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Won By A Certain Labour: A Conversation On The While Of Things

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*This conversation began when one of us (Jardine 2008) discovered a published article by the other (Ross 2004) and ended up with an e-mailed dissertation (Ross 2003). This led to a decision to work together on our mutual interests in Hans-Georg Gadamer's idea of **Verweilen**—an experience of time (and a place of cultivation) involving whiling, tarrying, gathering—threaded with our interests in education and the work of teaching and learning. In the spirit of the topic under consideration, what follows is an edited and annotated version of our ensuing conversation which, we hope, will draw readers into their own considerations of the while of things.*

S.R.: My own interest in composing an anti-narrative, no doubt of interest to you, too, is to test Gadamer's model of understanding, specifically the way in which this modality of the written dialogue is uniquely productive, producing something new, something *unexpected* about our subject matters, (whiling & narrative?). I'm quite excited to be trying this not only because of this philosophical interest, but also it communicates differently. The reader would have to follow differently than following an argument with an up-front thesis, say.

I was also thinking about what you describe as the "inner life" of knowledge as an "inheritance"ⁱ (inherit, inherent, in here) requiring devotion¹, dedication, a vitality which makes this knowledge a thing that lives withinⁱⁱ, and is thus difficult to impart intact to another. I wonder whether coming to this view of knowledge as alive and as beautiful (as in the "rightness" that HGG talks about) is perhaps a key lesson for the teacher, a first principle? Does the teacher require experience to see this? Perhaps this organic, non-particle theory of knowing/ledge of yours could be a specific point of departure. I think this lies at the heart of finitude, too, that these truths are so profoundly individual, yet we go around assuming they

can be transmitted, disseminated, transferred.

These ideas suggest directions in my own thinking: I think that teaching literary art as experience is, too, a kind of corrective. I'm interested in further particularizing the formative value of this as experience for the student in such a way that their subsequent classroom work of reflection and analysis can validate and illuminate this rather than neuter it, and considering the ramifications of such a shift in emphasis.

DJ: Your email was quite timely. I just attended a Master's level defense in the Faculty of Nursing where the topic of her wonderful hermeneutic study was depression. The candidate was a practicing nurse in a health unit dedicated to such issues. Her colleagues have been pressing her with precisely these issues we have started to discuss: what did you find out? What should we be doing differently/the same? and so on.

I keep thinking of that phrase at the beginning of *T&M* regarding "amassing verified knowledge."ⁱⁱⁱ Even though the members of this committee understood its hermeneutic character, some of them seemed to want the *outcome* of her study to be presentable independently of the devotion, dedication and time that the candidate took whiling over such matters. It was as if the self-formation (*Bildung*)^{iv} that was required in order for the topic to show itself, all that work she had to do on herself and in this field, had nothing to do with *what* she found in her study. Her study itself was a bit of a "corrective" as you called it. However, as is the necessity in such work, she was asked, in her defense, about "implications," again *as if* these could simply be listed for a reader to amass independently of that reader's own self-formation.

This is why your idea of composing this paper as an anti-narrative is so very important. It is rare with much research in my profession that one reads something with the expectation that something will be expected of me as a reader, that I myself will need to while over what is being written in order to cultivate in myself the ability to understand what is being asked of me.^v

It may be that this sort of knowledge "cannot be taught" (this is a quote from *T&M* somewhere that has always disturbed me) in the usual sense of transmitting amassed knowledge. But perhaps this is simply, as you've noted, a poor understanding of teaching as transmission. I think we can draw our students into these living inheritances and into the work that whiling requires and the beauty of its cultivation. Perhaps, as you note, it cannot be "transmitted, disseminated, transferred" without expecting of those who wish to learn about these matters something other than passive reception.

SR: Cannot be taught, yes. There are many layers to

this. The difficulty of drawing our students into this seems to me indicative of a kind of tragic dilemma in delineating between, say, the “technological” and the “hermeneutical” components of education. The technological has such an advantage over the hermeneutical, precisely in that the technological can be taught, while the hermeneutical only learned. Expecting something of a reader makes the text hermetic, its understanding won by a certain labour only. It is so much easier to follow an instruction than to follow a hunch. We want, or think we want, the convenience of the pure, thus verifiable statement, the kitchen gadget of understanding.

I wonder whether a challenge I face teaching undergraduate literature is similarly symptomatic of this apparent blindness to the workings of *Bildung*. A rudimentary hermeneutical lesson in literature speaks to this: literature shows; it does not tell. But the student, say in a first-year literature class, has often a very different expectation of the literature text, along the lines of what you encountered with the peers of the nursing student writing about the hermeneutics of depression, though these are of course very different students. The student of mine wants to be told by the text, not heed suggestions or follow clues.^{vi} The text is read as, or for, something explicit, conclusive, useful.^{vii}

Like you I wonder why such a student should necessarily have this expectation? Why should they, really, have so little poised capacity for understanding beyond this? One can't simply attribute this to maturity, their earlier education, or sensibility, though these are involved. It seems to be a more fundamental question about the hermeneutical running right through our culture. Do we really know what we are doing when we seek to understand? Although this may be a lesson that can only be learned and not taught, like you, I'm not convinced a lifetime of experience, or a PhD, is needed to learn it. (I'm reminded here of your description of the child's natural capacity to explore in your piece “On Genius and Repose”^{viii}). I think the lesson is closer to home.

When I used the term, “anti-narrative” I was thinking primarily of Paulo Freire's (1970) derogative use of the term “narrative” to designate the lesson which is *dictated* to others, as opposed to negotiated with them.^{ix} But the literary meaning of “anti-narrative” is relevant too: the story that continually disrupts the expectations we have of “stories,” forcing the question, what is a story? (or, What is history? What is an autonomous character? and so-on). So the anti-narrative might impose such questions on the reader by, for instance, never quite getting underway, never quite forming a complete “statement.” The interesting question here is why such experiments in fiction, and the theory and criticism surrounding them, haven't finally managed to draw attention to our collective blindness to the hermeneutical.

This question of the statement, so to speak, and what it betrays about our collective hermeneutical acuity is taken up by Gadamer in a beautiful essay just lately available in English that you've probably seen, entitled,

“Language and understanding” (Gadamer 2007a). It was originally delivered in 1970 as a radio broadcast, so it is particularly lucid, no doubt why he included it in this *Gadamer Reader* just hitting the English stands. In it he talks about how science, with a little help from Aristotle, gives priority to the statement, thereby “constantly adding to its stockpile of knowledge available for random use” (Gadamer 2007a, p. 102). But of course his whole point is not that this is illegitimate but that we fail to see it is a linguistic illusion, a destructive one. There is no such thing as the pure statement. Just as the single word is subject to the “linguistic melody of the whole sentence” (24), the statement cannot resound in a vacuum.

DJ: “Won by a certain labour.” This feels like exactly the right title for our conversation! I think that students have *learned* that expecting anything other than what is simply laid out in front of them—given, present, consumable, repeatable, anonymous, disposable, with all the intended neo-Heideggerian smell of these terms—is a waste of time. So that when they arrive at our doorsteps, they have rarely experienced in school how something might come to shine, to grow, to appear, to arrive, through their labours and not otherwise. It is true, however, that many of them would have had such an experience *outside* of school—how the ways of horses or skiing or hiking or playing music requires a labour that yields something not available without that labour. This knowledge is not a “stockpile of knowledge available for random use” but a territory you have to traverse and, shall we say, “work”—the issue of a tarrying or gathering or whiling which, as your work (Ross 2003, 2004) helped me understand (see Jardine 2008), involves a different experience of time (rare in the panicked accelerations of school-time which is always running out). With matters such as these, no one expects that becoming experienced asks nothing of me.

