

Becoming *Ajarn*: A Narrative Inquiry Into Stories of Teaching and Living Abroad

by

Matthew Robert Ferguson
B.A., The University of Western Ontario, 2001

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Abstract

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This M.A. thesis is a narrative inquiry into a westerner's personal stories of teaching and living in Thailand. It narrates the experiences of becoming an *ajarn* (a teacher), but moreover an *ajarn farang* (a white teacher) in a Thai university. As International Education programs are largely supplemented with western-developed curricula and teachers, what are the implications for a western teacher when material and pedagogy fails in a new cultural situation? How can a teacher reconcile feelings of power (as a perceived education authority) and powerlessness (as a cultural foreigner)? This narrative inquiry explores the role of story to make meaning out of otherwise uncertain situations. The stories are about experiences deemed emblematic of tensions and ideas employed by multiculturalism, postcolonialism, phenomenology, and transformative education. These discussions aim to expose and exploit borders of experience that exist for reasons of culture, colonialism, location, and race. The transformative exercise of exploring spaces between borders recognizes that people are characters inside one another's stories, which thereby expands boundaries of identity to anticipate and embrace moments of uncertainty that can inspire innovative pedagogy because of cultural difference, and not in spite of it.

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Thank you to my parents for their unrelenting support and love. Thank you to my sister for her friendship. I can rely on my family from anywhere in the world for anything at any time.

And sometimes remembering will lead to a story, which makes it forever. That's what stories are for. Stories are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can't remember how you got from where you were to where you are. Stories are for eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.

Tim O'Brien

Chapter 1: The Teacher and the Ajarn

The Thai word for “teacher” is ajarn (a-jaan). More than that, ajarn is an honorific, a very highly regarded title reserved for teachers and monks in Thai society. Teachers hold a special place in the minds and hearts of Thai people; oftentimes teachers are met with sincere and emotionally charged respect from people about town for their immense selflessness (greng jai), as they are educated persons who chose to share their higher knowledge as a profession. When I touched down in Thailand, I became Ajarn Matthew. For me, at the time it was kind of funny. It was a novelty of living in a new culture. Ajarn was a title and identity that I at first largely took for granted, unaware of the reverence and respect ajarns knew in Thailand, unaware at least until my first experience of Teacher’s Day (wai cruu), a national day for teachers.

I arrived to my office on the morning of Teacher’s Day and found my desk decorated with flowers, cards, small hand-made gifts, and treats. Students were making rounds about the teachers’ offices giving thanks: truly touching and wonderful. Classes were cancelled that day for the different events taking place. I, along with a couple of other foreign teachers, were asked by the Thai staff to represent the international teachers at the Wai Cruu ceremony in the university’s auditorium. Not one to pass on new cultural experiences, I went along with the other two and the three of us joked together about the gifts and cards we had already received. We arrived to the jam-packed auditorium. We entered from the back to see students milling about in their seats, waiting for the ceremony to begin. A student ushered us down the aisle to the stage and as others took notice of our arrival, applause slowly sputtered from sections of the auditorium.

Eventually the clapping spread among the whole crowd as everyone knew that we had arrived: a rock star-like ovation for three humbled foreign ajarns.

I found a seat on the stage, completely flushed in the face and overwhelmed. I looked to my other foreign teachers exchanging nervous smiles and confused shoulder shrugs. The spotlight shone on all the teachers, a single row sitting stately side by side across the stage looking back at the audience. The Thai teachers sat tall, rigid, and dignified, unlike me, glancing back and forth conspicuously like a novice line dancer trying to learn and dance the steps at the same time. Students in the first couple of rows covered their chuckling faces. A couple of student representatives came to the stage and made heart-felt speeches about Wai Cruu, and gave personal accounts of what teachers meant in their lives, tearing up as they did so.

After the very touching speeches the students began to move. Row by row, they made their way to the stage. When they came up the side steps, they bent down to their knees and shuffled single file across at our feet. A young girl sat bent before me, waiing (a traditional greeting of respect with both hands pressed together in front of the face as if praying). I was blushing and sweating with embarrassment under the stage lights and collective gaze of the student assembly. We had been given jars of clay that I was now stirring with my finger. The teachers dotted the students' foreheads to make a triangle, a Buddhist blessing of good fortune. They said some words to the students before they shuffled away again off the stage for a new student to shuffle on. From her knees, the freshman looked up at me, and I awkwardly dotted a triangle on her forehead, trying desperately not to make a mess. She smiled and waiied again to me in thanks before she moved on. I dotted more than a hundred students that day, oblivious to its significance

and completely overwhelmed with mixed feelings of shame, wonder, embarrassment, awe, and amazement. After that day, to be an ajarn was no longer something I could take lightly, and it gave me a new sense of duty and respect for the ascribed status I suddenly inherited from this culture.

There is surprisingly little written about the experiences of western teachers living and working abroad. Most of the literature about International Education either addresses the issues of increased diversity in western classrooms (Alexander, 2001; Flower, 2002; James, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Osborne, 1996; Pavlenko, 2002; Phillion, 1999; Scott, 1992; Worth, 1993), the issues of wide diversity in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms or international schools abroad made up of multiple nationalities (Edge, 1996; Hayden & Thompson, 1995; Livingston, 2001; Singh & Doherty, 2004; Taylor & McWilliam, 1995; Tsolidis, 2001; Volet & Ang, 1998; Williams, 2003), or about foreign-born teachers who found teaching placements in western-style schools and the cultural adjustments that inhabit that territory (Bodycott, 1997; He, 2001; He & Phillion, 2001; Wu, 2001). Specific teaching stories of growth and acculturation for western teachers in foreign contexts are hard to come by.

For western teachers working abroad, I can only speculate as to why these teaching stories in foreign contexts go largely untold. They may not fit into discussions about multiculturalism because not enough cultures are involved. Stories such as the one narrated above are very specific to time and place, and may have little implication for wider teacher audiences. Westerners teaching abroad are also a widely transient group of teachers, often country hopping from culture to culture because of the great plethora of

ESL opportunities in “exotic” locales available with the insatiable demand for English language learning around the world (McKay, 2002), and so the learning of culture may not come to pedagogical fruition in such short teaching stints. Furthermore, the kinds of teaching stories I wish to relate may be regarded as too narrow for teacher audiences caught up in the language teaching industry. Finally, working abroad is difficult. Often the adjustment to living abroad is too much to bear, and so many teachers return before they can integrate and reach a level of cultural fluency that could translate into culturally innovative teaching (Garson, 2005; Medenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Garson (2005) gives a revealing statistic: 30% of expatriates working overseas do not perform adequately, and 25% return earlier than expected. She goes on to say that the main reason for this reality is the inability for the expatriates to adapt to the host country (p. 322). A point to which I will come back again and again throughout this thesis is that International Education so far is a western-run tradition, exporting ideologies such as multiculturalism to contexts that are not necessarily multicultural. Western teachers often arrive to jobs abroad with a chip on their shoulder as educational authorities, welcomed as teaching experts, but rarely publishing in foreign journals and always referring to western developed materials, research, textbooks, and curriculum for their teaching (Smith, 2000). Another reason, I believe, for few western teaching stories is that the success rate is low (evident by Garson’s statistics) and few teachers lack the humility to tell the stories that project home-grown assumptions that failed them while learning to teach in a new culture. Most literature from educators in foreign schools do not recount their own teaching stories, but instead take up issues about ESL, internationalization, and politics (Bodycott, 1997; Smith, 2000; Wu, 2001).

I can attest to Garson's conclusions, having seen many foreign *ajarns* come and go for various reasons. The turn over for foreign teachers was like a rotisserie. For one, with the amount of demand teachers could move on to different opportunities easily and with little notice. Secondly, some teachers boiled over the perceived inefficiencies of the Thai system of doing things, and the different study habits of the Thai students. Well-experienced and highly credentialed teachers had their professionalism and effectiveness put into question, as their pedagogical expertise could not "solve" the different cultural approaches to education. Only those teachers critically and self-consciously open to reflection managed to see their hosts not as puzzles to solve, but rather as people to complement with various ways of knowing and being. While many teachers threw up their hands and left for more familiarly run institutions, some *ajarns* were open to the pedagogical possibilities made available by the cultural dynamics of teaching abroad.

I was a lone Canadian teacher facing forty Thai students everyday. Traditional top-down power structures of teacher/student relationships dissipate in this kind of construction, where the will of the foreign teacher must yield to the will of the mainstream culture in which he or she teaches. I may have been *ajarn*, but this only has meaning in a Thai context. If I were to attach my own culturally known discourse of what a teacher is to that of an *ajarn*, my practice would stumble (as it often did in the beginning). With new discoveries about the culture came new teaching possibilities. Once one learns the discourses that shape the society and culture, opportunities for culturally relevant pedagogy present themselves (Alfred, 2003; Bell, 2002; Ciganko, 2000; Ladson-Billings 1995; Lamont; 1996; Livingston, 2001; Osborne, 1996; Roberts, 2003; Tsolidis, 2001). These opportunities are manifested out of moments and stories,

what Carter (1993) calls “well-remembered events” (p. 7). These storied moments and memories are what shape, without exaggeration, who I am to the core of my being, and the stories are emblems that represent my current understandings of cross-cultural education.

In this thesis, I will offer well-remembered events; this select catalogue of stories represent my times teaching abroad, and the stories themselves identify my own philosophical persuasions and perceptions about not only my own cross-cultural teaching experiences, but a generalized approach to teaching cross-culturally in a foreign context. This is important because western teachers too often go into teaching positions abroad, amazed at the ease of finding a great job, overwhelmed with the respect and welcoming they receive, only to slide into dismay over the cultural realities and differences that other education systems emphasize (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Smith, 2000). Bodycott and Walker (2000) echo this sentiment in their experiences teaching in Hong Kong:

Many experience stress ...and must learn to cope with challenges of living in a foreign culture and working in institutions that are very different from what they are accustomed to...Foreign academics bring with them preconceived beliefs about their role. Many see themselves as saviour, that is, bringing the best of the West to a developing country. (p. 81)

The school I worked for used English as a medium of instruction, and sought to establish itself as an international-style university, one that gave the western teachers a sense of entitled expertise in the area. Western teachers have been guilty of privileging their own cultural and linguistic knowledge over international students (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Flower, 2002; Gee, 1989; Gunew, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995;

Medenhall & Oddou, 1985; Scott, 1992; Taylor & McWilliam, 1995; Williams, 2003; Worth, 1993). The problem lies in the fact that the internationalization of education is an enterprise of the West (Alexander, 2001; Doherty & Singh, 2004; Hayden & Thompson, 1995; Livingston, 2001; Perez-Torres, 1993-1994; Smith, 2000; Taylor & McWilliam, 1995; Tsolidis, 2001; Williams, 2003); as a result, western educators carry more baggage with them than just their suitcases. A relentlessly stubborn postcolonial tradition with inflexible assumptions about teaching and learning (Taylor & McWilliam, 1995) are ultimately rendered moot by the forty Thai faces smiling to the front. Western teachers living abroad experience feelings of alienation and otherness (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Garson, 2005; Gosselin, 2003; Tsolidis, 2001), discovering age-old practices to be less than helpful (Lamont, 1996; Williams, 2003), yet at the same time these teachers are touted as the professional authorities of International Education and the English language (Bodycott & Walker, 2001; Byram, 2003; Singh & Doherty, 2004; Smith, 2000; Tan, 2005; McKay, 2002; Wu, 2001). In an odd paradox, the western teacher is the embodiment of an institutional mainstream and as a bearer of highly privileged curriculum and pedagogy worldwide, yet meanwhile that same teacher is a cultural stranger living at the margins of the local context. There upon the stage on Teacher's Day, I was an *ajarn* saluted by the students, while at the same time I was looking side to side to my colleagues to figure out what on earth I was doing there.

And so, how are teachers to negotiate emerging identities of empowerment and social standing as teachers in a foreign context, carrying the perceived privileges of western knowledge and culture with the simultaneous experience of powerlessness, or rather of conflicting ideas about what is good teaching?

Narrativity and Empowerment

“Empowerment involves a growing sense of self-authorship as one becomes more in charge of how the story of one’s life unfolds, more in control of one’s own narrative” (Edge, 1996, p. 20). Many have described the empowering nature of storytelling; that is, how narrative allows one to situate one’s identity in uncertain contexts (Bruner, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Ciganko, 2000; He, 2002; He & Phillion, 2001; Phillion, 1999; Sokefeld, 1999; Williams, 2003). The alienation and anomie experienced by teachers and students alike while living abroad stem from the inability to communicate fluently in the language and discourses of the host culture (Bodycott & Walker, 2001; Flower, 2002; Gee, 1989; Geertz, 1995; Delpit, 1992; Meddenhall & Oddou, 1985; Sykes, 2006). One reality that I wish to illuminate is that, for the foreign teacher, alienation and loneliness are not feelings necessarily reserved for private moments, but are often on display beneath bright spotlights on a stage. Before my class day to day, I learned new things about my cultural self through the direct interactions with cultural others (Bell, 2002; Cruz & Duff, 1997; Edge, 1996; Geertz, 1995; Jay, 1994; Meddenhall & Oddou, 1985; Roberts, 2003). Simultaneously, I was revealing my cultural self to my students, projections of my being that may have gone undetected before a group of cultural compatriots. These personal projections manifest as an ongoing biography, a narrative identity that emerges and becomes evident to me as I negotiate a new teaching landscape (Bell, 2002; Carter, 1993; Flower, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002). These stories also enable me to step outside of those projections and to reflect my current feelings and understandings back to the storied experience, to become what Banks (1993) calls an “involved observer” (p. 5). An outside-looking-in perspective’s purpose is to hopefully

enable a dimension objectivity to what is an inescapably subjective, interpretive, and personal endeavour to story the self. This kind of self-aware writing-of-the-self, or as put by Edge, “self-authorship,” is what I will provide examples of throughout this thesis, telling stories of cross-cultural teaching, and self-consciously and reflexively interpreting what the stories do to reconcile the alienation that lies between power and powerlessness while teaching abroad (Bruner, 1990; Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Elbaz, 1983; Livingston, 2001; Phillips, 1994; Phillion, 2002; Roberts, 2003).

Many have referred to narrative as a strategy for empowering the foreign self in cross-cultural teaching contexts (Ellis, 1993; Kanu, 2003; Pavlenko, 2002; Tsolidis, 2001; Williams, 2003), but none have explicitly demonstrated the process of narrativizing (White, 1980) one’s experiences in order to flesh out a transformative and tangible translation from cultural other to culturally relevant teacher (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lamont, 1996). McAdams (1993) says: “Through our personal myths, we help to create the world we live in, at the same time that it is creating us” (p. 37). Working and living in another culture is a dialectic exercise between the cultural self and new ways of knowing. Encounters with newness can only be informed by previous experiences, by personal pre-established myths and philosophies that form our approach. For teachers working in foreign contexts, these personal and cultural myths are incomplete and often contradictory to the mythologies of peoples living in other cultural frameworks. Consequently, the resulting stories that emerge from new encounters contain the potential to reshape personal myths, and to engage the reflective teacher in refining their teaching philosophies and practices in order to make them complementary with the local norms and expectations. For me, Teacher’s Day was a point of departure for becoming a teacher

in a Thai context. Once told, however, it has the potential to operate as an emblematic story that brings to bear for me a change in personal mindset and myth, a dialectic creation of a storied self that encounters cross-cultural teaching with more complete and dynamic ways of knowing. One major objective for this thesis is to create working examples of storytelling and transformation, to detail and describe the stories as they were lived and how they continue to influence and inform my cultural teaching, and moreover to explore the affective domain of narrative and its reconciliatory potential for cultural identity.

To quote Tsolidis (2001) at some length:

Students' desire to learn something new does not mean that they wish to unlearn or denigrate what it is they already know. Similarly for teachers in the cross-cultural classroom, successful pedagogy should not require the erasure of their accumulated knowledge about teaching and learning from other contexts...As educators we need to understand that teaching in new cultural locations offers us an opportunity to learn a range of new knowledges, not just because this makes us better teachers but also because this extends our knowledge base. (p. 108)

Learning to be an *ajarn* entailed for me a great deal of experimentation, humility, uncertainty, discovery, and joy. As I manoeuvred through the cultural landscape: through language acquisition, through the different discourses of both foreigner and teacher, and through the pedagogical expectations as both a teacher and student of culture, I accumulated over time the knowledge of how to be a relevant and respected cross-cultural teacher. Integral to this process was my willingness to plant my ideological roots in *place*. Once gaining some awareness for the historically rooted epistemologies present

in that situation, I could begin to piece together a new platform from which to practise, a platform that both provided new avenues for student expression and new possibilities for my teaching. A suspension of my western-style approaches and adaptation to Thai familiarities required patience, tolerance, and some frustration, but ultimately opportunity.

In this inquiry, I embark on an investigation into cross-cultural pedagogy via personal experience, applying it with postmodern approaches to identity with multicultural and postcolonial lenses, and grounding all of these experiences in the self-conscious and reconciliatory milieu of narrative inquiry. Its utility to teachers or any cultural workers living and working abroad will emerge as it highlights not only the importance of personal reflection on experience, but also the openness to learning and working with the host culture. Moreover, this inquiry documents my truly transformative and deeply personal growth and reward of learning, negotiating, and reconciling personal and pedagogical challenges in different cultural spheres. In the following section, I will explain further my rationale for the format of this enquiry.

Continuity, Situation, and Interaction

One is not entitled to an opinion if they know it to be false. Some may still be of the opinion, despite conclusive evidence, that climate change is not real. Some still claim that the earth is only six thousand years old. Opinions such as these are informed by ulterior motivations, from business points of view or religious commitments. Some teachers will also be resiliently opinionated about how to teach. These teachers are often well informed by years of relatively successful teaching. I witnessed many of these teachers crumble over their stubborn opinions while teaching in Thailand, as tried and

true practice of years of work in numbers of schools proved trying and erred in a new cultural context. Yet as these entitled opinions remained, ultimately for these teachers it was the way of being, knowing, and doing in the host culture that was flawed, and so they moved on to western run schools where I am sure they are enjoying continued success. One cannot be of the opinion that western informed curriculum to non-western students is authoritative, universal, or seamlessly transferable, especially after continued cultural misgivings in the classroom: silence for a discussion-based lesson plan, group cheating on a test, or utter disinterest in a special activity, all of which I have encountered on my bumpy journey in this unknown terrain. One is not *entitled* to an opinion. Yet I must recall what a friend once told me: “People are entitled to their experiences.” And what else do people have to form their opinions but their own experiences?

John Dewey (1938) categorizes the nature of experience into three dimensions: continuity, situation, and interaction. These dimensions are motivated by the idea that experience does not exist in a vacuum, nor is it exclusive to any one individual, but it is a consequence of its relation to these three dimensions (p. 34). He believes that it is the:

primary responsibility of educators... that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by envioning conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. (p. 35)

Conditions implicit in the experiential environment are one’s position on the temporal plane (continuity), as one experience leads to another and forms a history that informs the present and imagines the future. Those points in time take place in certain physical and mental spaces (situation) that influence the conduct of the experience, and a sharing of

those experiences with others (interaction) verifies and consolidates one's connection to it. On Teacher's Day, my experiential history was not prepared to anticipate that moment, nor was I comfortable with the foreign situation on the stage under the scrutinizing glare of the lights and gaze of the auditorium-filled audience. Finally, my interaction with the students marked by the status and prestige of an *ajarn* revealed the utter absence of informed experiential dimensions, and produced a story that represents for me a point of narrative departure for cross-cultural experiential learning to better inform my opinions about teaching in uncertain terms. The experience of Teacher's Day, and now the subsequent story of it, put to test and expand the boundaries of my personal myths about what it means to be a teacher. I shall now preview how I intend to use Dewey's three dimensions of experience for narrative inquiry into the aesthetic and active domain of emblematic and transformative stories.

Some have written on the systematic conversion of experiential knowledge to agency (Bruner, 1990, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988), yet sparsely has it been investigated how indirect experience, the information of consequent narratives give agency to the inexperienced. Travelers around the world carry guide books in hand, reading the witnessed events of other travelers, fellow journeyers informing others with their storied encounters with uncertainty, and so faced with similar situations, the experiences of others prepare us for our current challenges. The traveling stories are not point form how-to instructions of what to do when face-to-face with a water buffalo or inflicted with a severe case of diphtheria, but instead they are storied accounts of the experience as a whole, a plot-driven narrative filled with characters, settings, sights and smells, fears and pains, and so forth. When one

relates an experience to another, they do not give the experience, but instead tell a story about it. The expression of plot makes an experience meaningful, and thus conceivable to others. Let me be clearer by explaining the nature of experience in relation to Dewey's dimension of *continuity*.

Action is a narrative expression. It is an artful movement in the plotted organization of events (Polkinghorne, 1988). On the temporal plane of past experiences, events in one's lifetime do not exist as solitary units of time. They are realized and coherently organized as part of a living narrative, giving a sequence of events meaningful unity (Kermode, 1981). The shape of this organization in the individual motivates action. The individual does not exist in and of the self, but is only realized by a connection to others, a unified self that is made possible by a network of informants, in other words, by a culture. Words are not meaningful unto themselves, but only as they are given a referent do they become relevant; a musical note is just a noise until it is made part of a song; an experience is just a moment in time until it is made into a story. As these units merge to make meaning, they animate an aesthetic narrative from which human expression is produced: one reads and imagines; one hears music and dances; one embodies a story and acts upon it. This is the active domain of narrative in continuity. In the initial encounter between a foreign teacher and his students, the two entities are fused together in an uneasy pairing, where an individual exists outside the expected narrative frameworks, where a sense of coherency is difficult to realize, making the expression haphazard and even risky. Cross-cultural workers are often found without a guidebook, without existing narratives to make sense of these moments, in these isolated and lonely points of time.

To understand a concept of place (what Dewey calls *situation*) in this inquiry is important because it challenges much of the literature about International Education and multiculturalism (Alexander, 2001; Bell, 2002; Bredella, 2003; Byram, 2003; Edge, 1996; Gunew, 1997; Hayden & Thompson, 1995; Jay, 1994; Powell, 2003; Scott, 1992; Volet & Ang, 1998; Williams, 2003; Worth, 1993), which argues the need for individuals to suspend their cultural identities in order for international learning forums to be productive. Others call for culturally relevant and sensitive pedagogy that respects one's cultural commitments (Brock et al, 2006; Carter, 1993; Flower, 2002; Giroux, 1996; He & Phillion, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Livingston, 2001; Mayes, 2001; Zarate, 2003) and the inextricable and intangible links between person and place (Abram, 1996).

The continued contestation of multiculturalism does not debilitate its value to discussions of International Education, but instead it will serve here as a point of investigation into the nature of *place*, in terms of physical environment as well as social and spiritual location; places that emerge out of one's narrative understanding of experience. Cross-cultural work can potentially produce inescapable situations, like being put under a spot light with a jar of clay without direction. Moreover, it can lift one out of familiar mental spaces, where out of uncertainty we engage ourselves in the formulation of new identities that are more complementary to the situations asked of us, specifically here about the process of becoming an *ajarn* in an unfamiliar culture with an elevated status in society. Inhabited in this tension between place and placelessness is my main focus of inquiry: the question of power and powerlessness for westerners teaching in foreign situations.

Alfred (2003) says that entering a situation where familiarity and security is drastically reduced has great potential for personal change and transformation (p. 14). Through the workings of the narratives I provide, I aim not to develop yet another space for individuals to negotiate, but to provide a mechanism of *feel* and *flow* between the multiple discourses and transformative identities that emerge in cross-cultural teaching (Alfred, 2003; Gee, 1989; Singh & Doherty, 2004; Tsolidis, 2001), a cultural sensory that moves one through the lived narratives they experience in newly recognized locations (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Grumet, 1993; He, 2002; Olson, 2000).

Multiculturalism cannot inform good pedagogy by removing borders, but conversely it can challenge educators to explore the pedagogical possibilities of the border (Bahri, 1997; Bhabha, 1998, Kanu, 2003; MacLure, 1996). McWhinney and Markos (2003) describe what they call the “liminal space:”

There, learning transforms in radical, irreversible, and often unexpected ways.

The conditions for such change may occur by accident or intentional plan, or may emerge from the natural rhythm of human life. They lead the traveler to let go of assumptions and wander in the transformative space, free from expectations and ego identity. (p. 21)

It is this kind of pedagogical positioning that I espouse here when referring to multicultural education. At risk of coming across highfalutin and mystical, leaving oneself open to the rhythms of liminal spaces, a space between limits of experiences where humans can exercise their great capacities for inter-subjectivity, I believe is a pedagogical approach in itself, and nowhere else more relevant than to cross-cultural education where situations are unpredictable. Alfred (2003) argues that, “Intercultural

experience has the potential to be highly significant...entering a situation in which the familiar is drastically reduced...has the potential to change an individual in important ways” (p. 14). Without doubt experience, preparation, and thoughtful planning is fundamental to meaningful education and not to mention teacher professionalism, but it is the planning, preparation, expertise, and self-awareness that makes rhythmic and transformative learning possible in practice. One becomes more aware of oneself by the direct experience with others, bringing me to the third of Dewey’s dimensions:

interaction.

“Education is a major embodiment of a culture’s way of life, not just a preparation for it” (Bruner, 1996, p. 13). As for International Education, how does one prepare the students or teachers for a “culture’s way of life,” and for all intents and purposes of this thesis, what is the nature of the cultural embodiment a western educator represents? These questions go to the heart of my enquiry into postcolonialism in relation to cross-cultural teaching, and more specifically to the complex and creative implementation of western curriculum in non-western cultures. This effectiveness is only measurable by others’ reaction and cooperation.

With renewed and committed focus on *place* through a sophisticated multicultural lens, one that recognizes a culture’s identification and profound ties to a physical and spiritual location, then I wish to explore the postcolonial-informed prospect of inhabiting different places at the same time: straddling borders of curriculum, pedagogy, and culture as the foreign teacher has to negotiate his or her own cultural commitments, professional experiences and knowledges with the local needs and expectations of the students. I hope to demonstrate how this experience of teaching abroad, and the ongoing narrativization

and negotiation of story reverberates in my continued practice, representing a kind of transformational learning process: “to live in perpetual self-renewal, reviewing the assumptions by which self and society are guided” (McWhinney & Markos, 2003, p. 30). Work done on postcolonial education (to name a few: Bahri, 1997; Bhabha, 1998; Kanu, 2003; MacLure, 1996; Spivak, 1993) explores the pedagogical potential of border pedagogy, the working out of different spaces of knowing to expose new, revelatory, and unexpectedly exhilarating learning and teaching opportunities, especially when the western teacher manages to loosen his or her sense of entitlement, and pays closer self-conscious attention to their experiences with newness.

The experiences of living in liminal spaces and to explore the interstices between cultures provide moments of failure and epiphany, some represented here and throughout in this personal canon. Anderson and Saavedra (1995) say that to engage in demonstrations for reflection like telling these narratives, to mediate and interpret them generates new knowledge and a greater sense of agency (p. 233). Out of stories comes action. Stories are all one has when one needs to act out of uncertainty. Teachers are entitled to them, yet must remain dutifully opportunistic to the revelation of new narratives that emerge. Now I will preview the stories I have selected and what they are intended for in their respective chapters.

