

The Graduate School of Education  
at The University of Melbourne present

# UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts

.....

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

## A/r/tography and the Literary and Performing Arts

**Volume 3 | Issue 2 | 2013**

.....

Guest Editors *Rita L. Irwin*  
*Anita Sinner*

Editor  
Associate Editor  
Designer

*Lindy Joubert*  
*Naomi Berman*  
*Rosie Ren*

# UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts

Volume 3 | Issue 2 | 2013

## EDITORIAL TEAM

### Guest Editors

Rita L. Irwin  
Anita Sinner

### Editor

Associate Editor  
Designer

Lindy Joubert  
Naomi Berman  
Rosie Ren

## ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

*The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.*

*Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.*

ISSN 1835 - 2776

Published in Australia

Published by

The Graduate School of Education

© The University of Melbourne

The University of Melbourne, Parkville,  
Victoria 3010.



# Special Issue: A/r/tography and the Arts

## Guest Editors

*Rita L. Irwin | Anita Sinner*

### THEME

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create relational and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work are often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess, which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of a/r/tographers come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others (see <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca/Artography/>).

This special issue of Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts invites original creative and scholarly inquiry that engages in critical debates and issues regarding a/r/tographical methodologies; are exemplars of critical approaches to a/r/tographical research; and/or extend the boundaries of inquiry-based research. Contributions are welcome from disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences and in a wide range of formats including articles, essays, and artistic interludes, which explore diverse forms of the arts from drama, dance, poetry, narrative, music, visual arts, digital media and more.

# Autobiographical Footsteps: tracing our stories within and through body, space and time.....

**Dr. Kathryn Ricketts**  
*Simon Fraser University*  
Canada

**Celeste Snowber**  
*Simon Fraser University*  
Canada

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the autobiographical footsteps of two dancers, scholars and educators, whose work is grounded in the interconnection between the personal and universal. Author A and Author B explore embodied forms of research and inquiry, juxtaposing their own stories and others; revealing the layers and fragments of narratives, which give rise to fresh meaning and understanding. A grammar of the senses emerges, where visceral perceptions are uncovered and states of immediacy are unearthed. Both Author A and Author B, in different, yet parallel bodily ways, touch on notions of longing, belonging, presence, absence, and place. This explores kinesthetic, sonic, and textual shades of identity construction and reconstruction and its interconnection to a/r/tography. They provide a path to research more viscerally and invite arts-based researchers, performers, and teachers, to follow the tracings of their own footsteps creating communities of curiosity that travel from senses to sentences.

## KEYWORDS

*Autobiographical Inquiry, Auto-ethnography, Embodied Inquiry, Pedagogy of Place, Embodied Poetic Narrative, Performance, A/r/tography, Dance*

*The two authors of this article are dancers, they see the world through a series of punctuated movements. The grammar of their sensibility lays deeply embedded in their kinesthetic memory and presence. They move through their research footstep by footstep telling their stories and incite others to do the same as they collectively move through their research, footstep by footstep.*

For years we have explored the body, dance, movement and aspects of physicality, as a way of embodied inquiry. Not only has there been a huge resurgence of the importance of somatic learning, but dance as way of discovery and its connectedness with research has been documented for years within arts-based research methodologies. (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995; Bresler, 2004; Cancienne, 2001, 2008; Richmond & Snowber, 2009, Ricketts, 2008, 2010, 2011, Snowber, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2012). Our interests continue to lie in not only what we know, but more importantly in what we don't know. The body has an enormous capacity to open up places of deep and embodied wisdom, and this is not about the steps, but what goes beyond the steps. It is literally our feet, which discover the visceral ways of knowing, which have the capacity to connect our thinking to mind, body, heart and soul. I have said many times, *we do not have bodies, we are bodies*, and embodied places of inquiry open up a phenomenological understanding of who one is and who one is becoming. Body knowledge and body wisdom is somewhat of an endangered species in our world, particularly the academic world, and there has been more emphasis on the outer body, what one looks like, rather than the felt body, or what would be called the *lived body*, in more phenomenological terms. It is the lived body, which becomes the place of knowing, and the place where both of us allow the skin, belly, fingers, feet, and shoulders to become the place of deep listening and expression. Knowledge is cracked open to the mover and dancer in ways that are congruent to the body's capacity for insight. Here is a body intelligence, a place to increase understanding, perception and reflection. This is an embodied location of unraveling static locations of perceived knowledge to places of new and unexpected understanding; *embodied wakefulness*. We believe this state is comprised of lived experiences moving through memory and the imagination and finding home in the flesh, the blood, the sinew and the perspiration glands of our body In *Method Meets Art*, Cancienne and Snowber (2008) write about the nexus of our body in a more explicitly sensual manner:

*As dancers, it is our limbs, torsos, gestures, pelvis, hips, legs and hands that excavate the nexus of knowledge, insight and understanding. Our dancing bodies become a place where we can cultivate a sense of embodiment in an age in which analysis and fragmentation often thwart us in recognizing and exploring the meaning of the ordinary. (p. 200)*

As Cancienne and Snowber said many years ago in their article, “Writing Rhythm: Movement as Method” (2003), we are moving researchers and use movement method within the education research process to open up the questions and see the self as a place of discovery. Dance, movement and the body are not only expressions of research but also a form of inquiry into the research process. These waters have been navigated for years to substantiate the body, physicality, dance and movement within arts-based research. However, the body can be messy, unpredictable, just as illness, and is not so linear, as one might like but rather has the capacity to invite us into a pedagogy of discomfort.

It is through the working methods of what Ricketts terms Embodied Poetic Narrative (2011) that we have been able to preserve some of this messiness in our practices as artists, researchers, and teachers. We have been able to foster the notion that unknowing is the foundation of inquiry and that there is a recursive pattern in our quest as a researchers to find ourselves with more questions in the wake of deeper understandings and discoveries. “And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time” (Eliot, 1943, p. 59). This dedication to continuous and deep inquiry through active and collaborative doing is what links our work with a scope of very vibrant arts based research practices, a/r/tography being one of them. This piece invites the reader into sharing our own footsteps, as a way to honor the complexity and beauty of your own.

## THE GRAMMAR OF SENSIBILITY

*This article looks at how these kinesthetic pilgrimages traverse through uncharted territory whereby the participants become vagabonds with stories that seek a sense of home in each other.*

We parallel many of the ways in which we are working with that of A/r/tography drawing on explicit examples of our how these expeditions echo the six renderings that has become the framework for a/r/tography. We parallel our stories with the history of our own explorations of integrating physicality as a place of bodily inquiry, one that infuses all of our research and teaching practices.

*Thus, when we consider embodiment, we recognize that we embody in action through our interactions with others, our narratives, our histories, in relationship with place and time, relationships and experiences remembered, and newly realized in an ongoing unfolding of new possibilities. (Ricketts, 2011, p. 27)*

We bring two voices, four feet, two bellies to this work, and leave spaces in between for new footsteps to be traversed. The interconnections are subtle, allowing for a walking path for the reader, to enter his or her own footsteps, and journey.

Figure 1

*A score of footsteps*  
– Crescendo and  
decrescendo

(with permission)

But first we start with our stories...



### CELESTE: MY FEET HAVE CALLED ME.....

My feet are my brain, my heart, my life. They take me to the core where I breathe deep, sign into the earth and listen to the words, which rise from my soles to my belly, throat and tongue and await to be birthed.

I have too much of a monkey mind to truly listen; but when I walk, I trace, or am traced by the fertility of the soil to hear the syllabic praise of creation. I may write with my fingers, but it is my footsteps that usher the words to my hands.

For over several decades I have walked daily only to have poetry, dance, insights and ultimately bodysights to emerge. Creation has been my studio, my feet the methodology to truly foster a writing from the body and create site-specific performance in the natural world.