But in schools, as industrially conceived assembly plants^x, each curriculum area is sundered, and those elements that might call for tarrying are systematically and deliberately erased (to use the terms Gadamer cites from Vico, a knowledge of the ways of a place, *topica*, becomes knowledge of the method for assembling an object, *critica*, or, as my students as me “How do you teach writing to young children?”^{xi} rather than “What is this inheritance, writing, what are its ways, and what does it expect of me? How am I already living with students in the midst of this inheritance?”²). As with an industrial assembly line, *being interested and invested* in what is in front of you simply leads to inefficiency. Schools have thus *rendered* living inheritances into objects to be assembled (which, of course, is precisely what the natural sciences do in their process of objectification). I had a student teacher last year in a high school chemistry class who was laying out wonderful connections for students in a Grade 12 class, and his “partner teacher” kept coming up to the board every few minutes and circling things and declaring “now *that* is on the exam” and trudging, with all due arrogance and huffy superiority, back to his observe-the-student-teacher-and-give-feedback seat. Brilliantly awful example, I think, of what you’ve talked about above. It is not simply that something to be “won by a

certain labour” is not pursued by students. What is often offered to them are things that *don't require such labor*. And such trivialities are often given to students by well-meaning teachers who then try to promote “inquiry” and end up ruefully saying that “it didn't work with my kids.” The depth of the Gadamerian dystopia you mentioned in that earlier article^{xii} hits home for me right here, that little in the world of schools requires such labour. There is no use working over something that will not yield its gifts under such suffering/whiling/tarrying. (An aside: I can't help thinking about the lovely connection in English between whiling and wiles/wiliness. There is something animate about the wiles of something whiled over. This is why many teachers turn away from such matters. If matters that are whiled over come to be experienced as “there” “over and above our wanting and doing,” they start to become experience as having *their own ways* that ask something of me. Familiarity becomes *familiaris*, like an animal spirit that knows the ways of a place.^{xiii})

Your second characteristic of anti-narrative is really important. I've found that a lot of “post modern” “narratives” that are broken up or use {([}\) to break up wor(l)ds (yuck!) in fact push readers even further into flitting and fluttering over texts and don't *necessarily* induce whiling at all.^{xiv} Instead of inducing me to think, they induce me to think *about the cleverness of the author's all too obvious attempts at manipulating me*. They always read in a way I find akin to watching a bad actor whose “interpretation” refuses, as Gadamer put it, to disappear so that the thing itself—the work—can shine forth.

Regarding your reference to Friere, I'm compelled to cite this fabulous and disturbing passage written by David G. Smith up in Edmonton as a way of closing for now:

"Education is suffering from narration-sickness," says Paulo Freire. It speaks out of a story which was once full of enthusiasm, but now shows itself incapable of a surprise ending. The nausea of narration-sickness comes from having heard enough, of hearing many variations on a theme but no new theme. A narrative which is sick may claim to speak for all, yet has no *aporia*, no possibility of meeting a stranger because the text is complete already. Such narratives may be passed as excellent by those who certify clarity and for whom ambiguity is a disease to be excoriated. But the literalism of such narratives (speeches, lectures, stories) inevitably produces a pedagogy which, while passes as being "for the good of children," does not recognise the violence against children inherent in its own claim. Because without an acknowledgement and positive appreciation of the full polysemic possibility which can explode forth from within any occasion when

adult and child genuinely meet together: a possibility which resides precisely in the difference of every child, every person, a difference about which one can presume nothing despite the massive research literature (e.g., about children) available to us, and despite the fact that our children come from us, are our flesh and blood. Without an appreciation of the radical mystery which confronts us in the face of every other person, our theorizing must inexorably become stuck, for then we are no longer available for that which comes to meet us from beyond ourselves, having determined in advance the conditions under which any new thing will be acceptable, and thereby foreclosing on the possibility of our own transformation. This radical difference of every child, every other person, renders our pedagogical narratives ambiguous but at the same time hopeful, because the immanent ambiguity held within them opens a space for genuine speaking, holding out the promise that something new can be said from out of the mists of the oracle of our own flesh. (Smith 1999, p. 135-6)

SR: Yes, narrative in this passage meaning *antithesis to the dialogical*, a metaphor, more or less, for presuppositions about the nature of understanding that result in one's being insufficiently "open" to the "other." Smith's hopefulness comes from his observation that the dialogical isn't something we can choose to heed, or not, because it operates anyway, *despite narrative*, by virtue of our "radical differences." The point being whether we choose to honor it or not. I would like to comment on his characterization of *not* honoring it, where he suggests this amounts to a form of violence against children (I suppose "out-comes"-based or "learner-centered" education was supposed to fix this, somehow guarantee student engagement, guarantee rapport. But it doesn't, really, as we know, the point continues to be missed).

I wonder whether a certain defense of the literary genre of narrative can actually shed more light on the violence Smith mentions - the damage wrought by our well-meaning pedagogies. He alludes, I think, to the child's particular vulnerability in the face of such a closed (can we say pure-statement?) pedagogy. This is surely related to the vulnerability of a child wholly at play, whiling away over something alone or with others, spellbound by some subject matter. Gadamer would of course draw our attention to the possibility that this vulnerability is in part due to the *autonomy* of this space. The violence occurs when this is breached, when there is certain kind of "interference": The child learns from such a trespass on these boundaries that she is not *safe* there, this space does not really *belong* to her, or, that it is an *illegitimate* space to enter, this space of whiling. These are indeed serious consequences for identity and well-being. Reading the engaging literary

narrative is similarly autonomous, where the engaged reader forgets about the passage of time, about who they are supposed to be, about what is next in their workaday lives. And a pedagogy that undermines the self-evident validity of this experience has a much the same kind of fallout as for the child, just a little more, shall we say, “mature” – *What am I supposed to do when I read? She will tell me what this really means later, so I don't really have to read it*, and so-on. There is no hermeneutics to simply point out to students how unique this is, how much a departure it is from other states of ordinary consciousness, what it can tell us about participation, about truth, much less its consequences for human well-being in a technological society. I have been wondering whether articulating this autonomous space-place-modality, making it real and particular and consequential for students would make any difference to thinking that prioritizes the interpersonal, this question of rapport, of honoring the other. What I am hoping this exchange will clarify for me, for us, for others, is whether the situated, limited, or perspectival nature of human being (call this the condition of human ‘finitude’) can be adequately understood *without* such a basic, concrete grasp of one’s deeply “animate” as you say, ‘truth.’^{xv} It does seem a problem of connecting the dots. Or, perhaps we need other concrete evidence of our own finitude in order to *place* whiling, as a note in a melody?

I have to ask you something else, having to do with how rhetoric is complicit in this blindness (how *else*, that is—we’ve already identified the pure-statement problem). I’m considering “narration sickness” from another perspective, that of the writer, the “narrator.” Sticking to my defence of narrative, the art-form, I right away have to acknowledge the constructed nature of the narrator, or, if we remove any hint of personification, the constructed nature of the “voice” (one asks, what is the whiling of the artist at work? What is Bildung, the gathering of *familiaris* here?). There is a sense in which the potentially annoying narratives to which we refer may be seen to consciously portray one of the 3 violences of identity I mentioned. In this deliberately self-defeating, self-referring narrative, the writer perhaps portrays a narrator who can’t rid herself of the gaze of conventional discourse upon her, is unable to enter the well of creativity. Aside from afflicting an unsuspecting reader, in a sense this would seem to portray a debilitating self-consciousness or self-objectification.^{xvi} Is such a phenomenon as this important to our inquiry, this paranoia of being watched? I cannot help thinking such a state – the state of having an exaggerated sense of irony, rhetorically speaking, is somehow the antithesis of what we are seeking to give form to. I’m feeling boxed in by this notion.

