

## Chapter Seven

### A Grounded Pedagogy of Body/Place Knowing

It seems customary to end theses with another question, where to from here? I find myself thinking only about how to do more of the same kind of work I have been doing in the nexus of this project/thesis. If I did not realise it at the beginning I do now understand that that is how I *do* my belonging. Self and community – I do this work to bring us both into being in a mutually productive way. I have a profound investment (that is neither entirely selfish, nor of course selfless) in helping to create a sense of community that is fluid, expansive, inclusive, that will continue to engage productively with me. And a belief that the work of enabling rural women to bring their embodied experience into the public domain, can contribute to the ways we can think about and practice creative, ethical living and learning.

#### **An epistemology of mothering, a pedagogy of the body**

To borrow a question from Armstrong (1993), so what's the mother's body got to do with all this? What does Armstrong's embodied maternal knowledge have to offer in developing a grounded pedagogy of body/place knowing?

In response to the 'marketisation' approach to pedagogical issues in higher education in Australia, Terry Threadgold suggests:

[the] process of the *making*, not just the transmission of knowledge, the fact that that knowledge has both symbolic and cultural as well as economic value ... the fact that any making of knowledge that goes on involves people, people who have bodies, sexed bodies, and that that process is never free of desire or power, nor of class, race and gender struggles and inequalities (1995, 46).

For me this means looking much more closely at the ways texts (of any kind) come into being, and looking much more imaginatively at what a text can be and do. It means developing practical skills in both the production and reception of texts which acknowledge the material practices, relationships and specificity of embodied experiences that are integral to the making of texts. It means not erasing or denying but embracing the productive possibilities presented

in and by the traces of labouring bodies (which, as Threadgold says, are always carried in the text anyway). It means giving those most disenfranchised (and here my present commitment is to rural women) ways to make and circulate texts that embody alternative economies.

Hart (1992), in response to her critique of education's involvement with deeply hierarchical, patriarchal, exploitative practices and assumptions in western business and industry, proposes a model of *subsistence* knowing and producing. This is exemplified in practices of mothering, which then suggest a model for an ethical education for life. Mothering, Hart claims, illustrates non hierarchical, interactive work relations, and a non dualist epistemology that arises from its practice. She gathers together the main features of mothering, conceptualised as a productive labour – particularity and generality, engagement in reality, provisional and ambiguous knowledge.

Armstrong suggests 'the *process* of creation, the art object, the experience of its reception, the theorizing of it as concept and praxis – all these are comprehended in the term *aesthetic*' (1993, 175). She talks about the re-politicising of this aesthetic and the paradoxical connection with the other. The paradoxical relationship with the other is for Armstrong a both/and relationship, derived originally from the embodied mother/child relationship in the space of play. In that space between mother and child the grounds are laid for the child's ongoing creative capacity. It is in that space that the both/and can happen: I am both one and the other, separate and connected, at the same time.

As Armstrong sees it, the aesthetic is to be politicised by carrying through the paradoxical qualities of that original mother-child relationship into our other makings. This is political in the sense that it is precisely this relationship that is otherwise absented.

Hart's formulations of provisional and ambiguous knowledge in relation to later mothering also links to this idea:

Because she is in contact with the continuously changing nature of her child ... the mother's knowledge can never be finished or be absolute, but must remain tentative and provisional ... constantly affirmed or disaffirmed, created and recreated in accordance with the unique and constantly changing reality of the child (Hart, 1992, 188).

For Hart, knowing in the act of caring, in relation to lives progressing in relationship, changes the parameters of knowledge itself. Hart's call for a radical approach to education for life, based on an epistemology of mothering, is a welcome naming, a challenge to make productive mothering a subject of educational theoretical analysis. Hart's implications of an epistemology of mothering is long and detailed but the main points for my analysis are: that it is embodied; that it relates to the primacy of the mother/child experience; that it entails the mother's love for the child, but also the capacity to stand back and let the child develop; that it is about production rather than lack, and importantly a *life-sustaining* production necessary for the well-being of community and environment as well as the individual. It provides a means of making visible the underpinning of any necessary pedagogical practice of the body.

We already have some very dominant discourses of mothering, but this use of mothering is different than most. Yet while Hart's discourses are already different, she does not make it very plain how much work is required to rethink mothering. She does not elaborate how, for the adult mother/daughter/woman, the acts of caring implicated in this knowledge making process might include a simultaneous caring for the self.

This links to my own experiences of work undoing the model of femininity inherited and transmitted in dominant discourse. In this discourse I can either be a caring, selfless mother, dedicated to the other, or needy, dependent and immature daughter/child. Reworking my relationship to this model has been a journey of undoing and redoing the specificities of my relationship to my material mother as well as my own acts of mothering.