My feet have called me to trace the ethnic heritage of my background going to Ireland and Armenia, the heritage of my Irish dad, and Armenian mom. I do not have living family there, but I traversed to let my feet be on land. The land and borders hold a memory from stone to sea. In having my feet on the soil the poems explore an inquiry that is in my blood and bone. Walking and now swimming are the practices, which allow for the flow I require to create. They are the scales of musicians, and plies of dancers. There is something about the respective pattern of feet to earth and arms and torso to water that calls forth the idea waiting to take shape in image, movement, gesture, rhythm and texture to form. I travel from senses to sentences. This is an embodied inquiry, a methodology of the body – a research in and with flesh.

Figure 2

*I have found an  
organic place to house  
all parts of me*

*(with permission)*



### KATHRYN: TRACING, BRACING, FACWING...

*We were lovers...without the sex  
It was his mother who called  
Long distance  
"He is asking for you - can you come?"  
"Let me think about it..."  
"In a heart beat"  
I was still mad at him for calling off the wedding..  
I arrived – dressed up  
There are definitely 2 places one should always arrive dressed up:  
The bank and the hospital  
"Where is the AIDS ward?"  
"5th floor... at the end"  
"Is there some place I can leave my luggage?"  
"No"  
"OK"  
The hallway was endless and I was, of course, heading for the end.  
The white tile and the black shoes announced my arrival.  
All doors were open and every fleeting glance..left and right, I saw men – lying – alone  
I came to the last door and he said  
"I knew it was you"  
"Keep wearing the shoes"  
"Every day"  
"Please..."*

I am working with a digital media artist who records my stories of footsteps and places them in another kind of memory, a memory that lives in little chips that get embedded into platforms that invite motion and emotion.



I walk the platforms and depending on how fast, how hard or how frequent my footstep, the stories are released. Re iterated through my step, time and body hover in the fusion between memory and moment.....

Like catching fire flies in the dark I move to catch the fragments of narrative and to pull them into my heart. What does it mean to capture the resonations of narratives seasoned with time? Are these iterations like old friends or new visitors to the soul?

This artist, Ellen Moffat, and I are working on a research project called *Surfacing Stories*.

*Surfacing Stories* is a community based collaborative project developed over a period of 14 months with a variety of musicians, teachers and dancers with a willingness to explore an experimental process in movement, stories and sound making.

My work with Ellen Moffit is questioning issues of causality in form and content. When working with immediacy and authenticity of creative impulse, we are asking: "When are we the provocateur and when do we surrender to the unexpected conditions and properties of our medium?" We are exploring notions of storying; the act of generating stories by defining kinaesthetic and musical structures, which provoke states of immediacy and readiness to respond. This is what we term as an *excited system*. These states are both visceral and singularly focused; chronology and logic is permitted to recede and we thereby create the conditions to work on a potent ground for poetic interplay. Habituated techniques and implicit traditions within our disciplines are abandoned and instead we are inviting an entirely new set of causal relations and systematic parameters, which are discovered and articulated as we continue this research together. Within this playful process we are continuously honoring the integrity of the interconnected language of the body, text and sound and remain attentive to the surprising possibilities that emerge from this triad.

With this work we are asking:

- How can stories be shared then re-written in a way that acknowledges the intersections and the shared moments of meaning in an imaginative and playful process?
- How can we integrate embodied/dramatic play with sounds of our stories and our footsteps?
- How can we connect this 'doing' with contemplation of the community in which this occurs?

## CELESTE: VISIBLE AND (IN)VISIBLE

My footsteps are connected to my whole body. It is not just my feet taking me, but my knees and hips, shoulders and sternum, pelvis and belly. It is my feet however, which usually feel the energy rising through my body. From earth, to feet, to belly to sky. The act of walking is one of symmetry and asymmetry. Our feet are two, but in the act of walking, we go between one foot on the ground to another. It is in this in-between space, this place of liminality where movement arises, and I surrender to the life energy moving through me. More common it is true, for people to walk, run, and jog, through a nature trail. But as my feet walk the path, I am brought to surrendering my whole torso to the response of trees swaying, herons waiting by the shore, eagles soaring, the change of seasons created through the flesh of creation. Footsteps are enough and not enough. I am called to create, move spontaneously, where my whole body becomes a dance, and it is not only footsteps, but *handsteps*, and *elbowsteps*, and *hipsteps*, which guide the flow of energy. This of course is the beginning of choreography, but I seldom choreograph any more. I often call myself a recovering choreographer, and have become a lover of improvisation over the years. Although my form is contemporary dance; it is the natural world, which partners me in this duet.