DJ: Because of your last letter, I think I’m beginning to see how these threads entwine. This feeling of being boxed in, of surveillance etc. Let me try something.

Perhaps this “lay it all out in front of me so that my whiling isn’t called for” isn’t properly called narrative at

all? It does fulfill the weakest of characteristics: events connected one after the other in a “story” of sorts, but the story, here, is like your description of Gadamer’s talk of “empty time”: the story fits into an empty container of “this, then this, this took three days, then we talked about this, here’s how I assessed things, here’s how it fits with Grade 5 curriculum mandates” and so on (and here is how the child gets questioned: “how long did this take you? What was your favourite part?” and, always, eventually, the grandest of empty narratives, “what grade are you in? how old are you?”). One might even say that the story being told here is most fundamentally that empty narrative. It’s having taken three days or four, this being a favourite part or that, this grade or that, this age or that—these are all subsequent to the empty narrative form and do not have any effect on shaping how that narrative might go. Smith: narration sickness. This is “application” in its most horrible sense of individual-cases-falling-under-the-Universal-form-without-forming-that-Universal (no “fecundity of the individual case”).

Empty narrative (perhaps it could also be called instrumental or industrial narrative?) is not pulled by its *topica*, and what that topic asks of the tale being told. Such “narratives” (and readers of... and writers of...) are not formed as they proceed. Rather, the topic is formed by the empty narrative form. This empty form *renders* any topic in the same way: manageability, easy of assembly sequences, surveillability, safety and security.^{xvii}

So, as you mentioned above, it is all too common in schools for the space of whiling to be breached, trespassed upon, violated, and degraded in favour of another emptier time and another set of emptier narratives. These later empties render classrooms all too often into spaces that are indistinguishable. That is why your last missive sent me back to two small passages from Ivan Illich:

War tends to make cultures alike whereas peace is that condition under which each culture flourishes in its own incomparable way. From this, it follows that peace cannot be exported; it is inevitably corrupted by transfer, its attempted export means war. (Illich 1992, p. 17)

War, which makes cultures alike, is all too often used by historians as the framework or skeleton of their narratives. The peaceful enjoyment of that which is not scarce [that which is not under threat, embattled]. . . is left in a zone of deep shadow. (p. 19)

So it is almost as if empty narrative or industrial narrative is narrative-under-threat or narrative-under-surveillance or, as you put it, narrative-under-trespass. Foucault fits here, of course: narrative under

normalization^{xviii}, where things become more alike, and that which does not fall within the purview of normality already has its being measured in relation to that norm: abnormality as “special needs.” Children become more alike in such an empty narrative form: The Grade Three child who, in response to being asked “why do you read?” answered “to improve my reading skills”; the Grade One child who struggled over some issue but then, to the teacher and his classmates said/asked “but I did my best, right?” The whole class concurred. This sort of untresspassable narrative is, as you put it above, more invulnerable to breach. Differently put, if I talk like this, the teacher will leave me be (this is why students ask “tell me exactly what you want on this assignment”!!). Empty narrative becomes safer and safer, rather than more and more beautiful, more and more invulnerable, rather than more and more vulnerable, more and more foreclosed rather than “kept open for the future” (p. 340) (as Gadamer [1989] defines openness to interpretation). Empty narrative, in fact, has no future:

if such a transparency of intelligibility were ensured it would destroy the text, it would show that the text has no future [*avenir*], that it does not overflow the present, that it is consumed immediately. Jacques Derrida (& Ferraris 2001, p. 30-1).

Yikes! This always scares me. An empty narrative as a narrative with no future (hence the narration sickness). No future. No children. From a headline I saved years ago: “The City of Tomorrow has Fewer Children,” with the sub-title “Cheryl Crow, acting principal of Garfield High School said, “to me that would be one of the scariest things to imagine, to live in a city without all the generations.” (The Seattle Times, Sunday, April 2, 2001, p. A8). Empty narrative as degenerative, a narrative that cannot be cultivated, that is not memorable but just memorizable, that will not grow with further work and attention and love and devotion.

“Left in peace,” Illich says, differences flourish. Perhaps this is a good word to use with whiling or tarrying, that the thing under consideration, the thing being worked upon, and those who engaged such work, start to flourish from such attention. “Self-identity” starts to become variegated and multifarious and ambiguous and, as you mentioned above, finite: I become *someone* when the narrative is not empty. And, to use Gadamer’s citation of Heidegger’s terminology, the thing under consideration starts to “stand-there”^{xix}(I always think, especially this time of year, of a garden well tended, where the work sets the thing right [this is the language HGG uses in *The Enigma of Health*, where the physician doesn’t *create* health but simply sets up its arrival]).

As to this last point, then, regarding the teacher. Is there a form of pedagogical trespass that is on behalf of whiling? This is not simply a matter of “staying out of the child’s way” (such “learner centeredness” is simply the inverse of “teacher centeredness” and its

normalizing effects). Teachers need to *cultivate* this safe space for whiling, they need to encourage it, to embody it and practice it in the presence of children, participate in it, praise it, expect nothing less. This, of course, is a dangerous spot, but I've often seen how some teachers, when they recognize the vile effects of the empty narratives of schooling, simply invert matters and try to set free a Romantically conceived "creative child," thus once again passing over the need to while over a child's work or to teach students to while themselves. Many teachers, once the spell of empty rendering is broken, start to, as Hannah Arendt put it, "stand helpless before the child" (1969, p. 177), unable to understand how they are expected to be more experienced. Some talk of "following the child's lead" and so on without meditating upon how you have to be good to do this well, you have to be experienced, you have to have whiled and being whiling yourself, not just standing helplessly on the side.^{xx}Being "left in peace" is not, as Arendt put it "abandoning the child to his own devices." This would be like an inexperienced person going to a showing of Matisse's work and believing that they just needed to give their opinion, and didn't need to "work" this experience. I love going to a museum with someone experienced who can help me cultivate my own ability to experience without simply replacing my experience with theirs. My inexperience does need a sort of loving trespass.

Hmm.

SR: Well, "trespass" is just a bad thing, anathema to intactness or autonomy^{xxi}, at least psychically speaking. But I know what you are saying. And it is really important to see the danger of, as you say, inverting matters. The corresponding practice in teaching undergraduate literature is also to simply abandon the student to their own reader-responses and leave it at that. All reading is subjective, the teacher concedes, end of story. Then what is the point of taking a literature course, a student might rightly ask. Concocted answer: "It will teach you to read critically, a very useful skill." So there is this toxic combination of a generally accepted view of the student's that interpretation is "subjective" combined with an expectation that such courses be useful to them. But you are facing a different problem, I'm thinking, in the case of primary education, where "subjectivity" is not yet problematized since, developmentally, the child's "subjectivity" is so emphatically intact, so healthy. This is why it is such a critical starting point for hermeneutics, right? Do you think that a correction to our basic prejudice against "subjectivity" as the laughing cousin of objectivity, the goofus in the family – needs to begin here?

