. Can we do it again next week?"

"No, definitely not," I tell him, taking his arm.

"Ah, why not?" he asks, his disappointment obvious.

"Because you have already learnt what the tower could teach you. Next week, you must learn other things."

"Oh, okay, " he says without argument, and races off to join his family.

Ten years later, I am lecturing to a group of student teachers at the Cape Town College of Education, and I tell them this story, in connection with the ability to be flexible, and to always be alert to different possibilities for learning. Emma Coop, one of the students, gasps.

"I was in that class!" she tells me. "I've never forgotten that day. I've told so many people about it!"

"Emma," I ask her. "Can you tell me what you think you learnt, during that process?"

"Oh, there was so much. We learnt about using materials in the best way. We learnt that we could make something exciting out of a newspaper. We learnt that we could work in groups. We learnt to solve engineering problems, balance, and to listen to suggestions from the other children. We didn't know it was a real lesson. We thought that we were just having fun. It is only when I came to think back on it, as I grew older, that I realised what an incredibly valuable experience it was."

None of this occurs to me on the day of the tower. I am simply responding to a moment. Emma makes me aware of the possibilities of the situation, the possibilities that I have completely overlooked ten years earlier.

I smile at her. "And how will you apply this learning to your own teaching?"

"I can't wait to build my own tower!"

"Emma," I tell her soberly, "promise me that you will never build your own tower."

She pulls an obviously confused face. "Why?" she asks.

"Because that tower worked because it grew naturally from what was happening in the class. You can't ever repeat that. It will fail."

"Really?" she asks, beginning to think about my words.

"Find your own tower. It doesn't have to even be a tower. But better still, let it find you." Ten years after my own tower, I am beginning to realise how much I still had to learn.

Emma has developed into an extremely creative teacher, and is currently completing her master's degree with a thesis in the creative education of deaf children.

Living next door to Dorothy Reyersbach proves to be an interesting challenge. She is kind and wise and generous to a fault, and she invades our lives with a tumultuous presence that has us howling with laughter at her sense of the ridiculous, and beaming in joy in the warmth of her love. She crochets cotton edges to placemats, while she sits and listens to us talk. And all of us who know her talk to her about everything. She represents the earth mother, the wise maternal presence who has all of the answers, and when she did not, she helps us to find our own.

She keenly seeks the best that she knows is in each one of us, and then forces us to find those qualities within ourselves. She is also interested in every aspect of our lives, and listens with interest to our stories. There is always a stream of visitors at number 25, and yet Aunty D makes place for everyone. She is the kind of woman that everyone needs in their lives – the wise woman, the listener, the advisor and the guide. When I look back at that time, more than twenty years ago, I wonder what need it was within her that made her model herself into this kind of person. She could not have been older then, than her mid-fifties, and yet she had about her the air of great age. She appeared to make no demands on her friends, and asked for nothing for herself.

1983

In the Eastern Cape, Cheryl's marriage to Sean begins to falter. She has moved with him to live in Grahamstown, so that he can complete a BA degree at Rhodes University. As he becomes more involved in his studies, and gathers around him a group of student friends,

Cheryl begins to feel more and more isolated. She has imagined that once she is married, she can get on with the business of being a wife and a mother, and she finds herself working as a bank teller with regular hours and responsibilities, while Sean enjoys the rich and varied life of being a student. Within two years, they are divorced.

Cheryl is desperately unhappy, because she loves Sean with every fibre of her being. She refuses to come to Cape Town, needing to be near to Sean, in case he changes his mind and takes her back. My parents invite her to come back to East London to live there, and for a while, she agrees. But living at home, after being married and away from all that home represents, was not ideal, and within months, she moves into one of the flats in a block that my father has recently purchased.

## 1984

During this time, the Education Department introduces housing subsidies for women, and Joanie and I decide that, rather than pay rent every month, we will invest money together in a property. It makes financial sense for both of us, because when we eventually sell the house, we will both benefit from the investment. It does not take us long to find a house that we both love, in Oranjezicht in Cape Town, and within a short time, we are living in an old Victorian cottage right below the benevolent mountain.

My mother does not hesitate in showing her disapproval. She does not like any of the friends that I have made in Cape Town, and Joanie is her least favourite. The fact that we have bought property together makes her seethe.

"It's an investment," I tell her. "When we sell the house, we'll both make a profit. It makes more sense than throwing money away in rent."

"Well, I hope you know what you're doing. Your father doesn't like the idea." When my mother disapproves, she still always tells me that my father does not like the idea.

"Mom," I tell her, "I am living in a three-bedroomed house in Oranjezicht, instead of a pokey little flat."

"Yes, but still…"

I know that my mother resents my friends because she feels that they are present in my life in Cape Town, and she is not. She is simply jealous. I try very hard to compensate for this, but nothing seems to ease her underlying dislike of everything that I do in Cape Town. I develop a habit of returning to East London for every school holiday, so that I can try to keep her happy. Nothing seems to help. Just the mention of Elske, or Evelyn and Bruce, or Aunty D or Joanie makes her lip curl involuntarily. She finds Richard acceptable, because he comes from East London, and because she knows that one day I will marry him, and settle down to a life that she understands, but she can not understand why I was taking so long to do it.

I suppose a good way to describe Joanie's family of five children is say that they are 'alternative' young people. Her oldest son is determined to be a millionaire by the time he is thirty, and involves himself in every business deal possible to make this happen, whether it is legal or not. Her second son, and favourite child, Gerard, is a student at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, experimenting with far more than his astounding creative talent. Judith, her daughter, lives with a boyfriend in Cape Town, and her two youngest sons are both still at high school, and living with their father in Pinelands. Although initially they are welcome visitors in our home, it soon becomes clear that they view the place as an extension of their own home, and I find it difficult to accept that they will simply present themselves at any time, work their way through the contents of the fridge, and then leave, and leave their mess for Joan or me to clean.

Although Gerard and I are probably the closest, we also argued the most. I refuse to allow him to smoke dagga in our home, and he becomes angry that I am so 'small-minded'. He purposefully sets out to cause friction between Joanie and me, because he states that too much harmony is a bad thing. He is also Joanie's favourite child, and she finds it difficult to cope with the fact that he is not perfect in my eyes, when he is perfect in her own.

At Christmas time that year, Richard calls to say that he is staying in Johannesburg to work. My parents decide that they will come to Cape Town to stay with us. I hear this news with a

sinking heart. I know that with them will come tension, disapproval, anger and argument. I am determined to make it the best time possible.

Before the holiday, I buy small baskets and paint them white to use for serving the starter. I work an extra night per week teaching calligraphy at Pinelands High School so that I can afford to host my parents with no embarrassment. I plant petunias in the garden so that the house will look pretty and welcoming.

When my parents arrive, I give them my bedroom, and move into the kitchen to sleep. My mother brings her disapproving look with her. Joanie's ex-husband, John, has over the months become a regular and welcome visitor, and he is an instant success with my parents. We spend several pleasant evenings together.

On Christmas day, we are combining families, and hope that everyone would behave. Judith and I spontaneously perform a musical piece that has everyone laughing and the tension seems to ease a little, but when Peter, Joan's youngest son, arrives unexpectedly, the day turns upside down. He has been smoking dagga, and because he is suffering the after-effects and is ravenously hungry, he goes into the dining room and consumes the entire starter, which has been set out in the small baskets down the middle of the long table.

I am furious, but try to remain controlled, because I know that I will have to explain the disappearance of the prawns to the rest of the gathering, while at the same time preserving the Christmas cheer. It goes from bad to worse. John, a recovering alcoholic, decides that one little drink on Christmas day will not hurt, and within half an hour is too drunk to speak. Gerard thinks that my careful planning and decoration is too precious, and systematically sets about destroying it all. The end of the day finds us all in tatters.

1985

My parents return to East London, with my mother's curled lip still intact. Although their visit cannot be called successful, it is also not a complete disaster, and there have been moments of laughter, talking, and closeness.

A new year begins. I think that new years promise new beginnings, as if January brings a compulsory change towards the positive, and so I am hopeful.

My optimism is short-lived. Early in the year, Cheryl calls, and in a small, strangled voice, she tells me that Sean has been killed on his motor cycle, while travelling between Grahamstown and East London. She is shattered. Cheryl has always believed that when Sean qualifies, he will come back to her, and they will live happily ever after. The fact that they are divorced when he dies leaves her strangely dislocated from her ability to grieve. She cannot claim any place at his funeral, nor be comforted by any of the usual support from friends.

When I call Richard to tell him, he is strangely unmoved. "Well, they were divorced," he says. "It's terrible that Sean died, but they weren't married anymore."

"But Cheryl still loved him," I argue.

"Life is hard," is his response. It makes me very angry. The death of such a young, vibrant person is always a tragedy, and Richard seems oblivious to the sadness.

Shortly after that, my mother calls to tell me that my father has been diagnosed with an aortic aneurysm, and needs immediate surgery. There is a possibility that he will die. I call their doctor, the same Mitch from years before, a man who is grieving for his son.

"How bad is he?" I ask.

"Well, let me put it this way. The choice is yours. But if you want to bring flowers to the living, come now."

I make arrangements at work, and fly to East London immediately. My father survives the operation, and within two weeks, I can return to Cape Town. The entire family has gathered in East London for the crisis, Douglas from Durban, and Cheryl from Grahamstown. She is thinner, quieter. There is a tall young man at her side.

"That's William," she says, while he is standing outside the ward, talking with Douglas. "I met him before Sean died. He insisted on coming."

"He seems nice," I smile at her.

"I'm not interested," she answers dispiritedly.

## 1986

The following year, Cheryl surprises even herself by marrying her tall young man, and they move to live in Grahamstown. Less than a year later, she is pregnant, and we all anticipate the birth of the baby with joy and delight. She is finally fulfilling the role that she has always longed for.

## 1987

Two years pass quickly, and I become more and more involved in the workings of the Art Centre, often returning home after dark in the evenings. My teaching feels very settled. I have been itinerant at the same schools for six years, and am confident about what I am doing. Richard continues to come to Cape Town fairly regularly, and our routine becomes comfortable and easy. Almost settled. I begin to write and illustrate a children's book for John's publishing house. He is inspired by an old legend that he wants to revive. For this I am paid an upfront amount instead of royalties, and coming as it does at the time of a relatively new house, it is extremely useful. I never want to be as concerned about money as my father has been. I take on frequent art commissions and the design and rendering of Illuminated manuscripts, so that there will be additional funds available. I also start working on personal mandalas, symbolic and meaningful representations of stages or times in life, drawn in circles. This method of reflection and graphic symbolism continues to be an important part of my inner world. The non-verbal opportunity to reflect and find value and meaning in significant moments of life provides an opportunity to search for and discover intuitive answers.

After my father's recovery, he decides that he will retire, and hand the family business over to Michael, my older sister Anne's husband. He informs Michael of his decision, expecting him to be pleased. The following day, Michael resigns. This is to begin a family rift that lasts until my parents die, and inexplicably splits the bond between Anne and my mother.

By this time, I have been working at the Art Centre for almost eight years, and my confidence as an art teacher has grown tremendously. Although we all work independently, the members of staff are supportive of each other, and in an atmosphere where everyone is teaching different aspects of the same subject, we are constantly stimulated and inspired by each other's work, and by each other's thinking. My friendship with Elske also nurtures my work, as we cross-fertilised each other with ideas and discussion. During the year, we hold several exhibitions, and in this way we draw parents into our philosophy of art education, and encourage their support of creative activities for their children.

In 1988, as well as the regular child art competition that the Sanlam insurance company holds, they introduce a competition for teachers of art. It is a core philosophy at the Centre that we do not enter our children's work into art competitions. Although this is certainly one way of achieving a higher profile, we feel that competition negates the very essence of our work. We do not believe that it is possible to measure a child's success and creative growth by making a judgement of the finished product, when the real learning and problem-solving occurs during the process of creative making. We feel that it is unfair to choose one work that is 'the best', when so many are achieving so much. However, when the competition for art teachers is announced, some of us decide to support it, because it requires that we write lesson briefs, include the children's responses, and explain our teaching philosophies and our approaches to art teaching.

It is an important validation to hear that I have won the competition. The following year, I receive the award again, and after that, Sanlam does not repeat the competition. It seems a great pity, because the competition encourages art teachers to write about their work, and to share their ideas with other art teachers. The value of art education has always been

marginalised, and this competition gives the process a higher profile. But it is short-lived, and we continue our work in relative isolation.

In October, Richard comes to Cape Town for a long week end, and we spend most of the time at the sea, in the late winter weather. October is not yet spring, in Cape Town. One evening, we brave the cold night air to walk hand-in-hand along the promenade in Sea Point.

"Are you going to East London for Christmas?" he asks.

"I always go to East London for Christmas," I answer cynically. "It's not really an option."

"You could choose not to go," he says.

"It's not worth it. You know the drama it would cause."

"Well then, that's when I'll see you next," he says.

"Oh, this year you suddenly have time for Christmas?" I bate him. "I thought you didn't care about those kinds of things…"

"I have to take leave," he answers. "I might as well go and check up on the folks."

It does not really matter to me that he has no more trips to Cape Town that year, because I know that we will see each other in East London for another kind of time. We have learnt to give each other space. It is natural and good. As December approaches and life becomes busier, the telephone calls also trail off, but I do not give it a second thought. We both know that East London is there.

I fly to East London, and as Christmas approaches, and I hear nothing from Richard, I begin to feel very disappointed. My mother makes it worse, by asking every day whether I have heard from him, and whether he has arrived yet. There is just a blank, empty space. Even after all the years of being together, it is not acceptable for a woman to make contact with a man; we have to wait for the man to initiate contact. So I have to wait, and be angry and hurt and confused, but I am powerless to do anything about it. On Christmas day, I wake to a knot of anger. Richard has made no contact. I am bewildered, and wonder whether the time had come to finally end this relationship, and move on with my life. I relive our last night together

in Cape Town, and try to find something that has happened that could possibly make him behave in this way. But it was a particularly warm, loving time, with no stress, and with a tender gentleness between us. I can find no reason for his silence.

My birthday falls between Christmas and New Year, and when there is no contact even on this day, I move from being angry to hurt. Everything that I have been raised to be, prevents me from contacting Richard. Women do not run after men. They do not call them. They never make the first contact. They wait. They wonder. They do not act. They behave like my mother.

And so I do nothing, meekly waiting for Richard to call me, and to explain why he has behaved in this hurtful way, why he has chosen to ignore me, after so many years, and why he has simply disappeared. The new year breaks open, and with it, my heart. I am devastated.

1989

On the fourth of January, my mother bursts into my bedroom early in the morning, her eyes wide and shocked.

"Sandy, Sandy," she says, breathless and agitated, "Guess who's dead!"

And so it is that I learn the reason for Richard's strange absence. So it is that I learn that his hiatus hernia is an incorrect diagnosis, and is in fact stomach cancer. So it is that I hear that Richard had died.

His father tells me "He didn't know until right at the end. Nobody thought to check."

"Why didn't he call me?" I weep.

"He didn't want anyone to see how he was. Not anyone. If he could have chosen, he wouldn't even have been here."

"But he was, and so was I, and nobody told me."

"We couldn't. He made us promise. Please try to understand."


After the funeral, I return to Cape Town in a daze. Everything feels out of place and removed from what it had been before.


Nothing can ever be the same again.


I am numb from shock and grief, and from a deep regret. I do not know then that I am busy learning one of the biggest and most important lessons of my life. I live with the knowledge that I could have called Richard, and that perhaps, if I had

> In this one quick death
> I have lost more than your life;
> I have lost my own.

done that, I could have offered him some comfort in his last days. I, who have explored the writings of Elisabeth Kubbler-Ross, who claims to accept her philosophy as my own, have made an error that cannot ever be undone. I have not acted on my own truth, and have stayed away from making contact with Richard because of pride, because of game-playing, because of smallness.


And in the act of giving in to that smallness, I have lost more than I could ever regain.


The slow year after Richard's death passes underwater. Nothing in my life has prepared me for this kind of grief. I lose momentum in my work. I lose touch with my friends. I lose contact with my own life. I want to be left alone, so that I can mourn, and do nothing else. There is nothing that can replace the darkness. I give in to it like somebody sinking into a fog. The only way to *not* feel the pain is simply to disappear. And so that is what I choose.

I have no idea how I manage to keep my job. I am grateful that my friends remain supportive and give me the space and the time that I need. I am surprised that Joanie manages to survive my frequent outbursts and my unpredictable behaviour. But gradually, the following year, normality returns, as I suppose it always does. Slowly, life comes back to itself, and somehow, so do I. There is not a time when I wake and can say "Ah, look, I have survived," or when I know that I am beginning to be whole again. It just slowly comes back. And life somehow continues, and gives me no option but to continue too. And so, I do.

I learn that one never recovers from the shock of sudden loss. One copes, and one moves on. But the loss is always there. We have holes that are never filled. We just learn how to live around the negative spaces.

## 1990

This year, Nelson Mandela is released from prison. We watch the scenes of his arrival in Cape Town, and his address from the Grand Parade. I am filled with disquiet. His wisdom and dignity make me uncomfortable with my white ignorance, and I am ashamed of being a part of what has happened to this man. I am ashamed of not knowing more. At the Art Centre, politics entered our conversations much more readily, and we all seem to become more aware of the world beyond our comfortable, beautiful, elite double doors.

Anne and Michael visit Cape Town, bringing with them their two growing boys. While the parents go to a wine farm, I take the boys on a whistle stop tour of Cape Town. As we are walking down the avenue in the Gardens, the oldest one questions me about my parents.

"Why did Granny just stop coming to see us?" he asks.

"Why do you say that?" I am very guarded in my response. I have no idea what, or how much these children have been told.

"Once she used to come to all of my rugby matches. Now she doesn't even 'phone us anymore."

"I really miss her," says Bruce, the youngest one. "She always used to come and see us."

"Why don't we buy post cards, and send them to her?" I ask. "Maybe if she gets a post card from each of you, then she'll realise how much you still love her."

"Okay," both boys say in unison. We continue into Adderley Street, and buy a post card for each of them. Then we return to the Gardens, and sit and drank milkshakes at the restaurant while the boys carefully write messages, in big, sloping boy handwriting, to their grandmother.

"Sometimes things happen between grown ups," I tell them. "But I know that your granny loves you very, very much. And I also know that she will never stop."

"Maybe she'll 'phone us when we get back to East London" says Bruce enthusiastically, and my heart aches for these children, and for my mother, caught in this strange rift that no one can really understand or explain.

I have no idea that I have just sealed my own fate with my sister and her husband. When they hear that I have encouraged the children to communicate with my parents, I am swiftly and completely cut out of their lives, and we have no further contact. Once, on a visit to East London, I try to talk about what was happening in the family, but I am asked to leave their home, and not ever to make contact with them again.

1991

Joanie and I sell the house in Oranjezicht, and build a new one in Rondebosch East. We plan it to accommodate both of our families for visits, so that we each have two bedrooms and a bathroom. This means that when one of our families visit, the other will not be too disturbed. We have been living in the house for a few short months when my parents decide to come on holiday.

My father busies himself with all manner of things, drilling and screwing and hanging and doing, while my mother sits and does nothing. She does not approve that Joan and I have become involved in a second joint property venture. She knows that with the death of

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Richard, it is unlikely that I will ever sell the house, and she will not become a part of making our new house a home. It becomes clear that she is involved in a battle with Joanie, and the unpleasantness mounts on a daily basis.

One Sunday afternoon, we drive to the Brass Bell in Kalk Bay for lunch, and afterwards, my father asks me to drive through an area near Lakeside where a new housing development is being planned. We wander through the houses, commenting on the plans, and looking at the layouts, and hardly notice when my father disappears. When he rejoins us, he looks particularly pleased with himself.

"Well," he says, "I've just bought one of these houses!"

We all register shock.

"Which one?" I ask.

"Not built yet," my father replies. "It's a corner plot with a view of the Muizenberg Mountains. When they build, we can choose what we want to do about fittings and fixtures."

I am struck dumb as the full implications of his words hit me. Years ago, I ran away from all of this, but now it is following me to Cape Town, and is about to invade my life again.

My mother is delighted, although she is a little piqued that she has not been consulted before my father signed on the dotted line.

"Typical of him," she sniffs, when we are alone. "Wants what he wants, and doesn't worry about the rest of us."

"What *do* you want, Mom?" I ask her, already knowing the answer.

"Well of course I want to live in Cape Town. I just wish he's asked me first."

My father only buys the house because he knows that my mother wants to live in Cape Town. He is giving in to her, and fitting in to a plan that she has no doubt hatched years before. My mother has a way of presenting her ideas to my father as if they are his ideas, and she always manages to be surprised and delighted when he suggests, as if for the very first time, what she has long ago decided that she wants.

And so they return to East London briefly, to sell their house there, and to settle what affairs they can. By this time, their relationship with Anne has degenerated in to a state of total silence, and they do not even see her before they leave.

My parents move to Cape Town, and spend three months living with us while their house is being built. It is a difficult and stressful time, as my mother tries constantly to reassert her control over me, and blames Joan for her inability to do this. She tries every manipulative trick that she can find, and although I know exactly what she was doing I find it impossible to confront her. I take to spending more and more time at work, busying myself with as much as I can so that I will not have to come home to the tension.

During this time, Cheryl's second daughter is born. Her family is living in Greytown now, and she is happy and active. Our lives are so far apart. We speak seldom, because she does not have a home telephone, and there are no cell 'phones to make contact easy and regular.

### 1992

Finally, my parents' new home is ready, and they move in, giving us the space to try to restore some balance and harmony. But they live in Cape Town now, and my world is different because of this. I teach Graphic Communication at the Art Centre during the day, and Calligraphy at both Pinelands High School and the Art Centre in the evenings. I make an illuminated manuscript for the mayor of Pinelands, and as word spreads, began to have regular calligraphic commissions. I begin to be too busy. I begin to feel that my work is swallowing me up, and that I have no space to breathe. I begin to need some kind of renewal, but at the end of the day, there is no time for any kind of renewal, because I am working or exhausted. This is a pattern that is beginning to emerge in my life. When I do not

feel that I am coping, I make myself too busy to think. I do not know it or recognise it at the time. I simply keep doing it.

With my parents living in Cape Town, part of every week end has to be dedicated to visits with them. There is no time for my own being, my own life. But because I have made myself so busy, I can expect no assistance from anyone else. I cannot withdraw from the things that I have started at the Art Centre. I cannot simply stop being what I have become. I have no idea how to cope with what I have done to my own life.

One day, I am paging through a brochure from the University of Cape Town, and find the description for a full-time diploma in Special Education. When I reflect, I find that I always make life-changing decisions instantly, working on an obviously silent intuitive process. Deciding what to wear takes me a lot longer. By the time I arrive home from work that day, I have established that I have accumulated enough leave to have a whole year's study leave on full salary, and have telephoned the university to ask them to post application forms to me.  Sebastian is supportive, and at the beginning of the next year, I cut off my hair, have it frizzed, buy some silly clothes, and become a full-time student again. I am thirty five.

1993

On the first day at the university, I discover that I am one of six white students in a group of twenty seven. The rest of the students are coloured or black. This is my first exposure to real multi-racial living. Up to this moment, I have proclaimed myself a liberal, and have publicly denounced apartheid, but have not had any real contact with black or coloured people in the textures of their own lives. Education in my world is a white art centre with white children, and my world is very much built around education. Suddenly I am in a group of people who are my equals, who are lively, wonderful human beings, and who are far away from my comfort zone of whiteness.

The work is different, the days are different, the people are different, and my world becomes light again. Within weeks, Penny, one of the white students from Durban, and I adopt the three Shangaan students who have travelled to Cape Town, leaving their families behind in

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*Gazankulu*. Most afternoons find us sprawled on my lounge floor, listening to music and drinking wine. Discussing Piaget and Vygotsky as if they are old friends. Enjoying being silly. I make mandalas that recognised the value of laughter.

Slowly the group grows bigger and bigger, and Joanie becomes used to coming home from work to find the house full of people of every description. Tsakane Dlamini, a tall Shangaan woman who has left behind her husband and two children to come to study in Cape Town, develops a particular affinity for Joanie, and picks her up and gently swings her around, telling her that she is their "Cape Town Mother".

Through my friendships with these students, I come to understand, for the first time in my life, what apartheid has done to our people. Apart from the areas of education, personal space and living conditions, there is the area of personal beliefs in their own subordination, in shattered self esteems, that keeps them in a place of separateness, which makes them believe that they are not good enough to move beyond that place. While politicians have been clamouring for the release of Mandela from an imprisonment of twenty seven years, and are now moving towards democratic elections, these wonderful human beings are no less imprisoned by a system that has forced them to believe that they are worth less, can do less, and can BE less.

Their release will take much longer, and be far more complicated and difficult, than turning a lock, and opening a key, or registering a vote.

These are things I have never thought about before, and have never really understood. These are things that now curl deep in my belly, and make me ashamed that I have been so ignorant. I do not need to resolve to be different from now on. I just am.

Because Joanie, Penny and I are not politically motivated in our actions, our friendships with the black students grow easily and naturally. They move into our lives in the simple way that new friends do, and we share meals and life histories and stories. We study together, eat

together, and get drunk together. I have missed out on the silliness of student life the first time around, and as I approach middle age, I discover it, and excel.

In the second half of the year, we begin our remedial teaching practice, and I work with a child from Delft, a dangerous area on the Cape Flats. He is fourteen, and cannot read or do mathematics. It seems pointless to me to expect this child to enjoy mathematics, when he has already failed this subject so many times that his self-esteem is rock bottom. He feels stupid and disempowered. For our first meeting, I take a large lump of clay.

"We're going to make pots." I tell him. "Two pots." I make two unequal balls from the clay.

"Which one do you think will make the bigger pot?"

He stares at me as if I am crazy. Everyone knows the answer to that! He points at the bigger lump.

"Why?" I ask.

"Because it's bigger," he tells me.

"How much bigger?"

"I dunno." He looks confused.

So we spend a pleasant hour making pinch pots, and chatting about his family. I tell him some stories about mine, and about my own difficulties at school, especially with mathematics when I was his age. When he has used the two balls of clay, and has made two pots, I ask again, "How much bigger is this pot than the other one?"

"I can't tell you," he says, but this time he smiles at me.

"How can we find out?"

He thinks for a while.

"We could weigh them?"

So we weigh the pots, and then we take the weight of the smallest one from the weight of the biggest one, and Arnold naturally has understood what he is doing, and he gets the answer right. It makes sense to him. He is delighted, but the lesson is not yet over. We discuss geometric design, and he spends another while decorating his pot with lines and diagonal shapes. At the end of this time, I ask him to count all of the lines on one pot, and add them to the number of lines on the other pot. Before he has even started, his face breaks open in a smile.

"You're tricking me into doing maths!" he laughs.

"Come on," I laugh with him, "add the lines."

After that first meeting, I see Arnold twice a week, and although we do concentrate on his reading and numeracy skills, I try each time to bring in some kind of art activity, so that the pressure is removed. At the end of our time together, his mother telephones me, and asks me if they can come and see me at home. Arnold arrives with his mother and father, and all of them laden with gifts. He has improved tremendously, but more than anything, his self esteem is beginning to heal, and he is beginning to believe in himself again.

"I caught him reading the newspaper the other day," his mother tells me. "He's never done that before!" Arnold looks delightedly embarrassed and pleased with himself.

"He's going to join my business at the end of next year," his father tells me.

"I'm a panel beater."

"That's wonderful," I smile, although my heart sinks. William will be only just sixteen at that time. "Are you good at panel beating, Arnold?"

"I dunno," he shrugs awkwardly. "I've never tried."

I also work with the children from a school that initially catered for children with cerebral palsy, but which has opened its doors to children with learning difficulties. While we are learning how to read, I teach them fabric painting, and how to fire pots in a sawdust kiln. We

make masks and strut around the school playground, rhythmically chanting, counting, laughing.

I am determined that these children will not lose out on further creative experiences, and discuss this with Sebastian at the Art Centre. Once again, he agrees, and from the following year, the children from the school are bussed to the Art Centre once a week for regular structured art lessons. We also extend our reach, and include a school that caters for coloured cerebral palsied children. We visit them on their own premises once a week, working with children who have so little control over their muscles that they have to use head pointers, bands that are attached around their heads, and to which we attach coloured pastels and paint brushes, so that they can make their pictures.

My year of being a student passes quickly, including as it does such rich and varied learning experiences, and the following year, I return to the Art Centre, renewed and invigorated by my time away. I am more convinced than ever that art education offers an avenue of learning and personal development that cannot be matched by any other subject, and I re-enter my work with renewed passion.

1994

As a result of my student days, the University of Cape Town invites me to be a part-time art lecturer for their Post Graduate Certificate in Education Course, and, as I am easily able to accommodate it into my work load, Sebastian has no objection. On Mondays, I drive up the hill to the University, full of energy for the work that I am doing with these teachers in training.

Lecturing at the University and working at the Art Centre at the same time is an interesting experience, and one that extends me professionally. In effect, I am training these young students for my own job, and so I have to examine what my work embraces. It is necessary to unpack the skills that are required, and I have to think about my own practice, and about the practice of the colleagues whom I admire, so that I can provide my young charges with a strong model. This is a significant time for me, because I have to verbalise what I am doing as a teacher, and for the first time in my life, I begin to consider, in different ways, my work.

Looking back at this time now, I realise that this early reflection was quite a superficial practice. I sought rather the skills that I believed that the teachers would need, and tried to find the best ways to quickly, in the limited time at my disposal, give them the tools to develop these. I remain arrogantly, blindly confident about my own skills as a teacher. I am doing well, I am contributing to the growth and development of the Art Centre, my pupils enjoy my classes, and I have a sound reputation in the art teaching community. It does not ever occur to me that all of these things can improve and deepen.