*My imagined mother coat hangs reasonably lightly, bulky enough to embrace me without impeding movement. Between the patches of fine ribbed cord, and favourite fabrics (their deep colours and underlying patterns held together in an overdye), blue printed images of my mother angle towards me across the space. We both are there, mostly without crowding each other, although occasionally folded together in tiny pin tucks and pleats. The words that loop between us are in tiny stitch, giving subtle structural integrity to the layers, quilted as well as patched. I make no secret of the seams, however; inside out, boldly stitched (I am fascinated by the joins). On the inside, I have printed our botanical gatherings, how she earthed me. A riot of summer fruits and berries, somewhere between an encyclopaedic page and a Morris wallpaper. Fitting body in, there is the faintest smell of lavender.*

It has been a process, for example in the work of making a mother-coat, of materially playing in the space between mother and child, and giving tangible and visible forms to aspects of that relationship as they are reworked, as new possibilities become available in the process of making. It has also meant applying this kind of productive work to the nature of my relations with other adult women.

This is an issue that feminist pedagogy is attempting to address in various ways. In higher education, as elsewhere, the public performances allowed to women have been characterised as the desexualised mother or the dangerous seductress (Threadgold, 1995). Threadgold, in reviewing the 1994 edited collection of *The Jane Gallop Seminar Papers*, points up the ubiquity of Freudian family narrative as both the reality and the only discourse available to women in educational institutions, and the need for an alternative model of the mother and of mother-daughter relationships. There *are* critiques of the version of feminist pedagogy based on the nurturing, selfless mother, Gallop's own paper 'The Teacher's Breasts' being one. But these critiques themselves can raise other deeper anxieties about power and authority in relation to sexuality and eroticism, sometimes producing the very opposite sense of the dangerous seductress.

Although feminist philosophers have traditionally sought to show how the body is figured as feminine, or how women have been associated with materiality (whether inert – always already dead – or fecund – ever-living and procreative) where men have been associated with the principle of rational mastery, Irigaray wants to argue that in fact the feminine is precisely what is excluded in and by such a binary opposition. In this sense when and where women are represented within this economy is precisely the site of their erasure (Butler, 1993, 37).

A potential self erasure, or at least immobilisation, seems to come from a dominantly discursive, deconstructive approach, whose logic eventually puts the *feminine* self under the same critique. If a place is not claimed in her productions, as a priority at the outset, for her lived body experience, there is no means of accessing and considering it otherwise.

In a performance paper that brought the pedagogical details of a supervisory relationship into public view, Margaret Somerville and I begin to explore this possibility. We perform, as supervisor (completing a PhD) and student (completing a Masters), the sort of writing that

comes out of a different model of mother and mother-daughter pedagogical relationships; a re-writing of relations between women that allow us both to be desiring and nurturing. Our scripted conversation insists on speaking the material embodied details of our working relationship, the kind of knowledges that are produced out of the relationship and the writing practices. These include the negotiation of space, food, time, separate and shared desires and interests among other specific strategies involved in the making of our texts.

*I dream I am on a train, an old British train where the carriages are linked, and can be traversed, through difficult and unconvincing spaces of swaying rubber and steel. I sense others in the carriage with me, but am aware particularly of a figure seated writing at a desk, with back towards me. I know the figure is male. I understand that this carriage is to do with academia and maleness and that I am leaving. But I find that the sliding door has become concertinaed with folds so thick and close that I have to present my shoulder first and force my way through, sliding, head first it seems, down a chute to where women are waiting for me in the next carriage (Hartley, in Somerville and Hartley, 1997, 31).*

Our bodies and our embodied relationships are central to the producing of academic texts.

The text itself was the ultimate material representation of the practices that challenged academia because in a sense the other practices are still always invisible in academia. I mean how you organise food and negotiate space and time and even our personal relationship isn't necessarily visible to anybody else outside. All those things are invisible in academia, but what you actually produce is text, is infinitely materially visible and that's the challenge. I mean that's the thing that actually subverts. The challenge was to develop a way of writing that could incorporate all the different bits.

...

It's about the practices of writing from the body, and how you get to do that (Somerville, in Somerville & Hartley, 1997, 34).

Women in the audience responded by bringing forth and rethinking accounts of their relations with women and the kinds of knowledge production they were engaged in. '[T]alk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and teachers might do together *and* the cultural politics such practices support' (Simon, 1992, 57, in Green and Lee, 1995, 41). In a performance mode, our paper suggests a different understanding and practice

of the maternal can produce and perform alternative texts in public with important effect. In a feminist intent to draw attention to the process through which knowledge is produced, this embodied 'both/and' maternal becomes not only the underpinning but the knowledge itself.