I am thinking this change we seek could also be described as the primacy of the pure statement or empty narrative *being overtaken by the primacy of the question*, reversing their priority. Here it is revealing to consider the number of actual question-asking practices that appear sophistic in this reversal: drilling students, the 'test' question, the transparent "leading" question, as in "leading a witness" by tricking the

interlocutor into seeing things their way. Pedagogically all these become mere rhetorical questions.^{xxii} So if there is a form of pedagogical trespass on behalf of whiling, it might be reasonable to say it takes the form of the authentic question. Leading an inquiry about a subject where the student can see, as you say, that the teacher is on a path also, this “leading” is about leadership, or at least a certain aspect of leadership, where one “leads by example.” The crux of the dilemma for our ideal teacher “who practices whiling in the presence of children” is perhaps that, in recognizing success is so tied to the concrete here and now of real-time confluences of subject-matter, this-student-now, and this-teacher-now, given this, teaching is *work*, is *labor*. The teacher prepares, then, precisely by being prepared for anything! But not by preparing ahead of time for any eventuality she can envision so much as by going into the classroom prepared to engage the unique, flourishing differences, as you cite from Illich. Along with her own hermeneutic mastery of a subject matter, perhaps what the teacher needs more than anything is the courage of the adventurer. I don’t doubt that many good teachers discover this. Teaching as quest. Question as quest. Quest as *habitus*.^{xxiii}

As a sidenote, it has not escaped notice that we seem to be entering the age of the question by another route in the more and more widespread practice of “Googling.” The sophistication of the search-engine has grown quickly from the rigidity of original Boolean operators to more and more natural language responsiveness, and already on the horizon is, I read somewhere, a search that can be initiated through speech recognition technology and object recognition. So we can talk out loud to Google, and show it things. Maybe soon it will talk back, appearing in the form of a hologram (this is the future according to David Mitchell, in his powerful post-apocalyptic novel, *Cloud Atlas*, incidentally, an anti-narrative of quite a different kind, one which, fittingly, plays with suspense.^{xxiv} So we may be in the process of becoming habituated to question-asking in this other way, regardless of hermeneutics.

Your mention of Derrida on the secret reminds me of a biographical film about Derrida that was produced around the same time by Amy Ziering Kofman and Kirby Dick (2002).^{xxv} I had forgotten about this film. In it he makes an observation about the secret self betrayed by the hands and the eyes, the most communicative parts of the human body: When our hands are animated and gesturing is precisely when we do not see them. And though the eyes are the part of the body said to be windows into our selves, we can never regard our own gaze as others do. One can immediately think of other examples this – we do not hear our own voices as they are heard by others, we do not know our own smell and so-on. We seem very creature-like in these limitations! So the secret self to which he refers in the film, at least, is not the private one we might choose to withhold from others, or where one lives an alternate life unbeknownst to others, but the one that we are never in a position to see and that only others ever may. Yet the most remarkable thing about this dynamic is that we are so oblivious to it, this

evidence of our finitude! If it were everyday knowledge that, in giving ourselves over to our passion to communicate something, we reveal more than, other than, what is “intended,” then we would be faced with the question of how to regard this loss of authority. It would have a value.^{xxvi} Here is that vulnerability again, of leaving yourself open. This puts the presumed “transparency of intelligibility” in a slightly different light, and gives a bit more form to the nature of the dynamics that condition dialogue with students. What happens to this secret self in the case of the emptied narrative, in the teacher’s “communiqué” as Freire puts it? What else do students inadvertently learn from this?

What I see emerging in our exchange, for me, at least, is the matter of defining what it means to have an “identity” in this experiential way. “I become someone when the narrative is not empty” in the same way as I become “someone” when I lose myself in the fullness of the literary narrative, to return to my example. So this whiling identity is quite particular, as you indicate in “Genius and Repose,” quite crucially excluding some usual aspects of identity. In particular, any preoccupations with oneself as a “self” at all would seem to *interfere* with an engagement with the subject matter. This is evident in the fact that one cannot be engaged by something while simultaneously observing that one is so, “*I am engaged by this, I am reading the narrative now*” To tarry, one must not feel oneself watched, feel the trespass, but neither can one watch oneself, engage in self-surveillance (these two afflictions being nearly indistinguishable). Is this tendency to watch oneself, measure oneself against, be obedient to some perceived norm or ideal not pervasive to the point of malaise? This being *all there is* to one’s identity? My thought is to detail as much as possible what distinguishes the richness of this other *modality* in order to suggest another way of thinking about who we are and what the point is. That we need a plan ‘B,’ as far as the point of it all goes, seems pretty clear.

This is what I found so important about time, the question of its fullness and its emptiness. It is easy to see that time-consciousness operates differently during the experience of full engagement in something.^{xxvii} Anyone can see this. The quality of time during these formative experiences is another way to point out its autonomy; tarrying time, as *Verweilen* is often translated, is in Gadamer part of the condition of this fullness of content standing before one, a condition of its meaning. Conversely, emptied time, perhaps best exemplified in the experience of boredom, in having nothing to fill one’s time, is a kind of waiting, as is planning and promising, thinking of a future as a continuation of a past.^{xxviii} One needs the measurements of past and future to think instrumentally -- this is Gadamer’s point in his pieces on time.^{xxix} But the wonderful thing about a fully engaged reading of literary narrative is how unmistakable it is as an illustration of something utterly beyond this instrumental temporality. In discussing this with my students as an initial observation about the particular autonomy of reading narrative literature, they typically feel drawn (as the

child would never be, if there were some way to say this) to the conclusion that literature must therefore be escapist, an indulgent entertainment, a diversion. How far we are just here from *Bildung*, its safety! Hermeneutics also starting here, then, in this grasp of the experience as something quite profoundly *home*.^{xxx}

DJ: “What happens to this secret self in the case of the emptied narrative?” This is the great “hidden curriculum” of a lot of contemporary curriculum theory that is interpretively based.

This secret self is the one who is in love with the world and its ways and seeks out to be known by it, witnessed by it, the one like Calvin who, upon seeing a trickle of water through some dirt, turns to Hobbes and says, “I think the rest of the day is booked!” This secret self is the one who is becoming in the face of whiling, it is me scouring over old books on the Enclosure Movement in England, trying to get a deep, Earthly sense of what “the commons” might mean, and how education has become enclosed. It is the self that seeks out vulnerability and opportunity: or, to follow up what you said above, it is the self that is being scoured by those books, witnessed by them, shaped by that trickle of water and gravity: “Understanding is an adventure and, like any adventure, it always involves some risk.” (Gadamer 1983, p. 141).” This, again, is where *Bildung* fits for me: my self becomes *more* vulnerable to experience, the more that I experience. In reading about this topic and filling myself up with its images and tales, the quest/ion gets linked to *habitus*, inhabiting a place and being inhabited by it. This self is worldly, and, to follow up what you said above, leaving yourself open has the correlate of finding that the world is more and more open (to interpretation). I love reading these old books, for example, because I know that they will have something to say about me that I could not have said to myself, like that great line in the foreword to the second edition: “it would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not know by ourselves.”

