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Inside Story: An Arts-Based Exploration of the Creative Process of the Storyteller as Leader

Heather Forest

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

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THE INSIDE STORY:
AN ARTS-BASED EXPLORATION
OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF THE STORYTELLER AS LEADER

HEATHER FOREST

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership & Change Program
of Antioch University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

August, 2007

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

THE INSIDE STORY:
AN ARTS-BASED EXPLORATION
OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF THE STORYTELLER AS LEADER

prepared by

Heather Forest

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Leadership and Change

Approved by:

Dissertation Committee Chair: date
Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D.

Committee Member: date
Laurien Alexandre, Ph.D.

Committee Member: date
Jon Wergin, Ph.D.

External Reader: date
Celeste Snowber, Ph.D

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I offer thanks for the profound guidance of my professors and instructors at Antioch University's Ph.D. Program in Leadership and Change who helped me to expand my horizons and to gain new skills in academic research and writing. Thank you to Dr. Flora Joy, Dr. Gwendolyn Nowlan, and Dr. Joseph Sobol who prompted and encouraged me to pursue an academic path. My thanks is offered for the storytelling performance settings provided by the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference, 2007, SAJES* (Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services), and Code Pink Long Island. I thank the readers of my travel journal, Susan Klein, Jerry Lipschultz, and Elaine Gale, who offered counsel and feedback on my seminal writing.

I am endlessly grateful to the ancient stories of the world that have been my guides.

Abstract

Storytelling is one of humanity's oldest art forms and an enduring educational method. Stories can spark social change. Although storytelling is tacitly recognized in diverse social science domains as a communication medium used to powerfully transmit leadership vision and ideas, little empirical research has been reported about *how* a teller constructs and tells a story. Through qualitative, arts-based methods, this heuristic study examines and describes the lived experience of a storyteller composing and performing a tale on issues of peace, justice, and social change. It reflects on the teller as leader and identifies a palette of arts-based skills for change leaders.

As a professional storyteller, I phenomenologically explored the *essence*, or nature, of a storyteller's creative process by creating a storytelling work. The storytelling work I composed as a *research vehicle* is based on a travel diary written during a time of war in Israel in July, 2006. Utilizing art making as an inquiry method, I mindfully became an *embodied research environment* during this study. I gathered *emic*, or insider, information about the imaginal world of a storyteller. Through a literary, autoethnographic writing process, I observed, described, interpreted, and named the steps in my creative process as I designed, rehearsed, and performed an original storytelling work. The work interweaves personal memoir, history, folklore, and current events.

Commonalities between the storyteller (composing and performing a complex tale) and a change leader (designing and communicating a change vision) emerged. Storytelling communication skills and creative thinking ability are core competencies in artfully leading change. Arts-based training in storytelling could provide change leaders with experiential

knowledge about innovative thinking and an appreciation for the power of story and metaphor to convey ideas. Storytelling can be an illuminating art medium through which to inspire peace, justice, and positive social change.

This document contains embedded graphic files (JPG) and is accompanied by audio files (MP3). The electronic version of the dissertation is accessible at the OhioLINK ETD center <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd>

Author's Audio Comments



The Inside Story:
An Arts-Based Exploration of the Creative Process of the
Storyteller as Leader

Table of Contents

Approval	ii
Copyright	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Author's Audio Comments	vii
MP3 Sound File:	
Author's Audio Comments	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Figures	xvii
Audio Files	xx
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction: A Meta-View	1
Storytelling and Leadership	1
About the Ancient Art of Storytelling	3
About the Storyteller/Researcher	4
Background: About Autoethnographic Research Methods	6
Autoethnographic Writing Style	8

The Risks of Venturing	9
Current Research on the Teller	10
The Dual Purpose of the Study	11
Constructivist Reflective Practice	12
Story as a <i>Research Vehicle</i>	13
Embodied Research	14
Philosophical and Methodological Grounding	15
Contribution to Leadership & Change: An Overview	17
Research Statement Summary	17
Reflections on Storytelling	18
Summary of Chapter Content	19
Nested Dissertation Design	21
CHAPTER TWO	
Literature Review: Talking About Telling	22
Contemporary Grassroots Discourse on Storytelling	22
Contemporary Empirical Research on Storytelling	28
Research on the Story, the Listener, and the Teller	31
The Story	31
The Listener	34
The Teller	36
Leadership Literature and Storytelling	48
Summary Comments	54

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology: Arts-Based Research	56
Art as Inquiry	56
Research Method Choice and Positioning	60
The Storytelling Work	64
A Musing on Art	65
Head and Heart	66
The Power of Reflective Story	70
The Emergence of Autoethnography	71
Summary Comments on Autoethnography	74

CHAPTER FOUR

Travel Journal, July, 2006	75
Introduction	75
Scenes: Travel Journal	79
MP3 Sound Files:	
King Solomon and the Otter Song	86
Two Possibilities Poem	89

CHAPTER FIVE

Travels in Imaginal Space:	
An Autoethnography of the Creative Process of a Storyteller	113
Introduction	113

Invitation	113
Preparation	114
Divergent and Convergent Thinking	118
The Travel Itinerary	120
Beginning the Journey	121
Group Meeting in Imaginal Space	121
MP3 Sound File	
Invitation to Listen	122
A Storytellers Process Cycle	123
On Quality	124
Design Decisions	124
Self-Critiquing	126
Compositional and Performance Quality	127
Shaping	128
Choosing a Nested Design	130
Inviting the Listener	133
Nested Story Design	136
Melody as Metaphor	137
Rehearsal	138
Performance Quality	139
Co-Creating with an Audience	140
The Wellspring of Ideas	141
Discovery and Linking	142

End-Generated Process	142
Fishing for Ideas	143
Chronology	144
Deep Chronology	144
Wheel of Association	145
What if? How? When? Where? Why?	145
Pattern Finding	145
Forming, Framing, Fashioning	146
Making Worlds	146
On the Creative Edge	147
Introspection and the Developing Tale	148
Stage Presence	149
Interior Tales	150
Transforming Chronology	151
Forming and Fashioning	152
Extending	153
Story Making, Positioning, and Paradox	154
Musings	156
MP3 Sound File:	
Paradox Song	160
First Performance Experience	161
Second Performance Experience	164
Afterwards	166

Summary: Surveying the Imaginal Terrain	171
Design Stage, Rehearsal Stage, Performance Stage	171
Amalgamation, Integration, and Transformation	177
CHAPTER SIX	
(Re)Presenting the Performance	179
Musings on Documentation	179
The Map as a Pathway Metaphor	181
Many Pathways	182
Nested Story Design Map	183
Travel Scenes Map 1	184
MP3 Sound Files:	
Invitation Song	184
Entrance Interview	184
Rabin Square, King Solomon and the Otter	184
Travel Scenes Map 2	185
MP3 Sound Files:	
Carob Tree Garden, Planting Trees, Honi Stories	185
Katzrin Talmudic Village, Two Possibilities	185
Carob Seed in My Pocket	185
Travel Scenes Map 3	186
MP3 Sound Files:	
Machon Ayalon Bullet Factory	186

Radio On	186
War	186
Sde Boker	186
Bombing Begins	186
Cattle Car	186
Yad Vashem	186
Nightly News	186
1948	186
Masada	186
Dead Sea	186
Art Therapist	186
Who's Crazy?	186
Museum of the Seam	186
Travel Scenes Map 4	187
MP3 Sound File:	
Exit Interview and Paradox Song	187
 CHAPTER SEVEN	
Artful Leadership for Creating Change	188
The Art of Designing in Time and Space	188
Making Sense of Chaos	189
Some Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders	189

Holding the Meta-view	190
Improvisation	190
Embodying a Multi-faceted Process	191
Embracing Paradox and Ambiguity	192
Flexible Thinking	193
Mindful Responsiveness	194
Intentional Engagement in Creative Process	194
Summary Reflections on Arts-Based Skills	195
A Palette of Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders	196
The Art of Leading Change	197
Vision and Possibility	198
Cutting-Edge Leadership Training through the Arts	201
Commonalities: Storytellers and Change Leaders	202
Teller as Leader	203
Co-creative Relational Exchange	205
Looped Communication Process	206
The Neuroscience of Storytelling: Stories and Memory	207
Neurons that Fire Together Wire Together: Metaphors and Thinking	208
Ethics and the Use of Metaphor	210
Considering New Possibilities in Imaginal Space	212

References	213
Appendix	240
Original Notebook Map Sketches	
Map 1	241
Map2	242
Map3	243

List of Figures

1.01	Reflections on Storytelling	18
1.02	Nested Dissertation Design	21
2.01	Storytelling Heuristic: The Teller, the Tale and the Listener	29
2.02	Storytelling Research Focus Triad	31
3.01	Once Upon a Time	62
3.02	Flowers, Life and Art	66
4.01	Nested Dissertation Design	75
4.02	Jaffa at Night, a view from the Old City walls	81
4.03	Caesarea, Amphitheatre Wall	83
4.04	Caesarea, port built by Herod, 1 st century	84
4.05	Israeli Flag	84
4.06	King Solomon and the Otter	86
4.07	Pomegranate at Katzrin	88
4.08	There Are Always Two Possibilities. This poem is based on "Always Two Possibilities" from <i>A Treasury of Jewish Folklore</i> (1948) edited by Nathan Ausubel	89
4.09	Arab Israeli Teens, Group Talk	92
4.10	Arab Israeli Teenage Boys	92
4.11	Kotel, Jerusalem	93
4.12	Wailing Wall, Slips of Paper	93
4.13	Soldiers, Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem	94
4.14	Gravestone, National Cemetery, Israel	94

4.15	Palmach Museum, Tel Aviv	95
4.16	Photo Wall, Palmach Museum, Tel Aviv	96
4.17	Newspaper Headlines: WAR	96
4.18	Ibec, Negev Desert	97
4.19	Soldiers, Sde Boker	98
4.20	Soldier, Sde Boker	98
4.21	Guns, Sde Boker	99
4.22	Tiberius	100
4.23	Carob Trees, Yad Vashem	101
4.24	Forest, Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum	103
4.25	Checkpoint, Jerusalem	105
4.26	Masada	106
4.27	Masada, Wall	106
4.28	Dead End Art Exhibit Banner	108
5.01	Invitation Song	122
5.02	Storyteller's Process Cycle	123
5.03	Map Segment	128
5.04	Nested Story Design Map	136
5.05	Discovery and Linking	142
5.06	End-generated Process	143
5.07	Fishing for Ideas	143
5.08	Chronology	144
5.09	Deep Chronology	144

5.10	Code Pink Poster	163
5.11	Sharing the Fire Poster	164
5.12	Sharing the Fire (photos: courtesy of Doria Hughes)	170
5.13	Creative Thinking Modes	172
5.14	Storyteller’s Design Stage Activities	173
5.15	Rehearsal Stage Activities	175
5.16	Performance Stage Activities	176
6.01	Map Segment Drawing	181
6.02	Nested Story Design Map	183
6.03	Map 1	184
6.04	Map 2	185
6.05	Map 3	186
6.06	Map 4	187
7.01	A Palette of Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders	196
7.02	Storytelling Triad, Change Leader Triad	205

Audio Files

The audio files associated with this ETD (Electronic Thesis Dissertation) are MP3 files. They include an author's audio comments and excerpts from *Travel Scenes*, a storytelling performance work by Heather Forest. The audio *snapshots* from *Travel Scenes* were informally recorded in performance on April 1, 2007 at the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference*, Nashua New Hampshire and in rehearsal, in Huntington, N.Y. These audio files are linked to the main text of this Electronic Thesis Dissertation via interactive *buttons* designed as graphic icons with the embedded word "listen." The audio files in the electronic version of this dissertation are activated by a reader's mouse-click on the icon. The *buttons* appear in selected places throughout the dissertation. The linked audio files have been included to (re)present the oral nature of a storytelling performance and to support the storytelling content of this study.

Recorded at my Rehearsal Studio, Huntington, N.Y., July, 2007

track01.mp3 (1.79 MB) - Author's Audio Comments (Duration 1:57) vii

Recorded at Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference,

Nashua, New Hampshire, April 1, 2007

Travel Scenes Audio Snapshots:

track02.mp3 (5.12 MB) - King Solomon and the Otter Song (Duration 05:35) 86

track03.mp3 (3.80 MB) - Two Possibilities Poem (Duration 04:09) 89

track04.mp3 (1.08 MB) - Invitation to Listen (Duration 01:11) 122

track05.mp3 (1.53 MB) - Paradox Song (Duration 01:40) 160

track06.mp3 (1.08 MB) - Invitation Song (Duration 01:11) 184

track07.mp3 (3.90 MB) - Entrance Interview (Duration 04:15)	184
track08.mp3 (8.46 MB) - Rabin Square, King Solomon and the Otter (Duration 09:14)	184
track09.mp3 (6.94 MB) -Carob Tree Garden, Planting Trees, Honi Stories (Duration 07:34)	185
track10.mp3 (5.20 MB) - Katzrin Talmudic Village, Two Possibilities (Duration 05:41)	185
track11.mp3 (799 KB) - Carob Seed in My Pocket (Duration 00:50)	185

Recorded at my Rehearsal Studio, Huntington, N.Y., May, 2007

Travel Scenes Audio Snapshots: Four Days of War

track12.mp3 (1.57 MB) - Machon Ayalon Bullet Factory (Duration 01:43)	186
track13.mp3 (809 KB) - Radio On (Duration 00:51)	186
track14.mp3 (1.77 MB) - War (Duration 01:56)	186
track15.mp3 (2.47 MB) - Sde Boker (Duration 02:42)	186
track16.mp3 (814 KB) - Bombing Begins (Duration 00:52)	186
track17.mp3 (825 KB) - Cattle Car (Duration 00:52)	186
track18.mp3 (3.61 MB) - Yad Vashem (Duration 03:56)	186
track19.mp3 (672 KB) - Nightly News (Duration 00:43)	186
track20.mp3 (449 KB) - 1948 (Duration 00:28)	186
track21.mp3 (3.06 MB) - Masada (Duration 3:20)	186
track22.mp3 (270 KB) - Dead Sea (Duration 00:17)	186
track23.mp3 (2.36 MB) - Art Therapist (Duration 02:34)	186
track24.mp3 (2.10 MB) - Who's Crazy? (Duration 2:18)	186
track25.mp3 (1.73 MB) - Museum of the Seam (Duration 01:53)	186

Recorded at Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference,

Nashua, New Hampshire, April 1, 2007

Travel Scenes Audio Snapshot:

track26.mp3 (3.06 MB) - Exit Interview and Paradox Song (Duration 03:20)

187

Chapter One:

Introduction: A Meta-View

Storytelling and Leadership

Storytelling is one of humanity's oldest art forms and an enduring educational method. Stories can spark social change. Even in our fast-paced, mass-media-filled world, telling or simply listening to a well-crafted story remains a compelling, imaginative experience. Oral stories can be powerful leadership tools that help individuals and communities construct new order and meaning out of life's natural "heart of chaos" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 116). In leadership settings from education to parenting to ministry to international politics to grass-roots organizations and more, a storyteller's intentional and aesthetic choice of story, metaphor, and language can influentially shape and direct a listener's thinking, motivate and inspire action, and initiate social change.

A story is a complex form of metaphor that can penetratingly touch the unconscious and emotional levels of listeners, offering an indirect and persuasive way to make new concept linkages and to communicate new ideas (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). On a cognitive level, stories are easier for people to remember than a string of isolated, disconnected facts (Caine, R.N. and Caine, G., 1990, 1991). Leaders who understand the capacity of stories to convey ideas can become persuasive agents of change.

"In recent years social scientists have come to appreciate what political, religious, and military figures have long known: that stories (narratives, myths, or fables) constitute a uniquely powerful currency in human relationships" (Gardner, 1995, p. 42).

Oral storytelling skill is a core competency in live, interpersonal communication. As a primal leadership skill since ancient times, storytelling has been traditionally learned through

observing mentors, through direct experience, and vicariously, through hearing stories. Arts-based training in storytelling, encouraging heightened awareness of language, metaphor choice, and story design, could enhance leadership communication skill and creative, improvisational thought.

A change leader can have a transformative change vision for the future. But, if the vision for the future is not well communicated and, therefore, no one else can see it, there may be little impact. Ideas and values embedded in stories and metaphor can motivate listeners. Martin Luther King did not just *have a dream*. “He could describe it . . . it became public and therefore accessible to millions of people” (Pondy, 1978, p. 95). King communicated his dream in words, stories, and metaphor. In doing so, he catalyzed a social movement.

Although storytelling is traditionally acknowledged as an aesthetic art form that has helped to preserve global culture, language, and world view over the centuries, there is a growing contemporary interest in the *applied* use of storytelling in a wide range of fields such as education, law, psychology, linguistics, ministry, medicine, business, organizational development, grass roots social change, and more (Sobol, Gentile & Sunwolf, (2004).

More needs to be known about *how* one develops competent storytelling skills yet little empirical research is reported in the social science literature about *how* a teller constructs and tells a story (Forest, 2006). Research on the teller from a teller’s point of view is rare.

I have addressed this knowledge gap by conducting a heuristic, arts-based study inquiring into the *essence*, or basic nature, of the creative process of the storyteller as leader. “Through exploratory, open-ended inquiry, self-directed search, and immersion in active experience, one is able to get inside the question, become one with it, and thus achieve an understanding of it” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). This study’s dual purpose is to illuminate the *essence*, or the nature of

the creative process of the storyteller and to add arts-based knowledge to the field of leadership and change.

In order to experientially explore the *essence*, or nature, of the creative process of a teller, I phenomenologically “turned to the things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1973) and composed and performed a complex tale that interweaves memoir, history, folklore and current events. I utilized literary, arts-based, autoethnographic writing to capture and interpret my unfolding creative process. Commonalities between the storyteller (composing and performing a tale) and the change leader (designing and communicating a change vision) emerged.

About the Ancient Art of Storytelling

Passed on through the oral tradition, every culture around the world has a rich resource of oral tales that has shaped and preserved values and folkways across generations. Storytelling is a time-honored educational method. Through stories, we can learn vicariously from both the wise and the foolish. In the oral storytelling event, with the storyteller as a guide, a dreamlike journey unfolds filled with characters, colors, landscapes, and meaning as detailed and complex as the creative listener devises. Each listener brings personal memory and imagination to the storytelling event and hears a story uniquely rooted in his or her own life experience. Stories teach, entertain, lobby, comfort, cajole, and inspire. Whether recounting the humorous events of a day to family members seated around the kitchen table, telling a sacred story at a religious ceremony, or enacting the extraordinary exploits of mythic heroes in the courts of ancient rulers, storytellers throughout the ages have transported listeners into imaginary worlds using the simplicity of words, sound, gesture, body language, and subtle nuance.

Storytelling is a living event, unfolding in time and space and shaped by the presence and response of both teller and listener. Interactive by nature, storytelling weaves together the teller, the tale, and the listener into a momentary community of imagination and possibility. Once the story engagement begins, listeners willingly release themselves from the rules of ordinary reality and leap into the imaginal realm where *anything* is possible. It is in this magical space that transformation can occur and new vision for positive social change can be instigated.

About the Storyteller/Researcher

Since 1974, I have been a professional storyteller, touring my repertoire of musically crafted retellings of world tales to theatres, major storytelling festivals, and conferences throughout the United States and abroad. As a storyteller I feel a responsibility to carefully choose the tales I tell. Stories touch listeners in emotional spaces that transcend rational thought. Stories touch listeners in the unconscious metaphorical recesses of the mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) and can be transformative. As a tale bearer, I curate a large collection of folktales I know “by heart.” I intend for the folktales I retell to contribute positively to my community of listeners and to offer constructive ideas supporting peace, justice, and an ecological perspective. I understand that a story can be a seed that takes root in a listener and grows and blossoms over time into new insight and understanding. Each year I tell stories for over 20,000 children in schools in my local community of Long Island, New York. I have shared stories at the National Storytelling Festival, Tennessee; The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y.; The Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.; the Sidmouth International Folk Festival, England; the Tales of Graz Festival, Austria; and at the Glistening Waters Storytelling Festival, New Zealand. As an adjunct professor of Oral Tradition at Southern Connecticut State University, I tell stories to teachers and

librarians during classes in a post-masters degree program in storytelling. As a parent, I have raised my children on stories. In these wide varieties of settings, I have experienced the power of oral storytelling to engage listeners of all ages.

Storytelling is a powerful interactive experience for both teller and listener and involves both the intellect and the emotions. A mesmerized delight emanates from an audience as a story takes hold. A hush and a trance-like mood engulfs the story space that is orchestrated by the teller and punctuated by language, silence, responsive laughter or sighs. Audience and teller are connected on the breath of stories. When the sequence of events in a story is vividly described, listeners vicariously feel the emotions of characters and visualize the twists and turns of the situations embodied in the tale. Listening to stories can help a person to develop the power of empathy. Becoming empathetically and emotionally engaged with issues can inspire inventive thoughts and can motivate social action. In his book *Leadership* (1978), James MacGregor Burns describes empathy as “the vital leadership quality of entering into another person’s feelings and perspectives. That is the beginning of moral leadership” (p.100).

I am attracted to retelling ancient, folkloric tales that have been shaped by the tongues of tellers over time. My minstrel style of storytelling is an interweave of prose, poetry, original music, and the sung and spoken word. Although I have had formal training as a visual artist and as a modern dancer, oral storytelling has been the primary medium through which I prefer to express emotion and ideas. Storytelling is a processing lens through which I make sense of the world and a public communication tool that I utilize for celebrating positive social change.

As a professional storyteller for the past thirty years and as a qualitative researcher in the dissertation process, I have, in this arts-based study, phenomenologically explored the *essence*, or the nature, of *how* a teller constructs and tells a complex tale, offering a “careful description of

ordinary conscious experience of everyday life (the life-world)” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 191) of a storytelling artist engaged in the creative process. I have documented and interpreted my experience using *autoethnographic* research methods.

Background: About Autoethnographic Research Methods

In the field of anthropology, ethnography – the art and science of interpretation – has an established history as a research method. “Ethnography tends to be most forcefully equated with methods and methodologies calling for some form of in-depth fieldwork employing participant observation as a primary component of the research project” (Prasad, 2005, p. 75). “*Ethnos* is the Greek word for “a people” or cultural group” (Patton, 2002, p. 81). In ethnographic research, the study of a culture by an *outside observer* has been the mode. Studying a culture as an *inside observer* is a newer research approach.

The word *autoethnography* was coined in 1979 by David Hayano in his article “Autoethnography: Paradigms, Problems, and Prospects” in *Human Organization*. An anthropological term, the word autoethnography describes a study of a culture by one who is a *part* of that culture, offering an *emic*, or an insider’s view rather than an *etic*, or outsider’s view. Autoethnography has political overtones. Historically, cultural anthropologists using ethnographic methods studied non-western cultures deemed primitive, indigenous, or exotic. “Colonialism and the frontier movement triggered an urgent need to understand the colonial subjects and Indian nations who were both targeted for subjugation, exploitation, and/or conquest” (Prasad, 2005, p. 77). Contemporary anthropologists and modern social scientists have expanded the goals of ethnographic research from documenting “the other” to using ethnographic field work methods to observe and study a wide range of cultural topics in modern

society, including poverty, organizations, intercultural understanding, education, and more (Patton, 2002). When an *insider* of a culture has the power, positioning, and educational credentials to conduct and report cultural research, autoethnographic methods can offer a personal, unique, and credible voice to the inquiry.

The art of storytelling has been a contemporary topic of ethnographic research. Investigating recent research on the subject of storytelling in the Dissertation Abstracts database, I came upon two dissertations in which I had been interviewed as part of ethnographic studies on the culture of storytelling in America. As a contemporary professional storyteller, I have been a part of the renaissance of interest in storytelling in the United States spawned by the establishment of the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough Tennessee in 1973. Featured eight times as a performer in the National Storytelling Festival, I have been a recognized member of the storytelling community for the past 27 years and am a recipient of the National Storytelling Network's Circle of Excellence Award. The two dissertations (Sobol, 1994; Wischner, 1991) in which I am interviewed explore the lived experience of professional storytellers in the arts community connected to the National Storytelling Festival.

Using ethnographic research approaches, others have studied my work as a storyteller in the contemporary storytelling movement. As an artist and researcher I am now adding my own voice to the study of storytelling. I am immersed in the art form as a performer, author, recording artist, and teacher. I speak as an *insider* to both the contemporary culture of storytelling and the inner workings of the storyteller's art. My lived experience as a storytelling artist is my ground of understanding. It is from this base that I explore my work in storytelling performance, composition and pedagogy. I have written about my lived experiences as an artist constructing

and performing a complex plot on issues of peace and justice from an *emic*, or insider, point of view.

Autoethnographic Writing Style

The writing style of my autoethnographic study is reflective, intimate, and written in the first person. Carolyn Ellis offers a detailed and elegant description of the writer's experience in her definition of autoethnography. In her essay "Researcher as Subject" in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) she writes:

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations . . . As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language. (p. 739)

The Risks of Venturing

Social science writing incorporating autoethnography can utilize the connective power of personal story to illuminate ideas, humanize research, and bring personal positioning and insight into the writing and research process. As an exploratory and experimental form of social science writing, autoethnography has its detractors. Autoethnography is derided as “nonevaluative, anything goes, self-therapizing, sans theory, reason, or logic” (Spry, 2001, p. 713).

For an academic professional, there are powerful risks associated with presenting research in autoethnographic, artistic form. Patrick Slattery, commenting on his own autoethnographic process, warns:

I have often been asked by colleagues and student to explain why I take the risks involved in *working within* to develop arts-based forms of research and representation. The risks they identify include gratuitous self-indulgence, the unreliability and inaccessibility of the unconscious, embarrassing self-exposure, alienation from mainstream social science researchers and their grant money, ridicule among peers, tenure and promotion concerns, and lack of rigorous scientific standards to evaluate arts-based autoethnography. (Slattery, 2001, p. 384)

To counter the disparaging perspective of detractors Tami Spry (2001) offers some criteria for good autoethnography.

- It is well crafted writing.
- It is emotionally engaging.
- It is a provocative weave of story and theory (p. 713).

A reader of autoethnography texts must be moved emotionally and critically. Such movement does not occur without literary craft, persuasive logic, and personal/cultural

thick description . . . Autoethnography is a felt-text that does not occur without rhetorical and literary discipline, as well as the courage needed to be vulnerable in rendering scholarship . . . to step out from behind the curtain and reveal the individual at the controls of academic-Oz. (Spry, 2001, p. 714)

With the challenge of working differently and the real possibility of ridicule and rejection looming, one wonders why social scientists would venture into the autoethnographic inquiry realms. Perhaps it is the willingness to explore the power of story that draws. First attempts at defining a new approach can be clumsy. Not all autoethnographic works will shine. But it is the quest and the willingness to reach new edges that unite artists and scientists as kindred spirits.

Current Research on the Teller

Research focused on the *teller* in the storytelling event has been addressed by many social science fields through both qualitative and quantitative methods and for pragmatic purposes serving the inquiry needs of the domain instigating the studies (Forest, 2006). Researchers in the domains of Education, Folklore, Psychology, and Language, who have dominantly published research on storytelling, have been primarily outside (*etic*) observers of storytelling. Only most recently have storytellers themselves begun to research and write about this ancient art from an experiential stance. The intricacies of the storyteller's art can authentically be known through the direct experience of telling tales. Storytelling is an ancient art. It is an invisible heart of many arts. The sharing of a story in real time and real space with an engaged and co-creative listener is a living event. To authentically study this art one must experience it from the inside, taste it, journey to its depths, and emerge to reflect on the experience. There is much that could be described from the teller's point of view.

The Dual-Purpose of the Study

The dual purpose of this study is to add knowledge about the creative process of the storyteller to the emerging interdisciplinary field of storytelling studies and to contribute arts-based knowledge to the empirical literature on leadership and change. Deeply reflecting on my creative process in storytelling, I gained insights into how to describe and share *emic* information about this powerful communication medium with change leaders and other practitioners, such as teachers, lawyers, ministers, therapists, and social activists, who may seek to apply this ancient art in their work.

Interest in the *applied* use of storytelling is growing and is evidenced by the wide range of academic departments in American universities – education, library science, theater, communication, and law – that offer storytelling courses. The National Storytelling Network, an American membership organization that serves the storytelling community, has now initiated a special interest group, *Storytelling in Higher Education*. A peer review journal on storytelling entitled *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies* has recently been established. Although academically accredited Master's Degree programs in storytelling are offered at East Tennessee State University and at Southern Connecticut State University, currently no Ph.D. program in storytelling studies exists in the United States. Perhaps when there is a critical mass of published writing on storytelling, a Ph.D. program in storytelling studies will become a reality. This study on the creative process of a storyteller contributes to the growing body of academic literature supporting storytelling studies.

In the realm of new epistemological approaches to qualitative research, this autoethnographic study on the *essence* of the creative process of a storyteller offers an example of an arts-based research study utilizing art making *as* an inquiry method.

Internationally, cutting-edge, arts-based leadership training programs are looking to artists as a pedagogical resource to help leaders gain knowledge and experience in creative thinking and design skills (Adler, 2006; Darsø, 2005). This study suggests that the art of storytelling, as a conceptual, interpersonal communication form, is well suited to be an arts-based medium for change leadership training.

Constructivist Reflective Practice

The majority of this qualitative study on the *essence* of my creative process as a storyteller unfolded in the realm of imaginal space. The physical setting for my explorations took place in my rehearsal studio. As a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983) and a constructivist artist/researcher seeking emergent knowledge, I was both doer and watcher. Documenting my creative process in an autoethnographic journal/essay I gazed inwardly and reported outwardly. For this experiential study, I chose a challenging, complex tale to tell that pushed the edges of my artistic abilities and deepened my personal understanding of the art of storytelling. I sought to unite prior experiential knowledge with new approaches in arts-based research. I integrated social science theory into my contemplative writing by including reflections on how my arts-based exploration connects to both the history of ideas and to contemporary thought on leadership, change, metaphor, art theory, peace, and justice.

This scholar/practitioner study is based on self-observation and deep reflection in the process of art making. The study's intentional subjectivity is both a limitation and an advantage depending upon one's epistemological point of view. A positivist might claim that in a *self-study* there is no objective triangulation with which to corroborate findings and therefore its validity could be challenged. From a positivistic point of view, researcher bias, "or prejudice . . . defined negatively as something that interferes with, prevents, or inhibits having true, genuine

knowledge” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 16) would detract. However, from a constructivist perspective, as a practicing storyteller seeking emergent knowledge, I am the most reliable source for information about my own creative process in storytelling. The deep reflection in which I engaged enabled me to authentically explore and reveal the lived experience of a single artist.

Gadamer argued that prejudice (prejudgment) can neither be eliminated nor set aside because it is an inescapable condition of being and knowing. In fact, our understanding of ourselves and our world depends upon having prejudgment. What we must do to achieve understanding is to reflect on prejudice (prejudgment) and distinguish enabling from disabling prejudice. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 16)

My findings are authentically rooted in reflection, are subjective and unique. However, my research design can be reproduced by others and could be utilized to advance knowledge in the field of storytelling studies. Future autoethnographies by storytellers investigating creative process could provide emergent knowledge. Commonality of experience may or may not come to light as more artists in the field reflect upon their practice. Certainly a vocabulary of critical aesthetic discourse will evolve as artists attempt to find language to describe elusive, imaginal experiences in the art of storytelling.

It is my hope that the palette of arts-based skills for change leaders that emerged as I reflected on my composition/performance experience (see diagram, p. 196) may be transferable to diverse practitioner fields in which conceptual design skill is utilized.

Story as a Research Vehicle

In order to offer insights into the creative process of telling a story I created a storytelling work as my *research vehicle*. The storytelling work is based on a journal I kept while traveling to

Israel in July 2006 as an artist-in-residence with a group of Jewish-American educators exploring Jewish narrative in context. The trip to Israel also served my personal need to learn more about my own Jewish cultural roots. Prior to leaving for Israel I spent many months immersed in learning about the history and multi-cultural tapestry of Israel, and in expanding my repertoire of Jewish folktales. My journal documents how, during the expedition the group journeyed to richly “storied” sites in Israel that embody ancient, founding, and modern tales. The journey ranged from the euphoria of standing on ancient sacred ground to the catastrophe of witnessing modern military aggression. During the last four days of our stay, war erupted between Israel and the Hezbollah. My reflections and daily attempt to understand the escalating violence are documented in my journal.

The storytelling performance work I created has been designed to be a solo piece that can be presented in both formal and informal performance spaces. It is composed as a series of intertwining vignettes and juxtaposes personal memoirs, folklore, history, and current events. The storytelling performance style of the work reflects the multi-textured form of the content and interweaves original music, poetry, prose, and the sung and spoken word.

Embodied Research

By inquiring into the creative process through the actual creation of a storytelling performance work, this study utilized experiential art making as a research pathway. My body, voice, and imagination were the physical tools for the study. From a postmodern, hermeneutic perspective, the live storytelling performance I created as my *research vehicle* was a “text” to interpret. When performed, the work contains “embodied knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty, 1973). Seeking self-knowledge as a reflective practitioner, (Schön, 1983) I observed and reflected upon

my thinking during the creative process. The journal upon which the storytelling work was rooted is also a “text” to interpret. I sifted through the raw material of this primary source document for images, script ideas, stories, and memories. During this heuristic, arts-based study I became an *embodied research environment* in which I gathered *emic*, or insider, information about the *essence* of a teller’s creative process. I meta-observed and reflected upon my creative process as I adapted, improvised, composed, performed, and revised the storytelling work. I *documented* as well as *interpreted* my lived experience through an autoethnographic essay that includes my intrapersonal dialogue as an artist who creates, forms, steps back, steps in, revises, contemplates, judges, births again, separates and reveals.

Philosophical and Methodological Grounding

This proposed study has been informed by my readings on heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) and researching lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). It has been encouraged by exposure to pioneering qualitative research theory such as Eisner’s (1997) comments in “The New Frontier in Qualitative Research Methodology.” In the article Eisner defends arts-based approaches to research by stating, “Virtually any careful, reflective, systematic study of phenomena undertaken to advance human understanding can count as a form of research. It all depends on how that work is pursued” (p. 262).

Arts-based research, like any traditionally accepted research approach, builds upon a body of published theory, extends prior knowledge, and acknowledges the historical continuum of ongoing academic discussion. Arts-based research and autoethnography can push the edges of established modes of exploration. The arts can be a *method* of inquiry as well as a powerful *vehicle* through which research is (re)presented.