*Oopik Pitsiulac, an Inuit woman artist prepares herself for making 'I am just on the way to seriously doing beadwork. I am collecting my mind to doing beading' (1994, 192).*

*'Recently, I have been re-arranging my mind for doing more carvings and expressing myself' (1994, 195).*

*Walking, breathing deeply. A ten minute stretch in brisk morning air while porridge is cooking. Re arranging my body for writing, for last words which do not come easily. Resist picking fresh slippery jacks, yellow brown boletus in droves along the roots of roadside pine, but I cannot resist three filigree seed heads of tall grass.*

The courage to know in a different way. I have new insight into Hart's words: 'A transformed perspective, on work and life', she says, 'enables the seer to move about', to bring herself into different proximities, and to assume a view that 'brings entirely new issues, questions and problems to light' (1992, 202). This knowing and doing encompasses the material, the imaginative and the cultural, and seeks to move freely between them, thinking them together, so that some forward movement is achieved.

The whole point about an epistemology of mothering (a particular way of knowing based on embodied experience) and about the pedagogy that arises from it is that it is uncontainable, won't be reduced to simple categories, and has a mobility that cannot be talked about in static terms, only in terms of what it does. Based on an open materiality, a body that is in process, it can only be talked about in terms of what it can do. In the final analysis, however, Hart's Utopian idealism loses me because in that projection and abstraction, the body is once more absented. The material, embodied and situated practices enacted in this project have given rise to a grounded pedagogy of bodily presence.

Before discussing this pedagogy, I explore first the poetics of this practice.

***Bridging***

Bridging between me and other women

One place and another

places and bodies.

placemaking and community

Bridge as transitional object.

Bridging as a way of *producing* space-in-between

(where does one thing end and another begin?)

Then and now, you and me, us

Bridging between theory and embodied practice

concrete and wood,

between academic and non academic, between image and voice,

visible and invisible.

***Voicing***

In the first instance, simply a matter of talking. Taking this tracking of mother and matter and materiality into language.

To start with things mattering

Voicing everyday embodied lives and experiences

Your voice, my voice, the voice of things - these things: cups and weeds, flowers, stones, irons, trees, books, boxes, leaves and feathers.

What does it mean voicing material relations at the heart of language

showing and telling

listening and scribing

Kaluli voice flows through the body like a river

Your voice permeating my flesh, mine resonating in yours

and these other voices that resound through us

What language carries that material flow?

Voicing body, embodying voice

Ingesting, digesting

bodily process

where food and words come together in paradox of flesh

allows us to think of nurturing the other and caring for/expressing the self

without collapsing one into the other.

### ***Gathering***

Gathering folds of cloth for a start. Hand, finger tip and thumb work, gauging the thickness, the feel, bringing one fabric fold up against the other, pulling the thread through. Thinking seriously about what material actions, what knowledges are required to bring things, people, ideas together in a productive way. To take seriously the wrinkled surface of specific skin and ground, as well as ideas

provisionally, contingently, contiguously

where differences can sit together, juxtapose, interact, touch

moments of contact that make possible the emergence of the new and unexpected. Can't help thinking of those loose stitches temporarily holding things together – *tacking*. A sailing term too. A zig-zag strategy required to keep making a way forward in a head wind.

*Gathering*, with all its references to sustenance, subsistence (hunting and gathering), the gathering necessary for our existence. Which means, when picking any crop or natural yield from its place of formation or growth, knowing the necessities of *its* existence too. Gathering in the everyday. Gathering what matters.

*Gathering things, objects* - A simple physical gathering of things that we do not normally attend to, even see, perhaps hardly realise exist. Reminding us of touch and texture, colour and sound, smell and taste. Learning and inferring from embodied attentiveness. Gathering that leads to *seeing and hearing differently* – our world expands.

*Gathering bodies together* - Acts of gathering that are about sharing and simply being together, doing things not alone. Gathering as a practice of community as well as a community of practices.

*Gathering bodies 'up'*, different qualities and capacities of body, which means gathering the visible with the invisible – skin and bone, arms and legs, breath, resonances, emotions, stories, images, memories, senses, desires

*Gathering the potential voices in others and other things* - recognising different materials as well as subjects have (potentially) multiple voices as well as gathering up the voices within the self – what's here and now and real for you, the contradictory and the possible

*Gathering past and present*

*Gathering* marks, records, documents, traces, sites and moments of contact between embodied subjects.