At the Art Centre, I approach the principal, and tell him that I would like to introduce Graphic Communication as a matriculation subject. I have been working with the senior students for a year, and enjoy the commitment that comes from the young people who are taking art as a matriculation subject.  He agrees, and we begin to plan and advertise the course. In the first year, we have too many applicants, and I am able to select a group of students who show exceptional promise. My boss, ever-supportive, invests in a computer for my studio. I have no idea how to use this tool, even as a replacement for my electric typewriter. My work takes on new meaning as my students begin to explore their particular talents in a discipline that is demanding and requires an application that is different from the extra-curricular classes that I have been teaching. The students teach me to use the computer, and I research advertising agencies, and build the portfolio requirements from tertiary institutions where my students are ultimately headed, into my course. With the more senior students, I slip easily from being 'Miss Johnson' to 'Sandy', and within months, notice that the other teachers at the Centre are encouraging their students to call them by their first names as well.

The principal is embarking on his Ph D in Art History, and while we respect and admire him, it is always from a distance. He is a reserved man who must find it quite difficult to cope with his extrovert and sometimes very alternative staff, but he always encourages us to follow what we believe is educationally sound, and so, in a way, we are engaged in a kind of constant action research. Collegial conversations provide us all with shared learning, as advice is sought and given, ideas are discussed, and new materials and techniques are explored in an environment that is safe, sound and focuses on art education.

This is the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, and we mark the day with a great celebration. A group of friends gather at our home, and we enjoy a typically South African meal together. Then we dress in South African colours, and walk as a group to the church just over the bridge, where we stand in a queue to vote, and laugh and have a wonderful time with the other people who are also waiting to make their marks, many of them for the first time ever. It is a day that had an undercurrent of joy and hope and change, and we are all excited by the possibilities. Nelson Mandela is fast becoming an icon, and we admire him, and are grateful to him.

While we stand in the peaceful, happy queue, we joke about the dire warnings that there will be no more electricity, that there will be a shortage of food, and that we should all be prepared for the worst. On that day, in a humble suburb like Rondebosch East, we are all prepared only for the best, and we bring that joyousness with us. Finally, we are neighbours and can begin to be friends. It is an exciting time, and one that I shall always remember with a kind of awe.

During this year a lecturer at the Cape Town College of Education invites me to be the external moderator for the third year students, and I am intrigued at the approach to art-making for education students. The mark is awarded, not for the end result, but for the learning that occurs along the way, and by the demonstration of the student's understanding of the process. The process is always more important than the product in child art, and I am fascinated to see how this is being employed to teach young adults about art teaching. In my own final year at the Teachers' College, we were steeped in our art-making, and had enjoyed the luxury of arts processes all day long on a daily basis. These third year students have a few lectures a week, crammed between all of the other subjects in the curriculum, and yet they are beginning to understand the value of the creative process for small children.

I encourage the introduction of inset teacher training courses at the Art Centre, and we hold workshops where we introduce practical sessions with the theoretical underpinnings of a sound art teaching philosophy.  These workshops prove to be tremendously popular, and are well attended by teachers from 'model C' schools, where parents provide partial funding for an improved education for their children. We also host teachers from schools on the Cape Flats, which are largely state-funded and impoverished. I find my work absorbing, and spend

a great deal of time at the Art Centre. Our Saturday morning classes are booming, our adult art courses are very successful, our quarterly magazine is well-received by parents and students, and my Graphic Design classes are producing the kinds of results that we are delighted to send out from the Art Centre.

I know that in many ways I am using work to fill up the spaces that Richard still leaves in my thinking and in my life, but I believe that it is a good filling of space, and it is contributing to my teaching in a positive way. Work has become a way for me to cope with life. While I am busy, I do not need to think too much.

My private life is filled with visiting my parents, who have moved to Cape Town without knowing anyone here but my friends, whom my mother did not like at the best of times. I know that if I am not spending time with my parents, they are mostly alone. My mother justifies their move to Cape Town by telling me that Cheryl's husband is always being transferred from one city to another, which indeed he is, and so there is no stability for them there. Douglas and his family have moved to Johannesburg, and both of my parents find the altitude there very difficult to cope with. My mother had to get away from East London. She could not tolerate being in the same city as Anne, knowing that she might meet her at any time, and be ignored by her own daughter.  So Cape Town was their obvious choice.

I resent being made responsible for their well-being, and their intrusion in my life. I try to encourage them to join the Association for Retired People and Pensioners. I hope that they will find something, or someone, that will take some of the pressure off of me. For months they resist.

"I don't want to sit and talk to a crowd of old people," my mother says hotly. "I'd rather stay at home, thank you very much."

In spring that year, the Association advertises a bus trip to view the spring flowers, and I once again raise the possibility that my parents might enjoy the outing. Grudgingly, they agree to let me make a booking for them, and they have a wonderful time. They immediately

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join the group, and much to my relief and gratitude, are soon playing Bingo once a month, enjoying regular *braais* with the members, and they slowly begin to make friends with some of the other old folk.

At Christmas time, Douglas and Lana come to visit with their two young children, and it is a happy time of laughing at the antics of growing human beings who are exploring their own worlds. There is always a tension between my mother and Lana, and we are guarded and careful, but the time passes without any major upheavals.

Cheryl has produced a second daughter, and we visit fairly regularly. Sometimes during the school holidays, I drive my parents to East London, where Cheryl and her family have returned to live, after her husband has once again been transferred. Sometimes they will drive to Cape Town to visit us. I am close to these two small girls, and enjoy making them pretty clothes. Cheryl has never been very interested in clothes, even for herself, and so I have a wonderful time knitting complicated Fair Isle jerseys for the girls, sewing track suits and dresses for them, and trying to turn them into little girls, while their mother laughingly encourages them to be tomboys.

She is a natural mother, and although she is often quite outrageous with her children, they are confident, happy little beings. Cheryl's marriage to William seems stable, and she does not seem to mind that they are always broke, that they never stay in one place for longer than a year, and that she seems to spend her time packing and unpacking her life into boxes. She wants nothing more. Her life is what she had always wanted it to be, and in many ways I envy her. Her children laugh a great deal, and are naughty and active and lovely.

1996

At the Art Centre, the principal and I often spend the last part of the day drinking a cup of tea together when the rest of the staff has already left to go home. These evenings are very meaningful to me. He has a deep wisdom about many things in life, and we discuss subjects that are wide and varied, from new trends in art teaching to the concept of forgiveness. He

has an ability to stay silent during a conversation, which encourages us to say much more than we ever intended.

And so it is that one night we are in the staff room, chatting about nothing and everything, that I find myself telling him that I am thinking of changing jobs. I have hardly realised this myself. I love my work. I love my students. But I am approaching forty, and I have been doing the same work for years. There is nothing new, and no renewal. I do not want to stay where I am, doing the same thing for the rest of my life, and the Education Department does not offer promotion posts at Art Centres, where there are so few members of staff. The post of Head of Department has been handed to a man some years before, despite my internal appointment to this post at the Art Centre. Gender still plays a large part in these appointments.

"Don't do anything yet," he tells me. I look at him in surprise.

"I'm thinking of taking the package," he says. "You could apply for the principal's job here."

I am shocked. Who can imagine the Art Centre without our current boss? He is the silent force who keeps us all level, who makes sure that, despite all of our differences, we function as one. I have several times acted as the Head of Department, and twice as principal, but that was only acting, and not the real thing. I go home hollow and scared. I cannot help wondering whether the National Department of Education has really considered who they will be losing when they offered the severance packages to rid themselves of too many staff members.

In time, the principal shares this information with the rest of the staff, and John, the Head of Department, and I both decide to apply for the job. We have become friends, and we laughingly tease about the Department's gender bias by saying "Let the best man win…" The short list is announced, and John and I are both selected to be interviewed. There are four other names on the list.

I do not wish to write about what transpires. It is long and unwieldy, and unfair to the successful applicant. Suffice it to say that the Department of Education sees fit to ignore their own policies, and to behave in a very irregular manner. Procedures are not followed, and an appointment is made that was surprising, to say the least. The applicant applied late, did not go through the departmental process of being shortlisted, and is the personal friend of the subject advisor who is on the selection panel. John and I dispute the process of the new appointment, and the dispute continues for six months. It is a time that threatens to tear the Art Centre apart, and when we realise how destructive the process is becoming, we withdraw our complaint, for the sake of the Centre that we both love so much.

John has a nervous breakdown. My back, which has continued to plague me through years of physiotherapy, radium treatment, bamboo injections into the spine, chiropractic manipulations, and several other alternative health treatments, finally simply refuses to support me, and I can hardly stand up straight. I consult a surgeon, who insists on a spinal fusion. This will require six months away from work. The new principal arrives at the Art Centre, which is a gracious, beautifully cared-for old building, and paints her office door red.

I invite her to my home, and she comes, and we spend many hours working through the administrative workings of the Art Centre. I make lists for her of processes and departmental procedures, because she has not before worked for the Department of Education. I try to get past my anger and rejection of the Department of Education, to help her to assume her role as the new principal. It is a very hard thing to do, when I am still dealing with so many unresolved emotions, but it is important, because she needs to be prepared, and the Art Centre needs to prevail.

If it is true that when one dies, one's life flashes before one's eyes, then I am calm about the fact that during these weeks, for once in my life, I knowingly do the right thing with as much integrity as I possess. It is a time of great learning for me.

A spinal fusion requires the removal of bone from a hip, and the packing of this bone around the area of the spine that is to be fused. Titanium rods and screws are inserted, and the healing process is slow and painful. One may not sit for six weeks after the operation. One may not do much at all, apart from lie on a bed, or walk. It is impossible to do any action that requires any kind of bending. It is impossible to lift anything heavier than a daily newspaper. It is a time that dislocates me from the world.

Evelyn brings me audio books, and I lie and listen to "A Year in Provence" by Henry Maille, and am more dislocated. Friends come and visit, and sit upright while I lie flat. They bring me news of the world, of which I cannot be a part, and I am further removed. Depression engulfs me, but this time, I have a fairly clear and objective understanding of where it comes from, and so I just wait, and know that it would pass. There are even moments that leave me laughing at myself. I dress in the mornings, finding all sorts of ingenious ways to cope with putting on clothes, and am perplexed when it comes to putting on socks and shoes. Joanie finds me weeping on my bed, because it is all just too much for me, and then we laugh at the ridiculousness of it all. In the middle of all of this, I have a telephone call from one of the lecturers who is working in the Art Department at the Cape Town College of Education.

"I am taking the package," he tells me. "So is Stan. Why don't you apply for one of our jobs?"

"Why on earth would I want to work there?" I ask him. "I don't know a single happy person who works there. All of the really committed people are taking the package."

"That's why we want you to apply. And I am going to keep on at you until you agree to do it."

"But I love working at the Art Centre," I tell him, feeling weak at the thought of starting something completely new, somewhere completely new.

I have even toyed with the idea of taking the package myself. I feel no loyalty to the Department of Education. They have betrayed the Art Centre and John and me with their powerful show of nepotism. The arrogant and dismissive way that they treated us, after so many years of loyal and committed service, still leaves me reeling and disempowered. I am also unsure of how I will be received back on to the staff by the new principal, who must herself be angered by the dispute.

"Just apply," he says. "There are no guarantees. But who knows…"

"I'll think about it," I say weakly. I have no energy left to argue anything with anyone. I need every bit of strength I have to lift a cup of coffee, hold a hair brush, survive the next hour.

"No," he says. "Don't think about it. Do it."

And so I do, in a standing position, and then lie on my back, with a cushion under my knees, and ponder life for many long, long hours. What do I want? What do I want to do? And where do I go from here? I have absolutely no idea.

A telephone call from the rector informs me that I have been shortlisted for the appointment, and that I should present myself for an interview in four days' time. I panic that I have not been to a hairdresser in four months. That I have nothing to wear. That I will not be able to find anything to wear, because I cannot go shopping. That I do not really want the job in the first place.

I panic because I do not know what my life is all about any more. I used to be so sure. I was being meaningful in my work and making a real contribution. But the Department of Education has negated all of that, and made me worthless. I am not sure that I have the strength to start in another place, in another kind of work, all over again.

I discover that I do not care. I give up on wanting anything, and want nothing.

On the day of the interview, I arrive at the College in plenty of time, and then find, to my horror, that the interviews are being held upstairs. I have not climbed a flight of stairs since the operation. I have to work my way slowly, embarrassingly, up two flights of stairs, and am late. When I arrive at the location, I am told that the interviews are running late and that I will have to wait for twenty minutes. I cannot sit down. I stand in the upper foyer. I read every

notice on the notice board. Then I read them again. I talk to a young woman who had also been shortlisted.

Finally I am called in to a room filled with people.

"Please sit down," the rector invites.

"No thank you," I answer, and then realise how ridiculous that must sound. How ridiculous the whole situation is. I am in a room full of people who are about to decide on my future, and they have no idea that I am not being difficult. I simply cannot sit down. I have to suppress an urge to laugh hysterically.

They ask about my approach to art teaching, about my philosophy of education, about my level of commitment. And I say all of the things that everyone always says at interviews. That I am committed and dedicated. That I am a hard worker. That I will try my best to be my best. And then I leave, mainly because I cannot stand any more. Joanie drives me home, and I return to my bed with a sense of unreality.

Half an hour later, the rector calls.

"Congratulations," he says. "You've got the job."

I send in my letter of resignation to the Art Centre, and stare at the ceiling for days. I am still not convinced that I am doing the right thing. But the dispute with the Department of Education has left me with a bitter taste about my professional life. Perhaps, I decide, it will be better to work with young adults, in a different place, and with different values. Perhaps there, it will not matter so much.

### 1998

Catherine Hendrikse and I are appointed together to run the Art Department of the Cape Town College of Education. She is a young and energetic teacher with a superb intellect and a deep knowledge of her subject. Together we create a course that is strong on theory and practice. For the first time in my life, I find myself working closely with someone who shares

the same passion and belief in art education and in the value of critical thinking. Even at the Art Centre, although the staff had all been art teachers, they were working in their particular disciplines or age groups, and none of us team-taught or shared the same classes.

The synergy between Catherine and me is quite remarkable. We both have energy and enthusiasm, and the building rings with music and laughter, as the students learn to know their new lecturers. Because Catherine and I are both new, and do not really know what is expected of us, we also have no limits, and in those first years, everything becomes possible. Supported and encouraged by the rector, we build on the strong tradition of the course, and use our own particular strengths to develop it.

The rest of the staff remains a mystery to me. They see us as separate, and we are not included in staff discussions or meetings. They do not encourage our participation. Catherine and I invite them to a lunch in the art department, but only a handful of them come. They are not unfriendly. They are just distant. A few of them are hostile, and while I find it hard to accept this attitude from people who do not know us, and who have not given us the time to prove ourselves, Catherine and I are busy creating our course, and we do not have too much time to think about these things.

In reality, I miss the attitude of care that was so strong at the art centre. I learn that people at an institution such as this are not really any different from the world at large. There are people who are kind. There are people who are unfriendly. And there are people who will intentionally cause harm, so that they can look better. I learn who to avoid, and who to acknowledge. It is a difficult time in terms of how I feel about joining this institution. I miss the quality of joy that I found at the art centre. I miss the friendships that developed over so many years. I miss the feeling of knowing that I am doing my work well. In this new world, I am not even sure what work lies before me.

In the safety of the art department, Catherine and I learn to know and to like and respect each other, and we quickly develop a synergy that I have never again experienced. We support each other's strengths, and balance each other's weaknesses. We share a commitment to developing a strong and valuable course. We both hold similar beliefs about art education.

We introduce the students to form by taking them to the beach, and letting them build vast sand sculptures. We take them to exhibitions and galleries, and encourage them to come to exhibition openings with us, so that they can hear the opening addresses. We explore Cape Town through the eyes of developing art teachers, and seize every opportunity for learning that we can lay our hands on. I introduce a Field Study trip to the craft areas of the Southern Cape, and then on to the Karoo, and the mystery of the Owl House and the Outsider artist Helen Martins. This is to prove a significant and deep learning experience for our students, and so the trip becomes an integral part of the course in the years that follow. We send them to teach art lessons at schools where they are able to refine their teaching skills, and where they can learn from experienced art teachers who are committed to meaningful art education.

Catherine and I take it in turns to visit one or two students a week, and to watch them while they are teaching. Afterwards, we examine their 'streaks and weaks' as we called them, and spend time discussing their lessons with the students. Although this discussion is essentially about the lessons that the students are teaching, and the ways in which they are teaching, I find that I am learning almost as much as they are. I learn what I should incorporate into my next lecture, and what I should stress about the art teaching process. I learn what the students do not know and what I should encourage them to learn. I learn about my students, and about who they are, and how it is possible for them to teach. I love this part of my work. After a student lesson, it is just me, and one or two students, and the world of teaching that we are thinking deeply about, learning from, and coming to grips with.

My father's health has continued to deteriorate, and both my mother and I are almost constantly on medical call. He has once again had serious surgery, and has aspirated on the operating table. This means that his lungs have been burnt by stomach acid, and he remains frail and weak for the rest of his life. My mother takes on the burden with stoic acceptance, but she herself is become less able to cope with running a home. She is plagued with serious chest complaints and backache, and is chronically depressed. My parents celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary in March, and although we plan and hold a large party, with family gathered from all over the country, my father is silent and small at the luncheon, and it is my mother who, for the first time in her life, makes a speech, and thanks her guests for their presence. My mother and father have learnt to live together, and in some ways, even to

be close. They are still governed by the rules that were forged in their home during the early years of their marriage, and there is never any question that my father, even in his severely weakened state, is the boss, and the decision-maker.

My mother has never managed to build a relationship with my brother's wife, and I have also found this difficult. Lana has decided that Joan and I must be homosexual, and her children, who are grown by this time, admit that she refers to me as their gay aunt in Cape Town. I am shaken at this blatant judgement, and saddened that she, and consequently my brother, are not able to understand that Joanie and I have simply shared a wonderful friendship. I am distressed that any member of my family can make such a stereotypical decision. I have many gay friends, and love them dearly. They have taught me the value of personal honesty and integrity. If I was gay I would have openly lived this lifestyle. It is a great loss to me that someone who should be close to me cannot see the value of Joanie, and is not able to share the joy and the warm care of our friendship.

Since my parents' move to Cape Town, I have once again become my mother's confidante and support. When they lose all of their savings in an investment that is unwisely made by their broker, they come to rely financially on me. I find it a tremendous strain, starting a new job, and trying to manage my own and their lives. With the added financial burden of assisting them, I have to take on more and more freelance work. There are times when I am aware that I am burning the candle at both ends and in the middle, but I am avoiding examining my life too closely, for fear of what I might find. There is strain everywhere in my life. Joanie is in the process of retiring, my parents are growing more frail and demanding, but refuse to consider moving to a secure senior citizen's village, and I am trying to manage it all. The only area that gives me any joy, that brings light and laughter to my life, is my work, and so once again, it is to my work that I turn, and allow being busy to engulf me.

One of the most difficult things that this year brings for me is the death of Dorothy Reyersbach, our dear Aunty D. She has been ailing for some months, and she is aware that she is about to die. One afternoon she tosses an exquisite small cloth bag across the table at me.

"I want you to have this," she tells me. I open the bag, and am overwhelmed to discover that it contains her engagement ring, a simple and beautiful arrangement of large diamonds set between two rows of dark sapphires.

Previously, my first response would have been to refuse, to encourage her to keep this piece of jewellery that she wore every day. I am grateful for the understanding that Elisabeth Kubbler-Ross has provided.

"Are you saying that you are ready to pass this on?" I ask her.

"I want you to have it," she says.

"And what about your daughter, Aunty D?"

"That's why I want you to have it now."

I put the ring on my finger, and looked at her through tear-filled eyes.

"I will always treasure it," I tell her. "It is a very special gift. Thank you."

My mother, with a twisted lip, insists that I have the ring valued immediately for insurance purposes. I refuse.

"I don't want to know what its monetary value is," I tell her, knowing that she will be appalled. "I am not going to insure the ring. I am going to wear it."

I do not tell my mother that the worth of the ring is not in diamonds and sapphires, but in love, and that I know that Aunty D is going to die, and that it will be in tribute to her when I wear it. My mother's hands are crammed with clusters of diamonds that represent my father's repentance after his big misdemeanours. I do not care how many she leaves me. I will never wear them.

Elske and I spend as much time as we can with Aunty D, but she has moved to a retirement village in Somerset West, and so our times together are limited to week end trips. Although we know that she is in the process of dying, when she finally stops breathing, we are devastated. Elske and Aunty D and I have forged a remarkably strong bond, one that no longer needs explanation or talking. Her last week end is particularly difficult for all of us. Elske moves into her flat to care for her, and spends the time surrounding her with love. Joanie and I drive out and spent Saturday there. At times, we sit beside her as she lies, silent and watchful, in her bed, and at others, we stand on her balcony, and draw deep breaths of fresh air. There is a particular smell to the dying. It is the sweetness of a life that is ending, and also its sourness.

When I leave, I kneel beside the bed, and hold both of her hands in my own. I know that it will be the last time that I see her.

"Travel well, Aunty D." I tell her. "You have earned this rest. Thank you for what you have been to me."

She puts her palms together in a humble Thai greeting.

"Sa wa di ka" she says.

"Sa wa di" I answer, in the way that she has taught me.

Elske stays the night.

"I want to be here in case she needs me," she says. "Christ, it's difficult." Elske's pain shows in every line on her face. "I owe her this, Sand," she tells me.

But Aunty D chooses to die three days later, while her strange and estranged daughter sits beside her, frantically quoting the Lord's Prayer, because she has nothing else to say to her mother.

Even although we are expecting her death, when Aunty D dies, something crosses over and out of our lives. A remarkable and wonderful woman has created an important space for us, and when she is no longer there, the space becomes a vacuum, and we are all devastated.

I am grateful that I have my work. I can be busy. No one will ever be able to understand how this death of this funny, eccentric old lady has left me poorer and bereft. She is not my mother, my grandmother or my aunt. But she is all of those things, and I grieve for her and am grateful to her for all that she has taught me about myself, and about being in the world.

The one remaining art lecturer at the College who has not taken the package resigns at the end of the first year that Catherine and I join the staff. She admits that she cannot cope with our combined energy. Her workload is shared between Catherine and me, and we begin our second year with a little more knowledge, a little more wisdom, and as much enthusiasm.

Our group of students is a remarkable gathering of young people.  We are both looking forward to a promising and exciting time, where we can explore more deeply this strange world of teaching teachers. It is a wonderful time for both of us, because we are bringing everything that we have ever learnt into our work with the students, and it is showing results. We show them films, we take them to exhibitions, we share books and philosophies, we sculpt sand on beaches. We explore the world through the eyes of new art-makers. The students seem to respond to our determination to have joy and growth on the course, and they present as a happy group who often speak of their delight and enjoyment. We are working more confidently at the college, and with our students, and are beginning to realise that our experience as teachers is adding tremendous value to our work with the students. We had both assumed that we were inadequately academically equipped for the job, but in many ways, our previous jobs had given us the understanding of our work that was perhaps more important than an academic qualification.

Catherine is delighted when she falls pregnant with her second child, and although I am dismayed at the thought of having to work without her, I share her joy. She plans to take six months away from work around the birth of her baby, and then to return, with a care-giver to assist her with the newborn. Nothing can hold us back.

We have settled into a routine in our work that has defined our roles, and both of us are comfortable in them. We are teaching what we know best. Neither of us has yet considered the possibility that we need to learn more, because we are still in the process of finding ourselves in this world of tertiary education. We rely on our content knowledge, and on our beliefs about art education. We have a shared belief that our most important roles are to extend our students. We have not yet considered the possibility, or the necessity, of extending ourselves.

In May that year, we invite an exciting young artist, Johan Hartog, to hold an exhibition on our premises. His work shows his deep bereavement at the political events in our country, and he examines the many deaths in Richmond, Natal, with graphic and visual detail. The students assist him as he installs shrines to dying fathers, dead mothers and forgotten children. We are all irrevocably affected by his work, and the students learn a great deal about the power of non-visual communication and about installation art.

During the mounting of this exhibition, the father of one of the students dies suddenly. The students, surrounded by the exhibition of anonymous deaths of four thousand people in Richmond, are profoundly affected by the death of someone so close to them, and the group draws together and becomes a tight unit. We all weep with Lucy, and we offer her what support we can as she slowly comes to terms with her loss.

Within a week, my own mother is ill, but refuses to see a doctor.

"It's only a chest cold," she tells me determinedly. "I'll be all right." I drive out every night, taking food for their supper, and encourage her to see a doctor. Finally, when the week end dawns, I become insistent.

"Mom," I tell her on the 'phone. "I'm coming down to fetch you. You need to see a doctor."

"No, I don't think it's important," she says. "I'll be fine."

I ignore her, and when I arrive, insist on taking her for medical attention. The doctor admits her to hospital immediately.

"Your mother is in heart failure," he tells me.

I take my father home, and we collect some of his clothes, and their dog, Rusty. There is never any question about it. He will stay with me until my mother is well enough to look after him again. My studio is full of work in progress, and so I move him into my bedroom, and move my own life into my studio. For the next week, we visit my mother twice a day in hospital, and she slowly improves. I call Douglas and tell him what has happened, but he and his family are preparing for their first overseas holiday together, and they are leaving within a fortnight.

"How bad is it?" he asks me, and "Should I come down to Cape Town?"

"I don't think so," I tell him. "I don't know."

I am not able to reach Cheryl. Her husband has lost the business that he has tried to establish, and they are so broke that they are not able to afford a telephone. Transferred once again to the north, they seem very far from Cape Town. The only way that we can contact them is by telephoning William at work, a job that he has returned to under the worst circumstances. His company, knowing that he is desperate for work, has transferred him to Vryburg. I let him know that my mother is in hospital.

"I'll tell Cheryl," he says. But Cheryl does not make contact, because she is too busy trying to cope with the mess of her own life.

My mother improves steadily during the week, and on Sunday, she announces that she will be discharged the next day.

"You'll come to me," I tell her. "Just until you're strong enough to go home again."

"Just for a few days," she agrees.

She is sitting in a chair, out of bed, and eating an ice cream that we have brought for her. She seems a little feverish, but is certainly in good spirits about coming home. She even seems to quite like the idea of coming to stay with us until she is well enough to return to her own home.

When my father and I leave, I tell her that we will be in touch during the day, to make arrangements to fetch her. Then I wheel my father down the long, long passages, and help him into the car. We have taken to using a wheel chair for hospital visits, because he can no longer walk any distance.

We go home, and have supper, and plan my mother's homecoming. I make up her bed, and we put flowers in her room.

At 04:20 the following morning, one of the nursing sisters from the hospital calls. I stumble out of deep sleep to answer the telephone.

"If you want to see your mother before she dies, you must come now," she tells me bluntly.

With a deep sense of unreality, I wake my father, help him to dress, and then he, Joanie and I drive in pre-dawn darkness to the hospital. We are all in a state of shock. Nothing has prepared us for this eventuality.

When we arrive at the hospital, my mother is still able to talk.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mom?" I ask her, as my father and I sit on each side of her, holding her hands.

"No, thank you, Lovey," she smiles her answer. She is amazingly quiet and calm.

"Put this pill under her tongue," the nursing sister tells me. I try, but my mother spits it out. I try again, but with little success. Then, because I know that she was going to die whether she has the pill or not, I place it neatly beside her water glass, and leave it there.

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I stroke her hand. "We love you, Mom," I tell her. She smiles, and leans back into her pillows, her eyes closed. Suddenly, her hand goes limp in mine, although I can still feel her pulse. Her heart continues to beat long after my mother has begun her journey. Finally, her pulse slows, and then stops. My father has no idea that she has died. He simply sits beside her, rubbing her hand, and staring at her still, tranquil face.

Sister Oliphant, capable as ever, comes and rubs his shoulders from behind. Her job is done.

"My deepest sympathy," she says. "Can I bring you some tea?"

I contact Douglas from the cold impersonal open space of the hospital call box, and break this terrible, unexpected news. I amnot able to contact Cheryl. I drive my father and Joanie home in the bleak light of a grey winter dawn, and make more tea when we arrive. We sit in silence at the table. I have to get back to the hospital with my mother's identity document. I have to sign things, arrange things.

My father has disappeared into himself. I leave him sitting at the table with Joanie, staring deep beyond the wood.

My brother and his family postpone their overseas trip, and come to Cape Town immediately. I manage to contact Cheryl through their minister, and she and William arrive, white-faced from shock, with their two little girls. We arrange the funeral. We choose hymns, and I illustrate the front cover of the order of service with wild flowers. The last flowers for my mother.

Cheryl and I are sitting on the floor in the lounge, at night, drinking a late night glass of wine. The funeral is the next day. We are over the first shock. Able to talk a little. Cheryl speaks of her own role of mother, and how she has realised years before that she is consciously trying to be a different kind of mother from the one we had.

"I want my girls to know that I am there for them," she says, tracing the patterns on the kelim rug on the floor. I go to every meeting at their school. I'm the head of the PTA. We never had that with Mom."

"No," I agree. "She was always trying to survive her stuff with Dad. She didn't really have the time or the emotional energy for anything else."

We hear a noise from the passage, and my father stumbles into the lounge, clutching his chest.

"Sore," he mumbles, "so sore, so sore…"

Cheryl and I move as one. We gently ease him into a chair, and fetch a blanket. Without further discussion, we know what we have to do.

"I'll tell William," says Cheryl. "He's still reading."

The shock of my mother's death is so great that my father suffers a kind of collapse, and when the doctors can find no other option, they call it pneumonia. Douglas and I hire a wheel chair, and fetch my father from his ward to attend the funeral service. At the church, I am surprised to see Anne, my estranged older sister. She keeps apart from us, but joins us at my home for the tea, and sits beside my father, holding his hand. The prodigal returns. Too late for my mother, who grieved for her daughter every day of her life, and even in the moments of her death. I am angry, but keep silent. If this healing can help my father, then let the healing happen.

My students are marvellous. They bring food, make the tea, and wash up.