Once narrative empties, it is no longer a matter of “giving myself over” to some *topica* but of wielding and rendering. It is no longer a matter of “what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing,” but is only a matter of my doings. . . what I make of things I encounter overwhelms and silences what they make of me. Understanding becomes *critica*, method-wielding with no substance to hold it delicately in place and in proper measure to the things under consideration. Once students believe that the read topic is the grade to be received, the fullness that whiling might bring no longer holds any sway. Worse yet, I become equivalent to how I experience myself and what I command and the knowledge I have amassed and can wield at will. That secret self that is vulnerable to become more than it experiences itself to be becomes *privatized* and *individualized*. Worse yet, self knowledge becomes like American foreign policy: we already know who we are and what others can warrantably think of us, so we

don't need to listen to what others have to say. They either agree with what we already know ourselves to be, or they are wrong. What students inadvertently learn from this emptying is that they are sovereign individuals, but that they have no land, no place, no world to inhabit. I think there brooks here a hint of an ecological crisis as well.

SR: I am suddenly struck with something else hauntingly ecological in what you describe: the joyful accretion of abundance in whiling seems to obey a very *organic* principle of growth, suggestive of the beautifully generative nature of fractals, distinctly un-linear in shape!^{xxxix}

DJ: We're getting up to 6500 words or so. Is it possible to continue our conversation and also nip the current paper and starting shaping it up into something to send off into the ether? My first priority is not to interrupt what we are doing. Very interesting and helpful to me thus far.

SR: Indubitably. Your last would make an excellent ending. I've added a short bit, but we could delete it. We could think more about the closing after finishing/shaping it. I guess we can't both be working on the file at the same time can we? We will have to send it back and forth? How have you done this in the past?

DJ: In the past, what has usually happened is that one person takes over the end-game. I think we need a brief introduction regarding how this came about and what came before it, then each of us could go through the whole thing and add whatever footnotes seem compelling to add (we could refer to this process in the intro as well, as a matter of speaking out of ancestries that don't necessarily get mentioned explicitly, and how such explication after the fact is itself a form of whiling-as-shaping-and-forming) that this process is, in theory, infinite. It is a matter, then of pointing out trails rather than foreclosure.

So why don't we start by each separately footnoting the thing (including each other's passages, I'd say??), and then we can collate those two notings together into one document. Meanwhile, we can each take some separate notes on an introduction.

SR: Sure, that sounds like a plan. So, notes toward an intro, footnoting. I've been mulling over something else from Derrida. It struck me that my preoccupation with "invisibility" is a kind of deconstructive impulse. A light went on (or rather, a glimmer). I really like the idea of making ancestries stand out, I like the formal principle of that - its organic in the way I was hinting at with that last comment of mine, that exclamation I don't know what to do with.^{xxxix} It seems important, but maybe doesn't go there? Your thoughts? I'm also curious about your general sense of whether this effort of ours is working...? Sometimes, I have my doubts,

other times, it feels just right.

DJ: I feel the same way, fluctuating, but I think that is partly because we haven't yet done part of the important work that we are now starting. Our conversation, so to speak, "begins too late" for readers. I certainly don't want to make it easy on readers (this would belie the very thing we are attempting to explore), but I think we need, in an intro., to open a door or two at the front end to make "getting in on the conversation" possible for readers. I think that my sole concern is that we never quite say what it is we are talking about, if you get my drift. The concern for the degrading, objectifying breakdown that some forms of "narrative" can induce, the tendency to ask for a degraded narrative that won't require whiling from me, . . .are these the main threads?

SR: Yes, I agree that the intro must not explain what we are saying, it has to be doing something else. I think the main threads are as you say, yes. And these can emerge a little more in our revisions too, notwithstanding what I, too, feel pretty good about, which is that it is a matter of capturing, not delivering, of hinting at that which is to each of us, respectively, under quest, so to speak: "It is as if...."

I looked at your annotations, happy to see we are doing something similar. A couple of things occur to me about how our text will weave together these levels of investigation, notes and body. Here is my thought: Will this stage of annotating be a preliminary for revising the body itself? So for now, each of us can annotate in the way we are doing, and later we can see what belongs in the main event, and what belongs as gloss, digression, branching off, whatever we decide the notes are for? Am I needlessly worried, here, David, that we will overwhelm the dialogue with our notes, demonstrating that it is a failed experiment? I'm worried that our conversation itself won't be the place where the thinking goes somewhere important (albeit bringing along with it all of the dropped threads and fugal iterations endemic to conversation), but that we each have to revert in our notes to 'finishing' the thinking. It's this crazy genre we are fashioning.

I had been drafting a bit for our intro that attempts to capture the features of this genre of written dialogue, the way it has a real-time dramatic element to it where each of us is held in the pull of the other's preoccupations, the reader following this unfolding movement. I was looking at a very thorough essay, "Theory and Research on Teaching as Dialogue" (Burbules and Bruce, 2001) and was happy to see it ends up, albeit very circuitously, more or less where we are with Gadamer. But interestingly, it a) does not consider dialogue as a *written* form, and b) does not consider it as a scholarly form.^{VV} It's more about resolving the student-teacher dichotomy. But I don't think this is the way to begin, either.

DJ: I really think that our footnotings don't

demonstrate the failure of the experiment but its success. Each of the notes entices me to annotation all over again and, rather than finishing the work, it pulls it open once again to the possibility of annotation once again. We are each, I think, demonstrating that thinking always and inevitably has undergrowth, so that even when reading our own conversation, the "conversation that we are" keeps going beyond even our own keening. This might be a note for the introduction, that the reader's own enticement in reading the dialogue or checking one of the notes is itself another undergrowth. Recognizing this and entering in to it is what is demanded. Even authors must while over their own words because they are a world that authors belong to, not something that belongs to them? or something like that? We'll need to note in the intro that, eventually, we had to stop rather than finish.

DJ: Just some other thoughts, that perhaps our introduction could be about our annotating? When I think through the specific things we are adding in annotation, I don't think this forecloses on the paper itself, wanting to "complete" it. It might be taken that way, of course. It might be that the notes are read as if they contain the "amassed verified knowledge" that the body of the paper refuses to provide in a straightforward way. But if someone were to make this mistake, I would love to be there when the reader takes up, for instance, that one footnote of mine and buys a copy of Martin Heidegger's (1968) *What is Called Thinking?* expecting not to have to while, expecting that reading *this* will fulfill the desire for completion found in empty time-narratives that promise but don't deliver. From an old paper of mine:

“People whose governing habit is the relinquishment of power, competence and responsibility, and whose characteristic suffering is the anxiety of futility, make excellent spenders. They are the ideal consumers. By inducing in them little panics of boredom, powerlessness, sexual failure, mortality, paranoia, they can be made to buy virtually anything that is 'attractively packaged'.” (Berry 1986, 24)

I cannot help but read this passage in relation to the lurid advertisements that haunt educational magazines, offering purchasable whole language kits and packages for instant classroom use. In an almost inevitable turn, whole language has become 'the latest thing', purchasable and consumable with, it seems, little cost, little agony and little real work:

Dr. Terry Johnson will show you (quickly and easily) how to turn your classroom into a whole language showplace. You'll learn everything you need to know to profoundly

increase your whole
language teaching skills
(And. . .we'll even buy you
lunch!) (Johnson 1990: 32)
(Jardine 2000, p. 63-4).

This allure and being charmed by such promises of no-need-to-while it is not precisely a fault, but is itself a weird inheritance of the educational system and of the "leveling" that Heidegger cited as part of everyday life (see also your own stuff on the Gadamerian dystopia). I find that this happens with students all the time when they are becoming slowly familiar with the wiles of whiling. Under the stress and "threat" of the pressures of institutional schooling, they'll do what is, unfortunately, sensible and understandable: revert to the tried and true, the secure, try to amass knowledge that will be protective and assuring. The promises are not fulfilled because such promises don't (and, in a way, cannot) speak especially of how my own self-formation is the source of *pedagogical* promise (*pedagogical* promise is not possible without remaining vulnerable to the arrival of the need to while all over again).