Narrative Inquiry

Stories distill our learning and lend it narrative form, so that through variations of tone and style and anecdote we can try not to forget what we have learned. Stories are our memory...and reading is the craft by means of which we can recreate that memory by reciting it and glossing it, by translating it back into our own

experience, by allowing ourselves to build upon that which previous generations have seen fit to preserve...Under certain conditions, stories can assist us.

Sometimes they can heal us, illuminate us, and show us the way. (Manguel, 2007, p. 9)

The story about *Teacher's Day* along with others presented throughout this narrative inquiry all represents a personal canon. Out of all the days and experiences, lesson plans and classes, questions and assignments, the day-to-day realities of a teacher and teaching, a small canon survives the sieve of my remembered events. This personal canon consists of the following stories:

- Teacher's Day
- A Tsunami and a Hurricane
- *Eveline*
- A Basketball Game and the First Exam
- Amrita

They represent for me moments of formation and transformation (Gosselin, 2003; Hinchcliff, 2000; Johnson, 2003; Shahjahan, 2004). They are not just stories, but more like experiences of epiphany that in time have emerged as definitive narratives that I turn to in the present for guidance in my continuing educational journey in cultural terrains. In the following chapters, each story is a personal emblem used to represent these particular issues in cross-cultural education: identity, narrative inquiry, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, and transformative education. The stories foster an ongoing dialogue between my current enquiries into cross-cultural teaching and my past experiences, a reflective practice that brings unity to a series of events in a complementary continuum.

The canon does not represent isolated events in time. They are connected by a sequence where one makes the next possible, and the next hearkens back to inform the present. They make up a kind of sequential logic that produces a narrative journey of travelling, teaching, and returning transformed. I will continually revisit the idea of journey and transformation throughout this inquiry.

This thesis offers a chapter that comprehensively reviews narrative as a method of inquiry, its possibilities and shortcomings, and investigates what narrative does to an individual as they author their own experiences. Many have written about the phenomenology of “living narratively,” how lived experiences take on story-form with plot, tone, settings, and characters (Aoki, 1997; Bruner, 1991; Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Geertz, 1995; MacIntyre, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988). These storied experiences form our realities: our hopes, ambitions, opinions, and prejudices. More than this, they in a point of fact replace the experience. Stories reside and work in the artful domain between experience and agency (Polkinghorne, 1998). They make up the alchemy that transforms an experience into story, and it is by story that one decides how one must act. As an experience is left behind in time, the story of it lives on in the storyteller, the implications of which will be discussed in detail in the methodology chapter.

I will review the facilitations, constraints, and dangers of narrative inquiry, what it means for teachers, and more specifically how this method has been used for cross-cultural teaching research. As noted earlier, very few teaching stories of difficulty and frustration from abroad make it into the academic literature. I believe the absence of these teaching stories of failure and discovery abroad is an ever-widening gap in cross-cultural

education narratives, especially as more and more teachers opt for working overseas and as the globalization of education becomes more prolific (Hinchcliff, 2000). Stories are a gateway to the cultural self (Bruner, 1991), and therefore this inquiry aims to uncover the teacher's cultural self vis-à-vis the host cultural classroom.

I provide two narratives that mark moments of epiphany in ways only natural disasters can: the South East Asia tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, moments in my biography where my tacit cultural self was made explicit to me before my students, and the transition from experience to story was conscious and reflexive. The ongoing inquiry into these narratives marks for me a continued struggle and fascination with cultural identity, cultural living, discovery, and teaching. It also is an example of how my process of understanding the chaos of both catastrophes was one that looked to each storied experience for reflective and therapeutic reconciliation. McWhinney and Markos (2003) say: "Crisis is ultimately associated with a loss of meaning" (p. 25). The tsunami and Katrina were two crises that reverberated within the cultures and beyond. They were times of utter confusion. In this chapter, I explore the process of meaning making through "living narratively," a process that can provide a coping mechanism to understand, and how it has varying manifestations in different cultures. This idea is illustrated by the cultural responses both to the tsunami and the hurricane from different cultural points of view. It also marks my process from confusion and frustration to recognition and hope, as new narratives emboldened my personal bank of stories: they provided new possibilities for my storied space of knowing.

Multiculturalism and Place

I will devote this chapter to an analysis of multiculturalism and its mark on curriculum study and International Education. While probing further into the conscious constructions of a cultural self through narrative inquiry, this chapter discusses the politics of multiculturalism and its traditional tendency towards the suspension of cultural identity for the aims of integration and assimilation (Ghosh, 1996; Fox & Gay, 1995; Kellner, 1998). My intention for this chapter is to emphasize the politics of *place*, and to maintain that one's identification with location in both figurative and literal ways facilitates a sense of individuality as well as social responsibility in changing cultural contexts. My inherited social elevation to *ajarn* was a new discourse for me to learn, in addition to the various other discourses in general society: that of a foreigner, a white man, a tourist, and so on. For the western teacher abroad, the principles of multiculturalism are problematic. By the narrative exploration of these identities through a postmodern lens, I hope to convey the different relations of power associated with these discourses at work while teaching and living abroad (Gee, 1989; Grumet, 1987; Gunew, 1997; McKay, 2002; Sokefeld, 1999; Scott, 1992; Sykes, 2006; Welch, 2001; Worth, 1993).

The process of discourse acquisition requires, I believe, an investigation into ideas of phenomenology, to explore the sensuous and interpretive transition. This will be important for this discussion, because it pinpoints the inquiry to the workings of a particular place, "the environing conditions" (Dewey, 1938, p. 35), from where experience originates. The cross-cultural encounter, the sensory experience with the unknown produces unexpected physical, emotional, and spiritual responses (Abram,

1996). More encounters and more responses manifest into more fluently registered experiences from which narratives are made, the underpinnings from which expressions are inspired. A personal connection with place fosters in the individual a special sensory for the world around them. Phenomenology facilitates this discussion to move from experience to Giroux & McLaren's (1993) work on "politics of place," which for the intents and purposes of the chapter illustrates movement for the cross-cultural teacher from "nowhere" to "now here," from a sense of disorientation to a *feeling* conception of place. It is here where work on multicultural education gives an investigative hand into the movement between experiential and sensual location.

This chapter's story describes the process of recognition I came to realize during the teaching of a selection from James Joyce's *Dubliners: Eveline*. It tracks my teaching journey from apprehension, confusion, and challenge to surprise, fascination, and tenderness towards my students. The history, pain, politics, and spirit rooted in Joyce's story, set in a time and place far far away from northern Thailand took new meaning for my students in their own personal situations. My students' sense of place and life uprooted the literature and applied to it their own gravity. Having first felt daunted by the task of teaching dense and heavily laden prose to second language learners, my students instilled in me a new sense of awareness in the power of the place in which we were situated, and the ability of the story to emerge from the consciousness of my culturally bound students. The intentions for this narrative are to illustrate how the politics of place and identity override the origins from which ideas are rooted in cross-cultural education.

Postcolonialism and Border Pedagogy

Gee (1989) says that no person can acquire full fluency in any secondary discourse, as though to become one and the same with the primary discourse culture (p. 13). In the same vein, Worth (1993) provokes with this statement regarding postmodern critiques of multiculturalism: “The question to be asked is what happens to the pedagogical enterprise once one accepts the idea that knowledge may be nontransferable” (p. 10). This chapter will draw on postcolonial literature to further explore the politics of place with regards to International Education and cultural positions in opposition, and what it could mean for the foreign teacher to occupy both places simultaneously.

This chapter offers two stories. The first narrates an account, interpretation and recognition of being a white foreigner and teacher in an after-school pick-up game of basketball, a professional lauded with respect and admiration, and laded with entrenched postcolonial suspicion and skepticism in a context of confused discourse. Discourses provide boundaries that format our behaviour, language, and manners for effective communication (Bailey, 1997). Not only are the discourses foreign to the western visiting teacher, but also when the high status of a teacher is muddled into the hodgepodge reality that is International Education, the discourses suddenly become uncertain too to the student. My narrative gives an account of this kind of cultural tiptoeing for both them and me, each of us straddling borders of uncertainty and changing cultural narratives.

The second story describes the experience of giving my first exam in a Thai classroom. The exam does not go well. It marks a wavering sense of empowerment, a moment where the power of the teacher was subverted by the collective will of the students. Despite being an international program, supplied with western-based resources,

curriculum, and teachers, a western-based approach to pedagogy and assessment did not meet the needs or interests of the cultural mainstream of the class, and resulted in protest and chaos. I was a representation of authority, yet simultaneously and practically unequipped. Both stories together draw on examples of what Brock et al (2006) call “displacement spaces,” where familiar situations are made strange and the roles of the individual are made unclear. Displacement spaces are the inevitable likelihood of cross-cultural situations, yet I believe that they need not be always construed as dangers to prevent. They are moments to exploit for learning opportunities.

This chapter draws together different literatures that explore the potentials and pitfalls of cultural borders (Bahri, 1997; Bhabha, 1998, Brock et al., 1999; Kanu, 2003; MacLure, 1996). Borders by implication are margins, and where there are margins there exists a centre (Ghosh, 1993). These social, hierarchical, and cultural structures employ a critical analysis of International Education and its construction of both privileged and oppressive systems of pedagogy and learning worldwide. The stories in this chapter of a pick-up basketball game and a botched exam provide a double-angled critique of the border building aspects of cross-cultural work implicated in race and nationalism. The narratives also provide an ongoing and deconstructive heuristic for learning the processes that produce the power relationships between the centre and the margins, between conventional and othering practices. Ultimately, critical narrative reflection and the willingness to overstep borders and explore the possibilities of hybridity can produce new spaces for radical and exciting potentials for pedagogy (Tsolidis, 2006). Postcolonial literature on education provides insightful critiques that explore these dynamics of power

at play, and provide a systematic tool for understanding the implications of the International Education enterprise.

Transformation and Togetherness

This fifth and final chapter tells a different story and shifts in time and place to my time in India as an educational researcher where I was visiting a very rural school for girls of families below the poverty line. Even though I was there to observe the conditions of the school and interview the teachers about their particular motivations and feelings about teaching, they granted me the opportunity to meet the class of girls and interact with them. In fact, I was asked to teach them something, and so this describes the feelings of being put on the spot, of acting in the moment, and of intuiting thoughtfully and viscerally the emotions, anxieties, and energies of the group with whom I shared no spoken language or apparent experience.

I pull together literature on transformative education (Chin, 2006; Hussein, 2006; Johnson, 2003; Mayo, 2003; McWhinney & Markos, 2003; O'Sullivan, 1999; O'Sullivan, et al, 2001; Shahjahan, 2004; Weddington, 2004) to illustrate that if borders of experience are exposed, that when one knows where the limits of one's knowledge ends and another's begins, then the boundaries can be exploited and expanded to include both sides. Story is the process that facilitates the domain between experience and agency, and personal transformations of assumptions, beliefs, and identities are the outcomes from the direct interaction with the other (Manguel, 2007; McWhinney & Markos, 2003). This chapter explains two aspects of transformative education.

The first kind of transformation is the one that takes place in the moment: the visceral and intangible process of change and adaptation to an unknown situation. It is the

process of interpreting the energies and emotions that define a situation of uncertainty (Dei, 2002), particularly the cross-cultural anxiety that people embody when they encounter the other for the first time. This kind of situation is guided by emotion, and its capacity to work and succeed depends on one's emotional stake in doing so (Weddington, 2004). The story describes a moment where the students and I, the other and me, managed to *feel* out a space of mutual trust and hope, and make the conscious and emotional decision to transform. Although preparation and planning are vital to good pedagogy, I challenge here that a teacher's openness and submission to the energies present, to listen to intuition and act on it is equally important for meaningful practice and cross-cultural transformation.

The second kind of transformation comes in its reflective capacity. As stories emerge from experience, and as readings and re-readings continually reinterpret the events and emotions of the remembered event, a series of transformations occur in the teller (O'Sullivan, 1999). This process has the capacity to deconstruct one's sense of identity and privilege in relation to the other. The story describes the emotions of the girl looking up at me with confusion and nervousness, wondering like me, what happens next and where to go from here. Looking back up at me from her eyes produces a vision that makes explicit the power disparities in the interaction, yet at the same time is humbling because we are one in the same space of uncertainty as to our responsibilities for action. With honest and thoughtful reflection, teachers have the duty to deconstruct their stories, to practise personal narrative inquiry by which they will transform and recognize their own otherness in the eyes of the student. In that mutual otherness I believe is a common humanity that must be recognized for the improvement of International Education and the

more peaceful and understanding international relations needed in an increasingly interdependent world.

Objective for Inquiry

My objectives for this thesis are not to propose narrative as a gateway to literate proficiency in a foreign discourse, nor do I propose it as a methodology that facilitates perfect clarity of teaching and learning cross-culturally. What I want to examine is the capacity of narrative's affective domain to make visible and to reconcile personal anxieties about dominance and power intrinsic in western traditions of multicultural and postcolonial education. This thesis is to be a working example of how narratives of power and powerlessness can restore a sense of place for a teacher working abroad, and to address these missing narratives in International Education literature. Moreover, it is a challenge to teachers to read carefully and critically into their own stories, and to explore deeply the characters that they represent. Personal reflection of practice and identity by the process of storying and interpretation can enhance the affective domain for more thoughtful and effective agency. Personal stories are remembered experiences, and they provide some distance between the "I" now and the "I" then, a kind of objectivity that gives voice to the other in a cross-cultural classroom, and thus can provide a way to better inform one's practice in an otherwise uncertain teaching situation. This inquiry embarks on a journey that moves back and forth in time, in place, and in memory. This exercise is to turn back on this inquiry with interpretive and transformative intent. It traces a series of *I's*, personal stories that I believe have the capacity to project onto other cross-cultural educators who are feeling similar anxieties about cultural newness. This thesis is a hermeneutic endeavour that interprets stories of experience and reflects inward

for personal growth and transformation. Consequently, my hope and ambition for this work is that it will also project outward and reverberate with and validate the conflicting feelings that define cross-cultural teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

What this narrative exploration will provide is an especially unique approach that recognizes all individuals, teachers and students, as persons with biographies, culturally rooted in place with histories and lives culminating in the present (Anderson, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Conle, 1999; He & Phillion, 2001). By bringing these biographies, histories, and values to the forefront of this discussion, I can make explicit how my stories are constructed, what informs them, and what informs my current views on cross-cultural pedagogy (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1997; Conle, 2000, 2003; Edge, 1996; Elbaz, 1983; McCabe, 1997; Shields, 2005). By doing so, I believe that I meet the criteria of a responsible and effective *ajarn*, a foreign teacher with a tuned cultural sensory that brings a western tradition to the classroom, but meanwhile keeps a finger firmly held to the pulse of the mainstream needs and expectations of the host culture. Flower (2002) says that: “Dialogue is an achievement, not the mere outcome of contact” (p. 184). This thesis aims to promote the significance of this kind of achievement, and show how a respectful and relevant dialogue between a western teacher and his Thai students, a balance of personal humility and professional expertise, enriches the lives and stories of both parties (Ciganko, 2000; Eisner, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lamont, 1996; Osborne, 1996; Tettegah, 2005; VanManen, 1990) and culminates in a lived cross-cultural curriculum filled with new possibilities for living and learning (Aoki, 1997; Carter, 1993; Flower, 2002; Tsolidis, 2001).

Chapter 2: Narrative Inquiry and the Tsunami

I was not sure about what or how to teach when I came back to class that day. I rode my bike to campus, reminding myself how fortunate I was to be there, teaching and living in Thailand, riding past bent-over rice farmers in the fields. Everything had been as usual: the gardeners manicuring the hedges, the security guard dutifully saluting faculty on their way in, and students sauntering out from their dormitories to the dining hall. It was a brisk morning. As normal as things initially seemed, there was heaviness about the world. People exchanged uncertain morning smiles. I met my colleagues in the office hallways, nodding to one another in a bizarre mutual sense of confusion. I was not sure about what or how to teach that day.

The university had been off for a week after the mid-term exams and for the New Year holiday. On Boxing Day, 2004, a terrible tsunami rolled over the west coast of Thailand's southern provinces and various parts of South East Asia. It wiped out whole fishing villages, tore down beach-side bungalows, and crippled the world famous resort islands of Pang-Nga, Phi Phi, and Phuket in the middle of peak tourist season. More than 11,000 people drowned that day in Thailand, and multiples of that in greater south Asia. It was the most awesome natural disaster of the world on record. The wave did not touch the northern provinces, but it flooded the hearts and minds of us all.

My students arrived to class acceptably late to some light music I had playing. A little apprehensive and unsure of myself, I welcomed them back. Without much planned, I opened the floor for them to share their thoughts of the tragedy and I was met with near silence and nervous glances. After some time of what felt like being under water, a

student popped his head up and said: "It's life. Some things happen sometimes like this." The students tended to all nod in consensus.

Relieved by a response, I felt renewed that this would encourage more reflections. Teachers back home would allow this time to students at times of trauma, like if there was a tragic death in the school or a parent was ill, some kind of tension that was emotionally and physically affecting the group. Often those reflection sessions not only provided coping and comfort, but also enhanced the closeness of the group, and made a special rapport with the facilitating teacher. As I waited for this same kind of effect to take hold in my class, I was only met with an overwhelming sense of discomfort in the students. There seemed to be a collective need to get on with things, yet I was not ready to do that. Without much to fall back on, and not wanting to spill out my fears and feelings to an audience desperate to avoid the topic, I instructed them into a seemingly gratuitous free-write session before dismissing them for the day.

Telling stories help us to make sense of our lived worlds (Conle, 2003, p. 5). Not only do they help us to cope and to understand our lived worlds (Conle, 2000, p. 192; Grumet, 1987, p. 322), but they shape those lived experiences, generate meanings, and potentially change them (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 76). When I asked my students about their reflections and thoughts about the previous week's tsunami disaster, it was an attempt at providing a story telling venue, a safe place for people to "narrativize" and make sense of the incomprehensible (White, 1980). Polkinghorne (1988) says: "narrative is the discourse structure in which human action receives its form and through which it is meaningful" (p. 135). Conle (2003) says this about narrative knowing: "Stories open

possibilities to our imagination...A person without access to certain stories is a person without hope, without social vision” (p. 4). Our realities and our interpretations are limited to the narrative possibilities that we embody (p. 4). The stories move us to a space of knowing. They situate us into a milieu understood through narrative construction. We inhabit the milieu, we live and act in the narrative, guided by the possibilities present in the storied space.

Another thing stories do is that they connect individuals and make generalization of the narrative or subject (Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997, p. 76; Shields, 2005, p. 180). Sharing our personal and contextual stories reveal an avenue to the cultural self, one and other coalesced into an atemporal collective where we all inhabit a particular narrative milieu (Conle, 1999, p. 9). That is, stories have a double function to move inward to the first person “I” and also to project outward, to be made public, and merge and enhance knowledge in the public domain (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000). One function to telling stories is that people vicariously make sense of the lived-world through the told-experiences of others (Conle, 2003, p. 7). Implied here is that there is a story that “wants to be told” (p. 7). Also implied is that there is a particular selection of stories to be told that will reveal one’s narrative constructions (Shields, 2005, p. 181). The stories we choose to reveal, as well as those we conceal, are regulated and informed by those things we deem acceptable or not as part of a culture (Gay, 2006).

Leading to that first class after the tsunami, I felt lost. My narrative account of the tragedy was incomplete. I suspected it was the same for my students. My story was guided by my own limited experience of natural disasters. Very few possibilities existed in my narrative space in relation to the devastating destruction of the Thai south.

McWhinney and Markos (2003) say that during crisis, people will “typically enter into a transformative effort with pre-established goals, only to find that those goals somehow no longer relate to the present conditions. Crisis is ultimately associated with a loss of meaning” (p. 25). My goal for the lesson was to share the various personal accounts to bring for us a greater sense of wholeness to this story, to transform emptiness into meaning. When my students declined my offer to share their tsunami reflections, I was faced with an unwillingness to tell and was faced with the reality that my pedagogical ambitions were lost in this context. Were my students guided by a cultural self? Did the residential narrative space of the cultural self inhibit the conditions to share one’s personal and contextualized experience? My cultural self wanted to share experience. My cultural self was disappointed in my students’ seeming insensitivity to the tragedy. At that time in that milieu, I felt without hope and without social vision. I was without a unified narrative space that sufficiently provided meaning to such an epic event.

As many writers on the issues of methodologies in the human sciences have said that stories shape our perceptions, animate our lived realities, and form identities both individual and cultural (Bruner, 1991; Casey, 1995-1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1997, 2000; Conle 1997, 2000, 2003; Denzin, 1997; Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997; Geertz; 1995; Grumet, 1987, 1993; He, 2002; Olson, 2000; Phillion, 1999, 2002; Shields, 2005; White, 1980). I have stories about my experiences living and teaching abroad that want to be told. These are stories that continue to shape my conceptions about teaching and being in a foreign culture. Through continuous self-conscious reflection, I want to examine the affective domain of these stories, and how I embody them and project them to an audience. By reading them, I am continually reflecting and moving inward to a storied

space of hope. Moreover, by telling them, hope translates outward to a storied space of social vision, where the individual meets cultural self, and for the *teacher*, where theory meets practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997).

Living Narratively

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) said “teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own stories” (p. 2). Individuals each live what they, among others (Aoki, 1993; Bruner, 1991), call storied lives. People think narratively (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988; White, 1980). People do not live moment to moment in isolated points of time and place, but narratively blend those moments into a coherent and storied whole that prepares one for the present moment and imagines the next (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Conle, 2000; MacIntyre, 1981). It is through narrative where people interpret their emotions, feelings, and experiences, and thus construct and reconstruct their reality (Bruner, 1991; VanManen, 1990).

When I asked my students to speak about the tsunami, it was an attempt at telling stories. It was an effort to elicit the power of storytelling to make sense of life’s randomness. Bruner (1991) calls it a “breach” in the canonical narrative (p. 11), when the familiarity of everyday life is disrupted and our interpretive ears perk up. Each student has a storied life: personal narratives running parallel to each other and to my own. Through the act of telling and listening will the stories intersect, and in that meeting, expand interpretations and understandings (p. 16) of the tragedy so difficult to comprehend. It is one method of creating meaning in a world that sometimes makes no sense (Casey, 1995-1996, p. 215; Ciganko, 2000, p. 39). We are characters in each other’s stories, teacher and students. With story, there is mutual and educational benefit

to telling. I will examine what affect the action of telling has, as well as of what is told. The stories shape what I am. More than that, they underpin my sense of agency and will. It is by making narrative sense of new experiences that finally prepares one to act (Polkinghorne, 1988). By making meaning of experience, then one can know what to do. I did not know what or how to teach that first day back after the tsunami, and the aim of a reflective sharing in class was my desired attempt to make meaning for all of us, so then we could reconcile and get on with things. Unknown to me at the time, something else was at play that inhibited the sharing of experiences, and now that lesson represents for me a teaching story of cultural miscommunication, cross-cultural learning, and personal transformation.

The accumulation of these selected teaching stories, and the noisy absence of those stories left untold, guide my perceptions of what it means to be a teacher. In effect, I make myself (McAdam, 1993, p. 13), cutting, editing, and pasting my narratives to create what Connelly and Clandinin (1997) call “cover stories”: stories that enable teachers to package themselves as characters that are competent and professional (Anderson, 1997, p. 131-132). Edgerton (1996) says: “The stories we create about ourselves are, in part, what determine our perceptions of ourselves and, as such, influence what we become to ourselves and others” (p. 171). My eventual aim is to unpack how these stories affect my identity and pedagogy, and to contribute my life stories and interpretations to the ongoing dialogue, to the lived stories of teachers, coalescing into narrative notions of a lived and living curriculum. Bailey (1997) says that the greatest challenge for the postmodern researcher is to move from the third person “one” to the “I” (p. 155). The “I” will remain constant throughout these personal narratives; however,

what will emerge in the end is a collection of *I*'s that reflects back out, characters in stories with whom others can identify and relate and adopt as a storied source for personal agency (Polkinghorne, 1988).

In this thesis, I refer closely to Connelly and Clandinin's (2000) book, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, to ground my storied experiences of a foreign teacher in northern Thailand and to unravel the personal and cultural identity changes and emergences I realized through narrative. I will use narrative inquiry as a method to represent my stories and my personal ways of telling them. In the next sections, I will describe narrative inquiry as a method that is interested in how these stories shape perceptions of reality and teaching, and more importantly in what these stories *do*: their possibilities, their constraints, and the implications of power for the teller particularly in cross-cultural contexts. Further, the reading of these stories and outside interpretations are welcomed for re-reading and re-telling, an integral aspect to narrative inquiry, and creating new transformative possibilities for curriculum (Conle, 2000; Phillion, 2002; He, 2002; Tsolidis, 2001). Olson (2000) calls it a "multistoried process."

Narrative Inquiry

John Dewey's (1938) analysis of experience lays the bedrock from which education literature on narrative inquiry is firmly grounded (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 1-2). He developed three aspects to do with the nature of experience: situation, continuity, and interaction. Narrative inquiry is interested in life and the classroom stories happening between people, within and without the school, and over time. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) look at Dewey's foundational analysis of experiences as a "metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 50), as personal and social

(interaction), and time spent with people (continuity) in the milieu (situation).

Throughout this thesis, I intend to both deploy and exercise this three-dimensional inquiry space, focusing my story interpretations on the influence of people, time, and place.

In the thick of writing this inquiry into my stories of living and teaching, I must bring forth a potential problem with my narrative space; that is, my readers and I are all removed from the context: from the place, time, and people. I am relying on my memories of being there. Furthermore, readers of my stories will rely on my descriptions and characterizations to formulate their own interpretations based on their own experiences (Bruner, 1991, p. 17). The aesthetic quality and seduction of narrative inquiry undermines the empirical objectives of educational research. Storying entails an aesthetic nature that romanticizes the journey. My role as researcher is to investigate the affective capacity of story and to expose its pedagogical potentials, yet at the same time remain highly critical and self-conscious of the honesty and sincerity in my reflections that are shaded with aesthetic and rhetorical appeal. “Inquiry is structured by the inquirer” (Anderson, 1997, p. 131; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 55). In constructing my narratives, I will be working more specifically in the dimensions of interaction and continuity, or in directional terms: inward and outward, and backward and forward (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 50).

Inward, my analysis of teaching stories will interrogate my hopes, feelings, and moral commitments. Outwardly, it focuses on my existential relationships with people there, while the backward and forward direction addresses the temporal aspects: my professional, intellectual, and ethical development over time teaching in another culture.

Through it all, as an educational researcher, I must remind and emphasize that I am working with “an ongoing sense of dislocation” moving “from a remembered past in one place to a present moment in another, all the while imaginatively constructing an identity for the future” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 55).

I have selected personal stories that work as emblematic representations of cross-cultural living and teaching. I have selected stories that I consider interesting, revealing, and entertaining, even as I remain aware that stories are the means by which people communicate, teach, learn, and persuade (Anderson, 1997; Bruner, 1991; Olson, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; White, 1980). Bruner (1991) notes the wide belief that “narrative comprehension is among the earliest powers of mind to appear in the young child and among the most widely used forms of ongoing human experiences” (p. 9).