"First Lucy, and now you," they say. "We know how to do these things." They carry me through the daze of the next few days.

"We can work without you, so be with your Dad. Let us show you what we can do."

"Do it, then," I say.

After the funeral, Douglas and Cheryl and I take our father back to the hospital, and then come home for coffee. Douglas and his family have to leave almost immediately to catch their flight to London, and Cheryl and I spend the evening sitting at our long dining room table with Joanie. William and their two daughters have gone to bed.

"What are we going to do about Dad?" Cheryl asks.

"There's not really an option," I answer cynically. "I've been looking after them both for the past five years. He will expect to come here."

"Well, I've got the kids…" she says. "He won't fit in very well with my girls. They aren't the quietest in the world."

"You and I both know that he will come here," I tell her. "We'll cope. God knows how."

"He hates me," says Joanie.

"He hates all women," answers Cheryl, to my surprise. "But Joan, just remind him that this is your house."

"Easier said than done. He's never seen me as anything but an outsider."

"Well, we don't." says Cheryl. "My kids even tell people that they have three grannies!" New tears slide down her cheeks. "Well, they used to have. This is their first death."

"They've coped very well," I say. "You've been wonderful with them. I love your honesty."

"Well, they've got to learn," she responds. "We all thought it would be Dad who went first, but William's folks are also old…"

Two days later, William drives the girls back to Vryburg, and Cheryl stays behind for a week to help me pack up my mother's clothes, and care for my father. The June school holidays

are approaching, and this means that I will have time to be with him during the day, as he becomes used to his new life.

Although Cheryl and I have not been able to have regular contact, we maintain a close bond, and during that week after my mother's death, we spend the nights sitting up until very late, talking about our childhood. It is almost as 'though, with her death, we are examining her place in our lives, the role that she has or has not played, and the women whom we have become because of or despite her.

Cheryl is aware that her deep need to be married and to have children is because she longs for a family, for a normal life of loving and belonging. And she is determinedly creating a loving environment in her own family. She is consciously making her daughters and her husband feel warm, and safe, and loved. We find a bleak humour in the fact that, although we have shared the same parents and the same experiences, we have each responded so differently.

"I wonder how different it would have been if Richard had still been alive," she says one night.

"I also used to wonder," I tell her. "But I can never know that. And it's okay. If this is what life is, then we will live it to the best of our ability."

"You're such a teacher," she laughs.

"Yes," I join her laughter. "I suppose I am."

My father is discharged from hospital into my care, and Cheryl returns to Vryburg. A different life begins for all of us.

I start work early, and come home late. During the day, the care of my father is left up to Joanie, who has been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis some months ago. She makes him endless cups of tea, prepares lunch for him, and tries to involve him in conversation. Most of

the time, he sits at the dining room table, and stares morosely into space. We can no longer go out in the evenings, because there is no one to look after my father.  It is difficult to invite friends to visit, because he is rude and disinterested.

I replace my mother for him. He tells me what he wants, makes arrangements for me to do things for him, and treats both Joanie and me as his personal staff. Although I am much older, and I hope wiser than I was in my adolescence, I try to keep him happy. This time, though, it is different. I do it because I know that he is weaker than I am, because he is not able to cope with his world, and because both he and I know that he has lost all of his power.

There is a dreadful irony in the fact that this man, who has spent his whole life discounting women, has come to rely on them totally for his very survival, in every possible way.

Catherine leaves the College at the end of the first semester to have her baby, and Elske agrees to come and teach for six months. Catherine plans to return the next year. It is a happy arrangement, if somewhat strange. Elske, who has once been my lecturer, is now returning to her place of work, and I am her Head of Department. This situation can only have worked with someone like Elske, who returns to her work with the same passion and vitality that made such an impression on me nearly twenty years before, when I sat as a student in her class, and was handed a green apple.

There are severe problems surrounding the birth of Catherine's baby, and as a result, she reaches the difficult decision to resign, and to dedicate herself to her baby's care. Elske agrees to extend her time at the College until we can replace her. We do not try very hard. The year seems determined to break us all. The rector, Mac Donald, has recently divorced, and is finding his own new circumstances difficult. The loss of his home and his children is devastating to him, and he begins to spend more time in the art department, where we talk, and listen, and become friends.

His support for our work in the Art Department is tremendous, and in a very short time, I feel that I am a meaningful part of the College staff. I serve on many committees, quickly make

friends on the staff, and find, to my delight, that I really enjoy working with young adults. The theoretical component of the courses requires more information that I possess, and so I have to read to extend my knowledge base. With little guidance, I drift from one place to another, Jung, Erich Fromm, Steven Covey, and Thomas Harris. I re-read Kubler-Ross, and introduce her into our course.

In August, Cheryl is due to turn forty, and she decides that she will have a big party.

"I hope you will come," she tells me.

"You know that I can't," I respond. It's not during the school holidays. But Dad will want to be there, I'm sure."

I am right. My father decides that he will visit my brother in Pretoria before Cheryl's birthday, and then travel with them through to Empangeni, where Cheryl and William live.

"Need to talk to Douglas about what I am going to do," my father tells me. The irony of this situation does not escape me. I am the one whose life is going to be most affected by the decision that my father will take, and yet I am not part of the discussion about that very decision. Douglas, simply because he is a man, will have more influence over my own immediate future than I.

My father's sombre presence has become increasingly difficult. He simply takes charge of my free time, making appointments and arrangements for himself that mean I will have to provide transport, and either accompany him or return to fetch him whenever he decides that he wants to come home. It is difficult to ask him about his long-term future plans, because he avoids these conversations.

I take my father shopping in preparation for his trip, and then see him off at the airport. It is a relief to have the house to ourselves again, and Joanie and I are able to visit friends, invite them for dinner, and regain some of our normality. I have inherited some money from Aunty D, and I decide to extend our dining area. I also send Cheryl a large cheque for her birthday.

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"Because you're my sister, and I love you," I write in the card. She telephones.

"Are you crazy?" she asks. I tell her about the inheritance from Aunty D. "Enjoy it, girl," I say. "Do whatever you want with the money. But promise me that you'll spend a little just on yourself."

When my father's visit with her is over, he returns bringing photographs of a happy party. "But those kids are bloody naughty," he complains. "No discipline. No control."

"I don't know how you put up with him," Cheryl tells me on the telephone. "He nearly drove us crazy."

"Did you reach a decision?" I ask Douglas, when we call to tell him that my father is safely back in Cape Town.

"Well, there wasn't really much to decide," Douglas answers. "He told me that you wanted him to live with you. We all know that he'll never go back to his own house. He'll never cope on his own."

"Douglas," I respond, "That's impossible. I'm at work all day long. Joanie is not well herself. I've never even suggested to him that he live with us."

"Well then *you* tell him," Douglas tells me. "And find a place for him in one of those senior citizen villages down there."

My father decides that he wants to sell his house, and so I contact an estate agent. Within a few short weeks, the house is sold, and Joanie and I go down every evening after work, and pack up his belongings for him. Usually, he comes with us, and sits on a chair, pointing with his walking stick, and directing operations.

In September, Cheryl and Douglas come down for a week, and help with the final packing. I try again to enlist Douglas's help with the decision about my father's future, but there is very little time. He and his driver Robert are staying at my father's house, while Cheryl stays with us.

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Once again we sit until the early hours, talking about our lives, and trying to find a solution for my father.

"In a way, it's your own fault," Cheryl tells me bluntly. "You wanted them to come and live in Cape Town…"

"What?" I ask, astounded.

"Mom told me that you begged them to come and live here. If they were still in East London now…"

"Cheryl, that is just not the truth," I tell her. "I left East London all of those years ago to get away from them. You knew that. What would make me *beg* them to come to Cape Town?"

I tell her how my father made the decision, and how I wept when he had announced his intentions. "You and William are never in one place for longer than six months at a time. They couldn't cope with the altitude in Johannesburg. Mom wanted to get away from East London because of Anne. I was devastated when they decided to come here."

"For all of these years," she says slowly, "All of us believed that you had forced them to come to Cape Town. We all thought that it was a huge mistake, and…."

"And you blamed me," I say bitterly.

"Well, how were we to know that Mom was lying?" she asks. "And from the time that they came here, everything was always about you. Sandy did this, and Sandy made this, and Sandy …."

"Did you ever stop and think but how this was in my life?" I ask. "I travelled right to the opposite side of the country to get away from them, and they followed me. Mom hated Joanie, and made no effort to hide it. When they needed anything, I was the one who had to see to it. When either of them was sick, I was the one who had to go down there, make food, see to their needs. When they lost their money, it was automatically me who had to bail them out, provide what they needed. I feel as if I am the old-fashioned spinster daughter who is left behind to look after the parents while everyone else is living their lives, and doing what they want to do."

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"Joanie, who never interfered when family matters were discussed, gently adds: "It's true, Cheryl.""

"But then why did Mom tell us…?"

"Because that was her style," I answer bitterly. "Mom was so used to using manipulation to get her own way that she didn't know how to stop. God knows, by the time she died she probably believed what she told you."

From that conversation on, there is renewed warmth in our relationship. The night before they are due to leave, we all have supper at my father's house, and it is clear that Cheryl has made time to relay our conversation to Douglas, because his attitude is also different. It is a close and lovely evening, and we laugh a great deal, remembering stories and our shared histories. We leave early, so that the three of them can have an early night in preparation for their long journey. When we part, there was a great deal of warmth and love in our embraces. Healing has happened.

The academic year is drawing to a close. With the proposed introduction of Outcomes-based education, and an Arts and Culture Learning Area that embraces the four arts disciplines, I have introduced a drama module into our course, and Philip Thraves voluntarily lectures in this subject to my students. As their final exhibition approaches, they work hard at their presentation for the evening. I have always tried to encourage my students to be aware of and grateful to the many people who contribute to their learning, and at the end of every year, we hold a dinner to thank the administrative staff for their assistance. This busy time of the year suddenly arrives.

We are told that our amalgamation with the Cape Technikon will become a reality, and in preparation for this, a group of us decide that we will enrol the following year for the Master's in Teaching Course offered at the University of Cape Town. Not one of us is particularly enthusiastic about this choice, and we laughingly agree that we will support each other with plenty of alcohol during the process. We feel almost angry that we have to give time to this kind of distraction, when our real work is so demanding.

My sombre father asks: "Will you get a higher salary?"

"No, Dad."

"Will you get a better job?"

"I already have the best job in the world."

"Well then, why are you going to do this?"

"Because I have to."


Early in November, I spend a Friday afternoon helping the students to decorate the hall in preparation for their Graduation ball the next night. I arrive home dirty and stiff from climbing up and down ladders, and am sitting at our dining room table drinking coffee with my father and Joanie when the telephone rings.


"Don't get a fright, but Cheryl's had an accident," says William.

"How bad is it?" I ask. I take the telephone, and walk into the garden so that the rest of the call can be private.

"We don't know yet. Her pelvis is smashed. Broken in seven different places…." His voice breaks.

"I'm coming," I tell him. "I'll get there tomorrow." Already my head is making alternative plans for the end of year arrangements.

"No, not yet. She's going to be in hospital for at least six weeks. Come when she comes home. We'll need you then. She'll be… in a wheel chair for a long time."


"Are you okay?" I ask.

"It's just such a hell of a shock," he answers.

"And the girls?"

"Yeah, they're fine. We're all just so bloody shocked…"

"Are you sure you don't need me?"

"No not yet. I'll let you know."

I go back inside, and tell Joanie and my father. I call the hospital in Empangeni, and speak to the nursing sister in charge of the ward that Cheryl is in. She tells me that Cheryl is stable, but is not able to answer my questions about whether she will walk again.

"We'll have a better idea in the morning," she assures me. "But if you are able to come, it would be better to wait until she goes home. She will definitely need help then."

After a bad night for all of us, there seems no change in Cheryl's condition. Throughout the day, William and I are in contact.

"I'm taking the kids up to see her this afternoon," he tells me. "She's beginning to crack jokes again. Teasing the nurses. Typical of your sister."

"Give her my love," I say. "Tell her that I love her."

I go to the graduation ball with a heavy heart, but feel that I cannot let the students down. I am the only member of staff who has promised to attend. My students and I share a table, and when I tell them about Cheryl's accident, they are as shocked as I am. They have all come to know her during her trips to Cape Town. Marion, a student from Kwa-Zulu Natal, suggests that I drive to Durban with her at the beginning of December.

"Might be a good idea," I agree.

We have great fun at the dance that night. My group of students has planned the event, and so, instead of it being a sedate dance, it is an intimate evening of dancing in a big circle, with a great deal of laughter and silliness. I decide to leave the young people to their own devices, and return home at about 23:00. I want to make one last call to the hospital before going to bed.

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When I arrive home from the graduation ball, Joanie is standing on the veranda. As I turn from closing the gate, she reaches out her arms to me. She does not have to say a word. I know that Cheryl has died.

There is a strange craziness that comes at times like that. A kind of madness, a deep denial that does not know how to accept a truth that is too terrible to comprehend. I do not try to open the gate. I try to climb over the fence, because I know that if I can just get out of the garden, on to the other side of the fence, I will not have to hear the words that Joanie is going to say, and that can never, never be unsaid once she had said them. I break nails, I rip fabric, and yet the knowledge is already there, and by the time Joanie reaches me, I am kneeling on the lawn begging her not to say anything, not to tell me, not to shatter the belief that Cheryl will get better, will be wicked and dangerous in her wheel chair, will be my baby sister forever.

Joanie and I kneel together in the wet earth of the garden, and she holds me while I howl like a mad woman.

Then we come inside, and I 'phone William. Phone Douglas. Wake my father and sit beside him and hold his hand and gently, gently tell him that his youngest child, the one we all loved the best, has died.

The following day, I call Douglas. "Please can Dad come to you?" I ask. "I can't do this again."

"Sand, I'm at work all day,"

"So am I, Douglas. Please help me. Just for a couple of weeks."

By the following afternoon, I have put my father on an aeroplane, and he is on his way to his son.

When I go to work on Monday, to tie things up with Elske before I fly to Kwa-Zulu Natal for Cheryl's funeral, my students are waiting for me in the Art Department. Elske has told them the news of Cheryl's death, and we sit on the steps in the foyer, and weep together.

"You know that we will do whatever you need," Fiona says. "You have our total support. You don't have to worry about anything."

I am disabled. I cannot think straight. The end of the year is the busiest and most demanding time, and I am frozen by grief. Elske and the students surround and support me at work. They take over everything that needs to be done, and release me to do what I have to. I leave all of the planning for the end of the year, the dinner for the administrative staff, the final exhibition, the opening, the speeches, the flowers, the mounting of the work, and fly to Durban, where Douglas, Lana and my father will collect me to travel to Empangeni.

Cheryl's little girls are overwhelmed and frightened.

"Please won't you marry our Dad?" Mary asks me. "Then you can be our mom."

"I can never be your mom," I tell her. "But I will always be your aunt, and I will always, always love you."

**For Cheryl, who died in a car**

The Unicorn Girl, with a head full of curls, and with eyes full of stardust and laughter

is riding the skies wearing blood for disguise and with broken bones following after.


Ah, see, candles are lit, prickle-point light in the dark,

Ah, look, mourners have come, two by two, riding the ark.


With such joy does she sit, and with outrageous wit, bursts of energy fired by a star,

She was just rushing out, would be home soon, no doubt, in the red, in the red blood red car.


Ah, hear, how  we all weep, Life that is taken so boldly,

Ah, feel, ice in our hearts, numbing and mumbling coldly.


In the galaxy springs silver light on the wings, bold bright body fluorescent and gleaming,

Did she feel the collision, the shattered division, was she silent, or silently screaming ?


Ah, wait, thoughts all on fire, No Noah to guide us in prayer,

Ah, pain, remember her joy, And the spring in that bright curly hair.


So she rides in the night, like a dream out of sight, knees clasped tight round the unicorn's
shoulder,

And the white of the light is unfailingly bright, but the world is unceasingly colder.


Ah, girl, whole now and healed, riding your road to  that new  place

Ah, horse, horn on your head, cover her gently with grace.


And the unicorn wings play the notes that she sings as she gallops in gleeful delight

Sweet furls colour the air, starlight sparkling her hair, and she disappears into the light.

"You
're
good
at
writi

ng," William tells me. "Will you do the speech at Cheryl's funeral?"

"I'll write it, but I won't say it. Please don't ask me to do that." A family friend reads Cheryl's eulogy, while my father and I weep and hold hands. It is all we can do. I come home, and make a mandala for Cheryl. Yellow angels singing her entry into light, playing trumpets as a celebration of her being.

In December I buy Cheryl's girls air tickets, and fly them to Cape Town. I am assuming a new role in their lives, and will have to do it with honour. I feel laden with responsibility. My father is growing more and more morose and frail. Joanie's rheumatoid arthritis is becoming worse. These two needy girls are grieving and lost without their mother. I am inadequate, financially unprepared for these new responsibilities, and finding Cheryl's death, coming so soon after my mother's, hard to cope with. Once again, I busy myself. I busy myself like a mad woman.

## 2000

The following year heralds the new millennium. It is a difficult choice. How does one celebrate the birth of so much newness when there is so much pain?  Mac Donald is dealing with his divorce, and we are trying to come to terms with two sudden deaths. We opt not to celebrate, but to spend the evening quietly with Mariechen, a friend from my student days. We sit on her veranda, and watch the fireworks of other people's joy, and feel as if we are the only sad people in the whole world.

The Master's in Teaching course brings new interest, and I enjoy the stimulation of the lectures and the debates that suddenly fill my life. As a group, some colleagues and I drive up the hill, as we called it, in the late afternoons, and embark on a process that will change all of us profoundly. We hear words that we have never said before, and taste them laughingly on our tongues. 'Epistemology' has us showing off in staff meetings, and we are like children at school. A group of us gathers to share conversation and cigarettes during our breaks and we become serious when we struggle to understand the meaning that postmodern philosophy has in our lives, and in our work. We argue about how we can or should interpret our lectures, we complain about the workload, we know that this new learning is changing the way that we teach, and the way that we think about our work. The

other students in the group challenge and stimulate and delight us, and we laugh and look forward to our lectures.

Sometimes, when I drive alone up that hill, I am filled with a sense of wonder. Is this really the girl from East London, the one whose father did not want her to teach because she would never make the qualification? Sometimes, when I walk my dog in the evenings, I find myself a little afraid. Is this really me? Am I really a student at this university, studying for a Master's degree? I am afraid that I will not make it. Sometimes I am afraid that I will. Most of the time, I am fascinated. I am fascinated by the work, but I am also fascinated that I, who thought that this choice would be a waste of time, am loving every minute of it.

New knowledge and thinking begins to affect my work at the College, and my next intake of students benefit from my own studies. Postmodern philosophy helps me to make sense of so much that is happening around me, and a module on Gender Studies shocks me into realisations about my own life and the world at large. I make a mandala of the mystical moon, sharing space of purples and lilacs with complementary yellows and feminine pinks. I establish that the moon is gendered into female.

When I reflect on my relationship with my father, I realise how he has always been a chauvinist and a bully, and how he has used the power that he simply took for granted to direct his family. We have all suffered his abuse, his tantrums, his demands. The girls have suffered his disdain. And the irony is that now, at the end of his life, he is totally reliant, for his every need, on two women. It makes me kinder to him. He loses his power, and I lose my anger.

> For my Father, before death.
>
> When I was small and things
>
> were bigger than the table I thought
>
> that you and other tall ones knew
>
> everything and knew everything about everything too,
>
> and now the table is small

My father spends the last few months of his life in a wheel chair, and there are moments when I stand back and almost objectively watch this man try to direct from his weakened,

sitting position. It is possible for me to let him retain what dignity he has left, to let him think that he is still in control. It does not matter to me anymore. I have nothing left to prove, no approval left to seek.

On the night that he dies, I sit beside him in the hospital for a long time, holding his hand, and loving him simply for what he has been. He is in great pain, and the nursing staff asks me to leave so that they can medicate him. I come home and sit at my computer and play endless games of Freecell.

"Aren't you going to bed?" Joanie asks.

"No," I tell her. "I'm waiting for the hospital to call. My father is going to die tonight."

When the call comes, I take a carnation from a bowl on the table, return to the hospital, and lay it on my father's chest. I sit beside his frail old body, and weep for what has happened, for all of the deaths of the past months, and I weep for what might have been, if we had all been wiser, stronger, and more honest.

**For my Father after death**.

Empty space, empty place, empty look upon your face.

No more life, no more touch, no more trouble now, not much.

No more eyes with vacant stare, no more shoulders hunched in care.

No more asking, no more pain, no more calcifying brain.

No more father, cold and small, no more anything at all.

Finally I get to grieve in the spaces that you leave

All your hardness slowly goes, leaving memory in its throes

Times long past come slipping back, (roller skating at the track.....)

Dancing standing on your feet, feeling rhythm, hearing beat,

When I drive home, once again to call Douglas with news of another death, I slowly understand that there can be no might-have-beens. This is what it is. This life is its own direction. We do what we do, all of us, because it was what we know how to do at the time.

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It is easy to be wise with hindsight. The last months of my father's life were difficult ones for all of us, but they teach me about forgiveness, and about loving without a need for anything in return. They also teach me that I could give up feeling guilty about my parents. We do what we do, because it is all we know how to do at the time. The understanding comes later.

I realise that learning is not in the experience. It is in the reflection on the memory.

What is left of the family comes for his funeral, Anne as well, but she does not even greet Douglas and me, and leaves straight after the service. William has to return to his girls, whom he has left with his parents. Douglas stays in Cape Town for a week. While I am at work, he trims our vine, helps Joanie in the house, fixes things that have been broken for a long time, and which I have ignored. In the evenings, we sit and talk. Somehow, all of these deaths, coming so close together, have released a great deal of honesty between us, and the hurts of many years come out, slowly and hesitatingly, and are laid bare.

It is a frightening thing, to see what our parents have done to us all. They have been so caught up in their own needs that they have not realised what they are handing out to their children. This time with Douglas is to begin a new phase in our relationship.

"We're all that's left now, kid," he tells me. "We are going to have to look after each other."

I feel burnt out, but not in the conventionally accepted way. Burnt, as if the fire of grief has cleansed something out of me.

Now that I do not have to rush home to relieve Joanie of my father's care, I am able to give more time to my work. I make a mandala of a heart that is healing. Influenced by my studies at the University, I begin to refine the field study trip that I have introduced some years ago, and introduce the idea of a journal for the students to use as a reflective record of the processes that they are going through while they explore the craft of the Southern Cape, and delve into the Outsider Art of Helen Martins. My process of teaching is stimulated by newness, by a different way of thinking, and I approach my work with the students in different

ways. I want to push my students even further, and I invite a young potter to work in our ceramic studio at night, on condition that she gives my students free ceramics lessons.

I plan my lectures in different ways, leaving space for student participation on a much deeper level, so that my teaching becomes more open-ended. I am often nervous, sometimes disappointed, and every now and again, exhilarated by what is happening in the art studio. Elske decides that she finally wants to retire, and a new colleague is appointed in her place.

2001

My group of students this year is a particularly diverse and interesting one, and I respond to them by pushing them to become more diverse and more interesting. We visit exhibitions all over Cape Town, and spend hours discussing the merits of each artist's work. Although our lecture times are officially from 09:00 to 16:00 every day, the students soon learn that there are no official tea breaks or lunch times, and that when one is excited about something, it stops being work, and begins to be play.

This year, I meet all of their boyfriends, who join us in the studio at night, bringing pizza, while we watch current films and debate their merits, pore over artworks in process and decide what still has to be done, and explore teaching and learning in a deep way. They come to my home for suppers so that we can watch films, we travel all over the Peninsula in search of exhibitions, architecture, sand to be sculpted, trees to be drawn, experiences to be shared, and they respond in a magical and dynamic way.

At the end of the year, I edit a video that I have been taking of their progress throughout the year, and show it at their final exhibition. In anticipation of the new curriculum that is being introduced, my students integrate their dance and music skills, and hold a presentation on the stage.

"You're making a mistake," Anne, a colleague, tells me. "You make it look like too much fun."

Because I respect her, I think seriously about what she says, and it concerns me. Are we on a pathway that denies that learning can be fun? We are becoming an institution that is too

serious to realise that experiential learning can be a deeply meaningful, purposeful and passionate way to gain knowledge? Where is Dewey in all of this? How can we tell our students about effective teaching if we ourselves are not exploring as much of it as possible? Over and over again, I am reminded by colleagues that this is a tertiary institution, and we no longer teach. We lecture. Our relationships with the students must change. They must 'get on with it'. I have no answers, but am beginning to be disturbed. In general, there is little support from my colleagues for what I am doing, but I am too busy with my students to be particularly concerned.

I also do not need their support. I always invite them to any activities that we have in the art department, but my invitations are met with mute disinterest. The friends whom I have made on the staff attend everything, but they are there as an act of friendship and this is not collegial support.

It is beginning to dawn on me that to be a staff member at the Teacher's College does not mean that the staff is a united body. I miss the collegiality of the Art Centre, where we shared interest and supported each other's work. At the new institution, it is becoming clear that we cannot hope for interest from our colleagues, who are all busy with their own subject disciplines and lives. Initially, I try to encourage a more social aspect, inviting staff members to exhibitions, and end-of-term functions at my home, but I slowly realise that it is a waste of time. The staff does not want to break bread together. Their lives and their work are separate.

My friendship with Mac Donald also separates me from the staff. Half of them think that I am having an affair with him, and the other half no longer trust me because they think that I am privy to inside information. This saddens me, because it questions Mac Donald's integrity, but he does not care.

"You're naive, Sandy," he tells me. "People are generally horrible. They use any situation they can. Get wise, girl."

Mac Donald and I spend a great deal of time together, and for both of us, the friendship is important. As a practising catholic, Mac Donald cannot contemplate a relationship with another woman, and the safety of this is good for me. We walk for miles while we talk about our lives, we take the children out, we go to the cinema and manage to bring a sense of fun into our lives. We have a rule that we will never discuss work, and so our friendship is based on mutual interests, and an enjoyment of each other's company. We talk for hours.

Mac Donald manages to make me talk about myself, for the first time in many years, and is a wise and caring listener.  He is also not afraid of giving advice, particularly when I believe that I do not want it, and he quite often forces me to see things from the other, the uncomfortable side. He regularly tells me that I am being ridiculous. He often tells me that I am naïve. He sometimes stops me in my tracks and throws me off course. He is very good for me.

I am approached by Oxford University Press to co-author, with Elske, their series of learner and teacher handbooks for the Arts and Culture learning area, and I find this diversion interesting and enriching. It means that I have to come to terms with the new curriculum, and this impacts on my own teaching in a very positive way.  I make a mandala of the First Understanding.

At the University of Cape Town, I take a module in the Master's in Teaching course that deals with imagination, and I am once again inspired. Some years before, I have joined a Writers' Group, and the opportunity to write with purpose and on a regular basis is adding a great deal of meaning to my life. Now, in this module, my writing is finding a home. I make a mandala of the Second understanding. Although the module has nothing to do with visual art, it explores aspects of creativity and imagination, the world of possibility, and so, ultimately, has everything to do with visual art. I am loving thinking about such different things, and this thinking extends once again into my own work. How should I change? What should I bring into my lectures with the students? I am aware that my practice is changing, along with my own inner change as a result of my participation in this degree, and I am determined that I will never again allow myself to stagnate, and to become complacent about my work or my life.

The absorption of the Teacher's College into the Cape Technikon is fast becoming a reality, and people from the Main Campus in Cape Town are frequent visitors to our campus. They walk into the building, take measurements, ignore us, and go away again. The staff is thrown into a time of insecurity and despair. People who have been dedicated lecturers for twenty years are confronted with the fact that they are likely to lose their jobs. We feel negated and unheard. We are told that there will be nine permanent appointments made for the Faculty of Education. We are invited to make written application for the jobs that we are already doing.

And with all of the insecurity and despair, we are expected to continue with our work as if the world is normal. The staff is split down the middle. Colleagues who have worked together for years, who have become friends because of their shared passion for their work, are forced into competing for the same job. There is no trust, there is no support, and there is no kindness.

Mac Donald is excluded from this process, and is moved from his office, into a small, ungracious and impersonal space, so that renovations can begin. We try to continue with our work while workmen bang and hammer, while walls come down and go up, and none of us know what is happening, why these structural changes are being made, or who has decided that they are necessary.

Finally, the interviews are held, and then we proceed through the agonising process of waiting to hear who has been given their jobs, who will be offered contracts, and who will have to find somewhere else to be. Those of us who do not get jobs will be given the option of staying with the Department of Education, and will be placed in jobs that will make use of our skills. Those of us who are offered contract posts will have the option of accepting them, and leaving the department, or staying with the Department of Education and being placed at another site of work. There is no respect for the 'college staff', and we are all treated like underlings. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis, and it appears that we need to know very little. I am told that I will have no chance of a permanent job. There is no place for a permanent job in the subject of visual art, or in the Learning Area of Arts and Culture. Clearly, these disciplines are to be given no value at the new institution.

At my interview, I answer all of the questions politely and honestly, although I am aware that it is a waste of time, and that we are all simply going through the motions. At the conclusion of the interview, the Academic Vice Rector of the Cape Technikon asks what I will do if I do not get the job at the Technikon.

"That's not even an option." I answer, caring so little that I rise from the seat and terminate my own interview. "Of course I am going to get the job."

Weeks pass, and we hear nothing. The entire staff is strung as tightly as the highest possible string on a violin, and is liable to snap at any moment. Distrust runs high. I make an appointment to go and see a member of the Technikon management, to ask him informally about the nature of the institution.

He humours me through the entire meeting, introducing me to the staff members who will be moving to our campus once we become the Faculty of Education, and giving me coffee to drink while we talk.

"How does the Technikon treat its people?" I ask. "Does the institution care about its staff members?"

"All I can say is that you should wait and see," he tells me, as he shows me out of his office.