My footsteps lead me into the unknown. The unknown is my companion and here I am comfortable, and find comfort. It echoes much of my life, and what I feel is the texture for the artist, researcher, and scholar. I know what I know, but what is it that I don't know? How can my movement bring me to a place of discovering the unknown, the invisible? What are the heron lessons and earth lessons waiting for me through the creation of movement? I have always been compelled to work with the relationship between the visible and invisible. My footsteps are visible, but what is birthed from them is not. The wind, the life-force, the energy transmuted through the blood is invisible, and I am moved, literally to bring forth form. They are both friend and visitor to the soul. It is in this place of walking, dancing, moving, creating site-specific work that I have found an organic place to house all the parts of me – my artist, researcher, educator, and scholar. Here I learn and question, create and am re-created in the soil of stone and sky, water and wind.

Figure 3

*Connectivity is the fascia – within the body narratives*

*(with permission)*



## KATHRYN: COLLECTIVELY STORYING A COMMUNITY

But what is it that I don't know? I am created and recreated through micro chips echoing my stories with impact. But now I hear them differently...I am stomping on the plank that houses these little chips, these stories. My hair is stuck in front of my eyes, fused to skin by sweat. All senses are altered, I am in a state and my stories digitally play back and re create me, they tell me something I don't know about myself. Invisible and yet palatable in their brush strokes of a new picture....This is a form of re authoring...a re purposing of a memory into a provocative moment to be hurled into space with the intention of triggering another memory.

It tells the story of my lover without the sex but in its electronic re configuration it claims ownership with another, it abandons my memory, my phone call, my hospital room and it attaches to another. This intersection between my story and that which is triggered by another is the node where we find belonging. Your story, my story... invisibility...connections between spaces of knowing.

So what happens when I move from solo performer to a community of performers? Stories flit in and out and through us. These fireflies illuminate the space, the space we are creating together. We are collectively storying a community whereby fragmented narratives become the fascia linking us one to another.

## CELESTE: LONGING AND BELONGING THROUGH NARRATIVE

Our stories are found in one another, echoed in the subtle shadows and light of each step we take on this journey. I hear your narrative, your dance, and I see how my torso responds – it is an invitation to see that we are not alone. My call to belonging is always one of being in longing. The word belonging is truly an invitation, for in the act of belonging, is the cry, the haunt to long for something, someone, somewhere. Our stories utter one another, for they are born in a spiral of narratives. I return to them over and over again – the same themes emerging after years of performing. Belonging, longing, creation, creatures, home, identity...wherever they bring me, it is to the questions I keep living in. I am not so much looking for the answers, but having a space, which can hold the viscosity of the questions. The connectivity is in the fascia, within the body narratives we live and perform, perform and live. Our living is a performative act, and our performance is an act and art of living.

Over the many years of integrating performance and curriculum studies, arts-based research and the body, I continue to find myself integrating voice, text, dance, gesture, writing, as if it was all one delicious language, forming and informing one another. No longer can I separate my words from my movement, for one pronounces the other, and they long to be together, companionship each other in the circle of longing and belonging.

## CELESTE: LIVING IN THE ABSENCE OF FOOTSTEPS

Living in the absence of footsteps. My three sons in and out of the house, bounding up and down stairs, the heavy foot to earth announcing their presence. I had become so use to them over the last twenty years I did not know how much the footbeat was the heartbeat of our home. The rhythm section in this ongoing symphony and cacophony of lives growing up. There were my footsteps too, but one does not often hear the sound of one's own steps. Their footsteps became the background for the dances of our lives - the underbelly of opera singing from one twin, guitar riffs from another twin, and my older son rehearsing lines for acting. Not to mention the song of beats from the human body tapping, touching, and tracing the paths between the outer world and world at home.