Acts of gathering that matter— because they are practices of community - bringing together, in material everyday physical ways, the one and the many without those distinctions collapsing.

Acts of gathering that put one at the cusp between the particular and the general -

Acts of gathering that make a place neither inside nor outside, because it is in the act of gathering that those very categories get made and remade?

*Gathering up* as prerequisite for such expansion; assembling, collecting one's resources as for an effort.

### ***Stretching***

The 'elasticity' of being. The nature of matter - matter's mobility, flexibility, (having a life of its own as well as connecting with yours)

Stretching belly, body, mind

Stretching across differences

Stretching, implying reaching out, beyond oneself,

yearning for more than one is

Stretching as effort, labour, movement, desire to connect up with the other

Stretching implying possibility

Change

Movement that involves return, expansion and contraction

The capacity of a material to stretch assumes also the capacity to gather itself up again. Once it has lost its stretch it has lost its ability to move - to return to an elastic state, a state of possibility. (There is always the possibility of consolidation, not always necessarily radical change)

Winnicott's phrase (the space of play) captures beautifully, for Kirby, 'not only the spatiality I have been attempting to incorporate into my approaches to the subject, but also the elasticity, the revisability that remain when we conceive of the subject as the effect of a provisional boundary that is continually being sketched back into existence' (Kirby, 1996, 150).

Going through new ground, taking risks, extending geographies. Does this stretch you, what are you doing that makes a stretch?

Undoing and redoing

Tools for reading/writing stretchable place, stretchable self.

Stretching with some of the multi layered, multi formed significances of body and place.

Stretching attention to the active surfaces of skin – not just the writing of meaning onto bodies and places by intersecting fields of discourse, but the ways in which the exchange between material place and material bodies make meaning possible and writeable.

### ***Performing***

Bodies in place

Bodies in public places

Body, place and public performed through the stories folded into them, imbricated. What kind of stories can circulate across communities, and how?

Provisional, situated and ambiguous knowledge embodied in our performances. These stories are never exactly singular, never exactly communal. Never quite complete.

Provocative? Dialogic? Circumventing commodified processes?

essential demonstration of a productive and life affirming approach to difference?

Learning and teaching in the same breath / becoming what you write, writing what you become/ bridging with new knowledge / performing possibility

alternative ways of being and responding

putting these in place for others at the same time as for self

Performing the grounds of a different approach to the reception of works, work and play, work/play.

Process and product

changing subjects and changing relationships between subjects

performing self and other

Co-constituting each other

In writing about the series of workshops and performance events that make up this learning process, I move now from the metaphorical to an explanation of the grounded pedagogy.

### **Pedagogies and epistemologies**

The workshops built on each other, each one accumulating the experiences and learnings of all the past workshops. None of the processes are discrete, being consciously and closely interwoven in back and forward movements between them. It is only writing it in a linear fashion that means I order it in the following way. The beginning of this teaching process however does start with **bridging**: creating and exploiting a number of bridges that invite women to participate in alternative knowledge making. A material bridge, most obviously, allows me to make links between the women's already present interest in painting it and my research interests, between my world and theirs, our different making practices. By inviting the women to bring their multiple places and voices into the process at the outset, we bridge relationships between researcher/teacher/learner as possible joint exploration. The picnic interview creates a place of some familiarity, again bridging not only between our different workplaces, but between those and domestic experiences we loosely share. The opportunity for the women to talk about their painting and the bridge in conversational style bridges between different representational conventions, and between our different modes of reflecting on our makings.

As a grounded practice, bridging moves between lived experience, material constructs and metaphorical and theoretical concepts. It invites crossings and recrossings and suggests seriously attending in detail to the specific nature of the ground of knowledge making between us. It suggests a way of inviting people to make use of existing structures whilst putting them under question at the same time; to extend territory, have mobility without it necessarily being a colonising appropriative gesture.

To begin to recognise that the uneven textures of a folded topography are an invitation to reconceptualise the history of the site - in terms of migrations into, across, and within its continually unfolding surface - would not only shift attention away from gate-keeping to path-making; it would also redefine the artmaking process as a dialogue with other habits and histories of occupation (Carter, 1994, 6).