McAdams (1993) says:

Indeed, much of what passes for everyday conversation among people is storytelling of one form or another. This appears to be so pervasively true that many scholars have suggested that the human mind is first and foremost a vehicle for storytelling. We are born with a narrating mind. (p. 28)

Telling stories is the only way for me to relay my experiences short of taking my readers with me. Moreover, the stories transport me backward, imaginatively return me to those situations to interpret, reinterpret, and engage in a hermeneutic exercise of understanding my experiences (p. 7; Conle, 1999, p. 14). Bruner calls this *hermeneutic composability*. It refers to the complex circular and reiterative process of expressing a story and taking meaning from it: what is meant and what is understood. With every telling, every reading, every representation, meaning is interpreted and dynamic (Shields, 2005). What

my readers interpret will in part depend on my stylistic, rhetorical, and aesthetic choices, personal revelations, and the particular constructions of these storied experiences, not to mention also the possibilities present in the three-dimensional narrative space they inhabit.

My aim is to create engaging “readerly texts” (Bruner, 1991, p. 9) that shape my perceptions of teaching (Anderson, 1997, p. 131), but equally important, texts that invite further interpretations and conversations to engage artfully with a narrativized dialogue about curriculum (White, 1980). Moreover, we (writer and reader) must also remain self-consciously critical and aware of the rhetorical functions of the stories and of their telling. Bruner (1990) says that “the narrative’s opaqueness, its circumstantiality, its genre, are taken to be as important as or, in any case, inseparable from its content” (p. 113). Stories as readerly texts are slippery, by which I mean that without the complementary acts of self-conscious composition and engaged critical reading, the story’s usefulness and legitimacy is called into question. And so, I will now move to explore the ongoing debate in the research literature on narrative inquiry as to its legitimacy and reliability as a methodology in educational research.

Narrative Inquiry: The Debate

Narrative inquiry has gained wide popularity and appeal among researchers for its post- and even anti-positivistic approach to inquiry (Casey, 1995-1996), what Connelly and Clandinin (2000) call “formalistic” approaches to human research, where people are interpreted by a preconceived and predetermined set of expectations and assumptions about human nature, denies the capacity, potential, agency, and participation of that individual in their vision (Phillion, 1999, p. 135). Bailey (1997) says “the work of

many educational biographers and narrative inquirers concerns itself with examining and facilitating change within the oppressive modes of the classroom” (p. 139). Chin (2006) advocates for teachers to live an examined life: “cultivating the narrative and compassionate imagination, which are ways of relational learning” with the Other (p. 38).

Narrative inquiry is a postmodern approach to research that seeks to animate the experience of the individual within a curriculum system (attempting to represent people from all walks of life) that inevitably works in inadequate generalizations. However, I believe the aim for narrative inquiry is also to arrive at some reliable “findings” about a particular phenomenon. Herein lies the contradiction that fuels the debate of narrative inquiry as a methodology. Narrative originates as a relativistic act of producing a personal truth, formulating a narrative version of an experience like the tsunami, and using that story to describe to others “what happened.” The subsequent *inquiry* into the story, to interpret it, to write and read it through many iterations is to apply a sense of disconnected objectivity to “what happened.” Through this continued interpretive process and act of telling the story (of which this thesis is a working example) can the researcher create some distance between him or herself from the experience and derive from it “truths” that resonate with wider teaching audiences.

I do not claim that narrative inquiry is a neat or systematic methodology, but I do believe in its capacity to empower and challenge the researcher to look critically at the stories they inhabit, the emblems they live by and use to inform their approaches to teaching and living. I shall continue to describe the debate, and how I believe the contradictions between postmodernism and narrative inquiry are negotiated in practice.

In a world of self-publishing, online blogs, YouTube productions and the like, lay individuals have more public power of voice than ever before. In many cases, people no longer need to justify their opinions nor need approval to review and publish their work. Moreover, individual voices, experiences, and representations are being listened to and followed. Narrative inquiry as research method retrospectively shapes personal experience through the process of narrativization. Categorical statements or conclusions about *truth* or *reality* are not primary concerns for narrative inquirers (Bailey, 1997; Bruner, 1991; Grumet, 1987). Without serious self-conscious reflection, critical accountability, and pursuit of truth, people like Phillips (1994) wonder skeptically: “What follows from this?” (p. 17)

Narrative research is not concerned with apprehending epistemic truths. Its goal is to uncover the conscious and unconscious constructions of life through the process of what White (1980) calls “narrativizing” (p. 6). He says:

The very distinction between real and imaginary events...presupposes a notion of reality in which “the true” is identified with “the real” only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity. (p. 10)

For White, reality is actually the *problem*. Reality can only be understood through narrative, and real events do not always present themselves in narrative form (p. 8). The truth of a “real event” is not always accessible, and so interpreted narrative truths provide for versions of reality that people adopt and believe. I think to my experience of the tsunami as an instance when reality got in the way of my understanding. It was a severe Bruner-ian “breach” of the narrative tradition, a severe interruption of the past (Bhabha, 1998), and so maybe I felt the need to solicit the stories of other’s to help construct my

narrative understanding of the present. I have stated my concern for the lack of teaching stories available in the academic literature that describe the particular tensions in International Education. I think that teaching in foreign contexts is a reality little understood, much like the tsunami, which was for me, difficult to understand. With the help of a collection of stories, I would be more easily able to formulate a vision or narrative truth about the event. However, as my students had no stories to contribute, no reflections or insights as I felt at the time, the tsunami remained for me an enigma only understood by my own individual and confused thoughts about it. Likewise, I believe that International Education remains a postmodern idea made up of multiple realities and truths, which on one hand makes it an exciting and liberating system to explore and exploit for new and unexpected teaching possibilities. Yet, on the other hand, to date there are few published stories that contribute to the collective knowledge of teachers working abroad, leaving their narrative truths incomplete and keeping them vulnerable to cultural transgressions. My aim here is to put this contradiction to work throughout this inquiry: to explore the possibilities of story and expose the potentials of cross-cultural teaching, and conversely to illustrate how the absence of story makes an experience difficult to interpret and respond to.

Bruner (1991) claims that inevitably all experiences take narrative form (p. 7). He says that researchers have moved away from positivist methods because the objective findings were those developed by the researcher, by an outsider looking in rather than a participant immersed in the experience (p. 17). He states:

Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve

“verisimilitude.” Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness. (p. 4)

Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) concurs that it is not solutions that narrative seeks to unveil, although they may be by-products of narrative research, but it is to “gain increased understanding of the multitude of meanings that are created by practitioners and researchers working together” (p. 78).

Phillips (1994) is not worried about the reliability of an individual’s beliefs or interpretations, true or not, but he is more concerned with whether the individual actually believes what he or she purports to believe (p. 18). He warns that the narrative researcher’s apparent indifference to the relevancy of truth is potentially dangerous and disastrous if the findings are reported and published to be emblematic or truthful of its referent situation (p. 19). If as Polkinghorne claims that narrative knowing inspires human agency, then what are the implications when one acts on the basis of unreliable, poorly told, or misconstrued stories?

Another concern is that narrative inquiry is a method more concerned with the development and formulation of personal stories, plots, rising actions, and denouements than it is with the actual detailed reportage of experience. As noted earlier, teachers are constantly engaged in the formulation of a “cover story” that constructs a wished perception, inevitably and expectedly avoiding particular undesirable projections. Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) says that the primary interest for narrative inquiry is to arrive at generalization, to render meaning generated on and from a subject (p. 76). The narrativization of experience will add context and texture to an experience (Conle, 2000,

p. 198): emotions, feelings, anxieties, and ideas that may not have been present in reality, but are inserted into the narrative space for effect. In other words, they serve a rhetorical and aesthetic function that seeks to persuade a reader and substitute one reality for another.

Phillips (1997) says that the pursuit of a plot-driven inquiry is “epistemically irrelevant” (p. 105). The injection of literary elements into one’s narrative of experience is an imposition on the truthful representation of one’s reality. He warns that once the narrator has decided what the story will be, “the subsequent selection of ‘events’ to include is likely to be ‘plot driven,’ not ‘truth driven’” (p. 105).

A story does not need to be true to be educational (Phillips, 1994, p. 17). I have already established that we inhabit our stories, and they are the means by which we learn and form our world-views, and they have the capacity to motivate and inspire our actions. However, much depends on the objectives of the storyteller and on what the story *intends* to do. The effects of a story work on the affective domain of the reader. And one needs no reminding of the harms and atrocities provoked by charismatic rhetoricians who spread stories of hate and discrimination (Conle, 2003, p. 13; Phillips, 1997, p. 107).

Phillips (1997) stresses that the inquirer must remain self-consciously critical of the stories told (p. 104). The danger lies in taking narrative accounts at face value, because often it is not objectivity one is trying to relate, but more so to tell a good story (McAdams, 1993). First person stories are “raw data” (Anderson, 1997, p. 134). I do not disagree that stories are of primary usefulness to the teller for understanding an experience, and for a reader as a source of provisional truth about teachers and teaching (Anderson, 1997, p. 135). In this light, Conle (2000) says:

Reading and listening to stories of experience involves the audience in an aesthetic way... You would have been able to work at your own 'tensions with a history' by allowing my stories to call forth parts of you that are on a quest, on a road of existential inquiry, with its own particular ends-in-view... The effect of aesthetic work on an audience is primarily experiential. Possibilities for theoretical and practical gains come out of that aesthetic experience. (p. 208)

Weddington (2004) believes that "part of what makes any experience aesthetic is the palpable realization of being immersed in an unexplained and unpredictable situation" (p. 125). Narrative inquiry is a method of understanding that accentuates the aesthetic experiences of our past, but also formulates a Romantic journey from one point in time to another, making sense of unexplainable emotions and situations along the way (McAdams, 1993). "The going back into the past," Polkinghorne (1988) says, "is not a mechanical reproduction of what has been; rather it is a fetching back of the possibilities that have passed by in order to make them real again in the present" (p. 133). In the next sections, I will continue my review of narrative inquiry, keeping in mind the essential need for critical reflection on the rhetorical constructions of my narratives, and attempting to remain constantly attuned to the affective dimensions of my selected stories.

I believe that narrative inquiry is a methodology that buffers the empowered feeling for individual teachers taking ownership of their own stories with the academic pursuit for objective and reliable truth. Banks (1993) says that story has the capacity to place oneself as an "involved observer" (p. 5), an ability of the aesthetic to inspire an active form of reflection that does not only remember an experience, but participates in it

in an interpretive and constructive way (Polkinghorne, 1988). Out of this process emerge new formulations that inspire better-informed modes of agency, and I believe this is the value of this inquiry to cross-cultural educators. As an educational researcher, I want to tap into the aesthetic dimensions of narrative as a way of exploring and making visible the complex and contradictory experience of cross-cultural teaching and how stories keep experiences alive, dynamic, and involved in the present.

Embodied Narrative Knowledge

“To live inside a theory or to live inside an ideology is to live inside a story of oneself” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1997, p. 672).

When we tell a story, we are engaging our interlocutors in the four-directional process of understanding people and places over time (Shields, 2005, p. 180). For Shields (2005), sharing stories is what connects people across time and place, and constructs, reconstructs, and narrativizes realities from the remembered past in the new light of the present (p. 180). Life narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3) are what give context and meaning to our school situations and help us to develop our storied lives as teachers.

Shields states that people are “born into a story already in progress” (p. 180). Throughout life we inherit stories from various tellers. We adopt, adapt, and become them. Growing up, we develop our epistemologies through long-established lenses passed on by people through generations: situation, continuity, and interaction. By the continued telling and re-telling, Shields says that we go through a “pattern of awakening” (p. 181). The reiterative and hermeneutic nature of telling stories revises and refines our epistemologies, equipping us with templates to understand our present situations: namely

for teachers, the classroom. Shields emphasizes the necessity for teachers to continually reawaken to one's self; that is, to be aware of the ongoing and changing contexts of the three-dimensional narrative space, and therefore to be continually reflecting inward, outward, backward, and forward in order to interpret the "present circumstances of our lives" (p. 181). To be attuned to the present and to feel the story in which one is an actor in a real and embodied way, I believe, keeps the teacher awakened to a class' dynamism.

In curriculum, Shields believes that there is an exaggerated emphasis on learning the teachings and views of masters, and imparting that knowledge onto others. There is not enough focus on the process of the go-between, where the learner receives information and takes ownership of it. She describes a feeling of emptiness (p. 184) after years of rigorous academic study, because for her, personal relevance was missing. More than that, learners are not expected to look inward and outward, and to embody the stories passed on to them by teachers. Equally little considered are the personalized narratives of teachers and the implications of stories for practice. Shields says:

The forgotten step is the connection to why we might think as we do based on our own tacit knowledge, which we seem to learn to discount in our race to present arguments that appeal to us but that are owned by others. (p. 184)

Only when one can absorb the stories and knowledge to a personal sense of relevance and ownership, and awaken to revised personal epistemologies, do we then embody those stories and develop wholeness in our life narratives (Elbaz, 1983).

The stories that form our life narratives are lessons and skills we acquire to form what Connelly and Clandinin (1997) call our *personal practical knowledge*. It pays tribute and integrity to teacher's special intuitive knowledge, both conscious and tacit,

and its utility to understanding teacher practice and enabling an awakening to teacher self. What teachers do is not merely communicate knowledge from one to another as Shields laments, but transmits personal narratives of experience (Olson, 2000, p.170). Teachers are not only equipped with knowledge from teacher education programs, textbooks, and curricular documents, but more so with autobiography, memories, and the experience of many conversations and shared stories about teaching and learning. Central to Connelly and Clandinin's (1997) *personal practical knowledge* is the teacher's recognition of tacit knowledge; it focuses on how a teacher expresses their knowledge and how they know it (p. 666). It is about awakening to how acquired knowledge is embodied in the teacher, made part of the personal narrative, and consequently manifested and represented in practice.

Teachers often develop their own stories for teaching. Crites (1997) calls them *sacred stories*: "men's [sic] sense of self and world is created through them. They form men's living image of themselves and their world...and celebrate the powers of which their existence depends" (cited in Shields, 2005, p. 183). Stories are formative, and they are the "dwelling places" (Shields, 2005, p. 183) of our storied selves.

Phillion (2002) describes her sacred story called "Ms. Multicultural." She was entering as an educational researcher to Bay Street School in Toronto, a hub of ethnic diversity consisting of people of different colours, classes, and creeds. She had an extensive wealth of personal practical knowledge in multicultural teaching, having taught and researched about the plight of immigrant students in the Canadian education system. "Ms. Multicultural" uses culturally relevant pedagogy, sensitive to ESL difficulties and

issues, empowers minority students, and so on. “Ms. Multicultural” was her sacred story: her guiding narrative as she approached her work in Bay Street School (p. 267-268).

He (2002) uses a river metaphor for her sacred story about the experience of teaching in China and Canada, as a Chinese immigrant to Canada, and then returning home to teach. She describes a river that runs from inland to the sea, the overlapping oceans and meeting of far-off riverbeds. The rivers manipulate the landscapes and the people living there (p. 302). This was her sacred story that guides and shapes her view of cross-cultural education, encompassing the similarities, differences, and transformative powers of rivers, of teachers, and of cultures.

These stories shape our views, and create our conceptions, form our assumptions, and as we move inward, outward, backward, and forward, we resituate our three-dimensional narrative space to our present storied embodiment. In the constant movement of the ongoing present, if we continually reflect and re-examine our storied selves, and remain self-consciously critical, we reawaken to the present, and re-story to fit the narrative at play. For teachers, the narrative at play is part of the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1997).

Curriculum Stories

And then so what? To what end and to whom does this exercise of narrative inquiry serve. Is this thesis a self-serving soapbox for me to share my experiences and views on teaching? Is this a kind of therapeutic exercise to help me reconcile some thoughts I have about cross-cultural education through my life, my travels, and teaching abroad? Why do I tell stories? What benefit or relevance do my stories and interpretations have for educators? In response to these kinds of questions, Anderson (1997) says: “I do

not mean to imply that such stories are unimportant or useless. They are important and useful, but primarily to those telling, writing, and living the stories” (p.135). I am relating my own experiences, and I do not deny their constructive and aesthetic appeal they have for me personally, spiritually, and professionally, but I dare anticipate that they are not unlike those stories of other teachers. They may differ in nuance, and most definitely in time, place, and people, but with collaboration will the stories coalesce to explain future teaching narratives for cross-cultural workers. It is my aim and hope that these narratives contribute to a greater story data bank of cross-cultural teaching experiences.

For Anderson, telling teaching narratives is a means to an end. First-person stories like the ones I will tell are “raw data” (p.134). Once we can amalgamate all the first-person stories and collect and analyze all the raw data, we can then develop a third-person generalized framework that resonates with teachers’ storied lives. This is the conversation in which I want to participate, share, advance, and continue. Anderson says that storytelling is useful primarily to the teller, but it is educative to those listeners with a common conceptual framework (p. 135). The reason that teachers tell stories and conversely listen to them is to learn more about our craft, and the classroom is a situation that we know, pedagogy is a language that we share, and through the dialogue will a meta-narrative emerge about our teacher lives (p. 134). Conle (1999) hesitates to disembody the story from the teller: “The ‘I’ in that wider sense takes on a generalized tone and loses its contextualized narrative quality” (p. 14). Although the stories recounted in this thesis are personal, and their significance to me and my practice are obvious, I maintain the claim that stories have the capacity to reflect back to a generalized Other. Manguel (2007) says: “Stories distill our learning and lend it narrative form...Reading is

a task of memory in which stories allow us to enjoy the past experience of others as if it were our own” (p. 9). The *I* that my stories describe are autobiographical, yet with more readings, that subject in its storied-form can absorb the *I*'s of its readers and have wider resonance for a generalized audience.

Important to remember, and I will continue to reiterate, that even as a third-person meta-narrative reveals itself, there will always remain a wealth of raw data, new teaching stories with new teachers, students, places, and contexts that move the dialogue into new narrative spaces. This is what carries such great appeal for me about narrative inquiry, that the stories I tell will live on, and so will I. It connects the self to the teacher community, and takes into account all aspects of my life to explain my current approaches to practice. It is a conversation that repeats itself over time in new contexts with new people, inviting new stories to reconstitute the past and to understand the new present. Ultimately, narrativizing is an act of agency (Conle, 2000, p. 199). Living narratively is becoming one's stories and living by them.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) describe something of the process of thinking and teaching narratively:

The process of making meaning of our curriculum, that is, of the narratives of our experience, is both difficult and rewarding. It, too, has a curriculum in that narratives of experience may be studied, reflected on, and articulated in written form. (Cited in Olson, 2000, p. 173)

It is my goal throughout this inquiry to unpack my narrative experiences of teaching in Thailand, and describe how my ongoing story, like He's river, manipulated my teaching landscape in a foreign culture. Writing these stories now help me to understand them, and

later readings and re-readings will awaken me to new interpretations in a different present. In the next section, I will shift my use of narrative inquiry more specifically to culture and how my stories of people and places shaped my teaching self in a dialectical construction of classroom, curriculum, and being. I will expand more on Olson's (2000) *Curriculum as a Multistoried Process* and examine closely the idea of a "lived curriculum" (p. 171) where stories and individuals constantly guide the curriculum through a vibrant maze of narrative knowledge and interaction.

Breaching Levees and Narratives

"It's life... Some things happen sometimes like this." My student's comments and response to the tsunami, the most devastating natural disaster on record, was to me unnatural and disconnected from a world that deems itself just. I do not know what it was I was looking for. I did not know how or what to teach that day. Maybe I was hoping for some profound Buddhist reflections on the nature of life and death, some new perspective my students could provide as they often did, something that addressed tragedy in a light that I never before knew. I still felt the reverberations of the wave that hit less than a week prior, updated death tolls reported daily... It's life. Is it? Is it so banal? So simple? These were my emotions, and I returned to my house that afternoon feeling dismayed, frustrated, and even disappointed with my student's apparent ignorance and carelessness. It's life. This response brought for me new meaning nine months later, as I retold the story to myself and others, in a different place with different people, in a new present, and a new disaster.

I returned home to Victoria in May of that year to start graduate school. The adjustment back to Canadian life was arduous, finding myself a new person in an old life.

Graduate school was invigorating, and was starting to provide me with the language to tell my stories of cross-cultural teaching. Nevertheless, I spent most of my time missing Thailand and my life there. It was difficult to articulate the differences, and what it was that I experienced and to find audiences interested in these stories. I missed my classroom and the teacher conversations about trying to understand our cultural situations. I felt alone and alienated in my hometown.

My life in Thailand and the memories are visceral; they are experiences one feels more than one observes. For me, however, when Hurricane Katrina pulverized New Orleans and other parts of the Deep South in October 2005, the cultural differences were made glaringly clear, and the gambit of emotions and feelings, visceral and tangible were brought to bear. The subsequent questioning, outrage, and finger pointing in the media, and the social unrest that incurred in the aftermath of the hurricanes moved in me different cultural vibrations. The news was exhausted with survivor confessionals, stories of victims and heroes, debates and protest of the government's mishandling and ill preparation, and it went on and on. My students' solemn acceptance and reconciliation with the tsunami catastrophe was completely foreign to the outrage and anger all around me at home. When I think back to class that day, when I was soliciting some kind of Buddhist reflections to understand the disaster, it took Hurricane Katrina nine months later to realize that it was exactly that kind of reflection they provided. My student's comments brought to bear for me new meaning, and my tsunami narrative guided me in my understanding of people and places in this new moment of disarray.

The story of teaching that first day back after the tsunami in Thailand re-emerged and reverberated in me as I watched the news and listened to the discussions and arguments over the handling and management of the recovery efforts in New Orleans. What I was experiencing back home was what I was used to. This was my cultural self: questioning, reflecting, and imagining improvements or alternatives for the future. This was what I was expecting from my students nine months prior. Conversely, I found that I was then the person to be accepting and serene about Katrina while people around me were trying to understand the apparent unfairness of this tragedy. I was not as much guided by a cultural self, but more by a narrative self that knew the experience of the Thai response to crisis. The experience of the tsunami, in effect, transformed me and my relationship to the natural world. This story marks my own transformation, but also illustrates a fundamental difference between two cultures. The intricacies and nuances of a culture and how it manifests itself in different situations sets the framework for which I want to employ to discuss culture. Phillion (2002) says in her article *Classroom Stories of Multicultural Teaching and Learning*:

Narrative multicultural understandings do not spring forth from a deductive mind using pre-formulated theoretical frameworks; they flow from a slow thoughtful process of immersing oneself in the midst of life, soaking up the milieu one is in, developing relationships with people in the milieu, and allowing understandings to develop in this process. (p. 281)

My aim is to move away from formalistic notions of culture; I do not want to refer to the cultural idiosyncrasies of Thais or westerners to explain the events described in my stories. I am trying to move away from conversations about culture that focus on

difference, tolerance, and accommodation, and move more into domains of rhythm and feel, fluidity and flow. I believe that it is in the realm of the visceral that true cultural understandings can develop. Cultural *difference* suggests observation, voyeurism, and exoticism. Cultural *tolerance* suggests a superficial acceptance of another's views of which one does not necessarily share. Cultural *accommodation* suggests a power relationship where one has dependencies without which one could not succeed. All of these approaches, while often well intentioned, nevertheless maintain boundaries and invoke "othering" analyses. In this thesis, I hope to develop a cultural *sensory* that taps into what Eisner (2002) calls "qualitative intelligence," one of *feel* that emerges from the long and reiterative process of narrativization: a storied world where people are characters acting in concert and not in collision.

To be open to multiple narratives is to give the flexibility needed for a coherent understanding of cultural life (Bruner, 1996, p. 143). This may sound counter-intuitive because it suggests that a departure from unitary views of culture actually provide clarity to the idea of a cultural self. It may be convenient for outward descriptions for social vision, but a singular narrative restricts the inward need for individual hope. The curriculum milieu must straddle spatial lines between the self and society. The curriculum will also have more clarity and relevance if it is allowed to be fluid and rhythmic, catering to the cadence of the heartbeats that dynamic peoples with multiple narratives bring to classroom life. Olson (2000) says curriculum development and enactment is a multi-storied process where "students and teachers...interweave curriculum as a course of study and curriculum as narrative experience" (p. 170). Living narratively enables a world where the curriculum is lived; that is, the curriculum moves

away from unitary definition, and represents the embodied narratives of human experience. If viewed as a multi-storied process, Olson says curriculum then is allowed the same dynamism as its participants' narrative lives:

Curriculum, then, is what they experience situationally and relationally, each person constructing and reconstructing his or her narrative knowledge in response to interactions. (p. 171)

Aoki (1997) reflects this same point of view, that the curriculum is caught in the interstices of singular and multiple narratives. It represents generalized social visions, but must permit the flexibility that multiple narratives require (p. 263). The lived curriculum is a negotiation of sameness and difference (p. 265).

In this chapter, I have tried to detail and describe what possibilities a narrative epistemology enables, and to examine what stories do, what they provide, what they constrain, and what implications emerge from inquiry into the inhabited storied space. Up to this point, I have tip-toed around the issue of culture. Throughout this inquiry, I aim to develop a conception of culture that draws on Eisner's qualitative intelligence of *feel*, to recognize culture as dynamic, social, unpredictable, and not properly defined, which is naturally divisive and intimidating. I believe that this kind of conception is complementary to more sincere notions of cross-cultural and lived curricula.

Many have noted that the way in which we come to know is by our relations to others (Gearing, 1984; Grumet, 1993; Olson, 2000; Sokefeld, 1999; Tsolidis, 1997). Recognition of difference in others constitutes one's conception of self (Sokefeld, 1999, p. 418). The different cultural responses to the tsunami and then the hurricane marked for me more generalized clarity about the cultural differences in western and Thai culture.

These stories are my current interpretations of those experiences, and they are the stories I inhabit to describe aspects of cultural difference. All this being said, with my investigations and reflections of cross-cultural *teaching*, these stories do not function as teaching aids, but they accentuate exactly what is described: *difference*. Cultural difference is not something to overcome, to tame, to tolerate, or to accommodate. It is not something to *observe* in the Other. Instead, for this thesis I want to establish difference as a *revelation* to parts of us that are otherwise unknowable without the intervention of the Other (Manguel, 2007). This is the utility of living a storied life; that is, to recognize others, no matter how different, as characters in one another's stories, embodying the personalities that we are to them and they to us in an ongoing narrative. This does not make difference a fearful or oppositional experience, but instead a unifying one.

In my experience, difference-as-observation does not provide possibilities in a storied space, but instead it constrains. In the next chapters, I will examine more closely how storytelling can be an act of differentiation, and also how living narratively can be a heuristic for unity and cultural fluidity. The former shapes one's perceptions and acknowledges the identity commitments one has to one's self. The latter enables one to problematize and negotiate their commitments in uncertain worlds, providing possibilities for new and emerging identities to unfold (Tsolidis, 2001, p. 106). International Education, by virtue of the many different people involved and the diversity of narrative spaces, is a place for what Tsolidis (2001) says holds the "possibility of radical pedagogies."

In cross-cultural education, Tsolidis argues that one loosens "her monolithic identity and, instead, becomes fluid, fragmented and responsive to the many contexts in

which she functions” (p. 106). Williams (2003) describes it as a phenomenon of “cultural flow” between various ethnic, media, technological, and economical landscapes (p. 605). Aoki (1997) describes this view as “the metaphysics of presence” (p. 260). He says that this view asks us “to consider identity not so much as *something* already present, but rather a production, in the throes of being constituted as we live in places of difference” (p. 260). The tsunami and hurricane stories, for me, both marked feelings of difference (my disconnected feeling with my students in response to the tsunami) and fluidity (where my students’ response re-emerged in the storied space in reaction to the hurricane, taking new meaning and understanding of that context of difference in relation to contexts of familiarity). Stories lend “presence” (Bailey, 1997, p. 155) to the energies of voices and bodies in uncertain times. I found myself engaged in a reiterative hermeneutic process of filling out empty conventions in my own living narrative.