This descriptive research project is rooted in arts-based, heuristic, autoethnographic methods and is informed by recent explorations in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), performance studies (Madison & Hamera, 2006), performance anthropology (Turner, 1986), critical studies in education and culture (Giroux, 1997, 2001), autoethnographic writing (Ellis, 2000; Pelias, 2004), concepts of researching lived experience (Van Manen, 1990), heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990), phenomenology and embodied knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1973), mindful inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983), metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), antenarrative and plurivocal story (Boje, 2001), arts theory (Eisner, 1991, 1997, 2002; Gadamer, 2004; Kenny, 2006), creativity theory (Guilford, 1968; Sternberg, 2005, 2006; Wallas, 1926), ethnographic “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1995; Heifetz, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2007; Wergin, 2007), and the freedom to “dance the data” (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002).

As I wrote my autoethnography describing my embodied arts experience, I juggled the artist’s view and the scholar’s view. I added an academic layer to my creative process commentary by contextualizing my arts experience in qualitative research and inquiry theory. I invited the ideas and comments of contemporary leadership theorists into my writing as I situated my work in the history of ideas. Grounded in a constructivist paradigm, this project is positioned as part of contemporary research efforts that use the arts *as* an inquiry method. My dissertation is a story within a story within a story. I utilized my autoethnographic writing process to seek understanding and to make sense of my lived experience during the development of a work of art focusing on issues of peace, justice, and social change. I utilized the experience to personally

explore the edges of qualitative arts-based research techniques. The study has been guided by my mentor and advisor, Dr. Carolyn Kenny.

Contribution to Leadership and Change: An Overview

Storytelling prowess is tacitly considered a core competency in effective leadership communication (Allan, Fairtlough, & Heinzen, 2002; Boje, 1991, 1994, 2001; Denning, 2001, 2005; Gargiulo, 2005; Gabriel, 2000, 2004; Gardner, 1995; Simmons, 2001) yet little empirical research has been reported about *how* a storyteller actually composes and conveys a tale (Forest, 2006). This arts-based study offers *emic* insights into the *essence* of the creative process of a storyteller composing and performing a complex story.

The study suggests that leaders who are aware of the capacity of metaphor and story to transmit ideas and vision could become persuasive change agents. Storytelling is a powerful communication medium that can be used to inspire and motivate listeners but must be used responsibly. Storytelling and creative thinking skills are core competencies for designing and communicating a change vision. Artful leadership for creating change could be enhanced through arts-based training in storytelling.

Research Statement Summary

There is a gap in the social science research on storytelling. Although many discrete aspects of the storytelling event (the teller, the story, and the listener) have been empirically studied by diverse domains in the social sciences, little research is reported about the inner workings of the storyteller's art from a storyteller's point of view (Forest, 2006). I have addressed this information gap by conducting a heuristic, arts-based study whose purpose is to offer insights into the *essence* of the creative process of the storyteller and to add arts-based

knowledge to the field of leadership and change. In my study I have autoethnographically explored, described, and interpreted my lived experience as a storyteller composing and performing a tale on issues of peace, justice, and social change. This qualitative arts-based study offers an intimate, *emic* view of the storyteller's creative process and provides practical insights into arts-based skills for change leaders. It encourages the responsible use of story to inspire and support positive social change.

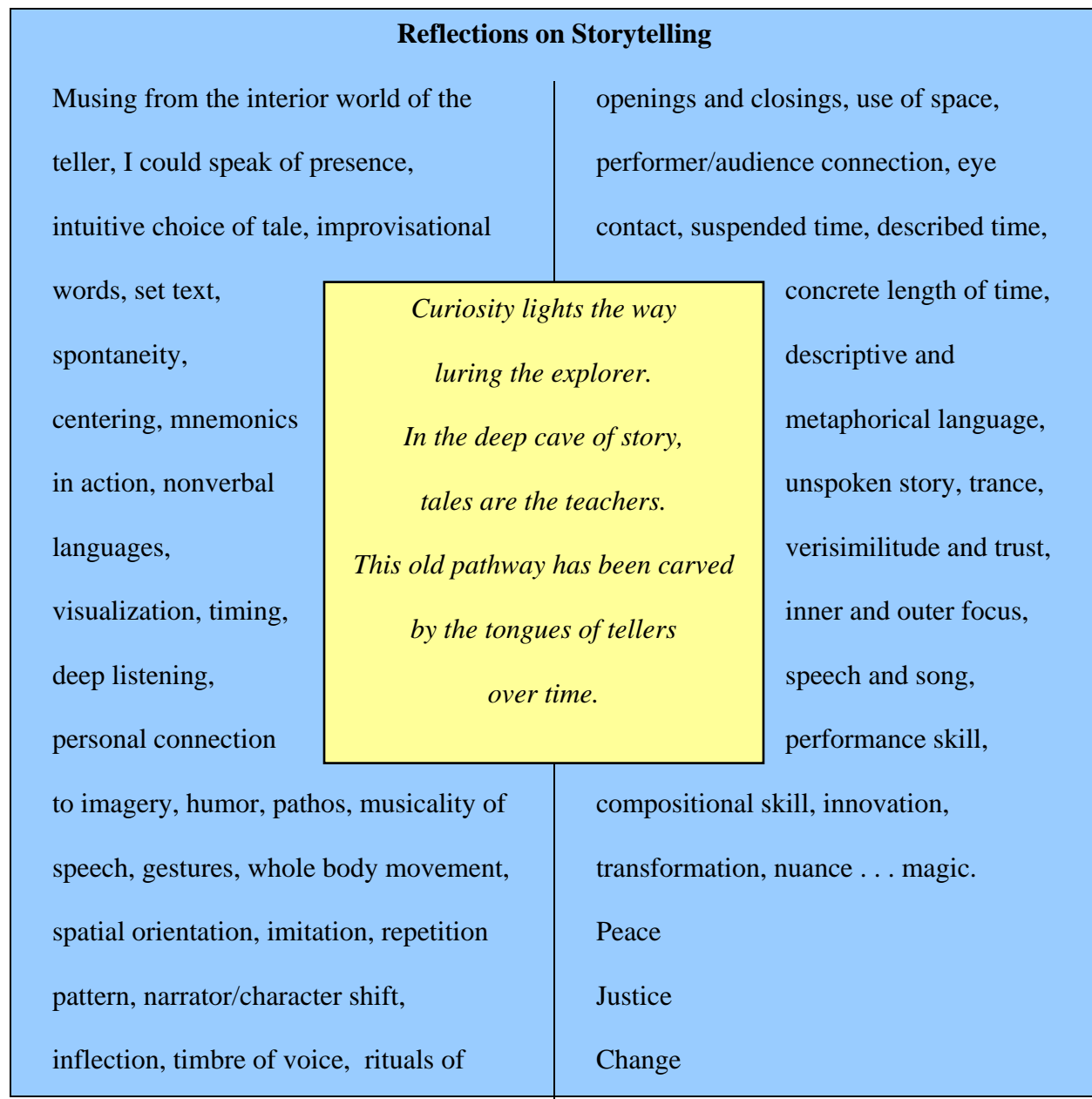


Figure 1.01. Reflections on Storytelling.

Summary of Chapter Content

Chapter Two, *Literature Review: Talking about Telling*, is a literature review that tells the story of my exploration of current research on storytelling. It positions this study to fill a gap in research knowledge on the *teller* in the oral art of storytelling. Chapter Three, *Methodology: Arts-Based Research*, explores the methodology used in this study and offers an overview and examples of current research using arts-based methods and autoethnography. It positions the *art as inquiry* method of this study as the most appropriate for a phenomenological study exploring the *essence*, or nature, of the creative process of the teller composing and performing a complex tale. Chapter Four, *Travel Journal, July 2006*, includes excerpts from a primary source document, my autoethnographic travel diary, upon which a storytelling performance work has been centered and developed as a *research vehicle* utilized in this study.

Chapter Five, *Travels in Imaginal Space*, is an autoethnographic essay that observes, describes, and interprets my creative process as a storyteller who is engaged in composing and performing a complex story. It includes field notes that offer reflection in action and on action as I explored my choices, strategies, understandings, questions, methods, and stages of thinking in the journey along the creative process from inspiration to evolving art work. Complementary to the journey log of my travel in *actual* space to Israel, this journey log documents my travels into *inner* space and explores imaginal territory. A multi-dimensional piece of writing, this autoethnography juxtaposes and layers my reflective observations, descriptions, and interpretations on the creative process of the teller with the voices of other philosophers, theorists, and practitioners who have reflected on arts-based research, ethnography, autoethnography, creative process, storytelling, and leading change.

Chapter Six, *(Re)Presenting the Performance*, explores the challenges of documenting a live performance design in a research paper. The chapter (re)presents the storytelling work created as a *research vehicle* in two ways:

- Performance Scenario Maps

These computer generated maps are based on notebook sketches (see appendix) and show a teller's flow-chart of scenes that are mnemonic aids in reconstructing the oral tale in diverse and modular ways.

- Photographs of the debut workshop performance on April 1, 2007 at the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference*, Nashua, New Hampshire.

- Documentation in Audio Media Format

Accompanying the bound copy of this dissertation is a CD with sound clips from both performance and rehearsal. The Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD) version of the dissertation stored in the dissertation archive in Ohiolink contains sound files linked to the main text.

Although the embodied experience of oral storytelling cannot be adequately captured on the page or in media, *audio snapshots* capture the sound quality of the oral tale composed to explore my creative process in this study and include live audience response.

Chapter Seven, *Artful Leadership for Creating Change*, offers an interpretive essay on the implications of this arts-based study exploring creative process and storytelling skill, for the field of leadership and change. My comments are based on emergent knowledge gained from my autoethnographic exploration of the *essence* of the creative process of a storyteller. Considering leading change a creative act, this essay examines the commonalities between the creative process of the teller (making and performing a story) and the creative process of the change

leader (designing and communicating a change vision). It speculates on the benefits of arts-based training in storytelling to enhance creative leadership.

Nested Dissertation Design

This research project has a nested design. It is a story within a story within a story. The following drawing expresses and describes the design visually. It positions my autoethnographic study on the creative process of the teller composing a story, in the context of considering the power of words, metaphor and story, the teller as leader, and the creative process of leading change.

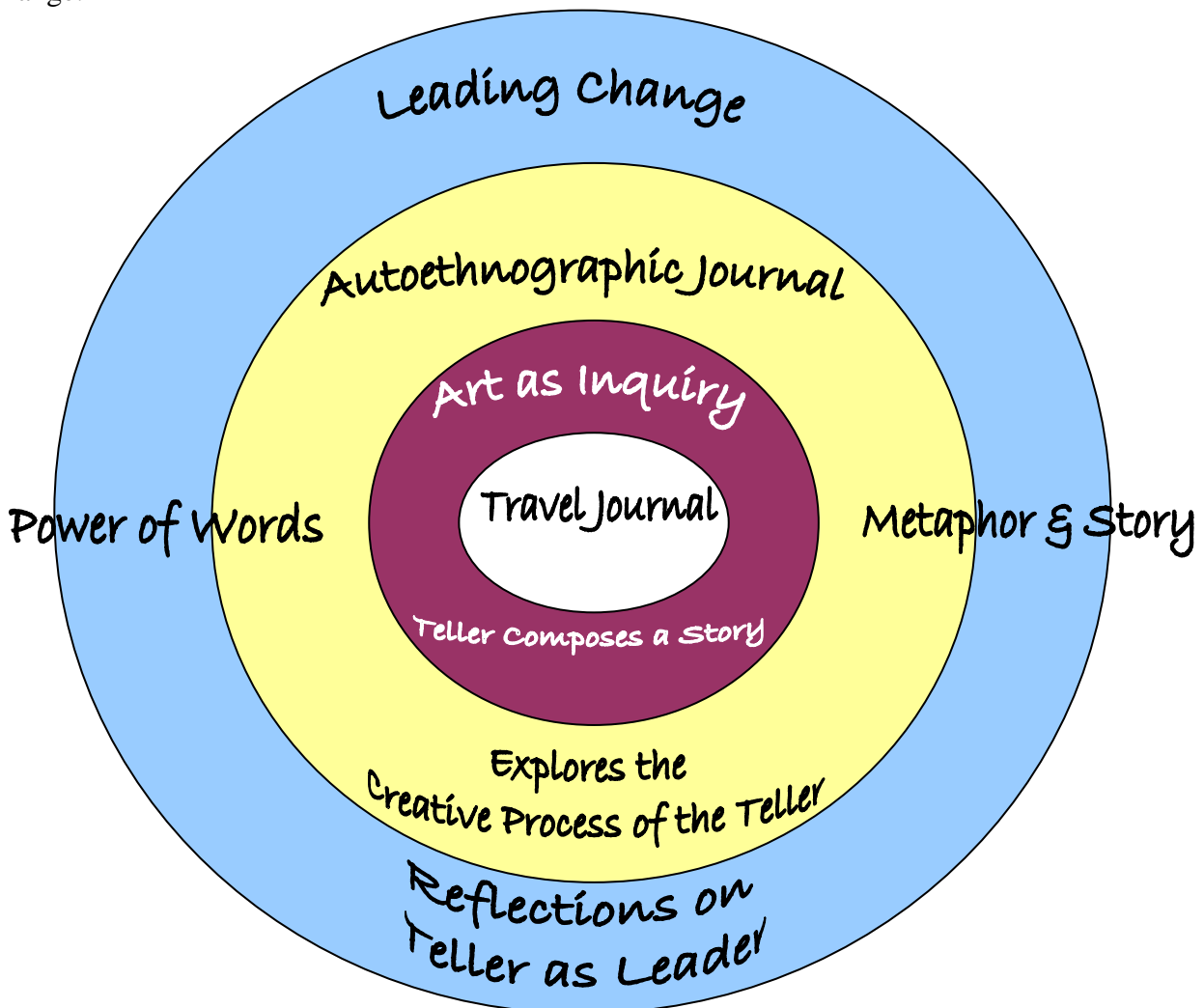


Figure 1.02. Nested Dissertation Design.

Chapter Two

Literature Review:

Talking About Telling

Contemporary Grassroots Discourse on Storytelling

Storytelling is one of humanity's oldest experiences. It is elusively a noun *and* a verb, an action *and* an event. Within the grassroots folk arts revival movement of American storytelling, that "is widely celebrated as having been initiated in October, 1973, with the first National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee" (Sobol, Gentile, Sunwolf, 2004, p. 1), an informal, active, and ongoing conversation within the close-knit community of tellers has occurred about the practice and process of storytelling. This discourse, spanning the past 35 years, is an evolving and unresolved conversation that has consistently inquired into the nature of oral storytelling and its place in the modern world. Contemporary tellers are still asking each other: *Can we define storytelling?* An attempt at definition appeared in the first article of the inaugural issue of *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies*.

Storytelling *is* a medium in its own right, an artistic process that works with what we may call the technologies of the human mainframe – memory, imagination, emotion, intellect, language, gesture, movement, expression (of face and of body), and, most crucially, relationship in the living moment, person-to-person or person-to-group. (Sobol et al., 2004, p. 3)

This definition attempts to clarify that storytelling is *not* media, film, literature, sculpture, painting, or diverse ontological, yet narrative forms that sometimes lay claim to the term. As a practicing professional teller, I would add that any definition of storytelling needs to also describe the action of imparting a verbally expressed *plot* that is transmitted orally between the

teller and the listener. It is this ancient model – the living, verbal transmission of imagery, unfolding in a linear way in time and space that sets oral storytelling apart from other more modern art forms that have been inspired by storytelling and that contain embedded narrative. A play, a puppet show, a book, a ballet, an opera, or a movie, might, like a story, *have* a plot, too. As live performance art, storytelling has a kinship with other time/space art forms such as dance or music.

Oral “storytelling” within the contemporary revivalist notion, is a “live” solo art. There is also an evanescent quality to the verbal/physical act of telling a story. As a teller I enjoy the idea that the tale I have told is a “one time event.” The story might resonate in the memory of the listener, but, from a teller’s point of view, the story vanishes once it is told and must be recreated each time it is shared. This is both a challenge and a blessing. The ineffective rendering of a tale discreetly disappears as the telling concludes. A teller can learn, from mishap, how to improve the telling of the tale. On the other hand, unlike a painting or sculpture, a well-crafted tale, however beautifully told on a given day, must be made again and again for new ears. Both the event and the art are time-and space-dependent. There needs to be participant *presence* for the communication to take place.

The concept of *togetherness* in the act of storytelling is implicit. “One of the central intuitive tenets of the storytelling movement is that storytelling is a medium of connectivity and of community” (Sobol et al., 2004, p. 3). The pivotal topic of community came up when I was interviewed after my first appearance in the National Storytelling Festival in 1980 by Jill Oxendine, the editor of *Yarnspinner*, a newsletter of the then nascent *National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling*. She asked:

What do you think the value of storytelling is?

HEATHER: At best I think that stories, especially when they're shared from different parts of the world, point out that human beings have a common ground. And that we all live together on the planet Earth . . . that there is a common sky. There's a common heritage.

Why do you think we're having a return to basic relationships?

HEATHER: We're sitting in a world that is literally threatened with demolition.

Storytelling is a way of reaching out to each other – a way of reaching out for simplicity, for intimacy in a world where things are very big and impersonal. (December, 1980)

As the field of storytelling has matured over the past three decades, the questions and issues raised by storytellers about the art form have become more theoretical. *How do we understand and describe an aesthetic of storytelling? How do we assess it? Are there unified standards or common experiences? From whose culture's standards shall we consider excellence? What are the ethics of telling stories from cultures of which one is not a part? How can the art of storytelling be applied to serve diverse settings, ages, cultural, or societal needs?*

Community discourse among tellers takes place informally during shared venues at festivals, workshops, conferences, and retreats. Conversation topics between colleagues over the years have included the attempted deciphering of wide ranging approaches to crafting tales in a polyglot of genres including, traditional folktales, personal autobiographical stories, family and oral history, historical narratives, original fantasy, literary tales, and nuanced combinations of these. Styles of telling, ranging from the conversational casual to the platform formality of the theatrical, have been parsed. Heated debates have raged over the ethics of storytelling as it relates to cultural imperialism and the honoring of multicultural oral traditions. Issues have risen

in discourse about the ethics of respecting ownership of the “signature tale,” an artist’s uniquely crafted creation. Storytellers have participated in sustaining the revival of interest in storytelling spawned by the National Storytelling Festival by actively creating local and regional venues for performance, coaching each other in technical skill, establishing email list-serves, and developing special interest groups in the applied use of storytelling in higher education, ministry, healing, organization, and youth telling. Tellers have documented their work in a profusion of recordings. “Storytellers and storytelling audiences are aging, too. We are beginning to think more urgently about legacies, about leaving structures in place that will continue the work in succeeding generations” (Sobol et al., 2004, p. 4).

Storytelling discourse moved in the mid 1980s from informal community conversation to published articles, often written by storytellers and story listeners. This journalistic and essay-styled writing appeared in the *Storytelling Journal*, a magazine published by the *National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling* from 1984 on, and in *Storytelling World*, a magazine which also features annual juried awards for excellence in storytelling recordings and books. The *Storytelling Journal* became the *Storytelling Magazine* in 1990. The *National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling* has now split into two organizations: *The National Storytelling Network* and the *International Storytelling Center*.

The new peer review journal *Storytelling, Self, Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies* is currently contributing to the advancement of theory on the art of storytelling by providing an avenue for academic literature on storytelling issues.

For the purpose of establishing storytelling studies within the departmental structures of colleges and universities, it is essential to build a body of such literature, a conversation

among scholars and artists from the numerous disciplines that owe their own lifeblood to the storytelling art. (Sobol et al., 2004, p.4)

Storytellers Carol Birch and Melissa Heckler assembled, in *Who Says? Essays on Pivotal Issues in Contemporary Storytelling* (1996), a collection of writing that presents some oft-addressed community discourse topics: performance, aesthetics, ethics, ethnicity and cross-cultural telling. They state, “To develop a language for this art is to be involved in a process of synthesizing many models into an emergent aesthetics and ethics of storytelling” (p. 14).

There is, however, no globally accepted agreement as to what parameters the art form of storytelling adheres. A profusion of styles, contexts, and applications abounds. Storytelling in ancient times was guided by local cultural traditions. Contemporary American storytelling reflects diverse ethnic roots, a composite of pristine nostalgia and modern commercialism, the influence of performance setting and audience, oral vs. literary form, and diverse pragmatic application in a wide assortment of fields.

A contemporary performance protocol has evolved to fit the performance venues often created by tellers themselves. Tellers are no longer wandering minstrels in the courts of kings. Storytelling concerts take place in venues ranging from concert halls to school assembly settings to corporate meetings. I have told stories in festivals, theatres, museums, libraries, schools, at celebration, on a cruise ship, in a European castle, in a graveyard, at weddings, and for listeners on a bus. Modern tellers often share formal performance events with other featured tellers. An understood community courtesy is to be mindful of one’s allotted time on stage so that everyone can be heard in turn. At a contemporary storytelling concert event, a listener can expect that a storyteller will speak and not “read” text. There will be a minimalist setting without demonstrative props or scenery. The ambiance is one of simplicity and audience involvement.

Storytelling is a co-creative activity that engages the imagination and trancelike attention of the audience (Stallings, 1988). But, as in any emerging field, community rules are tacitly made and creatively broken. My lived experience as both a teller and an observer of other tellers, has taught me that, as in any other art, storytelling is evolving in consort with the exploration of its practitioners.

Storytelling is a reflective practice. Unlike actors in the theatre community, storytellers don't usually have directors. Much of the artistic work is self-directed in tandem with audience response. The speaking of the tales and the listeners' response teach much about how to shape and tell a story. Aspiring tellers still ask: *How does a teller shape a tale for retelling? How does a teller remember a plot? How does a teller incorporate body language and vocal nuance into the communication? How does a teller engage listeners of diverse ages?*

There is a growing body of "how to" books about storytelling. Contemporary published texts about modern telling owe much to two classics in the field, the pivotal books, *The Art of the Story-teller* by Marie Shedlock (1915) and *The Way of the Storyteller* by Ruth Sawyer (1942). These books contributed to the early revitalization of storytelling efforts in the United States in the 1900s and offer advice on shaping stories for oral telling and a sampling of tellable tales. Contemporary books about oral storytelling have appeared in the past twenty-five years, extending and addressing ongoing concerns in the field about practitioners' development of storytelling skill and repertoire (Baker & Greene, 1987; Birch, 2000; Brody, Goldspinner, Green, Leventhal, & Porcino, 1992; Hamilton & Weiss, 2005; Lipman, 1999; Holt & Mooney, 1994, 2000; Niemi, 2006; Niemi & Ellis, 2001; MacDonald, 1993; Maquire, 1985; Mooney & Holt, 1996; Pellowski, 1990; Schimmel, 1978; Torrence, 1998). However, as a folk art, learning about storytelling is best done by direct experience.

As a performer I have participated in storytelling festivals featuring numerous contemporary storytellers both in the United States and abroad since 1975. There are diverse contemporary approaches to the art form and a willingness to push the edges of form. As different as tellers might be in repertoire, language use, physical presentation, and audience interaction, all the effective tellers to whom I have enjoyed listening have one commonality – both metaphorically and in actuality, storytellers know their stories “by heart.”

Contemporary Empirical Research on Storytelling

“Who studies storytelling in the academic realms?” I wondered. Seeking to learn if empirical research has been done on the topic of storytelling, I set off on a journey through cyberspace searching the academic databases. Blatantly using the word “storytelling” (instead of its cousin “narrative”) in either the title or subject field as my search strategy, I found empirical storytelling studies strewn across the social science and humanities domains. Studies on storytelling are not concentrated in any one field but are published in a wide spectrum of journals whose constituency might be interested in the practical focus of the research. In trying to make sense of the wide assortment of journals and domains in which one can find storytelling research I gazed at the disparate stack of 104 storytelling studies I had gathered to review from 68 journals serving fields such as Psychology, Education, Business, Language, Linguistics, Sociology, Folklore etc., (Forest, 2006). I did not grasp an overview of these studies until, as a sense-making effort, I sketched a diagram of how, as a storyteller, I perceive the act of storytelling. I tacitly understand storytelling to be a co-creative, living event that dynamically interweaves the teller, the tale, and the listener. The storytelling event is a multi-layered, complex experience.

Using this heuristic sketch as a lens, I looked again at the pile of disparate studies and realized that the peer review research articles I had assembled did not address the meta-topic of storytelling. Rather, the studies look at “parts” of the storytelling event.

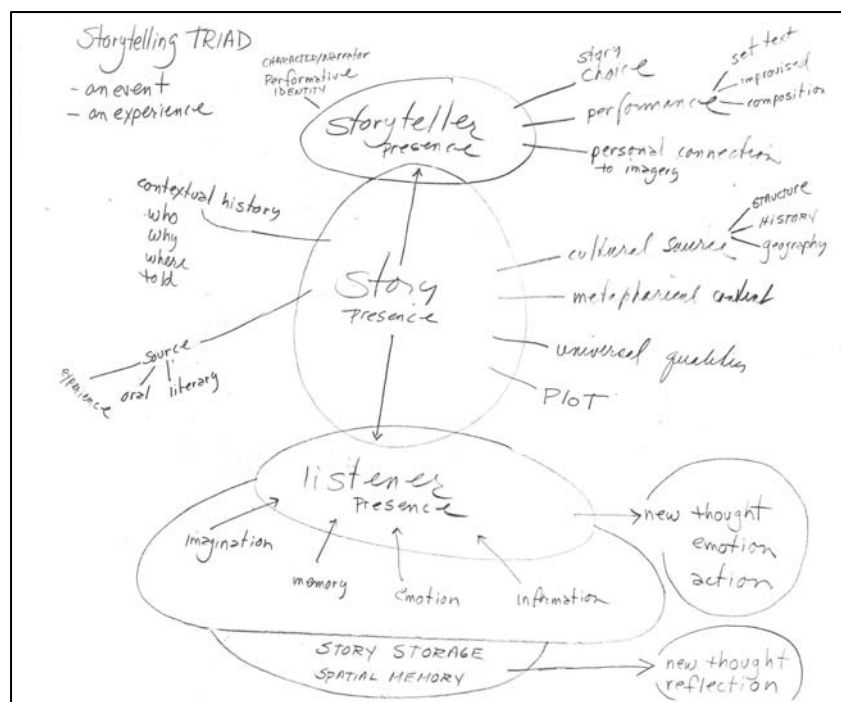


Figure 2.01. Storytelling Heuristic: The Teller, the Tale and the Listener.

Furthermore, from a trans-academic prospective, diverse domains pragmatically study “aspects” of the storytelling event: the teller, the story, the listener, and nuanced combinations of the three that serve the research needs of the domain. Rarely is there a holistic study.

From my tacit knowledge as a performing artist I developed the following storytelling research codes that function as topic lenses through which we can view contemporary research on storytelling. This heuristic grouping of topics does not categorize the specific research *question* of a storytelling study, but rather identifies the area of the storytelling event that the researcher has emphasized or illuminated with his or her questioning.

- T Teller
- L Listener
- S Story
- TL Teller/Listener
- TS Teller/Story
- ST Story/Teller
- SL Story/Listener
- LT Listener/Teller
- LS Listener/Story
- TSL Teller/Story/Listener

These categories reflect an awareness of the research *emphasis* in a storytelling study. There are subtle nuances to storytelling research. For examples, a study that focuses on the lived experience of the teacher accounting for the use of narrative in her teaching (Pinnegar, 1996) or the study of evocative gesture in Nakota storytelling (Farnell, 2002) emphasize the Teller (T). A study that explores the impact of a teacher telling stories in the classroom to increase listening or writing comprehension on the part of students (Groce, 2004) or a nurse telling stories to critically ill children for therapeutic purposes (Freeman, 1991) emphasizes the relationship between the Teller and the Listener (TL). A study that focuses on the types of family stories told in the early stages of parenthood (Fiese, 1995) or the differences in the compositional construction of stories told by American and Chinese children (Wang & Leichtman, 2000) focuses on the Story (S). A study about how tellers use personal metaphor to illuminate their life stories (Keller-Cohn, 2003) or how a teller's gender affects how he or she recounts family stories (Fiese & Skillman, 2000) emphasizes the Teller/Story relationship (TS). A study that focuses on how stories told in commercials emotionally link listeners to brand names (Edson Escalas, 2004) addresses the Story/Listener (S/L) connection.

Exploring this descriptive coding process, I have attempted to discern the often subtle aspects of the co-creative act of storytelling that are the focus of inquiry for researchers. This way of looking at published storytelling research offers a lens to make sense of a diverse and interdisciplinary body of knowledge and also offers topics for future research.

The next section of this chapter will report on the girth of empirical studies conducted by researchers in a variety of academic domains.

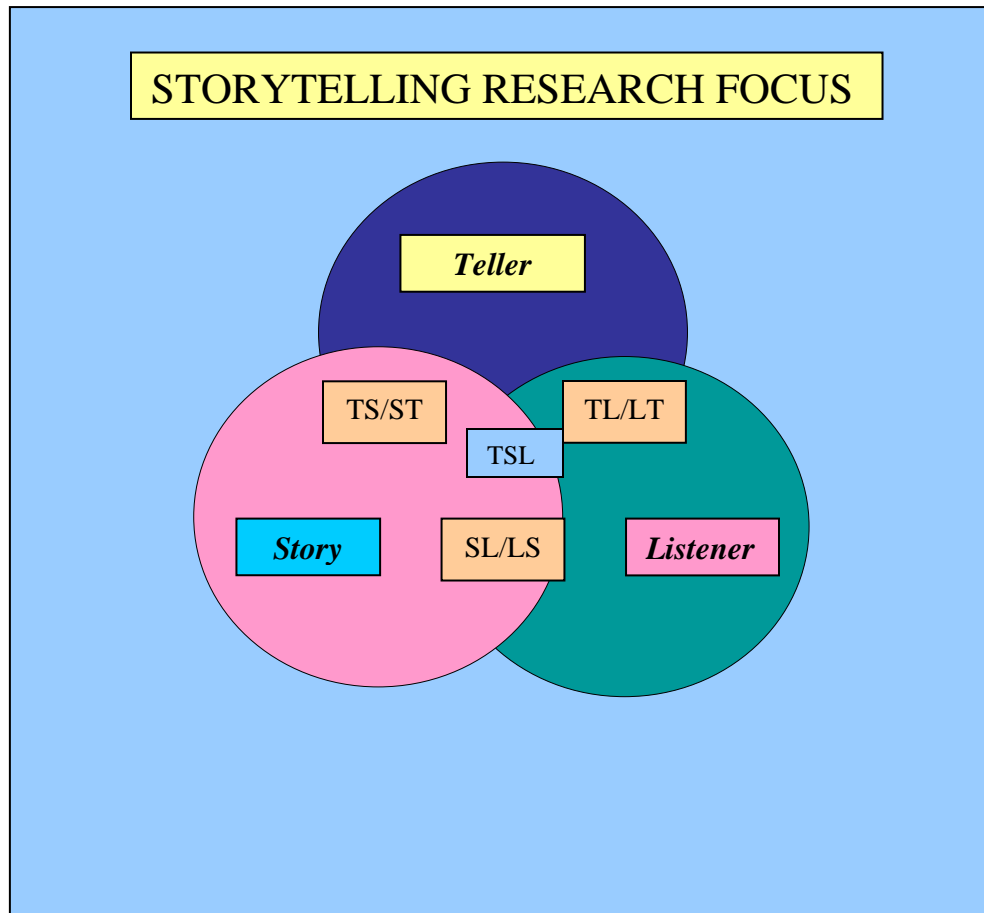


Figure 2.02. Storytelling Research Focus Triad.

Research on the Story, the Listener, and the Teller

The Story.

Recent humanities and social science-based research on the *story* as an aspect of the oral storytelling event explores how the abstract entity of an orally told tale can be an effective tool for social, educational, and therapeutic change as well as a pragmatic tool for educational, linguistic, and psychological testing and assessment. Studies incorporating tales as assessment tools are conducted in the Education, Psychology, and Language communities and utilize story as a vehicle through which to assess a wide range of language topics such as causality,

coherence, usage, conventions, and narrative structure (Carlsson, Samuelsson, Soponyai, & Wen, 2001; Freeland & Scholnick, 1987; Gutierrez Clellen & Iglesias, 1992; Hayes & Casey, 2002; Hyon & Sulzby, 1994; Merritt & Liles, 1987; Pickering & Attridge, 1990; Porath, 1996; Tafoya, 1982; Valentine, 1995; Wang, & Leichtman, 2000; Wellhousen, 1993).

Psychology studies focusing on *story* have shown that tales can be powerful therapeutic tools in counseling settings (Lawson, 1987), can serve women recovering from spouse abuse (Ucko, 1991), and can help children traumatized by tragedy (Geist, 2003). Sociology, Psychology, and Communication studies focusing on the *story* in the storytelling event have shown that tales can be a powerful vehicle through which the nature of socialization in families can be explored (Miller, 1997; Pasupathi, Henry & Carstensen, 2002; Peterson & Roberts, 2003; Peterson, 1987; Fiese, 1995; Martin, 1988) and can illuminate inquiry into the nature of interpersonal oral communication (Goodwin, 1990; Mandelbaum, 1989; Norrick, 1998; Polanyi, 1982; Preece, 1987; Swidler, 2000). Studies utilizing a focus on *story* can offer insight into the imagination in young children (Pramling, Norlander, & Archer, 2003). *Story*- focused research reveals that the accurate recounting of a sequence of events can be an indicator of memory functions (Pratt, 1989).

Story- focused research in Business and Education has shown that stories can be educational tools in a range of settings from corporate organizations to the classroom. Organizational stories can contribute to new learning in the workplace (Abma, 2003). Folktales can be useful in teaching foreign language (deRamirez, 1999). Teachers can utilize the variety of forms of stories shared in the staff room to create improved teaching strategies (Kainan, 1995). First Nations stories can offer cultural education when used in the classroom setting (Archibald, 1997).