The dynamic space of the in-between which Carter relates to contact space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous settlers, and a dialogic exchange that preserves 'the intervals of difference' (Carter, 1992a, 179), takes on another layer of possibility when applied to the in-between space of the bridge, and the way women are constructed as a site of difference. There

are already at least two bridges in this story, the old and the new, and the pilot study makes explicit an implicit, perhaps inchoate comparison or sense of change being experienced. Rather than suggesting an unimpeded seamless flow into a pre-existing terrain, bridging reminds us not to take for granted either the structures that carry us over, nor the material and local landscape over which we cross. From this mobile and provisional perspective 'a new theory of orientation, of way-finding, and of place-learning in the environment becomes possible' (Gibson, 1979, in Carter, 1994, 6). The knowledge making premised by bridging is situated, partial, and negotiated across different but specifically gendered embodied experiences.

### **Voicing**

The praxis of voicing starts materially in the women's own living speech, in face to face communication, and enabled by our material objects. It focuses on voice not as metaphor, but as embodied, situated, materialised itself in different ways. The combined strategies of *listening, scribing, voicing* bring the women immediately into a *making* process that engages their bodies directly, productively, interactively. This is a co-operative, reciprocal making which everyone experiences from both positions of teller and scribe, and which might suggest a non-colonising, non-hierarchical, interanimating form of communication.

Voice, taken into the body through careful listening, resonates it, permeates it, passes through it, comes out through the fingertips in writing and drawing and can be collaboratively shaped and shared as text. This way of working with voice considers the traces left on both participants, the way changed perceptions of the self are wrought through the other and vice versa. Voice is made material, in response to the material, translated from the oral/aural and given visible and tangible presence in text, becoming part of the empirical 'real', part of active matter.

Hart, discussing experiential learning theory and long held principles of adult education, finds that

Because a communal orientation is entirely absent, by implication the relationship of self and others is stated in terms of the primacy of the former. Interaction or communication, reciprocity or mutuality are therefore not integral elements of

experiential learning theory, as they must be for an education for life (Hart, 1992, 192).

Dominant models, whether they be in fields of visual arts or textual practice presume a highly individual art making practice. Here the structures that we put in place consider voicing as simultaneously an individual and community process. Mary Hutchison's writing practices, which she conceptualises as *writing self and community*, use 'imaginative writing strategies and conventions in unorthodox and transgressive ways with a view to agentially re-writing the subordinate subject' (1999, iii). The social relations of this practice which we drew on, by no means limited to, but very much apparent in the collaborative process of scribing, intersect with my work around conversation. I capitalise and focus on the way knowledge making for women often happens in conversation, in the space between self and other, and I make a particular critical point of extending the notion of 'other' to include the non-human other object world in these social relations.

The cooperative making of a text from voice celebrates rather than censors embodied self presence, catching precisely those qualities that are otherwise often the first to be excluded by our perceptions of what a written text should contain. Both teller and scribe have work to do, and a care both for the self and the other. It is an act of care to hold the other's words within the self until they are written down, and a learning/labouring process too. While the scribe learns to attend to and identify significant details of the other's story, they also learn to recognise the other's meaning coming in unique patterns and rhythms of breath, and pauses - sound moving through the body as a flow as much as items of intelligible speech.

The kind of authorship that emerges from the consultative process between teller and scribe, and the later development of the scribed piece, introduces participants to the movements between mimetic nearness and critical distance that Hart claims are central to an alternative subsistence making and learning. Tellers, as their words are validated in the recording, become more aware of what they choose to tell, and of their expansion of ideas and lines of thought in the process. Making changes and approving the resultant text, and later playing with and changing the text again offers a way of shaping and changing meaning, without devaluing it. These movements might be seen also as the use of the naïve (Marshall, 1999) whereby we bring lived experience to the fore and value it, but at the same time begin to bring reflexive critical play to bear on it, without devaluing or dismissing the generative experience.

## **Gathering**

The emphasis on intersubjectivity that is threaded through this project arises from the belief that it is through engagement with other(s), subject to subject, that in fact we experience the profoundest sense of self. The difficulties for a woman in this respect, (never fully considered subject in a patriarchal binary system), may be that she either experiences too much sense of the other, as overwhelmingly alien, separate and powerful, or has difficulty distinguishing between self and other.

Like many others, and from close reflection on my own experience, I make a connection between the way women are thus positioned and the difficulties this poses in her relationship towards all aspects of her productions - their materials, form and content. Gathering, in both simple and complex engagements with materials from the object world, intervenes in this situation in a number of ways.

The way the women work with the materials of the world changes their perception of objects as mere things to things with agency and life of their own, capable of engaging and stimulating them in a productive dynamic. This process also changes their perception of themselves. Hart refers to Bookchin (1982, 233), to make a similar point:

It is only through such a contact that valuable knowledge about reality can be gained, and that the various phenomena of this reality – objects, organic materials or living organisms – are respected in their own right, may even be considered ‘co-equals’ in the labour process (Hart, 1992, 187).