Now that they are gone and have done exactly what a mother yearns for – to become more independent and follow their passion, I am startled in the absence of their footsteps. No longer do I awake in the middle of the night to hear one open the door at 1 a.m. or bound in with all their friends. Only when they visit are they here again, but it is not the pulse of my current home.

There was a joy and vitality in their steps squeezing all the juice out of life. A score of footsteps – crescendo and decrescendo all supporting lives of curiosity and amazement and sometimes chaos, but always creativity. It is too romantic to think one only understands in its absence, but what I see now was footsteps were the rhythm section of our home. They were the drums.

I am lost at times, needing to find a new rhythm and honoring the one that abided with me for decades. Footsteps of love, where flesh meets soil and pulses the floor for another possibility. The glorious sound of footsteps – the bodysteps of the lived curriculum of raising boys.

Figure 4

*Our footsteps are on a  
kinesthetic pilgrimage*

*(with permission)*



## KATHRYN – FRACTURED THEN RE-ASSEMBLED: A COLLECTIVE POETIC

How do we learn to write about our lives within thematics such as footsteps, to embrace the notion that an arc of shared understandings can be a path we take together. To trust that the fertile ground where we plant our stories will reap new understanding that can be shared and reborn into the unexpected, into wonderment.

I am working with a group of community dancers, they range from age 7 to 75. They come early and stay late and some come late and leave early. They have conditions for their involvement and restrictions to their abilities and yet they embrace my obsession with *footsteps* as a theme that we will work with for 1 year.

I start by explaining my research and the definition of my form of practice *Embodied Poetic Narrative* and it falls on polite ears that actually just want to be flushed with action with jumping, spinning reaching and running. I give them playful warm ups that bring them the visceral high they are looking for and then I ask them to write a story about walking away or to something that is walking away from your childhood home for the last time or walking toward your lover after a long time apart. They write again politely but it does not take long before they tell me that they actually do not like writing. I ponder this and eventually bring them to a new experience of writing to the body and the body that brings them back to writing.

I place very colourful and large pieces of paper around the studio walls surrounding our warm up area. I start a story such as I followed your footsteps towards...I gave them their anticipated warm up and dovetailed it into an improvisation based on the material of the warm up. At any point they were invited to go to a paper and finish the last line on and start another one and then return to the improvisation. There was a game like quality to the action, they needed to stay standing and to return to movement, which seemed to remove the analytical tendency and self imposed judgment. The stories formed accumulatively, collectively, impulsively and the cause and effect of movement to writing and writing to movement became blurred.

We peeled the paper off the wall and reveled in the stunning poetics. I had convinced them of the joy of writing! The next stage was independently owned pieces of paper on the walls where a story of footsteps would come out of the same kind of improvisation. We created a fluidity between impulse, words and movement that resulted in the most unexpected and surprising singularly authored stories.

These stories were then recorded by sound installation artist Ellen Moffat who then created digital interfaces whereby the stories were surfaced when triggered by small computer chips embedded under planks of plywood when stepped on. Footsteps actually provoked stories about footsteps! The stories overlapped and repeated and brought again new meaning in this next iteration

Suddenly the group of community dancers was faced with a sense of agency as they felt that their physicality and their mindfulness fused into performative moments of emotional poignancy. This power cannot be taken lightly as most of us bury stories that will not be coaxed out even with the most enticing rewards. Suddenly in this process the dancers become the playful provocateurs of poetic narratives that started as owned by one and then fractured into many pieces and then reassembled as a collective poetic.