Eisner (2002) describes a particular qualitative intelligence that asks one to rely on feel (p. 9) that responds to nuance in a situation and interaction. Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) talk about “bodily rhythms” (p. 671) that develop from teaching:

Rhythms are not incidental to the work that people do. They are central to the knowledge teachers have of their teaching...the idea of cycles and rhythms leads, we believe, quite naturally to a broader understanding that is the life that a teacher is leading, overall, that is the most important framework, the practical-theoretical context for understanding what it is that a teacher knows and does. (p. 671-672)

If living narratively is an embodied way of knowing as Connelly and Clandinin (1997) suggest, then part and parcel of what the stories are and what they do is their joining of visceral and mental experience. It is this, I believe, that narrative knowing permits: it

opens up possibilities in storied spaces for emerging identities by decentering positivist notions of difference and definition. As I claimed before, cross-cultural education cannot depend solely on observation and analyses of the other, but needs to pay attention to the aesthetic nature of nuance, feel, and the intuitive knowledge teachers embody as a result of their immersion in foreign contexts, with their development of a cultural sensory, and with their ongoing self-conscious narrativizations of their experience. “Education conceived of as aesthetic experience,” says Weddington (2004), “ensures its significance and necessity in all human experience and its intimate connection and dependence on those humans involved...in any particular experience; that short of death, it is impossible to separate education from any individual experience” (p. 124). In the next chapter, I will examine traditional educational approaches to multiculturalism and explore the problematic politics of identity and place, as they find expression in personal narratives of the lived experience of teaching.

Chapter 3: Multiculturalism and *Eveline*

“Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.”

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

I rode my motorbike to work every morning. On the way, there was a high climbing overpass that went over the railway, a long skinny line of tracks cutting through the land, marking the city from the country. From the summit of the overpass was a view that I looked forward to, an open plain of checkered rice fields with palm trees scattered throughout. The plains’ expanse was only interrupted by the lush mountains jutting up at the horizon. A thin layer of fog drew a line across the countryside. Lazy water buffalos were being ushered to work by the farmers. For extra effect, the rising morning sun shone its eastward shine to produce a misty orange over the vast watery plains, illuminating the mountain backdrop to the deep and dark greens of the sprouting rice plants. Riding over the bridge, the rushing wind, and inspirational view catalyzed a spontaneous and deep inhalation. A regenerating breath. A respiration. The lungs felt fuller than before, my body was lighter on the bike, and new spirits took hold. It was a wondrous and wonderful way to start the day. It was a way to recognition that not only was my home very far away, but more revealing that I was being overcome with this land and with this place. It made me happy. Thailand is nicknamed “the land of smiles,” and daily experiences such as the bike ride could do nothing but produce a smile in the land. Life and story were contemporary. Experience and knowledge were lived in tandem.

In what way does place play into the dynamics of life and culture? How does the spirit of the moment regenerate our sense of intention? I arrived to work.

The literature course I was assigned to teach came with a syllabus proposing to survey writers from Hemingway to Steinbeck, from Orwell to Joyce. It seemed an exciting opportunity, but yet a monumental undertaking. These stories come from lands so far away from this one, with cultures and politics and emotions deeply influenced by their environments, the peoples, and the histories of their situation. My students had no cultural ties to these writers (Right?). These stories had no connections to this place (Did they?). I was motivated to teach these stories, but all the while questioning the relevance, being self-critical, and meticulous over my planning and teaching.

As I was feeling more at home with every ride over the bridge, with every day in this place, the literature I was teaching in class was taking me and my students to different mental spaces far far away. The view remained but the stories changed. It was difficult to gauge the level of relationship my Thai students, natives to this land, were developing with the writing: artifacts of another. When we came to James Joyce's Eveline, there was a spatial shift: special and insightful responses of anxieties, giving indication of both the spiritual and physical encompassing nature of the lands for my students. Just like the restrictive physical boundaries of a book with pages and words has the capacity to free the mind to new universes and far off places, the fields and the surrounding mountains provide open spaces as well as boundaries for both cultural identities and experiential limitations.

In the previous chapter, I stated that one aim for this thesis was to develop a “cultural sensory,” to use my stories as symbolic gestures of cross-cultural teaching and living. It is not the “ins and outs” of Thai culture I aim to represent here, but to relate

moments of fluidity and feel between mutual cultural others, and to examine what my stories do to negotiate my experiences with my being. What about these narratives is emblematic for a more general teacher audience interested in cross-cultural education? Is this a guidebook for the traveling teacher? In one respect it might be said to provide tales of caution, advisory warnings to those venturing into the unknown spaces of foreign classrooms; but the stories here are part of a deeply personal canon that represent narratives of feel and transformation, inspiring my present sense of agency for teaching and for life.

In this chapter, I will explore the concept of physical place and mental space from work done in phenomenology. Described above is a narrative of lived experience, and it represents for me moments of acute consciousness, visceral feelings of exhilaration in a foreign place. Giroux (1981) says “‘lived’ experiences...make up the texture and rhythm of daily life” (p. 94). Grounding experiential learning to a specific Deweyan *situation*, to a self-aware sense of place where one is conscious of what one is experiencing in the rhythms of life lived will then enable me in my role as educational researcher to articulate a unique approach to multiculturalism and multicultural education. Identity as it is related to a place gives gravity to individual conceptions of Self in multiculturalism, a contested ideology often accused of flighty universalism with little regard for personal and cultural commitments (Edgerton, 1996; Eldering, 1996; Ghosh, 1996; Kellner, 1998). This conversation is intended to examine the limitations and possibilities of multiculturalism in order to think with higher sophistication about postmodern identities emerging in the global age of International Education. Later I will expand on this story above to describe my revelation to student discovery as their own cultural anxieties and feelings

transcended the enormous cultural and physical distance between us and inherent in the literature course.

Place and Cultural Difference

"Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided."

(From James Joyce' *Eveline*)

In a multicultural classroom, pedagogy is not practised in the same way as it would if the participants were all of one culture. This is a given. For the teacher, this then might mean speaking with more accessibility for students with language difficulties. It may mean learning something about the student's cultural identities and persuasions: Are they of collectivistic or individualistic cultures? Do scores and letter grades motivate them, or do they find participation and group work more engaging? Are they comfortable with speaking out in class? Do they represent their responses by other means? These are all aspects of multicultural education well explored and investigated in academic literature and are situations that cultural teachers face daily (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Fox & Gay, 1995; James, 2001; Tan, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Worth, 1993).

Teachers work exceptionally hard to be culturally sensitive, to develop and provide supplements to accommodate those who may be culturally isolated from the mainstream. Although culturally sensitive pedagogy is the duty of the meaningful and thoughtful teacher, without a feel and frequency for the nature of pedagogical cross-cultural encounters is like lifting the hood of a stalling car and letting it cool so it can go

again, all without knowledge about the inner workings of the different parts and how each informs the other. Fox and Gay (1995) write:

The cultural conditioning of students and teachers is a major determinant of how they act and react in instructional situations. Because they often do not share the same background experiences, ethnic identities, and frames of reference, the *incompatibilities* can become major obstacles to teaching and learning effectiveness in pluralistic classrooms. (p. 69)

Bruner (1996) laments that western education is too much about the explicit, visible, and measurable experiences in the classroom, and therefore does not do justice to the great inter-subjective capacities people have (p. 22). We too easily attribute our teaching difficulties to cultural difference, or as Fox and Gay (1995) put it:

“incompatibilities.” They say for example that “motivation to read means something quite different for Filipino students than it does for Japanese...If teachers know how to motivate students from each of these groups, this will lead to great achievement for them in the mastery of reading” (p. 70). They say that teachers need to “develop literacy” (p. 71) for different cultures in order to respond to the different perspective and orientations of cultural others (p. 77). Elderling (1996) says that this multicultural approach has some “shortcomings” because “no theoretical connection has been sought in psychological theories” and is “not based on empirical research on the culture of the groups concerned” (p. 320-321). I believe that these kinds of observations are desperately shortsighted and do little to advance our understandings of cross-cultural teaching. What Fox, Gay, and Elderling are here describing is what Giddens (2007) calls “naive multiculturalism,”

(p.18) approaches that try to define and articulate the textures of cross-cultural teaching practice.

But what does this look like in action? How does a teacher “develop literacy” for a Filipino or Japanese student as though there is an essence that defines how people from these places learn? I must make clear that cultural knowledge for foreign students will enhance a teacher’s sensitivity, and will often bring that student and teacher closer together. However, I believe that what is described above, “naïve multiculturalism,” where knowledge is relative to the perspectives of its participants without attention to the place they inhabit and the current environment that informs that knowledge, denies the capacities people have to work together. These “incompatibilities” are better interpreted as opportunities for intersubjectivity, and should not be reduced to essentialist language about culture. I believe, as Bruner points out, that there needs more privilege given to the intuitive and intersubjective knowledge that make up the nuances and dynamic workings of a multicultural classroom.

To be sure, people are different and every culture has particular views of how an educational setting works, but a more developed and deliberate understanding of what is at play: the histories, mythologies, philosophies, and politics that make cross-cultural encounters possible and necessary; the *individual’s* experience and flexibility with their own personal narratives; *and* consequences for the future are all parts of an educational continuum that is constantly being put into question by the present (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Conle, 2000; Kellner, 1998; MacIntyre, 1981). Multicultural education is a narrative influenced by many others. It is more than cultural difference that makes multicultural education difficult (Eldering, 1996, p. 319). It is more than culturally

sensitive pedagogy that makes a good cultural teacher. It is a continued awareness and self-conscious reflection on all these narratives, for the nuances that exist deep beneath the hood, the inner sensibilities of cultural identity, that need constant care and maintenance to make education formative and life-long. It is all part of understanding what one is not (Abram, 1996; Alfred, 2003). Bent over the engine, one is just as much looking for what is not the problem as much as for what is. For example, Canadians have engaged in a longstanding discussion over national identity and unity. Canadians are people who tend to and ultimately do identify themselves by what they are not (such as those with whom we share a very long border), but at the same time they are a people that identify with, if anything, the land (from the far north, the prairies, the coast, the great lakes, and so forth) (Sumara et al, 2001). It is no accident that Canada, the most celebrated project of multiculturalism in the world (Giddens, 2007) is made up of a people so deeply identified with the land they inhabit. ¹

¹ It is important for me to qualify more explicitly my criticism of multiculturalism, particularly the way it manifests itself abroad as an imported ideology for education. It would exceed the limits of this discussion to describe and unpack the history, politics, and economics that have produced the pluralistic societies we now know as reality in countries such as America and Canada. However, it is important to note that while multiculturalism has been made official policy and a means by which Canadian society and identity are defined, it has been widely regarded as an ideological threat to culture and identity in America. Canadian multiculturalism is a sophisticated project, a “mosaic,” and by no means a completed or perfect one, enabled and propelled by an undeveloped sense of identification as to what “Canada” is or what it means to be “Canadian,” (as a dual colony, as a bilingual nation, as a vast land mass with myriad indigenous peoples, and so on) (Howard-Hassman, 1999; Wilson, 1993). America, on the other hand, is a proudly nationalistic country, inspired by its independence from the Old World and from its colonial ties. And so in spite of Canada’s and America’s being equally pluralistic, foreigners remain foreigners within American borders and are pressured to assimilate to the “melting pot” of American rituals and customs (Citrin et al, 2001); yet generally in Canada, newcomers find a meaningful and engaged place in society with an entitled sense of multicultural citizenship. However, these statements do little justice to the complexities, nuances, and difficulties with both versions of multiculturalism. I rehearse them here to point out that although there are several distinct versions of multiculturalism, and the version favoured by the United States seems to be the one that prevails in International Education as I experienced it. Foreign teachers, I believe, are often guilty of wanting it both ways. They subscribe to a “naïve multiculturalism” in the classroom, expecting students to work and labour to assimilate to the school experience western teachers provide (as they are education “authorities”), yet in life outside the school, they are foreigners and always will be where pluralism is not the reality for a place such as Thailand.

In society we live by assumed and inherited narratives that shape our identities, perceptions, and ambitions (Geertz, 1995, p. 61). The structure of those narratives makes general definitions of discourse, rules of behaviour by which people live and learn (Bailey, 1997; Ellis, 1993, p. 384). Gay (2006) says, “the actual process of discourse engagement is influenced by culture” (p. 331). Our cultural narratives lay out the plots and characterizations typical of our situations, of where we live (Ghosh, 1996; McAdams, 1993). In Canada, I am literate in the discourses I grew up learning: the language, behavioural and gendered expectations, as well as how to communicate in the multiple discourses that make up my home society: how to be a student, a friend, an athlete, a teacher, a son, and all of the different roles I embody (Spivak, 1990, p. 60). As a teacher in my own culture, I have a set of reliable expectations and assumptions of what a Canadian classroom looks like, of its possibilities and of its challenges. When I was preparing to teach the literature course in Thailand, in a different culture with different modes of discourse, I was stuttering through a foreign cultural narrative whose characters performed differently and whose plots had different purpose. Our discourse of language and behaviour did not sync, and so modes of communication were oftentimes confusing. Tsolidis (2001) asks, “How do we teach and learn in classrooms where a range of assumptions which many of us have hitherto taken for granted are no longer relevant” (p. 98)? For this chapter, cultural difference is rooted in nuances of place and informed by the situation, interaction, and physical environment, all coalescing into particular forms of discourse in the moment. The place forms the culture. *Other* places form *different* cultures. Edgerton (1996) says:

The concept of the *other* is a crucial one for understanding the construction of a *sense of place*. Creation of a notion what constitutes *them and us*, the meaning derived from *difference*, of who, therefore, is *other* and the subsequent exclusion of the *other* (even within one's self) are often critical elements to the *sense of place*...Uncovering place in this way involves the process known to anthropologists as 'making the familiar strange.' (p. 134)

The world is shrinking. The proliferation of technology and trade to once distant corners has brought the remote and removed into our own backyards, societies, and schools. Reciprocally, teachers are answering fuzzy long-distance calls for job postings in all parts of the globe, country hopping from culture to culture, school to school—place to place. Despite the increased ease of global communication with the spread of English as an international language, the accessibility and affordability of technology worldwide, and the inter-dependency of countries for commerce, teachers and students who travel abroad encounter enormous cultural challenges where foreign visitors make familiar places strange. Cultural boundaries are not as easily crossed as oceans and borders. I want to investigate more of what Edgerton calls a "sense of place," how the culture is a part of a three-dimensional physical environment that needs to be negotiated in a fourth dimension: the mental environment (Lasn, 2001). The acquisition of feel and flow, of a cultural sensory where meaning unifies those dimensions, when the exhilaration of the motorbike rides continues rhythmically and organically into the mental spaces of the classroom.

Giddens (2007) calls it the "global age:" a way of life governed by technology and transportation, where people anywhere in the world are connected instantly at any

given time or place. “Globalization” for Giddens is the set of institutions that make this kind of connectivity possible. International Education is one of these institutions, setting up a cosmopolitan space for cultural teachers, students, and curriculum. I believe that more attention has been focused in the research literature on the pragmatic needs of everyday pedagogy, but too little has been given to the personally challenging and transformative processes that an individual teacher experiences while negotiating the contours of global postmodern terrain (Alfred, 2003).

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) credit Dewey with having founded a model of experience for narrative inquiry: a “metaphorical three dimensional narrative inquiry space,” which consists of interaction, continuity, and situation. In their own method of narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin propose a four-directional model: inward and outward, and backward and forward. The former two explore a person’s introspective reflections and then projects out to the social world. The latter two examine narrative change over time. Why does Connelly and Clandinin’s inquiry model omit the *situation* dimension in Dewey? Dewey (1938) states:

The conceptions of *situation* and *interaction* are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment. (p. 41)

My own narrative inquiry relies heavily on the place in which they were initially experienced and the social actors then present. Consequently, my stories are self-consciously and self-reflexively linked to the life-world moments (VanManen, 1990). They encompass the situational dimension, and inquire into how one’s narrative identity incorporates the people, the time, and also the place. Abram (1996) reflects this sentiment

eloquently when he says, “A story envelops its protagonists much as we ourselves are enveloped by the terrain. In other words, we are situated in the land in much the same way that characters are situated in a story” (p. 163). Taking a phenomenological stance allows me as an educational researcher to discuss the immediate and visceral experiences, connected to a very specific place. By doing so, I believe that this inquiry encompasses a sophisticated approach to multiculturalism. Later in this chapter, by use of story I will describe the beginnings of a “lived curriculum,” that ultimately became something other than what I expected. For now, I want to examine closer how living narratively can attune the multicultural teacher to his or her cultural sensory, what stories do to awaken the mental environment, and then what the possible implications are for international educators. These next two sections are entitled: “I am nowhere. / I am now here.”

I am nowhere.

“But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married—she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then.

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

The differentiation of my senses, as well as their spontaneous convergence in the world at large, ensures that I am a being destined for relationship: it is primarily through my engagement with what is *not* me that I effect the integration of my senses, and thereby experience my own unity and coherence. (Abram, 1996, p. 125)

Here Abram is describing the phenomenological experience of tapping into the primordial understandings of *coming to be*. He is describing an instance of synaesthesia,

when our senses converge on an experience. It is a corporeal moment between objectivity and consciousness: a moment in the “life-world” domain, otherwise called the *lebenswelt* (p. 40). He says, “the life-world is the world of our immediately lived experience, *as we live it*, prior to all our thoughts about it” (p. 40). He explains that this domain is a collective one because it is at the root of experience where subsequent consciousness begins to layer on its interpretive influence. The *lebenswelt* precedes and transcends cultural differences or social mores (p. 40). It is an ambiguous, contradictory, and unpredictable dimension of experience, but it is the seed from which our actions sprout. It is in the life-world where our senses interact with those of others, and then are catalyzed in an embodied response. It is also in the life-world where we interact with the environment we inhabit, described by Abram (1996) as “a place where the relations between the human and the more-than-human-worlds must be continually negotiated” (p. 256). It is in this domain where our eyes see an oncoming car and our body jumps, or where the sun produces in us a sensuous smile when it emerges from behind a dark cloud; it is where revelatory expressions of understanding radiate from student faces after a well-taught concept. In spite of cultural crevasses and the different narrative identities entailed by varying roles and responsibilities, a foreign teacher can take some solace in the collective domain of the life-world. I believe this is the contemporary space where fluidity and flow move in rhythms that reverberate out from our consciousness, where innate experiences are translated into personal narratives and go through a process of dislocation from the moment of “*as we live it*” to new meaningful moments of “*as we tell it.*”

Moment to moment, the narratives may take on new meanings in new contexts and have different purposes or functions for the teller, but the life-world source remains rooted in the story's profundity. VanManen (1990) says that the phenomenological lived experience is the acute awareness of experience as one is experiencing it (p. 35).

Likewise for Polkinghorne (1988), it is at this point of narrative knowing where one acquires a sense of agency. Dilthey (1985) describes this kind of relationship between the physical experiences of life with the mental environment:

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective. (Cited in VanManen, 1990, p. 35)

Riding my bike over the bridge to work was an occasion when I was intensely aware of the experience in the moment, affected by the physical terrain from which I acquired a sense of connection and relationship with the "more-than-human world." This need not be construed as mysticism. Those moments were visceral and specific to the motorbike ride; now relayed in narrative form they aspire to the condition of narrative truth. This is the aim of phenomenology; it is to, as VanManen (1990) says: "transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience" (p. 36). Edgerton (1996) eloquently describes this reflection process in conjunction with a "sense of place:"

The value of this rereading and rewriting for me is more in its suggestion of the possibility of reconstructing a place (historically, psychologically, geographically) through which I might examine my present relations to others, to myself, to “place”—relations that have a direct bearing on my teaching and notions of knowledge. (p. 152)

Here Edgerton is describing a process of reflection through literature, one medium of intense human intersubjectivity (Bredella, 2003; Bruner, 1990). Through her experience of literature, she hearkens to the different dimensions in both the stories and in her own life, and she re-examines them in her present situation, thereby revealing a sense of *presence* in the present (Bailey, 1997). The story of the motorbike ride serves this same kind of reflective purpose, as the life-world experiences now take narrative shape, the experiences of driving to work everyday through the Thai landscape melds into the experiences of working at the university. The narrative now represents an autobiographical moment that structures my current frames of reference towards living, learning, and teaching in a foreign culture.

My experience of teaching the literature course provided daily moments of reaction and non-reaction from my students to the course content. It was a pedagogical process I found myself *feeling* my way through, and meanwhile developing a *feel for* (Bredella, 2003). I managed the adjustments to life and work in a new place because I was learning the cultural rhythms in Thailand, anticipating my experiences before they happened, and so the life-world responses were less and less ones of confusion or nervousness and more frequently ones of relative comfort and acknowledgment. This was recapitulated in the revelatory and unexpected responses that emerged in *Eveline*,

responses that I will revisit later in this inquiry. I was continuously discovering the flow of the life-world, and slowly starting to comprehend what kinds of experiences shocked and frustrated or delighted and engaged my senses. It was a frequency that I continued to roll over on the cultural dial, fading in and out of static and coming closer to clearer expectations of what my students' life-worlds expected and would respond well to. I developed a sense of empathy with my students (Alfred, 2003), a cultural sensory that served me well to anticipate some of the possibilities and pitfalls of a proposed western literature curriculum.

The life-world is thus peripherally present in any thought or activity we undertake. Yet whenever we attempt to *explain* this world conceptually, we seem to forget our active participation within it. (Abram, 1996, p. 40)

As I tell my stories that represent my remembered, re-constituted experiences about cross-cultural teaching and living, I am admittedly guilty of constructing plot driven stories in an effort to provoke and persuade my readers, to give the stories aesthetic appeal. I am engaged in the construction of a neutral and universal space for dialogue (Flower, 2002, p. 184). With each new telling, the experience is multiply removed from the original life-world moment and morphs into a postmodern and subjective artefact (Worth, 1993, p. 8), and could possibly be included in conversations about "naïve multiculturalism." My stories in this chapter illustrate the acquisition of cultural rhythms, but in their telling, they are dislodged to move or frame a discussion that is dislocated from experience and deployed as research texts. The stories are personal and they are specific, yet without serious and honest reflection, they can be corrupted by postmodern entitlements and universal ideas about multicultural teaching.

Multiculturalism is a slippery concept, as Powell (2003) alikes it to picking “up a jellyfish—you can do it, but the translucent, free-floating entity turns almost instantly into an unwieldy blob of amorphous abstraction” (p. 156). The concept of multiculturalism is charged with incoherence and anarchy (Scott, 1992). It has been accused of trying to swipe aside histories of violence and discriminations to create a utopian site of cultural and historical vacuum (Scott, 1992). With regard to globalization and education, Livingston (2001) asserts “education itself...is the scene of powerful acts of disembedding as it equips local residents for a wider world” (p. 149). Perez-Torres (1993-1994) says that multiculturalism, while trying to move virtuously into spaces of inclusion, risks conversely to “dissolve into fluid movement toward a joyful chaos” (p. 166).

I am now here.

“It was hard work—a hard life—but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.”

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

A year ago when I was visiting New York, I returned to my friend’s apartment after having been bumped and jostled on the seemingly impersonal, unfriendly, and fast-paced streets off upper Broadway in Manhattan. I asked my friend, a New Yorker born and raised, about how it was to grow up there in such a harsh environment. She laughed a loud Big Apple laugh as I described my being bullied in the subways, and she explained: “On the surface—yes—New York is a hard place. But when you live here, and you go out everyday, and pick out your coffee shop, your dry-cleaner, your grocer, your pub and

get to know your neighbours, and the array of characters living around you—you see them everyday—then they will be the most warm-hearted, most gentle, and kindest people you will every meet. You create your community.”

Her thoughtful explanation of living in New York, the visceral harsh lifestyle that is apparent on the surface of the Manhattan culture, alludes to the process of getting to know the interactions present in that situation. It is the people that inhabit the place that give it a meaning... a culture. Giroux (1996) addresses the “identity politics” of multiculturalism. The discourse of multiculturalism suspends individuals from the cultural contexts (Ghosh, 1996; Giroux, 1996; Kellner, 1998): their histories, races, genders, and classes. Bredella (2003) says that identity politics ask cultural peoples to distance themselves from other cultural ways of knowing (p. 36). As reflected in my experience of New York, the universalistic assumptions I felt (that New York was a mean place) had total disregard for the identities that inhabited that place. The dynamics of the place create a culture that is seemingly fast and intense, yet if I were to take a moment to question my cultural assumptions about how one is to live and interact in a city, to recognize that *situation* and *interaction* are inseparable, and take the time to give thought to the people and to the place, I might discover something quite different much as what my friend described: warm-hearted, gentle, and kind.

The identity politics implicit in multicultural education places the onus on the individual student to take responsibility for learning. Learning is a cultural act (Bruner, 1990). If working under a multicultural ideology, the collective learning experience is posited as an a-cultural vacuum, where knowledge is dislocated from one’s cultural epistemologies. Therefore, the individual student, oppressed for their cultural

membership and unique ways of knowing, must retreat inward for their learning (Bredella, 2003).

Powell (2003) notes that multiculturalism decentralizes multiple discourses of identity for the purposes of political pandering (p. 159). Despite the theoretical conveniences multiculturalism provides, diverse individual voices arise out of “historically shaped and socially embedded assumptions, practices, and values” (Flower, 2002, p. 183). Cross-cultural teaching requires that these voices are heard and have a say over what and how they learn. Western exports such as multiculturalism tend to silence rather than liberate individual voices.

Back in Thailand, I had great apprehension towards teaching the western literature course. Was I to teach the culture from the time and place from which these works came? Is that possible? Was I to free my novice students, in a postmodern approach, to apply their own interpretations and meaning to the literature? Ideologies of multicultural education seemed to fail from these angles. On one hand, if I were to approach the literature in a naive way (as Giddens describes), and to ask my students to suspend their own cultural knowledge in order to engage with the literature would be to betray the cultural place and students’ identity. On the other hand, to let my students loose on the culturally foreign literature would be reckless and negligent to the cultural place of the author’s position (Sumara et al, 2001). Giroux (1981) says:

Classroom knowledge is often treated as an external body of information, the production of which appears to be independent of human beings. From this perspective, objective knowledge is viewed as independent of time and place; it becomes universalized, ahistorical knowledge...knowledge in this view...takes on

the appearance of being context free. That is, knowledge is divorced from the political and cultural traditions that give it meaning. (p. 52-53)

Utopian approaches for multicultural teaching encourage the educator to unite with students in a new culture-less space called the classroom. In my own instance, this approach was all very liable to topple in a painful recognition that my pedagogical practice would not translate to different cultural ways of knowing. What became evident over the course of teaching *Eveline* was that knowledge could indeed co-exist between out there as an external static independent body in time and place, and *also* more immediately in here, our dynamic classroom circumstance. The story comes from *then* and *there*, but the personal meaning making happens *now, here*. Bruner (1990) says:

Human action could not be fully or properly accounted for from the inside out—by reference only to intrapsychic dispositions, traits, learning capacities, motives, or whatever. Action requires for its explication that it be *situated*, that it be conceived of as continuous with a cultural world. (p. 105)

Worth (1993) describes a culturally rooted concept of “inventory”: a definition of identity as a “complex historical process, but does not construct the self from the outside as postmodernists do” (p. 18). Worth critiques multicultural discursive efforts as an exercise that constructs diverse identity as unitary. His notion of “inventory” instead “posits the erasure of such historical processes from one’s awareness and offers a method of retrieving such processes...a mediating technique between a humanistic identity (in which the subject signifies the object) and a postmodern identity (in which the subject is constructed by the signifying object)” (p. 18-19). Nevertheless, postmodern deconstructions of multiculturalism often result in clearer and more defined boundaries

between diverse peoples, and at least establish feelings of what some have described as “in-between-ness” (He & Phillion, 2001; Roberts, 2003; Worth, 1993). The political juggle that is multiculturalism insufficiently addresses the realities of individuals: the point here is that individual identity is historically and culturally fixed in the primary discourses marked by place.