In the Master's in Teaching course, I enrol for a module called 'The Discipline of Noticing', and I am fascinated by the work of John Mason. We are lucky enough to have John Mason himself present in some of the lectures, and the notion of 'noticing' opens new doors for me. I immediately bring this concept into my work with the students, and encourage them to become more alert. It also encourages me to become more alert in my own work, and I consciously and purposefully try to notice more during the course of my lectures with the students. Because there are only twenty two in the group, I am able to work intensively with them, and we bring the 'discipline of noticing' into their own sessions of teaching practice.

Now that we are all doing it together, we are able to compare notes about how and what we are learning, as we go along. By doing this with the students, I am refining my own way of using the process of noticing, and coming to terms with the difference that it is making in my teaching. The work that we are doing together in the art department feels vital and exciting for me. Sometimes it is also very frustrating, because the students come back from their lessons and ask me what I expect them to say in the 'noticing' sections of their written responses. I struggle to let them see that I don't 'expect' them to say anything except what is real for them. I realise that this is such a new idea for them that I am going to have to guide them through the process. We make video recordings of a lesson, and together we work through it. Slowly, the students come to understand the value of what we are doing, and they begin to work together when they teach lessons, so that they can share and comment and probe their own developing practices after their lessons. Sometimes they tease me about my own practice during a lecture, and it is in those moments that I learn. Although we laugh when they tease, their words often carry truth, and I listen. I learn to stop a lecture when I feel that I am not really reaching them, and I ask them "Okay, people, what is happening here? Why have I lost you?" In the beginning, this kind of question makes them uncomfortable, but when they start to answer it for me, and see that I really want them to tell me what they are thinking, it makes a difference. This deepening of our work together is very rewarding, and it carries me through the weeks of uncertainty before we hear about the appointments that have been made to the Technikon.

Finally, the decisions are made, and we are informed that we will hear about the jobs within a few days. The news arrives in envelopes, and is delivered to the receptionist downstairs. Those who are successful receive big envelopes. Those are not, receive small ones. Before we know our own fates, the receptionist has informed everyone else, basing her knowledge on the size of the envelope.

Tensions amongst the staff members become even worse. Those who are successful are called 'the chosen few", and are ridiculed by some who have been offered contract posts, or who have been offered nothing at all. To my amazement, I receive a big envelope. There is no joy in the receipt. It has caused too much pain for too many of my colleagues. There is no happiness or excitement for me when I realise that I will be joining the staff of an institution that has already shown that the arts are of no value, and that people, human beings, are also not that important.

The new dean visits the campus, and is introduced to us. Mac Donald's place at the institution becomes even smaller, and he makes the staff promise that there will be no farewell party for him at the end of the year. He leaves with no acknowledgement of his contribution to education, to

**Bureacracy**

There's a road sign at the corner of an incubated heart

And the arteries leading from it show you where to make your start.

You can travel there all winter without knowing where to go,

and the coldness in your body does not always come from snow.


In the springtime there are flowers that remind you of your lust

and they dot the thickened pathways with their lines of broken trust

Each direction has an obstacle to block you in the end

And the clay that builds the mountains becomes dust as you descend.


And if seeing is believing and believing is what's true

Then your eyes are cataracted now with misdirected hue

And those figures that you seem to think are smiling as you pass,

Are mocking you with shadows from the carefully scripted farce


And you think this is your journey, and you think you make your life

but the mindless little bureaucrat is sharpening his knife,

And he cuts just where the blade falls, there's no justice with the stroke

And the power has no face or form, no rule you can revoke.


The road that lies before you has a start but not an end,

And the shadow walking next to you will never be your friend

Because the light will make that shadow either in front or behind

And when only one of you can win, the other is not kind.


And the institution grinds on with its righteous blind contempt

Leaving dreams and hope and joyousness, we somehow are exempt.

Throwing passion on the pavement, mocking love from office space

And destroying individual thought, it falls, like rocks, from grace.


And the incubated lifeless heart keeps beating without blood

all the troubled foetal flowers fall like failures in the mud

Where there once were dreams and promises, and futures bright with trust

There now lie the steadied hardbeats of some bureaucratic lust.

the growth of the College, or to his nurturing of his staff.

The year ends with sadness and ill feeling. We take leave of each other knowing that too many will not be returning, too many will be faced with uncertainty. December brings with it a fractured, empty space. My thoughts return to the conversation that I had with the member of management. Did the Institution care about its people? Wait and see, wait and see.

I fly Cheryl's girls to Cape Town in December, and we spend the holiday exploring Cape Town through their eyes. They are wild, motherless children, and Joanie and I try to cram them with as much woman-ness as we can. I buy them clothes, and try to teach them simple cooking. In the early mornings, they both creep into my bed, and we lie and talk about their lives, and their mother. They are learning to cope with being raised by their father, who is doing his best. But they are difficult children who both vie for attention all of the time. I long for wisdom, and feel mostly inadequate. All I really have to offer them is love.

## 2001

The next year, the new Dean moves into her office, and asks me to co-ordinate the launch of the Education Faculty for the Mowbray Campus. We have another campus in Wellington. I work hard to make the evening a success. The FDE students act as hostesses, wearing elegant black and silver masks as they greet the dignitaries, and escort them to our hall. The same students have been working with Siyabonga Magazi, a Jazzart dancer, and present an African fusion dance item. Their works adorned the walls at the back of the hall. Naledi Pandor, the Minister of Education, is our guest speaker, and she comments positively about the new direction that the Technikon is taking, by entering the field of Primary School Teacher Education.

Within weeks, the new plans for the building include the removal of the exhibition wall claddings in the foyer. I try to stop it, and to make management aware that this area is essential for exhibiting our work. I am ignored, and the renovations go ahead. Our exhibitions will be confined to the small studios in the art building, where there is no space to accommodate the hundred or more guests who attend their openings. We will not be able to

make use of the stage for integrated presentations. The studios on the ground floor are taken away for us, and are both turned into woodwork rooms for a part-time lecturer. Our community outreach programme, which has gained strength over the years, and has given my students valuable teaching experience, is threatened by this move, and we eventually have to acknowledge that it is no longer possible to do this kind of work. We stop the programme, and this doorway for a rich learning experience is closed.

As the institution moves from a Teacher's Training College to a 'more academic' institution, research becomes increasingly important, and there are some members of staff who are encouraged to conduct research, while the rest of us battle on with little assistance. We are told that we will have support if we do research, but I am in the final stages of writing up my Master's Dissertation, and I am teaching forty four lectures a week, and there is no support in sight.

I decide to be proactive, and approach the acting Head of Research for assistance with putting together a poster for a conference. His response is not enthusiastic. "I'll give you a call when I have time," he tells me. I do not hear from him, and as the due date approaches, I call him again.

"It's a little bit late now," he responds. "Leave it till next time." The message is loud and clear. I am not to interfere in the research arena. I give up. I hardly have time to breathe anyway. This is not a battle that I am prepared to wage.

I remain involved in writing the Oxford series of text books, and spend most of the year spinning from one hectic activity to the next. I begin to feel that I am losing ground at the Technikon, but I am too busy to do anything about it. I do not have the energy to start the age-old fight for the arts. I have been caught off-balance by the attitude that is coming across very clearly from the new management. Finally, one of them verbalises it. "There is no longer an Art Department," he tells me. "There is only the B Ed course." I am effectively disempowered, and put in my place.

But my real place is with the students, and when we are working and growing together, there is nothing that can touch us. I am sustained by the knowledge that my students are making meaning of their learning in a deeply significant way, and they are showing this development in their practical work, in their thoughtful essays and responses to our theoretical lectures, and in their delight at teaching.  My own doors have been opened, and I am beginning to think about reflective practice, and my own practice in general. I know that, in an environment of so much change, I have to change as well, but I am not sure where, or how, or even in which direction.

I have become involved in the Student Affairs Department on the Main Campus, and my students participate in the annual Technikon celebrations, once again dancing with Siyabonga Magazi. Their presentation is hugely successful, and the Faculty of Education gains acknowledgement from our participation. It does not impact on the general attitude towards the Arts and Culture Learning Area.

The Students Affairs Department asks me to take over the annual student trip to the Grahamstown Festival, and the drama lecturer, Philip Thraves, and I plan a trip that extends itself into a Life skills Development Tour. We workshop group dynamics and personal development with the students, while making sure that they are exposed to enjoyable and enriching experiences along the Garden Route.

At home, I am confronting another irony. Joanie's health is failing, and her rheumatoid arthritis is beginning to take its toll. Now that she no longer has to care for my father, she finally has her days to herself, and she is too ill to enjoy them. Every time I go away with the students, I am concerned about leaving her alone. Fortunately, she was on my medical aid while I was working for the Western Cape Department of Education, and we have been assured by the rectorate of the Technikon that we will not be disadvantaged by the change. I am thus surprised when I have an unexpected visit from a member of Human Resources.

"We need you to give us an affidavit to say that this Mrs Malherbe is your partner," he tells me.

I decide to play dumb. "What do you mean?" I ask.

"Well, in order for her to be your dependent, we have to know that she is your partner."

"What do you mean by 'partner'?"

"Well, that you live together and…"

"Are you asking me to sign an affidavit to say that Mrs Malherbe and I are gay?" I ask.

"Yes, that's more or less it."

"And then she can continue to be my dependent?"

"Yes," he answers.

"But we are not gay," I tell him. "I would be lying in an affidavit if I said that."

"Well, I'm afraid that if you don't give us the affidavit, she can't be your dependent."

I am furious. On the instruction of my new employer, I have to lie in an affidavit, or lose what has been promised at the time of the takeover. It is simply too much.

"Take them to the Unions," a new Technikon colleague tells me. "That's what the Unions are there for. Use them."


I do not have the time for a lengthy dispute. Until the matter is resolved, I will have to pay Joan's share of the medical aid, a considerable amount every month. I am not able to afford this. In my desperation, I turn to the dictionary, and find my solution. I call the Human Resources representative.


"Am I correct in saying that if I send you an affidavit saying that Joan Malherbe is my partner, then she can be on my medical aid?"

"That's right," he agrees.

I send an affidavit stating that Joan Malherbe and I were partners, according to the ChPennylain's Dictionary definition. An associate. A sharer. One who plays on the same side as another in a game. The following month, Joanie is on my medical aid.

If I find the bureaucracy of the new, large institution trying, I find the arrogance of the power of the men in management even more frustrating. There is an 'Old Boys Club' feeling about it all, and it is impossible to make a point that is different from theirs. We are speedily and summarily dismissed. The staff who has been appointed to the Technikon begins to flag, to realise that this grass is not very green after all. I am concerned about my colleagues. They have all been through the most difficult of times, and have received no support, no care, and certainly no gentleness. We are hurtled through new processes, new structures, throwing courses together in crisis mode, with little understanding of what we are doing, and with no time to gain that understanding.

"I do not belong in this institution," I tell the Dean.

"It worries me that you say that," she answers me. "What are you saying about the institution?"

I tell her that I would be applying for a new job, and send an application in to a high school in Newlands in Cape Town. I am called to the interview, which lasts for an hour. I do not want the job. I do not

**11 September 2002**

A soft spring day after rain,

(small buds and elegant tendrils

lustily proclaiming the rebirth of hope;)

a gentle warmth

begins to creep as moods lift lightly after

the long grey arduousness of so much rain…

From the sea

two great white birds lift amidst chattering like gulls

and altering their wind-driven course

smash with Satanic insanity

into the symbols of our crafted civilisations.

Shock screams dumbly from a broken barrier of belief.

There is no sense but the retching ruins of burning flesh

and death not coming quickly enough

to broken bodies buried

before they knew that they were dying.

Those left watch, numbed,

while Meaning chokes on its own snot-filled

vomit and screeches its death in sirens.

A soft spring day after rain…

want to work with spoilt young girls in an exclusive school. I do not want my life to be about teaching my charges how to make 'good' artworks.

In September that year, two planes fly into two buildings half way across the world and our perspectives are changed forever.

With Richard's death, I learnt never to play games. When Cheryl died, my lesson was to use time, because we truly never know when our last moment is here. With the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, I learn to value what I have. Even if it is not perfect, it is real, and tangible. I have a life that I love. I have a job that I love. I am in a country that I love. I am determined to change from being a trampled person, and to take my power back.

The war in Iraq that follows the Twin Towers disaster fills our television screens with violence and death. We are watching a war while it is happening, seeing young men killed in real time for reasons they hardly understand themselves, and we are gripped by the senselessness of it all. I find that I am not able to grasp the bigness, the enormity of it all, and the implications that will change world perceptions. I do not understand American politics, oil battles, and conspiracy theories. As I watch, I am seeing the small. The single young man who has been somebody's son, a boy chasing butterflies and catching tadpoles and playing cops and robbers ten years before. I look at our students, and see in them young people of the same age, just beginning their lives, full of hope and promise. I am deeply affected by the power that can kill, that can destroy young people and their parents' dreams, and leave only a senseless and harsh reality.

Our Muslim students talk about the changed attitudes of people even in Cape Town. "We are not all fanatics," they say. "We are not all suicide bombers." George Bush's

**ANOTHER WAR**:

There was once a time

When, as time passed more quickly,

Speeding up with age and being busy,

I thought perhaps that I should have listened more intently

to this body clock beating biorhythms

boldly saying breed,

a baby could have softened parts

of a life grown hard,

described by many lines

like a bad contour drawing

trying to find the shape of an ageing face.

But now I see this boy,

This baby once lying chuckling in a crib

With fingers reaching up and tugging in delight

Tightening around a trigger, torturing another woman's son,

Killing his brother in a bloodbath of baying

While his own heart dies with each bullet from his gun.

Grinning.

And I am glad that my body was barren,

Because I do not have to bear the wrenching pain

Of a mother knowing so much,

And finding so little left.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,

Blessed art thou among woman, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Hail Mary, full of fear, the bullet will get thee,

Wretched art thou among woman, and cursed is the beast of thy womb.

Hail Mary, and a hail of bullets, and hell.

determination to create a war has given us all cause for thought, and even on the other side of the world, we are questioning, and arguing, and talking.

"How many of you have contemplated your own deaths?" I ask the students.

They look at me in surprise.

"How many of you have sat beside someone who is dying?"

Still no response.

I show them the Kubler-Ross video, and we talk.

"Learn to live!" I tell them. "Be inspired by your own possibilities!"

"But Sandy," Manuela says, "we're still very young. It's hard for us to think about dying. That mostly happens to old people."

"You could die crossing a road, in half an hour's time," I answer, but meet with no reaction.

"Or you could come with me on Saturday…"

Their interest mounts, and they agree to meet me at the parking lot of the lower cable station. I hire an expert, and take them all abseiling down a 40m precipice on Table Mountain. They emerge brave and triumphant.

Years later, one of the students, Janice, tells me "I have never forgotten how we felt afterwards, when we walked down that mountain. There was an amazing sunset. We felt so powerful. We really did know the value of life."

At the end of that year, I collect display boards from all over the building, and once again exhibit the student work in the foyer. At the exhibition opening, we show the video of our field study trip, and the students once again do an integrated presentation. The evening is a happy success, with the students glowing with their accomplishments. The following day,

some of the best work is knifed by some students lounging in the foyer. I realise that we have reached the end of the road for exhibitions in the Main building. From now on, we will simply have to cram ourselves into the first floor of the art department, and show less work. I have no idea how we will show the video to so many guests, and this means that there cannot possibly be any integrated presentations, but there seems little option.

Meetings with Technikon Management reveal that there is very little importance placed on the exhibitions, and on the integrated performances, and I realise that I am viewed, more than anything else, as a nuisance. There are bigger issues. There are more important needs. The arts do not deserve any further attention.

In December, I fly Cheryl's girls to Cape Town, and we spend the weeks finding clothes for them. Although William is fairly good at seeing to their basic needs, they still look like orphans every time they disembark, and our time together has developed into shopping expeditions on a fairly grand scale. They get on well with Mac Donald's children, who are roughly the same age, and we all spend time together, walking on the mountain, or swimming in the icy Atlantic Ocean. In the evenings, the girls help me in the kitchen, and we prepare food together. We often have grand dinner parties, just for the four of us, where we invent elegant menus, choose a personality to be at the dinner party, dress outrageously, and have to stay in character for the entire meal. They are slowly recovering from their mother's death, and are learning to laugh again. Television is banned for the time that they are with us, and we play card games, Trivial Pursuit, and paint decorations on hen's eggs.

## Still 2002

At the beginning of the year, I am informed that it is the last time that the FDE course will be run. There is no longer room for specialisation in Visual Art in the new curriculum, and consequently all such courses are to be phased out. This is a devastating decision.

Fed by my own studies, I do not only train my students to teach art. I try to encourage them to be critical thinkers, aware young people who have a value and a deep respect for the children with whom they will be working. I push them to consider power relations, their

attitudes to death, their cultural differences. I encourage them to value their lives, to be proactive and joyous.

Some years before, I had initiated a community outreach programme with the students teaching art workshops to children from schools in the community, and often brought children from the Cape Flats in to these workshops, which we held on our premises. These workshops had ceased. All of my students acknowledge that the FDE year is a life-changing one for them, and in the years that I have been running the course, I have never had one drop-out, or one failure. The results at the end of every year, which are externally moderated, show an average of a one third distinction rate. And yet this course is going to be dropped from our curriculum. Not modified to fit with the Technikon's criteria. Not adapted to be more in line with Outcomes-Based Education. Just dropped. Cut out.

I decide to fight it, and attend a Management Committee meeting, at which I offer to run the course part-time, for no remuneration. The Technikon will still be collecting the subsidy from the Western Cape Education Department for qualifying students with a fourth year. I do not care about the money. It is the quality of the training that concerns me.

The committee indulges me. They agree to allow the course to be run one last time, over two years, for two evening sessions a week, with ten practical sessions a year. I know that it will not be enough, but I also know that once I have students, they will come to extra sessions of their own free will.

That year my final full-time students are a group with boundless energy and vitality. We all know that it is the last time that the course will be run, and we are all determined to suck every drop of joy from it. Our collective energy is exciting and challenging.

My head of Department nominates me for the Distinguished Teacher Award at the Cape Technikon, and I have to spend some time preparing my teaching portfolio. The exercise proves to be an enormously worthwhile one for me. It gives me cause to pause, to examine my own teaching philosophy, and to reflect on what has been. This is the first time that I have

truly been reflective about the entirety of my own practice. It is an enriching experience, and one that is very worthwhile for me. I submit the portfolio, and forget about it. Life is too busy to fret about other people's judgements of my worth.

My students once again excel at the annual celebrations on Main Campus, and appear on National Television in a news item which features a community outreach project that we have devised. We have been working the whole year with the children from a disadvantaged school on the Cape Flats, and my students have developed their practice by teaching carefully structured art lessons to classes of more than fifty children. At the end of the year, we celebrate our collaboration by taking the children to the ice rink at the Grand West Casino, where the manager creates huge mounds of snow for us, and we hold a snow-sculpting workshop. This is a joyous morning, enjoyed by all of those who participate, and the television footage shows the delight.

Late in the year, I hear that I have been given the Distinguished Teacher's Award, and at a small function held on the Cape Town Campus, I am given a framed certificate and a generous cheque. After the formalities, we have coffee, and while we are chatting informally, the Dean approaches me to ask me to accept an extra lecturing load for the following year. I tell her that it would be very difficult, because I already have a full load. I explain that, even without the FDE Course, I will still have thirty lectures a week.

The academic vice rector became involved in the conversation. "Do you need bigger studios?" he asks. "Are there walls that we can break down?"

"I can't teach a practical subject like art to classes of fifty students," I tell him.

"Well then," he answers, "perhaps you need to change your mode of delivery."

I do not respond. I am standing with a framed certificate in my arm, which has just been presented to me, stating that I am a distinguished teacher. And then I am told to change the way that I teach. I know that I will remember this moment for the rest of my life.

The award also opens a question for me that I still seek to answer: what is a distinguished teacher? External judgements matter very little to me. How does one sustain being a distinguished teacher? What must one do to stay good? Can I manage to stay 'distinguished' for myself? How do I do this? While I am grappling with these thoughts, I turn to the process of reflective practice. If I can find one place in my professional life where a change occurs, where a lasting difference happens, it will be here.

At the end of the year, we use the Art Department building for our exhibition for the first time. It is not ideal, but the enthusiasm of the students is a joy to watch, and they are proud of the artwork that they have produced, and the many projects that they are able to display. We show their video in one of the studios, and the parents and friends throng through the building, sharing the achievements of these young people. It is difficult to let go of them, and they find it difficult to let go of us. We have several evenings, after the Technikon has closed, where we simply enjoy being together, talking about artworks, about current issues, and about life.

Douglas and Lana come to Cape Town for a few days, just to spend some time here. The weather is balmy, and we spend the evenings sitting outside on the front veranda, watching the sun sink behind the mountain, and sharing stories and times together.

Slowly we are learning to trust each other. It is beginning to emerge that my mother has been an extremely destructive force within the family, and while she has criticised Lana to me, she has been doing much the same about me to Lana. It is sad to realise that my mother had sought her power in the family by dividing it, and as we learn to trust each other, Douglas, Lana, Joanie and I are able to piece together the stories that my mother has told, the assumptions that she has made, and the divisions that she has caused.

For me, this is also a part of being, or rather, becoming, more reflective. There is no end, and anything can change, and can become better. It needs determination. It needs courage. It needs non-defensive, non-competitive honesty.

"We always wondered why you so badly wanted Mom and Dad to come and live in Cape Town," Douglas sys one night. "We thought they would be better off staying in East London."

"By now you know that I never wanted them to come!" I tell him. "I was horrified when Dad bought that property. I cried for days."

"Mom told us that you begged them to come and live in Cape Town," he tells me.

"Come on, Bro," I say. "I ran away from East London when I was eighteen years old. Why on earth do you think I would ask East London to follow me here?"

And so we talk on, and during this time, we rediscover each other, and slowly learn what is true about ourselves, and what has been speared into our relationships by my mother's need to keep herself central. We speak about how our young lives have been affected by my father's affairs, by my mother's behaviour, by our own needs to survive. And we discover that despite all of these things, we can love each other, we can rebuild our sense of family, and we can be easy with each other. It is a significant and meaningful time.

Once again, Cheryl's girls, Mary and Stella, come to Cape Town for the December holidays. A routine is beginning to establish itself, where I fly the girls to Cape Town for the mid-year school holidays, and for a large part of the December holidays. They are beginning to claim my studio at home as 'their' room.

This introduces a difficult dilemma for me. I need the space for the many different kinds of work that I do. Apart from my work at the Technikon, I am still very involved with Oxford University Press, and Elske and I have written several books together. We are also illustrating our own books, because we have decided to use the illustrations, not as decorations, but as visual references for both the children and the teachers, and as such, they have to be very specific. I am working on the final stages of my Master's Degree. I am working towards an exhibition of mandalas. I am trying to be the executor for my father's will. I desperately need the space that the girls are claiming for their own. I know that I will have to give in gracefully, and relinquish it.

It is a difficult time. Mary is beginning to reach adolescence, and without a mother, is confused and moody. Stella, the younger child, and her father's favourite, is confused by her sister's confusion, and sulky. They fight their way through the weeks that they stay with us, leaving Joanie and me both emotionally drained when they leave. I feel so sad. And helpless. I know that they need me to play a bigger part in their lives, but we are physically too far away from each other. William, their father, has been transferred from Empangeni to Pietermaritzburg, and the girls have once again been uprooted by the move, losing friends and supportive teachers who were there when their mother died, and who knew them well. They are thrust into a new school and environment, and have to cope with a world that is different and alien.

William, an unrehabilitated insolvent, is making wild promises to them, telling them that they will be getting over a million rand from the Road Accident Fund, and that when the money comes through, they are all going to Disneyland, and then will perhaps go and live in England. It is difficult to hear these excited stories from them, and not warn them that it will never happen. Their father is all that they have left. They have to believe in him.

When they leave, returning to a boarding school existence, I spend the final week of the vacation completing my Master's dissertation. It has taken a very long time to complete, and I want it to be over by the time the new year starts. It is time to move on to new things, and there are other areas that I want to read about.

Philip Thraves and I decide that we are going to be outrageous, and plan a holiday in Egypt for the following February. Egypt fascinates me. The money from the Distinguished Teacher's Award makes it possible to dream about a real holiday, and we plan it with delight. We are going to do all of the tourist things. We are going to see the Pyramids, lose ourselves in Temples, and cruise on the Nile. The year begins with a sense of excitement. We are going to walk in the shadow of Hatshepsut.

And so Philip and I travel to Egypt, and we see the pyramids, and we steep ourselves in more temples than we even know exist, and we cruise on the Nile. We are like children exploring the mysteries of this ancient, mythical world, and we steep ourselves completely in its magic.

We have the most wonderful time, made even more wonderful by an impossibly large royalty cheque from Oxford University Press. Elske and I have always written with a sense of dedication to the children and the teachers, and neither of us has ever considered that we would benefit financially from our efforts. When our royalty cheques arrive, we are stupefied with delight. It is suddenly possible to start breathing again. It is possible not to be flattened by financial concerns. Joan's failing health is an increasing worry, and the medical aid does not cover all that is necessary. It is a relief to be able to know that we can cope.

Just days after our return from Egypt, when I am still bubbling with being hailed as a Moon Goddess by the wonderful Egyptian people, Joan receives the devastating news that her son has died. Gerard, her third child, and the one whom she loved the most, has overdosed on heroin.

Joanie is plunged into despair. Gerard has chosen a path of destruction from an early age, and has often made things very difficult for us, arriving at strange times, and disappearing at others. We are never sure where he is, or when we will hear from him. He has stolen from both of us to support his drug habit, and has alienated his brothers and sister with his strange behaviour. But through it all, Joanie loved him more than her own life, and would have done anything for him. We weep together for her loss, and for the waste of this brilliant and talented young mind.

She flies to Nelspruit, where Judith, her daughter, is arranging a memorial service for Gerard. This time proves to be a turning point in Joan's life. She seems to give up on so many things, and has never regained her sense of purpose. Her sadness has become embedded in her being. She retreats into a space of loss, and spends hours sitting nd staring at nothing.

The first and final group of part-time FDE students enrols and begins their course. In February I submit my Master's dissertation, and hardly feel the extra time that this affords me, as Elske and I are deeply involved in the intermediate phase text books for Oxford University Press. The Revised National Curriculum means that the books have to be rewritten to accommodate the revised policy document.

> **Days.**
>
> Emptiness consumes me
>
> like a black hole at my back
>
> night vampire in slack, sleek moves,
>
> making me weak with nothingness
>
> and I move with robotic precision through the days

I find it hard to adapt to the new year at work. Without the dedication of the FDE students, my new fourth year students are like an alien species to me. They flop into their lectures with little enthusiasm, always have excuses about finishing their work, and as they only had art for three hours a week, their commitment is scant.

They also have a very full timetable of academic subjects, which of course assume more importance than art. With so little contact time with them, I am able to give them only the most basic of art-making techniques, and their theoretical knowledge is limited to what has been laid down in something called Form A, which has been drawn up by my colleague at the Wellington Campus the year before, when I had no input.

I file my notes on Pedagogical Power Relations, Maxine Greene's Theory of Possibility, John Mason's Discipline of Noticing, and all of the other important, critical stuff that I have been doing with my students in the FDE course, and begin to compile a new series, with headings like 'Discipline in the art room' and 'Organising your materials'. My timetable drops from forty four lectures a week to thirty. My work shallows itself into so little, after there has been so much. I begin an internal debate about the quality of art teacher education that still rages within me.

Another amalgamation looms, because of governmental rationalisation. This time, we are moving towards a merging of two technikons into a university. The thought fills us all with dread, but we continue with our work. It seems the only way to survive.

At the end of the first semester, Riana, my colleague leaves, taking early retirement to stay at home, because her own family has been deeply affected by a disaster. Her son has had an accident on a quad bike, and at the age of nineteen, has lost a leg. She feels that she needs to support him through his recovery.

The post is advertised, but there are few applicants for the job. It is a contract post, with no imminent promise of permanent employment. We need someone for the job who has a practical knowledge of teaching art in the Foundation Phase, a thorough understanding of the new curriculum, and a theoretical base from which to operate. It is a tall order.

Penny Fouchè applies. She is a friend from my student days at the University of Cape Town. She has been working at an art centre, and has completed the FDE course some years before I began working at the College. She has spent six months in a seconded position as an Arts and Culture Subject Advisor for the Department of Education, and is by far the best applicant for the job. She is appointed on a year's contract.

I know that Penny had tremendous energy, and that it is possible that she can help to build the Art Department up again. I look forward to working with her, taking on joint projects, reaching out into the community, and making a real difference with Art Education and creative projects.

My fourth year students ask for a meeting with me.

"We want to be your special people." They tell me. "We want you to take us on the trip. We want to have the same experiences."

"I haven't budgeted for this," I tell them. "And you won't get time off from your other lectures."

"We can raise the money ourselves," they say. "And if you ask the other lecturers, they might give us the time. We can also include a week end. That way we'll lose less time."

"I'll try," I tell them without enthusiasm.

The next time they come to a lecture, they present me with just over R200.

"We've started to raise funds," they tell me. "We had a cake sale at lunch time. We're going on the trip." I remain unenthusiastic.

They work hard to raise the money, and within a few short weeks, the trip had becomes a reality. They plan, and help with the arrangements, and become excited.

"It's not a holiday," I tell them. "It's very hard work. You will have no free time. You have to work all of the time."

"Just take us," they say. "We will show you."

The other lecturers are surprisingly supportive. It has to do, I suppose, with the fact that in one week, the students are not missing too much of any one subject, because they take so many

*Walking with Toby April*

A small mad energetic dog darting sniffing lifting endless legs and frantically exploring through his nose

I walk,

hands deep in cold pockets,

counting steps and feeling the rhythm of being in a hurry.