In short, the annotations, I think, might seem to promise completion(s), sites of "amassing," but look at what we are citing! James Hillman on the *familiaris*, like the black cat that sits on the witch's broom. Every portend of completion has the bottom drop out. We wouldn't cite something that did not have this whiling character to it.

So then, again, why are we annotating? To prevent the dialogue from being read as if it were simply saying what it is saying without bloodlines that are silently invoked, presumed, relied upon, or hinted at. The dialogue, therefore, requires whiling as it moves along, but also, one might say, there is a synchronic whiling also at work?

Oh, I like this! This really is an image like the festival time in T&M: in the living heart of each utterance there is while at work, not just over the course of the conversation. This is akin to: "every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate" (Gadamer 1989, p. 458). So it is the very movement forward to an expected arrival that will complete

matters that is being interrupted by the footnotes? We aren't just dealing here with an anticipated future that is always "yet-to-be-decided," (Gadamer 1989, p. 361) but also a sort of immanent futurity in every step, downwards into the footnote undergrowth, an undergrowth that is "past" in that odd sense that is still historically effective, not "gone by" but ancestrally inherited.

SR: Yes, I completely get what you are saying about the notes, yes. I think I had an idea that the piece work like a work of art, with an elegant "structure" of some kind that is highly suggestive (I'm a closet formalist), as in a clue but not a statement. But this image of the endlessness of our ancestries, the under/overgrowth, as you say, is the "right" thing, an image of something underway, with all the clues inherent in this. So I'm with you.

We must get this quote you mention into the piece: "every word breaks forth. . .".

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ[It] no longer has the character of an object that stands over and against us. We are no longer able to approach this like an object of knowledge, grasping, measuring and controlling. Rather than meeting us in our world, it is much more a world into which we ourselves are drawn. [It] possesses its own worldliness and, thus, the center of its own Being so long as it is not placed into the object-world of producing and marketing. The Being of this thing cannot be accessed by objectively measuring and estimating; rather, the totality of a lived context has entered into and is present in the thing. And we belong to it as well. Our orientation to it is always something like our orientation to an inheritance that this thing belongs to, be it from a stranger's life or from our own." (Gadamer 1994, p. 191-2).

¹The same sort of "continuity of attention and devotion" that Wendell Berry (1986, p. 34) speaks of in regard to ecological sensitivity.

ⁱⁱAlso, a knowledge that we live within, that we, as mentioned later, "inhabit."

ⁱⁱⁱHermeneutics "is not concerned with

amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science—yet it, too, is concerned with knowledge and with truth. But what kind of knowledge, and what kind of truth?” (Gadamer 1989, p. xxi).

^{iv}See Gadamer 1989, p. 9-18, plus von Humbolt (2000 [1793-3]).

^vIt is not simply that a text “would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not know by ourselves” (Gadamer 1989, p. xxxv). It would not deserve our interest, not be worth our while (see Jardine 2008; Ross 2004) if it did not ask of us something more than just anonymously amassing it as if I were “anyone” and it was of no especial concern to me. This is why Gadamer (2007, p. 131) is citing the lines from Rilke’s *The Archaic Torso of Apollo*, “for here there is no place that does not see you/You must change your life.”

^{vi}An old image of following tracks, vestiges (*L. vestigia*), which constitutes an investigation. Mary Carruthers (2005, p. 92), citing Quintilian (first century CE) speaks of how this image of following tracks in a habitat that one is familiar with was commonly used to speak of the cultivation of memory (which Gadamer [1989, p. 15 and following] cites as central to the work of *Bildung* itself):

Within his memorial
"forest," [*silva*] a trained
student, like a
knowledgeable huntsman,
can unerringly find the
place (*loci*) where the
rabbits and deer lie.
Quintilian observes: "Just
as all kinds of produce are
not provided by every
country, and as you will not
succeed in finding a
particular bird or beast if
you are ignorant of the
localities where it has its
usual haunts or birthplace,
as even the various kinds of
fish flourish in different
surroundings, . . . so not
every kind of argument
comes from just any place
and for the same reason is
not to be sought out in
scattered and random

places." As the huntsman finds game and the fisherman fish, so the student finds his stored material--by knowing its habits.

This is the sort of thread that has lead me to link up ecological awareness and knowledge of a habitat with Gadamer's citing of Vico's interest in *topica*, with a reading of this as topics, places, habitats, etc.

^{vii}Following the later-Heidegger and post modern critiques, this is the expectation, isn't it, of something being *present*, simply lying there to be amassed, available to be picked up by anyone (the so-called "metaphysics of presence")? In fact, the natural sciences require that if what is picked up is not available anonymously as something anyone could have access to if they use the right method, then what is picked up is "subjective." But we all know that the "knowledgeable huntsman" knows something *about a place in the world* that others, too, inhabit. But this is not a matter of simply using the right techniques of hunting, but becoming experienced in the ways of the place that have something to say, beyond my wanting and doing, about what ways of proceeding might be called for (this later phrase echoes Martin Heidegger's (1968) switch of the age old epistemological question "What is this thing called 'thinking'?" for its inverse: "What *calls for* thinking?" This places the agencies for the shaping and formation of oneself, in part, beyond myself and my wanting and doing.

^{viii}See Jardine & Batycky (2004). In particular, the account of the unique *incapacity* of the child to inhabit an 'I' while the pedagogy presumes they can (or ought to), p. 4.

^{ix}See "The Banking Concept of Education," Chapter 2, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum.

^xThese images are rooted in educational history in North America in the work of Fredrick Winslow Taylor (1911). See also the "Preface" to Jardine, Clifford & Friesen (2008), Wrege & Greenwood 1991 and Callahan (1964).

^{xi}“The increasing literalism at work in the demands of our undergraduates (“Tell me exactly what it is you want in this assignment?”) reflects somehow a shaping of the imagination away from an ability to think analogically, metaphorically, poetically. [This means] becoming indifferent to the full play of possibilities inherent in human discourse, a disposition which underwrites dogmatism.” (Smith 1999, pp. 111-112). In fact, James Hillman goes even further: “Literalism is the enemy. Literalism is sickness.” (Hillman 1975, p. 3). The illness here, like Friere’s narration sickness noted below, contains the wound: many students simply have never experienced a world that might ask something else of them. So when we encourage whiling, they search the world they inhabit and finding nothing that needs it. Thus, whiling seems “superfluous” in a world that cannot be experienced as one worth while, one fragmented and broken apart. In other words, the terrible issue we’ve raised here involves two complementary halves: “Not only is fragmentation a disease, but the diseases of the disconnected parts are similar or analogous to one another. Thus, they memorialize their lost unity, their relation persisting in their disconnection. Any severance produces two wounds that are, among other things, the record of how the severed parts once fitted together.” (Berry 1986, pp. 110-111). Just a non-incidental note, then. The essay where Hillman speaks of literalism as sickness is called “Abandoning the Child.”

²Note here how the issue of “relevance” (like the issue of “application in Gadamer [1989, p. 307ff.] that is so predominate in teacher thinking (i.e., “how to I make this curricular topic *relevant* to my students?”) is no longer subsequent to understanding but part of the act of understanding itself, hermeneutically conceived. The issue of how our lives are already lived in the bloodlines of a curricular topic means that the teacher’s task is not to *make* it relevant, but to “unconceal” (*alethia*) its relevance. Here, with the Heideggerian twists and turns, the relevance of the matters at hand *is* the revealing of the matters at hand *is* the truth (as *alethia*) of the matters at hand.