## CELESTE: TRACING RAW JOY

I am searching traces of a home I am yearning to recover. The roots of raw joy were evident in the midst of raw trauma, and there was always an excess of joy. I heard it in the sounds of my father's laughs and playing bongo drums, lighting a fire, and bringing my footsteps to meet the night sky. I grew up thinking all mothers went in the living room after dinner and did Hindu dance, especially for guests. The gestures of her palms moving as water, in stories where the meaning was only hinted at through the body's motion. But it was the graceful limbs and torso flowing in asymmetry where I was mesmerized as a child and continued to remember as an adult. I was steeped in these beautiful non-verbal movements at an early age, which formed my love for the expressive and dance for a lifetime. They got in my bones, and eventually in my feet, fingers, toes, hips and belly. Only in recent years when I went as a guest to the well known, Jacob's Pillow in Western Massachusetts as a dance researcher, did I get a chance to wander into the wonder of the dance archives. They have one of the best dance archives in the world, and I asked if there was any film footage of a dancer my mother studied with, La Meri. The dance librarian's eyes lit up and I was overjoyed to watch film of this exquisite dancer who is known as the, *Queen of ethnic dance*, primarily bringing Indian and Spanish dance forms to North America, and raising its status and importance to that of ballet and modern dance (Venkateswaran, U., 2005). I am piecing together my mother's history and thus my own history. Several months ago, I ventured to Boston, where I grew up and rented a dance studio in Cambridge, where my mother was born and raised. Somehow I needed to return to the land of her growing up years, and my early years to archive the footsteps of my own history, which formed and shaped me. It wasn't until I actually went into the studio and spent time creating in the place near where I had visceral memories, did the work arise, which connected to both the beauty and difficulty of growing up with a mother, a survivor of Armenian genocide had both rage and extravagance in her. At the same time there were stories of trauma and grave difficulty, there was the extraordinary beauty of living a life with color, and the infinite pleasure in cooking with plum eggplants and red peppers.

I never realized till much later how odd all of this was growing up in the fifties with an artist/dancer mother till much later. She was in between two worlds if not more – the old and the new. My mother, a lover of the Indian leader, philosopher and poet Tagore (1928/1955), has inspired me to go back to his writing and be formed again in the words, which make my feet dance, and heart sing. “ The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. ...I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life (p. 305).

My limbs have been made glorious by tracing the footsteps of my history in igniting new pieces to emerge for a one-woman show I am working on. One piece is entitled is “Ode to Vegetables,” which celebrates the small beauties of the daily wonder of cooking and sensuous knowledge. I may have written for decades on embodied forms of inquiry and been formed by the varieties of arts-based research over my scholarly career, but it is these early years of formation, traced in the footsteps and now dance steps, which have hearkened me back to a life imbued with color, texture and a poet's heart. Nothing can substitute for the literal feet to touch the earth, where memories of blood and bone were made. The physical place holds the memory, and here I am rebodied to what lives within me, waiting to take another form.

Figure 5

Like catching  
fireflies in the dark  
I pull the narratives  
into my heart

(with permission)



### KATHRYN: LEANING IN TO THE WORK OF A/R/T/GORAPHY

As I understand a/r/tography, it is very generous with its fluid description and invites a porosity whereby the artist, researcher and teacher redefines the external identity of this methodology. However at the core we find 6 clear renderings; key concepts that I believe are echoed beautifully in both of our work. Both of us as artists, researchers and teachers are exploring textual, kinesthetic and sonic emblems of identity construction and reconstruction.

As our paths of walking with and without the other within and through time echo iterations of self, we begin to understand the folds that become a clear concept in the renderings of A/r/tography. “As with the doubling of art and graphy, the doubling of art and a/r/t emphasizes an unfolding between process and product, text and person, presence and absence” (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005, p 901)

This recursive call to self and other whereby we fold in on ourselves and our stories and surface new nodes of understandings and commonalities with those that walk with us. These nodes trigger compassion, empathy and identification beyond individual membranes of action/ reaction.