Storytelling community studies focused on the *teller/story* relationship reveal that the telling of grief stories can aid in the grieving process (Hastings, Hoover, & Musambira, 2005) and that the telling of personal illness stories can contribute to wellness and the healing process (Drew, 2005; Ryden, 2005; Rosenblat, Lakoma, & Alexander, 2004). A Business community study reveals that the collective telling of stories is an essential, sense-making, structural part of organizational life (Boje, 1991). Communication, Folklore, Sociology, and Education community studies show that the telling of stories can contribute to reconciliation, social change and cultural understanding (Dan Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Farah, 1999; Kremer, 2004; Linden, 1989; Lykes, Mateo, Anay, Caba, Ruiz, & Williams, 1999). A study on the telling of stories in an education setting shows how the retelling of stories from literature can contribute to improved prediction and comprehension skills (Goodman, 1982). Research in the Language, Psychology, and Sociology community studies show how the telling of stories contributes to self identity (Fiese & Skillman, 2000; Keller-Cohn, 2003; Linden, 1989; Marvin, 2004; Meyerson, 2004; Peterson, 1994) and communication skills (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Peterson, 1990; Pratt & MacKenzie-Keating, 1985).

Research studies addressing a diverse array of topics with a *story* focus, have been conducted by a wide range of social science and humanities domains, and utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods. Studies with a *story* focus published in the Psychology and Sociology communities tend to be quantitative and studies with a *story* focus published in the Education, Communications, and Storytelling communities tend to be qualitative. The choice of methods for each study reflects the culture of inquiry of the domain conducting the research as well as the publishing preferences of the publications choosing to include the studies.

Although diverse fields, notably Psychology and Education have moved knowledge forward about the nature and power of *story* as a tool to teach and as a tool to assess, much is still unknown about the intrinsic nature of the oral tradition. Oral stories are a powerful and complex form of metaphor. The neurolinguistic process of perceiving a metaphor takes place at the neurotransmitter level of the brain and creates new connections and associations (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). By offering listeners an imaginative virtual experience, stories can, as metaphor, link abstract ideas presented in the form of a plot, to concrete, embodied experience and contribute to learning. Listeners can gain wisdom from stories through vicarious experience. At the neurological level, *imagined* stories are stored in the spatial memory center of the brain where *actual* lived experience is also stored (Caine & Caine, 1991). Information embedded in the plot of an orally heard story is easier to remember than a disconnected string of facts (Caine & Caine, 1991). Perhaps this is why storytelling is one of humanity's oldest teaching strategies. Practitioners in diverse fields have tacitly learned the power of story in action. Much has been observed about the effect of stories on both tellers and listeners. More needs to be explored about how the teller chooses or constructs tales to tell and how the listener processes story information, makes new connections, and applies the wisdom embedded in stories.

The Listener.

Empirical studies focusing on the *listener* show that story listening in a classroom setting can contribute positively to students' language use (Rooks, 1998; Trostle & Hicks, 1998). Listening to well-told stories can create a reflective, trance-like state in the listener (Sturm, 1999). Studies focused on the *teller/listener* relationship reveal that storytelling can have a positive impact on literacy and language development when integrated into the educational

setting (Clark, 2000; Furmark, 1999; Groce, 2004; Hanson, 2004; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lawrence, 2004). Listening to tales in a family setting can also contribute to literacy (Williams, 1991). Listening to stories about environmental ethics can change behavior (Wirth & Gammon, 1999). Therapeutic applications of storytelling in psychological care settings have shown that the experience of listening to a well-chosen tale can be beneficial and healing (Hoffman, 2004; Freeman, 1991; Kramer, 1995; Painter, Cook & Silverman, 1999). A quantitative study on interpersonal storytelling demonstrated that an enthusiastic listener can impact the number of words in a teller's story (Bavelas, Coates & Johnson, 2000). A Business study revealed that stories heard by consumers can strongly influence their purchases (Escalas, 2004).

Recent research on the experience of the listener in a storytelling event reveals that listening to a well told tale is not a passive activity. Listener engagement occurs on both the imaginative and cognitive levels that can impact action or have beneficial therapeutic effect. Educators have been the major contributors to the research on the experience of the listener in the storytelling event and have inquired primarily into the academic impact of listening and literacy. Research in this area has utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods appropriately shaped by each study's specific research question. Research concerned with assessing and improving literacy tends to be quantitative (Hanson, 2004; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lawrence, 2004).

More needs to be known about the *listener* in the storytelling event. Findings reveal that it is the well-told story (Sturm, 1999) and the well-chosen story (Freeman, 1999) that can have a powerful effect on the *listener*. More needs to be known about how and why stories affect the *listener*. Listening to a story encourages metaphorical thinking and can physically create new learning and connections at the taxon level of the brain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Since ancient

times, listening has been a core learning strategy. At both the multicultural, global level and at the individual, human developmental level, orality is older than literacy (Ong, 2002). Children listen to spoken language before they learn to read written language. More research focusing on the experience of the *listener* in the storytelling event could contribute positively to future educational curriculum design and could offer new directions for educational research.

The Teller.

As a professional storyteller, I am especially interested in contemporary research on the *teller* component of the storytelling event. The Folklore community has made abundant contributions to knowledge about the *teller*. Multicultural, folkloric ethnographies focusing on the ethnic storyteller as a “culture bearer” reveal that rich contextual information is reflected in the teller’s choice of tales, language use, gesture, and performance manner (Abrahams, 1982; Bearden, 2000; Blehr, 1978; Draitser, 1982; Farnell, 1991, 2002; Park, 1998; Willemse, 2003). These studies offer an *etic* or outsider’s view of the *teller* in context except in the case of Park (1998), who is a student of the storytelling style investigated. Using qualitative ethnographic methods, these folkloric studies explore how culture is reflected in the teller’s performance. Also examined are specific performance elements such as story choice, gesture, spatial organization, word play, and vocal effects. The studies offer insights into *teller* performance practices in an assortment of multicultural settings.

Abrahams (1982), using text analysis, explores the zany nonsense and rude antics of the *teller* “disbehaving” and sharing riddles and Nansi stories during the nine-day wake ritual in St. Vincent. The study examines the relationship between the *event* and the *teller’s* choice of story told.

The delicate relationship between the *teller* and the *listener* and its impact on the choice of tale told is examined (Blehr, 1978) with regard to the “verifiability” of the folk belief story to be shared. As the Nordic teller in this study senses that the listener holds similar magical folk beliefs, less “verifiable” tales can be shared without reservation.

How geographical knowledge is physically embodied in the dance and gesture of the Nak’ota Mak’oc’e storyteller is examined by Farnell (1991). She reports on how, integrating Plains Sign Language into storytelling, the Assiniboine *teller* uses gesture to describe a quadrant-like directionality “from which certain things come towards a person in contrast to the Euro-American convention image where lines move outward from a given point” (p. 88). Cultural difference in how storytellers physically organize the directionality in a tale is the focus of this study. Another study by Farnell (2002) focuses on the spatial syntax in the telling of an Assiniboine teller named Rose Weasel. Farnell asserts that “when human beings complement their speech with gestures they do so in culturally distinct ways” (p. 37). Her study concisely describes a storytelling performance from the point of view of an observer, stating, “overall, an intricate, dynamically-embodied, poetic structure emerges that is located within a semantically-rich corporeal performance space . . . a complex, evocative performance in which speech, gesture, and spatial orientation share in the creation of meaning” (p. 38).

Draitzer (1982) offers a study of the Russian *teller*’s language use during the sharing of the “*anekdot*” in satirical storytelling. Exploring word choice as the source of humor in casually-told tales, this study examines puns, double meanings, onomatopoeia, and word play. This study emphasizes the persistence of stories in the oral tradition even in times of political oppression of other arts. Willemse’s study (2003) documented a Namibian storyteller recounting the oral history of his Afrikaans heritage. The study focused on the teller’s desire to preserve his

language and story and was seen in the larger socio-historical framework of a disappearing culture. A dissertation (Bearden, 2000) investigating the performance device of “constructed dialogue” in a Texas Grandfather’s personal narratives, observes, documents, and interprets the genres and styles of telling in a familial context.

The researchers in the folklore studies thus far described are all *observers* of storytelling and outside of the culture ethnographically studied. One insider’s view is offered in this group of studies. Park’s (1998) research into gender enactment in Korean P’ansori storytelling positions the researcher as both ethnographer and a student of P’ansori singing. This study explores the gender shift demonstrated in the “style of narration, in the timbre and inflection of the voice, between characters from the story, and between the roles of the narrator and a performer” (p. 62). Focusing on one of the main elements of P’ansori singing/storytelling – the voice, the researcher describes how extended training creates a “voice aesthetically capable of depicting the spatio-temporal setting and scenery and conveying the thoughts and actions of dramatic personae” (p. 77). P’ansori storytelling was historically performed by men. In traditional Korean cultural context women are “demure.” The sometimes husky voice used by women in this form, imitates the men who originated this storytelling style in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula before the 18th century. Women portraying men in the classic tales offers the researcher an avenue to explore biological and culturally imposed gender stereotypes.

As a storyteller, some of the questions and issues raised in the folkloric studies feel familiar and touch upon my own tacit experience as a teller. Although several discreet *performance* topics such as voice, spatial orientation, gesture, and characterization are researched in these ethnographic studies, the lived experience of the *teller* from the *emic*, or, insider’s point of view of the *teller* has not been thoroughly explored.

In the Educational domain, studies show that teachers can be viewed as *tellers* and their storied communication in the classroom can contribute to literacy, meaning making, and language comprehension (Damlin, 2002; Hamer, 1999; Martin, 2000; Pinnegar, 1996; Stokrocki, 1994). A study on parents' oral storytelling at home and as guest tellers at school shows the positive impact of parent involvement in the classroom (Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keenan, 2000).

Stokrocki (1994) explored her experience developing an ethnographic, fictional story centered on a school day in the life of a Navaho girl. Designed as a tool to aid art teachers inspire culturally sensitive representations, Stockrocki's tale, told in the first person, with thick description, tells about the challenges of a native student attending an *Anglo* dominant school. Cultural concerns are also reflected in Martin's (2000) study of how a Lakota teacher utilized story for the purpose of "constructing a classroom community that is congruent with community beliefs" (p. 350). The teacher integrated personal story and Native American perspective in the class to augment the standardized curriculum on the Puritan, John Smith. This case study, conducted on the Lakota reservations in South Dakota, was done without the use of any recording devices due to prior Native experiences with media abuse on the part of researchers. Using only hand-written interviews and field notes, the researcher explored how the Lakota teacher used stories to help students make sense of American history through Native eyes.

Using a folkloristic approach, Hamer (1999) used participant observation, semi-structured interviews and field notes taken during an 11th grade American History class to examine how two skilled history teachers used the telling of personal experience narratives, legends, and historical anecdotes to illuminate *canonic* information in their American History textbook with diverse points of view. The teachers expanded their students' awareness of

information bias by “decontextualizing a text from the national context and recontextualizing it into a personal or local context” (p. 376). The study illustrates the effectiveness of storytelling for it is “through stories, the meanings of events are shaped and reshaped” (p. 383). The two teachers in the study have natural storytelling skills that they intuitively apply in the classroom as they regale their students with tales. The research suggests that teaching is a *performance* event and can be researched ethnographically using folkloristic approaches such as event analysis.

Pinnegar (1996) offers a self-aware autoethnographic description of how, as a teacher, she is a *teller* who intentionally uses storytelling in her classroom. Documenting her lectures by recording them and then transcribing the text, Pinnegar finds it difficult to identify exactly when the “stories” happen as they are embedded in her lectures as deeply “interwoven discourse.” She categorizes several functions of telling tales in her class:

- To carry content
- To teach moral messages
- To create community
- To reveal and make oneself vulnerable.

She describes teaching *as* telling in this self-study of her own practice. She points out that her telling creates a space of trust that elicits storytelling from her students. She develops a narrative structure that creates what she calls “empty nodes,” or places where students can make personal connection to the material by remembering personal stories connected to the content. Pinnegar’s students are a captive audience of teachers-in-training. Her report reveals how she models story use in a powerful way. By teaching through *telling* stories she demonstrates how stories inspire students to make personal connections to academic material. Her writing is

presented in a first person voicing and resonates with authenticity as it is rooted in her own experiential learning.

Bloome, Katz, Solsken, Willett and Wilson Keenan's (2000) action research study proposes the use of storytelling to create a community-centered approach to improving literacy. Two studies examined storytelling and story reading practices of African American parents from low income communities and explored the educational impact of inviting parents into the classroom to share oral histories. The sharing of personal stories created personal connections between the spheres of school and home and established a cultural relevance between standardized curriculum and community identity.

These six selected studies qualitatively explore the power of storytelling in the classroom to augment educational goals and practices. All the researchers in this group of studies, other than Pinnegar (1996), a classroom teacher who conducted a "self-study," were outside observers. The use of interview, field notes, recorded transcripts, and autoethnography were appropriate and effective methods to capture information in this setting and context.

Psychology studies on the *teller* and memory show how subjective and mutable the recounting of stories can be (Dudukovic, Marsh, & Tversky, 2004; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Mergler & Faust, 1985). Dudukovic, Marsh, and Tversky (2004) explore how the *intention* of recounting an occurrence accurately vs. entertainingly might change the type and quantity of sensory details and the accuracy of the information reported by the *teller*.

Diverse *teller* memory issues over time are explored in McGregor and Holmes' (1999) longitudinal experimental study on the effect of relationship bias on the recall of the details in a story about conflict in a relationship. Researchers presented University of Waterloo undergraduate volunteers a 45-line vignette about two contentious, fictitious characters, Kim and

Jim. The story included a range of ambiguous details that left room for interpretation about individual culpability. The participants had to read the vignette and record details that might make one or the other of the characters “look bad.” Role playing as a lawyer for one or another of the characters, students constructed retellings of the events with a bias for their client. A follow-up session two weeks later assessing the role of “biased evidenced memory” revealed, through counting the number of anti-Kim or anti-Jim details recalled, that bias contributed to the quantity of facts recalled that supported the bias.

Storytelling and memory were experimentally explored by Mergler and Faust (1985) in their correlation study of how more details, or “story units” were recalled by college students listening to a teller recount a story relationally proportionate to their assumed increase in age of the *teller* ($r = +.642, p < .05$). This study explores the role of the storyteller as respected “elder” and the impact of this positioning on the recall abilities of younger listeners. Using a recorded story, 144 undergraduates estimated the age of the reader. Coded “Story Units” accurately recalled, were assessed via a questionnaire.

These three studies do focus on the topic of the *teller* but investigate specifically cognitive and behavioral issues in the inquiry. Performance issues are not considered. The studies utilize the *teller* to pragmatically gain information about memory. Well constructed quantitative research methods utilizing control groups and questionnaires (Dudukovic, Marsh, & Tversky, 2004; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Mergler & Faust, 1985) and scaled surveys (McGregor & Holmes, 1999) were used to appropriately gather numerical information.

Language domain studies with a *teller* focus reveal that cultural background contributes to the way verbal plotlines, both linear and non-linear, are organized (Champion, Katz, Muldrow, & Dail 1999; Silliman, 1995). Linguistic studies have shown that storytellers use silence and

pause as a prominent compositional element (Kowal, 1983). The Language community's peer review journals include both qualitative (Champion, Katz, Muldrow, & Dail, 1999; Oliveira, 1999; Silliman, 1995) and quantitative (Kowal, 1983; Stenning, & Michell, 1985) studies on the *teller*. All the studies in this group focus on the language use of the teller and consider the topic from many vantage points. Oliveira's study (1999) utilized discourse analysis to explore the function of self-aggrandizement in stories told about embarrassment or vicarious experience. This linguistics study examines narratives told in Portuguese in Brazil and explores the strategies used by adults when telling "face-saving" stories to put themselves in a "favorable" light.

The *teller* was explored by Champion, Katz, Muldrow and Dail (1999) in a study conducted with African American pre-schoolers at a community day care center in an urban setting. Using content analysis, and event analysis, the types of personal and traditional folktale narratives constructed by 4-year-old children in the school environment were explored. This study expands earlier research findings (Michaels, 1981) on the structure of African-American children's narratives finding them to be organized in a non-linear fashion with "discourse consisting of a series of implicitly associated personal anecdotes" (p. 429). In the Champion et al. (1999) pre-schooler study, twice a week researchers read stories to the children and then the children retold them. Student retellings were coded and analyzed for content themes such as identity, information about social relationships, and entertainment goals. The study extended established approaches of text analysis of student narrative to also include content and event analysis in the study of childhood storytelling.

Trans-cultural challenges that occur when non-native researchers study the *teller* in an indigenous Native setting are explored in a study by Silliman (1995). The study presents narrative analysis on non-linear plot structure used by *tellers* in the Athabaskan culture of

Alaska. Athabaskan narrative tends to be organized in a spatial rather than the linear beginning/middle/end form of the Euro-American plot structure. Michaels (1981) pivotal research on narrative patterns of African-American children identified cultural differences in narrative construction that is *not* rooted in linear patterning. “Significant problems can arise in applying story grammar, event chain, or highpoint analysis with children whose concept of narration may not be well grounded in linear narrative concepts” (Silliman, 1995, p. 33).

Still focusing on the use and structure of language, two other studies are included in the Language community’s published articles in this group. Both Kowal (1983) and Stenning and Michell (1985) offer quantitative studies focusing on the *teller*. Stenning and Michell’s (1985) quasi-experimental study assesses the retellings done by a group of 5-10-year-old students selected from two schools. After students had listened to a story, their retelling ability was assessed to be *confused*, *descriptive*, or *explanatory*. Exploring “How does a child’s thinking affect his telling of a story,” the researchers embarked on an analysis of “linguistic components,” such as reference, tense, and the use of connectors such as “and/then” in the retellings. The researchers investigated whether explanatory skill can be predicted in a young teller by his or her use of these linguistic components. Researchers concluded that “children who use sophisticated connectives tend to tell explanatory stories” (p. 275).

Another *teller* performance micro-element was examined in Kowal’s (1983) quantitative study of recast compiled data on the use of time in the *teller*’s speech. Kowal compared previous studies in five languages that investigated a *teller*’s use of time to the use of time in speech expressed by interviewees. Temporal elements examined and measured after a teller spoke in response to a pictorial stimulus included “speech and articulation rates, pause duration, phrase length, and percentage of pause time/total time” (p. 377).

Focusing on temporal patterning of “filled pauses” (uhs) and general silence in storytelling, the Kowal study found that “storytellers use, on the average, almost twice as much off-time as interviewees” (p. 388). Kowal found that 31.2% (in a mean average) of the time the tellers engaged in storytelling was spent in the state of “pause.” This ex-post facto overview study draws together much research on the topic of tempo variables in storytelling and proposes “that the use of time is a legitimate experimental tool to characterize speech types” (p. 389).

The Language community publications have published a wide array of *teller* studies using both quantitative and qualitative research and methods supporting a wide array of research questions. The overall focus of this research is not holistic but concentrates on the language component in aspects of the storyteller’s performance.

Empirical research focusing specifically on the lived experience of the *teller* is, at present, not prevalently found in peer review journals in the Arts and Communication domains. The newly launched peer review journal *Storytelling, Self and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies* may encourage more research on the *teller’s* experience by providing a venue for empirical reports. In the inaugural issue, Gale (2005) empirically focuses on the *teller* and, utilizing theme analysis, reports on how the act of telling stories by health care workers impacts the values and practices of family members of patients. *The Journal of Poetry Therapy* included an article by Palmer (2001) that describes a study focusing on children telling stories in a summer camp arts program. Utilizing grounded theory, the study explores the expansion of imagination, creative thinking, and language abilities of youthful tellers.

Although observational research concerning the *teller* is addressed by published research in diverse domains, *autoethnographic* research on the *teller’s* lived experience, from the teller’s point of view, is not reported in the peer review journal articles in this sample other than in one

study by Pinnegar (1996) who recounts, in first person voicing, how she uses narrative in her classroom.

Empirical research on the teller's lived experience of the art and technique of storytelling can be found primarily in cutting-edge autoethnographic dissertations. Several recent writings explore the topic of storytelling from the insider's view of the teller (Damelin, 2002; Farah, 1999; Hunter, 2005; Rose, 2001; West, 1997).

Hunter's (2005) autoethnographic dissertation, presents his experiences as a theater director exploring his perception of the "sense of wonder" that emerges in the co-creative atmosphere of the theatrical experience between actors and audience members. He muses on the deep appreciation and emotion he senses in the theatre space as the performance event unfolds. The phenomenological nature of individual appreciation for a theatre work is considered from the meta-vantage point of the director whose receptivity and perception of the theatre experience is also unique.

The direct and intimate experience of the *teller* is autoethnographically considered by Rose (2001) who, in her dissertation on the woman's storytelling process, explores Pre-Hellenic myths, fairy tales, and her own experiences as a creative writer. Rose likens the creative development of a woman storyteller to the mythic archetype of the journey. The teller travels through texts. A three-fold view of creativity is seen through the eyes of the teller: *inspiration, process, and form*. Guided by the Muses: Meme (memory), Melete (Practice), Aoide (Song), and Hecate, the Goddess of Life, Death, and Regeneration, Rose examines the profound feminine powers rooted in the creative process.

The journey of becoming a skilled storyteller is introspectively examined in a dissertation by West (1997). A self-directed learner, West describes her apprenticeship path in becoming a

professional storyteller. She uses a storyteller's voicing to bring the reader vicariously to venues of community entertainment, the educational setting, and the healing possibility of storytelling. The reader is brought with West to two artist-in-residence programs in two different settings, a school and a hospital. We experience her development as an artist through storytelling. Through her descriptive narrative, information about her lived experience emerges.

An arts-based exploration of the "various selves" of the storytelling artist is examined in a dissertation by Damelin (2002) who researches the transformative power of story in her personal and professional life as an educator. In a postmodern presentation of self, Damelin tells of her various experiences attempting to understand the power of story. Each "self" quests to understand the nature of story with the help of her co-researchers, her 2nd grade class students, and her family. Autoethnographic life stories stitch this paper together. It is layered also with a series of graphic collages. "Storying" is explored as a collaborative creative act. Damelin's narrative brings us into a world where we can experience trust and allow the power of story to create community and self worth.

Farah (1999), a student of Ron Pelias, brings us, through a combination of ethnography and autoethnography, into the lives of Lebanese and Palestinian women. She has translated fieldwork interviews with Lebanese and Palestinian women in Lebanon into a performance that tells the story of resistance, survival, and cultural membership. The work explores how the women "story" their lives. The powerful sense-making of storytelling is woven into the performance of the gathered oral information. A transcript of the talk-back session with the audience offers further context to the sharing of ideas through story. This work is critical autoethnography with the goal of "decolonizing" the lived experience of women in the study.

Two ethnographic dissertations (Sobol, 1994; Wischner, 1991) explore, from an *etic*, or observational point of view, the professional *teller's* experience in the contemporary American storytelling revival movement spawned by the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. As a member of the storytelling community associated with this festival, I was interviewed by both of these researchers for their studies. Ironically, my journey in cyberspace seeking empirical studies on storytelling has brought me back to where I began, the grassroots contemporary storytelling movement in the United States.

Leadership Literature and Storytelling

There is a growing interest on the part of leadership scholars in the topic of leadership and storytelling. This interest is reflected in a growing body of books on storytelling and leadership (Allan, Fairtlough & Heinzen, 2002; Boje, 2001; Denning, 2001, 2005; Gargiulo, 2005; Gabriel, 2000, 2004; Gardner, 1995; Simmons, 2001), and in the emergence of numerous peer review journal articles on storytelling and leadership in organizations.

Ricketts and Seiling (2003) state, “Consciously and unconsciously, leaders directly influence and affect the development of their organization based on the language they use and pictures of hope and inspiration they create through the conscious use of words, metaphors, and stories”(p. 35). Utilizing a social constructivist perspective, Ricketts and Seiling (2003) propose that a change in language could co-construct new organizational forms and understandings in the workplace. “Words are a rich and complex set of interrelated symbols “surrounded” by emotional meanings and understandings”(Ricketts & Seiling, 2003, p. 34).

Karathanos (1998) suggests that to be most effective, leaders should tell organizational stories that subtly embody goals instead of just listing a set of organizational rules to follow.

Stories, unlike unrelated lists of facts, engage the imagination, are vivid and therefore more memorable (Caine & Caine, 1991).

Commenting on the constancy of change in contemporary organizational life, Flemming (2001) says, “One of the most powerful ways for leaders to make sense of the ambiguity-opportunity cycle is to tap the power of one of humanities oldest art forms, storytelling. Through “sensemaking” and “sensegiving,” leaders can use the raw materials of narrative to construct new “organizational sense”(Flemming, 2001, p. 34). Through stories, the chaos of experience is put into a simple linear form by the storyteller.

Ironically, real life is *not* linear. A multiple story reality with conflicting plotlines is closer to the truth of human interaction in organizations (Boje, 2001). Although it is comforting to reduce the dynamic chaos of life into an intelligible sequence of events that makes chronological sense, human organizations from the nuclear family to the global empire do not always reduce down to neat plotlines. Boje (2001) explores what he calls the “story soup,” the pot of “microstoria” that is omitted from the official tale gelled by the hegemony.

Boje’s (2001) thoughts on “un-plotted” (p. 1) narrative were metaphorically inspired by the long running Los Angeles experimental theatre play, *Tamara*, in which the audience follows, runs after, and chases, the actors through a house to discover the ever-changing ending of a mystery story. The play’s chaotic and totally unstructured narrative plotline inspired Boje’s (2001) “plurivocal interpretation of organizational stories” (p. 4). His focus on “multi-stranded stories of experiences that lack collective consensus, seeks alternatives to the fiat of the single-voiced, single-authored narrative dictating organizational memory” (Boje, 2001, p. 9).

Denning (2001) describes the communicative power of a *springboard story* during an organizational change.

A *springboard story* . . . enables a leap in understanding by the audience so as to grasp how an organization or community or complex system may change. A *springboard story* has an impact not so much through transferring large amounts of information, as through catalyzing understanding. (Denning, 2001, p.xix)

Lakoff (2004), offering advice to those who would like to use stories to metaphorically support an idea, suggests that leaders “find stories where your “frame” is built into the story . . . Build up a stock of effective stories” (p. 116).

One of the most empowering advantages of using stories to lead is that, “instead of directly telling someone to do something, “stories present a series of images . . . The images incubate and later re-emerge as “spontaneous” insights” (Groth-Marnot, 1992). Throughout history stories have been used to indirectly present information, engaging the listener in creative thinking. “An entertaining story can gently enter the interior world of a listener. Over time, a tale can take root, like a seed rich with information, and blossom into new awareness and understanding”(Forest, 1996, p. 9). An effective story is like an *indirect* leader (Gardner, 1995) that by *embodied* example creates an impact for change.

Collison and Mackenzie (1999) metaphorically describe a story as a *vehicle* that can contain and pass on knowledge. Pointing to the growing interest by organizational leaders in storytelling, they writes, “The re-emergence of story in business is perhaps unsurprising in a time when organizations are increasingly turning their attention to the potential of the arts for enlivening communication and employee commitment” (Collison & Mackenzie, 1999, p. 38).

Collison and Mackenzie (1999) see three types of stories being used today in organizations:

- *Anecdotal or biographical* stories “create and reinforce our feelings and assumptions about the organization.”
- *Creative characterization* allows problems to be recast as a story with “new perceptions emerging to point the way to new solutions.”
- *Story as metaphor* stimulates both right and left brain activity as a situation described in story transforms analytical thinking into imaginative thinking.

Linde (2001) describes the importance of passing on tacit knowledge about social practices in an organization through storytelling and suggests possible *settings* in which storytelling as *narrative meaning making* could take place in a formal organization:

- *Temporally* marked occasions, such as yearly reviews or calendared events, can bring people together for narrative sharing.
- *Aperiodic* occasions such as inductions or retirements could be a time to tell the organizational history.
- *Spatially marked settings* that have associative stories, such as ‘our first building’ or ‘the old mailroom,’ could help a newcomer learn about the culture of the company or organization.
- *Artifacts* that commemorate organizational events include everything from mugs to posters and can embody history and stories.

Storytelling is motivational for people in a group or an organization as it helps establish shared meaning. In reviewing Gardner’s (1995) *Leading Minds*, a book that tells the stories of eleven major contemporary leaders in the public sphere, Bennis (1996) notes, “Uncommon eloquence marks every one of Gardner’s leaders . . . Effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others . . . They create communities out of words” (p. 160).

Forster, Cebis, Majteles, Mather, Morgan and Preuss (1999) assert that the “importance of storytelling in organizational life has often been overlooked” (p. 11) and encourage storytelling as a way to communicate organizational vision and direction. Although we live in a highly technological world, “the most powerful approach to communication is still verbal dialogue face-to-face” (Forster et al., 1999, p. 11).

The sharing of the stories of past leaders in an organization can be important to illuminate current goals. There is historical precedence in this approach. Heroic tales have always been influential in the ways leaders are perceived.

An important component of many myths in traditional tales and saga is the hero, who acts as a role model of integrity, courage, faithfulness, and goodness. People still admire organizational “heroes” who are perceived to possess qualities of determination, courage, and integrity. (Forster et al., 1999, p. 11)

Organizational stories about effective leaders set models of excellence to which others can aspire. The stories of leaders create a shared knowledge about the organization and its meaning to its members.

Leaders are managers of meaning . . . They have to shape people’s understanding of reality and, whenever necessary, re-shape and re-mould their perceptions of reality . . .

Storytelling is an important element of this process, involving the sharing of experiences and creation of mental-maps of the environment in which people are motivated to perform to their full potential. (Forster et al., p. 16)

As a tool for social change, storytelling can be a way to focus community members’ energy and bring unification to goals and aspirations.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for social, political, and personal activism . . . Teach people in your organization how to tell their “who I am/why I am here” stories and you will help them find renewed inner strength. Help a group to document and discuss their organizational or community stories and they will discover the power of story to unify despite differences to create collective action. (Simmons, 2001, p. 241)

A recent dissertation study (Gilliam, 2006) explored the impact of the inspiring story of Joan Southgate, a 73-year-old African American woman who walked the 519 miles of the underground-railroad. Gilliam’s (2006) study revealed that “storytelling leadership” – a concept she developed concerned with unique purpose, sense of self, and meaning-making processes through the power of story – can help people to develop a sense of identify as part of a larger whole and encourage them to strive toward achieving group goals.

There is an emerging awareness in the field of organizational development that training in skillful storytelling could help leaders to facilitate the strategic visioning and planning process.

Narrative is central to addressing many of today’s key leadership challenges – for example, articulating the risks and opportunities identified by strategic management tools like strategic plans, scenario analysis, and dilemma resolution . . . While leading companies increasingly recognize the need to train leaders to use artful narrative to inspire and guide their organization to respond effectively to strategic challenges, the reality is that most organizations need help to get the full benefit of using storytelling. (Denning, 2006, p .42)

Gabriel (2004) states, “Scholars have increasingly turned to narratives and stories for a wide range of organizational studies . . . reconceptualizing organizations as narrative spaces” (p. 25).

There is now a profusion of ‘narratological’ analyses of virtually any organizational phenomenon, ranging from management of change to leadership, to group behavior, and to modalities of management control (e.g. see Boje 1991, 1994, 1995; Buskirk and McGrath, 1992; Hansen and Kahnweiler, 1993; Gabriel 1995, 2000; Clark and Salaman 1996; Hatch 1996; Czarniawska 1999). (Gabriel, 2004, p. 23)

Stories contribute to sense-making in organizations (Weick, 1995) and can, through the collecting of oral histories, help define the heart and soul of organizational change (Kleiner, 2001). Stories can be constructed – ethically – to intentionally communicate knowledge in large corporations (Snowden, 2001).

A flow of insightful, witty, memorable tales, shared among many organization members, becomes part of the evolving culture of the organization. They promote speedy comprehension, effective dialogue, humane values, and good judgment. Stories are not a nice-to-have embellishment; rather, they are a vital resource for getting the right things done. They evolve gracefully over time, as different speakers and audiences use stories, and as the organization changes. Stories and an organization’s culture co-evolve. (Allan, Fairtlough & Heinzen, 2002, p. 9)

Summary Comments

The art of storytelling offers new and fertile ground for contemporary academic research. Although much is tacitly known by tellers who have passed on knowledge through the oral tradition, much has yet to be explored and documented. Current empirical research on the art of storytelling is atomistic and investigates “aspects” of the storytelling event such as the *story*, the

listener, the *teller*, and nuanced combinations of the three. Holistic studies are rare, as are *emic* studies on the art of storytelling from the teller's point of view.

Anecdotal and empirical findings about the communicative power of the oral story have been reported in journals, books, and dissertations. Storytelling is acknowledged as an influential, interpersonal communication medium, yet little is reported about *how* this powerful tool— an oral story— comes to be. This dissertation addresses one of the knowledge gaps in current research on storytelling by investigating, from an *emic* storyteller's point of view, the lived experience of a *teller* constructing and telling an oral tale.

Investigating the *essence*, or the nature, of the creative process of a storyteller —*how* a teller composes and performs a complex tale— I have utilized heuristic, arts-based methods and literary, autoethnographic writing as research and inquiry pathways. The next chapter will explore these methodologies and describe their epistemological appropriateness and theoretical fit for this research.

Chapter Three

Methodology:

Arts-Based Research

Art as Inquiry

This study's dual purpose is to add *emic* knowledge to the field of storytelling studies by investigating the *essence*, or nature, of the creative process of a storyteller from a teller's point of view and to add arts-based knowledge to the field of leadership and change. As an artist/researcher, my practical strategy to inquire into *how* a storyteller composes a complex tale was to utilize art making *as* an inquiry method and create an original storytelling work on issues of peace, justice, and social change. Using the new work as a *research vehicle*, I captured, in a literary style, through autoethnographic writing, direct observations and reflections on my creative process as a storyteller during the composition and performance of the new work. Using a classical ethnographic approach – the art and science of interpretation – I observed, “thickly described” (Geertz, 1973) and interpreted my findings on the *essence*, or the nature, of my creative process. Based on my findings, I reflected upon the commonalities between the storyteller (composing and performing a story) and the change leader (designing and communicating a change vision). A practical collection of arts-based skills for change leaders emerged. This study suggests that arts-based leadership training in a conceptual, interpersonal art form such as storytelling could enhance a change leader's creative thinking and communication skills.

As a methodology, the arts can serve research efforts in diverse ways. The arts can be used to (re)present or translate research data that have been gathered in conventional qualitative

or quantitative ways. The arts can be a source of symbolic data for a researcher to interpret. The arts can be a direct, experiential pathway for inquiry. This study utilized art making *as* inquiry.