Scott (1992) argues that identity politics implicated in multicultural ideology provides a “false clarity” (p. 19). He says in order to transcend universalistic approaches that seek to de-problematize the realities of different cultures with different epistemologies, practitioners need to “historicize the question of identity,” to analyze identity productions and then to question the autonomy of any individual under the scrutiny of his or her cultural self as defined and constructed by the Other. Paradoxically, historicizing identity will “offer the possibility of a more unified view” (p. 16). This is to say, if I recognize my interactive experience with a cultural other as a meeting of two individuals historically tied with ways of knowing generations in the making, arising out of and situated in a location, I believe that I am more equipped, accepting, and open to the differences we will encounter.

Giroux and McLaren (1993) describe a “pedagogy of place,” which “points to the need for cultural workers to reinvent and reconstruct new spaces for engaging critical pedagogy as an ever-becoming relation of theory and practice” (p. 77). The challenges of cross-cultural education are not so much about the different histories and epistemologies that individuals embody (although culturally rooted antagonism towards a people is no doubt an ever-complicated issue) as much as they are about how individuals situated

themselves in a flexible interpretive space conducive to cross-cultural fluidity and flow.

Giroux (1996) says:

Central to such a position is creating a discourse of agency, one which recognizes that the problem is not the geography of multiple subject positions that students inhabit, but how students actually negotiate them within a geography of desire, affect, and rationality. (p. 77)

In this discussion (I am nowhere/I am now here), my intention is to illustrate a fusion of theoretical perspectives that all allude to a place, a site, a location, or a space with reference to cross-cultural encounters in teaching. I am trying to show the compatibility of Dewey's *situation* in the nature of experience with Connelly and Clandinin's adaptation to a "metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space," Giroux's postmodern structuring of "pedagogy of place," and the reflective process of self-identification and differentiation by establishing a "sense of place" as described by Edgerton. My contribution to this conversation is a working example of story as an active mechanism of "ever-becoming," negotiating a Self narratively in foreign contexts. Self-conscious narrativizing is for me a method reflective of Giroux's "discourse of agency." Giroux (1993) calls on cross-cultural educators to be more self-conscious and reflective of their own cultural and political locations (p.77). Telling these stories represents my reflections of moments where I am hermeneutically engaged in a process of identification and ongoing and reiterative interpretation of who I was then and now, there and here (Edgerton, 1996). Narrativizing my experience is a discourse of agency (Giroux, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988). The stories empower and enable me to reconcile the multiple discourses, and the various and varying borders of identity that emerge in cross-

cultural education. Critics of multiculturalism charge it with dissolving those borders and merging the discourses under ideological claims of tolerance and accommodation, cleaning the identity slates of history and primary discourses that come from somewhere else. Multicultural education is *not* about dissolving borders, nor is it about unlearning or abandoning one's cultural commitments for another; rather, it is to tap into a space that assumes nothing: a situation of experience, a three-dimensional narrative space, a pedagogy of place, a sense of place; it is a storied space where characters play an array of roles and can draw on appropriate discourses in changing contexts. To quote Giroux again:

Educators and cultural workers cannot be content to be in one discourse. Critical educators have to become border crossers, allowing the focus of their analysis to shift, move, circle back on itself, and push against its own discourse so as to extend and deepen its implications for critical pedagogy while tracing out a recognizable shape of the complexity that informed its underlying project. (p. 78)

What Giroux here describes is a hermeneutic process of inquiry. This inquiry is intended to be a discourse of agency, of situating myself in a narrative space that allows me a malleable positioning that anticipates cultural borders as pedagogical possibilities instead of cultural walls. Narrative as discourse-of-agency describes for me a space for fluidity and flow, an avenue through which I can recognize the possibilities and limitations of a multicultural classroom. Moreover, narrative allows me, as a researcher, to turn back on my experiences, to be an "involved observer," that interprets with renewed objectivity. Over the course of teaching the literature course to my Thai students, I was constantly aware of the experiences as they were happening, affected by

the life-world, reacting to it, and interpreting in the narrative space of the mental environment.

New Cultures in New Mental Spaces

“Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air.”

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

And so it went... my literature course evolved day to day in class. Students came with their texts graffiti-ridden with underlining, translations, and extensive marginalia. Back-broken dictionaries and bedazzled students hashed through the harsh prose of the reading list. I felt enormous sympathy for them. I too often had conversations with other western teachers who felt little inclination to help the students understand the volumes of English they were asked to learn and understand, since after all, it is the life of a student and the demands of a university program. The university touted itself as an international institution, using English as the medium of instruction, and so our students were, as described by the administration, to be held to the rigorous standards of native speaking students in English speaking countries. I struggled to position myself philosophically: to place the onus on myself to make the students successful in a course similar to a university English course in the West.

I was living in a culture that I was in the middle of learning myself. I laboured through every Thai conversation at the market, at the coffee shop, the restaurant, the laundromat, just getting half of every sentence and inferring the rest, sometimes accurately and sometimes not. How could I expect my students to understand clearly

James Joyce, to be fluent in the cultural literacies of history, politics, and people represented in these stories, especially when in this culture I could hardly barter myself a fair price for a taxi? Moreover, what relevance did Joyce have to them, and how would they benefit from all the underlining, note taking, and head splitting reading I was asking of them? The difficulties to understand the material were clear, both in practical language barriers and in cultural knowledge represented in the stories.

We looked at various texts. I reconfigured my teaching approaches again and again, reflecting on the student responses—verbal and non-verbal—that affected the tone and dynamics of each class. I spoke with Thai colleagues to understand those classroom experiences. I invented and introduced various ways for the students to respond to the literature. They recognized the lengths to which I was going to meet their interests, and in turn they were motivated to meet mine. This dialectical experience was governed by the life-world day-to-day discoveries of first-time teaching and first-time learning of literature in a cross-cultural context. It was a lived curriculum of learning to teach and learning to learn.

We looked at Eveline, a short story from The Dubliners. We worked in groups. We storyboarded. We looked at pictures of old Dublin. We listened to Irish folk songs. Discussed plot, characters, and events. But the story's relevance only became clear, unexpectedly so, when the students discovered the more worldly themes present in the story, ideas and emotions that had special significance to them.

Eveline is a story of a girl, sitting at her window looking down at the street, recalling old memories of people and formative moments in her life. She is to leave that evening for Argentina and a new life with her lover, but she sits and remembers a

promise to her long-deceased mother to take care of her father, a once abusive man. Her father is old and sick, much like the view out the window, a life short on promise or freedom. She eventually decides honour her promise and stay home at the end of the story, watching her lover from the pier, sailing away to Buenos Aries.

I made the questions and assignments personal. The students were not asked to write essays, but there was a repertoire of responses, established in previous weeks, to represent their connections to the story. I emphasized personal connectivity, feel and flow, and not language-based criteria. I did not want English or cultural fluency to hinder or to limit student responses. As a result, they produced incredible projects: multi-media presentations, stunning storyboards, and vibrant visual representations, poems and songs. I was touched and taken-aback by my students' versatility, deep understanding and relationship with the story, insights impossible to evoke if I were to run the course under a western model. I learned about my students and their cultures, as well as the changes that Thai culture is facing and what my students represent.

In their work they described deep anxieties about obligations to Thai culture and responsibilities as Thai people: to be good Buddhists, to support their families, to stay near home, to become parents and have children, all in spite of the personal hopes and dreams to travel, the opportunities learned in an international program. They wanted to travel around the world, to learn English, and to participate in the opportunities that globalization was bringing to Thailand. The different environments at play in the world around us and the mental environment inspired by Eveline engaged all of us in an ongoing negotiation of being nowhere and now here, between placelessness and place. This particular unit, although demanding in terms of workload and preparation, resulted

in great cultural reciprocity, identification with one another served by a collective appreciation for the literature, for the cultures, and for the effort and sensitivity of one another afforded in the process.

The *Eveline* unit brought into focus for me a new range of teaching possibilities, more creative practices that were both meaningful and organic, all emerging from the different cultures present and the way we, teacher and students, managed to position ourselves to one another. More specifically, as I became comfortable suspending my assumptions about education, I was able to put aside the notion that students should work independently or that essay writing was the only academically legitimate mode of response. I ultimately rejected the idea that a western-style-fits-all literature class would be effective or beneficial to my Thai students, *and* gave way to the classroom experiences as they were happening. Only then do I believe my class became truly multicultural.

In fields as multi-dimensional as cross-cultural education, Powell (2003) writes that people must strive “to imagine far more complicated ideological paradigms that are based on the historical complexities of multiculturalism rather than the utopian long for unity” (p. 169). The more recognition and respect I developed for the place and the on-going history rooted in the cultural consciousness of my students (in this case, commitments to family, longing for individual freedom, knowledge sharing, and cooperation), the freer I felt in my teaching, unbound by traditional pedagogical discourses and more open to new teaching visions (Tsolidis, 2001) intent on discovering emerging and living curriculum. Paradoxically, relenting to the complexities and complications of culture and history, I achieved more unity than I could have otherwise

working under the kind of multicultural ideologies that espouse cultural levelling and universalism (Ghosh, 1996; Mayes, 2002). The *Eveline* unit and its success shrank the cultural distance between us, making us closer as cultural people and as participants in the same “sense of place.” The unit resulted in greater trust, and facilitated the kind of feeling and flow between the curriculum and life lived. This feeling continued to evolve throughout the semester.

The story above represents an instance of what Volet and Ang (1998) call “cultural-emotional connectedness.” it “refers to the students’ perceptions of feeling more comfortable, thinking along the same wavelength, and sharing similar communication style and sense of humour” (p. 10). To achieve a level of cultural-emotional connectedness, I needed to relinquish some of my positional power, sincerely listen, and open myself to the different views that my culturally different students know (Lamont, 1996; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985), and in the case of teaching in a foreign place, to give flexibility to the mainstream culture that they represent (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Smith, 2000).

It is essential that professors teaching in cross-cultural settings examine the relationship between their individual biographies, historical events, and other constraints imposed on the personal and professional development. (Lamont, 1996, p. 4)

Here, Lamont (1996) describes the process of gaining self-awareness via the engagement with cultural others. She calls this a process of “cultural reciprocity” (p. 7), a requisite for meaningful teaching in cross-cultural settings: “reciprocating ideas help to engage professors in assuming the constructivist mentality, encouraging them to

perpetually construct and deconstruct the nature of their reality through a process of deliberate and conscious verbal exchange” (p. 8). Sincere and self-conscious listening to and telling of storied experiences will catalyze a process of self-awareness and positioning in a foreign context where traditional assumptions are not taken for granted, where teachers must inspect how their knowledge is formulated and its relative compatibility with their foreign students. This is precisely what the active domain of narrative establishes for the cross-cultural teacher. Narrative living problematizes universalistic approaches to multicultural planning and teaching, because it makes the classroom vulnerable to uncertainty and life-world experience.

Over that first semester of teaching literature abroad, I was constantly and vulnerably aware of the experience of teaching as I was doing it. There was always forty smiling faces looking up, but it was the evolving sense of uncertainty behind those smiles, to spontaneously and sensuously recognize and respond to the moments of both sincere understanding and confused dislocation (Gladwell, 2005) as we worked with the literature content: to notice a genuine smile over a fake one; to make a statement and be met with hesitation or skepticism; to ask a question where eager hands shot up and to ask another where disenchanted heads looked down. It was these moments that required a special cultural sensory, and as this ongoing story continued, the experience of living narratively, I was constantly engaged in a reflective conversation with my colleagues and with myself. I sought to understand these dynamics and where they came from. How were these responses rooted in this place and in this culture? These are the kinds of skills and sensibilities that I continue to develop through the reiterative process of interpreting my personal narratives, to tap into what Gladwell (2005) calls “the power of thinking

without thinking.” The physical life-world responses, spontaneous and dynamic in the classroom interactions are the aesthetic experience of education (Weddington, 2004). The sensible multicultural teacher is an artful expression of that relationship. Gladwell (2005) says that a facial expression “is not just a signal of what is going on inside our mind. In a certain sense, it *is* what is going on in our mind” (p. 210). In practice, teachers must intuit the visceral feelings of the life-world and must tune into the classroom experiences as they are happening.

Teaching is to know when the lesson plan is or is not working, and to register the physical cues as either emotions of misunderstanding or opportunity—understanding those facial expressions—but more importantly developing an understanding for the cultural mind that produces them: life-world visceral representations of the mental environment, a dimension embodied by a cultural being with personal stories of identity deeply rooted in a place. The experience of teaching the literature course changed my life, my reality, and now the story of it with continued re-examination and reflection prepares the way I experience today (Weddington, 2004, p. 125).

Despite the preparatory conversations with my Thai colleagues and other foreign staffs, I approached the literature course with little knowledge or expectations of my students. My Thai colleagues mostly felt that my anxieties were really little to worry about. Thai culture is one that encourages people not to worry, and so according to them, I was to make the class fun and “not too serious,” and I would then be a successful teacher. Feeling I needed more than that, I spoke to western staff members who had little faith that a literature class was either relevant or worthwhile in this context. In an exciting and unexpectedly convenient way, the literature ultimately provided a very special and

dynamic avenue for us to share our biographies and cultural knowledge, and in the process to tell stories that revealed self-knowledge, that brought to bear the tacit constructions of our identities, and developed in my students a trust in me and in my commitment to culturally relevant practice. For me, the stories as research texts reconcile some anxieties I had about being a cultural *ajarn* in Thailand, in a position of power facing a foreign mainstream. Powell (2003) says:

We need to continue developing more complicated theoretical models that will allow us to better understand the ways that a vast multiplicity of cultures collide in violence and occasionally coalesce in hope. (p. 176)

I have established that only with respect and honour to the experiential dimensions of continuity, interaction, and situation can we as teachers tap into the living narratives our culturally different students represent. Our students have an “inventory”, a life-world of experiences culminating in the present and problematic moment. For a western teacher to be slave to his or her assumptions is to deny students their own realities and to cause collisions of ideological expectations of good teaching. It is to constrain the potential available through a process of life-world sensibility and reciprocity, which has the capacity to stimulate cultural-emotional connectedness and hope.

Dialogue in Place

“He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness.”

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

I have provided a narrative framework that both harnesses and incorporates ideas about multiculturalism, infusing in them an integral sense of place in multicultural teaching. Situating oneself in a narrative space of experience that features time, people, and place foregrounds a strong sense of history in the question of identity (Scott, 1992). At any given time, cultural people inhabit spaces with historically rooted epistemologies (Geertz, 1995; Perez-Torres, 1993-1994; Scott, 1992). Nevertheless, the implacable globalization of education merges these diverse locales, layering different storied spaces of knowing over a complex cultural landscape. Tsolidis (2001) notes:

Increasingly, cross-cultural education is linked to international education, rather than “migrant” education, and how we do it, is inextricably tied to new understandings of culture, privilege and minority status. (p. 101)

Globalization has produced enterprises such as International Education, bringing into practice a great deal of confusion over identity and affiliation. Giddens (2007) believes that in this global age, “the future lies with multiculturalism” (p. 18). He describes it in sociological terms as a “sophisticated multiculturalism,” where different cultures inhabiting a place are not exclusive to one another, but are continuously engaged in dialogue, hashing out sophisticated, creative, and particular rules for their imagined community (Anderson, 1983). I believe that this is the same goal for multiculturalism in the classroom: an ongoing dialogue between the teachers, the students, and the content, learning the particular dynamics over time, and leaving the curriculum open to the life of the classroom, of the place. Flower (2002) states it in this way: “Dialogue is an achievement, not the mere outcome of contact” (p. 184). Multiculturalism is not simply a consequence of globalization, but it is the hard work of making dialogue in a global age,

co-writing narratives that fit the particular needs of the interactions in the situation over time.

In the next chapter, I will review and explore the postcolonial constructions of power implicated in International Education, and also the alienation and otherness a western teacher will experience while teaching in a foreign context. Scott (1992) says that true knowledge of Self only comes by membership in a culture or identity group (p. 18). In cross-cultural contexts, cultural membership is blurred or can be misconstrued and mis-constructed by the groups involved (Spivak, 1990). As described by He and Phillion (2001) when writing about Chinese teachers working in Canada: they felt “caught *in-between* one cultural view of who they were, and another cultural view of who they should be, *in-between* public notions of who they were and personal feelings of their own identity” (p. 48).

Narrative exploration of teaching is emerging in some educational literature (Edgerton, 1996; Mayes, 2002; Phillion, 2002; Tsolidis, 2001) as a complex yet flexible model that can reconcile a teacher’s anxieties about teaching to a foreign mainstream or to a multicultural classroom (Bredella, 2003). It can maintain and negotiate a sense of cultural identity in the middle of a membership-less milieu, found in between public discourses for teachers and personal feelings about teaching (He & Phillion, 2001). Being a teacher in another culture can confuse identities—different places of status, power and powerlessness—and so the foreign teacher is in constant negotiation of the borders between the center (as educator) and the margin (as a cultural outsider). This is a topic for further discussion in the next chapter.

“He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.”

(From James Joyce’s *Eveline*)

Chapter 4: Postcolonialism and the Basketball Game

According to most phrase book translations, the Thai word for “foreigner” is farang. That being said, a Japanese tourist in Thailand is not a farang, nor is a Hispanic, a South Asian, or an African. The colour of your passport may indicate that you are a foreigner, but only the fair colour of your skin will determine you to be a farang. This word exclusively refers to white people, and it won’t take long for the Caucasian Canadian to get familiar with the term, and likely frustrated with it too. You overhear the word spattered from Thai chatter as you walk by; kids playing on the street will point and yell it as you drive through the village; you will hear it mumbled nervously under student breaths when you walk in the classroom for the start of a new semester. To be white is to forfeit your anonymity in Thai society, for no matter how well versed in the discourses you become, how fluently you learn to speak, or how well respected you are in the school, you will remain inescapably and identifiably a farang. I came to recognize the many connotations and contradictions of the word, for it is a word that represents a meeting of old and new histories writing themselves in new narratives for the present postcolonial day.

The word farang derives from “français,” a linguistic residue of a complicated colonial past. Thailand maintained its sovereignty from France because of an immensely powerful and tactful monarchy, one of many reasons why to this day the royal family is revered and beloved by Thai people to the core of their being. While Thailand remains blissfully peaceful and skillfully resistant to invasion (save for the deep south Muslim provinces bordering Malaysia), neighbouring Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Myanmar

remain largely paralyzed by the occupation and abandonment of western influence, and subsequent war and bombings that devastated infrastructure thus far irreparable and neglected. One-time gloriously dignified capitals like Vientiane and Phnom Penh stay in utter decay, and Cambodian and Laotian farmers take their lives daily in their hands with every footstep in land mine-ridden rice fields. Thais know the plight of their cultural and political neighbours, and they carry a certain but careful smugness about avoiding colonial occupation. These days western tourists are welcomed with open arms in Thailand and are treated to hospitality unmatched anywhere else, but for those making a life there are held at an arm's length with the constant reminder in these postcolonial times of one's farang-ness, influence that has not done well for the region.²

Thailand is a true jewel of South East Asia, and it is a culture that is grateful and amorous towards its foreign guests, but simultaneously wary, suspicious, and politely defensive. Farang can mean any combination of these adjectives in different contexts. For me, I was an ajarn farang, a "white teacher," an often troublesome pairing of reverence and suspicion, which presents cultural ambiguities and conflicts I came to experience as these identities met in confused contexts for both me and my students in school life.

Late in the afternoons, when the penetrating sun made its way for the horizon, and the air thinned out of its heavy humidity, the students moved out to the sport grounds for pick-up games of soccer, volleyball, and basketball. As often as I could, I joined in on the hoops, which gave me a another avenue in which to connect with my students. Not to mention, the students thought me enormous and rough, and I secretly enjoyed my new

² Although Thailand has never been colonized, I argue that discussions about postcolonialism and neo-colonialism can be expanded to include foreign and imperialistic influences such as globalization and International Education, and can also be invoked to illustrate cultural tensions as represented in the word "farang" as used in this story.

role as centre for the basketball team, a position where I was normally flattened back home. One day in particular when we were sorting out teams, a new student entered the mix. As the starting teams were picked and I was taking the floor, this new player resented that I was chosen over him, and he, not knowing that I was a teacher at the university, referred to me disdainfully as a farang. Having heard the word to the point of white noise, I took no notice and got ready to take the ball, but all the other boys rushed to my defense. Some students apologized to me. His friends, some of whom I taught, stopped everything and confronted him in a harsh and disciplinary way that I had never seen before. The student was forced shamefully to approach me, wai in respect and apologize. I felt somewhat embarrassed by the apology but accepted it nonetheless because I then very suddenly realized the cultural severity of publicly demeaning a teacher. His only option was to publicly express his apology. The boy was ashamed, and shortly into the game I made a point of recruiting him to my team.

The respect I commanded as an ajarn followed me into the school-yard pick-up games as students apologized over and over again when they fouled me on a lay-up or blocked my shot, they cheered when I scored, and expressed regret when my team lost. Be that as it may, I remained quite aware that in their private moments, their respect was tenuous at best, for I was still a farang, highly privileged as a teacher and as a westerner in Thai society, yet all related to a deeper historically and culturally rooted sense of distrust and shy resentment. I came to accept and respect this dichotomy, and this recognition made me a better teacher, for it allowed me to feel through the nuances of inhabiting these different spaces.

Borders Between Spaces of Knowing

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent “in-between” space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The “past-present” becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (Bhabha, 1998, p.1336)

Cross-cultural situations provide for a plethora of discourse transgressions. Rule breaking inevitably happens. In a different culture, one needs to continually reposition oneself to new rules of discourse (Brock et al, 2006, p. 38) and to draw from incomplete cognitive maps: places that feel strange, people who look different, life that is unfamiliar. Between realms of cultural experience are erected borders where crossings are complicated by sociocultural discourses. “Discourse,” Bailey (1997) says, “is that which speaks to us orally or textually about both the internal and social rules of our existence. It is the moment between the law and the body” (p. 144). Discourses are predictable contextual rules that govern our individual acts in social situations. Situations taken for granted are suddenly made uncomfortable by unfamiliar visitors. The laws of the regular basketball pick-up games were made different with my foreign presence. Two different settings were fused in an odd mixture that required discourse rules from various venues that would not normally apply to the basketball court. Polkinghorne (1988) says that recalling stories from our past is a “fetching of possibilities that have passed by in order

to make them real again in the present” (p. 133). Yet, as Bhabha above describes, the “insurgent act” of newness infuses a space of uncertainty between the understood traditions and discourses that we embody and the current situations we inhabit, making the possibilities of the past incongruent with the new moment of the present. The new student at the basketball game unknowingly transgressed into a space that alienated him because he was not aware of the “rules” of engaging with me. Brock et al (2006) calls this a *displacement space*, which is the “nature of discomfort that may prevail when our comfort levels are challenged in unfamiliar social or cultural contexts” (p. 38).

The basketball game related above was an instance of border crossing where various discourse spaces met in an uneasy and uncomfortable fusion: *ajarn* and student, westerner and Thai: all basketball players trying to have fun, and meanwhile continually repositioning to one another in order to adhere to sociocultural titles, levels of status and formality in an otherwise informal and innocuous context. In this chapter, I aim to deconstruct this narrative and bring to bear the realities of race, hierarchy, and history that embody cross-cultural spaces. More specifically, I want to draw special attention to the relations of power present in postcolonial spaces embedded in International Education, and what that means for the western teacher working abroad. By way of ongoing narrativization, I will illustrate how the repositioning of the foreign teacher’s character and sorting out of one’s story is an important and integral method to working through displacement spaces (Brock et al, 2006; Bruner, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Geertz, 1995).

The way in which we position ourselves socially with strangers will determine the direction and outcome of our interactions (Brock et al, 2006). Brock et al (2006) call this

positioning theory: “the manner in which conversants use sign systems, in general, and language, in particular, to act and interact together” (p. 37). Others refer to *cognitive mapping* (Gearing, 1984), that is, the mental process of learning a new situation, people, and time and acquiring fluency and adaptability. Positioning theory and cognitive mapping are both what make up a discourse: sets of contextualized rules of behaviour learned through the discursive practice of living the same kinds of situations over time (Bailey, 1997, p. 145). The “setting” of the cognitive map is where people, place, and time dictate the rules of engagement, levels of formality, and language used. For example, arriving to your first day at a new job requires a certain level of discretion and formality, in contrast to a regular pick-up game of basketball where more casual behaviour is the norm. The “rules” we follow facilitate the conversations and their successful outcomes. They are generally consistent and predictable. Every time one visits a restaurant, a server takes one’s order; when one visits a grandmother, one must watch their language; one needs to be on time for class. Over years of living these different identities, we know these scenarios well and we understand the discourses. We take these rules of discourse largely for granted, yet when we transgress, we risk breaking the social equilibrium and making ourselves vulnerable to consequences.

How do stories of the present reconstitute narratives of the past? I have reflected deeply on my experiences of teaching in Thailand and tried to make sense of the power that was allotted to me as a representative of western culture. I was not only a representative, but also a *teacher* from the West. In Thailand, the definition of *teacher* entails enormous respect and high-ascribed status. My personal reflection of myself does not match that image. I view myself as a helper, a facilitator, and a catalyst through

which the students can discover their pursuits. I was and am cognizant of the colonial tradition I represented and the neocolonial hegemony implicit in teaching English and western-based disciplines to my Thai students. This reality continues to be a source of anxiety for me. Positioning theory and cognitive mapping help expose the different identities as defined by culture to reconcile the struggle between the Thai idea of me as authority and my own learned conceptions of teacher as helper and catalyst. What I hope to illustrate here is that a variety of dyads emerge in cross-cultural contexts. Not only are there dyads in the social context between teacher and student, but in this context, there are also internal dyads that create personal conflicts between what one believes to be and what one is perceived to be. That is, in the case of the basketball game, I was a teacher playing with students, which meant for them a heightened level of formality and conscientiousness. Yet internally, I considered myself just another player in that classroom-removed context of the basketball court. Moreover, I suspect, for the students there was an internal conflict between Thai and *farang*, which in a moment of confusion, produced anxiety and frustration. Embedded in these internal conflicts are postcolonial ideas of dominant discourse and multiple realities that will intertwine over the next sections.