An icy sunset drifts in on clouds the colour of dawn,

and a calling of the faithful to prayer

echoes from the mosque across the evening streets.

My head is full of busy thoughts.

A patch of grass, the same as millions of others,

attracts Toby's interest,

and he stops, sniffs, sniffs again, circles it, buries his nose deeply,

scratches once with a forepaw,

and then he's off again,

running for the sheer joy of running.

I kneel down beside the grass

small and insignificant in the fading light,

and reach cold fingers down, touch it

trying to find what it was that stopped

the small one.

Blue-green, thick and dense, these jade blades hold together

and enclose the single grains of sand

to create a union of growth and symbiotic wholeness

smelling of earth and new days and ancient beginnings.

I study the rich texture of interwoven leaves

spreading in tiny bits of growth each day

and I am entranced by the miracle I almost walked past,

almost walked upon,

and I find that I am on my knees,

and still,

and that I, too,

have been called to prayer.

subjects that there is no real depth any more. I have a PDP driver's licence, and have become so adept at organising these field studies that it takes a few telephone calls, a few changes to the journal that I present to each student, and we are off.

It is a surprising experience. I learn more than the students. I have been so used to the FDE students, who are exposed to new experiences all through the year, that I have forgotten that our other students do not have these kinds of experiences, and I glow as I watched this group unfold in the experiential learning. They are like sponges, and so grateful that they become like children.

On the last night, on the farm in Nieu Bethesda, after a day of drawing and exploring at the Owl House, they present me with a group poem that they have written, and I know that I cannot stop exposing my young people to this kind of learning. Even although they are not specialising in art, and even although they have so little time, at least this experience opens doors for them, and once the doors are open, they will never be closed again.

It is a worthy lesson, and I have continued to take my students on this trip every year since then, determined to expose them to as much as possible. Each time we go, I try to be truly reflective about the experience, and involve my students in honest feedback. "What do you suggest I should change for next year?" I ask. "What was your biggest learning experience?" or "What should I leave out?" Because they understand the reason that I am asking the questions, their feedback is helpful and provides guidance to me for future planning.

Their response is always positive, and I am constantly reminded that, even although this excursion might not be feeding faculty research, and might not be bringing in sponsorship for the university, it is nonetheless of immense value for the students. They speak about the trip as a 'life-changing' experience.

Around this time, I meet a South African artist called Wilhelm Hahn. I am invited to a slideshow of his most recent work, and am moved by his ability, and captivated by his

personality. Wilhelm has just returned to South Africa after a twenty-year sojourn in America. He is living with HIV, and wants to be home. He is looking for studio space.

"Please come to us!" I tell him. "You can be our 'artist-in-residence!"

He enjoys the idea, and the following day, I approach a member of management with the proposal. He has no idea of the benefits to the students of such a programme, and wants only to know what the financial benefits for the institution might be. The meeting drags on, and eventually I think he gives in just to get rid of me. Wilhelm is allocated a small room in the art department, and the following week, moves in his art equipment, and begins to work.

The studio becomes a space where I frequently find students watching with interest while Wilhelm works, or chatting to him about a technique that he is using. Sometimes he will wander upstairs to where we are working, and will join me in my studio, and talk with the students about their own work, throwing in a piece of advice or a comment in his very unique way. He knows the senior students by name, and in the evenings, just before we both leave to go home, he often comes up to my office for a last cup of coffee. We linger over a conversation, a book that we have both read, an idea that is brewing.

Wilhelm is obsessed with Nijinsky, and is determined to use his artworks to make the ballet dancer move.

"There is only twenty seconds of documented film on Nijinsky actually dancing," he tells me. "Everything about him fascinates me. Once, I used to say that whatever the question was, the answer is always Nijinsky." He makes a four-metre painting showing the lace of Nijinsky's costume, moving in the dance. He makes drawings of Nijinsky's face, moving and changing. In between, to give himself space, he makes miniature paintings of stones. When he is having bad days, he makes paintings of his medication. "They are only small pills, but they have all this power, you know."

One evening he says, "I've been thinking about madness today."

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"Why?" I ask, and then laugh, because I already know that the answer will be Nijinsky.

"He was really great, you know, but there was also an aspect of madness." Before I can comment he continues, "And it's only society that defines the difference. If people can understand it, they call it greatness. If they can't, they call it madness. I don't even know if this is my own original thought. I just know that I really understood that, today."

We discuss life, death and art. We discuss cooking and film. We discuss relationships and conflict. He makes me think wider, broader, and simply differently.

In October that year, Douglas and Lana call to say that they are going to come to Cape Town for a long week end.

Sometimes one just knows when one has to do something. Before my mother died, she made her will very specific. Cheryl and I would inherit all of her diamonds, and Lana would get one small, pearl ring. When the contents of her will were revealed, Douglas was clearly hurt that his wife had been left out of the big jewellery, but he made no comment.

I am not one for diamonds, and the only rings I wear are rings that are of emotional value to me. My mother's diamonds, given to her by a repentant husband, (and he repented often,) have no value for me at all, and they have been left in my safe. When I die they will go to my nieces.

And so when Douglas and Lana come, we have supper, and after the meal, I give Lana one of my mother's diamond rings. It is strange that my mother's diamond ring manages to do what my mother herself has never done in her life. It brings us close and makes us trust each other. It gives us hope about being a family.

We continue to work at it.

At the end of the year, we hold an exhibition of the work of the graduating art students. Now that we no longer have an exhibition space, the work and the guests are crammed into two rooms and passages, and I feel disheartened at the backward step that art education has taken at the institution. I try to understand the need for flexibility, the need to change, and to *accept* change, but somewhere deep within me, I know that we are losing more than we have gained.

I have also come to understand that my expectations of Penny have been far too selfish, and that it is unreasonable to expect her to share my passion and vision for the Art Department. We approach our work differently. She does everything that is professionally expected of her, and she does it very well, but she does not enjoy teamwork. I have to learn to accommodate this in my thinking about the art department. We are good friends and colleagues, but we approach our work very differently. I have to learn to let Penny be Penny, without any expectations from me.

We are heading for the end of the year, with marks and meetings, Elske and I are writing for Oxford, and Cheryl's girls are arriving for the December holidays. Joan's health and her general state continues to deteriorate, and my responsibilities at home are increasing as she weakens. I do not feel strong enough to confront any major change in my life. There are times when I feel that I am barely coping with what I know.

Cheryl's girls are growing up, and Mary continues to be a difficult and demanding adolescent. She uses her mother's death to manipulate sympathy from me, and I feel that I am handling both of the girls badly. I over-compensate by spending too much money on them, and by spoiling them while they are with me, and then I am exhausted and depressed when they leave. I feel that I am failing on every level, and can manage no enthusiasm for the following year.

2004

It is not surprising that my fourth year group does not perform well in 2004. There are very few of them, and apart from my negative attitude, each one of them brings their own personal

set of problems with them. In one class of six students, I have a girl who self-mutilates, a girl who tries to commit suicide on the campus during a tea break, a single mother who thinks that every white lecturer on the campus is a racist, a religious fanatic, and a girl who has fallen pregnant during the December holidays. Perhaps an even bigger concern is that these students are all academically inadequate, and despite this, will become qualified teachers at the end of the year, and will influence the lives of countless children.

I am not able to raise my enthusiasm for working with them, and do not even suggest a field study excursion. I wonder if I could have made a difference if I had tried harder. My work is uninspired. Their work is uninspired. I give most of my energy to the part-time FDE course, which is running in the evenings and over weekends. I take these students on the Field Study trip. Once again the learning is deep, and on many levels. I am forced into seeing that I will somehow have to fight for this experience, so that more students can come to be exposed to this kind of learning.

This year, our Faculty appoints a new head of research, and his attitude gives me new hope, and brings with it a resurgence of vigour for me. We became friends easily and quickly, and a small group of staff members begin to emerge as survivors of mergers and amalgamations, as friends, and as dedicated colleagues. Often we meet for coffee in the art department, and talk until late about a wide range of subjects. Ana Maria is in the final stages of her Master's Degree, I am beginning to consider the possibility of a Ph D, Wilhelm is painting and working towards an exhibition, and Armand is full of encouragement and support. His energy and enthusiasm are infectious, and he joins our adult ceramics class, which is taught by Joe Faragher, a friend from my art centre days, stays late to make cards with the students, and becomes a regular and welcome visitor in our home.

Philip Thraves, my travelling companion, is also enthusiastic about embarking on his Ph D, and we pore over articles together, discuss theory and practice, and approach our work with a new sense of purpose. Joanie complains about feeling left out. "All you ever do is talk about work," she says, after one of our many group suppers. She has adopted Armand as closely as if he were one of her own children, and will happily cook meals for us, while we sit at the table and engage in heated discussion.

It is a lovely time, and one in which my thinking shifts tremendously. Before, I have given up on any idea of doing research. My earlier experiences of trying to become involved in the research department at the Technikon have been thwarted, and I also believed that my practice was far more important than any research that I might complete.

Slowly I come to realise that research should form the very fabric of my practice, and as I read more, and start to expand my horizons, my practice also shifts, and become more meaningful. I retrieve Maxine Greene from her file, and discover Schon, and the real value of reflective practice. I pore over the autobiographies of Nelson Mandela, the biography of Helen Martins, and the theory of Narrative Research. I watch films with a different eye. I talk with Elske and Evelyn and Hannsie about different things. New purpose is beginning to emerge.

In June, I take away a group of students on a tour to the Grahamstown Festival, and Philip comes with me. During our time away, our bus is stolen, and we have to get twenty seven students back to Cape Town. The head of the department of student affairs is tremendously supportive, and we manage the disaster with the least amount of fuss.

When we return to Cape Town, I am not able to shift the tiredness that hangs over me. Student excursions are always physically exhausting, because one has to be on call at all times. Often, the students needs are somehow made bigger when they are away from the academic environment. I am also always aware of the tremendous responsibility of having so many young people in my care, because so much can go wrong in an instant.

Usually, I bounce back full of energy after a few days back at home, and one or two nights of sleep without keeping an alert ear for problems. This time, however, the tiredness persists, and in fact, becomes worse, and after some weeks, I realise that I should consult a doctor.

I began with my regular doctor, who prescribes a tonic, and suggests that I should have a mammogram. A lump is found, and sample tissue is removed from both of my breasts. It is suggested that I should see a gynaecologist, who discovers that I had 'sinister growths' in my uterus. For the first time in my life, I have to really and sincerely confront the possibility of my own death. The concept does not make me afraid, but makes me establish what it was that I still want to do. Although I am forty six, I still think of myself as a fairly young person, and consider that there is plenty of time to do what I hope and plan to achieve.

The possibility of cancer, in two areas of my body, forces me to refine my goals, to redefine my dreams and my aspirations, and even to reconsider my relationships. What is really important to me? Who are the people that I want to be with? What do I still want to do, in order to make sure that my life is not wasted? I write a great deal. I contact friends whom I have neglected. I think about the life of this middle-aged spinster, teacher, friend, aunt, sister, person. I wonder whether I will leave anything of value, if it is time to die.

In October I have a hysterectomy, and six weeks away from work. My mind clouds from anaesthetic and pills and tiredness, and my sudden removal from my academic life gives me space to spend long hours reading and thinking. I do not have cancer. I will recover and be healthy and active again. I will have time to do and to be. I do not like being idle. I do not enjoy time to sit and do nothing. My forced exposure to television at night makes me want to throw that large black box into the sea.

**Cancer Scare**

It's not a regular mass, she said, smiling in a matter-of-fact,

let's-not-panic-about-this way;

We'll have to do further tests,

But don't worry too much,

let's wait until we've got the results.


Not we, I, and not our results, mine,

And not your mass, and not your waiting,

but mine.

Mine to confront this night, mine to confront this life, the things

I thought I still wanted to do,

important now, pressing in on me, down on me.

My body that will be slit, sliced and taken from,

stitched up, dried up, used up,

and nothing more to do about it but think, use up thoughts, use them all up now.

No point

in waiting for the right time, it might not have time to come.

The night time is always such a long, long time.

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At the same time, Hannsie Visser, my high school Afrikaans teacher, who has become a close and dear friend, is in Cape Town for a spinal fusion, and we spend as much time together as our ridiculous ailments will allow. We pore over an Ingrid Jonker biography, and share frustrations at our inability to think properly because of our mutual anaesthetics. We laugh at ourselves, and the laughing helps us heal.

In December, Philip Thraves has a massive stroke, and is admitted to hospital. Ana Maria, Armand and I try as best we can to support him, to offer practical assistance, and to aid his recovery. It is an event that makes us all realise, once again, how frail our lives really are, and how they can change in an instant. Philip, who has been a vibrant, funny, dear and bright man, who has climbed into pyramids with me, and energetically directed my students to 'feel it, and then BE it", suddenly becomes someone who has to use all of his energy to put one foot in front of another, to formulate simple sentences, and to force his tongue to form the words. His recovery is slow and sporadic. He has to teach himself to speak, to eat, to walk.

I come to realise that if one does not search for meaning, in every moment, then life passes almost unnoticed. My reprieve from cancer, followed so closely by Philip's stroke, makes me spend time reflecting on what I am doing with my own life. How am I constructing my own meaning, and of what value is it to myself, and to the other people in my life? I seem to spend so much time filling hours with being busy, and at the end of all of the busy-ness, what is left? And more importantly, how have I made meaning? What am I actually giving to my students that is of lasting value, long after the information had been forgotten? I resolve to make 2005 a different kind of year, with different teaching, and different thinking, and different learning, for my students, and for me. It is a resolve that does not last long, because I am far more comfortable making myself busy, too busy to think about anything else, and too busy to follow my own resolves.

## 2005

The amalgamation with the Peninsula Technikon becomes a reality, but because the group of staff members in which I function is on the lowest rung, we are not really affected by any structural or management changes. We continue to do our work, in the same space with the

same students. All we have to do is become used to a different institutional name. I find that it is easier, when I meet people, to simply say that I am a teacher. It cut through the complications, and speaks of my real work.

I have worked with my fourth year students since their second year, and know them well. They are dedicated and enthusiastic, and work hard to explore their art-making skills. In March I take them on the Field Study trip, and watch as they expand and fill themselves with the new experiences. Just before we leave, a teacher from a School for the Deaf comes to speak to me about the introduction of the Revised National Curriculum Statement, and she asks about the busy preparations that the students are involved with. When she hears about the trip, she smiles.

"Do your students know how lucky they are?" she asks. "When I take my learners to the local supermarket, they get excited. The experience that you are planning for your students is beyond the wildest dreams of my children."

"Well," I answer, we are just going to have to take your learners on a trip like this one day."

It happens sooner than I think. Private funding is offered to me to make this trip a reality, and I call the students together, and discuss the possibility of taking children away on a trip. They are excited and inspired.

"You are going to have to do it all," I tell them. "I don't have time to organise another trip. I'm busy planning the one for the Cape Town Campus for June, and so it really is up to you."

The teacher from the school is excited, and we begin initial planning. Three teachers will accompany us on the trip. Before we leave, they will teach sign language to my students. While we are away, they will be able to see Outcomes-Based Education in practice. The students will learn about preparing for such a trip, and will mentor the children through a five-day carefully planned learning experience.

They embrace the idea, and are soon busily making telephone calls to find sponsors for warm clothing, sweets, and art materials for twenty deaf children. They begin to learn sign language, and to put together journals for the children. In between all of this, they continue to make their practical work, as their moderation exhibition at the end of the year has to be complete, and show the quality of their thinking and their work.

In May I fly to East London for a week end to interview my headmistress, as part of my own research for my Ph D. I dread going back there after so many years, and arrive with a heavy heart. I drive from the airport, back over the Buffalo River that I had crossed a lifetime ago, and slowly wind my way through the streets, which I have not forgotten. Their pathways are carved like scars in my heart.

Meeting my principal again, after so many years, and such a lifetime of growth and change, is an incredible experience. She is older, slightly stooped, and yet has retained her dignity, and her firm beliefs in what she was trying to achieve with 'her girls'. We talk for hours, and I listen to her stories with fascination and respect. She is truly a woman who has made education her life.

After I have spent Friday evening and Saturday with Miss Ogilvie, I choose to spend Saturday evening transcribing the recorded interviews, while they are fresh and closely in my thinking. There is no one that I wish to visit in this strange city of my youth.

I am sitting in my hotel room, high up on the fourth floor, and am transcribing our discussion from the tape recorder. I have worked from about 19:00, and as the night wears on, the room becomes progressively hotter. I am not good with technical things, and the air conditioner has foiled me. Although I have flung open the windows, there seems no respite from the heat. As I become more and more absorbed in my work, I simply begin to shed my clothes, and am finally sitting in my underwear.

Sometimes, when one is really absorbed in something, one becomes aware of a sound that has been going on for some time, and only slowly begins to invade consciousness. So it is

now, when I became aware of a deep keening wail on the pavement outside the hotel. When the sound becomes an anguished weeping, it rouses me enough to make me rise from the computer, and go to the window to look out.

The air conditioner shields me almost to my chin, so even if anyone looks up, they will see only my shoulders and face, and not my semi-naked appearance. I am safe in the darkness of the badly-lit room. It is well past midnight, and the rain is thick and almost solid on the streets.

Across the road is a large woman, very large, and stark naked. Her body is wet from the rain, and from my angle, she has the shape, from shoulder to buttocks, of a perfect bell. She is weeping with the hollow sound of a pain that is so deep that it no longer has words. In front of her stands a policeman, in full uniform. He is stretching out his hand to her, in a gesture that is both comforting and inviting. She reaches towards his hand, and then recoils, as if she cannot trust so far as to touch him. Then he gently reaches out his hand again, and waits, in the pouring rain, until she begins to reach towards him. After many such attempts, they finally make contact, and he, with infinite gentleness, reaches an arm around her, and guides her, like a queen, to the back of his police van, where he helps her to climb up, and then closes the door. His actions give her back the dignity that she has long ago relinquished.

After he has closed the door, he begins to walk towards the front door of the van, and then he suddenly stops, and for perhaps ten seconds, he simply stands dead still, and stares out at the bleak street, completely motionless. Slowly he climbs into the van, and drives away.

I stand for a long time after that, at the window, staring out at the street, and I weep with some kind of strange thing that had been touched deep inside of me. I, too, am almost naked, but I am high up in a dry and comfortable hotel room, and hot, and safe, and surrounded by expensive state of the art equipment. And she is just there. With nothing. And weeping, and alone. And the policeman has been gentle, and comforting, and lovely.

And East London gives me something back, this night, with this moment. The woman was white, the policeman black. And I think of the snake, and D H Lawrence. The snake came to drink, and was disturbed by the log, and went away, and did not know how it had made Lawrence think, reflect, feel.

It takes me many hours to fall asleep. The image of the cold, blue-white broken body and the gentleness of the policeman keep coming back to me. The colours of a nation trying to heal.

And on Sunday morning, instead of seeing people that I hardly know any more, I take my hired car, and drive through all the remembered places in East London, and find, to my deep gratitude, that there are also good memories and whole times and sweetness that come back to me. The bleak times feel as if they have happened to someone else, in another lifetime, and I realise that I have changed, and have embraced new learning.

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*East London*

City of night, you fight my heart with darkened memories

of what you held

in those far days

Your beach is unconcerned with my return,

No remorse for all the pain you caused to burn

my throat when I would hunt for solace in your waves

your empty graves holding dead dreams and

broken shafts of what could have been if what was then, was not.

And I forgot how gently you could cloak

your daggered night, your long despairing joke

your painful heavy yoke

in so much green, obscenely soft and light,

your streets my bled out arteries

cold and tight

as if, you in your rightness, make it right,

you cannot heal the scar you left, no touch,

no word can take away your desperate crutch,

so much you took, so little could you give,

I live with your dark shadow, dark and bright,

My flight then was the same as now,

Not right, not brave,

but just to save what I have left, I leave,

and grieve for all you took away

like the senseless words we say

when death has choked the final breath

out of a hope.

I grope out of your angry space

I watch your shores grow small and bleak,

and weak but strong enough for me to know

I can't belong here.

So I go.

I was right to leave East London, because I did not belong there, and it did not belong in me.

Who can know what life will give, when one least expects a giving?

I return to Cape Town with a sense of release. East London has imprisoned me, but in a strange way, has also finally let me go.  Many years ago I ran away, frightened and insecure, but this time I am leaving because I know that I did not belong here. I have made another life somewhere else, and I am going back to it. I cannot change the way that I feel about the city, and the deep sadness that I feel about so many things, as I drive those well-remembered streets, but I do not belong here anymore, and I am free to go. From all that East London ever was. From all that East London never was. I never want to come back here.

The interview with my headmistress is significant in my early understandings of what I am researching. In the days of her early training, and throughout the many years of her professional life, she worked intuitively, doing what she believed to be right in the midst of great busy-ness. She has never considered curriculum development, has never pondered her own practice, and has not remained current by reading. And yet she had been a significant educator, and a great leader at our school. I spend many hours considering her way of being. What is at its centre? What made it affective and effective? And what, of these qualities, would still be relevant currently?

It was, I believe, her humanity. The quality of her being.

When I return to Cape Town, I immediately begin preparing for the Life skills tour for the Cape Town Campus, but just before I am due to leave, our two male dogs fight, Joanie intervenes, and she is badly bitten. I have to have one of the dogs euthanased, and it breaks my heart. I have bought him and his sister from street children when the puppies were two weeks old, and we have carefully nurtured them back to health. His fight with Toby is to try to establish dominance, but Joanie has become tangled in dog bodies. She ends up in hospital

with severe blood poisoning, and Penny agrees to take the students away on tour, so that I can stay in Cape Town and care for Joanie.

After the first week of the holidays, I buy air tickets to fly Mary and Stella to Johannesburg, where I am able to join them, and we all spend a week with Douglas and Lana at their bush camp near Marble Hall in Limpopo. Mac Donald and his son join us, and we walk for miles through cotton fields on neighbouring farms, discover sunflower heads as big as dinner plates, and spend the evenings sitting around a huge fire in the boma, listening to the sounds of the natural world beyond the reed walls of our circle of light.

It is a wonderful time, coming in the middle of so much activity, and for the first time in a very long time, I feel myself relaxing.

One day, while the children are shooting cans with pellet guns, Mac Donald and I go for a walk. He has become the director of a private school in the centre of Cape Town, and is enjoying his new position. We talk about our work, and the directions that our lives are taking, and about our futures. He knows that he does not want to work for much longer. He is exhausted by education, and wants to retire properly. Neither of us imagine that he is actually seriously ill, and that his body is in the process of slowly shutting down.

"And you?" he asks me. "What about you?"

"I don't know," I answer him honestly. "I don't think that this institution is the right place for me. I have to fight too hard for my subject. There is so little support for the arts."

"What will you do?"

"I honestly don't know. Where does one go, after this? I don't want a promotion post, because that just takes one further and further away from the students, and with the students is where I want to be."

"Would you consider leaving education?"

"To do what?" I ask him.

"Well, you always said you wanted to write."

"I'm writing already. For Oxford."

"Could you afford to do that full-time?"

I have not told anyone, but the royalty cheque that I have just received from Oxford means that, if I live conservatively, I could survive for a good five years without working. But I do not want to stop working.

"I don't want to write full-time, not text books, anyway. That's not real writing for me. I don't think I could cope with being a full-time text-book writer. It's not about real stuff. It's just a busy-ness that helps teachers to do their work. But it is still their choice of they want to do it badly. The books won't change any of that."


We slowly make our way back to the camp.

"The trouble is," I continue, "I like my work. I love my work. I just don't belong in that place."

"But what is that place?" asks Mac Donald. "I mean, doesn't your work create your own place?"

"I suppose you're right," I answer. "But you know me – I think everyone should work together to make it a *good* place."

"I've told you before, you're naïve," laughs Mac Donald. "That doesn't happen in the real world."

"But when you were there, people seemed to care about each other more."

"No they didn't." he laughs. "They just made it look like that. People are horrible, Sandy. I've told you that before too. Just do your own thing. Make yourself happy. Stop worrying about everyone else."

"You're a cynical bastard," I tell him, as we arrive back at the camp, and pour drinks.

"I know," he laughs. "But I'm also a survivor."

I reflect on Mac Donald's words for a long time after that. He is right. My work does make its own space. And there is no demand from anyone else. All I have to do is make sure that, within the small physical space that is left to us, we can create a world where art education is respected and thrives. It does not really matter what anyone else thinks. Or even how much anyone else understands about what we are doing.

As soon as the third term begins, the students and I immerse ourselves in the preparations for the tour with the deaf children, and in the middle of August, we load everyone into a bus, and travel to the Crags, near Plettenberg Bay, determined to give them the learning experience of a lifetime.

Three of their teachers come with us, and Armand also accompanies us. The synergy is amazing. The teachers share their knowledge with the students, the students share their knowledge with the children, the children share their knowledge with all of us. Armand and I provide back-up and theoretical input. We name the trip "The Magic Tour", to stand for 'Making Art Grow In Children' and it is more magic than any of us could ever have planned. It will be one of the most enduring memories of my entire teaching career.

During the time that we are away, I gain a deep and lasting respect for the students. They are responsible for checking even the smallest details, things like making sure that the children clean their teeth, make their own beds, and adhere to hygiene standards. In this way, they learn to know the children very well, and can absorb the responsibility for the whole child, and for understanding who the whole child is, instead of seeing just the learner in the classroom.

They are tireless in their willingness to give time and energy to the children, in their quest for knowing, and in the evenings, they gather in my room, sitting huddled in blankets on the floor, and we discuss, debate and argue about learning, teaching, and the power of knowledge. We share wine, coffee, laughter and many hours of conversation, and all that is happening inspires me. For the first time in so long, I feel that we are breaking new ground, learning real lessons together, and that these students will make exceptional teachers.

The following month, I take the Foundation Phase students on the same tour. They have approached me earlier in the year with this request, and assured me that they would raise the money for the trip, if I would agree to take them.

At the time it seemed like a good idea, but by the time the trip becomes a reality, I wish that I had been less enthusiastic. I am tired. There seems little time to catch up on work. I am neglecting friends and my own research. Once again, I am allowing my life to be filled up with busy-ness, at cost to myself. I approach the Foundation Phase trip with no energy, and with an attitude that shows that all I want is for it to be over.

Christelle Ekron, the young drama lecturer on our campus, accompanies us on the trip. Within hours of leaving Cape Town, I am ashamed of myself for my negative attitude. The students are hungry for knowledge. They are open to learning on every level, and after four days away, have managed to fill me with energy and joy in all that is happening. They verbalise their delight, their surprise, and their own dedication to what they are experiencing.

We take them to walk with elephants through a forest, and then to interact with the elephants after the walk. The experience is moving beyond measure. One of the students stands with her forehead against the side of an elephant, and weeps from the joy of the experience. I, jaded after so many student trips, find my own eyes wet. Christelle weeps openly with the student. The other students draw together, touch each other, and understand the enormity of this experience. There is no silliness, no noise. The space becomes almost sacred.

Christelle and I talk a great deal during this trip. We unpick it every night, finding and defining the positives, trying to find solutions for the negatives, and simultaneously understanding that what our students need is warmth, kindness, understanding, and challenge. They are responding so well to the trip because they feel safe with us. They are prepared to be pushed beyond their safety barriers. They are prepared to think in areas where they have not ventured before. We agree that it is the quality of the person that guides and challenges, and

we both decide to spend more time on the personal development of our students, bringing it in to our courses wherever possible.

The following month, I travel to Johannesburg to present my first ever paper at the Fotim Mentorship Conference. I spend the week end with Douglas and Lana in Pretoria, and it is a very close time. We have come to a place where we are able to simply love each other. We acknowledge our differences, and are even able to tease each other about them, and we find it easy and lovely to be together.

Early on Monday morning, I collect my rental car, and drive to the hotel. I spend the afternoon reading through my paper, timing my delivery, and making sure that the PowerPoint presentation is right. The next morning, I register for the conference, and a different world begins to open to me.

I clutch my flash drive in my pocket, beg the gods to be kind, and plug in the laptop.

There is only one conference that is the first one. Mine is memorable. I love every moment of the presentations, the conversations, the discussions with the other members of institutions from all over the country. I learn so much. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity. Reflection brings about another shift in my thinking. I have wanted support from the institution for the work that I am doing in art education, and I do not feel that it was forthcoming. But that does not stop me from doing the work.

However, in order to attend this conference, I am given tremendous institutional support. On my way back to Cape Town, I stare out of the window of the aeroplane, and slowly begin to understand the nature of an academic institution. Have I perhaps been expecting it to be run along the lines of a school? Am I foolish enough to expect staff members to be collegial, when they themselves are busy trying to carve their own places in this strange new world into which we have all been plunged as a result of the many amalgamations?

I feel as if I am on the brink of understanding something new, but I am not yet sure what it is. I want to think about it, to play with it, and to talk about it with colleagues who are friends.

Funding that had been promised to the Art building finally becomes available, and we look forward to the changes with delight. At last, we are going to gain our exhibition space, properly lit studios, and practical storage space. It is not long before it becomes clear that we will gain none of these things. The funding that has been promised to us is re-allocated to the improvement of the rooms that were being used for Technology downstairs.

Although I can understand the need to support a new learning area, I am bitterly disappointed, and fight the changes as hard as I can. I send an email to management in which I beg them to consider the needs of each learning area, using the national policy document as a guideline, rather than the personal needs of the lecturers.

With no explanation for the reason that I wrote the argument, the email is immediately circulated to all staff members in the building. In this one action, the collegiality that I have worked so hard to nurture in the Art building is destroyed.

I am shocked to my core by this breach of trust. I examine my responses to the building changes. Am I being unreasonable? Am I being unfair to another learning area? I know that I have intended no personal slight to the Technology lecturer, but the damage has been done. This, coupled with the realisation that the years of waiting for proper space, for an exhibition area, have been in vain, and that we are never going to get one, leaves me numb with disappointment. All of the hard work that we have done in the Art Department seems to be pointless. The value of the subject has once again been negated.