I phenomenologically “turned to the things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1973) and constructed a storytelling performance piece in order to experientially inquire into the workings of my own creative process as a storyteller. Using literary, autoethnographic writing techniques I “thickly described” (Geertz, 1973) the steps in the creative process unfolding in my interior life-world. My arts-based research sought to illuminate the *essence*, or the nature, of my creative process as a storyteller and was heuristically (Moustakas, 1990) rooted in direct, lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). “Heuristic inquiry requires that one be open, receptive, and attuned to all facets of one’s experience of a phenomenon, allowing comprehension and compassion to mingle and recognizing the place and unity of intellect, emotion, and spirit” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16).

This approach mirrors the goals of general phenomenological inquiry, e.g. a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience. It also seeks the disclosure of truth. Its unique aspects have to do with a belief that self-experience is the most important guideline in the pursuit of knowledge. Once again, this has to do with the link to tacit knowledge as direct experience. One only knows what one has experienced in the self. The refreshing quality of this line of methodological thinking is the importance of the researcher in the process of the study. Any research project can be considered a design of the researcher’s world view, or some aspect of that view, because one can only create out of what one knows to be true and meaningful in the self, then in relation to the world. (Kenny, 1989, p.60)

As an artist, I continually seek to deepen my understanding of my art and to push the edges of my prowess. For the past thirty years I have focused my repertoire on metaphorical

folktales from around the world. The new work I created pushed the edges of my storytelling explorations and interwove personal memoir, history, and current events into the performance composition. I seek to add to public conversation about peace by performing this work. The role of an artist in society can embrace a wide range of responsibilities, from entertainment to contributing to positive social change.

As spokespersons for multiple points of view and advocates for a critique of society, artists may well be understood as public intellectuals – those who believe in and take seriously the importance of the public sphere and who create, for an increasingly shrinking collective arena able to house real debate, work they expect the world to respond to. (Becker, 1997, p. 18)

As well as being *public intellectuals*, activist artists can aspire to be *public educators* and “cultural workers” (Giroux, 2001) who contribute to social change in transformative ways. “Education as a cultural pedagogical practice takes place across multiple sites, which include not only schools and universities but also the mass media, popular culture, and other public spheres” (Giroux, 2001, p. xi). Artists can create new realities to ponder. Marcuse states, “The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it) to define what is real” (as cited in Giroux, 2001, p. 24).

The tale I created as a *research vehicle* is centered on an autoethnographic journal I maintained while traveling to Israel in July 2006 as an artist-in-residence with a group of American educators exploring Jewish narrative in context (see chapter four). The group traveled to ancient archeological sites including Caesarea, Masada, and the recently excavated Talmudic village of Katzrin as well as to contested places such as the Golan Heights and the Old City of Jerusalem that have a complex and many-voiced history. During the journey our group

sought to become attuned to the embodied narrative that surrounded us in an ancient land that is an echo chamber of many-sided, story. We traveled a wide swath of terrain from seaside to mountain top to desert.

During the expedition, violent current events penetrated our experience. War began between the radical, paramilitary, Islamist group, Hezbollah, and the Israeli army along Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Hezbollah, in support of the Palestinian cause, has openly vowed to destroy Israel.

History and modernity clashed around me and pushed the edges of my ability to make sense of the escalating issues of peace and war. I returned home from my journey galvanized to work for peace. Through this phenomenological study, I have deepened my understanding of the *essence* of my creative process in storytelling. I have experientially explored how to hold and publicly tell a complex, difficult tale. I have peeled away the layers of my creative process and designed language through which to discourse about process. I have identified arts-based skills that could potentially be useful for change leaders. Researching with a constructivist perspective, I utilized my lived experience to make sense of my findings during the development of a work of art whose goal is to explore the possibility of peace in a global culture shaped by oppression and war.

As I reflected upon my process in the construction of this work I utilized a “mindful approach to social science research” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). In maintaining a meta-perspective of my creative process I held to the following principles (Bentz & Shapiro, p. 39) in an attempt to remain centered in what can often be a chaotic process:

- The importance of mindful thought itself
- Tolerance and the ability to inhabit multiple perspectives

- The intention to alleviate suffering
- The notion of the clearing, or openness, underlying awareness

In conducting this research I straddled the worlds of inner and outer experience as I composed and documented my work. Max Van Man (1990, p. 30) offers a concise and pragmatic approach to methodically conducting hermeneutic, phenomenological inquiry that connects to both my long standing professional commitment to the art of storytelling and to its pedagogy. He suggests that the researcher of lived experience:

- Turn to a phenomenon which is of serious interest and which commits one to the world.
- Investigate the experience as it is lived rather than as it is conceptualized.
- Reflect on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.
- Describe the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
- Maintain a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon.
- Balance the research context by considering parts and wholes.

This approach echoes Merleau-Ponty's (1973) encouragement to turn "to the things themselves." It is through the *entering into* the creative process that, with, mindful introspection, I have illuminated the topic. It is through the direct experience of constructing a living event between a complex tale as a vehicle, my listeners as co-creative participants, and myself, as teller, that I have returned from the creative process journey with a research story to share.

Research Method Choice and Positioning

As an artist, my creative work in retelling traditional tales in a minstrel style of storytelling is positioned as part of the revivalist storytelling community's efforts at preserving and perpetuating the folk art of storytelling. As a scholar I have sought to understand how my

research on the creative process of the storyteller is also positioned and aligned with the work of other researchers in the contemporary qualitative research movement who seek to explore the diverse ways that the arts can effectively serve inquiry.

A stack of academic books towered precariously beside me on my desk as I wrote my essays. Seeking to gain theoretical insights into arts-based research, I surveyed the lofty mountain of ideas. Until recently, my research in the arts has been grounded in my direct experience. As a storyteller and a self-taught folk musician whose artistic media range from words to music to evocative body language, I have spent the past thirty years tacitly learning about the multicultural folktales of the world by telling them. Through the art of storytelling, I have traveled to imaginary places and experienced the structures and images in folktales from the inside out. I have researched the cultural context of the ancient tales I choose to carry and have composed spoken and musical performance works for adults and children. I have engaged in verbal and musical art for communication, to contribute to positive social change and for personal joy. Seeking a theoretical understanding of why and how one would use art for academic inquiry, I recall reaching for a book from the heights beside me. Gadamer (2004) spoke to me eloquently:

The fact that through a work of art a truth is experienced that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophic importance of art, which asserts itself against all attempts to rationalize it away . . . the experience of art is the most insistent admonition to scientific consciousness to acknowledge its own limits. (p. xxi-xxii)

As a budding researcher learning about the myriad possibilities in contemporary qualitative and quantitative research methods I have come to realize that there are many ways of inquiring into the nature of reality and into the physical world. There are many ways to *look at*

the world. What is *seen* is often limited by language. We have a “linguistically mediated experience” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 546). Researchers and seekers in many fields have sought “truth” and claimed “truth” in the natural and social sciences for centuries.

But what constitutes *truth*? Would we each know *truth* differently if we found it? Would we all agree that we could even see it? *How* we seek may contribute to what we each find. Some theorists “reject the notion that we ‘discover’ the truth about the world . . . that truth is somehow ‘out there’ . . . all accounts of the word are language bound. If there is such a thing as truth, it is arbitrary . . . relative to some language system or worldview.” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 168).

Once Upon a Time

As a storytelling artist I travel, like a minstrel of old, from performance space to performance space. Once, after telling an imaginative folktale to a group of children at an elementary school, a young student approached me and asked, “Ms. Forest, is that folktale you just told us *true*?”

I replied, “Do you mean, “Did it happen?”

The boy nodded.

“Yes,” I solemnly said, “The tale is absolutely true . . . not because *it happened*, but because there is a bit of *truth* in it.

Figure 3.01. Once Upon a Time.

Truth as well as reality is in the eye of the beholder. Modern research methods span a wide spectrum of epistemologies and truth claims. An underlying premise of quantitative, *positivistic* research posits that there is a reliable, measurable, countable, discoverable, external

reality that exists and is independent of our conscious minds (Creswell, 2003). Since the Enlightenment, this view has been dominant and the positivistic, scientific method approach to research has been privileged. In this paradigm, like a portrait painted in an attempt at realism, research must dutifully, and truthfully, correspond to an outside objective reality.

Qualitative research design is rooted in *constructivist* thinking. This world view conceives research as interpretive, empathetic, holistic, contextual, and emergent (Stake, 1995). “There are multiple meanings of individual experiences” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). The storytelling work on issues of war and peace I have created is rooted in this notion. As an artist I look at life through a creative lens, trying to see the many-sided story. I accept ambiguity and contradiction. Although it is comforting to reduce the dynamic chaos of experience into an intelligible sequence of events that makes chronological sense, human organizations from the nuclear family to the global empire do not always reduce down to neat plotlines. Like *autopoiesis*, a natural process in self-sustaining systems, life’s explanations fall apart and come back together again (Wheatley, 1999). The “non-linear, incoherent, collective, un-plotted, and pre-narrative speculation” (Boje, 2001, p. 1) described in David Boje’s theory of *antenarrative*, when stories are “still in flux,” (2001, p. 4) poetically reflects everyday lived experience. As an artist constructing a many-sided tale, an acceptance of non-linearity allows for the deconstruction and reinterpretation of social and political events to include voices that have previously not been included in the official version of any story. It allows for the re-visioning of history as well as the broader telling of current events. It permits simultaneous and contradictory versions of reality to coexist. Sharing and accepting contradictory stories may be the first step on the journey to justice and peace.

The Storytelling Work

The storytelling work I created as a *research vehicle* for this study is a complex plot that interweaves many threads and perspectives. The work is as much a “process” as a “product.” It will continue to evolve and change as it matures with the telling. The documentation of my creative process in constructing the performance design has been a writing intensive exploration. The physical aspects of developing the performance were constructed in my studio. I used journaling, mapping, and audio recording as mnemonic helpers as I worked through improvisational methods to develop a performance piece. A weave of improvisation and set text, the work I created will grow over time. For the purposes of this study I have bounded the autoethnographic essay in a ten week rehearsal period with an informal workshop performance of the piece at the end, during the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference*. The performance of the work-in process allowed me to have the co-creative audience input that is essential to the further development of the storytelling work. I intended that this storytelling work contribute ideas about non-violent resolution of conflict, justice, and social change. I aspired to create a work that would leave listeners considering the possibility and benefits of choosing collaborative, peaceful measures instead of war. I wanted to open dialogue.

The arts are well suited to address emotionally difficult topics such as war, peace, and justice. In a metaphorical and indirect way, art can present ideas that stimulate new perspectives and inspire action. In art intended to have a catalytic effect and encourage action and change “the action advocated is embodied in the work presented” (Mullen, 2003, p.168). “In the context of activism, what is called for is expressive research that portrays the multidimensionality of human life as compared with truth finding, proofs, and conclusivity in traditional social science” (Finley, 2005, p. 683).

Elliot Eisner, in his noted book *The Enlightened Eye* (1991, pp. 7-8) offers a concept list that helps to organize thinking on the subject of artistic inquiry:

- There are multiple ways in which the world can be known: Artists, writers, dancers, as well as scientists, have important things to tell about the world.
- Human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature: Knowledge is made, not simply discovered.
- The forms through which humans represent their conception of the world have a major influence on what they are able to say about it.
- The effective use of any form through which the world is known and represented requires the use of intelligence.
- The selection of a form through which the world is to be represented not only influences what we can say, it also influences what we are likely to experience.
- Educational inquiry will be more complete and informative as we increase the range of ways we describe, interpret, and evaluate the educational world.
- Which particular forms of representation become acceptable in the educational research community is as much a political matter as an epistemological one. New forms of representation, when acceptable, will require new competencies.

A Musing on Art

Research and inquiry through art making provides pathways to knowledge unavailable through other means. Artistic endeavor expands knowledge possibilities and expands the edges of how we communicate ideas.

Flowers, Life, and Art

In Omaha, years ago, I met an older Japanese woman who practiced the art of flower arrangement, *Ikebana*. I watched her one day as she arranged the flowers in a vase, turning them into a small universe of balance and beauty. I told her I was a songwriter and a storyteller. I asked her why she arranged flowers. She said that she had met many writers since coming to America. “American writers experience life’s pain and joy so that they can create the great novel,” she explained. “I am the opposite of those who live their lives so that they can make art. I practice my art so that I can live my life.”

Figure 3.02. Flowers, Life, and Art.

I think about the flower arranger sometimes when I consider why I tell stories. My storytelling art is my practice. I study stories by telling stories. I enter the world of the story. I go back in time. I travel across continents. When I tell a story, I am inside the place of that tale. I am present. I am a guide for my listeners. I must be there with them as the tale unfolds. No stray thoughts intrude to jar the imaginary place back to ordinary reality. Just as I lead my listeners, the tale leads me. When the storytelling is over, I return to my everyday life, wiser for the journey. The tales have been, and continue to be, my respected teachers and guides.

Head and Heart

As I prepared to venture into an arts-based research inquiry I brought my head and my heart into the research process. Ron Pelias, who explores alternative, artistic, autoethnographic inquiry, a method to which I too am drawn, in his book *Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life* (2004) says, “an emotionally vulnerable, linguistically evocative, and

sensuously poetic voice can place us closer to the subjects we wish to study” (p. 1). Art has some common methodological attributes with more conventional forms of inquiry as well as some distinctive differences. Blumenfeld-Jones makes a comparison.

Art may be called “research” in that as with other researchers, artists inquire into the world through particular modalities (poetry, dance, music, etc. just as conventional social scientists employ social science inquiry protocols) and manipulate materials (play with data) through which the artists discover a world. Then, as with other inquiry, artists present their findings to the public through presentation of their artwork. (2004, p. 317-318)

The act of creating and exploring in a medium *is* the research in some cases. “The insights that artists develop are developed in the process of the art making and are not separate from the presentation of those insights” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2004, p. 318). As a storyteller, I learn much about the plot structure of the multicultural tales I tell by telling them. The plots only begin to make communication sense when I embody them in performance. The plots change meanings when they are presented to audiences of different ages. Or, perhaps, my understanding of their meaning changes and I subtly adjust the performance for the listeners. Improvisational music, writing, and painting are research in action.

From a postmodern perspective, no one way of seeing the world is privileged. There are many vantage points, many inquiry techniques, and art is just one of many.

“The various modes of inquiry available to us can be understood to offer differing angles into the world that taken together, provide a more full understanding than any one mode could provide independently. This line of reasoning accepts art making into the pantheon of possible modes of legitimate inquiry” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 2004, p. 318).

While considering diverse methodological approaches to studying the lived experience of the teller, I was encouraged to move off the written page by the book *Dancing the Data*, edited by Carl Bagley and Mary Beth Cancienne (2002). Accompanying the book is an interrelated CD ROM that visually, aurally, and kinesthetically presents research material in artistic forms including dance, collage, poetry, and drama. As a performing artist turned scholar, I looked at the silent text in the book with great interest but it was when I watched the researchers present their work in time and space that my own fires of inspiration were ignited.

As a storyteller who “embodies” the art I create, I am aware that the text I speak is only a part of the communication between my listener and me. In order to understand the *essence* of *how* a teller composes and performs a tale I have utilized experiential arts-based methods as a way of knowing that can authentically investigate both my storytelling process and my composition choices. I used reflective writing as an expressive art form as well, as I explored the imaginal/physical process of designing, composing, rehearsing, and performing. A living, time/space art form, storytelling is rooted in compositional entities that vanish in time and must be recreated for each set of new listeners. Capturing the process as well as the product was an autoethnographic writing endeavor. I engaged in an intra-personal communication process with aspects of myself, the *creative*, the *critic*, and the *meta-viewer*. I paradoxically functioned as both doer and watcher. I questioned myself deeply. It is my hope that the work I created as a *research vehicle* will evolve into a critical performance piece that can be shared with audiences in diverse settings.

Although ethnographic and autoethnographic interviews have been utilized to create scripts for theatrical performance in experimental theatre venues, in the world of academic

research, qualitative interview-based performance is innovative and, in some camps, still controversial. About representation of ideas through performance Madison (2006) writes,

On one level performance is understood as theatrical practice, that is, drama, as acting, or “putting on a show”. . . In certain areas of the academy these narrow notions of performance have created an “anti-theatrical” prejudice that diminishes performance to mimicry, catharsis, or mere entertainment rather than a generative force and a critical dynamic within human behavior and social process. (p. xii)

In the performance studies community there is a growing consciousness of the social implications of performance communication that goes beyond its consideration as an entertainment vehicle. Madison (2006) cites Northwestern University’s performance studies professor, Dwight Conquergood’s alliterative description of contemporary approaches:

We can think through performance along three crisscrossing lines of activity and analysis. We can think of performance (1) as a work of *imagination*, as an object of study; (2) as a pragmatic of *inquiry* (both as model and method), as an optic and operation of research; (3) as a tactic of *intervention*, an alterative space of struggle. (p. xii)

A performance autoethnography presented as a theatre work offers audiences outside of the academy an accessible opportunity to be politically and spiritually moved by research findings. I constructed a performance work that contributes ideas about peace, justice, and positive social change by presenting a many-sided tale. I included contesting perspectives as I described places in Israel. Norman Denzin, in his book *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture* (2003) claims, “A good performance text must be more than cathartic – it must be political, moving people to action, reflection, or both” (p. xi). Denzin (2003) invites readers to explore the social change possibilities of critical pedagogy through

performance ethnography. He states, “The critical imagination is hopeful of change . . . Hope is the desire to dream, the desire to change, the desire to improve human existence” (p. 229). The arts have long been a pathway of hope. Both scientists and artists are visionaries who can see and invent new possibilities. Imagining change is the first step toward creating change. Fran Korten, the publisher of *Yes* magazine states in her Winter of 2007 editorial, “When we think about how to change the world, we must think about how to change the stories” (p. 58).

The Power of Reflective Story

Contemporary social science researchers have come to realize the power of story to shape reality and to process experience. We are our stories. By telling our stories, we come to know, create, and recreate ourselves.

The construction of selfhood, it seems, cannot proceed without a capacity to narrate.

Once we are equipped with that capacity, we can produce a selfhood that joins with others, that permits us to hark back selectively to our past while shaping ourselves for the possibilities of an imagined future . . . Our stories also impose a structure, a compelling reality on what we experience, even a philosophical stance . . . Story making is our medium for coming to terms with the surprises and oddities of the human condition and for coming to terms with our imperfect grasp of that condition. (Bruner, 2002, pp. 86-90)

Qualitative social science methods are now encouraging the inclusion of the researcher’s reflective storytelling voice in the positioning and reporting of research. To *(re) (port)* is to *carry again*. The storyteller/researcher *carries* information, is an *embodiment* of that information, and has *shaped* the information through personal sense making. Researchers must be good tale bearers.

Tale bearing is an ancient activity with great ethical responsibility. Stories are powerful communication connectors in human interaction for they touch emotional spaces in the listener/reader that reach into unconscious metaphorical recesses of the mind and can affect behavior and new thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). It is no surprise to me as a storyteller, that social science prose writers have discovered the capability of personal and metaphorical story to convey ideas. Contemporary knowledge in the field of neuroscience, cognition, and linguistics has revealed that carefully chosen language, metaphor, and story can shape and direct a listener's thinking, motivate, inspire, and initiate social change (Lakoff, 2004).

“Because we reason in terms of metaphor, the metaphors we use determine a great deal about how we live our lives” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 244) . . . “You don't have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically . . . metaphor is a neural phenomenon” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 256-257) . . . “Metaphors . . . are among our principal vehicles for understanding and they play a central role in the construction of social and political reality” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 159).

Neuroscientists have come to understand metaphor as a neuro-linguistic activity that is reflected in language use, which, in turn structures thought. By creating new concept linkages, effective communicators alter the neural maps of their listeners. “The frames are in the synapses of our brains, physically present in the form of neural circuitry” (Lakoff, 2004, p. 73). Therefore, a new idea that can be incorporated into our prior knowledge, *physically* changes us at the neural level. At the deepest levels, metaphorical stories are power tools that must be used responsibly.

The Emergence of Autoethnography

Storytellers have long been a vessel for information. Long before modern technology took the role of information processing, storage, and transmission, the storyteller was

the keeper of memory using the most advanced and enduring of technologies, communicative human interaction. As new ways of researching in qualitative and constructivist modes are explored, new ways of incorporating the researcher's storytelling "voice" are emerging that directly reflect *embodied* knowledge (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003; Gray, 2003; Madison, 1999).

The roots of autoethnography reach into the field of anthropology and are related to the *emic*, or insider, ethnographic study of culture. The word *autoethnography* is currently also used by research theorists to describe a process of reflective social science writing that includes depth of introspection in the scholar/storyteller's literary presentation.

Originally defined as the cultural study of one's own people, this term now commonly refers to a particular form of writing that seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward at a world beyond one's own) and autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of one's self) intentions. The aim in composing an autoethnographic account is to keep both the subject (knower) and object (that which is being examined) in simultaneous view. (Schwant, 2001, p. 13)

As a creative writing process it can also be a form of arts-based inquiry. It is through the artistic process of reflective writing that sense-making, new knowledge and insight emerge.

Autoethnography . . . blurs the boundaries between individual reflexivity (auto), the transcriptions of collective human experience (ethno) and writing as a form of inquiry (graphy) that does not merely write up the research but is in itself the "method of discovery. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006, p. 427)

In a chapter entitled, "Autoethnography" in the 2005 *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln), Stacy Holman Jones (2005, p. 765) assembled several noted writer's statements explaining that autoethnography is

- research, writing, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness, and introspection . . . [and] claims the conventions of literary writing (Ellis, 2004, p. xix).
- a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts (Spry, 2001, p. 710).
- texts [that] democratize the representational sphere of culture by locating the particular experiences of individuals in tension with dominant expressions of discursive power (Newmann, 1996, p. 189).

These definitions of autoethnography offer a description of a writing paradigm for innovative, qualitative social scientists who are confronting the deeply rooted and privileged culture of positivism in the academic realm. The problem of how to weave personal reflection into poignant story that resonates beyond the personal into the universal may be adventuresome to social scientists, but it has been a challenge long explored by artists in many media, including fiction writers, and numerous contemporary storytellers who construct performance works based on “personal stories.” I deeply believe that stories can change the world. Stories are powerful tools that shape culture.

. . . our notions of what is real are made to fit our ideas about how we come to know “reality.” I’m suggesting that what stories do is like that: we come to conceive of a “real world” in a manner that fits the stories we tell about it, but it is our good philosophical fortune that we are forever tempted to tell different stories about the presumably same events in the presumably real world . . . Let many stories bloom. (Bruner, 2002, p. 103)

Summary Comments on Autoethnography

Autoethnographic studies of the inner world of the storyteller are rare in academia, but, as the qualitative research community opens its doors to artists, more will be known about interior, imaginal worlds. Perhaps autoethnography from the point of view of the teller is the most concrete and credible research that can exist. It is grounded in embodied knowledge. We cannot viscerally know the inner workings of another. We can only empathize and compassionately attempt to climb into another's reality through inference, language, and vicarious experience.

Finding the "voice" to describe inner worlds is the first step to being able to translate inner visions into action. Telling stories and being aware of the powerful forces at play in storied interaction is a creatively charged social, educational, and political act. Stories can change the world. Storytellers throughout history have always shaped the flow of ideas. I do not assume that my small acts of telling stories with themes of peace or justice will immediately alter the flow of events in the world. But each of us must do what each of us *can* do. And this is what I can do. Through my work as an artist I try to nurture the tiniest glimmer of hope anywhere I find it.

Margaret Wheatly in her book *Leadership and the New Science* (1999) describes the powerful impact of "small" efforts. Drawing from the academic domain of physics, Wheatley describes how tiny, unseen, and unknowable influences, called "fractals," even at a distance, can produce huge effects and ever-flowing transformative change. Causality is not always obvious. I take heart from this perspective and hope that the multicultural tales I choose to carry and to share can have a ripple effect and contribute positively to global efforts for peace, justice and positive social change. Perhaps, as in all large endeavors completed in small steps, it is possible to repair the world, one story at a time.

Chapter Four

Travel Journal, July, 2006

Introduction

The travel journal segments included in this chapter are the raw material from which I constructed a story that I utilized as a *research vehicle* to inquire into the creative process of the storyteller. The journal is a primary source document and functions as the core of the nested design of this arts-based dissertation.

As part of a national community of storytellers working to revive interest in an age-old art form, I have explored storytelling as

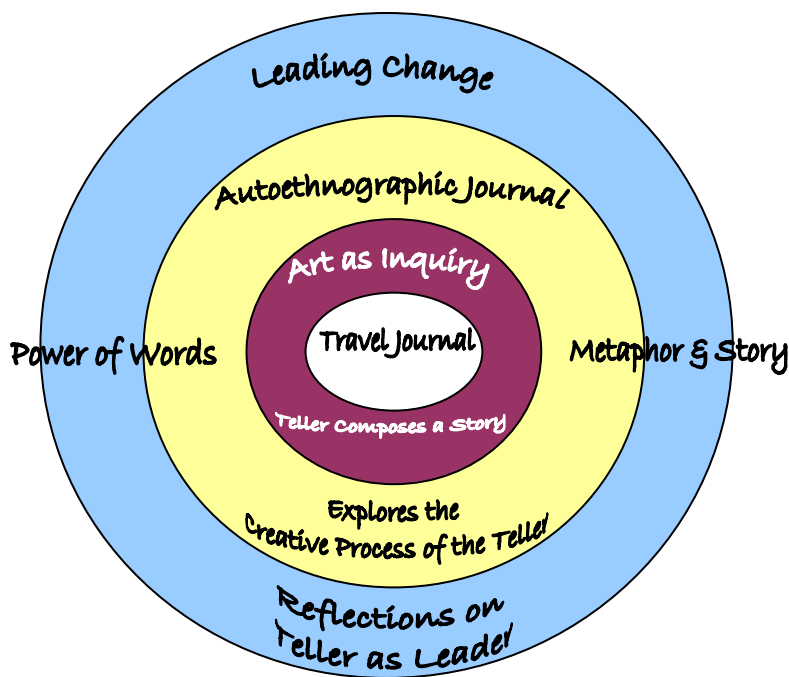


Figure 4.01. Nested Dissertation Design.

an artistic path for many years. Now, as an arts-based researcher, I have explored my art form differently. I engaged in autoethnographic journal writing in order to explore the creative process of the teller. In seeking to use *art as inquiry* to mindfully examine *how* a teller constructs and performs a complex tale, I maintained both the artist stance and the meta-observer stance as I worked. Based on my observations, I then turned my reflections toward considering metaphor, the power of words and the teller as leader.

Utilizing the material contained in the following travel journal as a starting point, I was both “author” and “actor” for the performance I composed. In *The Anthropology of Performance*

(1987), Victor Turner describes the relational process between actor and author as separate entities. I embraced the process by embodying both.

In a dream or fantasy, the subject is usually unaware that he is dreaming. But in play he is made aware that “this is play”. . . The actors, to do their work well, must be in flow; but the “script,” “scenario,” or “message” they portray is finally shaped by discriminative reflexive secondary processes – the author’s metastatements are powerfully animated by the actors’ absorption in primary process. Whether the script is by an individual playwright or is “tradition” itself, it usually comments on social relationships, cultural values, and moral issues. (Turner, 1987, p. 107)

The research method I utilized for my arts-based inquiry, autoethnography, encourages a researcher to look both inwardly and outwardly; to see the topic of inquiry in the context of self and society, and self and culture. The work I created as my *research vehicle* is a challenging, many-sided tale to tell about the complex history of Israel. It is centered on my travel diary written during a journey to “storied” places in Israel during the summer of 2006 as an artist in residence with a group of Jewish educators.

The excerpts from my travel journal included in this chapter tell of visiting places that embody ancient tales, describe places important to the founding of the nation, and confronts the tension tale of modern Israel. During my travels, war erupted between Israel and the Hezbollah. As Katyusha rockets fired from villages in southern Lebanon pounded northern Israel and the Israeli Air Force retaliated with unbridled rage and force, my diary tracks my daily attempt to understand the violence and documents my gathering feelings that war is not the path to peace.

My expedition to Israel changed me. I went to Israel seeking to deepen my pride and understanding of my ethnic and cultural traditions. I sought to understand the stories of my

ancestry in context and not just in books. I went to Israel as an American Jew and returned as a Jewish American. I returned with a deep sense of responsibility to speak for peace as a member of a global community of Jews in Diaspora. The storytelling work I constructed based on this journal raises questions rather than answers. It is my hope that through the arts I can be a small voice for nonviolence in a world where violence is often the seemingly logical response to aggression.

For me, the creative process is often a discovery endeavor. I could not predict, before I began to create my tale, the exact form that it would take. I simply entered the creative process with the desire to create, with a faith that *something* would come from the effort. I sifted through the text of my travel journal for images, moments, and epiphanies. I added new elements as well. I improvised, memorized, selected, and structured. I played with parts and wholes, constructing a tellable tale that weaves many strands together. Unlike a two-dimensional collage, I made an oral tale that unfolds physically in time and space. I wove song, poetry, prose, news, history, folklore, and personal memoir into the telling. I intended the composition to be for adult audiences and to be shared in the setting of a small theatre, conference, or a storytelling festival.

As a storytelling artist, my solo work based on my travel diary will likely not find its way into the popular *culture industry*. “The term *culture industry* was coined by [Theodor] Adorno . . . it pointed to the concentration of economic and political determinants that control the culture sphere in the interest of social and political domination” (Giroux, 2001. p. 24). However, in response to the “non-commerciality” of storytelling works, festival and conference organizers in the storytelling community have created grassroots venues for performance. These venues at conferences and festivals encourage a freedom to explore outside the box of standardized modern media. Unencumbered by the hegemonic forces of commercial entertainment, it is my

assumption that I may find many places to eventually share the work I created based on the travel journal.

When I began working with the material in this journal, I simply made a commitment to walk to the *precipice* of the creative edge and to willingly jump in. I understood that I might land on my face or on my feet. The construction process included a rehearsal period that stretched over a ten-week period. Stepping into this intentional time of daily practice and preparation, I began the ritual process, as Victor Turner (1987) describes it, of: “separation from antecedent mundane life; liminality, a betwixt-and-between condition often involving seclusion from the everyday scene; and re-aggregation to the quotidian world” (p. 101). This process culminated in a work-in-progress performance for storytelling community attendees at the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference* in Nashua, New Hampshire on April 1st where I had been invited to be a keynote speaker (see p. 164). The work was well received, spawned much dialogue on storytelling and social change, and my exploration of the inner world of creative process was encouraged.

It is the willingness to explore new territory that unites the scientist, the artist, the sage, and the fool. I took the raw material of my experience and shaped it into a story form that, through the metaphor of the arts, questions violence. There must be other ways to achieve global goals besides war. Even if they are not visible to us now, we must stretch our ability to see. Artists and social change leaders must develop creative vision.

Scenes: Travel Journal

Written by Heather Forest

July 5-16, 2006

Wednesday, July 5

The Security Interview: Confirming Identity

Entering the Israeli Airline terminal at New York's JFK airport, I made my way down the check-in line with my luggage in hand. My first stop brought me to the dark-eyed young man at the interview station. He took my passport, looked intently at my picture and then at me. He read my name out loud, "Heather Joan Friedman Forest."

"'Friedman,' is this your maiden name?" he asked in a thick Israeli accent.

"Yes," I replied.

"Why are you going to Israel?" he asked, looking back and forth from my face to my passport picture once again.

"I am a storytelling artist-in-residence traveling with a group of Jewish educators from the United States."

"A storyteller?" He narrowed his gaze. "What is your Hebrew name?" he asked.

"Joheved," I lied.

Without going into details, I gave him the "girl's" name I had given myself. My father had wanted a son so much that when a daughter was born, he went to the synagogue and "named" me, in the formal ceremony honoring the birth of girls, "Jacob Israel," a boy's name.

"Do you have children?" the young man continued.

"Yes . . . two."

"What are *their* Hebrew names?" he asked.

"Nussen and Hannah Shaina," I replied.

My thoughts flew to my Grandfather Nathan and my Grandmother Sadie. I named Lucas after Nathan, a deeply observant, orthodox Jewish man who lived with my family in his old age. I listened to his songlike prayers each morning and night. My family lived next door to the Young Israel Synagogue so that he could walk to Shul each day. Since both of my parents worked, I prepared a special kosher meal for Grandpa each night. I spent many hours each day with him talking about how fast the world was changing. Born in the late 1800s he was a revolutionary in Odessa and an organizer of a worker's strike. Reprisals and the Tsar's pogroms caused him to leave Odessa for safety in 1905 and come to America. Within his lifetime, the first airplane flew and the first man walked on the moon. "So many changes . . . so fast," he would say with a sigh and shake his head.

My daughter Laurel was named after Grandma Sadie. Hannah means "graceful" and Shaina means "beautiful" in Yiddish. Sadie told me that as a young woman she had walked with her young son in tow, from her village in Russia to Europe, hiding under bridges at night from the Tsar's Cossacks until she reached safety across the border. She made her way to England, earned boat passage making "bathtub gin," and came to America.

"Do you speak Yiddish?" An insistent voice startled me back into the airport.

"A little," I said.

"A bissel?" he inquired, testing me.

"Yes, a bissel." I replied.

"You may go," he stated, in a firm and thoroughly professional tone. He sent me along and waved for the next passenger on line.

Identity and narrative in context is at the heart of my journey. I am going to travel through time and space and explore the sites and stories of my ancestors. As an artist-in-

residence, I will share stories as we travel that are connected to the places we visit or to the themes we address as a group. We are seeking sites and stories that reflect three core concepts: biblical times, the tumultuous founding period of the state, and the modern tension tale of multicultural Israel. The story of the land of Israel goes back thousands of years. There is much to tell. It is a complex and difficult history with many layers to understand. I boarded the plane hoping that the trip would be safe.