^{xii}“The Gadamerian dystopia is not unlike others. In his version, to be glib, little requires human application, so little cultivates it. Long alienated from abiding in inquiry as a form of life and a way of being, a restless humanity defers to

models, systems, operations, procedures, the ready-made strategic plan.” (Ross 2004). This list—models, etc.—is almost a definition of the bureaucracies of education. The depth of the dystopia is most sorely felt when “abiding in inquiry” is understood, from within the dystopia, a simply not being up to date, not understanding “the real world of schools” and so on. The dominance of this technical discourse is demonstrated especially when it gets to define what *resistance to such discourse* can be: “abiding in inquiry” appears like elitist intellectualism. In fact, in the Calgary Board of Education, there are hints that “abiding in inquiry” is, in fact, a *cultural bias*, since many new immigrants to the city want more “traditional schooling” (see Naqvi & Jardine 2007).

^{xiii}“Perception of opportunities requires a sensitivity given through one’s own wounds. Here, weakness provides the kind of hermetic, secret perception critical for adaptation to situations. The weak place serves to open us to what is in the air. We feel through our pores which way the wind blows. We turn with the wind; trimmers. An opportunity requires ... a sense ... which reveals the daimon of a situation. The daimon of a place in antiquity supposedly revealed what the place was good for, its special qualities and dangers. The daimon was thought to be a *familiaris* of the place. To know a situation, one needs to sense what lurks in it.” (1979, p. 161) To follow James Hillman’s language, here, to know a situation requires cultivating in oneself a sense of the place and what lurks in it. Becoming familiar with the habitat—you need to take whiling time to lure the familiar of the place. This “animate/animating spirit” won’t show itself quickly or easily. It needs to be coaxed, cared for, and a relationship to it needs to be cultivated. This, of course, links up Hermes as a trickster figure to the animal spirit of something like Coyote (Jardine, Clifford & Friesen 2008a) or Raven, both of whom were/are, of course, *teachers*.

^{xiv}Guilty! That old self-published book of mine, *Speaking With A Boneless Tongue* (1992/1994, http://www.ex.ac.uk/~PErnest/pome16/boneless_tongue.htm). But even there the warning was made, back in 1992 (p. vii): “the experience of trying to read this book is inevitably one of constantly “losing the thread” and finding it again, looping back and forth. We have all been trained to believe that this “losing and finding” way of reading

(and writing) indicates either a mistake in the text or a mistake in ourselves. We are not accustomed to such "comings and goings," and the first response to this book may well be one of deep frustration. However, it is precisely something akin to such interlacing, lateral "comings and goings" that ecology suggests is essential to our Earthly lives. It is precisely because we have forgotten how to live well with such "comings and goings" that describes our current ecological troubles."

^{xv}That is, it is quite possible to have a commitment to "honouring the other" in a commitment to "intersubjectivity," for instance, *without* an orientation to the "ecological" awareness" we discuss here. For an indication of Gadamer's exasperation with this disconnect, see "Hermeneutics" (Gadamer 2001), for instance, "Oh please spare me that completely misleading concept of intersubjectivity, of a subjectivity doubled!" (p. 59).

^{xvi}My feminizing this problem notwithstanding, an example of such fiction is any of David Markson's remarkable quarto, *Reader's Block* (1996) *This is Not a Novel* (2001), *Vanishing Point* (2004) and *The Last Novel* (2007). Bordering on a new genre altogether, the 'narrator' in each case is a writer who cannot get past the preliminary business of his research into other writers and artists of various kinds, and this erudite and fascinating miscellanea comprises each book. The reader of these lists (which one suspects are actually highly ordered) is led on by the very occasional item referring to the tragic would-be narrator-novelist. The novels each dramatize a certain anxiety of influence, by portraying, not the full occupation of a writer-narrator telling his story, but the preoccupation of his measuring himself, we may infer, against the successes, failures, and fates of other artists.

^{xvii}Perhaps, as you mentioned at the end of your previous letter, being "boxed in" is precisely what is pursued of things and, as you mentioned, we ourselves begin to feel boxed in, but we are told to experience it as incisiveness and security. Right back to Fredrick Winslow Taylor and the "efficiency movement" (see Callahan 1964). In the face of the demand for "tell me exactly what to do on this assignment?" the narrator in an empty narrative is forced to present (I use the word on purpose) something "available to

all.” The voice that the narrator is forced to use is the voice of an “anyone” who no longer speaks as “someone.” There is an old phrase by Heidegger [1977, p. 197]: “the uniform accessibility of everything to everyone.” Here is an even deeper cut: “The scholar disappears. He is succeeded by the research man who is engaged in research projects. These, rather than cultivation of erudition, lend to his work an atmosphere of incisiveness. The research man no longer needs a library at home. Moreover, he is constantly on the move. He negotiates at meetings and collects information at congresses. He contracts for commissions from publishers. The latter now determine which books must be written.” (Heidegger 1977a, p. 124).

^{xviii}See Jardine, G.M. (2007), see also Foucault (1999).

^{xix}Beautiful passage: “The existing thing does not simply offer us a recognizable and familiar surface contour; it also has an inner depth of self-sufficiency that Heidegger calls ‘standing-in-itself.’ The complete unhiddenness of all beings, their total objectification (by means of a representation that conceives things in their perfect state) would negate this standing-in-itself of beings and lead to a total leveling of them. A complete objectification of this kind would no longer represent beings that stand in their own being. Rather, it would represent nothing more than our opportunity for using beings, and what would be manifest would be the will that seizes upon and dominates things. [In whiling over something] we experience an absolute opposition to this will-to-control, not in the sense of a rigid resistance to the presumption of our will, which is bent on utilizing things, but in the sense of the superior and intrusive power of a being reposing in itself.” (Gadamer 1977, 226-7). Whiling over something allows us to begin to experience how the thing does not just face this way, gobbled up into my constructs or opinions or perspective, but is, rather, “itself”—that wonderful experience which, for epistemologists, seems simply contradictory: we can experience that which goes beyond our experience, we can come to understand something that “is” without our understanding of it. This is the great burst beyond Kantian constructivism, that old metaphysics whereby arises “the old mythology of an intellect which glues and rigs together the world's matter with its own forms” (Heidegger, 1985, p. 70).

^{xx}There is great potential just here for a different answer to the question, “what is what we call the prerogative of age”? In this context the only special privilege conferred by experience is perhaps that of understanding what it is *to be or have become* experienced, something a child, say, can never know, the point being that what follows from this privileged knowledge is not controlling authority, but a very particular form of deference: the deference of one who knows to respect the movement of experience in the other which we are describing.

^{xxi}Though to be intact is to be in touch and to be in touch is to be susceptible, open, not self-enclosed. However, physical trespass is too common a matter to leave this word unchallenged. Perhaps, then, the experience of something “standing in itself” is the experience of something in its intactness, its untrespassedness? This is the great trespass of methodologism being challenged in favour of the lingering/whiling of Heidegger’s (1962) version of phenomenology: “letting things be.” But still, as you go on to say, there is the need with students to interrupt the sleepiness and complacency of Heidegger’s “leveling” and Gadamer’s dystopic nightmares.