*I propose that **what you do** and **how you are** works cyclically to **what you know** and it is through this claim that my work invites a surfacing or an unraveling of stories that may never have seen **the light of day**, like small translucent creatures that have lived their lives under the stones. (Ricketts, 2011, p 28)*

Although we see our work as translucent membranes holding strong to voice and intention the containers are malleable and delicate and often contain ruptures and lesions where healing must occur. These are the openings that are considered one of the 6 renderings of a/r/tography. these openings are not referred to as windows inviting a transience of ease but rather emblems of loss or of absence. “Loss, shift, and rupture are foundational concepts or metonyms for a/r/tography. They create openings, they displace meaning, and they allow for slippages. Loss, shift, and rupture create presence through absence, they become tactile, felt, and seen (Springgay,



Irwin & Kind 2005, p 897). These cracks or lesions are the fault lines of our history, the ruptures in our terrain of lived experiences that allow the unpredictable, the resistance to the assumed, the habituated sensibility and as Sumara writes permits “the difficult, the unknown, the ambiguous, [and] the unpredictable” (Sumara, 1999, p. 42).

After two years of working with a group of Chinese seniors in Embodied Poetic Narrative work I said to them. “Well now it is time for you to tell me your stories from your past” they shook their heads gently, looked down and replied “they are not all happy or easy stories.” “Yes I know” I replied: “..and now we can tell them and we shall listen...” these are the openings. Just as wounds develop closure and scar tissue so do our souls in the releasing , the exposing and the telling.

And then like a beautifully well-worn face from decades of sea storms we stand proud of these emblems of surrender against these forces, protected with nothing more than courage.

These are the openings, of our histories and the scar tissue of our soul. How then do we cultivate spaces for this courage these acts of absolute vulnerability? My suspicion is that it is through an everydayness. a/r/tography invites us to make meaning out of the everyday complexities of our lives “...to make sense and create meaning out of difficult and complex questions that cannot be answered in straightforward or linear tellings” (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005 p 902).

I have been in the middle of enough very critical incidents in my life to understand that everydayness is absolutely key in bringing a sense of assemblage when entering the abyss. The abyss of hopelessness of resignation of absolute hysteria or lethargy or simple complacency or as Snowber (2004) writes to lean into the uninvited guests of our daily lives.

*“The path, the journey, whatever metaphor one uses for the roads we take in life, is filled with curves, detours, branches of Eros leaning out to us in all directions. As much as we plan the curriculum of life, the book, the lesson plan, the marriage, the family or career, they all have lives of their own.....How can we lean into the uninvited guests of our lives whether that is people, experiences, illnesses, broken plans, or both the delight and limitations of our own bodies?” (p.125)*

In this work of ‘leaning into’ we acknowledge what is important and bring that which is often invisible into presence. When surfacing stories of our past we presence that which is sometimes buried or forgotten allowing a shift in our references to self. New information becomes forefront and is tethered to and interrogates that which is known or assumed. In this way we trouble our present with that of our past or bring into tension the notion of presence with that which has been absent. a/r/tographers speak about this as a process of unfolding. “As with the doubling of art and graphy, the doubling of art and a/r/t emphasizes an unfolding between process and product, text and person, presence and absence, art” (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005, p. 901)

## KATHRYN: COMMUNITIES OF CURIOSITY

When I create poeticized iterations of remembered stories, which I call Fractured Narratives, I create an absence of specificity, of personalized detail which otherwise anchors the text to singular author event and setting. This absencing creates a space for new meaning-making, It allows another to move into these spaces with their own story, finding connections on a deeply human level. To trust that the fertile ground where we plant our stories, will reap new understandings. In our own distinct work with embodiment and narratives as we are constantly seeking new ways to weave and connect through a variety of methods.

All too often we hunger to contain our work in a complete package of methodologies and yet it seems so holistic in the healthiest way to acknowledge and celebrate the nodes of intersections whereby we can build fellowships in our scholarship.

Although distinct in our playful and imaginative ways of research in embodiment and narratives, we find kindred links drawings accurate relations to the renderings of A/r/tography thereby modeling the value of building scholarly associations with arts based research strategies. The more we seek and celebrate synergies with other ways of conducting research the better we can model to our next generation of scholars that invention and distinction are perhaps secondary to interrelation and community. *Autobiographical Footsteps*, urges arts-based researchers to build *communities of curiosity* as a means to substantiate robust and resonating practices. We invite you to follow the tracings of your own footsteps as you move through your research and discover the nodes of connections and interrelations within a broader community of practice.