Thursday, July 6
Jaffa at Night

Jaffa is one of the oldest, continuously used ports in the world. Some say it was named by Biblical Noah's son Japhet. Other claim the Canaanites, over 3,000 years ago, named it Jaffa, which means "the beautiful." Archeological excavations reveal that the port has been conquered

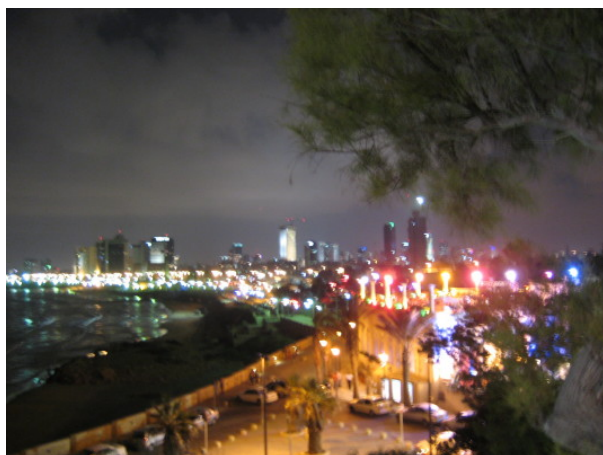


Figure 4.02. Jaffa at Night: A view from the Old City walls.

and occupied by a long succession of cultures and Kings: the Egyptians, Canaanites, King David, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans. From this port Jonah set sail, King Solomon received the cedars for the building of the temple in Jerusalem, St. Peter raised the dead, Crusaders came and built a church, Sultans ruled, and Napoleon established a hospital in an Armenian

convent. One of the jagged rocks that can be seen from the shore is the rock where, according to the Greek legend, Andromeda was chained by Poseidon and rescued by Perseus. Listening to our guide's tapestry of stories of the city I could feel the layer upon layer of blanketed history.

As I walked along the cobblestone streets I noticed the Arabic writing etched indelibly into the stone of buildings now used by Israeli shopkeepers. New modern stones etched with Hebrew writing sit juxtaposed to older, worn stones with Arabic writing. In 1948 Jaffa became part of the new Israeli State. Fierce battles were fought between the Jewish *Haganah* militia and local peoples. Many Arabs left, many stayed. The feel of the city is ancient and it has somehow survived the turmoil. The old walled archways now house art galleries and cafes. The streets are narrow as a donkey cart. Wandering the stone paths I forgot about the present. The smell of Middle Eastern spices drifted through the air from cafes filled with people talking and sipping strong Turkish coffee.

The moon was full as I headed back to the hotel. I walked along the seaside path which winds from the old city of Jaffa to modern Tel Aviv. Groups of Arab families picnicked in the moonlight along the shore. The pathway was full of local people enjoying the cooler air of the night. The forty minute walk brought me to the sandy park between the sea and the hotel. Having lost both my friends and my bearings along the way, I was glad to recognize the modern hotel rising up in the distance. I cut across the dunes and stopped here and there to watch the children playing and to listen to the Arab women singing. The seaside sandy strip between the waves and white modern buildings of Tel Aviv was dotted with a few small makeshift cloth tents and many barbeque fires. On one blanket an older Arab woman played a clay drum. I swayed to her rhythm as I walked by. She called out to me in Arabic and motioned for me to join the women seated around her on the blanket singing. As I moved toward the blanket I paused and reconsidered. I was walking alone. I do not speak Arabic. I felt vaguely vulnerable. I decided to continue walking and smiled as I moved swaying down the path in the moonlight back to my world.

Many Arabs live in this neighborhood. Most of the time, I was told, here, in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, Jews and Palestinian Arabs *do* get along. Being an optimistic “peace-nic” I smiled at the prospect. Then, an Israeli woman mentioned an unfortunate and sobering fact of life in modern Israel. “Go visit it,” she said. “There is a small ‘memorial’ across the street from our hotel in front of a night club called the Dolphin. In 2000, a terrorist’s bomb killed several people there who were dancing.”

But, for now, I am told, relationships between Arabs and Jews are friendly, tourists are returning, and everything is going well in the city. I sense that this is a fragile relationship at best. From the hotel balcony I could see the now rebuilt Dolphin Club. It pulsed with light and loud disco music.

Friday, July 7
Caesarea

We left modern Tel Aviv by bus and headed up the coast towards Haifa. Going back in time, we visited the ruins of the port of Caesarea that dates to King Herod’s despotic reign in Judea during the end of the first century B.C.E. Herod, a Hellenized Jew, governed the region with the distant agreement of Rome. At this time the Roman Empire extended into the Middle East and all local Jews were expected, or forced, to follow Roman customs and religion. The documentation of Herod’s building projects and violent suppression of Jewish customs comes to us from the writings of a scribe named Josephus Flavious, a Jewish general who surrendered to



Figure 4.03. Caesarea, Amphitheatre Wall.

the Romans and became their historian. King Herod forbade all Jewish custom and ritual in the lands he ruled and thousands upon thousands were slain by his soldiers for their beliefs.

Standing on the old stones of Caesarea, my heart and mind have been pulled and expanded by sites and tales of places that thrived long ago. Coming around a bend by the amphitheatre, I



Figure 4.04. Caesarea, port built by Herod, 1st century.

stumbled upon an archway. As I stepped through the gate I beheld a vast harbor constructed 2000 years ago. Without the tools of today it is mind-boggling to imagine how this palace and port was made. I gape in amazement at Herod's attempt to control the environment. Herod slaughtered

thousands of Jews. It is said that the streets

flowed with rivers of blood as deep as a horse's

nostril. As I stood in the now silent ruins I thought, "I am a Jew looking at Herod's rubble. He is gone. I am here."

*Sunday, July 9
Rabin Square, Tel Aviv*

The morning light sparkled over the sea. I gave one quick glance from my hotel window and headed downstairs to board the bus. Visiting the Independence Hall Museum in Tel Aviv, we learned about Ben Gurion's reading of the Israeli Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948. It was a short celebration. The next day five Arab



Figure 4.05. Israeli Flag.

nations, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq declared war and invaded. Fast forwarding in time, we drove on to Rabin Square in the center of Tel Aviv and stopped so I could tell a story.

Through the bus window I saw a small group of people standing around the pole of an Israeli flag embedded on the corner where Yitzhak Rabin was killed. On Nov. 5, 1995 there was a huge rally here called, “Yes to Peace. No to Violence.” It was a rally to celebrate the Oslo Accords that Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin had negotiated as a peace plan between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Israel. Both men received a Nobel Peace prize in 1994 for their efforts in social change. I have been told by Israelis that it was difficult for them to watch Rabin shake hands with Arafat, who, they say, had so much blood on his hands. It takes great strength to show restraint. Rabin was heroically willing to make peace with his enemy. There were others in Israel who were not willing to make peace. It was another Jew, an extreme fundamentalist and religious man, Yigdal Emir, who shot and killed Rabin as he came off of the celebration stage.

Our tour guide had been there when it happened. She said the shooting sent shock waves through Israeli society. As the weeping throngs of people attended Rabin’s funeral the next day, there was unity in sorrow for a little while. “*How could an Israeli do this?*” was asked over and over. Our guide said that the violence opened dialogue and deep introspection in Israeli society. People acknowledged the need to mediate the internal diversity tension within Israeli culture. All agreed that although conflict with outside forces is dangerous, internal conflict can be just as lethal.

Israel is a young country at 58 years old. It is a story that is still forming. I did some math. What was the United States like 58 years after the Declaration of Independence? In 1834 slavery was practiced, a civil war would soon happen, women could not vote, the country was

still carving its path. Israel is young, vibrant, cocky, arrogant, sacred, complex, ugly, beautiful, serene, ancient, modern, multicultural, temperamental, elegant, war-torn, rebuilt, eclectic, monumental, small, visionary, vulnerable, reactionary, blooming, inventive, traditional, a danger zone, a haven, the beginning of a story looking for a just end.

At Rabin Square I recounted the story of *King Solomon and the Otter*. I have told this tale many times since I composed the storysong during the war in Viet Nam. It is a song based on a story published in a book entitled *And it Came to Pass* (1938) by Hyman Nachman Bialik, Israel's National poet. The song addresses the concept of a "cycle" of violence. At any point in the tale the cycle of violence could stop if any character chose *not* to respond aggressively. The song I wrote is 36 years old and, unfortunately, it is as relevant and timely now as when it was first written. With each new war, I have dusted it off and it surfaces again in my repertoire. The tale begins and ends with a call for peace.

KING SOLOMON and the OTTER
A Song Based on a Poem by Israeli Poet Hyman Nachman Bialik

King Solomon looked out across the land and saw people fighting. Being wise, he knew that the best teacher sets a good example. He made a new law. From then on there must be peace among the beasts. People would then see the peaceful example and be inspired to change their violent behavior. The tale begins as the trumpeters go forth and announce the new law.

Peace Among the Beasts!
 Peace Among the Beasts!
 Peace Among the Beasts!

“Death! Death! Death to the slayer!
 Death to the slayer,” the otter cried.
 “It is the fault of the weasel my children died!
 I came out of the water with their food
 (I got them these little crabs . . . they loved little crabs)
 And found,
 Weasel had trampled my children dead on the ground.
 He broke the vow of Peace
 agreed among the beasts.

Peace is dead!
 Death instead
 reigns without cease.
 I want justice!"

Weasel was brought before King Solomon.
 "Oh King!" said the weasel, "What the otter says is true.
 But my heart contains no malice when I do the things I do.
 I heard the woodpecker drum a call to arms.
 I never meant to do the otter any harm.
 But the drums...they thrilled me to my core.
 I trampled her children as I marched to war."

King Solomon commanded, "Then bring the woodpecker before me!"

"Oh King!" said the woodpecker, "Be not alarmed.
 I drummed the drums but I meant no harm.
 I saw the scorpion sharpening her sting.
 It frightened me so
 That I let the drums ring."

Into the throne room came scorpion with her poison sting
 held high above her head.

"Oh King," said the scorpion, "I made no offense.
 I sharpened my sting in my own defense.
 I saw the turtle climbing into her armor.
 I did the same but I meant not to harm her."

Turtle was brought before King Solomon.

"Oh King," said the turtle,
 My armor is strong
 I climbed in here for safety but I meant no wrong.
 I saw the crab with angry claws
 Charging across the ocean floors!"

Into the throne room came crab
 With claws outstretched and tears in her eyes, she said,
 Yes, I confess
 It is true what she saw.
 With angry claws I DID charge to war.
 But I saw the otter dive into my home
 And eat my children I'd left there alone."

Solomon turned once again to the otter,

who was still holding the little crabs in his claws, and said,
 “Otter, you’re the one
 who cried, “Justice be done.”
 But, otter, who’s to blame?
One who sews the seeds of death shall reap the same.

Peace among the Beasts . . .

Figure 4.06. King Solomon and the Otter.

Monday, July 10

Katzrin

Turn it and turn it for everything is in it. Pirke Avot 5:22

Located near the northern border of Israel in the Central Golan Heights is a Talmudic Village and synagogue that flourished during the 4th century C.E. The ruins of this village were discovered after the Six Days War in 1967 which made the area accessible to archeologists. Here, long ago, Talmudic era rabbis debated the details of every law. We explored the artifacts in a reconstructed house and then sat in the pillared remains of the synagogue and debated some fine points in a section of the Talmud. We imagined ourselves as Talmudic scholars and were transported in time. Outside the gate I told a modern anecdote that I had turned into a poem entitled the *Comfort of Talmudic Thought*. The poem bifurcates an idea into myriad possibilities in order to scatter worry. It was a delight to be able to share this story standing in the context of the Talmudic village. The village represents the roots of the kind of self-dialogic thinking expressed in the poem.



Figure 4.07. Pomegranate at Katzrin.

THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO POSSIBILITIES:

The Comfort of Talmudic Thought

A Poem by Heather Forest

Two Talmudic students sat together in front of the Yeshiva.
The first said, "I'm very worried.
If the country goes to war you know,
I may be conscripted and I'll have to go."

"You have no cause for consternation," said the second.
"Besides, there are only two possibilities to every situation.
And of the two, from what we learn,
Only one is ever a source of concern."

"In all the wide world of thought,
Only two possibilities?" said the first,
"Explain this to me."
"It is simple," said the second,
"Reason it and you'll see."

"Either you will be conscripted,
Or you *won't* be conscripted.
Now, if you are not conscripted
You are free from this concern.
You can stay at the Yeshiva,
And continue to learn.

If you *are* conscripted,
There are two possibilities.

You will be sent into battle,
Or you *won't* be sent into battle.
If you are not sent into battle,
Don't worry your head.
Before long you'll be back at the Yeshiva,
Studying instead....

If you *are* sent into battle,
there are two possibilities.

Either you will be wounded,
Or you *won't* be wounded.
If you are not wounded,
Then what's to wrinkle your brow?
Sigh a sigh of relief,

And count your blessings now.

If you are wounded,
there are two possibilities.

Either you will be fatally wounded,
Or you *won't* be fatally wounded.
If you are not fatally wounded,
Then you'll live to tell,
Think of the story you'll have.
Cheer up and be well.

If you are fatally wounded,
Then there are two possibilities.

Either you will die later,
Or you will die immediately.
If you die immediately,
Then all your worrying is done.
This is common sense...ask anyone!

If you do not die immediately,
Then there are two possibilities.

Either your suffering will be long,
Or your suffering will be short.
If short – Well, no fear...
Soon the end of suffering is near.

If the suffering is long,
Then there are two possibilities.

Either you will *not* be able to withstand the suffering,
or you *will* be able to withstand the suffering.
If you can withstand the suffering,
Then by a miracle,
You might recover from this strife,
And a brush with death can deepen your reverence for life!

If you cannot withstand the suffering,
Then of course you'll die,
But there are still two possibilities....
Either you will die peacefully,
Or you *won't* die peacefully...
But cows could fly and a dog could sing,
How do you know what tomorrow will bring?

Besides...
 What are you worrying for,
 There might not even be a war!"

Figure 4.08. There Are Always Two Possibilities. This poem is based on "Always Two Possibilities" from *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* (1948) edited by Nathan Ausubel.

Neighbors Program

Through the “Neighbor’s Program” of the educational institute of Makom B’Galil in Moshav Shorashim, a Northern Israeli residential complex near Karmiel, our group met with a group of Arab Israeli youth for a “mifgash,” or, encounter. A progressive initiative that encourages multicultural understanding and dialogue, The Neighbor’s Program helps youth from the local Arab Israeli villages look to positive futures. The director of the program spoke with us before the young people arrived to offer some context and background for our conversations. She explained that one in five people in Israel is Arab. The initiating vision of statehood for Israel ignored some basic realities. She believes that the Arab-Israeli conflict began with the proclamation that Israel was *a land without people for a people without a land*. “This is simply not true,” she explained. She told us the story of the people who were *here*. In the early history of Jewish settlement, as she told it, wealthy landowners living in far off places such as Beirut, owned the land and would rent it out to local Arabs to farm as “serfs.” When the early Jewish settlers came to this land they legally bought it for a fair price from landowners who were living far away. The new owners told the Arab people who were farming here to leave, as they, the new owners, were planning to farm the land themselves. In this way, she went on, the new landowners created a *forced* change. She reiterated that the 1948 War of Independence was called the *Nakba*, or “The Catastrophe” to the local Arabs. Some people fled and some people stayed. The Arabs that stayed became Israeli citizens but could not serve in the army, an experience that offers important networking and credentialing for Israelis. A cycle of mistrust

grew. After the 1967 War new lands were occupied and many Arabs who lived in these territories chose to stay. Unlike the Arabs who stayed in Israel after the 1948 War, the Arabs in newly occupied territories are *not* Israeli citizens, have no civil or voting rights and their children are not served by the system. Our speaker says that co-existence is a false security. There is deep, underlying tension. Also, she pointed out, unlike the civil rights movement in the U.S., wherein African-Americans wanted to integrate into the mainstream, Arab people do *not* want to integrate. It is important to most families to remain separate and culturally coherent.

The exclusion from social services is a dilemma, she explained for the Arabs who would like to improve their children's lot. Recently an Arab family who wanted to join a Jewish Moshav (community) so that their children could go to a better school were rejected. They contested this in court and won. Arabs, like Jews, just want the best for their children in a changing world.

The Arab village schools are not as equipped as the Jewish community schools. Yet at the college level, all the students apply for the limited places at the Israeli Universities. This is much like the problem in the US that exists for students who come from underserved, under-resourced, impoverished towns and compete for academic spaces with students from wealthy areas with fine academic resources.

Information came fast and pointedly. Our conversation was suddenly interrupted by the crowd of



Figure 4.09. Arab Israeli Teens, Group Talk.



Figure 4.10. Arab Israeli Teenage Boys.

enthusiastic Arab students who joined us in the room. We quickly assembled into conversation groups and the room bubbled with talk and gesture. The students were excited to be practicing their English. The educators in our group had a million questions.

I met Hosein. His English was hesitant as he struggled to find words. He wants to be a doctor and go to a school in nearby Haifa. His mother does not work outside the home and his father is unemployed. His huge family is supported by a brother who works in a factory. He says he just wants a better life.

Tuesday, July 11
Kotel



Figure 4.11. Kotel, Jerusalem.

We went to the Old City of Jerusalem and visited the Jewish Quarter and the *Kotel*, or, The Wailing Wall. This huge stone wall is what is left of the retaining walls around King Solomon's ancient Temple in Jerusalem. It is called the "wailing" wall because of the plaintive sound of Jewish prayer that

can be heard here. It is one of the most sacred sites in the world to Jews. People come from all over the world to pray. From the open air courtyard the gilded Dome of the Rock, a sacred site to Moslems can be seen on the hill above. The sound of the Moslem call to prayer and the sound of Jewish songlike prayer mingle.

It is a Jewish custom to write a hope, a wish, or a prayer on a slip of paper and insert it between the stones. The wall is covered with tiny slips of paper.



Figure 4.12. Wailing Wall, Slips of Paper.

My father always wanted to come to Israel and to the Wailing Wall in particular. As I was growing up, he said this often. But whether for financial or health reasons, over time, he never came. As I approached the wall, I fingered the small stone in my hand. I had brought the stone from my father's grave. I set it gently down beside the wall. His memory filled me. I inserted a wish for each of my children in a tiny space between the stones. I wondered what happens to the slips of paper over time. I was told that the paper eventually disintegrates and people are employed to sweep up the dust of the wishes. The dust is stored in deep stone rooms under the wall.

I spent several hours wandering through the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. There are Arab, Christian, and Armenian Quarters, too. We were told not to go into the Arab Quarter. Two Israeli soldiers guarded the entrance to the market. What is the danger I wondered? Why stay separated? I looked wistfully down the cobblestone path.



Figure 4.13. Soldiers, Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem.

*Wednesday, July 12
Mount Herzl*

After visiting the Theodore Herzl museum we walked to his grave and then to Israel's National Cemetery. I walked through the graves of young people, mostly 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds who have lost their lives in recent wars in Israel. Beating



Figure 4.14. Gravestone, National Cemetery, Israel.

swords into plowshares, some families have taken bomb shells and made them into memorial candle holders that sit on the bedlike graves. I read one stone out loud. It named a girl of nineteen. *“May her soul be bound up in the bond of life,”* it said. We got back onto the bus, solemnly thinking about the young lives on all sides that have fallen in battle in the making of this state.

Weary from too much talk of violence I returned with the others to the bus. The tour guide, in an even toned voice mentioned that earlier in the day there had been a Hezbollah attack on the northern border of Lebanon. Two soldiers were kidnapped, four died, and more are missing. She pointed out that people might call from the United States. “Don’t be alarmed by rumors,” advised. “We will give you updates as we can.”

The bus radio was turned on and from then on the news became a low background drone. As outsiders, the people in our tour group did not know exactly what this news implied and did not immediately react with any clear sense of danger. I sat quietly trying to make sense of what was happening. My stomach churned.

Palmach Museum

The walls at the entrance hallway of Palmach Museum in Tel Aviv are lined with photos of the vibrant faces of young people who died in the early days of establishing the State of Israel. We entered a powerful experiential exhibit



Figure 4.15. Palmach Museum, Tel Aviv.

and learned about the history of the Palmach Fighting Force by following, in film, sound, sculpture, and photography, the braided tale of several men and women in their late teens and

early 20's who were trained by the colonial British army to defend Jewish settlements against the impending possibility of Nazi invasion of the Middle East from Africa. After World War II ended the British disbanded the Palmach, which then went underground and continued to defend settlements. The storied environment surrounded us as we journeyed with the soldiers through World War II and through the War of Independence in Israel. The day that Israel declared its



Figure 4.16. Photo Wall, Palmach Museum, Tel Aviv.

statehood on May 14, 1948, five of its Arab neighbors declared war and invaded. All the youthful characters we had come to know through the unfolding stories of their lives, their families, and their love stories, had perished in that fighting. The exhibit is deeply moving as it personalized the loss of individual lives.

At the end of the experience, I wandered out into the sunlight with a heavy heart and a clearer understanding of the sacrifice in flesh and youth that had gone into the creation and defense of the new nation. The museum contextualized the founding of Israel within the backdrop of the Holocaust that sent thousands of survivors urgently searching for a safe haven after the war. Many young and idealistic people paved the way for that haven with their lives.

Thursday, July 13
Mil Cha Ma (WAR)



Figure 4.17. Newspaper Headlines: WAR.

The morning's headlines had a single word, "WAR" in large block Hebrew Letters. Under the word were eight photographs of slain, kidnapped, or missing soldiers. The

news spoke of an Israeli action to “clean out the nests of terrorists.” I contested the language. “It is not a *cleaning*, it is an *attack*. *No negotiations? No discussions?*” I said at a rest stop where we paused in our journey south to the Negev Desert. “You don’t understand,” said an Israeli woman. “The Arabs only understand force . . . if we do not show a strong hand they will keep kidnapping our children.”

I was startled by the word “children.” Then I realized that the age of the Israeli soldiers are the same age as my own children. The stories of the youthful Palmach soldiers rose up to mind. In modern Israel, students graduate from High School and then go, without question, into the army. If they survive, *then* they go on to college. “It is absolutely necessary to have a strong army,” I am told by many, “when your neighbors want to drive you into the ocean.” Israelis are very proud of the young people in the army who protect them. Israeli youth consider the army an essential rite of passage to be part of Israeli society. Lifelong friends and connections are made. Without an army background it is hard to get a job. It is what must be done, I am told.

Sde Boker

After traveling along desert stretches dotted with Bedouin villages, sheep and camels, stopping only once for a donkey to cross the road, our bus pulled into the parking lot at a Kibbutz named Sde Boker where the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion had made his home in a simple one-story cottage. A squadron of soldiers training to be officers was there that morning, too. Their commander, a man



Figure 4.18. Ibec, Negev Desert.

of 36, gave lectures and told stories of Ben Gurion's life as a general and statesman.

On the Path

A group of soldiers walk together.

Young faces

guns in hand

learn the hard-won history

and painful birth of a nation.

The bombing in Lebanon has started.

Here in the desert it is quiet.



Figure 4.19. Soldiers, Sde Boker.

Overheard Conversations

Israeli people are talking, expressing support for the roaring military response.

“Might, that’s the only answer they understand.”

“Fight fire with fire.”

“Not to respond with bombing would show weakness.”

“ They are testing the new Prime Minister.”

“If we don’t show force, then kidnapping will become the new tactic.”

“There is no possibility for peace.”

“It is a perpetual cycle of war.”

“Peace? Ha! The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.”



Figure 4.20. Soldier, Sde Boker.

“Hezbollah is small and foolish to attack Israel.”

“Life must just go on,

Otherwise it would be psychologically impossible to bear.”

I just listened.

I yearned not to judge.

I saw the danger.

I tried to understand.

I could and could not.

Thoughts rolled back and forth.

Dizzy,

I watched my internal fray.



Figure 4.21. Guns, Sde Boker.

Camels

We stopped at a restaurant along the Dead Sea. Food was served in a tent with an open side overlooking the vast desert. Riding down to the tent on camels, our laughter and giggling made me forget the war. After dinner, back in the bus, we sleepily headed north to the hotel in Jerusalem. The guide gave us a news update. We were told that Katyusha rockets have hit many towns in the north including Haifa. A town’s name “Karmiel” rang out. We were just there a few days ago. My roommate’s best friend lives there. An edgy nervousness rippled through the group.

Back at the hotel I switched on the BBC News. The Israeli military response has been strong and is escalating. Beirut airport is in flames. It was not expected that Hezbollah had rockets that could reach 50 miles into Israeli territory. Israel now cannot show restraint. The

Prime Minister says, “Hezbollah has broken the rules. We will break Hezbollah.” The message that comes across the newscast is that Hezbollah would not have taken this path without the permission of Iran.

Conflicting Evening Thoughts

Peace does not come from exchanging gunfire.

This is a dangerous neighborhood.

*Friday, July 14
Yad Vashem
2nd Day of War*

On the morning bus ride through Jerusalem to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum, we heard from our guide that Tiberias had been hit by rocket fire. The name brought the sparkling and tiny seaside town to mind. Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, is where we heard a local storyteller tell his stories a few days ago about the



Figure 4.22. Tiberias.

complexity and tension of living in Israel. The guide pointed out that Israelis are not gripped with worry. It is the Israeli “way” to just live life as usual. My feelings are raw. It is difficult to see photographs of the results of Israeli bombs when civilians are hit. I cannot stop thinking about the innocent children who get caught in the fray of war on all sides of the discord.

Our group left the bus along a row of carob trees outside of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum. Each tree in *The Garden of Righteous Gentiles* has been planted in honor of someone who selflessly helped Jewish people survive during World War II. One of the women in our

group owes her existence to Suzanne and Henri Ribouveau. The couple had hid her mother from the Nazis in the town of Compiègne, France when her mother's parents were taken away for questioning and never returned. As a "hidden child" Rochelle Epstein survived the war, grew to adulthood and started a family. There are eleven descendents from Rochelle who would not now



Figure 4.23. Carob Trees, Yad Vashem.

exist except for the generosity and bravery of Suzanne and Henri. In 1979, a seedling carob tree was planted for the couple next to a commemorative plaque. Our group made its way to the now grown tree. There, we read from Rochelle's diary and collected seeds of the evergreen, carob tree. I plan to try and sprout one.

Entering the Holocaust Museum I traveled through the testimony as witness to the horrors of war and to the inhumanity people have shown to each other. I made myself walk this path with eyes open. I grieved for the gypsies, homosexuals and handicapped people who were "swept" from the "perfect" society of the Nazis. I grieved for the six million Jews who were herded, marched to death, lined up beside pits, and shot, starved, tortured, gassed, and worked to death.

The story of the unfathomable crimes unfolded through the video testimony of survivors struggling to speak their unspeakable tale. It was painful to hear. I made myself listen. No photographing was allowed. No matter. The images I saw in the photograph and artifacts displayed on the walls are indelibly etched into my mind.

How is it, I wondered, that the local villagers joined enthusiastically with the Nazis in places like the Ponary Forest in Lithuania to kill their Jews? Why is there such hate? The history is long. The expulsion is frequent. Assimilation offers no protection. The Jews in Germany thought that they had a secure place. Einstein and Freud were not safe. Artists and intellectuals had their books burned because the words were written by Jews. The film of the book bonfire seared into me. I heard videoed stories from now old men and women who were small children then. The long braids of a child from a Hungarian ghetto lay as testimony. Piles of shoes screamed, "Empty now." I watched Krakow and Auschwitz liberated by the Allied victory on May 9, 1945. Dumfounded soldiers saw the unthinkable vestiges of skeletal lives standing before them as the concentration camp doors opened. I made my eyes look. A bulldozer scraped up the bony frail bodies of the dead and pushed them like a pile of human rubbish into yet another pit. My heart could not watch. My mind demanded, "*Look! See* what war can do."

I walked, dizzy and sickened from the image, into a room that described the lives of some survivors. Moshe was the first-born child in a recovery center in Germany where a handful of people without any family left after the war, attempted to heal. They were healing by planting seeds.

I walked into the Hall of Names. Above me was a dome of photographs of people who had perished. The walls were filled with bound books of testimony about people who are gone. Below the huge vault of photographs was a deep hole that extended into an abyss that reflected the photos. I leaned over the railing and looked down into the depths. It was a hole of loss, of emptiness. I felt the tears drip from my cheeks and fall tumbling into the darkness.

On the sunlit platform outside the Hall of Names

There is a view of Jerusalem in the distance.

I have walked here through broken glass cruelty

Why . . . why . . . why?

I cannot contain my sobbing,

my mourning.

Why the hatred?

Why the cruelty?

I understand the defiant need for safety

Backlit by this horrific violence against a people

There are no words

Only tears

Why do people hate

Why

Why



Figure 4.24. Forest, Yad Vashem, Holocaust Museum.

I am caressed and soothed by a soft

wind moving my hair and the green,

Thank you,

Green branches of the trees.

I returned to my hotel and turned on the news. It is the second day of War. I am dumbfounded at the escalating violence. There must be another way – I deeply know. But everyone I ask expresses the same perspective . . . *“We have no choice. We must protect ourselves. This is an extension of the War of Independence. If we do not respond we will look weak. This is all that they understand.”*

Inside I scream. There is always a choice!

But I understand the fear.

It is a mosaic of contradictions.

Art Therapist

I met with an Israeli art therapist who is an avowed and active pacifist. I hoped to hear a different point of view. She works with a social service agency that serves the communities of Palestinian Arabs, Catholics, and Druze in the village of Mughar near Karmiel in northern Israel. She speaks fluent Arabic and deeply believes in coexistence, I have been told by one of my co-educators who arranged the meeting.

As we sat comfortably in my hotel room she explained how she uses art to help the many traumatized children in her care process their feelings. "I can tell much from 'reading' their pictures," she explained. She lives the concept of coexistence and she sends her children to a school where Arab and Jewish students study together. She told me of a time when there was discord between the Catholics and the Druze in the village where she works. Many churches were burned. It wasn't until the women principals joined the negotiations that peace was restored and that all the children came back to school.

As an Israeli who works closely with Arabs she explained that she understands the current discord as an insider. She insisted that the fighting is about men's honor. She explained that *of course* Israel has to show a strong hand. But it is a man's hand. It is part of the Middle Eastern male mentality. She told me that in her opinion, women would be better at negotiating a peace. She explained that if women negotiated, then the *main* question would be asked, "Is it worth losing a son or daughter over this?"

She wistfully told me about how, as a Jew, she works with *all* the cultures in the village but that *none* of them get along with each other. She animatedly told me that the most success she has had in improving the lives of the students was when she started an art therapy group for the mothers. As the mothers healed, their children's work improved at school.

I wondered what, as a pacifist, she thought about the Hezbollah and asked for her opinion. I listened, wide-eyed, as she told me that they terrorized the neighborhoods along the southern border of Lebanon and would barge into people's houses with machine guns and "inform" them that a Katyusha rocket launcher was to be placed on their roofs. She called them "thugs." There would be no choice for Lebanese civilians in this. She said that there must be a *new* way . . . but right now, Israel is fighting for its life. Rockets are landing near her home in Karmiel where her children are now waiting for her. She looked at me squarely and said, "But where can I go? This is my home."



Figure 4.25. Checkpoint, Jerusalem.

The day had been long. Holocaust images from Yad Vashem mixed with the news clips of the bloody effects of bombs dropped on civilians on both sides of the border. I fell into a deep and troubled sleep.

*Saturday, July 15
Masada, 3rd Day of War.*

I awoke long before dawn and, with a hearty group of educators, drove to the desert near the Dead Sea and climbed to the top of a mountain to watch the sunrise at Masada. Here on top of a giant stone fortress in the desert built in Roman times by Herod in the first century, Jewish

Zealots had a “last stand” and refused to capitulate to the Romans. Instead they destroyed themselves.



Figure 4.26 Masada.



Figure 4.27. Masada, Wall.

I have been traveling through time covering a distance of three thousand years in ten days. I am reeling with information and contradiction. Here, at Masada, in ancient times, force met force and did not succeed. All died. The TV news trumpets the world opinion that *Israel is using excessive force in the current conflict*.

Walking back and forth through the veil of time, I see that the current response is not to what has happened the other day to two soldiers at the northern border, but to what has happened for centuries. Jews are no longer helpless. The Israeli Army is powerful. There is a strident voice from the general Israeli populace that cries out that they feel threatened again. There are new enemies

now beyond the Romans and the Nazis. It is as if the scab of the past has been peeled back in this painful present. The strident military response is fueled by a long history of threat, not just current events.

I am alarmed

I am frightened by the violence

Looking back

Looking forward

There are consequences to aggression

Destroying enemies with force creates more enemies

The world has cried out

Israel stop

Your anger is excessive

This ancient anger is not about recent yesterdays

The looking back travels centuries of hate, destruction, exile, and survival

Turn it

Turn it

Look at all sides

I see war

Political

Emotional war against the oppressed who have become oppressive.

Aggressive

The battle rage of centuries has exploded

The children suffer.

I am not wide enough inside my inner caverns

I have traveled deep into the tunnels of time to find the roots of my ancestry

I have tumbled from heights of pride to valleys of shame

War again

Pride and shame mingle in an awkward imbalance

Circling each other

Challenging each other

As the battle rages on the outside

My inner world is burning

Crumbling

I come from an ancient, wise line

Fighting with guns and tanks will not create peace.

The mouse taunts the cat because behind it stands the dog.

Other more vindictive nations will rise in defense of Hezbollah.

There is great danger in responding to violence with violence. It is reckless.

But as the bombs fall,

is it perseverance or denial?

People on the street say,

Life goes on . . .

*Sunday, July 16
Museum of the Seam, 4th Day of the War*

Today's tour takes our group to an art museum with an exhibit entitled "Dead End." This private museum built on the edge, or "seam" of what was the border between Jordan and Israel before the 1967 War was at one time a museum that glorified victory in battle. Now it has changed into a museum dedicated to coexistence. The



Figure 4.28. Dead End Art Exhibit Banner.

curator of the exhibit explained that there are only two choices in Israel today, coexistence or non-existence. He wants soldiers to come to the art exhibit. The show is filled with questions not answers. In selecting the art works he hoped that people would leave the exhibit with uncomfortable emotions. Maybe they might be motivated to work for peace, he explained passionately.

Our guide through the exhibit was a 28-year-old man who said, "I spent four years of my childhood in the army." I asked him about his choice of words. He explained that he was too young to understand the responsibility of protecting a country. When he finished his army term he went to school in Rome. There were Palestinians at the school, too. He told us that he had a chance to meet his "enemy." He found that through communication, old ideas and stereotypes fell away. He became friends with people he would not have considered speaking to before. When he returned to Israel he joined the staff at The Museum of the Seam. We were his first tour group. He was fresh and idealistic. He bashfully admitted that he did not know much about art but that he deeply understood this exhibit. The curator of the exhibit emphasized that art touches people in inner places *beyond* the mind and can help to make change. I smiled deeply for the first time in several days.