Before my thinking has settled a colleague suffers from an autonomic shutdown as a result of stress. This coming so soon after Philip's stroke makes me realise that our whole staff is in a state of stress, and at a staff meeting, I suggest that we invite staff

Magdalene have mercy, you're a woman just like me,

but in your darkest hour, you had stones to set you free.

When you found your own salvation, did it ease your troubled night?

Could you sleep in dappled dreaming, did it give you some respite?


There is bleeding on my pillow and the colour is deep red,

and the edge is tinged with darkness, like the colour of deep dread,

And a map is on my ceiling where the sleepless journeys start,

and they travel through my memories and break within my heart.


In the morning when the cold light becomes bold light with the dawn,

And I rise to face the dayfight with a body broke and torn,

Although I feel your sisterhood, I never hear your voice,

And I wonder, when your stones rained, did you wince, or just rejoice?


Did you want the blood salvation and the public saving grace,

or were there spaces deep within you to reject the Christ embrace?

When your choices were removed, and you were just another prize

Was your smile in jubilation, or were you hiding your surprise?


When you walk along the street now, with your head discreetly bowed,

and your Master walks before you, with his back all straight and proud,

Do you ever look behind you at the freedom that you knew,

before they made you Magdalene, and covered you in blue?

members to record the causes of their stress, and to suggest any possible actions that might alleviate these. I am hoping that we can move into a place of solving problems, rather than

simply being crushed by them. A colleague publicly attacks me in front of the staff, accusing me of using this opportunity to collect data for my research.

I stand on the veranda outside of the staff room and weep. Too much about this institution feels wrong. I want nothing more in the world than to be away, to leave the institution, and to be free of this kind of hurt. I have invested too much of my self in my work, and the pain feels personal. The level of distrust amongst colleagues runs too high, and in the clamour for survival, jealousy and back-stabbing becomes almost accepted practice. There is no support for each other's work, because even small success is seen as a challenge, and is therefore negated or belittled. It is only in the art building where there is any sense of honour and trust, and I retreat there, stay there whenever possible, and avoid going to the main campus across the road.

Friends on the staff, many of whom feel the same way, try to offer support and wisdom, but I cannot rouse myself from the dark place. I withdraw from attending any staff functions, and stay in the art building more than ever, watching while our marble steps are replaced with brick paving, our beautiful, original Art Deco fence is ripped down and destroyed, our ceramics studio is turned into a dumping ground for all of the equipment and furniture that is stored in the building, and even more display boards are pulled down, because this is the policy of the new institution. I feel disempowered and tired. I am too old to try to begin yet another battle to convince anyone about the value of art education. I feel completely used up and finished.

The acting rector of the institution surprises us all by attending the Art exhibition at the end of this year. He watches the video that I have made of the student field study, and of the MAGIC tour. He hears the students talking about the value of the learning during the year. Afterwards he takes me aside.

"Thank you for the good work that you are doing," he tells me.

Although I smile at him, and make the right responses, I am aware that I do not care. Words make very little difference in a space of shrinking value.

As the year ends, I feel uninvolved and full of despair. Penny blames the narrative nature of my Ph D research, and is supportive.

"You can't spend a year delving into your own history and expect to feel okay," she tells me. Other colleagues tell me to stop caring so much, and to try to stop allowing my work to be so important. I do not know how to separate my self from my work. They are always inextricably connected, and as the years pass, the fuzzy edge between the teacher and the person has become even more blurred.

I also have to acknowledge that while I am losing control in my personal life, my work keeps me focussed and grounded. There, in that space, there is security. There is safety. But that space is changing, and I feel that I do not know how to function in this new, care-less world. I face a big decision. I either have to learn to swim in this institution, as it is, because I know that I am not able to change it, or I have to leave.

> I sometimes wonder if this is
> descent into madness or ascent into sanity;
> this lengthy biopsy of being is a crude alternative
> to doubt,
> and when the words have synthesised and
> systematically bisected the parameters of place and time
> and placed it all in time and space,
> and made sense of cause and effect,
> effectively causing a different effect, will it matter,
> will it matter to the strong south-easter winds, the turbulent ocean at
> the tip of Africa the child on his mother's hip in the wastelands of the
> Flats,
> the faces before me believing they can change the world?
> Will this pensive passage of probing make a mark,
> have a meaning in the way a moment can alter a world?
> They and thou and I shall live our days,
> And if we write them in retrospect, does the meaning revise itself
> to suit the written word?
> I know only this:
> That there is light in the waking of the day,
> That there is truth in the deep  and sacred silence of the night,
> and in between,
> there is the vast emptiness and
> vast fullness of everything else,
> and whether it is written or unwritten,
> known or unremembered or unencumbered by acceptance,
> time will take what it needs to make its own passing
> momentous
> or meaningless.

I decide to leave. The relief is overwhelming.

I have, however, committed myself to the current third-year students, who will complete their studies the following year, and to completing my research. I give myself one final year. By

this time, the Oxford royalties have made it possible for me not to work again, and I do not have to worry about what I will do next. I have free-lanced before, and I know that I can keep myself busy. Oxford had started to ask me to illustrate for them in other learning areas, Elske and I are involved in further projects. There is so much that I can do.

Wilhelm completes a body of work, and opens his exhibition in the Art building. It is well attended, and there is much positive comment. We are extremely privileged to have him on our premises, and I am grateful for the effect that he is having on the students.

I am also grateful for the effect that he is having on my own thinking. Our evening conversations have extended my thinking beyond my work, my home, and into areas of debate and philosophy where I have not ventured before. We have forged a lovely friendship, and Wilhelm and his partner are frequent visitors to my home. "If you think that you must go, then you must leave," he tells me, in his Afrikaans accent with an American edge. "We make our own lives difficult. Keith always tells me that I have the martyred attitude of an Afrikaner. Maybe you have it, too."

I think of my mother, and of her victim mentality. Could this be true for me too? Am I allowing life to do what it pleases with me, without having any power myself? Is this what I always do at times of crisis? I am internally in a state of upheaval, but my years of coping have taught me to present normality. How have I allowed that presentation to become more real than the reality itself? This is Wilhelm's value. He makes me stop. He challenges me to think. He makes me uncomfortable with thinking.

Mary and Stella, now fifteen and seventeen, come to Cape Town for the December holiday, but I am edgy and difficult. My work is in a state of flux, Joan's health is not good, Mac Donald is seriously ill, and the girls are moody and adolescent. I decide to take them to Hannsie at the Crags, so that they can have an experience with the elephants, and hopefully find something of value other than big shopping centres and television. In my heart, I know that I am simply not able to cope with their needs as well, when everything else in the world is unstable.

Armand is travelling to Port Elizabeth, where his youngest son is participating in a chess competition, and he suggests that we all travel together in his car. He will leave us with Hannsie at the Crags, and will pick us up on his return to Cape Town. I am grateful, because the long drive is not one that makes me feel positive.

Armand has come to know Hannsie during the preceding two years, and they have grown to love each other. She invites him to stay for a few days when he returns, bringing with him his two boys. We all look forward to a time of fun, of exploring nature and being together, away from work and difficulties and responsibilities. Evelyn and Penny agree to keep an eye on Joanie, who does not want to travel any more, and we set off with a sense of relief.

A day after we had arrive at the Crags, Evelyn telephones to tell me that Joanie has fallen, and broken a hip. She will be having hip replacement surgery the next day. I try to hire a car so that we can return to Cape Town, but it is December, and nothing is available. I try to book flights from the George airport, but there are none available. Finally, Armand arrives with his sons, and when he hears what has happened, he immediately insists that he cut their holiday short, and drives us all to Cape Town.

The rest of the holiday is spent trying to accommodate the girls, caring for Joanie when she is released from the hospital. Douglas and Lana drive down to Cape Town for Christmas, and their presence is a great help. Lana has a particular ability to deal with frail, elderly people, and Douglas provides a support and wisdom on practical levels like hiring medical equipment and mowing the lawn. Christmas is a quiet affair, as Joanie finds it difficult to move, and is overwhelmed by too many people. Her medication keeps her confused and tired, and she remains frail.

## 2006

When the academic year starts, I am more tired than I was at the end of the last one, and my resolve to leave strengthens as the days pass. I weep frequently at work, and Penny spends many hours sitting in my office with me, and telling me that I have to try to pull myself

together. "Stop doing this research, Sandy" she warns me. "It's messing too much with your head. Do something else. Take up kick-boxing or something. Come out with us sometimes. Learn to relax and get drunk every now and again."

I can see no point. I begin work on a mandala of All Considerations. It is a conscious attempt to let my subconscious mind find an answer for me. It is a difficult mandala, and sometimes I take it out to work on it, and it lies untouched while I stared at it. And then I put it away again. The voice of the Universe is silent.

Wilhelm's voice also becomes more and more silent. He begins to lecture in the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town, and as his work there absorbs him more and more, his work at the Art Department becomes more sporadic. Within months of his taking up this position, he is diagnosed with cancer. As the disease takes hold of his body, his energy lessens. Chemotherapy exhausts him, leaving him ill and weak.

"I don't mind dying," he tells me. "But there is still work left in me. I don't know when one knows that one's work is done. What is one's work, after all? I mean, one's *real* work?" I find the question asking itself of me as well.

Finally, the students return, and with them, some lightness. Their contact time has once again been cut, to allow the final year students to become more involved in their own research, but nobody has explained this to them. When they see that they do not have lectures on a Friday, they all find part-time employment.

I sit with my group, and ask them to commit themselves to more time in the art building. We work through our joint timetables, and find mutual spaces that we can fill with art-making. They begin to understand the commitment that they are making, and give more time to their work. I frequently come to the building to find it ringing with music, as they sit and work, or group around a guitar during one of their breaks.

As my own research begins to impact on my thinking, I feed it straight back to the students. We pore over social constructionsim and the true meaning of knowledge. We search for the tools of meaning construction. We discuss what it means, to *teach meaningfully*. We explore the art elements in their daily lives. Slowly they creep into my heart, and help it to heal a little. I gain energy from my work, and from the wonderful atmosphere that is returning to the art building.

Hannsie and I have been talking about going to Egypt together, and one thing or another has delayed our departure. There are times when I think that we will never really go. Finally, during the Easter break, we put the rest of our lives on hold, and board an aeroplane that will take us to the far north of our continent.

The first two days are wonderful, as we stand on the plains of Giza, climb into the depths of a pyramid, and stared at the sacred sphinx. We bargain with the traders in the Cairo markets, and laugh like children at our own delight. By the time we reach Luxor, it is clear that Hannsie is seriously ill, and after a doctor has diagnosed severe bronchitis, she is confined to bed. I take my video camera, and walk the streets of Luxor on my own.

It is an astounding experience. I realise that it has been some years since I have physically been on my own, in any space or time. There are always people in my office at work, and when I come home, Joanie is there, with her ailing health and her sadness.

In Luxor, I wander aimlessly, revelling in this time to reflect, and to examine the events of the past months. I find no answers, but in a far-off country, I find the time and space to connect with myself again, and to allow the real questions to surface. I have never been good at setting long-term goals, or answering big questions like "What do you want from life?" In Luxor, I stop even thinking of these questions. The search becomes more focussed. What is important for me? What do I want to do about the things that are important to me? How am I going to do those things? What choices can I make? What choices do I want to make? Why do I want to make those choices? I come to understand that everything in life is about conscious choice, and that consequence is a part of that choice. I realise that everyone and

everything that is in my life is there because I have chosen for them or it to be there, and that I can just as easily choose difference. I am truly free to decide.

I am sure that many people come to this realisation at a younger age, and are empowered by this knowledge. It took me years, but when I finally understand what it really means to be free to choose, I take a big step towards growing up. Luxor embeds itself in my soul.

Hannsie slowly recovers, and we spend the rest of the time delighting like children in the magical qualities of this strange and beautiful land. We have been friends for over thirty years, and it is an easy time of talking from our hearts, or being silent and secure as we drift on the Nile feluccas, wonder at the Temple of Phillae, or watch the Nubian dancers become Whirling Dervishes.

In Alexandria, I walk for miles along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, letting my trouser legs get soaking wet. I stare out at this immense body of ancient water and become aware of the bigness of life, and also of its smallness. In that space, so far away from everything, life seems so much more manageable.

When we return to Cape Town, I plunge immediately into work, with a student teaching practice and Oxford deadlines, but I am very aware that the time away has made a difference to my thinking. I feel bolder, stronger, and ready to cope once again.

*The Sea at Alexandria*

For the first time in the heaviness of months

I walk with no other reason than to walk.

Sand squeezing through bare toes and soft brown children

rolling in the edges of curling waves

they watch

shyly

and smile with huge brown eyes.

Late afternoon sun warms my head and my heart and

the tops of my shoulders and my inside being

comes out as shyly as the children.

Lapis lazuli sky and sea

and pieces joining gently together as the water

seeps through cracks

where broken edges have grown thick

with the friction of the day-long grind.

Just walking and water, just this and now and here

and here is all for now.

After the teaching practice session, the students and I leave on their field study trip, and I watch with joy as they discover themselves in a new learning environment.

I remain convinced by experiential learning, but by now have come to realise that there has to be more focus to this learning, and in their journals, include John Mason's practice of the Discipline of Noticing, and guided reflective exercises. I have to put a curfew on their night-time discussions, as they refer to their journals for guidance, and then go way beyond the intended subject matter. They give themselves entirely to the experience, and are like children in their joy of learning. We talk for hours about the quality of humanity, of the teacher-being, of the values that they will powerfully demonstrate to their children.

We speak about the qualities of our beings, of our human-ness. We delve into the real meaning of teaching.

We have the luxury of a bus driver, and on long drives, I am free to sit and work on the stitching of my Mandala of All considerations, which has dragged on for months. The answers to the choices that I have to make will not come to me in non-verbal simplicity, and I have stitched complicated weavings of indecision into the background. Using threads and paints of all colours, I have tried to find my knowing in this meditative process, but it has eluded me, and the mandala has lain for many hours, untouched on my lap,

One day we are travelling on the bus, en route to a visit to a craft institution, and there is much discussion going on behind me. I turn to look over my shoulder.

Some of the students are writing in their journals. Some of them are working out mathematical games with the packs of cards I have given them. Some of them are excitedly discussing the experience of the elephant visit of that morning. None of them are unmoved. None of them are bored. I feel my teacher's heart swell with gratitude and joy, and find that I am stupidly smiling to myself. I am aware of the fact that this is a big moment in the strange space of this bus.

"How can I leave this?" I ask myself. "How can I go away from this determined quest for knowledge, this joy in discovery, this development of the teaching selves?"

I picked up the mandala, and begin to work on it. Suddenly the colours will come, the shapes fly from my hands, and a lightness returns to the heavy shapes that have been ponderous on the cloth. I stitch with ease and delight.

That night, I sit for a long time alone in my room, and think about this old self in this almost new institution, and the clash of values that is making my work so difficult. I have already come to see the value of the research process in my own work, and I am beginning to be inspired by the possibilities that are opening up in my thinking. I am learning more than I ever thought that I could, at this late stage of my life, and am aware of the support for this learning from the institution.

I realise that I was blessed with a Dean who trusts and supports my work as much as she can, and that the institution allows us a tremendous amount of independence. I finally understand that I also have to truly embrace the changes that have become the fabric of our very lives, and that if I can do this, it will mark a pattern for my own growth. I am approaching fifty, and know very clearly that the choice that I make at this time will have to sustain me for the rest of my life. I leave it to the power of the universe, and go to bed.

For the rest of the trip, every time we travel in the bus, I work on the mandala. By the time we begin the journey home, it is complete, and its answer given. Despite so many things, but more importantly, because of so many things, I will not be leaving, cannot leave this, and I joyously knew that I will stay to work with my students, and to try to help them to become the best teachers that they can be. This is the gift that they challenge me with on a daily basis, and my learning is not yet complete.

I make an appointment with the Dean, and strongly argue for a B Ed Honours degree with a visual art specialisation to be established the following year. Once again, I assure her that I will take on the added work in addition to my workload. She agrees, and tells me to follow the necessary steps to set up the course within our current structures. I do not believe that the current structures are ideal, but I am happy to be able to offer my students an opportunity to deepen their learning, no matter what the structures are. I start to actively promote the course.

Private funding for the MAGIC Tour is once again offered, and this time, we take thirty children from a local primary school. They have no physical challenges. They are simply ordinary children whose economically impoverished lives are put on hold for a while, as we show them MAGIC at work. This year, I add a research component to the Tour, and it deepens the experience for all of us. The students focus on the official roles of the teacher, which are gazetted in our country, and in the evenings when the children are in bed, explore how they have performed these during the day.

Reflective practice is gaining strength at the Faculty, and colleagues are no longer seeing it as an 'airy-fairy' way of dealing with student teaching and learning.  The students are inspired with what they are learning, talking about and gaining through this process, and it impacts deeply on the way they work with the children. The trip becomes a buzz of conscious learning, discussion and awareness.

When we return, I show the dvd to the staff, and this time, there are different responses to our 'fun'. The Dean encourages me to take this concept further.

I explore the value of experiential learning and its potential in visual literacy, and take the findings to the Kenton Conference in the Wilderness, where I present a paper and a research poster. I feel as if my pro-activity is beginning to succeed, and that I have made the right choice about my work. The year ends with promise.

Joan's health continues to deteriorate, and she begins to forget, first small things, and then bigger and more important details. Our doctor tells her that she is probably suffering from a bladder infection, takes tests, confirms the diagnosis, and prescribes antibiotics. Joan's general well-being improves, but her memory remains vagrant. Pots boils dry and buckle on the stove, the sprinkler is left to flood the lawn overnight, telephone messages are undelivered, and life hardens for both of us.

"You are just giving in to being old," I tell her unkindly. "Try to focus on the positive instead of the negative." She has been a chronic depressive for years, and her medication has increased and strengthened as her health fails and her mood degenerates. I find it hard to come home to her bleak mood swings and her erratic behaviour. Her social withdrawal is particularly difficult.

One night, she collapses in the passage, smashing her face into the tiled floor, and breaking her nose. While I wait for the ambulance to arrive, I sit beside her and hold her hand, and watch in horror as blood pours from her nose and mouth, and pools on the floor. Dark blood. Unhealthy blood.

A physician tells me that the loss of blood is from the broken nose.

"You are wrong," I tell him, describing the amount of blood.

"You can bleed out a square metre from a broken nose," he informs me arrogantly. I call our doctor, and ask her to interfere.

"You know that I am not a hysterical woman," I tell her. "There is much more wrong here." She intervenes, and further tests reveal that Joan has a bleeding duodenal ulcer, and that she could have bled to death if it had not been detected. I immediately fire the physician, and seek assistance from another practice.

Joan's family remains uninvolved, as I become aware of her frailty, her mortality, and her physical weakness. Her memory seems to fail more each day, and her mood becomes bleaker. She seems to be withdrawing more and more from life.

When she has recovered some of her strength, our doctor suggests that we consult a specialist physician geriatrician. An appointment is made for early in the next year, and we wait hopefully. Confidently. A solution will be found.

This December, the two girls once again come to Cape Town. Mary is about to enter her final year at school, and she has her future well-planned. "I'm going to come and live with you," she tells me. "I want to be a teacher."

"Do you want to be a teacher because you want to be like me, or do you want to be a teacher because you love the notion of learning?"

"Whatever, Auntie!" she tells me in adolescent-speak. "I want to live in Cape Town!"

In late December, Douglas turns sixty, and I turn fifty. We travel to each other's cities to celebrate together.

"It's been a good life," smiles my brother. "My kids are happy and established, earning a hell of a lot more than I am, and I've achieved what I wanted to." I smile at him, and am grateful for him. But I do not comment. I feel as if I am only beginning!

2007

Turning fifty is not a crisis for me, but it does cause me to reflect deeply on my life. With both Mac Donald and Wilhelm confronting their own deaths, and with Joan's failing health, I contemplate purpose and reason. My research had called for this autobiography, and this had also been responsible for a re-opening of old wounds, confronting old losses, but also for new understandings, and for some healing. I decide that from now on, I will learn something new every year, something that has nothing to do with my work, or with my teacher-self. It has to be something that I simply want to do.

For 2007, I settled on Poi dancing, an aboriginal craft of dancing with flames. I make time for the classes on a Wednesday evening, and laughingly join a group of young Rastafarians who

are at least twenty five years younger than I am. They are kind and protective of me, and we have great fun as I slowly learn not to hit myself too hard with the practice balls, and finally, not to hit myself at all.

I work more consciously with my first year students, because I want to entice them into the world of visual art, and to convince them of its value in the class room. Where before, I have always concentrated on my senior students, who have already proved their commitment, I start to work more consciously with my first year students, who come to art for a brief spell. I have very few lectures to make any difference to their attitudes. I know that the task is almost impossible, but I am determined to try. I use the full force of my personality. I make them laugh. I make them enjoy their sessions with me. I consciously manipulate them into being fascinated. I tell them stories about the 60s, about Woodstock, and about op-art. I show them examples and play them the music of the Beatles. I come more and more to understand their insecurities about being in an art class. I too, have been exposed to the unknown.

I come to understand more and more that my work has changed, and my practice must change with it. I have been used to working with students who are committed to art education, and who are willing to work to that commitment. My work now embraces large student groups who are compelled to take my subject. Their choices happen at a later stage of their academic careers. I try to make their engagement with the subject, however brief, meaningful for them. In a way, I suppose, it is just another step in my acknowledgement of the way that my work is now, the nature of the institution, and the things that I must accommodate, if I want to stay in a space where my work has meaning for me. It is an important learning curve for me, because initially I find it very difficult to relate to such large groups of students, who clearly do not want to be in an art studio.  I discover that if I want to truly engage them, then I have to ask them questions. Questions that they have to think about. Questions that have relevance for their own lives. Questions that can in some way connect us.

I start with the most simple one: "How many of you consciously paid attention to the colours that you are wearing today?" We have fun exploring the art elements that they have brought into the room, counting the different kind of lines that the room offers, and laughing at the contrasts that we have consciously chosen. To my amazement, I discover that I enjoy this

process. After the lectures, the students linger to tell me their own stories. I hear about art teacher who made them feel small, who ridicules their work, who told them that they  were not able to do art. They are afraid of committing to the subject, but are interested in earning more. "I don't want you to be Picasso," I tell them, knowing that few of them have ever heard of Picasso. "I just want you to be fascinated by line, by tone, by texture, shape and colour. And I want you to be able to share that fascination with the learners. Nobody will ever ask you to produce a masterpiece while you are teaching art." I am aware that I have their attention, and I am grateful.

I make the change with conscious intent, to a large extent, once again, because my personal life is being shifted into a space of insecurity. Joan's appointment with the geriatrician is a turning point for us. She comes to our home, and gives Joan a battery of tests, and finally tells us "With this kind of Alzheimer's Disease, it is difficult to know how rapidly it will progress."

We are both wordless with shock.

I have not realised that Joan no longer knows what month we are living in, nor what day it is. I have not realised just how disordered her thinking has become.

"Read more," she tells Joan. "Walk the dogs. Exercise. Keep a routine. Stay active."

She prescribes several different kinds of medication, a different kind of anti-depressant, and also sleeping tablets.

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**Alzheimer's at home**

Slow eyes grieve the death of
memory somewhere at their outer edges.
Your brow creases in an attempt to find
the words that will not come,
And then to remember what you were trying to remember,
And then you give up, uncrease your brow,
And the words are stilled, lost
 and float unsaid into a timeless space of silence.

It is hard to know you now.
You drop pieces of your self as you walk slowly from one warm place to another,
And once we tried to put them back together,
Laughing or crying or fighting,
Or just desperate,
But now they no longer fit and the puzzle is unravelling
And you
are unravelling.

---

"You must look after yourself. Eat well. Live well, and sleep well."

After she has gone, Joanie weeps for a long time. "I can't do this," she says. "I am too tired. I can't, and I don't want to."

"You can, *we* can, and we will," I tell her. But Joan gives up. From that day, she simply refuses to do anything that will keep her mind active. The book that she has been reading lies untouched on the table, and eventually it joins the pile on the chest of drawers, and disappears from sight. She stops reading the newspaper, and gives up even trying to do crosswords. She spends her days staring into space or talking to the dogs. I buy note pads with gummed backing, and stick notes all over the house, reminding her to read, water the plants, do the cross word. Joanie refuses to read them.

I grow angry with her for giving up so easily, for accepting that she has no future. I try to force her to be more productive. Sometimes, I know that I am being unkind. My anger separates us for a long time.

The Honours students arrive, and although there are only five of them, they are all dedicated young women, and were very serious about their work.  I love the extended time that this course affords us, and when I am ready to leave at the end of a day, I frequently find them still hard at work in the studio. "Don't you want to take us to Egypt?" they ask me one day.

"With pleasure," I answer laughingly. "Just tell me when!"

They begin to talk the trip into a reality, and before I have even really thought it through, we are making plans and blocking dates on the calendar.

"So much for a year calendar!" I tell the Dean.

Through his MBA, which he has completed at the University of Cape Town, Armand brings a contact who works for an NGO in Port Elizabeth. She needs an intervention programme for young black abused women from the Eastern Cape, and Armand puts my name forward.

"Can you do this?" I ask the Honours students, and within weeks, we are on an aeroplane bound for  Port Elizabeth. "About my year calendar…" I tell the Dean.

One of the generic courses in the B Ed Honours programme is Research Methodology, and I insist that my students apply their own learning by writing a properly researched paper. I take them with me on the MAGIC Tour that year, but this time as observers and action researchers, so that they can write up their findings. "I know that it is neither in my budget, nor in my year plan," I tell the Dean, "but can I please take these girls to present their papers at the International Learning Conference at Wits University?" She agrees, and once again, we are air-bound.

Armand is mentoring me through the supervision process of two Masters in Education students, and although he does most of the work himself, I am beginning to learn about this new work.

Late in September, I take the Honours students to Egypt. It is a magical time as the students discover the same strange, wordless joy that keeps taking me back to this wonderful country, and I love being with them, and sharing their delight at their discovery of themselves in a new world. I return to Cape Town with a feeling of strange removal from normality; my students and I have travelled to another world and come back to find a same-ness that is disconcerting. I face the end of the year, with its moderation exhibitions, its marking and planning and meetings, with a sense of being dislocated. I have been awarded an Education Department tender for training Senior Phase Arts and Culture teachers, which I have put through the university, and this work also needs to be prepared and carried out all over the Western Cape, while I try to keep my work at the university steady.

The Honours students do extremely well, with four of them earning externally moderated distinctions, and two of them deciding to continue into our Masters in Education Programme. None of this is enough to convince management that the course is worth running again, and I am not even told that it had been abandoned. I discover that fact when I ask about the enrolment number for the following year.

Although I always allocate Joanie's medications into containers marked with the days of the week, she has remained able to take the medication herself, and her sleeping pills lie beside her chair in the lounge. One night I am busy at the computer when she asks if I will give her a sleeping pill. Alarm bells ring. She has a week's supply in her container. I check, and find it empty. Although she denies taking the pills, I immediately call the doctor, who tells me to call an ambulance. By the time I replace the receiver of the telephone, Joan is incapable of speech.

She is comatose by the time we arrived at the hospital, and she lies in that state for four days. Slowly she emerges, but I am aware that our routine has to change. Joan can no longer be responsible for anything. The geriatrician changes Joan's sleeping pills to ivedal, a significant change that is to cause deep distress in the future, and tells me that the time is approaching when I will have to have someone in to

**Alzheimer's Disease April2008.**

You sit in the same place as ever, the same hands resting there,

on a powerless, silent chair.

There is a sameness to your face that belies the absent spaces

that once were grace

and intelligent connection to the world, the faces that you knew.

Where are you, now, I wonder, as I watch a stranger in your body,

watching nothing.

You stare with a vacant lack of being

at a world that grows strange to you,

frightening with its threatening, unnamed confusions.

Where are you, now?

What do you think, when you stare at a cup, and do not know

that it holds liquid?

What do you see, when you stare into a mirror,

and leave your hair unbrushed?

Is there space in your heart for dull-remembered life,

or are you just afraid and anxious?

You no longer read words that cannot connect the tissues

of your brain and create images for you; your books

are left mindlessly on an untouched shelf,

closed like tombs, with their secrets intact.

Films that once held you with delighted suspense

leave you slack-mouthed and sleeping now,

too difficult, too bewildering,

too hard in a world with soft, grey edges

blurred by perplexity.

You do not know those who have loved you, your children

Are just names, somewhere else,

Your only concerns are being warm enough, or cool enough,

Or just enough to be

Who you are now.

And who you are now has ill-defined edges that change

And slide into something less and further away.

When I see the fear in your eyes, I wonder if it is the reflection of my own,

Or whether it is all that you have left to hold on to,

Because this, at least you know,

When there is nothing else.

care for Joan on a daily basis, or place her in an institution. Joan is no longer able to be on her own.

I do not know what to do. There is no one who can help me. I do not know how to cope. When Mac Donald is suddenly hospitalised, I give in completely to despair. I cannot sleep. I cannot stop crying. Penny tells me I am leaking through my eyes. I leak right through lectures, and tell the students to ignore it, because I am not feeling well. They hug me and pretend to ignore it. I leak when I speak to Douglas and Lana on the 'phone, and Lana tells me to leave everything, and come to Pretoria. I cannot leave Joan, or work, or Mac Donald. Hannsie wants to drive to Cape Town. I do not see the point. Elske tells me, in her straight Elske-way, that I need help. Professional help. Evelyn telephones me with a number. "Just go and see her, Sand," she encourages. "She is trained to help you." I have no energy to argue. I make an appointment.

I cry through my first three appointments. The therapist tells me that I need to grieve, and I give in, and grieve. I mourn Joan's loss of herself, for herself and for me. I weep for Mac Donald, and for his process of becoming closer and closer to death. I weep for the Honours course that could have made such a difference to art teaching, but has been abandoned. The academic year ends in a kind of blur, and I begin to take sleeping tablets myself so that I can escape from the pain of all of this loss. I know that I am out of control, but I do not care. I still do what Joan needs, and she has disappeared so far that she does not notice the state that I am in. I am safe to give in and give up.