The work of moving through the world with an embodied understanding opens up the possibility to rechannel a sensory awareness into creative constructs that resonate for others and us. This work is what makes us as educators worthy of the (respons)ibility, as researchers, continually fuelled with curiosity and as writers, charged with the passion for ongoing discovery.

We work with and through the framework of a/r/tography as a means to open up the spaces and to probe deeper our relationship with embodied ways of inquiry. This process allows us to meet our days, filled to the brim with classes, papers, dissertations, conferences, meetings and ponderings, with an enriched rejuvenation. This article is a means to extend a call to join us in our continued footsteps of embodied inquiry and to invite the connections and intersections with those who walk and question with us in our community of practice.

*How can we learn to talk again  
syllable by syllable  
from deep in our gut through the heat of our breath  
with the pumping heart  
in the wake of each utterance?*

*Ricketts, 2011, p 126*

## REFERENCES

- Blumenfeld-Jones, D. (1995). Dance as a mode of research representation. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(4) 391-401.
- Bresler, L. (Ed.) (2004). *Knowing bodies, moving minds: Towards embodied teaching and learning*. The Netherlands: Kluwer publishers.
- Cancienne, M. B., & Snowber, C. (2003). Writing rhythm: Movement as method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(2), pp. 237–253.
- Cancienne, M. B. (2008). From research analysis to performance: The choreographic process. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 397-405). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.
- Eliot, T. S. (1943). *Four quartets*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace. Richmond, S. & Snowber, C. (2009). *Landscapes in Aesthetic Education*, Newcastle England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Method meets art, arts-based research practice*. (pp 198 - 214). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Ricketts, K. (2011). *The Suitcase, the Map, and the Compass: An Expedition into Embodied Poetic Narrative and Its Application toward Fostering Optimal Learning Spaces*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada.
- Ricketts, K., & Fels, L. (2010). *BodyHeat surveillance: Performing technology in poetic spaces of surveillance, encounter, and intimacy*. Submitted
- Ricketts, K., Irwin, R. L., Leggo, C., Gouzouasis, P., & Grauer, K. (2008). Muffling Identities/Cultural Silencing: Exploring issues of cultural diversity through dance. *Drama Australia Journal*, 31(2), 21-34.
- Snowber, C. (2004). Leaning Absolutes: Honoring the Detours of our Lives in D. Denton & W. Ashton (Eds) *Spirituality, action and Pedagogy: Teaching from the Heart*, (pp. 124 -135). New York: Peter Lang.
- Snowber, C. (2002). Bodydance: Fleshing soulful inquiry through improvisation in C. Bagley & M.B. Cancienne (Eds.), *Dancing the data*. (pp. 20-33). New York: Peter Lang.
- Snowber, C. (2005). The eros of teaching in J. Miller, S. Karsten, D. Denton, D. Orr & I. C. Kates, (Eds.). *Holistic learning: Breaking new ground*. (pp. 215-222). NY: SUNY.
- Snowber, C. (2007) The soul moves: Dance and spirituality in educative Practice. In L. Bresler (Ed.). *International handbook for research in the arts and education*. (pp. 1449-1455). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Snowber, C. (2011). Let the body out: A love letter to the body from the academy in E. Malewski & N. Jaramillo (Eds). *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing (pp. 187-198).

- Snowber, C. (2012) "Dance as a way of knowing." In R. L. Lawrence (Ed).  
Bodies of Knowledge: Embodied Learning in Adult Education, *New Directions  
for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 134, Summer 2012/ (pp.53 – 60)
- Springgay, S, Irwin, R, & Wilson Kind, S. (2005) A/r/tography as living inquiry  
through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (11)897. (pp. 897-912).
- Sumara, D. J. (1999). Action research as a postmodern practice. *Interchange*, 29(1),  
33-45.
- Tagore, R. (1928/1955). *Fireflies*.NY: Collier Books/Macmillan.
- Venkateswaran, U. (2005) *The life and times of La Meri: Queen of ethnic dances*.  
New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre For The Arts.

Figures 1 – V

Photography by Gary Bandzmer