I wandered along the main open air market near Zion Square. On Saturday night the market had been bustling with crowds of people celebrating the end of Sabbath. Groups of students sang and danced. Skittish about being in a crowd I lingered at the fringe and watched the activities. I heard talk of the bombing of a railroad station in Haifa where eight had just died. Life goes on. That is the mood. Lebanon is being blasted twenty years into the past. It is not about two soldiers anymore. The escalation is mind-boggling. Rockets have been falling on northern Israel. Life goes on . . . for sanity's sake. Local people have been counting the fallen

and shopping for groceries. The cab driver who drove me to the square had just come to Jerusalem from Haifa. He said that in Haifa he had watched Katyusha rockets falling into the Mediterranean. A soldier had banged on his cab window and shouted, “Are you crazy!” Get out of here.”

The driver summed it up simply, “It is not good.”

Who is crazy?

Everyone.

Cell phones are ringing. Families are calling. “When are you coming home?”

Soon.

The newspaper shows pictures of dead Lebanese children

My heart is breaking.

Soon. Soon.

Stop

Stop

Guns will never create Peace.

Security Interview: Confirming Identity

As the baggage inspector at the Ben Gurion airport meticulously looked through my suitcase at the baggage check-in, the books and postcards I had purchased from the Museum of the Seam initiated a verbal grilling.

“Who gave you these books with these pictures?” asked the agent thumbing through the graphics of conflict and bloody violence in Israel.

“I bought them,” I said.

“Tell me where,” she said firmly.

“At the Museum of the Seam,” I explained. “It is an art exhibit about war, peace, and the impact of violence.”

“Who suggested that you buy these cards?”

“No one,” I affirmed.

“So you picked them yourself?” she pressed on.

“Yes,” I said. “I made the choice.”

There is always a choice.

In a world guarding against extremists, even pacifist literature challenges the balance. The images showing the consequences of choosing war alarmed the security inspector. There are many factions at odds with one another in the complex tapestry of modern Israel. The social threads bind and tie . . . the fighting with Hezbollah on the northern border looms on this, the fourth day of warring, but there are many other factions that grate against each other’s ideology too and create a volatile environment: Ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews, rich and poor, immigrants and native-born *Sabres*, newer immigrants and older immigrants. Israel is a diverse multicultural environment. One in five people are Arabs. Contested areas of Israel are sacred to Jews, Christians, Moslems, Greek Orthodox, Druze, and more. The sparkling, gilded Dome of the Rock Mosque can be seen from the top of Jerusalem’s Old City walls in the Jewish Quarter. Spires of churches rise up from the sprawling modern city below. A step and a skip and one can

walk back in time through narrow cobblestone pathways and reconstructed antiquity. The ancient outer walls of Old Jerusalem are pockmarked with bullet holes.

Here

Old and new intertwine.

Sometimes the mingling is a beautiful braid.

Other times it is a tangled knot.

I have no answers

Only deep cavernous questions that echo and shake my roots

The security inspector handed me back the book that documented the *Dead End* art exhibit and simply said in a firm and thoroughly professional tone,

“You may go.”

Chapter Five
Travels in Imaginal Space:
An Autoethnography
of the Creative Process of a Storyteller

Introduction

This interpretive essay, composed in a reflective, literary style, describes my creative process while developing an original storytelling work based on a travel diary written while I was in Israel during a time of war in July, 2006. As a storytelling performing artist, I read and re-read my diary musing on how it might be transformed into a performance work that interweaves memoir, folklore, history, and current events. My musings led me into *imaginal* space, an inner territory where imagination and possibility abounds. This essay tracks the phases of my imaginal journey from creative first steps to the emergence of a performable, conceptual design.

Invitation

Come with me on a journey

Come and hear a tale

I have embarked upon a journey into the inner world of my creative process. It is a place of darkness and light, confusion and clarity. Creative thinking is mysterious and sometimes illusive. Finding evocative language to describe creative process is often like catching the wind in a net. Through autoethnographic writing, as both story composer and researcher, I am capturing my ideas, reflectively observing and describing the thinking modes that support my unfolding design decisions as I construct a storytelling performance work. Tracking my evolving

design progress in this reflective journal, I am tracing the pathway of my choices, step by step, from vague, amorphous ideas to shaped composition and co-creative live performance.

Preparation

Before I create a design, there is a time of introspective preparation. The actual composing of a story, or any other conceptual structure, starts as a spark of motivation, a desire to form, frame or fashion. In preparing to compose a storytelling performance piece, I have been observing myself muse about possibilities. I have been musing in both waking and sleeping states. It is not procrastination. From an outsider's point of view I might seem as if I am daydreaming, or doing nothing. My inner world is active. Intrapersonal dialogue is incessant. The *critic* inside my process impatiently clamors to do her job evaluating what the *creative* devises. The *critic* voice urgently taunts, "When will you start?" Ignoring the prompting, a focused cogitation occupies my *creative* aspect. I must collect my materials and set up a work space. The materials are thoughts scattered across a lifetime of memories, new experiences and emerging ideas. A spiral notebook enters the scene along with vague inklings about form, infinite possibilities, pragmatic and logistical considerations about length of the work and the potential place of performance. *Who will this work serve? Why am I engaged in making this work?* The gathering of materials and motivation is an ongoing process that is happening in the background of everyday thought. I cannot escape it. Even as I awaken in the morning, from the depth of sleep, ideas sweep across my groggy consciousness. I have taken to keeping a journal by my bed to catch thoughts. I have taken to making daily lists of disconnected but relevant ideas. Dreams have been vivid as I have prepared for the journey. My mission is clear. I will be observing the making of a story. I am going to be traveling in *imaginal* space. As both doer and watcher I will

document my creative process as I compose a performance work based on a journey I took in *actual* space.

As an artist I want to create a vivid communication, a storytelling work that (re)presents my lived experience traveling to storied places in Israel that embody ancient, founding, and modern tales. During the expedition, I experienced deep connection to my cultural roots and troubling concerns about the politics of violence. I traveled in Israel during a time in which war erupted. I want to describe my journey both inwardly and outwardly. I hope to create a performable story that addresses my questions about the possibility of choosing nonviolence in a violent world. I intend to learn about and describe my creative process by watching the unfolding of invention, introspection, and revelation. I believe that we, as a global community must re-imagine the world in which we wish to live. Perhaps this is the first step toward creating peaceful co-presence and change. Creativity is an urgently needed global competency. *How are new ideas born?*

If I were a painter instead of a storyteller/musician, to prepare for the physical act of creating a picture, I might start by stretching my canvas and cleaning my brushes. I have been preparing my mental canvas. I have been gathering the tools of my trade. As a musician, I repaired my guitar. I have set up a rehearsal space with a small tape recorder to catch and document the development of improvised text and melodies. I have been strumming chords and meandering around the frets seeking sounds that remind me of my journey to the Middle East. Words, images and diagrams, in a disconnected form have begun to assemble in my spiral notebook journal. Quotes from theorists are sprinkled throughout my musings on form and creative thinking. I am an artist who is also a budding scholar. I want to use my newfound skills as a qualitative arts-based researcher to deepen and expand my understanding of my own arts

process. My journal is filling with (pre)liminary sketchy thoughts. I write and draw in pencil. I want the words to be impermanent. I want to be able to erase my sketches and change my mind. I want choices. I am trolling my imagination for the portal into this new work I plan to create. *Where is the door?* I wander, day after day, around the outer edges of the process.

Victor Turner (1987) describes *liminal* space in his explorations on the anthropology of performance. This space is the special ceremonial time and place that one enters when participating in traditional ritual. The anthropological term has been embraced by the experimental theater community as it describes the engagement of the artist in postmodern performance. Before the ritual ceremony one enters the time and space *as is*. Upon emerging, one is changed. The shaping of a performance event has a kinship to this type of ritual transformation. An art-form such as theatre, dance, music, or storytelling that takes place in time and space can provide a transformative experience for an artist. The creation and the presentation of a work have a kinship to both private and public ceremony.

I am always eager to engage in the creative construction of a story. There is an intrinsic pleasure that comes from putting parts together and composing a coherent whole. Even though at the start nothing exists, I trust that once I begin, the art work will emerge. I trust that the steps will lead one to the next/ and an organic logic will bloom. This unfolding process is one of curiosity and discovery. I usually move energetically on the journey, often arriving at solutions without marking my footsteps. I have experienced the process many times and can take creative leaps, avoid pitfalls, and sometimes rely on tried and true solutions. However, this time, for this arts-based research project, I have committed myself to a slower, reflective journey that stretches personal time to the point that I can see and feel the sequence of thoughts as I move through the thinking stages. From a meta-cognitive stance, I have insisted, to my 'eager-to-complete-this-

composition' *critic* self, I will acknowledge, recognize, and "thickly describe" (Geertz, 1973) the creative terrain for others to see, too. Using a classical ethnographic approach—the art and science of interpretation – I will observe, record, and interpret my creative process. My observations will be drawn from my lived experience as an artist. I plan to mark and describe my inner journey in order to make sense of its sequence. I have emotional terrain to explore and interpret as well.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes, "A good interpretation of anything – a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society – takes us into the heart of that which it interprets" (1973, p. 18). I want to make the invisible, visible. So often the finished result of artistic work looks effortless and easy to the outside viewer. The artist's complicated journey to the simple, elegant solution is not seen. The artist's struggle, the lost pathways, the copious sketches, the destroyed scraps of ideas that lay scattered about in the frenzy of choosing are unknown. The play, the cavorting, the insider metaphors are unrevealed. The polished edges of the finished work mask the cacophony of construction. The poem, song, script, characters, composition and evocative language just seem to somehow mysteriously or divinely "appear" to the viewer. In the ancient Greek world, the Muses helped or hindered the creative process. Art was considered a gift from the gods. I have wondered if my creative process will be stymied if I scrutinize it too closely. I have vanquished my fear by regarding this arts-based study as an educational experience that will expand my perception of my creative process. Art theorist, Elliot Eisner, describes an educational experience as one that "fosters the growth of intelligence, nurtures curiosity, and yields satisfaction in the doing of those things worth doing" (1991, p. 99). By engaging in reflective practice I am seeking to understand my practice (Schön, 1983).

I am seeking to unveil the *essence* of my creative process. I will peel away the layers as I migrate between generating ideas and making choices. I can be a trustworthy source of data as I

actually engage in the stages of thinking that lead to a performable composition. Artists make choices. Choreographers choose the motions. Painters choose the color. Musicians choose the notes. There are always choices. It is this act of choosing that unites artists in diverse media. I must generate and gather ideas but ultimately choose a workable compositional form for my story. There are pragmatic as well as aesthetic details that will come into the compositional considerations. At the start however it is the endless possibility that attracts and motivates. I seek abundance of ideas. Then the sifting, sorting, categorizing, and prioritizing can proceed. The shaping of the design of a temporal sequence and its embedded emotional arc cannot happen until the possibilities are gathered, considered, celebrated, discarded, saved for later, mourned and, at last, chosen.

Divergent and Convergent Thinking

The first step on the artistic journey is to travel with openness to possibilities and new ideas, however impractical, half-baked, or profound those ideas may be. The pragmatic ‘choosing’ process of selecting the most workable ideas eliminates possibilities. Reflecting on other stories I have designed, I recall moving through the ebb and flow of the generative/evaluative process and remorsefully dismissing perfectly good ideas. *Maybe that idea will be useful in another context or in another story.* The *meta-viewer* consoles my wistful *creative* self as my unflinching *critic* self callously sweeps the discarded idea away. The creative thinking stage of generating abundant ideas is described as *divergent* by Gerard Puccio, Mary Murdock and Marie Mance (2007) of the *International Center for Studies in Creativity* in Buffalo, New York. They tip a hat to the work investigating creativity by Graham Wallas (1926), who described four stages in creative thought: preparation, incubation, illumination, and

verification and to psychologist J.P. Guilford (1968) who coined the terminology “divergent and convergent thinking.” Guilford’s (1968) *divergent* stage of creative thinking contributes to fluency (abundance of ideas), flexibility (multiple perspectives), elaboration (extensions) and originality (novelty). “Divergent thinking intentionally opens up new possibilities. It challenges paradigms and creates new knowledge” (Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2007, p. 72). “Deferring of judgment” in this stage of the creative thinking process is essential in order to allow innovative ideas to remain in the realm of possibility for later development (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007). Wallas’ (1926) concept of “incubation” allows ideas to develop on the unconscious level. I often leave my work and go for a walk to allow seeds to ‘sprout in the dark’ while I am doing other things.

Convergent thinking narrows the options in creative thought and focuses the mind on discerning the most promising options to be further considered (Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2007). This dual process of generating and then evaluating creative ideas is a balanced way to invent, sift, sort, and prioritize ideas.

Keeping the inner *critic* at bay can sometimes be difficult for me at the early stages of the creative process. A quick solution is enticing. But then, the quick choice, however intuitive, silences other possibilities. Like in breath and out breath, I recognize the oscillating pattern of my own creative thought in the Puccio, Murdock and Mance (2007) framing of divergent and convergent thinking. Naming has a power. As an artist I have not called this process *divergent/convergent* but I have experienced it as a *momentum of thinking* that, like the coming and going of the tide, ebbs and flows throughout the creative process. It is a reiterative process which cycles again and again as ideas are refined.

I am at the beginning of the creative process in this storytelling project. As an *emic* storyteller, I am deeply and experientially questioning *How does a teller compose and perform a complex tale on issues of peace, justice, and social change?* I have an itinerary for the journey in imaginal space that will explore the realm of creative process.

I dwell in possibilities.

Emily Dickenson

The Travel Itinerary

As I travel through the creative process, there will be steps along the way that I anticipate.

- Gathering (Collecting elements, feelings, motivation, materials, tools, content details, ideas)
- Sifting (Prioritizing elements, categories, themes)
- Shaping (Exploring vagueness and form possibilities, searching for solutions, noticing, inventing, filling gaps, selecting, setting aside/including, imagining empathy)
- Choosing (Focusing on a form choice, mourning exclusions, saving, reshaping)
- Accepting (Embracing, nurturing, developing, unveiling, layering, deepening)
- Refining (Adding detail, building skill, rehearsing, replicating/evolving)
- Sharing (Birthing, co-creating, timing, deep listening, empathy)
- Reconstructing (Developing, incorporating the sharing experience, adding new layers, reflecting on response of participants, (in)forming new developments)

Beginning the Journey

“If the narrative plot is how we get from the beginning to the end of a story, the emotional arc is how we want the audience to feel as we make the journey” (Niemi, 2006. p. 39). Constructing a story requires empathy. I must imagine how the audience will respond. Once the tale is composed it will take many tellings with a live audience to continue its construction and evolution in time and space. As an art form an oral tale must be recreated with each telling. Even if the text is “set” word for word, the timing will change. The meaning will change with *how* words are said, not just *what* words are said. The meaning will change with the context of where and why the tale is told. The nuance of facial expression, body language, and gesture can add another layer of meaning that either supports or denies the words that are spoken. A wry smile can transform the word “really” from meaning “actually true” to “I do not believe you at all.”

The storyteller’s art is a confluence of vicarious and actual experience. It is always a shared, multi-layered event interweaving the teller, the tale, and the listener. It is an ancient oral communication form that helps to make sense of life’s natural chaos. Both teller and listener can be transformed by a story.

Group Meeting in Imaginal Space

The *critic*, the *creative*, and the *meta-viewer* meet. It is time to consider possible compositional forms. This must be a collaborative effort. In imaginal space the intrapersonal discourse happens like this:

Meta-Viewer speaks. “It’s time to muse on the compositional possibilities that best serve the content. There’s a desire to weave multiple threads of history, memoir, folklore, and current

events in the dimensional tapestry depicting a place. There must be some grounding to begin the process. How and where does this story happen?"

Creative speaks: "I imagine telling the tale to a group of listeners. It's a formal telling. I'll address the group and begin by inviting them to listen. The invitation could be a call, a gesture, a song, a phrase to suspend time, a sound, a bell, a musical phrase, a dimming of lights, a casual comment, an introduction by another, a puppet, an announcer on a megaphone, a thread that pulls me onto the stage, a balloon that lowers me from the ceiling, a formal invitation with a starting time announced, an admonition, a wail, a graceful request, a surprise, a startle, a compound image . . . ?"

"Enough!" cries the *critic*. "A song will do."

"*Very well,*" says the *creative*. "A song . . . without an instrument? . . . a song with guitar accompaniment? . . . minor chord, Middle Eastern feel, melody with tumbling strains. An invitation to listen . . . Where are we going? Why should they want to come? A simple invitation, *come with me on a journey* . . . are they leaving? . . . No . . . we'll travel on the wings of words. Journey and tale are linked metaphors. Where are we going? Back in time, layers of history peel away as I stand in each place. Seeds . . . clues . . . to the whole are in the part. Yes . . . I can be standing in a particular place on the journey and imagine what was here before, telling what I see

Come with me on a journey.
Come and hear a tale.
Travel through the layers of time.
Lift the veil.
See the ancient face
of an ancient place.
The desert tells a story.
The buildings hold a tale.
The song at the Wall
has a plaintive wail.
The Calls to Prayer
mingle in the air.
Stories of peace and war
are everywhere. . .

Figure 5.01. Invitation Song.

and taking the listener with me to parallel universes. Teller as tour guide . . . The *here* mingles with *then*. ‘Now’ is mutable, melting away. Layers of time, falling away, like veils lifting.

Middle Eastern women, hidden secrets, sacred, protected, unseen, beauty, ugliness, confusion, necessary haven. Can I use the word “veil?” . . . it’s an ancient word . . . a charged . . . suggestive word. Middle Eastern tradition . . . Arab/Hebrew . . . bride, sacred, profane, forbidden, necessary witness . . . *see the face of an ancient place* . . . An A minor chord . . . one song line at a time . . . Amalgamating, connected threads of ideas string together like beads.

Singing . . . Walking . . . Humming . . .

Days pass.

A shifting, changing song takes shape –a key to the doorway into the story.

A Storyteller’s Process Cycle



Figure 5.02. Storyteller’s Process Cycle.

On Quality

It is my aspiration is to create several modular performance works of varying lengths that are based on elements from my travel journal as well as an interpretive description of the *essence*, or nature, of my creative process in developing them. From both a global and historical perspective, establishing universal standards for excellence and quality in artistic expression is aesthetically complicated. Excellence is relative and intrinsically bound to culture, history, time, place, and utility. However, if one considers the word ‘quality’ in its different uses, *relative value* as well as *the essential nature of something*, it is possible, at least on a personal level, to reflectively evaluate my *own* art making in this arts-based study in hopes of gaining insight into the *essence* of the creative process of a storyteller. In self-critiquing my work as an artist I have established rigorous standards to which I hold myself. I take pride in my craftsmanship. I must be a “connoisseur” of my medium. Eisner (1991) describes connoisseurship as “the art of appreciation . . . the means through which we come to know the complexities, nuances, and subtleties of aspects of the world in which we have a special interest” (p. 68).

Design Decisions

As I create, my design decisions are rooted in a wide range of creative thinking strategies. The final product does not just magically appear. Much ruminating goes on ‘behind the scenes.’ Pragmatic considerations and more illusively, an intuitive, personal sensibility of ‘rightness,’ come into play. The process begins in the searching for a personally meaningful story to tell, and continues with the gathering and generating of an abundance of form, shape, image, and sequencing ideas. Over time, the ideas are slowly winnowed down into a performable composition. I intuitively know when a design decision is just ‘out of tune.’ I call it my “wince

factor.” Simply, if it makes me groan or wince, it’s just ‘wrong.’ There are personal *preference* decisions that happen in the design process. Sometimes I just have a ‘gut feeling’ when something I am making has balance, wit, and structural integrity. When it has ‘rightness,’ I feel satisfied and delighted with the form. I always set my work aside for a while and walk away to get some distance. I then go back to it after a bit of time has passed and look at it again. Wallas’ (1926) concept of *incubation* is an essential part of my personal creative process as a storyteller. The intentional distancing from what I am making gives me the fresh view I need for re-evaluation and refinement. Sometimes when I look at my work again, I keep what I have made and sometimes I discard or revise it. Rarely does a piece comes out fully formed, whole, and perfect. But like a seed, the *potential* for growth in the work is often embedded in the shaping of the fragile first form. It is important to protect it. I wait to share a ‘first form’ concept until it is strong enough to withstand ridicule. Or rather, I feel confident enough in my personal decision making process that I can balance my self critique with the opinions of others. The work I am composing needs a defensible coherence. It needs to make sense – at least, at first, to me.

In the beginning stages of developing a new storytelling performance work, I am truly open to the ideas of others and yet do not betray my own creations by leaving them vulnerable and exposed *only* to the mercy of outside critical voices. I always listen carefully to the opinions of others and attempt to empathize with different points of view. Working from a constructivist perspective I allow the art work to emerge and grow with integrity into a tellable tale with a comprehensible sequence of events. The work must be rooted in my own values. Whenever I have drifted from this perspective, I have felt like a boat tossed in the waves of other people’s sensibilities. In an ocean of ideas, I must somehow remember to stay anchored. I must maintain

my enthusiasm and my creative spark. I fiercely protect it and refuse to allow it to be dampened. The joy of creation is what brings a unique pleasure into my life.

Self-Critiquing

To paint a fuller picture of the creative design process in which I engage, I must also describe the self-critique system I have evolved that helps me guide the intuitive process along. Creative process decisions are not all based on “gut feeling” and mysterious intuition. Reflecting on what could, from the outside, seem like a rather arbitrary and emotionally-based decision-making process, I must admit that the *creative* and the *critic* in me work together in crafting the final form of anything I design. It is often a robust inner dialogue with much anxiety and frustration as I seek and demand ‘quality’ from myself. The *meta-viewer*, who also keeps a trusty ‘outside eye’ and maintains a pragmatic awareness of the context in which the work will ultimately be shared and judged, cannot relinquish control of the working and reworking of the construction phase of the art making until satisfied that redundancy or closure have been reached. Redundancy is when the same ideas keep coming up for consideration. Closure happens when, for the moment, both *creative* and *critic* can truly say, “It’s the best that can be done now. It is time to share it and get some outside feedback.” Ultimately, the work must have *coherence*; the parts must fit together, and be comprehensible to others. Storytelling is an event in which the teller, the tale, and the listener are intertwined. I need my listeners to be able to follow the sequence of events and comprehend the story.

Compositional and Performance Quality

The *quality* of a storytelling work, from my vantage point as a professional performing artist, has two major components: *compositional* quality and *performance* quality. Each has its own criteria and unfolds at different times in the creative process.

Compositional quality can be appreciated in the structural design and flow of the tale – the choice of words, imagery, and metaphor, and the innovation employed in the presentation of the sequence events or the use of sound and movement. Compositional quality also must deeply reflect personal understanding of the meaning of the story. Layers of meaning can be intentionally embedded in the construction of a plot. All stories can have multiple layers of meaning. Peninnah Schram (2000) explains how the structure of traditional Jewish stories offers insights into a way of understanding *meaning*.

“When we read the story, the *pshat* is the “simple” or literal meaning, the plot, the sequence of events that we can outline . . . The second level, *remez*, which literally means “hint,” is the lesson or moral, the overall meaning of the story beyond the literal . . . The third higher and deeper level is *drash*, the aggadic level. *Drash* literally means “interpretation.” This can mean seeing how the story connects to your life . . . there is a subtext to be uncovered . . . The fourth and highest yet deepest is *sod*, “secret,” the mystical level and the most difficult to define. It is the unspoken understanding that forces you to take the story into your heart and make it a part of you.” (pp. 22-23).

In my ongoing thinking about the possible compositional story forms I could use in telling my travel tale, I have been considering how to ‘layer’ the story. Congruent with this arts-based dissertation’s overall nested design, I have been imagining stories within stories. I must draw a picture of this in order to better visualize the meta-form. I make maps and diagrams of

my stories while they are being developed in order to better understand their narrative shape and flow. These maps are abstract and meant to help me remember the temporal sequence of the story or to help me comprehend the larger shape of the work.

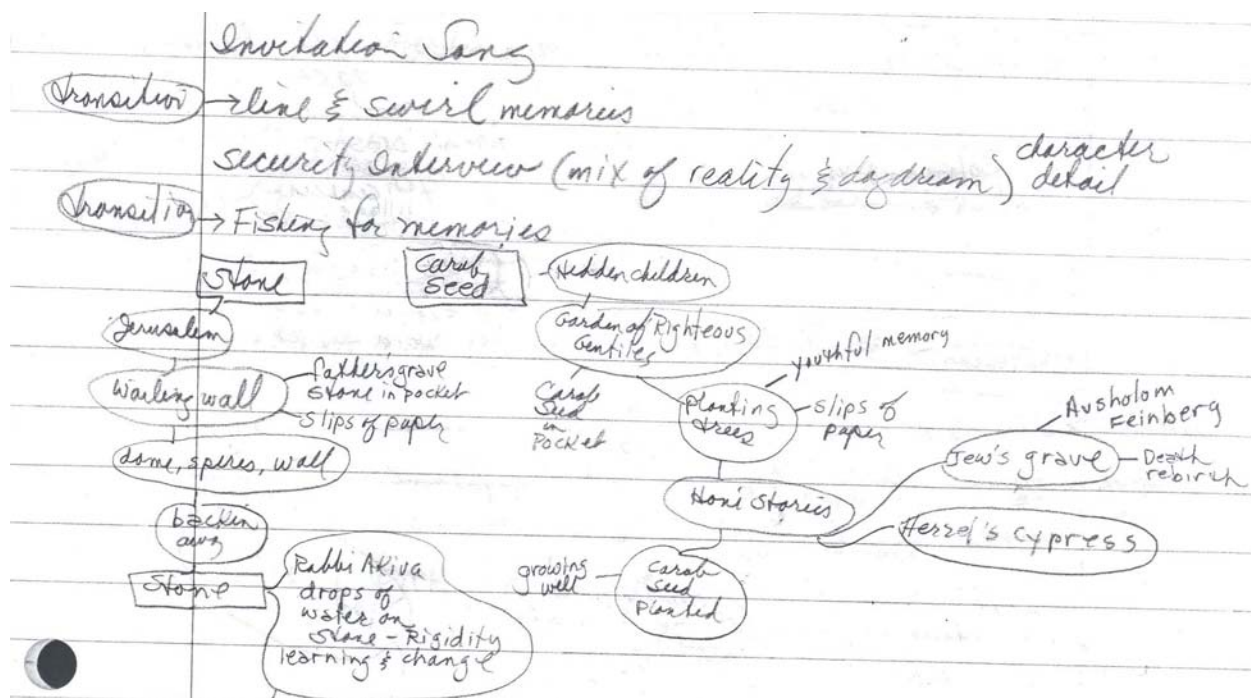


Figure 5.03 Map Segment.

Shaping

One compositional quality of a storytelling work is shape. As a teller I hold the meta-view of the structure of the tale. As it unfolds in the telling, it is a moment by moment experience for the listener. For example, tales can be linear, circular, braided, digressions, parallel, nested stories within a story, regressions, foreshadowed, cumulative, refrained, and more. As I have been considering possibilities for how I will construct a form that serves the content, I have mulled over the many shapes that the overall tale can take.

I am working through the creative thinking strategy of *backward design* at the moment. I am envisioning where I am going and then backtracking solutions to get there. I am seeking to choose a story shape that reflects the layered content. I am attracted to the nested story form that is prevalent in the oral tradition of the Middle East – the story of the *1001 Arabian Nights* is a classic example of a frame story with many interior tales. This story form is also a common composition in Jewish stories. Metaphorically this shape feels ‘right’ for the travel tale I wish to tell. My meta-view of the piece is that it is a tale of a journey to diverse places that embody many layers of meaning. I do not *yet* know which episodes in my travel experience will be included in the piece or how I will tell them. But I am comfortable with the decision that a nested form with modularly designed interior tales is pragmatic in that it allows for flexibility in performance length. As the interior tales evolve there needs to be an emotional arc that leaves room for questions – not answers – about issues of nonviolence in a violent situation. The story will explore my lived experience in Israel during a war torn time. In a multi-stranded interweave of thematic material each module could be self contained and so each piece could have different plot shapes. This idea is creatively appealing in that it offers a variety of plot shapes to explore and apply.

As the days progress, my journal is filling with sketches, ideas and questions. *What do I have to work with now?* What are my raw materials? My primary source document – my travel journal written in July, 2006 – anchors the work. But what could be outside the document that could also be woven into the interior tales?

- Personal experience tales that take place at other times in my life
- Folkloric stories
- Songs and poetry
- Allegorical characters like *Fear* and *Rage*.

The quality of the *process* of making this story is as important as the quality of the final *product*. This is simply because I genuinely enjoy the ambiguity and the unformed aspects of the shaping process. Inward and outward thinking occurs simultaneously. I keep imagining the tale told in the context of live time and space. I keep thinking about the tale in the world of my imagination. I am in a dance of thinking, feeling, and intuitive sensing. I am asking my *creative* and *critical* selves to be aware of steps in the process. I am documenting the process from a stance that is watching the *meta-viewer* negotiate with the *creative* and the *critic*. Experimenting with image connections I patiently await epiphany. I seek pleasure and satisfaction from design choices. Paradoxically, I must make clear decisions and yet be unattached to them so that they can evolve. The final work needs to have a sense of composure. I wonder if anyone else will appreciate what I have made. I must be clear about my own criteria too.

Choosing a Nested Design

In considering possible shapes for the tale, I resolve that form must poetically or metaphorically serve the content. The form of the story will contribute to the meaning of the story. The form will also contribute to the affective or emotional content of the story. I hope to offer an engaging emotional terrain for my listeners.

I redundantly return to the nested story design concept for this current performance work about my travel experience in Israel. The design makes metaphorical sense to me. There are

layers to the story of conflict. Contextually, Israel is “nested” in the physical as well as cultural landscape, precariously surrounded by Arab nations that refuse to acknowledge its right to exist. Ironically, ancient Hebrews and Arabs are part of a related circle of Semitic peoples. The two cultures have much in common. Both cultures have deep attachments to the same ancient landscape through stories; the Arabic and Hebrew languages have common semantic roots; and read right to left. According to the shared legends from the Bible and the Koran, both the Hebrews and the Islamic peoples are descended from the same Patriarch, Abraham, who had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac’s line became the Jewish people. Ishmael’s line became the Islamic people (Kimmel, 1998). The contemporary ‘conflict narrative’ fuels the discord erupting in a violent feud over land. The first step toward peace may be empathy and the recognition of commonality. As no simple, linear answers exist, this cannot be a linear plot.

From a storytelling perspective, in both Jewish and Arabic folklore, there is a long history of telling complex, nested tales. One of the most well known is an Islamic storytelling classic, the *1001 Arabian Nights*, a nested story cycle constructed orally in the Middle East between the 9th and 14th centuries. In the overarching frame tale, a misogynistic king, wounded by his first wife’s infidelity, married a new bride each night and then murdered her in the morning. In order to save her younger sister, the vizier’s daughter, Scheherazade, bravely offered herself as a bride. She was a master storyteller who, to beguile the king, began an intricate tale on her wedding night and left it unfinished at the dawn. She explained, “I only tell stories during the night.” Unable to bear the suspense of not knowing the tale’s end, the king spared her life so that she could finish the story at dusk. After it was completed, to pass the time, she started another and left it unfinished at the dawn. She was spared again. So her tales went on for 1001 Arabian nights. During that time she bore the king three children and transformed his evil nature with the

power of her storytelling. Peninnah Schram's book, *Stories Within Stories* (2000) offers 50 examples of nested Jewish stories within other stories. I circle back again and again to this form.

The compositional decision to use a nested story shape is simple and yet layers of thinking generated the idea. It not only feels 'right,' it makes poetic and pragmatic sense.

Creating a "nested" storytelling work aesthetically parallels the overall nested design of the dissertation, contributing to coherence and structural integrity. The parts fit together.

Pragmatically, creating short, modular interior story segments nested in the frame story addresses my desire to have flexibility in performance length. I will be able to perform some or all of the interior tales depending upon the diverse settings and situations of the storytelling events. This offers more performance opportunities in which the tale can evolve. Modular pieces may also make documenting segments of the work as digital files easier for submission as an Electronic Thesis Dissertation. I would like to include audio clips in the dissertation and do not want to create a document that is inaccessible because of its large download size. The point of having a digital archive of dissertation is the democratizing of information. I want my work to be easy to digitally access.

Selecting the scenes and composing the design of the *interior tales* will be the next level of construction in the nested design. The writing of the travel journal was organized chronologically and followed the sequence of the trip itinerary. An interpretive storytelling work based on that journal could be layered with themes (history, memoir, folklore, and current events), timelines (archeological, anthropological, cultural, wars, and dominion) or core concepts (ancient, founding, modern) as organizing principals. My evolving graphic diagram leaves room for these further developments. The picture began as groups of small circles within a circle. The larger circle represents the journey. The smaller circles inside the journey are the scenes.

At this early developmental phase of the work I need to imagine where the tale would be shared publicly. *Is it for children or adults? Will it be told formally or informally? How will I separate everyday conversation and everyday reality from the virtual world of the tale? How does it begin?*

The process of generating ideas is initiated by an endless stream of questions. Point of view comes into play. *Shall I tell the tale in the first person voice?* I make temporary decisions such as: Personal memoir threads will be first person. *I walked down the narrow cobblestone streets of old walled Jaffa. As I walked past ancient archways inscribed with Arabic writing, the smell of exotic spices and dark Arabian coffee mingled with the sound of modern voices speaking in animated Hebrew.* Folktales and history can be told in the third person. *There once was a man who planted a carob seed.* The meta-viewer watches the creative work. All ideas are encouraged and accepted at the beginning.

To build confidence, I imagine the nascent work already being performed. At its most essential level, a story needs a teller, a listener, and a place to unfold. Storytelling is a *physical*, relational event in time and space. The ritual of orally describing a sequence of events with a group of listeners is as old as the hearth fire. To bring listeners into the world of the story, a teller's tale needs a clear and engaging opening. To begin, a teller needs to create a portal. Inviting the listener into the tale is the beginning of an ancient form of communication. The teller must be trusted.

Inviting the Listener

The listener can be enticed to come on the imaginal journey. The invitation can be informal, such as the conversational phrase, *when I was young*, or formulaic, *Once upon a time*.