There must be an in-built ability to survive within each one of us, because I slowly begin to regain some sense of self, and some sense of having made it through to the other side. My energy slowly returns, and with it, a more positive feeling, a feeling that I can cope again. I am grateful to the therapist, because she almost gave me permission to go through this blackness, but I do not want or need to stay there.

She takes me to a window, and shows me a bee that is trapped inside the glass, frantically trying to escape.

"What do you see, when you look at this bee?" she asked me.

"That bee," I answer, "wants to get out of the window so that he can go back to work."

"Oh my God, Sandy!" she laughs. "You and I have some serious work ahead!"

"But it's a worker bee." I tell her. "His work is what he was born to do."

This is my last appointment. Whether I am right or wrong, I will not have my work taken away from me. It has always provided a stable point in my life. There are some things that are so deep that even therapists should not try to interfere.

At a later time, I will come to realise that I should have continued with these appointments, because although I did not know it at the time, I was beginning to show the initial stages of teacher burnout, which would eventually be properly diagnosed and treated some years later.

At home, I slowly make the changes that are necessary, and take over the last bits of cooking and housekeeping. I remove Joan's medication from her, and on a daily basis physically gave her the pills that she needs. When she begins to forget whether she has fed the dogs or not, Joan begs me to let her continue with this chore, because the dogs are her only joy in life. But double-feeding is resulting in one of them becoming obese, and so we compromise, and I prepare the food, and gave it to Joan to give to the dogs. It is in these small changes that we find the space to survive.

I discover that Joanie can still respond to humour, and so intentionally tell her funny stories, involve her in little moments of laughter. I tease her playfully, and find that this works. When she asks me the same question seven times in an hour, I learn to answer it each time, as if I have just heard the question for the first time. I try to use the same words each time, so that the answer will slowly stay. This seems to work for a while.

Sometimes I find it particularly difficult to stay kind and when my own frustration levels are peaking. I go into the garden, and weed the lawn, move rocks, or practise poi. Or I disappear into my computer, and write furiously.

2008

The new year begins, and with it comes many changes. A further Departmental Tender is awarded to us, and the beginning of the year sees us holding bridging courses for a hundred learners from the newly-established Focus Schools in the Western Cape. I involve my graduated Honours girls, and they prove their worth and their learning. I am incredibly proud of them, and the way in which they manage this course.

Mary travel down from Pietermaritzburg, bringing with her a youthful energy and excitement about her new life in Cape Town. She explodes into our lives with too much stuff, too much energy, and too much talking. But Joanie loves the talking, and Mary loves the telling, and so it works very well.

Early on Sunday mornings, Mary creeps into my bed with me, and twists her toes around mine, and her fingers around mine, and we talk. She is a strange mix of little girl and woman, and I am a little afraid of the responsibility for yet another human being. But this is a healthy young one, who will be growing up and away from me, and I hope that her neediness will become less and less as she grows into her own power.

> **For Mary, becoming an adult.**
>
> The barrel-vault of your forehead rises
>
> as you try to understand the world of the adult
>
> you are becoming.
>
> And the architecture of your face changes into postmodern angles
>
> combined with Gaudi-like playfulness, and decoration
>
> in bright colours and glittering night colours
>
> and you stride long-legged and newly elegant into
>
> a world where your place is not yet carved.
>
> When you are tired, you curl, kitten-like, into my side, and in
>
> Half-sleep syllables you share the spaces of your becoming being.
>
> Your beauty has not yet been written on,
>
> Like an unconsecrated church your purpose
>
> Has not yet been proclaimed
>
> And there are spaces still to be filled
>
> With your longings, with your life.
>
> Even your own imaginings could not bring you
>
> The woman you will one day become.

At the beginning of the year, Armand tells me that I will be supervising the two graduate B Ed Honours students through their masters degrees, and that I will have to do it on my own, as there is no one available to co-supervise. I do not feel adequately prepared for this task, and tell him so immediately. "Well, everyone else is too busy," he tells me, "and anyway, you are perfectly capable."

I am not prepared to disadvantage the students. I telephone a visiting professor at our Faculty, and asked her if she will mentor me through the process. She agrees immediately, and although I do not realise it at the time, this is to prove an important and meaningful pathway for my own learning.

I send an email to both Armand and the Dean, telling them that I will be suspending my Ph D until further notice. Joan needs more of my attention at home, and Mary has just arrived to live with us. My attention is needed in too many places, and I cannot commit myself to a study that would require too much of my time. There is just too much of everything else.

Mary and I have been helping Wilhelm to document his work, and I am aware of his growing weakness. Whilst I am attending a supervision course at the university, his sister telephones me to tell me that he has died.

"Please come by after work," she asks. "I would love to see you."

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**For Wilhelm**
You made Nijinsky dance with fire and lust-filled lace
Floating weightless through voluminous space on canvases
broad as the world and light as morning;
You found his fear and focussed on the fey insanity
Of the dancer descending. Down.
You were his mentor after death
You showed him all he could have been in
Drawings that danced across a page like
Shutter speeds on the understandings of your soul
Graceful in the elegance of a simple line
Slowly coming to rest in a breathless charcoal stroke
Well-placed and measured in a momentary mark.

He died twice,
Because your own decline took him with you,
And when your cancer made you still, blocks of charcoal in
An airless studio with
Oil and half-smoked joints in cans and a broken chair,
And wooden brushes wood again,
nor could again call up images of the dance made perfect
in your fire-infested hand,
you both were still,
as if by reciprocal agreement years apart
of when the dance would cease and your mutual movement
could be still.

I collect Mary, and we drive to Wilhelm's cottage in Observatory. His sister greets us warmly. She pours wine, and then leads us through to Wilhelm's bedroom, where his body is carefully laid on his bed, surrounded by all of his favourite things.

At first I want to stop Mary from seeing this body, this dead man, who had been so alive when last she saw him, but it is too late. She is in the room, in the space, and totally involved in the moment. She seems to be able to cope.

So, in a very unconventional way we take our leave of this dear man, and then drive home through the darkening streets of Cape Town.

"Are you okay?" I ask Mary.

"I'm fine," she responds. "But you could see that he was dead. I wonder why they say that dead people look like they are sleeping?"

"Maybe that's easier for people to understand," I offer.

"Well, I think it's a stupid thing to say. You could see that he was not there anymore."

Instead of a funeral for Wilhelm, we hold an exhibition of his work, and celebrate his life.

One night, I am raised from sleep by strange, scuffling sounds in the passage. I investigate, and find Joanie on her hands and knees.

"Joanie, what has happened?"

"I've got to go to work," she tells me, "but I can't find the lift."

Gently, I raise her up, and move with her through to her bedroom.

"Here it is, Joanie," I tell her. "But you have to lie down in it."

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"Thank you, Sandy." She responds. "I can't tell you how long I have been looking. I knew it was down here, but I couldn't find it." She is almost immediately asleep. I put the incident down to her disease, and do not mention it the next day.

The next night, she spends an hour in the bath, and Mary and I knock on the door.

"Joanie, are you okay?" I ask.

"I'm waiting for the elephant ears," she answers, with a weak voice. We open the door, and find her lying in cold water, unable to raise a hand. The bathroom plants are hanging over her face.

"The elephant ears are coming soon," she tells us, completely unaware and unashamed of her nakedness. Mary and I climb into the bath, and lift her gently out. We dry her, and carry her through to her bed, where once again, she is immediately asleep. Mary is as concerned as I am.

"Aunty, she's cooked. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," I tell her. "I have not the faintest idea."

Two days later, I take Joanie a cup of coffee just as we are leaving for work. She is clutching her arm.

"I need your help," she tells me, completely lucidly. "I have to go to work at the metalwork factory, and there seems to be something wrong with my arm."

She holds out her left arm, and I recoil in horror at the mess of sliced muscle, exposed tendon and blood.

"Oh my God, Joan," I gasp, "What happened?"

She makes slicing motions with her right hand.

"I had to get it off," she says.

I drive her to the trauma unit at the Claremont Hospital, and wait until she is admitted.

At home, her bedroom and spare room are a mess of blood that reach only a meter up from the floor. This is evidence of hours spent crawling around the floor, slicing her own arm with a sharp implement, and searching for something that only she could know. What has suddenly caused this strange and violent behaviour? I go through her medication, searching for clues. Ivedal. The new sleeping pill. Too late, I read the package insert. Side effects include sleep-walking. Sleep-driving. I research the brand on the internet. Stillnox. Banned in many countries. The pill that the young actor, Heath Ledger, had apparently been taking when he overdosed on prescription medication.

I take a green highlighter and scratch through the warnings on the page. I enclose a cheque, and tell the geriatrician that her services will no longer be required. She calls me to defend herself.

"This only happens in extreme cases," she says.

"Clearly," I answer, "this is an extreme case. How far does it have to go, before you call it an extreme case?"

| Still this disease |
| --- |
| Your pain is flawless |
| Untainted by logic, |
| Unblemished by understanding, |
| Undiminished by comfort |
| You float, a skinless body |

Once again, Joan is in hospital for over a week. I am devastated by the knowledge that this incident has taken place while I was in the house. The significance is that Joanie is no longer safe, even if I am at home. When she is discharged from hospital, we hire a qualified nurse for the first few days to make sure that she does not wound herself again.

I know that the time has come to find a more permanent solution, and I engage the services of a professional carer. On her first day, Joan fires her. I rehire her. Joan fires her again. This time I leave it, but it worries me that Joan is alone at home during the day. It worries me more that with each of the recent incidents during which she has almost lost her life, I have been in the house at the same time, but oblivious to the danger.

The year moves forward, and at work, I try to remain actively involved in learning. At the university, we speak easily about transformative education, but I am not sure how much of it I am really managing to do. I throw out my first year programme, and use weekly student feedback to devise a new one as we go along. I read up on mathematics anxiety, and compare it to art anxiety amongst my first year students, many of whom have never been exposed to art-making before. I adopt some of the strategies, try new ones, and document as I go along. I am learning and loving it. I write a paper on art anxiety amongst first year students, and deliver it at a conference later in the year. The research gives me an important insight into the way that these students think and feel about their involvement with visual art, and I use my new understandings to make further changes to the course.

During this process, I become aware of other aspects of these students' lives. They tell me about leaving home in the dark and travelling on public transport for hours, because they live so far away from the university. They speak about being afraid to go out, because there are many gangs that infest their neighbourhoods, and they do not want to be caught in the cross-fire. They speak about their backgrounds, about having parents who can't speak English, who work as domestic workers, and cannot assist with paying the fees for their children's education. They speak of being afraid in the corridors of the university, because the other students seem to know exactly what to do. They speak about not understanding when lecturers speak to fast, and tell me that they are afraid to ask questions, because they don't want to look stupid. Three years later, Bandi will tell me that it is these discussions, and not the lecture content, that made him decide to take visual art as a specialist subject in his final year. Bandi is a student from the Eastern Cape, and has never before had any kind of contact with visual art. When he graduates, he is one of my top students, because he gives himself entirely to exploring the subject.

I become deeply aware that our student population is changing, and I know that I must change, with it. I do not really know who these students are, and what their lives are about beyond the studio. They come from rural areas in other provinces, from areas where gang warfare is the order of the day, and their backgrounds and their contexts are new and foreign to me. My heart aches when I see the naked fear on their faces, their desperate needs to do the right thing in an institution that is new and foreign to them. There is nothing in their own backgrounds that has prepared them for these challenges. Asking them questions during our interviews has taught me that I need to use these questions to teach me about these

students. I have to get them to be more participatory, so that I can learn from hearing what they have to say. I also try to encourage them to talk to each other more, so that group discussions can reveal different ways of thinking, and open up possibilities for knowing different ways of looking. I remember my own experience of feeling safe in this very same building, when I was a student, and I try to make sure that these hesitant young people have that same feeling of safety. Always in front of my eyes, I keep those faces – Bandi's[5] eyes softening when he began to talk about the colours of morning in the eastern Cape, Badisa's[6] determination to remember the art elements by writing one on each of her fingers, and Thembisa[7] playfully teasing me about 'contrast' in conversations. I want our work to have meaning for them. I want their lives to be enriched. I begin to consciously look for ways to reach them in their own places, and then draw them into a space that we can mutually create.

Having Mary living and working in this space also gives me an insight into the lives of our students, and I watch their comings and goings, their workings and their playing with interest. These streetwise young people are mostly emotionally immature, and I realise that we, or at least I, should try to encourage growth in this area.

We are once again successful with an Education Department tender, this time working with intermediate phase teachers in the Western Cape, and because this requires being away from home for four days at a time, I once again engage a professional carer for Joan. This time, Joan lets her stay.

The MAGIC Tour is becoming an established annual event, and in my new role as Student Affairs representative on our campus, I establish an annual SHINE Tour, which encourages the students to 'speak, hear, investigate, notice and explore'. On this tour, I once again am exposed to the other side of our students, and we talk late into the nights about their lives, their hopes and their dreams. I find these experiences extremely valuable as a way of

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[5] Not his real name

[6] Not her real name

[7] Not her real name

coming to know the students, and of coming to understand who these young people are, when they walk into my studio. By this time, the research that I was doing for my Ph D is impacting deeply on my practice, and I am aware of the importance of knowing my students, and knowing them in many ways, so that the lectures that I prepare for them can have meaning for all of us.

This year, I give students access to my Facebook site, and enjoy the interaction that I have with them in the world of technology. They are able to reach me when they need to, and are able to send messages and ask questions about their work. Philip and I turn Facebook into an advantage, and create student groups, where we can send messages to the students, and remind them about excursions, due dates, and a variety of other things. We have great fun in the process, and sometimes have long and silly 'threads' of conversation. I send messages that read 'Why are you still awake? You should have been sleeping ages ago! You have ART tomorrow!'

A return message states playfully: 'I am too excited!'

Facebook teaches me about the other side of my students. I learn about who they are when they are not sitting in my studio. I learn about what they value, what they do with their spare time, and how they think about things. Sometimes, late at night, a message will come through from a student who is in need of some counselling, or who maybe just needs to know that there is another human being who is awake so late. Because Facebook has become such an integral part of their worlds, they use it to connect with each other in ways that are playful, serious or informative. They talk about the food that they are eating, the clothes that they have bought, the boyfriends that have hurt them, the pains and the losses that they endure. These new-age people reveal a great deal of themselves on Facebook, and because they give me access to this information, I learn more about them every time I visit the sight.

In these interactions with the students, I come to know more than any text book could ever teach me. It is a way of coming to know them in their fullness, and it changes the way that I see them when they come into the studio.

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I am able to use this knowledge of the students to adapt my planning for the SHINE tour, and it is very successful. Most of the time, I am nervous of what I am doing. Working with human beings is organic in nature, and there is always the possibility of the unexpected, the unplanned, and the unimagined. Throughout the planning, I hardly sleep, because I am tense with concerns about what still has to be done. While we are away, I hardly sleep because I am afraid that something will happen to one of the children or to one of the students, or to Joanie in my absence. A principal with whom I work closely once said to me, "If you are not living on the edge, you are taking up too much space." I often feel as if my whole world is on the edge, and could tumble over at any moment. Sometimes this energises me, and sometimes it exhausts me. But this is the nature of my being, and the nature of my being in my work. And unfailingly, when I see the response from the students, it is all, every single sleepless moment of it, worth it.

I know that my students come to the art building feeling secure, and that they want to be there, because they often speak about the fact that they 'feel different' when they come to the building. They use our studios to socialise in, when we are not using them for lectures, and I often find a student or two working there in the late afternoon. They come to know the other staff members who work in the building, and the relationships are friendly and secure. The other staff members, and particularly Penny and Philip, often come into the studio and look at the work that the students are doing, or engage with them in conversation. We laugh a great deal. We tease each other. Our cleaning staff is a part the closeness, and we often share stories about our personal lives, sometimes silly, and sometimes serious. Sometimes students just pop in to my office to say hello, and I give them a hug, and send them on their way, because work has its own demands. Sometimes I am aware that they are there for other reasons, and I make them a cup of coffee, and we talk. Often, I hear stories that shock me into a place of deep awareness about the trials that these young people face. One afternoon, Richard[8], a second year male student, tells me that when he can afford the petrol, he drives the family car to the university, because they live so far away. On those days, his father has to find a lift to work. His mother is a bipolar sufferer, and his sister can't work, because she has just had a baby. He is upset, because he was not able to complete a

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[8] Not his real name

project for another lecturer that required a large financial outlay. The lecturer has ridicules him in front of his classmates, calling him lazy, and telling him that he is likely to fail the year.

All I can do is listen, and make coffee. He talks and talks, and I realise that he is not asking me for solutions. He just wants me to listen to him while he tells his story. When he leaves, he hugs me warmly. I stand at the door, and say "Go to it, young person. Because you can."

He raises a hand as he leaves, and smiles.

"Well, maybe, I can," he says.

After he has left, and I am tidying my office in preparation for leaving myself, I am disturbed by what I have heard. How many of our students have these kinds of stories, that we do not hear?

The next time Richard comes to class, he does not meet my eyes, and works silently on his project. I let my hand linger on his back as I go past him. 'You are doing that beautifully'" I tell him, as I move on. "You should be proud of yourself." He smiles, and seems to relax a little.

I am so aware of the responsibility that I have for these young people. They seem to place us in the same position as they placed their teachers at school. We are always right. They may not argue with us. They should not tell us what they really feel. They should only tell us what they think we want them to hear. I try to let them know that I want to hear what they have to say, and what they think, but I am never sure that I am really able to do that. It is very hard work. And I find it hard, when I ask a class of students for their opinions, to be confronted by a sea of faces staring at me, in silence. I have learnt to just wait. Sometimes I have to wait for a very long time. But eventually, they start talking.

In these spaces of silence, I have also learnt that patience is important, because sometimes the students just need time to think about what they want to say. I have also learnt that sometimes it is better to let them discuss things in smaller groups, and then feed back their discussions to the class. It is different with my art students, those who are choosing to specialise in the subject. Because the groups are smaller, we have conversational lectures,

and the space is more intimate. We talk easily, and the work becomes a part of life, as we mingle both together. Classes go on for longer than the prescribed hours, and the students own the building, especially as they become more senior. They learn to tease me, to joke, to offer themselves. They demand that I offer myself to them.

I love this aspect of my work, but it is also the aspect that takes the most out of me. When I am trying to cope with things that are not going well in my personal life, and at the moment, it is Joanie's decline, I am stronger if I can be structured in my work. I am afraid that if I let the students get too close to me, then I will no longer be able to be a strong professional presence. I live on this edge. Close enough for them to know that I care about them, but not so close that there is no space to breathe. I have to be able to breathe if I am to survive this time.

## 2009

Being mentored through the supervision process of two of our students by our associate professor results in my thoughts returning to my own research, and the dean suggests that I ask her whether she would consider becoming my supervisor. She immediately agrees, and I begin to work on my Ph D again. Her input is invaluable, because she understands my limited research background, and she guides me gently and carefully through the process of re-evaluating what I am doing, changing some approaches, and supporting my work with a strong theoretical background. I enjoy the challenging discussions, the new thinking that I have to do, and the way that my thesis is evolving. I begin to read all of the time. Instead of books and magazines, I take journal articles to dental appointments. I read them in my car, while I am waiting for Mary to finish her shifts in her part-time job. I take them to bed with me at night. I spend hours doing searches on my computer at work. I become thoroughly fascinated by what I am reading. I begin to see myself as a Ph D student, as one who is seriously engaged in research. Sometimes I laughingly think of the person that I used to be, when the institution first merged, and I am amazed that I have changed so much.

At home, there is a dreadful awareness that Joanie has degenerated to a place where she is no longer safe. I am desperately aware that I no longer have the skills nor the time that she

needs to ensure that her days pass in safety. As the early months pass, and my concern mounts, it becomes clear that I am not functioning properly at home or at work. Evelyn eventually phones Joan's daughter, and suggests that she becomes more involved in her mother's care.

Judith lives in Nelspruit, with a fairly new husband, and for once, she rises to the challenge, and together we examine our options. It is impossible for me to find an institution in Cape Town that is affordable, and that can accommodate Joanie. She needs far more care than a secure home for senior citizens. Judith manages to find an ideal place in Nelspruit, very close to where she lives.

"It's got a beautiful garden, Sand," she tells me, "and the people are so nice there. And they can take my mom next month." I agonise. I weep with the not-knowing of it all. I try to discuss it with Joanie, but she has long passed the ability to have this conversation, and her concern is Jessie, her beloved dog. Finally, Judith and I make the decision, and we start to make arrangements. Slowly, slowly, I begin to pack Joanie's belongings, in front of her, one by one, so that she can see, and perhaps begin to understand, that she will be leaving. She spends all of the time weeping. Begging me not to send her away. Forgetting that she is leaving.

This year, the MAGIC Tour has to be delayed because I forget to put it on the annual academic calendar, and by the time that I manage to find suitable dates, the funding has been allocated elsewhere. I have to apologise to the school, and hope that the teachers there can somehow help their learners to understand the disappointment. Joanie's leaving permeates every aspect of my life, and I move through my teaching days with a sense of unreality. Her inability to accept, her real confusion at the activity that leads to her leaving, is a terrible thing to witness, and her pain is as solid as a physical shape. Slowly, slowly, the time draws near, and I arrange for Judith to fly to Cape Town to fetch her mother.

Suddenly, the arrangements of this move are all-consuming. Air tickets must be booked. We decide that Jessie, the dog, will also go to Nelspruit, and the arrangements for moving a large dog are almost the most difficult. I pack, slowly separating Joanie's life from my own.

Her cherished objects. Her life into cardboard boxes. Her being sealed with tape, labelled, piles high in the space we used to share. Judith spends the week end with us, so that Joanie can be eased into feeling comfortable with her. Finally, the day arrives for them to leave. The day is clear, but icy. Judith, Mary and I are consumed by the sadness of it all. Joanie thinks that she is going on holiday with Judith.

On the way to the airport, I play Joanie's favourite piece of music – Beethoven's 5th, on the CD player of my motor car. We are all too choked up to speak, and words sound stupid and hollow. As the music swirls into the silent car, Joanie says "What funny music you are playing, Sandy! Where on earth did you get it?" I cannot speak, as I realise again how far her disease has gone, and drive through tears.

For weeks after Joanie has left, I call her on a daily basis, and she begs me to come and fetch her. "When you are well, Joanie" I lie, and she seems to accept that briefly. Slowly she stops asking. Stops talking so much when I call her. I live with a sense of unreality. Neither Mary nor I can go into Joanie's side of the house, and the doors stay closed, rooms unused. The months pass with the dreadful knowledge of Joanie's absence, in this house, and in her departing being. Alzheimer's disease is an ailment that God did not even visit on Job. But Joanie, that dear, vital human being, is doing it for him.

> **Still Alzheimer's**
>
> Blank exhausted beds of fog lie across the dawning field burnt
>
> bleak and bleached by even the weakest arms of light
>
> sent by a god who has forsaken you.
>
> Hopeless day. Hopeless light for you
>
> to wait unwaitingly
>
> weightless in the small space you need
>
> for what you need.
>
> How can I reach you now?
>
> If Beethoven's Ode to Joy touches no chord of wondrous awe,
>
> no longer lifts you, those heart notes
>
> not heartfelt any more;
>
> If your own body and its functions are strange to you,
>
> and leaves you untouched by your
>
> powerlessness,
>
> who can reach you now?
>
> You move slowly in a fog-damped place of mourning,
>
> But you have forgotten the cause of your grief.

I cope by losing myself in work, and working until late at night, because I am unable to sleep. I begin to rely on sleeping pills again. I am co-supervising two M Ed students, working on my

own study again, and trying to maintain a presence in my studio at work. The SHINE Tour has to be cancelled because of lack of funding, and Penny is suddenly scheduled for a neck fusion, and is away from work. Within weeks, I succumb to H1N1, or Swine Flu, where I am laid flat and float in a dream-state through days.

Recovery is slow, and I emerge from the illness weak and passionless. Shortly afterwards, Joanie is admitted to hospital in Nelspruit, and I wait to hear whether I should fly up. I am teaching Penny's classes as well as my own, and I know that I should not take any more time away from work at this stage of the year.

Joanie survives, and I am grateful that my decision to stay in Cape Town has proven to be the right one. However, shortly afterwards, the matron from the institution calls me and tells me that I should come immediately. I drop everything, leaving Mary in charge of the house and the dogs, and fly to Johannesburg, and then on to Nelspruit. When I arrive, Joanie is still critical, but within days, she appears better. I am appalled at the degeneration in her mental state, and she has moments when she does not recognise me. I spend three days sitting beside her hospital bed, but we do not talk much.

Although she is able to answer questions, she does not participate in conversations any more. Her lungs bubble and wheeze through the pneumonia, but she slowly improves, and I am able to return to Cape Town and to work. I am heart-sore and guilty. Joanie's confused unhappiness plagues me all of the time. In the September vacation Mary and I pack the dogs into the car, and drive to the Crags, where we spend five days with Hannsie. The quiet mountains and the gentle days restore us both, and we return to Cape Town with more energy.

*As the final term gathers momentum, Mary celebrates her twenty first birthday, and we hold a party for her that requires much organisation, and a great deal of fun. It is just what we need – a sense of the frivolous, and a sense of youthful energy, and we spend a great deal of time laughing as we*

*plan decorations for the hall, menus and outfits for the birthday girl. The party is a roaring success, and Mary enjoys it tremendously.*

Almost immediately I am catapulted into the final stages of the year, with the student exhibition, moderation meetings, and final assessments. My own research is once again put on hold, and I struggle to find enough hours to do all that I must. I write the script, and consequently become involved in the Foundation Phase drama production, and days are giddy with too much activity. Penny and I write a paper together, and present it at the Kenton Conference, in Stellenbosch.

And so the year drains every last bit of energy from us, and ends with all of us being fatigued. I am so tired that I find climbing a flight of stairs exhausting. My

> I am so tired that the bones of my shoulders
>
> Leak ribbons of weightless fatigue to curl
>
> Like fog around my thoughts,
>
> And the day's doings leave me buckled with
>
> The weight of ordinariness. I move
>
> Through water to cook, feed the dogs, wash dishes,
>
> And stand thoughtless and desperate while I flood
>
> The lawn so that it will grow so that I can cut it short
>
> Again.
>
> There is an ache in my diaphragm that has acid
>
> At its heavy edges and my body longs to foetal-fit
>
> Into a quiet, dark space that has no door, and no other voices,
>
> And no other needs and no needs but to be nothing
>
> In the nothingness of darkness

weight begins to drop, and I am aware that I have to concentrate much harder to function properly at work. The students, thankfully, have taken their leave, and the administrative tasks of the year stretch before us.

A colleague invites me to become involved in a new module to be presented to our first year students for the following year, and the idea energises me. It is the kind of work that I love to do, and it draws heavily on the research that I have been doing for my own study. It is an approach and a new way of thinking that Philip and I have wanted to introduce with our students for years, and we smile quietly to ourselves. Everything in its own time, we say. Although this year has been a difficult one on so many levels, the next one holds much promise.

The first Christmas without Joanie's presence is a bleak time. It holds the memories of many years, and stretches back into childhood memories of disruption and anger. Mary goes away with a boyfriend and his family, and I am in the process of extensive medical tests to determine the cause of fatigue and weight loss. Nothing is conclusive, and everything is put on hold until the new year. I find myself breathing in the air of desolation, and simply pass time just so that the year can begin, and I can return to work.

## 2010

When the academic year opens, we have no timetable, because of electronic glitches, and we have to postpone the students' return to the university. Finally, they arrive, and our work can begin. The new module with our first year students gains momentum, and the work is exciting, sometimes dangerous, always interesting. I remember the principal's words of living on the edge, and know that I am doing that in this module. It could topple at any moment. I ask for student evaluations after every lecture, and go through them very carefully to build the following one. I feel as if the students are with me, beside me, and we are learning together. They know that the work is exploratory, and they give themselves with great generosity.

We have great fun as I introduce them to reading simple journal articles. I teach them how to 'cheat' by reading the introductions and the conclusions first, knowing that the articles that I have given them will interest some of them enough to encourage them to read the whole article. We laugh as we deconstruct complicated language, and I ask the students to put the thoughts into their own words. They have no idea that I am making sure that they think about the meaning of the articles, and that, by putting them into their own words, I am encouraging them to understand. We laugh about 'academic language' and call it jargon, but they are reading the articles that I give them, even if it IS to criticise the language level. I find articles that have been written about identity and Facebook, and tease them about their own profiles on this social network. What we are doing together is a great deal of fun, but deadly serious.

Suddenly I am called to Nelspruit and Joanie, who is weakening, and I go with a sense of dread. When I arrive, she does not know me, and it is only on the second day that she uses my name. I spend days sitting beside her, while I stitch on a mandala and try to make her

speak. She simply sits in silence, staring at nothing, saying nothing. Just before I leave, I ask her, once again, how she is. She stares straight into my eyes, and the pain I see in hers is shocking. She slowly answers: "I'm lonely. I am so lonely." I want to reassure her that we love her, that she has her daughter with her, that the staff at the institution is caring and kind and loving, but then I suddenly realise the extent of the loneliness of the Alzheimer sufferer.

There is no history. There is no relationship. There is only the brief, present moment. New people every time someone comes to visit. A strange face when those who love her call. This understanding tears something inside of me. I am the container for Joan's non-understanding of her pain.

When I leave, I kiss her gently on the forehead, and tell her that I love her. She stares at me in surprise with her cloudy eyes, and say "How can you? You hardly know me!"

At the airport in Nelspruit, I lock myself in a lavatory, and weep until I am empty.

Mary and I have planned to travel to Egypt in March, but I am without energy, and my weight has continued to drop. Eventually, my doctor diagnoses pernicious anaemia, and I am put on a course of B12 injections.