Dualisms and Othering

The world is divided into dualisms with one side privileged and the other disadvantaged (Grumet & Stone, 2000; Sokefeld, 1999). The dominant privileged group in the dualism assumes power/authority/righteousness and the opposite end of the dualism assumes a role of *other* (Grumet & Stone, 2000; Lovell, 1999; Sokefeld, 1999).

In this paper, *othering* is not a distinction reserved for foreigners with unfamiliar faces and faiths, but for any agent working in the shadows of any dominant dualism.

From a sociocultural perspective, *othering* is a form of collective identity construction through interactions that create and reproduce inequality (Schwalbe et al, 2000, p. 422). When one enters a new situation with people, one is immediately engaged in a process of othering, measuring up to the people around, and functioning in the new culture of shared experience. Schwalbe et al (2000) describes oppressive othering “when one group sees advantage by defining another group as morally and/or intellectually inferior” (p. 423). Oppressive othering is the assertion that difference is a deficit (Schwalbe et al, p. 423). Oppression occurs to different degrees in different dualisms, whether it is subtle or overt, yet the point remains that one is expected to position oneself accordingly with the culture in which one is participating. This process is important from sociocultural and positioning perspectives to help ground us in a new culture and to equip us with the tools to cooperate and function. But as Schwalbe et al (2000) maintains, “oppressive othering entails the creation of identity codes that make it impossible for members of a subjugated group to signify fully creditable selves” (p. 424). Sokefeld (1999) explains the necessity for an identified self in order to know:

The self thus became *subject* in the dual sense of being subjected to the conditions of the world and, simultaneously, being the agent of knowing and doing in that world. The belief in this subject became the a priori for the possibility of knowing the world. (p. 417)

If the teacher holds dominant status in the teacher/student dualism, then does it mean students cannot secure a creditable sense of self because of their marginalized status?

And if this is the case, then is it impossible for students to know the world in their position of *other* in a teacher/student dyad? Conversely, is the same implication true for the foreign teacher as a cultural and racial other? I want to unpack these questions and the unique complications that culture brings to them under a postcolonial lens. This analysis will help develop a sophisticated understanding of othering and the dualistic nature that exists in every classroom culture as entities situated in place and continuing in time.

Do students experience oppression by virtue of their difference to the teacher? In the classroom, teachers are positioned as carriers of knowledge and have the roles and responsibilities to relate information to the *other*: to the students. Conversely, students have a deficit of knowledge in relation to the teacher, and have the roles and responsibilities to obey, work, and learn. Admittedly this is a severely modernist description of the classroom and the student/teacher dyad, and most colleagues I have worked with would not articulate their relationship with students in this way. Yet this conceptual power structure remains in the classroom culture as we know it. It is only when the teacher makes a self-conscious attempt to challenge cultural narratives in order to empower the students and to elevate their title from one of deficit to one of freedom does the culture reinvent itself (Sykes, 2006). In the quotation above, Sokefeld referred to the self as a “subject.” He describes the dual sense of the subject as one that follows the rules of social and cultural mores, but also acts upon that system. The student as subject assumes that role, but is simultaneously evolving and actively engaging in their construction of self in accordance with, and in spite of the culture. Sokefeld (1999) goes on to say that “it [identity] was once defined by sameness and unity, both qualities have

given way to difference and plurality” (p. 417). The subject is not bound by its definition, for it can take on new roles as it repositions itself in the changing world.

Cognitive Mapping

“People by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives” (Connely & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). I wonder about people’s lives and about what stories they are living. When I meet someone in a particular place, I situate myself psychically and physically into the role that fits the scene. I am prepared for what formality is expected or what language is used. Gearing (1984) calls this the *setting*, the first of four dimensions of cultural transmission, where people map the kind of encounter and where they belong within its parameters. One such setting is the classroom, where students and teachers map out their respective roles. Gearing says that prior to any encounter, people bring a cognitively mapped experience: a set of expectations that will, to varying degrees, fit the actual goings-on of the setting. People will arrive with different stories, and will be at various stages in their respective journeys. In a classroom, students and teachers will typically have a series of encounters with one another, and so the cognitive maps of each individual in the setting will change over time and arrive at a more predictable set of expectations with each meeting, an eventual blending of lived stories between the classroom characters. For Gearing, this is one example of *equivalence* in cultural transmission, where “two mappings will reveal various degrees and kinds of fit and ill-fit” (p. 29). The basketball game represents a moment where different actors were figuring out their roles. An unpredictable scene made up of unlikely characters opened up the situation to the possibility for transgression. Over time and more basketball games,

the players worked out a discourse code of equivalence that included me in the setting, thereby constructing new and more predictable scenarios.

Gearing's second dimension is an individual's perceived sense of the *natural world*, "human and non-human" (p.30). This categorizes the ways in which people and things are interconnected and affect one another. In the case of the basketball game, we all arrive to the court with a perception of protocol: warming up, choosing teams, the rules of the game and the different positions, configurations for offense and defense, and so on. The third dimension is *social identity*, which addresses the role-relationships between people, the social power structures, and behavioral codes appropriate to the setting. Fourthly and finally is one's sense of *agenda*, "an expectation as to how the encounter promises or threatens to unfold" (p. 30). The new student and I found ourselves disoriented in our respective cognitive maps: where social identities were unclear and agendas interrupted. Each of the dimensions work in concert, and as a whole they provide a cognitive map that anticipates the encounter. And so, if the cognitive mappings are different to start with, the encounter will be problematic, chaotic, and even dangerous. These final three dimensions are rooted deep in historical and cultural identities: postcolonial dimensions of identity embedded in tensions represented in race, culture, and place.

Cultural miscommunication and othering is one result of undeveloped cognitive maps and unsettled discourses. A foreign teacher can find him or herself standing face to face with a mosaic of colours, creeds, and classes. What makes a good student or a good teacher changes with the context, and so one must work to redefine what they do and who they are in the current situation. What is the common curricular map for the teacher,

equipping to navigate the bridge over the cultural gap with foreign students, and vice versa for the students to meet the criteria of a foreign teacher? How does that person define himself or herself as a teacher in this setting and what does he or she deem the responsibilities to be? Gearing states that the notion of cultural “*transaction* calls to attention the interpsychic processes by which cognitive mapping may change in the course of an encounter or series of encounters” (p. 31). The range of experience and opinions embedded in different cultures continually destabilizes and shifts what it means to be a good student or a good teacher. As the world continues to shrink and the faces of the students and teachers diversify, I believe it is crucial for teachers to engage in ongoing reflections of themselves and their practice, re-evaluate how they and the students co-exist, and redefine the roles and obligations. It is to this sentiment that I believe cognitive mapping is a critically enabling concept.

Postcolonialism and International Education

A westerner in a Thai school is a symbol before he or she is a teacher. Long before anyone can establish himself or herself as a relevant and meaningful teacher, a coherent signifier needs to take shape: a complicated form of a “teacher” continually and dynamically engaged with engrained and historically rooted perceptions of race and power. That is, the *farang*, the white westerner, embodies a symbolic position of power, influence, and privileged knowledge in countries considered by the West as “Third World” or underdeveloped. The narratives of the past are continually reconstituted in the new moment of the present. “International Education” is riddled with the same problematic ideologies as “multiculturalism.” They are two terms politically neutral; they are language signifiers that neglect to make explicit the power implications of their

neocolonial creators. As globalization and free market enterprises expand to every corner of the globe, and once self-sufficient and locally-oriented economies give way to free trade and international interdependence, cultural institutions like education reposition their aims of citizenship and local concerns to new opportunities and necessities that come from elsewhere (Friedman, 2005; Hinchcliff, 2000; Vavrus, 2002). O'Sullivan (1999) says that the movement of transnational globalization implies that "education must now act as the formative institution of transnational globalization rather than the nation-state" (p. 32). That is, local customs, traditions, and epistemologies must surrender at least partially to dominant discourses as defined by global powers. My students, in their private moments, often expressed to me their anxieties about maintaining and reinforcing their commitments to their culture and home communities, yet at the same time were naturally curious and ambitious about the opportunities abroad that are well marketed and advertised by an internationally focused degree program with international staff. In some extreme cases, students looked for help to extinguish their Thai accents, sought advice about western fashion and dress, and so on: that is, to unlearn parts of their Thai identity in order to assimilate to more global mainstream discourses as portrayed by the West.

In effect, International Education has brought with it uncertain spaces of knowing. They are uncertain because differing discourse predictions complicate the assumed and expected safety of the classroom. Further, western authority is often honoured for reasons such as English proficiency and economic strength. As native English speakers and economic competitors on the world stage, the western subject commands a discourse of respect, and yet as a racial and cultural minority in a foreign mainstream, that same

cultural subject is marginalized in practice. This contradiction in teacher identity is a predictable reality of the cross-cultural classroom. I want to outline the neocolonial circumstances that have made possible such cross-cultural enterprises like International Education. What produces these uncertain spaces with undefined rules of discourse?

Post-colonialism and neocolonialism are terms that mark new forms of colonial expansion by the West with the export of English as an International Language (EIL) (Hinchcliff, 2000; McKay, 2002), curriculum, learning materials, and not to mention teachers like myself. What process or circumstances give me the authority to teach in a foreign culture? Furthermore, what system of power relations produce the rules of discourse that can both facilitate a dynamic and engaging classroom and manifest a situation of uncertainty like the basketball game? Anderson (1983) says: “The expansion of the colonial state which, so to speak, invited ‘natives’ into schools and offices, and of colonial capitalism which, as it were excluded them from boardrooms” (p. 140). Systematic, cultural, colonial, and racial grand narratives defined by different-as-deficit thinking are engrained to institutionalized levels of reality, and it is characterized in those individual workings manifested in uncertain spaces of knowing.

Despite increasing trade and interdependence, or as Friedman (2005) calls it, the flattening of the earth, economic categories such as “First World,” “Third World,” G8, all signify the strengths of nations as defined by western indicators of development and progress, but not by the cultural strengths as defined by local peoples (Lasn, 2000). Hickling-Hudson (2006) says: “We hear much about development issues and how they affect education as a system, but not enough about post-colonial issues and how they affect the lives and learning of the students and teachers involved” (p. 214). Post-colonial

studies offers a method of insight into the lives of local cultural peoples as they are governed by hegemonic structures that exist worldwide. In the following sections, it is my intent to deconstruct the symbol of a “white teacher” (an *ajarn farang*) as seen by a different racial and cultural mainstream, and further, to investigate the contradictions for western teachers to motivate and elevate the underprivileged other that seeks to participate in internationally-focussed institutions and still remain loyally dedicated to their own local cultural commitments and identities.

To begin, it is important to unravel some definitions of post-colonialism in the education literature. By no means is the globalized world finished with colonialism, but for Hickling-Hudson (2006), post-colonialism “refers to the thinking that deconstructs the operations of Eurocentrism in colonial and neocolonial polities, and that develops alternative analyses and propositions based on different ways of knowing” (p. 205). Moore (2001) describes the emergence of the term as initially a critique of western power, although the West not only colonized far parts of the world, but also itself in countries such as the United States and Canada. Further, Moore points out that “post-colonialism” was to replace more condescending economic descriptions such as “Third World,” or “non-western,” terms that insufficiently describe all other peoples to the West (p. 113-114), as if to suggest that the world consists of the West... and everyone else. Moore says: “it [post-colonialism] embodied a historical dimension, and it opened analytic windows onto common features of peoples who had only recently thrown off their European chains” (p. 113).

A historical dimension made explicit in cross-cultural practice gives sequential structure and reasoning to cultural narratives integral to the identity and actions of a

cultural subject. An economic term such as “Third World” suggests something innate in that country or region, as though economic poverty simply exists as a reality of their present situation in time and place, a tacitly accepted reflection of the people, culture, and government as though there is no storied lead to the present and economically poor condition. History and present place are not positioned in this thesis as a disconnected binary, but as one informing the other fluidly. The cultural actor embodies the historical structure they seek to change or challenge. Banks (1993) says:

The challenge that teachers face is how to make effective instructional use of the personal and cultural knowledge of students while at the same time helping them to reach beyond their own cultural boundaries...An important goal of education is to free students from their cultural and ethnic boundaries and enable them to cross cultural borders freely. (p. 8)

The culturally sensitive western teacher, practicing emancipatory pedagogy with his globally marginalized students, is exactly the source of which he teaches them to challenge. This is the internal/external contradiction. The accumulation of the past infused in the present is potentially oppressive and hazardous to cross-cultural communication, as manifested in the basketball game. As an individual, I am frustrated by the insults or discrimination that happens, but as a teacher I encourage students to challenge the structures they consider oppressive to their freedoms and values. In recruiting that frustrated student to my team, hopefully through the course of a game and games to come, new learning opportunities will present themselves in our joint objective to win, where one *needs* the other to do so.

To refer back to Dewey's (1938) "three dimensions of experience," the dimension of continuity provides linkages from one experience to the next. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) talk about the *temporal* "forward and backward" dimensions of narrative inquiry to consolidate a coherent storied self, a cultural consciousness constructed over time. An important distinction here to be made is that Dewey, Connelly, and Clandinin investigate the individual's understanding and negotiation of experience. Specifically they inquire into the teacher and how his or her experiences over time inform practice. Manguel (2007) says that in stories, place and time "remain constant as we travel through them; the stories...change in order to hold the passing of memory, since the telling of a legend is always both a voice from the past and contemporary of the teller" (p. 79). Here again is described the contradictory relationship between the past and the present. The post-colonial subject is not a unitary individual, empowered or oppressed in and of him or herself, but as a member of a culture with narratives long in the making (MacLure, 1995, p. 274). Membership to a culture includes one's participation and identification with colonialism, one's ascribed status, cultural discourse, and cultural capital in a world marked by privilege and destitution (O'Sullivan, 1999). Drawing from the work done on teacher experience, postcolonial researchers mind not only the historical dimension of the individual teacher and her practice, but of her culture and her cultural institution. Part and parcel to one's cultural membership are physical facets intertwined and contingent in historical colonial narratives: specifically described here in their present manifestations, location and race.

Location

One criticism of post-colonial theory that Loomba (1998) exposes is that it tends to get lost in the individual experiences and subjectivities instead of paying closer attention to location and institutions specific to a place where cultural peoples live (p. 17). Categories such as “Third World” uproot those citizens from a place and history where narratives do not simply exist, but are the realization of a long sequence of events and experiences in a specific locale. Such language organizes neatly other worlds of difference: packaged otherness that exists beyond the limits of our experience instead of honestly acknowledging the contradictions that live within our own mainstreams (Willinsky, 1994, p. 623). Like “multiculturalism,” “postcolonialism” has a universalistic ring to it when it is used to describe the nature of power and privilege between cultures (Willinsky, 1994). The politics of identity are inextricably linked to the politics of place, and so the deconstruction of the cultural individual within a cultural place reveals the nature and nuance of one’s self in relation to the locale one inhabits and embodies (Giroux, 1996). The *farang* in Thailand is a cultural identity with a discourse and a history manifested in the present and in a place, embodied by a cultural group with distinctly different cultural and historical narratives. Where these narratives converge, between history and now, is a point that can produce both violence and friendship. Then and now and here are the moments in continuity for the cultural individuals to critique, to interpret, and to negotiate with his or her current experiences in the hope of repositioning in closer step with the discourse rules of the foreign place and people.

Loomba (1998) says:

The word ‘postcolonial’ is useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe. But, if it is uprooted from specific locations, ‘postcoloniality’ cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination that it seeks to uncover. (p. 19)

The basketball game story reveals for me contradicting cultural narratives, points of history coming to a head in an otherwise mundane and innocuous context. The participants in concert with the time and place set the stage for the encounter’s possibilities. The status of a teacher is a Thai cultural narrative, in this case combined with a white face dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. The Thai students meanwhile had their own cultural commitments to respecting their teachers and moderating western influence. We just wanted to play basketball, but this mixed encounter of location and race provided for more than we bargained. It opened up a number of narratives rooted in culture and colonialism, revealing for me the stories shallow beneath the surface of my students’ lived narratives. These stories and their deconstructions are selected with the intentions of starting their own histories and spaces of inquiry that produce new revelatory narratives of trial and discovery for teachers working in other cultural places.

Race

As educators, we can learn from comparing how the curriculum of “whiteness” is implemented in different countries—and even more importantly, how it is being unchallenged and overcome. These are the two faces of power, viewed as both a negative and positive force, working dialectically on and through people, its operations both enabling and constraining. (Hickling-Hudson, 2006, p. 204)

To further emphasize previous discussions, one's identity at the outset of an encounter is interpreted through preconceived and entrenched assumptions based on superficial information and often incomplete narratives: embodied characters without voices characterized by racial stereotypes. Skin colour can presuppose where one is from, and in turn cultural membership with associating stereotypes that explain who one is, what one believes, and how one behaves (Loomba, 1998). It is a complex and institutionalized process of association rooted in modernist colonialism (Kanu, 2003). It is an easy habit to fall into, and often requires the postcolonial subject to consciously criticize and deconstruct the racial/social affiliations one expects. Teaching in the Thai mainstream, I represented the "white world," global leaders in development and economics, yet meanwhile I experienced alienation as a racial minority (Scott, 1992). I held social power as a teacher and a westerner, yet experienced racial discrimination as a *farang*, a current subject with complicated colonial connotations. All of these identities are separate narratives running parallel to one another. Fortunately as I discovered, the classroom provided the time and the venue, and with care and sensibility could be the place where a new history begins to draw up the beginnings of merging narratives that elicit those presuppositions about races and cultures to reveal sincere and truthful representations of cultural peoples instead of the superficial ones written on the surface of one's skin.

To quote Loomba (1998) again: "Race relations are not determined by economic distinctions alone, rather economic disparities are maintained by ideologies of race... A complex amalgam of economic and racial factors operates in anchoring the present to the colonial past" (p. 128-129). Loomba gives an extensive and pointed historical narrative

about how race provided for a clear class structure: “Colonialism was the means through which capitalism achieved its global expansion. Racism simply facilitated the process, and was the conduit through which the labour of colonized people was appropriated” (p. 124). As described here, race provided a functional and logistical purpose to organizing new multicultural societies. Benedict Anderson (1983) in his famous critique, *Imagined Communities* says: “The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside histories” (p. 149). Explanations of race go far beyond economic reasons to existential ones. These explanations attribute special, or essentialized determinations of racial others (Anderson, 1983; Bhabha, 1998; Delpit, 1992; Loomba, 2006).

Postcolonial educators can expose the limitations and unequal discourse definitions that are written into colonial narratives (McCarthy quoted in Hickling-Hudson, 2006, p. 214) that promote assimilation and cultural homogeneity. To trace the historical production of identity in not only cultural narratives, but also in the history of where these narratives meet in colonial and cross-cultural encounters is where International Education programs must be vigorously and self-consciously engaged. I believe that in order to be a relevant and meaningful teacher in a foreign space with other epistemologies, the teacher without fault must be engaged in the reiterative process of moving, in Connelly and Clandinin’s narrative terms, *forward* and *backward* through the sequence of the colonial past to the present in order to deconstruct the subsequent essentialisms that have emerged in master narratives rooted in race, history and superficial universalities attributed to cultural others (Scott, 1992). The key to

intercultural understanding and empowering individuals as dynamic members is to highlight dialogues between teachers and students (Bodycott & Walker, 2000). When the new player called me “farang,” I experienced no insult in the basketball game since the word carries no personal or hurtful connotation, and so privately I was able to later express my undamaged respect by recruiting him to my team. This encounter exposed manifestations of both cultural and individual narratives, both dynamic and essentialized identities, all aspects of discourse responsibilities dating back to the past, yet consolidated in the present (Willinsky, 1994).

Discourse Acquisition

Tsolidis (2001) says:

The cross-cultural pedagogies that define International Education have a radical potential...The radical possibility of such pedagogies lies in their capacity to challenge understanding which re-inscribe unequal and hegemonic relationships between marginal and mainstream cultural identities. (p. 99)

To refer again back to Gee (1989), he claims that no person can acquire native-like fluency in a foreign discourse (p. 13). For a Caucasian in Thailand, no matter how in tune with the cultural landscape or how well spoken in the language, the white westerner will always remain an outsider. Working in a postcolonial discourse, that same Caucasian outsider experiences discrimination and marginalization in local and isolated contexts (such as the market, the village street, or the basketball court), but on the other hand, he or she experiences great privilege and admiration in other venues (such as the international school, ceremonies, and with student parents).

In this section, I have tried to outline how history and place together form their own specific relationship with the Other: relationships established and told in historical narratives about colonialism and cultural mixing, all reconstituted in the current domination and continued hegemony. The neo/postcolonial narratives presently in momentum with the increased demand and development of International Education, the structure of discourse and the hierarchy within is determined by moves in global economics and visually represented in race. If Gee is correct in saying that one cannot completely be immersed and participatory in a foreign discourse, then how is this global education enterprise to be worthwhile or legitimated? Some writers on postcolonialism and cross-cultural education call for a vibrant and revelatory pedagogy based in the politics of identity and difference (Bahri, 1997; Giroux & McLaren, 1993; MacLure, 1996; Scott, 1992; Hickling-Hudson, 2006), while others maintain that while challenging societal and cultural injustices, cultural teachers must provide for the marginalized the facility to participate within the dominant discourse (Gee, 1989; Delpit, 1992). I will now shift my attention to the politics of difference and what it means for the foreign teacher to inhabit simultaneously multiple discourse spaces that convey power and powerlessness. Particularly, I will pay close and respectful attention to the work of Bahri and Spivak to facilitate my exploration of the sincerity of postcolonial educators to initiate a political pedagogy of difference in multicultural settings: all of this in anticipation of more discussions to come with Bhabha, Kanu, and MacLure over marginalized identity and cultural hybridity.

Different Spaces of Knowing and Hybridity

Positioning refers to the ways one orients him or her when interacting with another (Brock et al, 2006). Positioning theory equips a speaker with a set of rights and roles in a conversation: that is, there are rules of discourse that we follow in our everyday communication (eye contact, emphasis, gesturing, taking turns to speak, and so on), and our positioning prepares us to communicate effectively and maintain rights of courtesy and manners (Gladwell, 2005, p. 147). Our positioning is grounded in the Vygotskian contexts of society and culture (Brock et al, 2006, p. 37). According to Vygotsky, the mind is social in nature, and so worldviews are constructions between the individual and the society. The shared experience of the world creates a culture of knowing it (Brock et al, 2006, p. 38). As an individual continues to experience and re-experience the world, the reality of it is modified and reconstructed (Edwards & Usher, 1994, p. 12), and so when different cultures meet in an experience, a new reality emerges; what Bhabha and Hall call “hybridity” (quoted in Kanu, 2003, p. 76). The hybrid is a result of the co-existence of different cultures.

Enabled by perceived conditions of lack (of power, authority, voice), the designated marginal academic and her stock in trade (the postcolonial text)...are given the voice and the authority to create a manageable, systematized, and consumable discourse of difference that, precisely through its production rather than despite it, leaves the normative intact...Instead of expanding the limits of students’ experience with difference and diversity, our efforts merely contain them through a managed encounter with otherness. (Bahri, 1997, p. 278)

I argued in the previous chapter that the western teacher working abroad must incorporate self-consciously to practise humility and thoughtful engagement with the host culture to develop over time a sensory that *feels*: a pedagogy of nuance that is flexible and fluid for better maneuverability in different spaces of discourse. I have also argued in previous sections alongside other cross-cultural and postcolonial educators cited (Bhabha, 1998; Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Kanu, 2003; Tsolidis, 2006) that intercultural communication and its subsequent confusions over status, cultural tradition, and race requires a dialectical push and pull, renegotiation and repositioning vis-à-vis the Other to enable new and dynamic spaces of knowing. Bhabha (1994) calls these “in-between spaces” that emerge from the process exposing cultural differences: “In-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation” (p. 1332). Moving between cultural spaces dislocates the professional from identities that they know, to spaces of enormous cultural power and status like an *ajarn* in Thailand, but also to spaces of cultural powerlessness and discrimination like what I experience at times as a *farang*. The recognition of these identities, and their ongoing encounters in a classroom venue can, like Tsolidis (2006) argues, facilitate radical and exciting possibilities for pedagogy: fluid and reciprocal curriculum where teachers and students are both authors and actors in their own learning (p. 105).

However, as Bahri here argues, the enterprise that is International Education is a disingenuous one in the first place by name alone. It is a western export implicated with power and hegemony, and so as the institutional language of Tsolidis, Bodycott, and Walker promotes cultural mixing and dialectic learning to expose different cultures to

difference, ultimately for Bahri and Delpit, it is only one's *difference* highlighted in these encounters. As long as cultural power structures are in place, the postcolonial discourse is not a space created by its participants, but instead dictated by a politics of difference (Spivak, 1993, p. 57). Education is only international for the reasons that people from various countries are traveling to meet each other in a classroom, but as for curriculum, education is only as international as neocolonialism permits. Despite my efforts to play down my "whiteness" as relevant or important, to practise humility and thoughtful interaction, to learn the host culture and language, to participate in school life, and to establish trust and integrity with my Thai colleagues and students, I continue to inherit cultural capital as a white native English speaking westerner from hegemonic forces deeply engrained in the neocolonial discourses firmly in place.

In Spivak's (1993) book: *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, she explains:

Today the old ways, of imperial adjudication and open systemic intervention cannot sustain unquestioned legitimacy. Neocolonialism is fabricating its allies by proposing a share of the center in a seemingly new way (not a rupture but a displacement): disciplinary support for the conviction of authentic marginality by the (aspiring) elite. (p. 57)

In order for a center to exist, so too must a margin. To speak in terms of structure requires evaluative positions of privilege and oppression. Postcolonial-informed pedagogy, as Giroux (1996) argues, engages cultural workers and educators to unlearn their privilege (p. 19); that is, not to ignore or obliterate the power structures in place, which would render the educational enterprise to postmodern relativism and universalism akin to the language of naïve multiculturalism (Giddens, 2007; Willinsky, 1994), but instead activate

postmodern positioning of the cultural subject “to extend rather than erase the possibility for creating the enabling conditions for human agency” (Giroux, 1996, p. 20). The question to which I am investigating here is: wherein lies the center or the margin in the foreign classroom, or more appropriately, in the host classroom of a foreign teacher?

In grand narrative and universal fashion, neocolonial discourse consolidates power with the western teacher, with ascribed membership to a culture of global economic influence. However, the individual subject and his or her ongoing narratives living in present circumstances is, although informed by grand narratives, not obliged nor bound to them, and are acted out and upon by personal agency. The individual subject acts and authors narratives of experience featuring specific times, persons, and places instead of stereotyped ideologies based in superficial modernist and colonial relics of cultural observation. MacLure (1996) says: “Indeed it is the internal story that really counts—life stories are pre-eminently journeys of the self. They tend to be told from the inside out. But here too is the same paradox: the self undergoes change; but it remains in some essential sense ‘itself’” (p. 274-275). Again herein lies the contradiction, and it is in the personal narratives, the dynamic and multiple spaces of knowing that teachers and students embody and act that I want to expose and explore for its pedagogical potential. While discourses of neocolonialism perpetuate the inequities associated with race and culture, individual experiences produce alternative and subversive narratives; narratives that I believe need voice and publication in more discussions about cross-cultural education.