The invitation encourages the listener to suspend attachment to the present and leap into the world of the tale. People are innately attracted to stories and, when the setting and time are right, eagerly go into the mesmerized listener's trance (Stallings, 1988) with the teller of a tale as a guide. I have watched both young and old fantasize in this ancient way. I have decided that I will use a song as an invitation. There will be a journey in imaginal space with the teller as a guide on the tour to 'storied' places that embody ancient, founding, and modern tales. The story of the eruption of war will enter later in the sequencing and have a different textural shape.

To be satisfying, the story's ending must have a sense of closure. There must be an exit portal. Resonant stories continue on in the memory and musings of the listener. Stories touch metaphorical levels of the mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Resonant stories can create change. I take the mantle of the teller with a sense of responsibility. I am working with powerful tools and they must be used carefully. Since, on a cognitive level, orally heard stories are stored in spatial memory, a part of the brain that also stores actual experience, listeners can reference the lessons learned from stories just like lessons learned from life experience (Caine & Caine, 1991). An oral story unfolds in imaginal as well as physical space. It can provide a vivid, vicarious experience for a listener. I am sensitive to the power of story as a traditional teaching tool. I am careful what I put into people's minds. When someone hears a tale it is as though they have traveled to a place. Stories provide an environment in which a listener can virtually see, hear, and feel lived experience, such as danger, for example, without having to actually go to the dangerous place. The vicarious experience in the fantasy world of the tale provides a safe environment in which to meet 'the big bad wolf.' Through stories we can learn from both the wise and the foolish characters.

My story diagram is growing daily. At first, it was a circle with interior circles. Now it has evolved an outer rim representing an invitation to listen. There is an added portal into the journey and a portal out. One layer of my tale is about personal identity, growth, and lived experience. The security interview at the EL AL Airlines terminal at JFK Airport in New York began the journey. The interview carefully confirmed my identity. The return ritual, the security interview upon leaving Israel also confirmed my identity, but somehow I had been changed by the travel experience. These are my doors. The nested story diagram now has the suggestion of a temporal sequence, an *in* and *out* of the tale represented as portals. It is time to begin working on designing the inner stories. The process of searching, selecting, and shaping begins again. I will explore my travel journal to find pivotal moments, places or scenes to include. I will sift, sort, prioritize, and make choices. The *creative* and the *critic* will dance in ebb and flow. The piece will not be “set” for a while. It is still young.

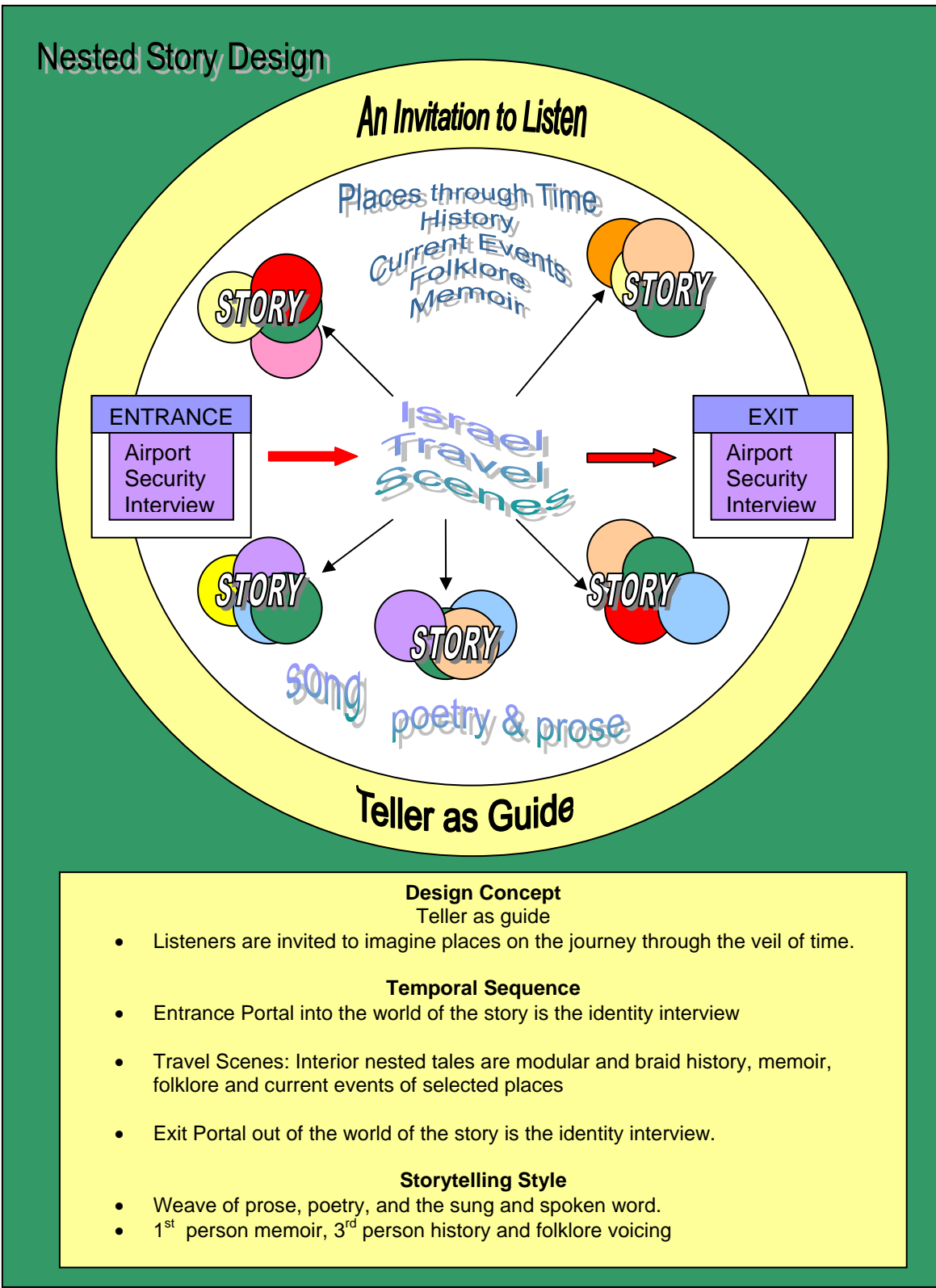


Figure 5.04. Nested Story Design Map

Melody as Metaphor

I am a folk musician. I do not read or write music in traditional notation; I compose and remember my melodies by ear. Sometimes I draw the shape, rhythm, or directional movement of the melodies. I associate the shapes and patterns with images, feelings and ideas.

I remember the melody by singing it over and over and listening intently to it. I feel the placement of the song in my body. It is a *physical* experience to find the notes again. I generally repeat a song I am composing at the same pitch, using only my voice as orientation in sound space. I recognize the location of the tones by the way the sound vibrates in my body and feels in my throat.

Rhyme and rhythm are always a part of my storytelling compositions. They offer a repeatable ritual form that threads solidity into what can be an amorphous structure such as a story. Rhyme and rhythm create a sense of anticipation as the string of words move toward resolution in a patterning of sameness. Phonemic pleasure in rhyme sounds is ancient. Rhyming is also a traditional mnemonic device used by multicultural tellers of epic tales. When I sing and tell, the rhyming jogs my memory to find the lines that fit the pattern. When performance language is constructed as “set” text, or, repeatable text, the challenge is in *how* the words are said not in *what* words will be used to express the plot.

Crafted language suggests some intentional planning and forethought. The sheer non-randomness of the offering can be pleasing to both teller and listener. At the same time, the spoken or sung text must feel new and fresh as though it has come into existence for the first time. This is one of the many paradoxes in storytelling.

Rehearsal

Storytelling is an embodied art. I must experience my ideas viscerally. In rehearsal I sing to myself. I am the first audience. I sometimes imagine the settings in which I will share my stories and envision the outside listeners. While constructing and practicing my stories, I exist in a private world. Transported to the place of the story as I sing or tell my tale, I must imagine it fully. I enjoy the intense privacy of the process. During the rehearsal time I can sing the same line over and over again. *Rehearsal* provides an opportunity to hear it again. I say the words and move through my studio space peopling the room around me with invisible characters.

This world I am creating must be stable enough to hold its form in the less predictable setting of a public audience. Storytelling is a time/space art – ever new with each sharing. My past experience has taught me that there will be nervous excitement. There may be distraction. I need to be able to hold onto my composition and to my words and music. If there are sections designed to include improvised text, then I must have a clear and vivid visualization that guides the language. I must see, feel, and *be* in the world I am creating. My personal and most primary self-critique criteria is whether or not I stayed *present* in the tale the entire time of its unfolding.

The ideas in a newly composed story are fragile. The feat of demonstrating mnemonics in public speaking is an ancient time revered skill. It is easy to forget the words and fall out of the story. A pratfall in front of an audience can be embarrassing. Even if there is a slip or a slide in memory, I must be the only one who knows. I must recreate the story anew with each telling. The creative ideas must still be flowing. Once the composition is made it is just an idea form and remains lifeless until I bring my body and breath to it. I must dance it, sing it, and breathe it back to life each time. I must be able to improvise new language, new music, and new movement if

the story falls apart or if it needs to be suddenly shortened. I have often told my friends that a fine inscription on my gravestone would be:

Improvisation is an act of faith that something will come next.

Performance Quality

Performance quality can be appreciated once the tale is composed as a sequence of events and has sufficient structure to be rehearsed and then performed. The performance may have a combination of improvised and scripted text. It will, as is the nature of the oral storytelling art form, continue to evolve. This is a co-creative part of the creative process as the sharing of the piece is intertwined with the presence and response of a listening audience.

Performance quality can be appreciated in the way a teller brings a tale to life in time and space through the use of voice, facial expression, body language, and gesture. Focus, characterization, use of space and timing, verisimilitude (characters seem realistic), charisma, grace, and truth are aspects of performance quality as well.

A connoisseur of storytelling, critiquing the storyteller's presentation of a tale, might nuance a review by evaluating *compositional qualities* and *performance qualities* separately. This is routinely done by art critics who review dance performances. The choreography is commented upon as well as the technical skill of the dancers performing the choreographer's compositional ideas. In the artistic community of storytellers, a language of critical discourse has not yet been developed in the same way that critical discourse has long been established in other performing arts realms. Reviewers of oral storytelling performances often simply tell what stories were told. Storytelling is often considered a folk art and not a fine art. As a community, the storytelling field needs to develop "connoisseurship" (Eisner, 1991), a discerning 'critical'

language to describe and appreciate *quality* in both performance and composition. In a storytelling review, for example, the plot structure or the choice of words a teller uses could be evaluated as *compositional qualities*. Critiquing timing or how evocatively the teller spoke the words would be in the realm of *performance quality*. Of course there are grey areas. *How* a word is spoken could also be a teller's composition decision. For innovators, an enticing aspect of the creative process is the unbridled willingness to break one's own rules. There needs to be a basis however against which one can push. *Composition* in storytelling is a rich and new discussion in the storytelling community. Loren Neime's *Book of Plots* (2006) examines an exuberant collection of plot structures that can be used to tell the same story differently. In the art of storytelling, choice is at the heart of the artistic process.

Co-Creating with an Audience

Creating the tale is the gestational part of the process. After it comes to life, I must tell it many times to refine the composition and to discover the co-creative response to the story in my listeners. The presence of an audience subtly changes the presentation. Unlike a painting or a sculpture that takes up physical space in a particular place, a story comes into new existence with each retelling in time and space. In oral storytelling, like live dance or music performance, the artist must be *present* for the art to exist at all. The sequence of events that the teller shares orally must be constructed for the listener to willingly follow. Each word and sentence that the teller says conjures images in the mind of the listener. Like a responsible tour guide taking someone on a journey, the teller must not 'lose' the listener by moving faster than the listener can imagine or by unintentionally distracting the listener from the story realm. The tale I tell can be extremely complex, but it still must make sense of chaos.

A memorable telling of a tale may resonate in diverse ways for a listener. My telling could transform into a repeatable story that is passed on, an image, a change message, a question or stimulation for the listener to conceive of new solutions and ideas. In setting or rehearsing the story, I think about the ‘cinema’ of a tale and consider the impact it might have. I try to imagine how the listener will imagine it as a movie in the theatre of the mind. I choose my language for metaphoric clarity. At the same time, I most humbly realize that the tale I tell is not always the one that is heard. Personal connections and subconscious thoughts stimulated by the tale allow it to unfold uniquely for each listener. Everyone’s storage bank of images is rooted in a unique set of memories and a unique imagination.

The quality of a storytelling work is a combination of *composition* and *performance* elements. I also consider how it will serve an intended use in the world. Tales can be tools for change; can be educational, or entertaining. Stories can establish history or can create a future vision. The list is long. I would like the story I am composing to be engaging and yet provoke questions, images, and dialogue about the potential for peace.

The Wellspring of Ideas

Generating abundant ideas and then sifting, sorting, and prioritizing them is an ebb and flow I recognize in my ongoing creative thinking process. *But how do new ideas come into existence?* Sometimes an idea seems to just bubble up and pop into consciousness, and at other times a new idea needs to be lured out of the depths. Patience and tolerance are required to remain comfortable with ambiguity – with *not knowing* and *not choosing* a new idea immediately. I remind myself to be confident that the wellspring of ideas is infinite. Sometimes I will hold ideas as *place saver notions* until something else occurs to me or a new and more

enticing connection is made. Taking time to reflect on my own generative process, I have observed that there are many ways that my ideas come into being. The act of choosing *which* idea to utilize in a design is a step further along the path. A wide assortment of elemental thinking modes that generate new ideas must be activated first.

Discovery and Linking.

This way of thinking is like going on a treasure hunt. In an exploratory mode, without a specific goal, I just begin the journey and allow one thought to link to the next. This linking process sometimes presents surprise connections. It is a discovery process. The stream of consciousness

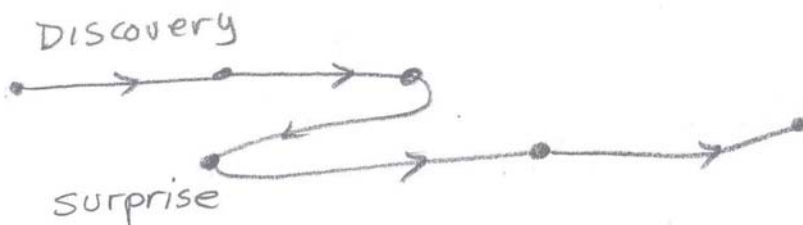


Figure 5.05. Discovery and Linking.

sometimes makes logical sense and at other times does not. Sometimes it is essential to be flexible in my point of view about what is a logical extension. New ideas can be radical and illogical until some interior linkages are made. Half-baked ideas sometimes just need more time to bake.

End-Generated Process.

Sometimes the goal is clear. How to get to the goal may not be obvious. I imagine this journey as a starting point and a maze of questions between where I am and where I want go. Predictive thinking is active. *What would happen if I did this? How do I do this? What comes next?* Imagining outcomes, I move toward the goal, step by step. Knowing where I am going gives a shape to the journey. Many paths can lead to the desired end. Scenario thinking is

embedded in this process. Storyboarding is used in cinema, cartooning, and children's book-making as a grid to mark the steps in an organized way. My journal is filled with scribbled flow charts that look more like stepping stones across a river to mark the key points in a plan or plot. There is a

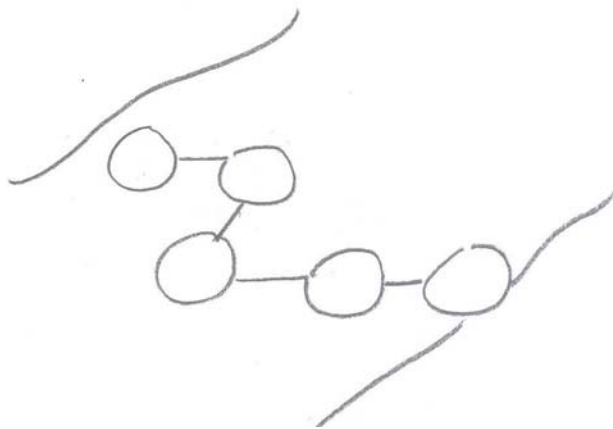


Figure 5.06. End-Generated Process.

defensible logic to this kind of thinking in that I know where I must end. That is the criteria. The possibilities of *how* to get there are abundant.

Fishing for Ideas.

Using an image or a theme for bait, I open myself to the ocean of ideas and memories from my lived experience. This approach to collecting abundant ideas allows for thoughts from many diverse times and experiences in my life to surface. Ideas that surface are non-chronological and sometimes surprisingly linked. This is a free-form way of gathering thoughts around a theme or a topic – a daydream form of musing.

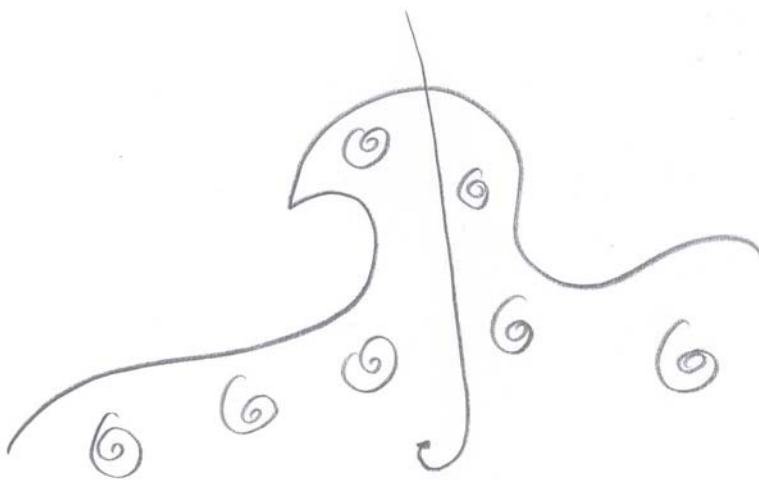


Figure 5.07. Fishing for Ideas.

Chronology.

Sequencing is a sense making device. In order to feel as though an issue, an event, a predicament, or an experience has been understood, creating a causal, temporal sequence is a tool for comprehension.

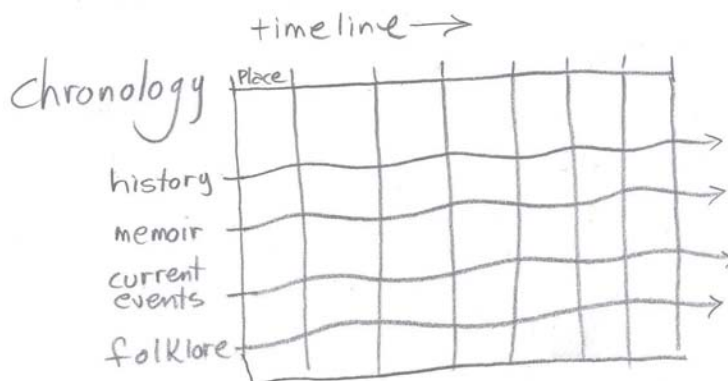


Figure 5.08. Chronology.

This story form is linear and can range over calendar time or spatial positioning, i.e., visits to a series of places in an order. This is the easiest way to translate complexity into a non-random form that offers a simple surface structure. *What happened and in what order?* The answer to the question must be easy to follow and help to make sense of the chaos of experience. In history as well as current events there can be plurivocal (Boje, 2001), conflicting stories depicting what may or may not have happened. In my travel story I am gathering ideas about how to *braid* or *knot* these types of linear tales of place. This kind of thinking can be drawn as a matrix of relational ideas.

Deep Chronology.

Deep chronology layers the simple timeline. In this way of thinking the moments or the places can have *stratigraphy*, or element layers like those found in the geological landscape when the mountain is cut away revealing its structure. In my travel story,



Figure 5.09. Deep Chronology.

places will have a stratigraphy that includes layers of history, current events, folklore, and memoir. Abundant ideas can be generated from each moment or location when themes, issues, topics or happenings are considered in tandem.

Wheel of Association.

A place can anchor musings on themes or topics. I visualize this as a freeform swirl of ideas rather than a chronology. Drawing from the full depth of lived experience and structured around an anchor, ideas amalgamate. In my travel story, *place* is an anchor and ideas are held around it.

What if? How? When? Where? Why?

This way of thinking is a favorite of mine as I muse in a freeform style about possibilities. The thinking can go both forward and backwards in time. *How did something come to be the way it is? How could something become something else?* This is a kind of inferential thinking that is both inventive and fantasy-based. It is similar to detective work. Looking at places I muse about the past and the secret stories embodied therein. From a Socratic perspective I imagine the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. *What if the opposite happened? What would be here now? What could be here in the future? What else?*

Pattern Finding.

Sometimes I see patterns that I have superimposed on reality. It is akin to creating my own constellations out of the abundant possibilities of stars strewn across the night sky in a random way. The grouping, sorting, masking, and categorizing is an emergent process. The

pattern finding sometimes is based on sameness. Sometimes the pattern finding is based on difference. I enjoy finding patterns in music that remind me of images. These patterns support my plotlines when I create musical stories. Sometimes I design thematic patterns to (re)present ideas, characters, or settings in the story.

Forming, Framing, Fashioning.

Compositional thinking can happen in many ways while working with material. *Forming* with raw material is a kind of manipulation whether mental or manual. Raw material is pushed and pulled into shapes and patterns or forms. The raw material could be clay or a story's simple plot. *Framing* is a way to design by selection. What is in and out of the field of view or in the grouping is considered. The masking out of images is as important as their inclusion. *Fashioning* is an assembling process that brings together diverse parts in an intentional relationship. *Seeing* patterns is a way to think.

Making Worlds.

Artists make worlds of possibility. The kind of visceral thinking that contributes to design sense is an interwoven rational, emotional, spiritual skill set that develops over time and with experience. Allowing for the possibility of inventive thinking is the first step on the journey to change. Creativity is about change. Even in settings where it is said, "*We have always done it this way,*" somewhere, somehow the *way it is always done* was at one time *new*.

On the Creative Edge

I have often mused about the creative process as a *leap off the edge* into the unknown. In my storytelling workshops I have taught people not to fear this place of discovery. With great trust in the wellspring of ideas, sometimes when I am creating a song or a poem or a story, I feel like I jump off steep cliffs. An *edge* is a metaphorical place in my internal world. I imagine a mountainous ledge that separates everything I have always known from that which is yet to be discovered. Or, it can be a clear boundary line demarcating the before and after of inventive thought.

Artists and scientists have great commonality in the motivation to know *newness*. My curiosity inspires me to inquire and explore. I picture the *leap off the edge* into the abyss and deeply trust that within the inquiry there is an embodied rescue. Somehow, from the depths of my heart and mind, somewhere, like a zephyr wind, I will be caught by a new thought that rises up out of the darkness to catch me. The thought drifts me safely to a new place that connects my memory and knowledge to the next step. This “leap” can be terrifying for those who prefer to stay safely with what is already known. Why risk newness?

Native American writer Douglass Cardinal (1996) states:

There are only tremendous possibilities if you are willing to stand out there and leap off the edge. Because that’s where true creativity exists; that’s what we have to do to create a new life, not only for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren, but to make a contribution to other people living in a small little world.

(In Kenny, 2006, p. 161)

The concept of willingly leaping into the unknown is not only a creative thinking skill. It is a life skill and a core competency in leading change. Our world is in danger. Violence has

become a seemingly reasonable response in difficult, aggressive situations. How can new more adaptive responses be conceived? “A rigid person is unable to adapt to difficult situations . . . creativity can counter rigidity . . . creativity cannot be separated from the process of life” (Kenny, 2006, p. 14).

Introspection and the Developing Tale

Introspective thinking allows me to travel back into my lived experience and, through memory and reflection, to interpret my perceptions in new ways. I turn and turn the experiences I recall and look at them from many directions.

In choosing interior episodes to describe as I construct this travel story, I have been introspecting on the days during my experience in Israel, when, in immediate response to Hezbollah’s kidnapping and killing of border guards, a strong military action on the part of Israel was publicly argued as the most *reasonable* response. During the first four days of the war, as I listened to the anxious conversations on the street, in the hotel, and at gatherings of all sorts, my gut feeling as an artist was to wonder about alternatives. Again and again I was told, “We have no choice.”

Ironically, choice is at the heart of my creative process. Without it I could not function. As I introspect on my thoughts and feelings on the beginnings of the war I was witnessing, I keep wondering how an artist’s way of knowing could contribute to a political leader’s decision-making process to go, or not to go, to war. *What if world leaders had artists-in-residence that helped them with the visioning process?*

The Museum of the Seam, a gallery in Jerusalem sits on the “seam,” or the border of what was the boundary edge between Jordan and Israel before the 1967 war. The poignant art

exhibit I saw there was called *Dead End: Coexistence or Nonexistence*. Artists from around the world contributed to the collection curated by Raphie Etgar. The images haunt me still. War, as seen through the eyes of artists, is senseless. *How can people who feel deeply threatened, find new ways to settle disputes with aggressive neighbors?*

I am wondering how to bring my sense of paradox into this tale. I do not have answers. I keep generating questions. As a Jew, I too feel threatened by the violence than has erupted in the past. Justice is essential, forgiveness is required. Co-presence may be a more inspiring word than co-existence. Presence suggests a sense of place and an alert awareness of life. *How have we, as creatures, come so far from understanding the basic beauty of presence?*

Stage Presence

The idea of *presence* is deeply embodied in the live performing arts. The phrase, *stage presence*, implies being in the *present*. When a performing artist is centered in the present moment, dynamic improvisation and quick thinking to solve emergent problems can take place with one's full pallet of possibilities. Cloaked in the *now*, an artist can take the small steps needed to move to the next moment with awareness. Lost in memory, or, regret of the past, or paralyzed by fear and worried anticipation of the future, the *present* moment is stripped of its power. Worry is *negative imagination*. Worry trips up the steps forward.

Life and art mingle in these thoughts. How I make creative decisions is akin to making decisions of all kinds in the larger world. Not all decisions can be pre-planned. Sometimes improvisation is essential. Being surefooted and balanced is required to make a leap in *any* direction. Balance contributes to more possibilities. Empathetically considering radical alternatives to one's position does not have to throw one off balance.

Being able to see the world from another's point of view is the heart of empathy.

Empathy is a step toward peace. *Can we see our commonalities?* I will weave some Arab and Jewish point-of-view folktales into this performance piece. I brought many such tales with me on the journey to share at appropriate times as artist-in-residence. The interior tales in my nested design can be a collection of stories from which I choose according to the timeframe and setting of the performance. Flexibility is important. I am beginning to see how important this can be in the process of change too. I must be flexible, limber, willing to tumble and enjoy the fall. I am ready to leap.

Interior Tales

The stories inside of my frame tale will be a weave that includes personal memoir. As a professional performing artist, I have told world folktales for many years. The stories I choose to carry and to tell have been personally gleaned and shaped from the countless stories that have been collected by folklorists over the centuries. On a private level, as a tale bearer, I find personal meaning and metaphor in the stories I have included in my repertoire as a tale bearer. Sharing overtly personal experience memoir in a public performance is a different storytelling path. Autobiographical story compositions need to be constructed from "scratch." Folktales have been polished by the tongues of tellers over time. There are no extraneous edges to the plotlines. The *personal story* is, by nature, new and unformed, not yet chiseled down. Finding the essentials, the core images, the memorable scenes, is a challenge. My travel diary was written chronologically as the days unfolded. Memory of the journey is an ocean of stories – a blur and a swirl of feelings and thoughts. Creating smaller vignettes is a way to *capture* the tales.

I sit patiently beside the shore of memory

Scenes swim below the water's edge

With thought as bait

I am

Luring them

Catching them

Choosing them

Tossing them back into the depths

Transforming Chronology

The emotional arc of my chronological travel journal is curved. Excitement at exploring ancient places builds with joy over the first few days. Then after embracing the roots of my cultural heritage, war, fear, and rage crashed through the itinerary and splintered the experience into moments of fear, emotional distress, and a deep longing for peace. I returned home from the journey and involved myself in local peace activities, from writing a children's book about nonviolence to engaging in community action to encourage embracing diversity through the arts. Making this performance piece is another expression of my attempt to understand violence and the need for peaceful resolution. *How can I weave these thoughts into the tapestry of the tale?* I want to explore retelling my travel tale in a thematic style. I will juggle the order of events discussed in the telling. It does not need to be a day by day chronology. My journal is a linear chronology. For a construction challenge, I will fish for ideas. I will link one memory to the next in a random yet internally logical way. I will assemble some beaded *strings* of tales.

Moon woke me at dawn

First thoughts at the cusp of night and day

Art creates change

I will be changed

Audience will be changed

Leading change is a creative act

Creative acts require creative thinking

Nurture Vision

A new story makes new worlds

Forming and Fashioning

Fashioning is an assembling process. *What are the congealing parts that need to fit together?* Following threads of ideas I am simultaneously rehearsing and fashioning finished parts and composing and forming others from strings of related thoughts. It is not a linear process. Different aspects are moving at different speeds. Some parts are set text; some parts are improvised text.

Nested stories

Ideas inside of ideas

Seeds and stones

Hidden in pockets

Story threads are weaving together

I have begun to *fashion* strings of story episodes around the theme of *stone* and the theme of *seed*. Stone buildings, stone walls, grains of sand, like Israel, are ancient and hold time. Seeds,

paradoxically can look like stones but change and grow. Many memories of the journey center on the planting of new seeds. Using these words to *fish for ideas* in my ocean of travel memories I have caught many episodes that I have assembled into scene maps. Even when the text is improvised, the image base is clear. Telling the story of the four days of war has a different texture. These days' tales will be presented in a more chronological form but will braid, tangle, and knot memoir, history of the places I visited and the unfolding current events. Layers of time are interwoven. Past and present will twine. Improvisation in rehearsal will be my loom.

Rehearsal is a *fashioning* process – a bringing together of elements. In order to assemble my words and body language in space, I need a physical locus in space. I link words to specific body movement in space. Gestures and focal direction help me to anchor the words in an embodied experience that will become a *pathway* to help me remember the text and music later on as I recreate the piece with each telling. I do not want to carve an arduous path through unknown underbrush in public performance. One pitfall of total improvisation in performance is that the length of the work would be unpredictable. The story pathway could be a paved road or a rudimentary trail, but the shape, interior cinema (or visualization), emotional direction and end moment must be clear. The *path* metaphor for the telling of a story is coherent with the feeling of sharing a story in time and space with a listener. Leading a group along the *path* is like leading listeners into the world of the story.

Extending

New segments are added cumulatively to threads of existent segments each day. One day I added only four lines to the work – a new ending to the poem *There Are Always Two Possibilities*. “It doesn’t seem like much.” said the *creative* to the *critic*. But the addition changes

the meaning and extension of the poem. The piece in my travel journal (see p. 88) ends with the lines: *What are you worrying for? There might not even be a war.*

But as I work on this story, I cannot ignore the fact that there *is* a war in the larger Middle East unfolding now on many fronts. It touches our immediate lives in the United States through the loss of life on the battlefield and in the deflection of tax dollars from domestic needs to the U.S. military budget. The war I experienced in Israel has long global tentacles. The larger clash in the Middle East mirrors the smaller skirmish in Israel. I find myself imagining Israel and Hezbollah as boxers in a ring with larger global powers goading them on with economic and security support lures. The *Two Possibilities* poem is a story about deep worry and demonstrates the comforting way contemplative Talmudic reasoning can help diffuse fear. But it also resonates with indirect comment that we use the power of our intellect to address the dilemma of a nation at war. *What are you worrying for? There might not even be a war. And, if there is . . .*

May your heart and mind

never cease

to hope for miracles

but work for peace.

Story Making, Positioning and Paradox

When I tell stories an underlying positioning occurs in the ‘voice’ of the narrator. My opinions about the unfolding tale are subtly transparent in the telling. With the framing of the tale I can influence the feelings of the listeners by painting characters or situations to be appealing, unattractive, unjust, outrageous, cruel, beautiful, menacing, and so on. I can be both

the puppet and puppeteer. My politics and spirituality are nested in the way I portray the characters and in the sequencing of events. On a *between-the-lines* level I broadcast my understandings of the meanings of my words in the nuance of my tone and in my body language. My transparency is also in the word and image choices of the text. I must *know* how I feel about the elements in the tale. I must embody the message and authentically tell the story. Tales can be teachers, even for storyteller who shares them.

As I shape and sequence my storytelling piece, I realize that composing this story has been a pathway to make personal sense of my paradoxical experiences in Israel. I am a pacifist with a philosophy rooted in Jewish spiritual values of friendship (*chaverim*), peace (*shalom*), charity (*tsedakka*), and intentional effort to repair the world (*tikkum olam*). During my journey to storied places in Israel, I began to comprehend what my family elders referred to as a need for *safe haven*. At frequent times and in many places in history, it has been dangerous to be born a Jew. Although I have researched and read extensively about Jewish history and narrative in books, physically walking in places that hold historical tales of Jewish bloodshed at the hands of the Romans and then of the Nazis scraped at my sense of safety. Anti-Semitic childhood memories rose up to haunt me. Katyusha bombs were falling. As the war with Hezbollah unfolded I felt a range of emotions from uneasiness to a sense of clear danger.

Simultaneously my pacifistic sensibilities rose and protested the unbridled retaliation on the part of the Israeli military. The bombing and tragic civilian toll in Lebanon was horrifying to witness in the international news. Israeli and Arab people were dying in northern Israel. “Why is aggression the only choice to solve this problem?” I asked again . . . and again.

“We must show our strength,” was always the answer. “You do not understand,” I was told.

Flooded with these recollections, I am aware that, as a teller constructing a personal tale to share publicly, I must pause in the story construction process and find a grounded emotional position from which to narrate. I need to mend any internal fray and sift, sort, and comprehend my feelings and thoughts in order to reliably function on stage during the storytelling performance process. I cannot lead my listeners into my own unexplored territory.

I would like my personal tale's meaning to suggest shared meaning. My tale must resonate with metaphors and experiences that listeners can connect to their own lives. It is part of the teller's responsibility to be a vehicle not a sledgehammer for ideas. To stay centered in the telling, I must disentangle mixed feelings and expand my emotional boundaries to comfortably hold the paradox. I must juggle pacifism, deep understanding of the need to protect a safe haven for Jews against the backdrop of the Holocaust, and simultaneously continue to question military aggression as a means to achieve safe haven and peace.

Having mixed feelings and struggling with conflicting truths is a universal experience people share. This endless, internal process is tacitly understood and woven into life's daily challenges both big and small. For my travel tale it is the *sod*, or interior secret level, "the unspoken understanding that forces you to take the story into your heart and make it a part of you" (Schram, 2000, p. 23).