All the movements in the gathering process - from the gathering I did with my mother, to the gatherings involved in the workshop, the processes of play and show and tell, operate in the contradictory space of subject/object. Learning the complexities of the co-constitutive relationship of the one to the many, the particular to the general through mothering, negotiating between self, natural world and the symbolic ordering of the world, necessitates a tolerance of both/and conditions. In teaching making processes, conventions often depend on a linear and ultimately polarising movement. We learn to work with the qualities of the material, allowing them to determine form and function. We make highly individual

subjective statements that bend the material to the service of our expressions. The art-craft opposition continues, and rarely do we fully exploit the productive potential of spaces and practices that confound easy distinctions and separations.

### **Material play**

The play experienced with gathered materials allows the women to explore making productive relationships between their own unique experiences and the meanings that exist outside the self, in the other, without the collapse or negation of either. Self/other, subject/object categories are temporarily suspended or blurred. Aspects of selves - memory, story, emotions - emerge and are made available in dialogue with the material's own qualities. Winnicott would claim this space/practice as both a resting place from, and a productive site in which all categories, including self/other, subject/object, get made and re-made. I use the material interactions that happen in these spaces and practices of play to contribute critically to women's knowledge making, producing in an intertwined fashion, both resource material and an understanding of the self as a creative agent:

our play is *play*, not simply subversive linguistic play, but the transformation of categories which constitutes a change in the structure of thought itself: it is not only an aspect of knowledge but the prerequisite of political change' (Armstrong, 1993, 184).

### **Show and tell**

We borrowed from a typical primary school practice to develop a pedagogy of subject/object relations. Show and tell, already figured in our voicing practice, is a hybrid thing, part conversation and part what comes into being as the individual expresses herself both in relation to the material object, and to the group. It is absolutely necessary to have the material there, as a critical element and agent in social relations, playing its part in the both/and paradox at the heart of those relations.

In show and tell the importance of material specificity is combined with a collective care for, and of, the individual with a community, the desire for the individual to flourish within community. Taking the work the individual is doing out of the private realm, frees it from being regarded only as a function of the individual's interior and isolated psychic world, to a group context, and an issue of individual in community relations. The work of show and tell is

structured specifically to support the individual doing this work in the care of, and productive interface with, community.

This is a way of bringing provisional, negotiated, situated knowledge to meaningful material form and substance. It is not knowledge making in a vacuum, *ex nihilo*, nor acquired through simple transference, but made in relationship to what already exists and what has gone before and outside the self, without those prior meanings overwhelming the individual.

### **the fold**

When you gather a fabric together, in a three (some might say four) dimensional way, a fold occurs. A material space is created where something else can happen. Things touch, meet or are oriented differently towards each other.

Begin to move and a world where images were juxtaposed yields to one where objects continually elide and fold into, beneath over and round one another (Carter, 1994, 6).

When things touch and make contact in this way, desire is both enabled, and enabling. ‘The idea that desire produces within the real - indeed produces the real - is also a veritable rupture with many modes of conceptualising being in the world’ (Probyn, 1996, 44). For Probyn, desire is not a metaphor, but a way of making productive links between beings, things, and ways of being, ‘inevitably giving way to the literalness of things’ (41). In the folds of our gathering practices both material and metaphorical surfaces are brought together with this in mind. Invisible surfaces like memories, emotions, stories are rendered visible in an encounter with the material surface qualities - textures, colour, weight, smell, shape, volume - of leaves, twigs, fabrics, found and manufactured objects. All of these can potentially have equal agency when folded together in this gathering process.

At a very basic level it is about making metaphorical or invisible surfaces available as alternate and transgressive data with the same agency as the material. They have the same status in the world as material objects, and they can be put to work in the same way. They don’t displace each other but, once made available to each other, most importantly have the potential to work together in a new dynamic.

Movement (as a desiring way of getting around) is thoroughly implicated in the practice of the fold. It's about the moving body and the moving body's disruption of the universal fixed world view. A way of relating predicated on closeness and contingency – 'there is no contact without touch' (Carter, 1991, 5).

### **Stretching**

Stretching is about body movements that focus a body in place. These are movements that take account of enfolded flesh, and enfolded terrain. They imply collection and expansion, and more collection and expansion. The capacity to stretch is about the capacity to return and stretch again, touching self and other in elastic, revisable ways. Stretching as a set of practices has its own mobility. We move in and out of structured embodied experiences, reflections, analysis and then give more opportunities to move further out and make our own applications and reflections.