Border Crossings

It was morning. I had only been working in Thailand for a couple of months, and so I was still trying to establish myself as a credible teacher among my students and colleagues. That morning, I was to give my first exam to my class. The test I created for that day was well developed and thoughtful with all the elements instructed to me in my teacher education programs; it was structured with progressively more challenging questions providing both tests of knowledge and learning experiences. I was proud of my test and quite anxious to see my students work through it. I walked to class with the test copies in hand, saying good morning to all the students on the way, they politely bowing to me at the start of a new day.

I arrived early to class. I arranged the desks in rows and properly spaced apart. As I placed the last few tests on the last few desks face down, my students were slowly trickling into class and bowing as they entered. They took their seats and waited patiently for everyone to arrive. Once all of the students were seated, I welcomed them to class and gave instructions for this well-anticipated test. After taking some questions, I instructed them to begin. The tests turned over in a loud ruffling and flipping of pages, and settled down to a quiet scribbling of pencils. I sat down and leaned back in my chair with pride, delighted by the concentrated looks on my students' faces, producing a light smugness on mine.

A few minutes had passed when I noticed a boy at the far end of the class about three rows back, looking and whispering to his friend. He made eye contact with my unmistakable look-down-at-your-test glare. He smiled back at me and continued to go over the test with his friend. Now with some irritation, I walked over beside him to make

my presence and seriousness more clear and he properly understood. At this moment, I noticed two girls at the other side of the room now chatting at which point I made a stern announcement to the class that chatting and cheating would be met with a penalty. I moved back to the front of the class and the students were once again working quietly. But just after a few more minutes, my test then began to crumble before my eyes and beyond my control.

Students here and there started to gesture to their friends. I walked over to them, and then behind me other groups were forming, and I turned around to see other students leaning to their neighbours. Before I knew it, students were getting up, talking, swapping paper, and making notes on each other's tests. I started to rant and rave, only to get the same gratuitous smile-and-nod acknowledgements. Threats of penalty and failure were no use. I sat back down in my teacher's chair, this time not out of pride or self-congratulation, but instead out of utter humiliation and defeat. The room was filled with chatter and cheating. As class time wound down to the end, the students one-by-one returned their identically completed tests, and they politely smiled and thanked me as they left the room.

After some time and serious self-reflection, I realized that I was working under a new set of rules distinct to that culture. Any modernist assumptions I had about the teacher/student power structure was momentarily carnivalized by how the students defined themselves. Their construction of Self was rooted in a collectivistic tradition that encourages sharing and helping and not individual pursuit (Cargile, 2006, p. 19). My definition of students was of individual ingenuity and creativity, and my test was

designed to draw on those qualities. Our definitions collided and regressed into yet another chaotic situation, albeit very educational for me.

When people are removed from their cultural comfort zone, they find themselves attempting to leap from a non-existent platform and simply fall into what Brock et al (2006) calls a “displacement space.” Displacement spaces are where the contextual grounds shift and people trip over the cultural divide (p. 36). The new player at the basketball game slipped into a displacement space when he publicly degraded me without knowing who I was. I was in a displacement space when my students collectively ignored my rules in spite of my attempts to control.

I learned that the way my students worked during my test had everything to do with the way they conceived themselves and the other participants in that context (Brock et al, 1999, p. 38). Studying the positioning of people in different times, places, and contexts gives us insight into the ways different people converse and act, and thus can give us a platform from which we can leap into new learning opportunities (Brock et al, 1999, p. 38). Bhabha calls what into which we leap the “third space” (as cited in Kanu, 2003, p. 77), a hybrid space that emerges from the interaction of different cultures, different shared experiences, and different ways of knowing.

Nadia Lovell (1999), in her article *The politics of teaching and the myth of hybridity*, describes her experience as a western Caucasian teaching African Issues to her class of immigrated African students. She experienced overt dissent from her students who viewed her initially as a biased colonial teacher. “The microcosm of the classroom obviously reflected wider political and social tensions. However, finding myself in such a politicized discourse, I was left to ponder the fact that I had become a disembodied

‘other’” (p. 12). In Lovell’s case, her othering developed not necessarily by different ideas of teacher and student, but was implicated in racial differences (p. 10). She experienced enormous resistance from a specific culture of students; that culture being one that had the shared identity as black Africans: a visual barrier impossible for Nadia Lovell to cross. She in effect fell into a displacement space. Bhabha’s notion of hybridity is useful to help teachers create new realities for their classrooms and practice, but for Lovell, the reality of race is one that is impossible to blend. “The hybrid identity of this group had been dissolved in order to emphasize and assert a cohesive response to what they perceived as a heavily white-biased institution” (p. 12).

Continually repositioning ourselves and modifying our definitions of selves can help us understand the challenge of cross-cultural teaching and help us crawl out of the displacement spaces to new hybrid realities where which to devise new and innovative plans for teaching and learning. Only through careful and critical reflection can a teacher redefine him or herself and give genuine and sincere respect to the new cultures students form in the classroom. To be culturally sensitive is to undergo continual revisions of one’s identity in relation to the cultural experience (Brock et al, 1999, p. 40). The physical and visual differences as Nadia Lovell experienced with her African Issues class can more deeply entrench one’s *otherness*.

Throughout this chapter I have reviewed what some have described as border pedagogy (Bahri, 1997; Bhabha, 1998; Kanu, 2003; MacLure, 1996), where actors in cross-cultural education find themselves re-mapping and repositioning with the others involved in the encounters, moving to different and in-between spaces of knowing: unpredictable spaces vulnerable to confusion and displacement (Brock et al, 2006), but

for educators, spaces that also contain possibilities for ingenuity and creativity that elicit the collective need to discover hybrid or collaborative discourses that make possible effective learning situations (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Brock et al, 2006; Giroux, 1996; MacLure, 1996; Tsolidis, 2001). In the next section, I want to focus this discussion to the question of power and its location when a teacher finds him or herself inhabiting different spaces at the same time as is the case while teaching abroad in a different mainstream.

Imagined Hybridity

Kanu (2003) notes that a discourse, the makings of a shared cognitive map with participants engaging in equivalent predictions and expectations, begins with *imagination* (p. 76). The colonial experiment, and now postcolonial institutions such as education are founded on the possible communities imagined to prevail. A community is imagined, according to Anderson (1983), because one can never know every member living in a location, and therefore the shared values of a culture do not only exist in the personal experiences of each person, but in the grand narratives of the culture (p. 6). As a community is imagined, so too is a curriculum (Kanu, 2003, p. 76). The cross-cultural curriculum makers are not in tune with all of its subjects, and so they imagine its representatives as a coherent whole with similar modes of self-interpretation, and they create shared epistemologies. From these imagined spaces of knowing, the notion of “hybridity” comes into play: “crucial in the formulation of the agenda of reform, for its politics embody fluid, pragmatic and multiple power relations” (Kanu, 2003, p. 77). To quote Kanu further: “There is no longer a single set of discourses about progress and change; rather, there is a hybrid—a third space—where local and global images meet in a weaving that has its own configurations and implications” (p. 77). To inhabit a third

space resembling a *hybrid* consciousness, or what McCarthy (1998) refers to as “an alloy of racial, cultural and ethnic metals” (as cited in Kanu, 2003, p. 78), is to imagine such a possibility in the first place. The cognitive *setting* of a cross-cultural classroom may be unfamiliar and vulnerable, but its human enterprise and investment in finding equivalence is fuelled by an *imagined* vision.

After my botched exam, I needed to re-evaluate and reposition my practice. I needed to practise my ingenuity and creativity, to imagine new and different ways of testing and challenging my students that both facilitated their learning styles and cultural needs for collaboration, but just as importantly satisfy my own personal criteria and integrity as a teacher. Over the next weeks and months, I developed nothing but group assignments and tests with components that required individual contributions to a collaborated product. I came a long way from that first test, a day I am sure my students considered me irrelevant and green as a new teacher in Thailand. I remember that smile from that boy at the other end of the class, now recognizing it as one that knew he had me figured out, like a heavy-hitter at the plate looking out at a nervous rookie pitcher in the stretch. As my new culturally responsive curve balls came at my students, new smiles shone back, ones that realized that I understood their cultural nuances, and ones too that appreciated my experience and effort to learn the particular dynamics of a Thai classroom. Those moments for me were exhilarating, and they represent hybrid experiences, new spaces of knowing that resulted in the development of creative and experimental pedagogy. More importantly, those moments of hybridity also facilitated relevant and meaningful learning opportunities for my students that were different from what they knew. Over time, many students expressed that they appreciated their

experiences in my class, and that they learned a lot because of the inventive and experimental pedagogy we practised there.

Once again, it is important to maintain and reiterate that the notion of hybridity as described above is not a perfectly dialectic result between different cultural actors. At some point in these relations one space ends and another begins, and where exactly the border sits is difficult to know depending on the context (Bahri, 1997, p. 281). These different spaces exist in time and place: they have long histories that inform personal and cultural commitments to the discourses of the present. My students had their own commitments to collaborate and to share, as opposed to hiding their answers and withholding information that could help their friends. I also had my own commitments to testing and challenging the limits of my students' experience and to showing them something of who I was and what I represent as an individual. The notion of hybridity as I use it here does not ask one side to relinquish those commitments, but instead to craft through trial and error (and sometimes embarrassment and surprise) new imagined ways of communicating and cooperating (Tsolidis, 2001, p. 205).

Nevertheless, borders of experience and power structures remain such as the racial ones Lovell experienced, and as like Bahri (1997) explains: "Capitalizing on signs of visible difference, however, the academy and the visibly different postcolonial nevertheless collaborate in manufacturing outsiders within, without an acute enough sense that the locus of power can be dispersed as that of powerlessness" (p. 281-282). While the foreign teacher puts thought and sensitivity into ongoing negotiations between the margin and the center, it is forgotten that these structures are manufactured and sustained, often disguised with the obfuscating language of multiculturalism,

postcolonialism, and International Education. For Bahri, the border is elusive in experience, but is explicit in racial difference. Bahri's analysis focuses on the minority teacher working in a postcolonial mainstream, but in a reverse analysis her words are appropriate and speak powerfully to my own contentions:

The imagined locations oscillating between the center and the margin, the academy and the public sphere, the global and the local, the first and the third worlds, rest the postcolonial text, the third (in the first) world critic, and the appointed "minority" teacher, each functioning within a circuit of desire, production, consumption, and exchange. (p. 283-284)

As I have tried to make clear throughout, the International Education enterprise is fuelled by trends in world economics and development (VanDamme, 2001), as well as pragmatic and communicable needs for learning English with its global designation as an international language. Western curricula and materials, western teachers, and western educational research are privileged worldwide and considered the authority on all things to do with International Education. The institutionalized hegemony present in the public sphere, expanded to levels of grand narrative are consolidated in the classroom with the white teacher. Even though I work for my personal goals of border crossing and culturally sensitive pedagogy, the visible borders of race are resiliently laden with power, producing the power structures represented between the white teacher and non-white students. Cognitive maps remain uncertain, grand narratives remain in place, and new personal narratives begin with new contexts and old assumptions. With these superficial and unavoidable borders in place, compounded by borders that divide cultural

epistemologies, what does narrative inquiry do for the negotiation and reconciliation of these boundaries of experience?

The Storied Space Between

Border pedagogy has important implications for redefining radical educational theory and practice. The category of border signals in the metaphorical and literal sense how power is inscribed differently on the body, culture, history, space, land, and psyche. Borders elicit recognition of those epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins that distinguish between “us and them,” delineate zones of terror from locations that are safe, and create new cartographies of identity and difference. (Giroux, 1996, p. 23)

Giroux (1996) here states that border pedagogy, teaching self-consciously in the interstices between different spaces of knowing, brings to bear for the participants the constructions that manufacture and produce the political distinctions between different peoples. A part of border pedagogy is the tracing back of the histories that made such categories what they are. My education in Thailand, to learn the language and the culture, and to know some of the history that made me a *farang* in that country gave me the insight to know, at least a little, about why the new player resented me and reacted the way he did. On a similar note, my ongoing narrativization of experience, reflecting and interpreting the experiences as they occurred like the story of my first exam, gave me the wherewithal to reposition and renegotiate my expectations and what was expected of me as I continued to teach over the semester. The notion of border pedagogy allows me to redefine and represent those expectations and subsequently to be a relevant and meaningful cross-cultural teacher (Giroux, 1996).

Bhabha (1998) says that borderline work in cross-cultural education is a recognition of “newness” to an encounter (p. 1336). Discourses are reinvented as people together map out their positions meeting to meeting. Each encounter reconfigures the past in the present, to become what Bhabha calls an “in-between” space that “innovates and interrupts the performance of the present” (p. 1336). MacLure (1996) says that all life stories are reconstructed by the circumstances of the present (p. 274). In effect, two stories are at play: the discontinuous stories happening now, and the assembled stories accumulated up to now. The discontinuity of the present is the “newness” Bhabha is suggesting. Personal stories-in-the-making reconfigure the histories already made. The personal stories, the experiences that shape and emblemize our views about teaching and culture, are in fact both the borders and the bridges between different spaces of knowing. They simultaneously divide and merge; they provide for problems and possibilities for understanding the other. As much as these stories can divide, they also have the capacity to integrate to formulate a kind of logic between them: “An initiating event leads to an attempt. The consequence gives rise to a reaction. One episode follows another, each containing the same structural sequence. Episodes build, and the story takes form” (McAdams, 1993, p. 26). Narrative structures offer what MacLure calls “a way out” (p. 275) of the predicament of needing to try and inhabit different spaces at the same time, when personal and cultural commitments require one to be unambiguously on one side. Narrative inquiry is a kind of retrospective re-enactment of border pedagogy.

My stories told in this chapter are more than “well-remembered events.” They are narratives that continue to inform my practice. They are part of my *inventory* of personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1997; Worth, 1993), and at the very least

prepare me for the displacement spaces that may occur with every new cross-cultural encounter. The basketball game was an instance of newness, as was the morning of my first exam. These stories describe the unpredictable learning opportunities that embody and define the very nature of cross-cultural education where new settings and narratives are the reality for cultural workers. Postcolonial theory reveals some of the history that produce the borders that exist in the present, while new personal narratives have the potential to slowly reconfigure the present and constitute exciting and even radical possibilities for classroom pedagogy (Tsolidis, 2001). The collective narratives that inform a culture set up the power structures that make a mainstream. The personal stories start at the margins in spaces of powerlessness but also hold the potential for reform. Race and location may provide superficial spaces that move back and forth between inner and outer circles, but it is my personal stories such as the ones related in this paper to which I ultimately defer to inform my practice.

Chapter 5: Transformative Education and Amrita

This final chapter will take a turn. When I say *final*, by this I mean only for the conventional limits of this thesis, because this narrative inquiry into cross-cultural living and teaching is an ongoing one, disinterested in conclusion. When I say *turn*, in a storied sense, it is a narrative turn from a personal series of canonical lived experiences that make up the possibilities of my storied space of knowing to the present moment of *living*. In a reflective sense, I intend to turn back on the stories of previous chapters and to review the journey that brings me here. At this moment, I am writing from New Delhi, India. This narrative turn is taking me from the past tense to the present continuous, or at least close to it. In this next personal account, I describe a visit to a very remote girl's school in central India. The school is part of a non-governmental organization's development project to promote girl child education in a wretchedly poor area of the country.

Our 4x4 jeep arrived to the unassuming schoolhouse around mid-day. The road to the school is bumpy and dusty, the car slowing to a walking pace at times as the driver skillfully rolls each tire into potholes one wheel at a time, all the while negotiating and honking his way through villages, full of scurrying chickens, lazy water buffaloes, and dusty-faced children. The school stands in an open space fronting rice fields and dry mountains in the distance. It is a boarding school for girls, itself a relatively new innovation in India to enroll girls from below the poverty line. I am here to see the school, to interview the teachers about teaching and motivation, and hopefully to interact with the kids.

The teachers greeted my interpreter and me kindly. We sat down to masala tea, and talked about the school, its history and challenges. It is only two years old, but the funding for it has already run out. The second story of the building, which was to be the sleeping quarters is now an open-aired and unfinished concrete structure, with pillars shooting up and iron reinforcing rods sprouting out of the top of them like weeds. Now the classrooms serve as dormitories. Fifty girls to a room in bunk beds side by side. The other teachers were busy conducting their classes in the outer concourse surrounding the courtyard. From where I was sitting with the teachers, I could see the students dutifully working, taking fleeting glances at me, a foreigner, important enough to impress. I catch an inquisitive student smile from afar in between questions and answers with the teachers, here over masala tea.

The teachers took me upstairs to look at the unfinished structure, and to describe what was hoped for. From up here on the wall-less second floor, I can see the view of farmers and the evaporating vibration of the flooded fields under the mid-day Indian sun. I feel the soft breeze, not dissimilar to Thailand during those daily motorbike rides to school.

When I come back down, I am faced unexpectedly with the whole school of girls. They have been organized precisely in calculated rows, making a perfect rectangle of pink-clad, dark skinned farmer's daughters, who now call the school their temporary home. And here am I, by the nature of their stares, a person with whom they had no experience, someone not from here. (From where?) As I survey the faces, I feel a mutual discomfort and anxiety, an encounter with newness, filled with uncertainty as to what happens next...

“Good afternoon.” I say.

The teacher shouts an order, and the students stand in unison and say in a well-rehearsed chorus: “Good afternoon, sir!” And sit back down again cross-legged all in one motion under their long brown skirts.

The session started as a question and answer period, where teachers and students asked me questions through my interpreter, and I answered back. I looked at the girl’s faces and smiled at them, trying to provoke an emotional response, to find a reciprocal or shared feeling of communication, while my answers were ventriloquized and transformed into a local Hindi dialect. I was mostly met with shy giggles or eyes turned down to the ground, looks not unlike the ones of my class after the tsunami.

After the questions were exhausted, I felt that I needed to share more of me. Trivial talk of plane rides and cold Canadian winters and how I like Indian food only serve to elicit trivial answers. I asked if I could do something with them, and the teachers agreed. And so I proceeded to start an old and reliable language lesson from Thailand I had taught countless times.

Introductions. My interpreter was too shy to model with me. Other potential assistants backed away. I am on the spot...in a displacement space, trying to find orientation in uncharted territory. My every movement is scrutinized and every utterance amplified, much like being under the spotlight on Teacher’s Day. The place and the people are different, but the feeling is familiar.

Determined and deliberate, I motion to the students to stand up purposefully.

They do.

“Hello!”... (confused stares) I say again, and louder, “Hello!!”

“hello” ... (a quivering voice from the back replies) “Hello!!”

“Hello!” (the group shouts out of time) “Hello!!!”

“Hello!!!” (in unison)

“How are you?!”

“How are you?!!!”

“I’m fine, thank you.” And I smile back to the girls, and bow my head, and they smile and laugh and clap their hands. And then we repeat and continue to learn some more simple phrases.

To take the lesson further, I step into the middle of the girls who are once again sitting on the ground. The anxiety is now at a manageable level with some sense of feel between us, as though we now know that there is no threat to one another. That is, until I kneel to offer my handshake to a girl a few rows in. She takes a noiseless gasp at the recognition that it is to her I am gesturing. I feel her anxiety in me. The other girls cover their giggling mouths in suspense, eager to see what happens next. I look at her and smile.

“Hello.”

“hello.”

I take her hand, and shake it softly. “How are you?”

“i’m fine, thank you.” She covers her face with her other hand.

“My name is Matthew. What is your name?”

“Amrita.”

“Nice to meet you Amrita.”

I smile to her again. She uncovers her face and smiles back nervously.

“Nice to meet you.”

I stand back up and walk to another student, and Amrita lets out a breath of relief and laughter all at once and her friends shake her by the shoulders in congratulations. The crowd laughs out loud, and as I put my hand out again and again, the students compete for it. “Hello! Hello! I’m fine! How are you?!”

We all went out to the front of the school for a group picture. The kids crowd around me, and we exchange giggles and smiles, the only language we share save for the few introductory words we learned moments ago. There is also a feeling of exhilaration for me, and I sense from them as well, a surprising bond out of newness.

I say goodbye and thank the teachers and the students. One last time I go to shake a student’s hand and on mass, students lunge to take it, every girl wanting to introduce herself one last time before never meeting again. I collect my interview notes and papers, say my goodbyes to the teachers and get back in the jeep. I take a deep and regenerating breath having survived the encounter, and I spot Amrita out of the group standing on the front steps. We exchange smiles once again. I wave goodbye, and out the back window they all wave as we jostle our way out of sight along the broken road back to town.

Namaste

The Hindi word for hello or goodbye is the same: “namaste.” It means literally: “I bow to you.” But the spiritual connotation is described as to say: “The god in me sees the god in you.” Namaste acknowledges a common divinity between us, but more than that, it represents a common soul that resides within us. We are the embodiment of a common soul. The god in me sees the god in you. It is with this recognition that I hope to illustrate the transformative potential for cross-cultural education not only to produce dynamic and

exciting teaching, but also to break through the differences that alienate us and leave us lonely. Namaste. We and the other are one and the same. When looking into the eyes of the other, one can be sure that the other's eyes, like those of Amrita, are looking back, and it is the teacher's duty to feel out what she sees. It is this perspective that I wish to pursue in this final chapter.

The story of the girls' school is an emblem that depicts a teaching moment of thinking viscerally, or in other words, maneuvering intuitively in a cross-cultural situation for which there was little preparation or understanding for the Other. One intention for this narrative is to illustrate another example of cultural sensory; that is, to open oneself to the energies of the class and to imagine outside of one's own eyes. In acting, it is called the "third eye," where two actors are engaged in dialogue together, feeding off of one another, acting, reacting, and creating, yet meanwhile they are under the direction of the "third eye," an outside sensory awareness, or *imagination* of their image in the eye of the audience. That view provides an interpretive mechanism that plays with both the boundaries and possibilities of the act. Stepping through the group of students, shaking hands, laughing, and teaching, I was acting out a kind of dialogue, reciting the teacher lines I have rehearsed over years of similar cross-cultural situations in Thailand, yet all the while remaining imaginatively connected to the eyes and minds of the audience, to the students and the Indian teachers, so not to overstep the bounds of tolerable otherness: to not shock, offend, or frighten. This story marks for me an instance where I managed to work through the anxieties of mutual otherness, and to find where our boundaries overlapped. I believe that if one can stay attuned to this kind of cultural sensory, then opportunities for trust, collaboration, and transformation will emerge. On

the other hand, if an overzealous foreign teacher is not aware, or chooses to ignore the cultural cues of the audience, he or she can be alienating and booed off stage. This chapter is about using that outside-looking-in view to locate the borders of experience, and to expose and exploit them for transformative teaching opportunities.

Transformative Education

Our life is never individual... it is endlessly enriched by the presence of the other, and consequently impoverished by his absence. Alone, we have no name and no face, no one to call out to us and no reflection in which to recognize our features.

(Manguel, 2007, p. 34)

In chapter three, I elicited the idea of multiculturalism to guide a discussion about identity and place. The story of teaching *Eveline* represents, in my experience, a kind of fluid movement from physical to mental spaces. Although cultural identities are emotionally and viscerally inspired by the land and rooted in location (Abram, 1996), fictions like *Eveline* have the potential to transport us to other imagined and imaginary places where we can encounter new people. And so not in spite of our cultural identities but because of them, stories of others enable us to see ourselves more clearly.

Multiculturalism is not an ideology of many cultural colonies living side by side, but instead it is a sophisticated dialogue (Giddens, 2007; Hinchcliff, 2000) that repositions cultural differences not as “incompatibilities” (Fox & Gay, 1995, p. 70), but as points for exploration and discovery: cultural ideas of different places that through careful dialogue can occupy the same mental spaces. For the foreign teacher, this means careful listening and expanded boundaries (O’Sullivan et al, 2002) for what is possible in a cross-cultural curriculum.

This chapter probes further into the notions of those cultural boundaries, and the pedagogical potential of the border. All social spaces are replete with codes and signs that make up a discourse (Gay, 2006): a set of predictable situational behaviours that we learn by our experiences of living and being in a particular culture. When different cultural spaces overlap, as illustrated in the narrative of the basketball game and my first exam, the “rules” of interaction are made uncertain and produce a situation vulnerable to transgression. I invoke work done on postcolonialism to examine reasons for the border (race and location), but to also challenge teachers to exploit the border for creative and even radical³ teaching possibilities (Tsolidis, 2001). This, I believe, is not only the challenge for so-called international educators, but part of a larger ethical project to promote inclusiveness and cross-cultural understanding.

By the sophisticated dialogue of multiculturalism, there is a capacity to see and understand ourselves through the expression of the other that was otherwise unknown to us. Dialogue has the capacity to change and expand. A postcolonial lens provides historical scrutiny to the reasons for the borders that divide us and why. In the realization and recognition of the forces that maintain those borders, only then can we start to deconstruct them and learn more about the Other, and consequently about ourselves: “our life is never individual,” and by dialogue, deconstruction, and the stories that describe them will we open ourselves to transformation.

³ In this context, “radical” intends to describe teaching possibilities that were not before imagined. The way this differs from teaching in general is in the unique and largely unexplored capacities of International Education to draw on these possibilities. When different cultural approaches to education can engage successfully, pedagogy and practice can become something quite genuinely “new.” I believe that too often these potentials are interrupted by an adherence to traditional multicultural approaches.

Mayo (2003) says:

Constant recognition of the ways in which we are differentially located with regard to those with whom we claim to work should be borne in mind as we seek to occupy different spaces within the system that, although structurally oppressive, is not monolithic and therefore offers spaces in which transformative action can be engaged. (p. 52)

The gap to which this thesis is meant to contribute is the severe lack of teaching stories coming from western educators working abroad. As someone who considers himself an international teacher, I can only hypothesize that the reason for this shortage is that there are very few success stories to tell; or, for reasons I suggested in the introductory chapter: the transient nature of expatriate teachers, and the particularistic experience of a foreign teacher is perceived to have limited relevance to wider education audiences. These reasons are in point of fact all reasons for each other, for as I have observed in my time working abroad, many teachers are lured by the excitement, opportunity, and status of working in a different culture, but are disillusioned by their relative ineffectiveness in it. Teachers are caught between feelings of power and powerlessness by a system that affords professional status and recognition, yet ill-equips them for relevant practice. International Education is a neocolonial production of the West, exporting the English language, textbooks, curricula, and teachers to the world. It is a postcolonial system implicated in the hegemony of the West (Banks, 1993; O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 29). However, as Mayo notes, the system is not monolithic, and paradoxically it produces spaces for teachers and students to re-imagine what their school experience can be. As both sides are trying to negotiate the boundaries of what they know education to be, it is

in this play between foreign teacher vis-à-vis foreign students that has the capacity to produce transformative and creative learning situations.

For international educators, this kind of re-imagination is both a collective necessity and an ongoing challenge. It is essential to our survival in a global age (Gosselin, 2003; O’Sullivan, 1999). Teachers will increasingly need to transform their profession. Teaching needs to move farther away from what Millard (2003) calls “the constipated, book bound modes of standard curriculum” (p. 4), and push their way to the cutting edge of knowledge acquisition and production in societies. Cultures intersect. Classes are more dynamic. Technologies are reinventing cultures. People are changing the places where they live. Time is accelerating like never before. Teachers need to keep themselves at the forefront of these situations, continuities, and interactions to negotiate and transform the ever-shifting crevasses that shape the landscapes of the past to present to future, from culture to culture to culture. This means that teachers need to keep a finger on the pulse of the classroom, to re-imagine the lives and the stories the students are living. Teachers need to keep looking through their “third eye,” to see how their practice works as different characters enter the stage of the classroom.