^{xxii}As opposed to the question that “outstrips itself” as in Gadamer’s essay, “Culture and the Word” (1998), which he concludes with the following summary:

It seems to me that our cultural tradition charges us with the task of nurturing the three forms of the word that I have distinguished, as a pledge of their continuance: the word of the question that outstrips itself, the word of the legend that corroborates itself, and the word of the reconciliation that is like a first and a last word.” (p. 15)

Literary narrative, incidentally, belongs to the word of the legend. This is the word that, like any art, has “claim to autonomy, not to be saying something that would then need to be confirmed or verified” (p. 13). One might continue this sentence, “by the teacher.”

^{xxiii}Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of*

Practice, Trans. R. Nice, Cambridge UP (1977). Seeking to reconcile the subject-object split, Bordieu proposes a mediation, a “dialectic of objectification and embodiment” (p. 87), theorizing the extent that human agency is embedded in habits, beliefs, practices, etc. But Bordieu is still not experiential enough. We can theorize this, but still not necessarily validate it as practice because it is an observation irrelevant in the act of self-formation; we do not bear this dichotomy in mind as we speak, as we tarry. Even if it were the subject matter, we would not be able to do so.

^{xxiv}Vintage Canada (2004). The novel has a highly suggestive nested structure of 6 apparently unrelated stories where each becomes an artifact in the next. The portrayal of what might be termed a ‘butterfly-effect’ in cultural transmission, it also plays with the prophetic: The stories range in time from British colonialism to a point in the remote future, but they are organized so that we know this future of civilization before we finish any of the episodes which precede it in time because each of these is suspended while the next one begins. Once our future is reached, the earlier episodes all complete one by one. Though clearly having this organizational code to crack, though, plenty of my students were annoyed at having to pause over this non-linear structure, of suspense taken too far.

^{xxv}Derrida, 2002. (Now distributed by Zeitgeist Films Ltd., New York).

^{xxvi}This is a moment in Derrida when he is sufficiently or, at least, explicitly experiential. He alludes to the whiling truth we are involved in, issuing forth this secret. So the condition of finitude he wishes to expose is *recognizable*. It is so not through an abstracted denaturalizing of a concept that might be at play in such an occurrence of dialogue, but in something recognizable the first-person experience of it. The secret signifies a “rupture” we cannot overcome, but overcoming it is never the point of or in practice; “reconciliation” is (see note 24): “One must lose oneself in order to find oneself” (Gadamer 1989 p. 57).

^{xxvii}Jan Zwicky, in *Wisdom & Metaphor* (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2003) seems to see this importance. Using a structure of juxtaposed aphorisms, she develops a theory (a poetry?) of metaphor very like

Gadamer's position that metaphor is the fundamental movement of language. She gives priority to the phenomenological "thisness" of things, coming very close to granting it a similar temporal autonomy: "The experience of beauty is the experience of some form (or other) of relief from time" (p. 71). Yet this experience is subsequently "domesticated" in metaphor, where she says such "gestalts glitter" (p. 71). Elsewhere: "Thisness is the experience of a distinct thing in such a way that the resonant structure of the world sounds through it" (p. 55). We would argue (if this were an argument) that the recognition, the metaphoricity, the glittering gestalt, occurs *in* this "thisness."

^{xxviii}See Ross 2003, 2004. See also a shortened and revised version of Ross (2004), "The Temporality of Tarrying in Gadamer," (2006) *Theory Culture & Society* Vol. 23 Number 1 (Jan) pp.101-123.

^{xxix}These are: "Concerning Empty and Full-Filled Time," trans. R.P. O'Hara, (1970) *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (Winter) 341-53; "The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment," trans T. Wren, (1972) *Philosophy Today* 16 (Fall) 230-40; "The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought" (1977) *Time and the Philosophies*, Paris: UNESCO, 33-48 (no translator listed).

^{xxx}It must be added that this escapist view of the experience, which is consistent with the student's impatience with the text to disclose, to complete itself also corresponds to the kind of being at home in the text wherein the reader finds it sufficiently engaging to merely press on with a narrative's little ideology of past, present & future and the fate of its steadfast characters: "...and then she..., and then he..." The memoir is the instructive narrative genre here. The memoir is the instructive form of narrative here. Frankly involving both a point in time when it is told and the time it takes this 'history' to complete, it is the exemplary two-timing narrative, especially so when the writer of memoir depicts what he so invariably discovers: its crafty, scheming wiliness, that the memoir can "turn on you," to borrow a phrase Wayson Choy (Chan 1999) used to describe writing *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*. How would exposing this basic truth about the

wiliness of the *writing* experience change how students find themselves *reading*? (Indeed, students are often acutely aware of the broader wiliness of writing but have learned to repress it, to do battle with it rather than to give it recognition). The fine line between memoir and fiction is evident in J.M. Coetzee's latest work, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2008), in which the reader must decide how to locate, in time and as 'truth,' a "collection of opinions" the author has composed as JC himself (p 67), since these unfold alongside (on one part of the page – the top) a fictional story about their being dictated to a young woman typist (which progresses below). This latest work is very much a development of similar preoccupations with authorship and genre in *Elizabeth Costello* (2004) and *Slow Man* (2006).

^{xxxix}And I am reminded again of Jan Zwicky's idea of the "resonant ecology" of things in *Wisdom & Metaphor* (2003), which she begins by citing American poet Charles Simic: "My poems (in the beginning) are like a table on which one places interesting things one has found on one's walks: a pebble, a rusty nail, a strangely shaped root, the corner of a torn photograph, etc.... where after months of looking at them, and thinking about them daily, certain surprising relationships, which hint at meanings, begin to appear...." She pairs this with another citation, this one from Wittgenstein: "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose" (2).

It must be noted that many writers of fiction work in the way Simic describes, Michael Ondaatje, for instance, who is well known to assemble things, to cobble scenes into a narrative form. Writers not beginning with plot, often not even with character, then, though this is where they end up.

^{xxxix}This preoccupation is to construct a description of things hidden in the experiential, other than this hiddenness in language, and which can similarly point out what *conditions* experience, in order to place whiling as one would place a "note in a melody" (see above) -- this to undertake a more general kind of *reconstruction* of experience(ing). Under such a melodious description, what significance might we give to aspects of bodily being that bear the same dynamic of hiddenness? When one holds up a healthy hand, moves it through space, one cannot "feel" the hand. There is an absence to this "feel," not unlike the way silence does not sound, or the air is not

seen, water does not taste. What is this absence? There is the enormously suggestive question of whether this is mere analogy for our hidden abiding in language, or whether it is part of a continuum of being. The analogy, at least, is perhaps what Gadamer is trying to suggest in his discussion of the enigma (*Verborgenheit*, hiddenness) of health: “This concealment belongs to the preservation of good health and this consists in forgetfulness” but at the same time, “to be able to forget, as if this were a skill one could master, is equally impossible” (1996, pp. 138- 139). See also Gadamer in “Science as an Instrument of Enlightenment” (1998) for a brief but related discussion where he states that for humanity “medicine is a truer model” than technology for consciousness (p. 82). What aspects of *Bildung* might stand out through such a description, through this analogy or continuum involving the enabling forgetfulness of the body? The quest of the body, its quest, too, always *with* something, part of a living web?

^{xxxiii}Of course, there are numerous examples of Gadamer in conversation but these are, for one thing, interviews, quite a distinct form of dialogue. See for instance, *A Century of Philosophy, A Conversation with Riccardo Dottori* (2004), or Palmer’s *Gadamer in Conversation* (2001). There are many others. Perhaps what is most important is that, as Donald Marshall says in “On Dialogue: To its Cultured Despisers” (2004), “Dialogue is not a method.... We do not enter into dialogue, we find ourselves already in it...” (p. 142).

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