The notion of traces is central to stretching practices. Traces record the mobile exchange, physical and emotional, between subject and surroundings (Carter, 1991, 5). Traces of the body in the landscape can be a way of thinking about the links between our representations and inhabiting a multi dimensional lived world. Indeed they may become the trace of the body in the text/work. But it starts in an exchange between surfaces. Dust and gravel – whatever the women found to be the trace of their bodies moving through and engaging with the environment – whether it was the smell of smoke permeating their skin, stickiness of something, scratches. And vice versa, whatever marks, footprints, a bush brushed by - document their presence.

The trace offers a way for the women to develop theoretical frameworks and tools on their own terms; to understand and analyse, deconstruct even, their relationship to social discourse that impinges on them. The women do the work of putting themselves in place in various embodied and imaginative ways (including the work in *the photo in place*), and collectively we name the traces and track them. Now linked to other kinds of surfaces, the trace becomes an analytical, deconstructive tool. Contradictions, inconsistencies, paradoxes, new material data becomes visible, accessible and offers a way of putting their situations under question in a manner that had not been available before.

I explicitly name the move between this kind of work and what can be taken into and made present in the text. I ask women how they can take these embodied traces into their art – named as the trace of the body in the text. This begins to conceive of the text/work that is to go out into the world as a particular kind of terrain itself. Pinboarding, as a further spatial practice related to the making of the text, then provides a site in which to process and start to apply these understandings.

### **Pinboarding**

Both a holding place and a process, pinboarding elaborates in a visibly spatial, mobile way much of what has been established in show and tell practices. It facilitates the materialising of a work intended for public circulation by making a semi public space of individuals' pinboards and of the whole group process.

Within the space of individual boards, the intention is to keep spatial opportunities open so that there is room for movement. Individuals re-arrange components and relationships of their developing artwork as connective desire lines suggest themselves. Group response and interaction, in a working show and tell, gives what is taking shape on the pinboard a public validity. The dynamic at the level of the individual's boardwork is mirrored in the space and practice of the room/group work. After individuals working on their own board, we make our way around each in turn. The teaching of the group plays out the same practice around the room, facilitating and drawing out possible resonances within and across pinboards. This demands a full bodily presence to each work, but in this way cross references begin to build an additional collective dynamic that each takes up in their own way. This makes up a learning experience that is visibly productive and simultaneously individual and shared.

It is possible to understand the teacher's body in pinboarding as a trajectory of productive desire, bridging between the different bodies of the group, and inviting them to become part of the same dynamic. It is work that is modelled for others to take up, and which they do take up in similar ways for each other. This re-arranges possibilities of teaching and learning, who can do it for whom and how it can be done.

This nexus of form and process in the pinboard, and in teaching pinboarding practice links with a performative approach that bring works to completion and into the public domain.

## **Performing**

In the library night we wanted to avoid, or at least defer attention to end products, and instead to intervene in expectations and bring our audience to the notion of process (one which they could conceive of participating in themselves) before the work finally becomes product. It is the group's first encounter with an audience and in that sense it is a both/and, very pivotal place, with a heightened sense of its own bridging practice.

As a group process, it modelled the individual process we had been teaching. We developed materials for the performance in the same way that individuals had been learning. We held conversations to produce scribed data, we gathered existing pieces from throughout the whole process and looked at the dynamic of everything we had accrued. The script for the night was then produced collaboratively out of this gathering of different voices and materials.

The combined process of making and performing our scripted piece created a space in which the women could reflect on their own learning. They consolidated their learning in that activity, changing visibly in their sense of selves in the public. They name themselves as artists, but still in process, and have this validated in the obvious interest and stimulation it generates for others. The substance of this naming is their lived embodied experience of the project so far, in conjunction with their reflections. The communicative medium is their own bodies, the embodied nature of the performance resonating with the work of the teacher's body desiring and facilitating linkages and connections. In this sense it could be said the women have claimed and publically expressed their productive desire.

There was a particular dynamic attached to this attempt to bridge the gap between what we had done and what we now knew and the conveying of that to people who hadn't shared the experience in any way. There is a sense of risk involved in the desire for connection that also understands that responses will be necessarily partial, particular, situated. In the space—between of that particular kind of exchange, we sought to affect a change or some new position that people could take up in relation to the women themselves and to the processes and reception of their work. It also changes the performers' relationship to the audience, and clearly their sense of self in this.

The library night performance creates both a momentum and something with material substance, because out of that performance the women go on to consolidate the forms of their

work. As a form of *show and tell* it is both more wide ranging and more intense because it involves people who may not have any particular grounds to care for them or validate their work. In having performed their embodied experience in this way they have given it a public history, from which they can project and consolidate. What they have heard themselves say and convey to others now has material substance for them, and it includes not just the scripted performance but the space that was available afterwards where they talked to people individually about what they had been doing and what they were going to make. Speaking these works into existence, what we have to do now is give them final material form.