> I wept for you behind a locked door
> in a public lavatory in a small airport in Nelspruit,
> tourists on either side of me
> shouting over the top of me of the joys
> of the dangers of Africa
> black-maned lions loping over the blood-red sand
> and I thought that the real danger lurks
> not in the sudden vicious kill that will thrill the
> tourists with photographs of spurting sand and death
> by suffocation in the late afternoon shattered calm
> of the water hole
>
> but in the loss of meaning

The Faculty seems fraught with tension, and the staff is unhappy. I am told that there is no funding for the planned student field study, and I have to break the news to the students. My heart aches as I watch their disappointed faces. I begin to feel that there is little value in what I am able to do with the students. There is too little time, and there is too much work to cover. I do nothing properly. Everything is simply budgeted down to money. Our ACE courses, which are run on a Saturday, allocate so little time that I leave every lecture feeling desperate, as though I am cheating the students, as though I am not really preparing them for the thinking that they will need for their worlds of work. I see our postgraduate students twenty four times a year, and in this time I must take them from practising artists to wise,

thinking teachers. Can it be possible, I ask myself, as I drive home from work in the gathering autumn? I feel as if I am failing on every level.

This extends even to Mary. One night, she weeps, and tells me that she feels that I no longer speak to her, that I am always too busy, and that she needs more time with me. I do not have the time to give her. There is never enough time for anything. My own study moves in fits and starts, without continuity, without real direction. My work is never properly prepared, and I always feel that I should have done more.

We are all devastated by the tragic death of a student. She has been an art student, and close to all of us in the art building. A motor car accident in the early hours of the morning robs thousands of children of the brilliance of what she would have become as a teacher. Life stops as my office becomes a space of grieving. My own heart wants to break, because she was one of those students who became dear to me, whom I loved. I hold the other students as they sob in shock and dread, not wanting to believe this death, not wanting to acknowledge that this lovely girl has gone from us forever. I make coffee and tea. Parents come and spend days in my office, in shock and disbelief. This child was their family friend, their niece, their daughter. We weep through the days that follow, making funeral arrangements and buying flowers. Three days later, yet another student, from the same group of friends, dies tragically in a car accident. There are no words to describe the terrible grief. This second student had taken time away from her studies to be with her father who had terminal cancer, and so she is not currently on campus, but her death, coming so soon after the death of the first student, shocks the group into silence.

We somehow survive. Work in the art studio staggers forwards. I spend an afternoon quietly removing the dead child's work from the drawer so that her peers will not see it. I stand with it in my hands and weep. The waste is too much to think about.

Slowly the students regain some sense of normality, and life continues. We seem to laugh less now, and I am aware that the second year students work in silence when they come to the art studio. I plan shorter projects that will require less concentration. I take them for walks

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to look at buildings. I design group projects so that they have to talk to each other. One of them says to me "It's okay, Sandy, we know what you are doing."

"So," I answer, somewhat taken aback, 'do you want me to stop whatever it is that I am doing?"

"No," she answers. "I never said that. I just said that we know what you are doing."

Somehow, that comment, said in front of the other students, after an obvious discussion, makes it easier, and work seems to go back on track. We acknowledge where we are, on our own, and with each other. We move on, and although we remain aware of the sadness, we continue with the business of life.

I find it harder and harder to be everything that the students need me to be, when I am trying to hold together my own sense of loss about Joanie, about my work, and about meaning.

Just months later, I discover that my accountant has been lying to me, and that I owe SARS R850 000. I cash in policies, pay what is needed, and find that I do not care. On a bitterly cold day in winter, I go shopping for provisions for supper, see a travel special for a holiday in Thailand, and immediately book two tickets. The World Cup Soccer event is being held in South Africa this year, and I have no energy for the fanatic crowds, the celebrations, and the extended mid-year vacation. I begin to feel that nothing moves me anymore, and think it must be the winter, which has been particularly cold.

Mary and I travel to Thailand, and I take no work with me. For ten days, she has my attention, and she excitedly explores this new country, her first overseas trip, with joy and delight. Her eyes regain their sparkle, and her sense of humour returns. We laugh a great deal, and she revels in bargaining with the locals, travelling on '*tuk-tuks'*, and seeing the incredible sights that this country offers. We snorkel, swim, explore, and enjoy every moment. I feel like an observer watching my own life unfold from the outside. I am aware of acting like a tourist, instead of being one. I have a sense of being dislocated from my centre.

On our return, I am met with an invitation to be a part of the team that is writing the new curriculum for basic education. Outcomes-Based Education has failed dismally, and emergency plans are in process to change, adapt, and repair the damage. Mary's sister, Stella, comes to spend a week with us, and she is difficult, moody, and jealous of the close bond that is evident between Mary and me. It is tricky to balance the relationships and the needs of the two girls. I am overcome with sadness at what their mother's loss has come to mean in each of their lives.

The re-writing of the visual arts curriculum absorbs me completely, and my inadequacy at this task almost overwhelms me. Arts and Culture is now to be called Creative Arts, and is to be split differently, with visual art being allocated half of the time, and the other three disciplines being collapsed into a new subject called Performing Arts. It is a step forward for visual art, and I am determined to create a meaningful curriculum, but the impossible deadlines mean that I have no time to do any research, to collaborate with colleagues in the field, or to think with any kind of clarity. I work at night, sometimes *through* the night, with meetings fitted in between, during the days. There are no clear briefs, there appears to be no underpinning philosophy, and with very little guidance, we write, re-write, and re-write. It becomes all-consuming. My university work hovers on the edges. My research grinds to a halt.

At the same time, our students are out on teaching practice, and I drive from one school to another during the day, trying to give them my attention, my guidance and support. I have no real time for them, for friends, for Mary. I am racing between one deadline and another. I am doing everything badly, and when I eventually drag myself to bed at night, I stare, unsleeping, at the ceiling, feeling that I am betraying the children, my students, myself.

When I drive home from work, and have enforced moments of stillness in the motor car, I find myself wondering whether any of this is worth it. Nothing is whole any more. I am out of balance with myself. I am out of balance with my world. I no longer know what my world really is. It feels like an endless list of tasks that must be completed before sleep. I never seem to sleep.

The publisher Oxford University Press approaches Elske and me to write their new series of text books, which will await the official new curriculum, and a different publisher, Heineman asks me to do some writing for them. I accept it all. There are moments when I allow myself to acknowledge the feeling of being overwhelmed, but there are also moments when I realise that I do not want to have quiet moments. When I am frantically busy, I cannot be frantically anything else.

Funding is suddenly released and I take the students on the Field Study. In the middle of everything, it calms me, gives me the bright challenge of remembering that these young people are at their own beginnings. One day, we are at a primate sanctuary, and about to cross a long suspension bridge. The students are already nervous of the bridge. When a large primate seats itself in the middle of the bridge, some of them are terrified. We have to cross the bridge. We cannot go back the way that we have come. I place myself between the primate and the students, and urge them to pass, while I am between them and the animal. I am a little nervous, but am comforted by the fact that I am wearing denim jeans, and that, if it bites, it will have to go through the denim before it reaches flesh. The students pass slowly, but we manage the crossing in complete safety, and immediately are able to laugh about the incident.

That night at dinner, we complete our regular reflective exercise: What were the highlights of the day? Usually, the students report on their learning, a new thinking that they have experienced, or a response to a new experience. On this night, several of the students comment on the experience of crossing the bridge, and their fear of the primate.

"I was really, really, REALLY scared," admits Melissa.[9] I have never been that close to a wild animal before. I would never have crossed that bridge if you had not stood in front of that big monkey.

Thobeka[10] joins the conversation: "You made us feel really safe, Sandy. When you stood in front of that monkey, we realised that it was okay to cross the bridge, because you were not afraid."

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[9] Not her real name

"What do you mean?" I respond. "I was just as scared as the rest of you!" This is a laughing comment, but it shakes the students.

"We wondered about that, on the bus back to the camp," says Hilary.[11]Some of us thought that you were really not scared, but some of us thought that you were being a mother hen!"

"I was scared," I admit, "But I was not being a mother hen. By coming on this trip, you have entrusted me with your lives. I have to honour that."

There is a moment of deep silence.

"So, if we take children away, are you saying that we have to do the same thing?" asks Thobeka.

"What do you think?" I ask her. "What would you do, if you had a group of grade four children who had to cross the bridge, and that monkey had been in the middle?"

Hesitation. Discomfort. Laughter.

"How did you feel, when I put myself between you and the monkey?"

"We felt safe, because you were showing us that there was nothing to be scared of."

"And now that you know that I was also afraid?"

Slowly they come to understand that the act of teaching carries with it an added responsibility. We talk about accidents that occur in the classroom, about taking care of children, and how that sense of responsibility can sometimes make us discover parts of ourselves that we did not know existed.


Eventually, I am able to withdraw from the discussion, and the students continue on their own. Finally, after a long time, I ask again: "So, what would you do, if you had a group of grade four children who had to cross the bridge, and that monkey had been in the middle?"

"I would do what you did," admits Thobeka. Then she smiles. "If we found that monkey on the bridge again tomorrow, I would try to do what you did."

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[10] Not her real name

[11] Not her real name

"Why?" I ask her.

"Because I also want to be brave."

"I was not brave," I tell them. "I was doing what teachers do, in the moment, because they have to."

"You know," says Monica[12], "There is a lot about teaching that they don't teach us at the university."

"Oh come on!" I respond. "You can't expect us to teach you about everything that could ever happen when you teach! How many teachers ever have to confront a monkey on a bridge?"

"NO, Sandy," she answers. "It's not actually about the monkey on the bridge. It's about how we show the children who we are. It's about making children feel safe with us."


We continue to talk about what it means for children to be safe with us, and how that safety can impact on their learning. We talk about how that safety extends even into normal classroom situations, and how children can feel threatened by anything and everything. We talk about the value of feeling safe, being secure, and being able to relax in a 'good' space.


When Hannsie, who always joins us for dinner on these trips, and who loves the interaction with the students, leaves that night, she says: "What a pity your bosses were not here tonight."

"It doesn't matter," I tell her, and really mean it. "These students were. And that is what is important."


It is a wonderful trip, and I am grateful for its gifts. I sink into their joy, and try to remember that I am a part of it, but this year, I feel separate, I am an onlooker rather than a participant. I watch them exploring, discovering, and I try to share laughter with them. We talk until late into the night, about the value of learning, the process of opening oneself to possibility, the real meaning of knowledge. They give me a reason to remember the things that I believe in, when I have become too busy to hold on to them, but that reason no longer feels enough.

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[12] Not her real name

One night, Hannsie joins us again, and we have dinner together at the large table where we can sit as a group. Paul[13] says:"Sandy, thank you so much for this opportunity. I never thought that I would one day be sitting at a table with three different colour groups, talking and being together."

I respond: "Paul, I may have brought you here, but you made it possible to sit at the table with three different colour groups. What did you do that made this possible, FOR YOU?"

He struggles to answer me, and the other students are silent. I let the silence rest. I do not say anything else. Paul begins to mumble. He hesitates. He is awkward. I keep looking at him. Finally, he answers: "I suppose it's because I am interested."

I feel sorry for him, but I will not give him reprieve.

"Why are you interested?" I ask.

"Because I never realised before that I didn't know so much." He answers.

I stand up, and move away from the table. I leave Hannsie with them. I trust her enough to know that she will continue to challenge them as a friend, while I must remove myself, as their lecturer. I light a cigarette, and purposefully put my back to the group while I stand at the fire burning in the hearth. I realise that I am taking an enormous risk, but I am determined that these young people will rise to the challenge.

Over my shoulder, I ask: "So what would you like to know? These are the best people to ask."

Three hours later, they are still talking when Hannsie leaves, telling me that she has had an inspired evening, and I abandon the discussion, and go to my room. During the course of the evening, they have discussed their cultural rites of passage, the food that they eat, the things that they believe in, and their customs and traditions. But they have discussed them to share them, and we have all learnt a great deal.

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[13] Not his real name

I realise once again that this kind of learning could never have happened in the art studio, or in the university context, and I am once again aware of the deep value of these trips. I realise that this kind of work should sustain me, because there is so much that happens, in the course of my work with the students, that is enriching and deeply meaningful. I find it hard to hold this realisation close. I feel alone and separate from the students. I am tired by the trip, instead of being inspired by it.

When we return to Cape Town, the new curriculum for the national department of education needs to be re-formatted, a colleague asks me to collaborate on a research paper for a conference, and the year begins to draw to a close. The student exhibition needs to be hung, the external moderation needs to be arranged. I become more dislocated.

A friend whom I have not seen for a while arrives for an unscheduled visit, and even as I write these words, I am alarmed by them. I have come to a place where friends have to schedule their visits. She makes several comments about my weight loss, and I resolve to make an appointment to visit my doctor. I lack the energy for the round of testing that this will bring about, and eventually forget about it all in the frantic quality that life has assumed. There is no end to the adjustments that must be made to the curriculum, to the changes, the meetings, the last-minute decisions. Days are spent on the academic processes at work in the institution, and nights are filled with endless telephone calls and discussions about the curriculum. It is not uncommon to make or receive phone calls until late at night, early in the morning, and as it thins down to being almost meaningless, I lose heart. It held so much possibility, but has become yet another meaningless document. I almost feel ashamed that I have contributed to it.

Phone calls to Joanie's institution reveal that she has degenerated into a state where she no longer knows anyone, and that her only words now are calls for help. I cannot begin to describe the sadness.

When the academic year ends for students, I take my leave of my specialist group with sadness. They have been a wonderful gathering of people, and I know that I have not served them well. I feel guilty when they thank me, and write notes and bring gifts. At their graduation ball, I watch them with a sense of disengagement, and find that I am not able to rise to their levels of excitement and delight. I feel completely out of place, out of place in my own skin, and leave early. I sit in my car in the grounds, and stare at the building where I work. The building where I spend many hours of every day. A building that I have fought to retain as an art department. I am completely detached from it, as if I have never been into it, had any sense of joy from it, made meaning with my students in it. It is simply a building, lit against the black night sky. I am engulfed by emptiness.

I return to the administrative tasks of the end of the year, the endless, endless curriculum, the re-write after re-write, the stripping of value and meaning, to fit a format, a page, to come into line with physical education and religion studies. Just as we manage to do this, religion studies is abandoned, and is replaced by a new subject, with new guidelines. I begin to understand that the quality of the document is of secondary importance. It must 'look' the same as everything else. It must not be longer, shorter, use different words or phrases.

As time passes, I become more and more forgetful, and although it does not worry me at first, it slowly dawns on me that I am losing whole chunks of time. I forget appointments. I forget to return telephone calls. I have moments when I feel as though pieces of me are dropping off as I walk. Words elude me, and sentences become difficult because I cannot remember common nouns, names for things I use every day. I hardly realise that the academic year has ended until just days before Christmas, when Mary plaintively reminds me that we do not even have a Christmas tree, that we have strung no lights, and that it is time for some form of acknowledgement of this time of year. I stop dead in my tracks, and we go and buy a Christmas tree, decorate it, hang gold balls and red apples, and tiny lights, and the child is content. I resolve that between Christmas and New Year I will do no work at all, and will dedicate my time to Mary.

And when the work stops, I begin to unravel. I cry for no reason, or for everything. I feel completely powerless, and a sense of meaninglessness pervades every day. I make an effort to be with the people I care about, and Elske calls me into her kitchen.

"You okay, Sand?" she asks. I begin to weep, and she is full of concern.

"There really is nothing wrong," I tell her. "I just cry all of the time. Maybe I am just a little bit broken, and I am leaking."

She hugs me warmly. "You must try to have some time to yourself now that all of this is over," she says, meaning the dreaded festive season, which we both loathe. "Go to Hannsie. You love the Crags. Go to your elephants."

I do not tell Elske, but I could not be bothered. Packing a car, seeing to my dogs, organising Mary, all of these things feel too much. Even the Crags feels too much. And there is the curriculum, which is still not over.

"I'll be okay," I tell her. "Really, it's just this time of year," and we collapse against each other, laughing weakly at our mutual dislike of enforced gaiety and celebration.

## 2011

Days later, I climb onto a scale, and find that my weight has dropped to below 50kg. Time becomes blurred, but one morning, Mary comes into my room, bringing coffee and dogs and rusks, and begins to talk with enthusiasm about her party of the previous evening. Her words sound like senseless, underwater babble, and I can't understand them. I find myself

Pieces of me are falling off,

Like some kind of thick passage in a

panorama of an unwanted dream,

Words blur and I forget how

To read the small print of the contract of a life

Where there is nothing that calls meaning into being

I weep for nothing in a

hollow space where time is vacuumed

into shapes of colours that have sounds

that I cannot remember

and faces that I cannot forget have no names

to connect them to the syllable of silent security.

I am the unheard voice speaking to itself when there is

no comprehension of sound,

I am bent repentant for unknown sins

before a god that does not exist I am

madness in a world forsaken in sanity I am

nothing in the everything that I know

and all around there are people who make sense of

Here, in this moment, I admit to the pain,
bowed back turned black against the longing,
and the same, always the same frame to a day
cut like an edge, an end, a long continuation of the wayward way,
no iambic rhythm or soft sea sounds
but bleak, and boneless curling in of form.

I wait, heart-bound, locked up within this curse,
for a dull repent, a vague reverse to all
the ache and aftermath of inner ancient ague.
There is no voice to still this silent beast
confusing breath for life, for here, at least,
and so I draw up straight.
Forsake the truth.
I smile beneath the break, I make the words
become the world of otherness
in all of its supposed simplicity and meaning.
And wild and carefree on a beach
I am the frantic energy of a single swallow
before the inner compass finds its path.

tracing the physical geometric shapes of them as they come out of her mouth, break off, and drop onto the floor. I cannot focus, and when I get out of bed, I ricochet off of the wall. My doctor listens to it all, while I sit in her consulting room and cry, and although she takes blood for testing, she tells me that I have classic burnout. She tells me to take a month's sick leave, and starts to write a note.

"No," I say, "not a month. I can't, at the beginning of a year."

"Well then, at least two weeks," she is emphatic. "Watch the cricket. Go to the beach. I am prescribing that you may not do any work."


I come home and cry. I have no interest in television. Elske and I go to a film, and I watch it with a sense of detachment. The intermediate phase curriculum has to be re-formatted, and I do it without caring. I am asked to fly to Pretoria for the final meeting of the CAPS curriculum, and I refuse. I just could not be bothered.


One evening, Mary and I argue, and she tells me that she feels that I do not care about her. She offers to move out, and I am shocked into acknowledging how much I am affecting her. I try to tell her, as gently as possible, and with as much understanding as I have, about burnout. At the end of it all, she says: "Basically, Auntie, you are fucked in your head!"


Although it shocks me, I understand her response, and the following day, call Evelyn, and ask her for the name of a good therapist. She understands the place from which I call, because she is one of my closest friends. She recommends a therapist, and I call to make an appointment. I cry through the first ninety minute session. The therapist tells me that she wants to book me into a clinic for a month. I refuse. I cannot escape from my life for a month. She asks me to submit to a listening test, and the results reveal that I submerge my emotional levels in my cognitive ones. She listens as I tell her about Joanie, the curriculum, the meaninglessness of my work, the pieces of me that are falling off. She calls it a crisis of grief. She tells me that it seems that I avoid my personal crises by submerging myself in work, and that when my work lets me down, I suffer a double crisis. It resonates, and I submit to extensive therapy sessions. It seems that I have to learn to care less during a time when I do not care at all.

I decide to return to work, but my doctor advises me to go in for half days. This is impossible, but I return only for my lectures, and attend no meetings. It is hard to be there, and I find that I can get through my lectures by remembering the motions of how to lecture. I am exhausted by this process, and come home immediately after my last lecture every day. I am on anti-depressants because burnout lowers the serotonin levels, and the pills leave me feeling even more disconnected, and physically floating. I get lost in a shopping centre that I know well, and stand aimlessly looking at the alien beings who are shoppers, and become desperately afraid.

Elske, Evelyn and Hannsie carry me through this time as if they are pall bearers. Penny and Christelle at work become gentle and supportive. The ground slowly evens out beneath my feet, and I can walk with more steadiness. I still have no enthusiasm for my work, but I continue to do it, and the students are content. Some, who have come to know me well, express concern, and are supportive and particularly helpful. They hug me and I feel invaded.

I have an image of a core that is burnt black and used up, as if burnout is really burnt out. I feel used up, as if there is nothing left of me to offer, on any level, and to anyone. I don't want to talk to anyone, see anyone, or be anywhere.

In the recess, I drive to Hannsie at the Crags, and spend time with my elephants. Hannsie and I spend hours not talking. And sometimes talking. She gives me the space to be who I am, in this moment, without expecting me to be anything else. I take the beginning steps towards wholeness again. When I return to my city, my work and my life, I am able to begin to embrace it, instead of being afraid of it.

I danced across the tip of Africa with the sun
She bountifully draped, having risen from
Her grieving bed, and left her dew-filled tears for another time;

On and on we rode through shadowlight and forests,
Open fields of grain and canola in van Gogh-gasping yellow
Gold and growing in between the green of spring
and waiting for the fullness yet to come.

Now before me, then behind, she threw dart-lights of
Sparkle across dams, diamonds dripping with
Beguiling playlight, shot through with rainbows and rivers.
She hid behind tawny peaks, peeping through the passes
To see when I would come, and racing through valleys like
A child hiding behind trees and slyly waiting to pounce

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There is an irony here that does not escape me; when a teacher identity and a personal identity become so melded that they are inseparable, there is no longer a distinction between the personal and the professional. Have I lost my self in my teaching, or is my teaching lost in my self? When work becomes the sole focus of a human existence, it is problematic, because it ignores those qualities that make us human. It negates pain in the pursuit of pedagogy, and finds purpose where purpose should perhaps first be found elsewhere.

I have used my work to dull the ache of being human, and by doing this, have lost the human quality of my work.

I have always claimed to love my work. I spent many long years loving something that I did not really understand. The reflective process has been significant for me in ways that I still discover. I no longer arrogantly proclaim that I am good at my job, but I believe that I am learning to know what the work requires. Sometimes I know that I have succeeded in awakening something new in the students. I watch as their eyes brighten, their conversation becomes more animated, and the depth of their discussion increases, and I am amazed and grateful. But sometimes I know that I have failed. They remain listless and untouched. I try to reach them, but they remain out of reach. Sometimes, when I am not trying consciously to reach tem, I realise that we have a beautiful connection, and that there is a quickening of thinking that is awe-inspiring. When I remove myself from what is happening, I am amazed by what is happening. There is no recipe that makes this work. It is in the moment. It is messy and unpredictable and terrible and lovely. The only survival technique that I have learnt is to be aware of what is happening, and to be so aware that what is happening is all that is important. And then to respond, to that moment, in that moment. There is no end. It is a journey that takes in all of my being, stretches it, bends it, shapes it, and sometimes almost breaks it. I no longer look for an end point. I am simply trying to be aware, much more aware, of the journey itself.

I have bitterly come to know that nothing is solid any more, but that with the fluidity, there is much that is gained. There is also a great deal that is lost. I understand the nature of my

work much more than I have ever done before, and it is an irony that it is at the time of my greatest awareness that I am also aware of the loss of so much that used to be possible.

The institution changes, and whether we like it or not, we have to become flexible, adapt, review, and relinquish some things that are important. I have found this to be the most difficult, as over the years, the small and the intimate has given way to the large and the bureaucratic. The things that I worked so hard to establish, because I believed in them so fervently – the MAGIC Tour, the SHINE Tour, the extended visits to Galleries, the time for students to immerse themselves in their work in the safety of a space that nurtures them – these things have all fallen by the wayside as the institution thunders on, and as technical details and the one-size-fits-all approach is imposed. I am concerned that, at a time in our country's history, where we have so many first-generation students who need nurturing and support in order to reach and fulfil their own potential, the emphasis in teacher education institutions is heavily on theory, research and publishing papers to generate funds, rather than on student development and meaningful teaching.

I am learning that one's work can only be vibrant and fulfilling and meaningful if one's human existence has those qualities. I am trying to come to terms with the fact that, if I bury myself in work, my work will eventually bury me. I cannot take on the role of being a good role model for Mary or for my students until I am truly a role model *of* myself, and it is up to them to accept or reject it. I should leave the choice up to them. I should not be dismantled if they choose to reject it. I am learning to do less, to sometimes refuse to do things, and to accept that I will sometimes not do things as well as they could be done.

I am learning to let go of guilt if I am not working.

I had initially thought that I would end this narrative on a grand, philosophical scale, where I speak of the value of the selfless teacher, the committed dedicated one whose sole purpose in life is to encourage learning in her students. I end it rather on a small scale, a gentle note. Self-less-ness is exactly what it says: to be devoid of self. It indicates imbalance and infertile soil. If I wish to be fully present to my students, this should be preceded with a wish to be

fully present to myself. There might be pain, grief and loss, but there may also be unbounded joy, felt life, and a meaningfulness that does not reside in the interpretation of others.

And so, in a strange way, I have my life back. I have my work, that will always be a meaningful and deeply fulfilling place, but I have also regained the ability to spend real quality time with people who are dear to me, and to do things that are fun, and sometimes even silly. I have re-kindled friendships, made some important new ones, and tried to give value to those that have nourished me for so many years. Hannsie's recent, shocking death has left a space that will never be filled. Her presence in my life was much bigger than I realised, when she was alive, and her loss remains, and will always be, immense. But her death has reminded me yet again that life can change in an instant. I try, now, to let friends know how much I value them. I use words to tell them. I am grateful that I still have Elske and Evelyn, caring, sustaining, and being.

I watch my Mary, my niece, the child of my heart, slowly growing into her own teacher-being, and realise that her journey lies before her, with all of the joy and the grief. All I can do is stand beside her, and encourage her to come to know that this is not work. It is a way of life, a way of being that will lift you up and bring you down. It will give and take. More than anything, it will show the value of meaning. She begins her own journey, as I began mine, so many years ago, a little afraid, a little in awe, and a little joyously.

And so, yet another spiral begins.

*With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling*
*We shall not cease from exploration*

*And the end of all of our exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we started*

*And know the place for the first time.*

*T S Eliot: The Four Quartets: Little Gidding*

Washing machines are a good height for elbows. I am six. I stand leaning, and watch my mother bathing my three-year-old sister. It is the evening of my first day at school.

"One day when I'm big, I'm going to be a teacher," I tell her.

**Little Gidding: T S Eliot, 1942**

**I**

Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown,
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and freezing
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
Not in the scheme of generation.
Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer?

      If you came this way,
Taking the route you would be likely to take
From the place you would be likely to come from,
If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness.
It would be the same at the end of the journey,
If you came at night like a broken king,
If you came by day not knowing what you came for,
It would be the same, when you leave the rough road
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull facade
And the tombstone. And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfilment. There are other places
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city—
But this is the nearest, in place and time,
Now and in England.

      If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,

It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.


## II

Ash on and old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The walls, the wainscot and the mouse,
The death of hope and despair,
    This is the death of air.

There are flood and drouth
Over the eyes and in the mouth,
Dead water and dead sand
Contending for the upper hand.
The parched eviscerate soil
Gapes at the vanity of toil,
Laughs without mirth.
    This is the death of earth.

Water and fire succeed
The town, the pasture and the weed.
Water and fire deride
The sacrifice that we denied.
Water and fire shall rot
The marred foundations we forgot,
Of sanctuary and choir.
    This is the death of water and fire.

In the uncertain hour before the morning
    Near the ending of interminable night
    At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
    Had passed below the horizon of his homing
    While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
Over the asphalt where no other sound was
    Between three districts whence the smoke arose
    I met one walking, loitering and hurried

As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
    Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.
    And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
    The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
    I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
    Both one and many; in the brown baked features
    The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable.
    So I assumed a double part, and cried
    And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'
Although we were not. I was still the same,
    Knowing myself yet being someone other—
    And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed
To compel the recognition they preceded.
    And so, compliant to the common wind,
    Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,
In concord at this intersection time
    Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,
    We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.
I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,
    Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:
    I may not comprehend, may not remember.'
And he: 'I am not eager to rehearse
    My thoughts and theory which you have forgotten.
    These things have served their purpose: let them be.
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
    By others, as I pray you to forgive
    Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
    For last year's words belong to last year's language
    And next year's words await another voice.
But, as the passage now presents no hindrance
    To the spirit unappeased and peregrine
    Between two worlds become much like each other,
So I find words I never thought to speak
    In streets I never thought I should revisit
    When I left my body on a distant shore.
Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us
    To purify the dialect of the tribe
    And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
    To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
    First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
    But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
    As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
    At human folly, and the laceration
    Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
    Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
    Of motives late revealed, and the awareness

Of things ill done and done to others' harm
    Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
    Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
    Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
    Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street
    He left me, with a kind of valediction,
    And faded on the blowing of the horn.


## III

There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle. This is the use of memory:
For liberation—not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action
And comes to find that action of little importance
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Sin is Behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.
If I think, again, of this place,
And of people, not wholly commendable,
Of no immediate kin or kindness,
But of some peculiar genius,
All touched by a common genius,
United in the strife which divided them;
If I think of a king at nightfall,
Of three men, and more, on the scaffold
And a few who died forgotten
In other places, here and abroad,
And of one who died blind and quiet
Why should we celebrate
These dead men more than the dying?
It is not to ring the bell backward
Nor is it an incantation
To summon the spectre of a Rose.
We cannot revive old factions
We cannot restore old policies
Or follow an antique drum.

These men, and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed
Accept the constitution of silence
And are folded in a single party.
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
We have taken from the defeated
What they had to leave us—a symbol:
A symbol perfected in death.
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
By the purification of the motive
In the ground of our beseeching.


## IV

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
    Lies in the choice of pyre of pyre—
    To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
    We only live, only suspire
    Consumed by either fire or fire.


## V

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make and end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.

We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree
Are of equal duration. A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this
    Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.