

Inhabiting Transience:

Stories of learning through chronic illness,
the body, place and creativity.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, of

The University of New England,

July 2014.

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my two supervisors, Associate Professor Bob Boughton and Dr. Paul Reader, for their inspiration, enthusiasm and encouragement. Thankyou to Paul for much diligent reading of my work and for some really interesting, inspiring and sometimes humorous conversations we shared. Thanks for continued encouragement and commitment along the way and for working closely with me on some areas, especially in the explorations of place learning. Thankyou to Bob for much enthusiastic encouragement, especially in the earlier stages of the research and for some really inspiring conversations. Thanks for getting the wheels in motion, for doing much admin assistance along the way and for the expertise and experience you provided in several areas. Thankyou both for having a calm, practical and supportive approach when things got difficult.

Thankyou also to Dr Alan Avery who, although only available for a short time as my initial co-supervisor, also helped me develop some understanding of the context of illness as a catalyst for learning.

I would like to acknowledge, and thank, Dr Sally and Margaret, two gentle, intelligent, caring, women making a difference to healthcare in orthodox, integrative, and natural methods, and making a difference for women, for patients and for practitioners. I would also like to acknowledge and thank some of the other health therapists who I have consulted at various times, and whose support made a big difference at the time. Thanks Kay, and Leisel and Tamara.

Thankyou to Peter, for always being there, as we managed to navigate the distances and travels in parts of the journey together, and for always saying you knew I could do it, even when I wasn't sure. Thanks specifically for always supporting me in music, and for knowing it means a life to me. Thanks for listening about perspectives and learning and the various ins and outs of being a research student, and for sharing some wonderful walks in nature with me. Thanks for being someone who makes a difference in the world, and in my world too.

And lastly, thanks to my mother, who passed away in 2005, but who I know would have been enthusiastic and encouraging of me doing a doctorate. Thanks for showing me all my life that women can be more than we are sometimes led to believe, for helping me understand that education is valuable, and for encouraging me not to drop out of high school when I was nearly giving up on it.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is anchored in the reflection that chronic illness may be a catalyst for transformative learning and that the creative arts are valid transformative learning tools. From this initial reflection, my aim was to explore how I had engaged in learning through some of the experience of illness/wellness and how creativity had been part of my learning as a transformative experience. Stemming from these reflections, I also aimed to explore how transformative learning may be situated in bodily contexts and within contexts of place, as these had appeared to be strong influences on my own experience of learning.

Themes of learning are explored through the autobiographical perspective of the researcher, as patient, musician, traveller and learner, connecting illness/wellness experience, creative expression, bodily learning, and elements of learning in relationship to landscape. These themes of learning emerged as some of the key influences within the researcher/writer's narrative during a timeframe spanning several years, and are reflected upon in various contexts throughout the writing and discussion. Although seemingly diverse areas, these key themes draw together into a whole story, interweaving separate storylines through autoethnography and arts based research.

These parallel and intersecting themes of learning are explored through a context of transformative learning, embodied/bodily learning, place pedagogy and creative expression. Theorising the body in relation to learning, exploring a bodily and creative context for learning of place, engaging in bodily and creative interaction with the subjective learning inherent in illness/wellness experience, and drawing on creative-expressive modes of learning and knowledge through music and verse, are all aspects of learning that are presented in this work.

Chronic illness may be a catalyst for transformative learning in several ways, both subjectively and through a wider social awareness. Extra-rational processes for learning, such as creative-expressive, imaginal, bodily and intuitive ways of knowing and learning are valuable ways of learning through chronic illness experience. Socially transformative learning provides a socio-political foundation for learning through chronic illness. Cognitive learning also plays a part in the learning that is drawn upon through experience of illness.

The creative arts are valid transformative learning tools, applicable through perspective transformative learning and through socially transformative learning. Creativity and creative

expression are forms of learning and knowing, and may draw upon imaginal and intuitive ways of knowing and learning in various contexts.

Learning the body is a dynamic process and is multilayered. Theorising the body can take account of multilayered perspectives of the body, rather than being disconnected from the body as a source of knowledge. Seeking a creative integration of body and mind, through utilising various bodily focused exercises and techniques, is a way through which to extend learning.

A new place pedagogy can take account of alternative ways of viewing learning, such as through creative and imaginal focuses on learning our places. Learning to listen with respect to the stories of others and ourselves, our collectivised stories, co-creating stories of place and belonging, and acknowledging inscriptions of place, each have a part to play in exploring our learning of place.

Original music compositions create a mini-soundtrack to the thesis, presented on CD and in web file links. This music soundtrack represents a period of time during the research period of about ten to twelve months in the researchers' life, and is integral to the thesis. It reflects various aspects of experiential and creatively focused perspectives of learning that are discussed in detail within the study.