The exhibition performance is pivotal in a different way. The process has come to fruition in both individual and group product – the individual works and the collective exhibition – but the forms are part of a spatial practice which the audience is invited to enter as process. Like pinboarding, this is both a space and a practice that invites the audience into a particular way of seeing and responding that is contingent on bodily movement, the making of relationships in that movement. It happens both within the space of separate works and across and in-between the works. ‘You’d have to have something you could touch and feel the roundness. You’d have go round it and be able to touch it’ (Lynda, 1999, group journal). The grounds of the work are brought into relationship with the grounds of place and the ground of one’s body. Surfaces ‘coterminous with the place beneath our feet and whose horizon is not over there but here where tongue and finger tip come into contact with the world’ (Carter, 1991, 5). We make a fold for others to enter. We make a fold in the place of community which was not there before.

During the process of the exhibition, many of the group made themselves available to talk about their work with exhibition visitors. Here the women talked to the work and to the audience not as exploration but as arrival, completely clear about what they had been doing. The works could be seen as platform from which to view and articulate the world differently. Claiming themselves as agents, as artist makers, they claimed a change in their sense of self quite audibly - a self becoming something else.

As well as talking about their own work they spoke with confidence about each other’s in the terms that individual artists had made available. When school children were brought to see the exhibition, the learning experience was made particularly explicit, and as any artist accompanied them around, I experienced the clarity with which she spoke as extraordinarily

powerful. In these optional conversations we return full cycle – not to displace or speak for the works, but to make visible and material the complex nature of cultural production.

### **Gifts and cycles of production**

At the end of the project the women surprised me with a gift that represents for me an eloquent response to the process. Unsolicited, unexpected and expressive in both form and content of much of what had taken place, I take it as an evaluative methodology for a grounded pedagogy.

The gift is an unbound book. Each woman has her own page in a loose collection that is layered between two end covers of sturdy but homely brown cardboard. It is tied around simply with black tapes. Bound only lightly together in this way, not fixed (or even finished - there is another page promised, still to come – an absent presence), it offers itself as both individual and group process. It is open to addition, re-arrangement, without diminishing any individual voice. On the front cover, the words *Expressions* and *Impressions* intersect and each becomes the other for the moment as they share the letter p. On the back, between a maker's finger and thumb measuring a span, the words - *works of genius, leaps of understanding*.

Every page is a work of art which speaks so succinctly, so materially, of the person who produced it and yet they all sit together with the implied possibility of movement, change. To read, one holds each piece separately in the hand, feels its different weight and texture. No surface is the same – some handmade papers, some layered, others translucent, opaque, quilted and corrugated. They all embody in distinctively different ways all of the things from the workshops - using palimpsest, thread, fabric, photos, paint, pressed flowers, conversation, text and image working together.

Mary writes - *I've been able to take on my practice with groups and writing in new ways. You've given it to me by taking it on. In a way that suggests the pleasures of conversation, of giving and receiving, and turning the gift around, making it another.*

All the things the women have learned they use to give back to me the story of what it has meant to them. I finish with the smallest taste of text fragments from this gift.

So now we sit down in the Park

Was this bridge here before the ark?  
 What do we think, and what do we do?  
 What happens next is something new  
 And whittles us down to just a few  
 In school and workshop we ponder and play  
 And look at ourselves in a different way  
 The absorbing amazing Expressions of Place  
 Jumps up and whacks us in the face  
 (Margo, 2000).

There were times when I was totally confused, stressed and quite literally terrified but would not have missed this experience for the world. Never would I have imagined all that I have gained (Wendy, 2000).

It has taken me to new heights. Although I have a visual arts background I have never before developed such a personally meaningful conceptual framework or pieces. My 'hole/whole' question is one with which I can work and play for years to come (Catherine, 2000).

we use fabric leaves paint paper recycled materials photographs wood  
 beans found objects sand wedding dresses embroidery threads crayons  
 natural materials apples stones silk dresses bricks pressed flowers  
 pens typewriters bark fishing line cardboard seeds pencils clay slides  
 buttons chalk brickies' hoists lace leather lichen

we sew paint knot knit stick rip draw thread drill weave stitch  
 type stain twist print dye

we create collages installations paintings textiles drawings texts

we put ourselves in the picture (Sylvia, 2000).

A sort of ecstasy arrived at through small, incremental and incredibly ordinary steps (Mary, 2000).

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