O’Sullivan (2001) says: “In moments of grace we take danger and turn it into opportunity... In order to survive our moment, one must be prepared to take a journey into a new creative ‘story’” (p. 4). I believe transformative education has two main aspects. The first takes place in our lived-experience, recognition as-we-are-living-it, as described as “our moment.” Millard (2003) calls it “literacy on the move;” that is to say, students and teachers are dialectically engaged in an exercise of reflection and expression. Bhabha (1998) calls the present an “interruption of the past.” There is a story

in progress, and our lived moments need to flow into that narrative in order for us to understand them. This is a process of transforming the moment lived to a moment narrated.

Phelan and Lalik (1993) say: “Like chameleons, transformative intellectuals cannot help but take on the color of any structure they inhabit” (p. 170). Referring to Dewey and his work on the nature of experience, Weddington (2004) talks about the aesthetic experience of reciprocity between people: “We should never think of the aesthetic in terms of reaction to some stimuli but rather as an interpenetration of energies shared between subject and object” (p. 121). Looking at my story of meeting the class of girls in India, my adaptation to the situation was not an achievement of preparation or lesson planning (although my stories of similar circumstances in the past without doubt informed my actions that day), but instead it was due to a conscious decision to open the place to the possibilities that the energies provided to make it work. “Relying on intuition and experiential knowledge allows the self to know and understand the outer world” (Dei, 2002, p. 126). Polkinghorne (1988) says:

Intuition...is a way of knowing through direct experience without concepts, through a kind of “intellectual sympathy” where the object of inquiry is experienced in its uniqueness before it is located and given a name with a category. When one uses intuition to become aware of one’s experience, one does not find an awareness filled with objects that change; one finds “duration,” or the experience of change itself, in which the past infiltrates the present. (p. 128)

For me, the process of storying experience is the self-conscious act of intuiting experience as it is happening and simultaneously interpreting one’s part in the story of the

other as indicated by the energies they project. The energies I speak of are represented in the eye contact of anticipation, the nervous handshakes, a quivering voice, boisterous laughter, and smiles of trust. Weddington (2004) goes on to say that “emotion is a conscious choice... interaction with another human being fulfills our desire for transformation” (p. 123). Transformation is not simply a consequence of our interactions, but indeed something we seek. We strive to change. Two things that made interaction possible that day were that I had an *inventory* of stories, of cross-cultural encounters that remember the textures and feelings of newness, and secondly there was a mutual interest for the students and me to transform, to enjoy the aesthetic of learning each other.

The second aspect to transformative education, and perhaps a more self-evident one, is its properties for self-reflection (Anderson & Saavedra, 1995; Christopher et al, 2001; Fox & Gay, 1995; Hussein, 2006; Johnson, 2003; O’Sullivan, 2001; Vavrus, 2002). O’Sullivan (1999) says:

Those who occupy a position without privilege must have a very intricate knowledge of those in positions of privilege in order to survive. It is therefore understood that it takes a great deal of cognitive, emotional and spiritual work for the one occupying the position of privilege to break free of it in order to embark upon more inclusive perceptions of the other. (p. 134)

My stories of strange teaching encounters are tales of failure, learning, epiphany, success, and transformation. They not only give me hope, but they also make me humble. It is in this way that stories can transform, for they shape our experiences into a narrative form from which personal truths emerge: “Stories can feed our consciousness, which can lead to the faculty of knowing if not who we are at least that we are, an essential awareness

that develops through confrontation with another's voice" (Manguel, 2007, p. 10). The reflective practice of narrativizing experience, and offering provisional interpretations of those narratives is a research method aimed at resituating the researcher into well-remembered moments of felt personal and pedagogical dislocation and powerlessness. The stories act as emblems that highlight the feelings that guide practice and breathe new life into action (Hussein, 2006, p. 369). In its reflective aspect, transformative education is the domain between revision and agency (Shahjahan, 2004, p. 305), and with my work here, I hope to offer narrative inquiry as a method into that transformative domain.

Throughout these chapters, I have spoken extensively about the possibilities of the storied space and pedagogical possibilities for curriculum at the interstices of those spaces. He and Phillion (2001) describe a feeling of in-betweenness, experienced by Chinese immigrant teachers in Canada. McWhinney and Markos (2003) talk about the "liminal space" of experience, a kind of rite of passage for teachers as they bridge personal experience with their professional teaching careers. Bhabha (1998) and Kanu (2003) explore extensively the nature of "hybridity" and the "third space" in a postcolonial context over issues of power and identity. Mayes (2001, 2002) considers something called the "transpersonal stage" of development where teachers deconstruct their personal and spiritual beliefs in order to understand the students' religious commitments, and finally, Abram (1996) talks about the "more-than-human-world," a place of synaesthesia that includes the physical, spiritual, and natural domains that guide our consciousness and make up our whole being. There are more (to name just a few: Bruner, 1991; Gearing, 1984; hooks, 2003; O'Sullivan, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1988) who describe a transition from experience to agency.

Between spaces exists an active domain, yet a troublesome one because it is not always immediately accessible with words. We know it exists because it affects us viscerally and emotionally. Many writers and researchers of education have made attempts at describing this space from different contexts (from multiculturalism, postcolonialism, phenomenology, mythology, and so on). My goal has not been to define this space between, but only to produce narrative representations of it as a dynamic and ever shifting space where personal, cultural, and pedagogical borders are permeable and where meaning (accurate or otherwise) takes formation. This is the crux of transformative education.

For McWhinney and Markos (2003), the ultimate goal for transformative education is to “live in perpetual self-renewal, reviewing the assumptions by which self and society are guided and given support, reflecting on and challenging their belief systems” (p. 30). Stories are renewable resources for the teacher. They are dynamic and can be applied differently to new situations, interactions, and times. Chin (2006) says: “Narrating one’s life story...is the act of bringing together the various parts or members of one’s lived experiences” (p. 29). My stories of cross-cultural teaching were transferable to the new moment in India, and they will continue to inspire my actions in future scenarios. Stories make the individual actor “an involved observer” (Banks, 1993, p. 5) of his or her experiences. They are the alchemical means whereby we make sense of our experiences and inform our actions, and simultaneously they are the methodological data set, the “well-remembered events” (Carter, 1993) that can be reviewed, revised, and re-enacted.

I want to now make explicit my intentions for undertaking this narrative inquiry. The act of remembering, putting my experiences into story, writing them, revising them, giving them scrutiny and interpretation after interpretation: this thesis in itself is a story of transformation. Over these final sections, I want to turn back on the stories and expand this notion of transformation to include the processes of teaching, remembering, writing and reading, and continually re-imagining identities not as borders to cross, but as mirrors that reflect to us newly distinguishable features that we never knew before. I shall hold a mirror to this canon of stories and reflect again on the work these stories do.

Teacher's Day

In chapter one, I tell the story about Teacher's Day. It is a national day in Thailand to acknowledge and pay respect to teachers. It was the day that I discovered the mythology of being a teacher in this new cultural context. Teaching was not just a job, not just about instructing, evaluating, and helping, but in fact it was a virtuous and benevolent profession. It was about more than being a teacher in Thailand; it was about being an *ajarn*, a position that transcends credentials. *Ajarn* entails a kind of love and respect that I had not known back home, and now that I was one, this realization was truly humbling. To be built up so much that day, under the spotlight in a row of teachers on a stage, being saluted ritualistically for an entire afternoon did not instill in me a sense of self-importance or power, but actually a feeling of humility and embarrassment. I was embarrassed because to that point I had largely taken for granted what it meant to be a teacher. Yes, I worked hard and gave all of my energy to my teaching, but to be the embodiment of a kind of cultural mythology was something I had not before understood.

That experience, and the story of it today marks for me an epiphany of teacher spirit (Shahjahan, 2004).

The transformative property of this narrative is in the transition from a purely practical and mechanistic sense of teacher self to a kind of archetypal reflection (Mayes, 2001), where personal and cultural assumptions about the meaning of teacher were replaced by the concept of *ajarn*. The students in the audience saw a group of *ajarns* to whom they offered their respect and admiration, while from my perspective I felt myself sinking in my chair under their gaze and the shining spotlight. What the story does here is it permits me a seat in that audience, to be an “involved observer,” and to see myself through the eyes of the Other and to understand the responsibility that I owe to that perspective. The story is a mirror that produces a changing image, one that transforms from a teacher to an *ajarn*, and instills a sense of responsibility to that new cultural identity.

Transformative education must include the reflective capacity for story to move a teacher from a space of work and duty to a grander sense of character, acting in and guiding the stories of others (Mayes, 2001; Tsolidis, 2001). It is in that narrative that a teacher can truly discover in mind and spirit what is expected of them and transform their practice to better meet that responsibility. This story of becoming an *ajarn* is more than about learning the cultural differences that shape the make-up of education (Taba, 1963). This story serves as an awakening to the different cultural conceptions of “teacher:” the story expands the boundaries (O’Sullivan et al, 1999) of teacher identity. Before Teacher’s Day, I had only a limited narrative of what teaching was; that is, I had only my own personal story of growing up in Canadian schools in Canadian culture. Teacher’s

Day provided me the experience that now is the story I tell today to describe what it is that I do. It took an encounter with the Other for me to understand this clearly.

A Tsunami and a Hurricane

In the second chapter, the stories are about crisis. The great South East Asia tsunami of 2005 and then Hurricane Katrina of the same year in the United States were catastrophes of crisis and confusion. My narratives on one level are about the absence of stories. They are about the sense of loss and being lost when there are no stories to understand or explain the experience.

When I came to class the first day back after the tsunami disaster, and as the death toll continued to rise each day, I had prepared nothing except a commitment to providing the time and space for students to reflect and share, to try and make sense of what was happening in the south. I was certainly not prepared to “teach.” And so I was stranded and taken aback when all my students wanted was a regular class: they wanted me to teach when I was not practically nor mentally prepared to do so. My need for explanation and understanding, my need to story this experience of the disaster was rejected by my students’ need not to (at least in the public domain). An important point to emphasize is that it was a class decision not to talk about their feelings. It was seemingly unanimous, and I was more lost than I was before, wandering alone in my confusion while the culture around me was apparently moving on. To talk about culture is the second intention for this story.

McWhinney and Markos (2003) say:

The condition that fosters a person’s, organization’s, or culture’s search for new meanings is often one of loss, a loss of support for what has been, or the

awareness that one can no longer turn back. This crisis unfreezes the person to accept the loss and begin a search that takes one across the threshold into a space where one can risk deep exploration, a space in which the exploration is free of immediate threats and consequence. (p. 21)

My experience of the tsunami and the very natural and matter-of-fact response from my students (“Its life. Some things happen sometimes like this.”) came home to roost for me nine months later when I returned home and the American deep south was hit ferociously by Hurricane Katrina. The cultural response to Katrina was not like the solemn acceptance of my class in Thailand, but instead North America was in uproar. There were media investigations of which politician was where at what time, who knew about the oncoming storm, how information and resources were dispersed, and so on with the finger pointing and blame, as though history could have, and *should* have, been written better. This story is for me an emblem that describes a fundamental difference between two particular cultures as informed by my experience of crisis. It is a kind of one-way mirror, where I am alone behind the glass, and they are in a room looking at themselves. I felt like there was no opportunity for me to reflect, but only to observe.

The catastrophes illustrate the power of narrative to reconstitute the past in order to make plot-like sense of the present. They also set the point for an investigation into culture and how people are differently orientated to story, whereby functions or method of use is more a practice for the private sphere than it is for public venues like school. This is certainly my experience of Thai culture. I believe that this understanding is one that emerges from what McWhinney and Markos (2003) call the “liminal space:”

Existing in this liminal space is the archetypal conditions that vessel transformation of individuals, communities, and societies. There, learning transforms in radical, irreversible, and often unexpected ways. The conditions for such change may occur by accident or intentional plan, or may emerge from the natural rhythm of human life. They lead the traveler to let go of assumptions and wander in the transformative space, free from expectations and ego identity. (p. 21)

To reiterate, these stories of crisis are intended to illustrate the importance of story to formulate understanding of experience and also to recognize that cultures are differently positioned to the way stories are utilized. There are, however, unintended personal spin-offs from these stories that continue to transform and guide me personally. They instill in me an awesome appreciation and humble acceptance for the power of the natural world and our limited control over it. Because of these stories, I have a more acute sensibility for the “natural rhythms of human life,” what I have called throughout this thesis, a sense of feel and flow, or, a cultural sensory that interprets the energies students emit to communicate what they need for understanding, for learning, or for coping. Feel and flow are the transformative consequences that emerge from crisis.

Eveline

I believe, it is extremely important for teachers to be well-acquainted and comfortable with difference, including difference within themselves. This is important in that learning necessarily involves self-awareness, and self-awareness necessarily involves difference-awareness. How can teachers facilitate students

self discoveries and creations if teachers are unable to facilitate their own?
(Edgerton, 1996, p. 135)

The stories in chapter three illustrate how a sense of place is a part of the make-up of one's mental environment. The identities of a place make culture, and stories from other cultures have the capacity for one's sense of place to expand: "a dynamic transformation produced by encounters between and among cultures" (Edgerton, 1996, p. 135).

The story of motorbike rides describes my process of learning the rhythms of life in another culture. The exhilaration and energizing moments of riding to work inspired in me a love for life in Thailand, expanding for me the meaning of *home*. Manguel (2007) says:

Nationalities, ethnicities, tribal, and religious filiations imply geographical and political definitions of some kind, and yet, partly because of our nomad nature and partly due the fluctuations of history, our geography is less grounded in a physical than in a phantom landscape. Home is always an imaginary place. (p. 144-145)

As a student of culture, learning how to live in Thailand, how to speak, acquiring a sensibility for becoming an effective teacher, I was experiencing in class the same cultural learning curve to understand the places and the people depicted in the literature that I assigned my students to read. The story of teaching James Joyce's *Eveline* is one that marks another experience of epiphany: a discovery that the stories of one culture can lay imaginative claim to the experiences of others. It was not the teaching of culture and history that made *Eveline* meaningful to my students, but instead it was the mutual

appropriation and response to a human story. It may be a story of another place alien to my students' experience, but it also spoke to my students' situation. Specifically it is the story of being bound to a place by personal commitments to family and cultural identity, an anxiety that resonated with a group of students studying under an internationally motivated curriculum. O'Sullivan (2001) says:

In a time when the global economy can no longer be relied on to provide the basic necessities of life, the cultivation of a sense of locality and place has built within it a corrective to the vagaries of globalization. Educating for a sense of place not only has a history to give; it also has a history to make. (p. 9)

As the *Eveline* unit unfolded, new learnings emerged for the students and for me about what other places have to say about "where is here" (Frye, 1967). It was a process of learning, as Edgerton says, self-awareness through the understanding of "difference-awareness" (p. 135). In this light, home is an "imaginary place," and its geography can be expanded for many cultures to inhabit and engage in dialogue that enhances a better understanding of the Other, and consequently understanding of the self (Edgerton, 1996; Ghosh, 1996; Manguel, 2007). In this instance, the mirror is not only a reflection of identity, but it includes the background, the place where one lives and makes meaning particular. The story of teaching *Eveline* is emblematic of "reciprocal transformation" (Weddington, 2004, p. 130), whereby I was conscious of my own growth and renewal by living in a new place, but in turn witnessed my students' own transformations. The literature inspired a revelatory dialogue with *Eveline*, and by that conversation with an imaginary other, they learned about themselves and me, and I about myself and them.

A Basketball Game and an Exam

There are two stories in chapter four. One is about a student pick-up game of basketball. The other is about the first exam I gave in a Thai classroom. What both stories illustrate is how conflicting historical and cultural narratives of violence and oppression make for borders between people and ideas. More specifically, they are stories that explore for me what happened on those days, to recognize that the mishaps were not arbitrary or accidental. They were real-time manifestations of historical narratives in the present.

The basketball game is a story about a time when a student insulted me because I was white, or in Thai, a *farang* (a derivation of “français”). The other students berated him and forced him to apologize before the game could continue, because I was not just any *farang*; I was an *ajarn*. The complicated historical residue of French colonialism in South East Asia produced an expression of angst, a response to white foreigners, which clashed with the cultural narrative of *ajarn*, a title to respect and honour. The student felt his autonomy threatened and he made a racial slur, only to be embarrassed and shamed by the fact that the autonomy of a teacher entails more cultural capital in a hierarchical society like Thailand. The story is one that reminds me of my privilege in a culture like Thailand, but it also reveals that in spite of social status, respect for a *farang* is not guaranteed or necessarily sincere.

Gosselin (2003) says:

Since autonomy is interdependent with the other, interdependence is essential to autonomy...Autonomy is a felt quality that arises in a real situation, not a move away from opposition to a situation, although it may feel that way when we think

our identity, values, or beliefs are challenged, or when interests conflict. The tension in the conflict is a felt experience. We feel oppressed by the other or by the internalized other. What follows is a need to assert one's identity or separateness. (p. 96)

When I arrived to class to give my first exam to Thai students, I brought with me a taken-for-granted idea that my pedagogy would work. Backed by curricular western education, learned research and theory about teaching and assessment, I had a thoughtful and well-prepared exam in hand, one that would test the limits of knowledge, but also challenge to expand those limits. When I gave the test and watched my preparation and care go for naught as the entire class on mass swapped papers, formed groups, and did the test collectively despite my warnings and outright threats. I was suddenly and rudely awakened to the fact that my professional knowledge and training was not universally transferable to a new cultural context. The story is a warning and challenge to western cross-cultural teachers that postcolonial enterprises like International Education may be managed and stocked with western curricula, texts, research, and teachers, but in-class practice is largely governed by local ways of knowing and local expressions of autonomy.

These stories are tales about limited knowledge of the Other, and only with work and an exploration of the borders that separate us will methods of reconciliation emerge. Ghosh (1996) says that "school must not create a centre...that inevitably creates a periphery...Rather, the centre and periphery must come together in one space" (p. 3). This is the transformative effects of these stories. By exposing the borders that divide people of different cultures, and further, understanding a little about how and why those

borders exist, then the possibilities for change are made available. Ghosh goes on to say that “education must empower students to negotiate with the margins of their identity” (p. 3). In order for border crossing to happen, for teachers working abroad to be relevant and effective, the responsibility to negotiate with their own margins of identity as westerner and teacher is paramount to their success as cross-cultural educators and as citizens of the world.

“I” and “We”

Through all of these stories runs a common thread. They are personal stories. The ones I have selected in this thesis are not arbitrary, for they are chosen to work as emblematic narratives that engaged with issues of power and powerlessness for teachers working in International Education. Nevertheless, they clearly remain *my* stories, and the personal nature of this kind of inquiry is quite obviously the crux of invoking this kind of methodology. And so I revisit the question: What do my personal stories contribute to a wider education audience?

These stories are well-remembered events (Carter, 1993), and as time continues and new experiences reveal themselves as stories layered over stories of experience, new interpretations and new meanings are inevitable in new times, with new people and in new places. The stories are dynamic and animate in myriad ways as the present continually interrupts the past and preempts the future. In the same way the stories are dynamic and fluid, so am I. As a student and teacher of culture, I find myself re-evaluating and revising the *I* in me.

The *I* is a third person. It is the “third eye.” The *I*'s of these stories, although autobiographical, are characters in narratives that are discontinuous with the present

(Bhabha, 1998). They are part of what Connelly and Clandinin (1997) call “cover stories,” *I*'s that portray an actor negotiating experiences of particular tensions that define cross-cultural education. They are stories of growth and transformation of the Self. Bailey (1997) says that “this has been one of the (recent) great struggles of postmodern academics: to make present the visceral as well as the mindful voice, to explore the meaning of moving from the ‘one’ to the ‘I’” (p. 155). My personal stories are one source for my understanding, but they are not the only source. It is this issue that I hope to address: that more personal stories of success and failure in foreign settings need to emerge in the education literature.

The *I* of the *ajarn* story is about a man discovering his call to realize the full identity of a teacher. He experiences tsunamis and hurricanes, gets into altercations over basketball games, is made a fool of in a class exam, and he maneuvers over the Thai landscape, riding his motorbike through villages and rice fields and mountains; he slowly learns the rhythms and emotions that guide his students through literature that initially seemed so foreign. Like stories, “all transformations have a beginning, a middle, and an end” (McWhinney and Markos, 2003, p. 21), but as the French filmmaker, Jean Luc Goddard, noted: “but not necessarily in that order.” This thesis is a journey of the many *I*'s, as identity is regenerated and reconfigured in each narrative and in each reading where beginnings and endings merge into an ever-becoming middle. It is a series of arrivals and departures from one place to another, and in between a continual reconfiguration of a storied identity and being. Together, the *I*'s make a collective I, or in other words, a *We* that experiences this kind of educational journey in all of our classrooms (McWhinney & Markos, 2003). The *I*'s of these stories need not be Me to be

useful, for they have the capacity to inhabit the affective domain of any storied self that is trying to make sense of that elusive in-between space, making the mystical transition from experience to agency. When we realize that the *I* is indeed You, that One and Other are the same and inhabit a common space and share a common soul (Ghosh, 1996), only then is education truly transformative.

India and Amrita

The historical expansion and triumph of western culture has institutionalized the industrialized world as a “superior force that can position itself to determine hierarchies” (O’Sullivan, 1999, p. 29). International Education is one market example of globalization, a source of authority that claims English as an international language, western curriculum as the model for International Education, and subsequently western teachers as professional authorities of both. It is this hegemony that qualifies teachers like myself to travel to places like Thailand and India to work in cultural institutions without prior knowledge or understanding of the local customs. However, as I have noted repeatedly, such “authority” or status or know-how guarantees nothing in practice if the teacher is not open to the dynamism and fluidity that the energies permit. “We see the teacher surrendering himself to the immediate experience and opening himself to the expression of the student” (Weddington, 2004, p. 130). My story of Amrita is my emblem for this sentiment. Borders divide us: political, cultural, economic, or historical; but in what O’Sullivan (2001) calls “moments of grace,” they can be transcended by the transformative potentials provided by peoples’ search for unity and growth. Shaking Amrita’s hand, interpreting the smiles, feeling the anxiety and testing the borders of

communication and connections brought to bear the exhilaration of discovering one's Self in the Other.

Unlike survival, living implies action and the continuation of growth as we reconstruct our past and present in experience with the intentions of guiding our future. As agents who are participants in guiding our own future, we empower ourselves and, in a sense, control our destiny. By "control" I mean we use our intellect as we come face-to-face with the environment. This process is ongoing as we undergo the vicissitudes of life. Our aim is not achieving completeness in the sense of a formed and static identity but a changing identity as we undergo the process of re-creating ourselves. (Gosselin, 2003, p. 99)

I believe what Gosselin says here is that if borders remains upright, and one stubbornly adheres to personal assumptions of identity, ideas, and action, then teaching in an uncertain space is indeed a matter of survival. It is to wander treacherously and vulnerably into the strange domain of the other and to defend against the differences that threaten one's ways of knowing. Living, on the other hand, to completely submerge oneself in the moment and open up to the feel and flow of the situation, then identity is negotiable and curriculum is lived. "This transformation requires feeling the integrity of the situation in its entirety" (Gosselin, 2003, p. 99). This is the ultimate challenge for international educators, especially in a globalized world that is increasingly interdependent yet at the same time increasingly ripe with hostility, violence, and mistrust. It is to expand the margins of the mirror to include all of the *I's* that make up humankind's image.⁴ The story of that day at the girls' school was without exaggeration a

⁴ This metaphor was a concern for my supervisory committee, for it depicts a rather utopian and over-generalized direction for International Education. It can be argued that a "broken mirror" may be more apt,

life changing moment, an imprint on my being that with each reading recapitulates my belief in the human spirit and its capacity to work together in spite of differences both apparent and real.

Namaste. The god in me sees the god in you.

Necessary Transformations

Stories told at day's end create a shared history, linking people in time and event as actors, tellers, and audience. The unfolding drama of life is revealed more by the telling than by the actual events told. (McAdams, 1993, p. 28)

I hope what is now evidently clear at the end of this narrative inquiry and exploration, if nothing else, is that stories have the capability to expand boundaries of experience to include those that were not otherwise understood. In order for stories to work, they require the presence of the Other. In order for transformation to take shape, one requires the Other for their own needs of reflection and personal growth. In the affective domain of story, the space between experience and agency, past and present, knowledge and uncertainty, one can expose and exploit the border between the familiar and the darkness. To recognize the dark side of one's heart is to identify the otherwise unknowable Self (Manguel, 2007).

The stories are dynamic and ever shifting as the processes of globalization and technology make the world increasingly more connected and interdependent. It is the

reflecting back multiple and fractured selves, because after all, a collective *We* suggests a plural self in reflection. This again highlights the contradiction of Narrative Inquiry and what this thesis represents. Individual stories provide multiple versions of a particular event or phenomenon, but collectively, stories can reveal common threads and trends that resonate more widely with relevance to an education community. This is the utility in this kind of work, and I believe also in this kind of metaphor of the mirror with expanding margins. The metaphor is not used to shut down the discussion, nor is it an attempt at conclusion as much as it is to provide a sense of utility and hope to teachers working in International Education.

teacher's duty to stay at the forefront of those processes and be in step with the realities that emerge from cultural inclusivity and transformation. More teaching stories of cross-cultural learning and revelation need to be made public, not only to enrich our understandings and development of cross-cultural pedagogy, but more importantly to maintain a sense of humility and deference to the other, to problematize postcolonial assumptions about western leadership in International Education for the aim of enriching cross-cultural practice through the direct interaction with the Other: to expose the potential possibilities for transformative and radical pedagogy. I will now employ one last quotation from Polkinghorne (1988):

To play a social role is not the same as configuring one's life into a plot that is one's personal identity. Performing a social role is a way in which a person manages and animates his or her actions, but playing a character—of what there are many over a life span—represents only one of the episodes that make up the content of a life story. One may play many different characters which give temporary periods of identity during one's life span. But these various roles...all take on meaning from the perspective of the single adventure that is one person, as defined by the plot. (p. 153)

The personal canon that makes up this thesis provides moments in my own life narrative that lead to my present condition. It is well beyond the limitations of this thesis to explore the question of whether I am writing the plots of my journey, or if in fact they are writing me; however, it is safe to say that this thesis describes a quest of many journeys: journeys of remembering and reliving, of interpreting and discovering, of writing and reading, and coming to know myself through the transformative experience of narrative inquiry. It is

the journey of living a storied life, recognizing that the experiences of cross-cultural confusion and mistake are not simply teaching miscues, but they are revelations that could not be available without the presence of the Other. The unexpectedly enlightening discovery of this work is that those other ways of knowing the world always existed in me. It is only by my direct participation with the other players in Thailand and India did they reveal themselves in me. We are characters in each other's stories. You, my readers, are characters in mine, and I in yours. We are all mirrors of each other. This has been the value in this work, and I extend it to you in the hope that it can expand the boundaries of cross-cultural education and invite more characters to offer their voice to the processes of the international classroom. I can think of no greater necessity as generations of students and teachers will not only encounter cultures different to their own on their own personal journeys and professional endeavours, but also in a much more immediate and profound sense, *need* them to succeed and to survive.

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