When conflicting truths sit side by side

The journey is a long and rocky ride . . .

Musings

I returned from Israel with a new sense of being part of a global community of Jews in Diaspora. This awareness offered a platform for having the right to an opinion about politics in Israel. I realized that the right to an opinion comes with a responsibility to understand the discord

from all points of view and an obligation to work for peace. I am an artist, I make stories and songs. Each of us must do what each of us can do. Art is what I can do.

As I consider paradox, the seeds of a poem are growing. It will be stitched with questions as are my musings. My journal is filling with multi-voiced phrases and juxtapositions of conflicting views. Ironically, some phrases could be spoken by either side of the dispute.

How can oppressed people with repressed rage

Respond to aggression without violence?

Compositionally, I see that my next step will be to describe the first four days of the war that erupted while I was traveling. Visualizing it, the escalation was shaped like a rising passion, a growing, rushing, roiling wave. Yet I am intentionally pausing from constructing the language for this series of interior tales as I attempt to comprehend the concept of war. *I need to understand the source of my images.* It is a struggle to wrap my heart and mind around war. As an artist and a pacifist, war makes no life sustaining sense to me. I cannot even kill bugs. Violence is a cruel tool, and therefore, is intrinsically, never completely innocent of wrongdoing regardless of the provocation. I ask, *What is the meaning of violence? Is it a kind of madness? Is there more subtlety to understand in a conflict than to just simply say, "Oh well, paradox exists."* As a teller I wonder, *"How can I artfully portray conflict in words?"*

Peeling away at the layers of my questions, the *qualitative researcher* in me offered the *creative, critic, and meta-viewer* a cultural interpretation of the strategic military details that unfolded during the early days of the war. I have deeply mused about the surge of happenings in the story from the perspective of an artist, a pacifist, a Jew, an Arab, a woman, an animal, and a planetary citizen. From an ethnographic point of view, there is yet more to add to the background. To be responsible talebearers, storytellers need to deeply understand the context of

a tale, whether it is a folktale, historical tale, personal tale, literary tale or fantasy. Although much of the mined information will likely remain below the surface of the performance, having done the reflection and research gives the teller a necessary depth of understanding and the telling of the tale its credibility.

Perhaps the kidnapping of two soldiers on the northern border of Israel on July 12, 2006 by the Hezbollah soldiers was a *symbolic* act as well as a critical incident. To report that the Israeli soldiers were *simply* kidnapped would be a thin description of the abduction. The subsequent Israeli response of unbridled bombing of southern Lebanon was also a *symbolic* act as well as being an aggressively defensive signal. In trying to make sense of the disproportionate fire power in the interweave of the instigating incident and the response to it, I am reminded of Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretation of a 1912 Jewish, Berber, and French conflict in the highlands of Morocco that is described in his pivotal essay, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (pp. 3-30). In the essay Clifford depicts a series of culturally symbolic acts of violence that culminated in the complex settling of retribution payment in sheep. He spins a tale of how aggressive acts were played out between adversaries in order to maintain pride and hierarchy. Each act had particular meaning within the culture of the actors.

Perhaps, the Hezbollah's subsequent ransom demand for 1000 Palestinian prisoners to be released by Israel in exchange for the two kidnapped soldiers was also charged with *symbolism*. The echoing refrains I heard during public discourse in the first few days of escalating bombing, "We have no choice . . . They are testing us . . . We need to show force . . . That is what they understand," revealed the importance to Israelis of a swift military reaction that signaled and clearly postured dominance. Peaceful negotiation was not a considered strategy in the first few days of the war.

Peeling away the layers, I see the ancient dance of violence with its aggressive, back and forth ritualized gesturing. Each side's fight referenced old wounds. Israel's aggressive bombing of southern Lebanon was not simply a response to Hezbollah's kidnapping of two soldiers. Two thousand years of aggression against Jews were encased in the raging military reaction. It was perceived as a fight for survival.

Geertz (1973) speaks of the challenges an ethnographer faces in attempting to explain a conflict and refers to "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (p. 10). This is an adequate description of my inner turmoil.

I continue to feel the undulating perspectives rise up. *What action is the right and moral response to overt aggression?* In proclaiming non-violence as a workable strategy, I have been called a fool. "*You cannot reason with madmen. Bombs are falling,*" I was told. For me, it continues to be a sticky cultural conflict, inwardly and outwardly.

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

My swirl of thoughts on paradox has become a song to include as an ending segment in the travel tale. Having an anchored end, I can now work backwards to describe the last few days of my journey and the rising tide of the battling. Constructing the paradox song offered me an artistic vehicle through which to (re)present my reflections on conflicting stances. The song has had many lines ripped out, pasted in, and the text repeatedly changed. *How much to say?* Less is more. *What to leave out?* I have painted the broader picture in which the conflict is nested. I

assume that the words will keep changing. I imagine the singing as a mix of character voices speaking. *When conflicting truths sit side by side, the journey is a long and rocky ride . . .*

Peace and war

Share the space

Truth and Lie

Holy place

Who holds the land?

Who has the claim?

How many die in religion's name?

Rage and Fear fuel the flame

Violence rules

in a circular game

For some it's defense

For others its aggression

Who is the villain when the topic's oppression?

How can oppressed people with repressed rage

Respond to aggression without violence?

Reasoning is based on blood drenched lore

Sheep to the slaughter no more, no more

There must be a way besides war, war, war.

There must be a way besides war.

Who's in the ring?

Who cheers them on?

Who is the king?

Who is the pawn?

Point of view

Truth and land

Peace and war

Hand in Hand

Share the space . . . Holy Place

There must be a way besides war

First Performance Experience

Finding the right setting in which to share a new story is part of the teller's creative process. It is not enough to shape and rehearse a story in private space. To come to life, an oral tale must be told to others, meet the needs of the listeners and serve the occasion of the telling. The tale must be presented in a way that suits the mood of the storytelling event. Storytelling, as a non-mainstream art form, can take place in a wide variety of places outside of a theatrical setting. I wondered where I could share emerging parts of the performance work. I began to informally *chat* segments to friends, testing their interest in the material.

When I received an invitation to speak at an International Women's Day gathering at my local cinema arts center I accepted and decided that some of the new travel tale would be appropriate fare. The event's speakers would include peace activists from the metropolitan New York area representing N.O.W., Women in Black, Code Pink, Woman for Afghan Women, the Palestine/Israel Education Project, and the Long Island Multi-faith Forum. The keynote speaker and the panel for the day would be examining the different ways that women perceive and work

to resolve conflict in the Middle East. I was invited to speak before the premier of Lilly Rivlin's recent film *Can You Hear Me? Israeli and Palestinian Women Fight for Peace*. The film addresses the cycle of violence in Israel and the consistent work that Palestinian and Israeli women have done to keep the lines of communication open. In the company of women with a passion for peace, I felt I could safely birth my story and present a paradoxical, many-sided stance.

The first time I publicly present an oral storytelling work I feel an energy that borders on the knife edge between being nervous and being excited. Regardless of how secure the work is in *private* rehearsal, it is always different in *public* with the co-creative energy of an audience. I decided that instead of talking before the film I would sing. I planned to offer a storysong entitled *King Solomon and the Otter* and to recite a new poem *Paradox* from my developing travel tale. The story song is a fable that describes a cycle of violence that could have been stopped if any of the fable's characters made a different choice in responding to aggression. The *Paradox* poem explores the concept of many-sided truth. My oral presentation was to last only a few minutes. The two short modules from the travel piece seemed appropriate. The poem's words were brand new. I practiced the chanted poem countless times in private.

I went early to the performance space to get accustomed to the space and to set up a sound system. The outside railing that led to the arts center door fluttered with pink ribbons. Code Pink members had written the names of over 3000 American soldiers who had thus far perished in Iraq. The tables were shrouded in pink cloth. Code Pink's name grew from President George W. Bush's color coded "fear alarm" system assessing terrorist threat. Code Pink is a group of women activists who use irony and theatre to augment their political message of peace. I felt at home. Someone gave me a warm hug and a hot pink scarf to drape across my shoulders. I

began with a short ode to Code Pink's political efforts to end the United States' current military action in Iraq.

Women's ways of knowing
 Are many shades of light
 Mutable tones of subtle pink
 Not rigid black *or* white
 Not *this* or *that*, but *both* and *more*
 Think Pink, Think Life
 And end the war.

In Celebration of International Women's Day

CODEPINK: Long Island Women for Peace
and the **Cinema Arts Centre** present

The 2nd Annual
Women Wage Peace Around the World

Special Guests include:
 Keynote Speaker: **Ann Wright** - former U.S. Army Colonel turned peace activist,
Eli Painted Crow - Iraq War Veteran, **Rajinderjit K Singh** - Long Island Multi-Faith Forum,
Ann Brodsky - Women for Afgan Women, **Ora Wise** - Palestine/Israel Education Project,
Aseel Albanna - Iraqi Voices for Peace, **Eve Sokol** - Women in Black

Entertainment by **Missile Dick Chicks**, **Heather Forest** - recording artist and storyteller,
Joan Wile, **Grannies for Peace**


PLUS Special Long Island Premiere

Can You Hear Me?
Israeli and Palestinian Women Fight for Peace
 Narrated by Debra Winger

In Person: Filmmaker Lilly Rivlin. A 7th generation Jerusalemite, Lilly Rivlin trained as a political scientist at the University of California, Berkeley.

Can You Hear Me? Israeli and Palestinian Women Fight for Peace is the first documentary to explore in depth the role of Israeli and Palestinian women peace activists dealing with one of the world's oldest conflicts. Though prospects for peace have ebbed and flowed between Israelis and Palestinians, women peace activists have worked consistently to bring an end to the bloodshed that has brought so much anguish to both sides. No matter how desperate the political situation seemed, these women never stopped communicating with each other. They come together in their bereavement over the loss of loved ones and to demand a better future for their children. There is bonding, there is friction, and there are differences of opinion. But most of all, it is a story about women who have hope and keep on trying to hear each other. (2006, 50 min., Director/Producer/Writer: Lilly Rivlin)

Followed by **Iraqi Women Speak Out** (DVD, 2006, 20 min.)



Sunday, March 11 • Noon to 5:30PM

Figure 5.10. Code Pink Poster.

The morning after the event I received an email from one of the organizers of the day. It said, “Once again, thank you. The poetry, the fable and the song were inspiring! It came from your most intelligent heart and moved many to tears.”

I felt appreciative to have had such a welcoming environment to try out some of my new work and to explore my narrative positioning presenting a many-sided, plurivocal (Boje, 2001) tale. The travel tale piece is mapped but will ultimately require live audience response to gel into a repeatable oral tale. I looked forward to the next opportunity to try out some more sections of the story in an appropriate setting.

Second Performance Experience

My second opportunity to present parts of the emerging travel tale piece was at *Sharing the Fire 2007*, a New England Storytelling Conference where I had been invited to be both a keynote speaker and workshop leader. The conference theme was *Flames for the Future*, an overview addressing questions about where the storytelling community wants and needs to go in the future in our art form. My talk, entitled *Storytelling, Metaphor, and Social Change*,

LANES, The League for the Advancement of New England Storytelling presents

Sharing the Fire


STORYTELLING
SHARING THE FIRE OF LIFE

26th Annual New England Storytelling Conference
Crowne Plaza, Nashua, NH
March 30-April 1, 2007


Theme: “Flames for the Future”

*Keynotes, workshops, story swaps, OLIO, coaching, bookstore and more!
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Jay O'Callahan



Heather Forest

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Figure 5.11. Sharing the Fire Poster.

focused on creating positive social change through the art of storytelling and celebrated tales of peace, justice, and the transformative power of carefully chosen words.

During the workshop I shared several longer segments of the travel tale piece bounded by the entrance and exit portals of the security interviews at JFK and Ben Gurion Airports. Compositionally I was delighted that the mutable meta-form I had created gave me the flexibility I wanted in adjusting the length of the work. I told parts of the *Stone Story* thread, and all of the *Seed Story* thread (see maps 1 and 2 pp. 184-185). Both of these sections had, by this time become sequentially coherent and had performable segments with both set and improvised text that need to continue to evolve in live performance. It was delightful to hear the audience laughter during moments in the security interview where I described the eccentricities of my grandparents. The layered inside/outside stance that I took in communicating with the security officer allowed me to create a daydream thought stream that the audience could hear as I mused out loud about my family and youth. At other moments in the performance, as the scenes unfolded, I heard sighs, gasps, and at times, utter attentive silence. The listener/teller relationship involves both overt and subtle communication. The *sound* of the audience listening helps me better understand the mood of the moments as they unfold. The audience response directs and alters the flow of the performance and will shape future renditions.

During the telling, I glanced at my watch and, alarmed, realized that I had limited time left. With more experience performing this piece, the timing will become set. For this particular telling, however, I mentally adapted the segment of the story describing the four war days and improvisationally condensed the section focusing on its essential moments. One aspect of oral storytelling is that each presentation is unique and must serve the needs of the time, place, and audience. Although I needed to end soon, I felt that it was important to heighten the emotional

arc of the tale as it flowed toward the ending. I broadly sketched my range of emotions during the escalating violence. I starkly contrasted my growing pride in Jewish heritage that deepened during the expedition to ancient storied places with my feelings of shame at the civilian toll the Israeli military action was taking in Southern Lebanon. To sweep into the ending section, I focused on my experience at the pacifist art exhibit at the Museum of the Seam in Jerusalem and then described the security interview at the Ben Gurion Airport in which the pictures I had just purchased at The Museum of the Seam, depicting the futility of violence to create peace in the Middle East, had caused alarm. My story came to an end with the Paradox poem which, by this performance, had developed into a song. Emotional closure occurred with music as I sang, "*There must be a way besides war.*"

The audience response was strong applause. My response was a combination of relief, astonishment, and pleasure that the interior pieces had held together well. My memory did not fail me as I accurately conveyed the set text portions. My words did not falter as I flowed through the improvised oral scenes. I felt elated.

Afterwards

As I stepped off the speaker's platform, I was surrounded by a flurry of people who needed to dialogue. I engaged in a lively conversation with audience members. The talk was energetic, sometimes explosive, affirmative, confusing, clarifying, and more. The attendees at the concert were all storytellers and storytelling enthusiasts. This is my community. There were those who were delighted by the workshop concepts I presented describing personal creative thinking modes. People were glad to hear my *naming* of creative thought processes we collectively recognized and shared. Others wanted to speak more about the power of metaphor to

shape reality and contribute to social change. The storytelling performance piece about my travel to Israel was applauded and its further development enthusiastically encouraged. A few were rattled by the plurivocal (Boje, 2001) stance I had taken in describing both Jewish and Arab perspectives on land.

As the crowd thinned, a small group of Jewish storytellers approached me for a conversation. I was informed that I had deeply upset several of the Jewish tellers in attendance with my rendering of both Israeli/Arab history and my description of the war with Hezbollah. I was told by one listener that sometimes the descriptions I offered so startled her that she could not hear my next sentence. “You have told a one-sided story,” she stated.

I listened intently to her comments for it was my heartfelt goal to tell the story of places I had visited from a postmodern, many-sided stance. Israel has a complex and layered history. I probed and asked to know specifically what I had said that offended. She told me that one example had been my use of the word “shame.” The word I had used, she explained to me with concern, deeply suggested negative judgment of Israel’s military actions, which, in her opinion were justifiable and in self-defense. As I listened to the critique, I realized that in telling my travel story with so many personal details I had identified myself as a Jew to many who did not before know this about me. I was being intimately addressed as a *Jewish* community member. Throughout the conversation I was advised that it is my *cultural* responsibility to get the story *right* before I take it out into the world. I understood the underlying, unspoken message in the word “*right*.” It protectively means – against the backdrop of the Holocaust and in the context of a dangerous world, take care not to make negative statements that could contribute to anti-Semitism.

I thanked everyone for their comments and, centering myself, considered the concept of *rightness* in a larger context. As a woman, a mother, an artist, a peace activist, a storyteller, a global citizen, and a Jew, I seek to speak in ways that keep dialogue and listening open, not shut. “Getting it *right*,” to me means keeping the paradoxical and conflicting points of view available and present for discourse. This, I believe, is the ethical first step toward long-lasting peace, justice, and safety in the Middle East. People must be willing to hear and empathize with each others’ stories.

In his book *Leadership without Easy Answers*, Heifetz (1994) speaks about *adaptive* change, the kind of change that requires a new way of thinking or doing. He encourages change agents to “modulate the provocation” when encouraging people to consider new ways of looking at issues so that one rocks the boat without toppling it over. My goal as the narrator of the story is to *report* the tale. (Re)port means to carry again. As I carry the tale I am the messenger not the judge. I must find a way, as a vessel for the tale, to present the material without becoming a “lightning rod” for personal challenge. I want listeners to question the politics of violence not me.

Hearing the range of feedback was useful. After the presentation, with the inclusion now of a live listening audience, I realized that I am dealing with some edgy material and I must walk a delicate line as a messenger attempting to artfully present a multi-sided tale. While staying true to my feelings, in order to be heard, I must carefully consider my words. I could have used a less judgmental, inflammatory word such as “pain” instead of “shame” in my story as I described my visceral response to the sight of the effects of the massive air-strikes documented on the evening news. I felt emotional *pain* as I took in the reports of civilian deaths on *both* sides of the battle and of the environmental devastation caused by the bombing on *both* sides of the border.

Describing my feelings during the first four days of war is complex and must be evocatively crafted in this storytelling piece. Paradoxical emotions swirled as I simultaneously understood the significance of national vulnerability and yet questioned the wisdom of Israel's swift and sizable military response. War can be defensive, or dangerous and reckless. I wondered again and again, *How can we find new ways to respond to aggression without being aggressive in return? War is a futile long-term solution to peace and safety.*

I made a note to myself to use poetry and "set text," in telling the *four-days of war* segment of the tale. Improvisation has its risks. Carefully chosen, memorized words offer an emotional armature in performance. I must always be mindfully responsive to my listeners. It is essential, at times, to be adaptable and capable of creating innovative words that suit the theme. Storytelling is akin to verbal jazz. The ability to condense and illuminate the essential point of a tale is also a storytelling core skill. The ability to co-create with an audience is at the heart of the art. I must be a responsible guide for those I invite into the world of my story. I need to learn how the story emotionally works when it is shared with different audiences. This subtlety is part of the creative process of developing a tale and takes countless tellings. It is sometimes a school of hard knocks. Both failure and success are acceptable teachers. Openness to critique is a core competency. Each listener receives the story differently. I must be responsive yet balanced.

The morning after the event, one of the organizers emailed me and wrote: "When I think of the information you presented, we as storytellers, have an awesome responsibility before us. We can change the world with our words if we choose carefully and really think about what we put into the pot. I, for one, will take this new information, and continue in a more mindful way in my own story journey. Thank you."

Another wrote, "Peace has a chance."

Sharing the Fire, 2007
Nashua, New Hampshire



Figure 5.12. Sharing the Fire (photos: courtesy of Doria Hughes).

Summary: Surveying the Imaginal Terrain

This autoethnographic essay describes and interprets my creative process as a storyteller composing and performing a layered story on issues of peace, justice, and social change. Looking back over the imaginal terrain I have traveled, I see that my journey to artistically interpret a diary written during a time of war in Israel in July, 2006 as a storytelling performance work, began with a profusion of memories, emotions, and images, and ended in an evolving but coherent story to tell. There were myriad small steps along the way that, as a working artist, I would have generally experienced at lightning speed. But for this arts-based study, I have slowed and widened my perception in order to capture the choices, layers of activity, and *essence* of my creative process as a storyteller.

Design Stage, Rehearsal Stage, Performance Stage

Developing my diary into a tellable tale, I traveled through stages of thinking and embodiment. These stages included a *design* stage, a *rehearsal* stage, and a *performance* stage. In the *design* and *rehearsal* stages I developed a flexible temporal sequence that will continue to deepen and nuance over time through my *performance* stage explorations. Hundreds of tellings are necessary for a tale to fully mature. This evolutionary, co-creative process is built on telling a story for diverse audiences and in diverse settings. The travel tale I have developed as my *research vehicle* to inquire into creative process is in its nascent form.

In the *design* stage the composition emerged and evolved as I considered, welcomed, and accepted the presence of diverse possibilities. I remained comfortable with the ambiguity of not knowing the configuration of the final form and had faith in the improvisational creative process. Curious, and driven by the anticipation of discovery, I remained confident that eventually I

would intuitively, logically, or pragmatically make design choices that had structural integrity. I trusted that, if nurtured, the seeds of ideas would sprout and blossom. I sought an abundance of creative solutions and, trusting in the wellspring of creative thought, I remained open to spontaneous and unpredictable connections. I used diverse creative thinking modes. I was willing to repeat the generative/evaluative process of conceiving of ideas and winnowing them down again and again. New ideas were explored both through journaling, drawing, and through physical and verbal improvisation. Amalgamating and adding on to the developing form, I held temporary forms gingerly in mind as I created steps toward resolved choices. I discarded as many or more ideas than I kept.

I paused to authentically examine my political, emotional, and spiritual position as narrator of the tale. I empathized with my imagined audience and carefully considered the impact of metaphor, language, and image use. I juggled complex personal emotions and learned about the edges of my ability to hold paradox without confusion. As a person living in a complex world, my

CREATIVE THINKING MODES

- Discovery through Linking
- End-Generated Process
- Fishing for Ideas in the Ocean of Memory
- Chronology
- Deep Chronology
- Wheel of Association
- Questioning:
 - What if? When? Where? Why? How?
- Pattern Finding
- Forming, Framing, Fashioning
- Devising Worlds
- Creative Leaps
- Introspection and Reflection
- Embracing Paradox

Figure 5.13. Creative Thinking Modes.

compassion and understanding grew as a result of shaping the material in this story. I sought understanding through arts-based exploration.

Like a living form, the story I have designed has discrete parts and yet has a feeling of wholeness. Metaphorically, it is not a *machine with working parts* but an *organic living form* that unfolds in time and space with a *presence* in the experience of both teller and listener.

Structurally, the nested story form I designed has an opening and a closing, a portal into and out of the tale; it has an interior environment in which I can explore a weave of personal, political,

historical and folkloric stories. It has evanescence as it exists *only* as I bring it forth in live performance. It will continue to grow over time influenced by the lived experience of sharing the story with audiences.

STORYTELLER'S DESIGN STAGE ACTIVITIES

- **Inventing** using diverse creative thinking modes to generate new ideas
- **Critiquing** alternatives through intrapersonal dialogue
Creative, Critic, Meta-Viewer
- **Deciding** through diverse decision making approaches
Intuitive, logical, pragmatic,
- **Documenting** to clerically capture ideas
Audio, journal, physical embodiment
- **Expressing through Art** to explore meaning
Drawings, poetry, songs, dance movement, literary prose
- **Emotionally Responding** to content to establish positioning
Attachment/nonattachment, attraction/wince,
confusion/clarity

Figure 5.14. Storyteller's Design Stage Activities.

In the *rehearsal* stage I sought to consistently nurture and *recreate* the emerging, nebulous form as it grew. Questions informed the work.

- *How does it flow?*
- *What are the transitions?*
- *How much to tell? What to leave out?*
- *What is the pivotal sequence?*
- *What is the emotional edge?*
- *What is the resonating message?*

Until a story composition is shared with an audience it exists in a private world. For me, the rehearsal time is an intense carving of image-laden, mental spaces and pathways to travel that must hold their shape in the presence of listeners who will add yet another new layer of energy to the tale. In rehearsal, the developing form needs to be explored again and again like a repeated journey. Each time the pathway becomes more and more clear. New details will emerge in the telling. The tale becomes a *place* to go in imaginal space that I can re-visit and explore. With each visit new understandings emerge. My body, moving in space, helps me hold the form as a sequence in time. The physical environment *around* my body becomes an extension of my imagination as I physically move through externalized images I see vividly in my imagination. New text grows out of the pictures I imagine.

Some parts of the story may have set text requiring the challenge of a word-for word memorization. Other parts are based on a flow chart or a cinema-like series of images that prompt newly invented language. Eventually the language will gel and become more predictable as it develops and grows firm.

I envision the audience and imagine their response. I intend to create specific response with images, language choice, pause, characterization, and the non-verbal aspects in the performance of oral stories. I practice. I practice slowly and with intentionality. I remind myself that I can always speed up the patterns later. If I practice without mindful attention to intended detail, I unwittingly carve careless habits into the performance that are difficult to change. I become an expert at my own mistake. I ask myself to stay *awake* in rehearsal. A family friend once wisely counseled me when she watched me play guitar.

Practice does not make perfect

Only perfect practice makes perfect

REHEARSAL STAGE ACTIVITIES

- Imaginative re-enactment
- Repetition
- Improvisation
- Building of secure scaffolding for remembering spoken text
- Prediction of audience response
- Empathy for future audience response
- Practice
- Mindful awareness of detail
- Discovery

Figure 5.15. Rehearsal Stage Activities.

The *performance stage* of developing a storytelling work is an opportunity to express the composition with the presence of the co-creative energy of an audience to help shape the timing, dramatic intensity, and flow of the work – a time when reflection *in action* (Schön, 1983) is essential. While sensing the outer audience response and my internal imaginal experience, I must also be an attentive listener to my own voice. Just as singers must listen to themselves in order to stay in tune, storytellers also must listen to themselves as they speak in order to shape the sound. I must be *in the moment* imagining each image as it unfolds so that the image (in)forms my body, facial expression, and gesture. My tacit experience has taught me that there are always uncanny surprises in a live performance event. The ability to respond to the unexpected requires a constant willingness to improvise, even if performing a set text. Intimate interaction with the listeners affects the performance in sometimes subtle ways. I could be repeating the same sequence of events, but told in a new place and time with new listeners, each sharing is different. Each performance experience contributes new knowledge to the next telling. Storytelling is a living event.

PERFORMANCE STAGE ACTIVITIES

- Enactment
- Improvisation
- Mindful attention to the present
- Nervous excitement
- Fantasy
- Interconnectedness with the audience
- Active and subtle response to audience responsiveness

Figure 5.16. Performance Stage Activities.

You can never step in the same river twice.

–Heraclitus

Amalgamation, Integration, Transformation

The teller must hold a *meta-view* of the story's whole form yet unfold and transmit the structure in time and space part by part, *moment by moment* so others can follow the sequence of events. The teller must maintain a clear, emotional overview so that dramatic or affective aspects of the tale can be shared without the teller losing balance. Telling a richly emotional story, moment by moment, links to journey, time, and pathway metaphors. The teller is a tour guide leading listeners through the world of the tale.

Telling a tale is an interactive group endeavor. Sharing a story with an enthusiastic listener involves *amalgamation, integration, and transformation* processes. As the teller shares the meta-tale bit by bit, the listener must reassemble and amalgamate the *moment by moment* parts into a uniquely constructed whole. As an artist I most humbly acknowledge that since everyone has a different memory bank of lived experience and a unique imagination, each listener constructs a slightly different tale. I can only speculate on what is being processed by the listener. The tale I am telling is not *always* the tale that is heard. The listener's cognitive assembling of the story parts into a whole sparks a creative process on the part of the listener. New ideas enter the listener's consciousness from both the exterior input (the teller) and from the interior world (the listener's memory and imagination).

As a complex form of metaphor, a story is *integrated* into the conscious and unconscious levels of the listener by neurological linking to prior embodied knowledge (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The story images are physically woven into the fabric of the listener's experience as the sense making takes place. "*Neurons that fire together wire together*" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 256). Stories can change people – can inspire, motivate, and educate.

More needs to be known about the effectiveness of different types of stories as change tools. Stories can be utilized in many domains: healing, education, entertainment, law, business, ministry, psychology. Stories are a primal sense making device and contribute to the structure of perceived reality. Stories can become a lens used to make sense of a complex and confusing world. Stories touch affective levels in the listener and can influence feeling, thoughts, and then actions. The teller is a vessel for stories and engages in a complex and ancient form of educational communication that can be *transformative*. The teller is a leader who can bring listeners into new ways of knowing, imagining, and feeling through powerful, vicarious experience in the imaginal world of an unfolding tale.

Chapter Six

(Re)Presenting the Performance

Musings on Documentation

The performance work developed as a *research vehicle* for this arts-based study emerged from a written travel journal. I aesthetically interpreted the travel journal as a storytelling work to be performed before a live audience. An autoethnographic (re)presentation of the storytelling performance work that explores and interprets the creative process of the piece as it developed over time can be found in Chapter Five, *Travels in Imaginal Space*.

Now I have arrived at a dilemma. *How can the actual live performance be (re)presented in a research paper?* Documenting the live storytelling performance work by inscribing the words and music of the work on paper does not depict a live improvisational performance event in its embodied, experiential form. Oral storytelling is an interactive, living art form in which stories presented in a temporal sequence are shared in physical space by a teller in consort with a listener. As such, a *documentation* of the phenomena of live storytelling is not the *actual* storytelling performance but is another expressive entity with unique qualities distinct to the chosen format of (re)presentation. From a post-modern, semiotic perspective, a live performance could be (re)presented as a film of the performance, photography of the performance, an audio recording of the performance, a review by an art critic or audience member, a scenario map of the sequence of events, an autoethnographic essay by the performer, a written script or transcription of the spoken text with description of physical nonverbal communication, and so on. Each method of representation has credibility, limitations and possesses distinct qualities. As an interactive social exchange, the art of storytelling presents an aesthetic challenge when

attempting to capture, mirror, depict, portray, describe, or replicate the *actual* lived experience of performing a story in the *actual* presence of a listener.

The *crisis of representation* regarding the “uncertainty within the human sciences about adequate means of describing social reality” is discussed by Thomas Schwandt (2001) who states, “No interpretive account can ever directly or completely capture lived experience” (p. 41). The producing of a film or audio recording of a storytelling performance results in a static representation of *one* particular telling event. A literary script does not include the audience response and its subtle effect on the teller. A mnemonic scenario map shows the design intention of the teller’s improvisational pathway through the plot but does not offer the actual words spoken. A literary script offers the performance text but not the sound of the language and the nonverbal physicality of live telling.

For the purposes of this arts-based study on *how* a teller composes and performs a complex tale, I have considered diverse ways to *show* the performance work I designed as my *research vehicle* in this research paper. Since I cannot physically travel with the document and share a full length live improvisational performance with anyone who wishes to read the paper, I have chosen to portray the performance design as a scenario map. I have also captured the sound quality of the performance design in audio clips of the emerging performance work that has been recorded in both a live performance setting and in a rehearsal setting. The performance sound clips included in my documentation CD are from a debut workshop performance on April 1, 2006 at the *Sharing the Fire Storytelling Conference* in Nashua, New Hampshire and include audience response. I have also included a collection of photographs taken during the first workshop performance.

The Map as a Pathway Metaphor

The primary focus of this arts-based exploration is to illuminate the *essence* of the creative process of the teller during the journey from conception to birth of an original live storytelling work. Limitations exist within all forms of representing the *actual* performance work in a research paper. “The dilemma of representation [does not] dissolve the responsibility of the social scientist to describe and explain the social world”

(Schwandt, 2001, p. 42). Therefore,

maintaining focus on my arts-

based inquiry and based also on

personal aesthetics, I have chosen

the metaphor of a scenario map of

the performance work as one of

the primary ways to (re)present

the performance work utilized as a *research vehicle* in this arts-based study. The map also

(re)presents and reflects my artistic process in developing the work. As I build a performance

piece, I anchor my initial verbal improvisations in story maps sketched in my notebook during

the construction of the performance work (see the appendix for the original drawings). The

maps help me travel from one pivotal point in the sequence of events to the next. The maps I

make do not include actual spoken text but are graphic, mnemonic devices that spark my

visualization which in turn generates language.

The computer-generated story map included in this chapter is based on my informal notebook sketches (see appendix). The computer-generated diagram is a scenario map that

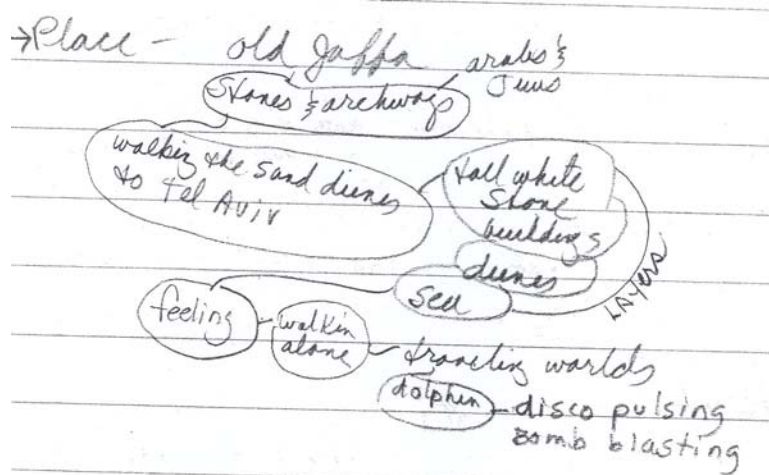


Figure 6.01. Map Segment Drawing.

shows a flow chart of scenes including the entrance into the tale, a series of interior stories, and an exit. The interior tales are depicted by titles and sub-scenes which are short and modular and can be linked or omitted depending upon time constraints in performance. In the first half of the travel tale there are two *story threads*, or linked tales depicted. These threads were assembled by fishing for memories in my travel journal using two themes, *Stone* and *Seed*. The four days in which I experienced the beginnings of the war with Hezbollah are represented in a more linear, chronological form that cross-cuts between three parallel story threads: memoir, history, and news.

Many Pathways

Interpreting a travel diary could have resulted in countless performance pieces. As in everyday lived experience, there can be many acceptable solutions to every problem. Artists must make choices when creating a work. Ideas are generated and kept. Ideas are considered and discarded. Some ideas vanish after the implementation or performance of the design and the audience's response has had its effect on the decision making of the storytelling artist. The performance work that I have (re)presented in this scenario map will evolve over time and will continue to change. The design is the result of a whole-hearted, intentional, creative thinking process. Perhaps the first step in making something new is to decide to authentically engage in the process. For me, excellence is expressed by working to the fullest of my capacity at any given time and embodying a genuine willingness to explore new horizons.

The ETD digital form of this paper stored in the digital dissertations archive at Ohiolink offers an interactive listening/visual experience for the reader. The digital form of the map is layered with audio files that allow the reader to hear parts of the tale embodied by the map.

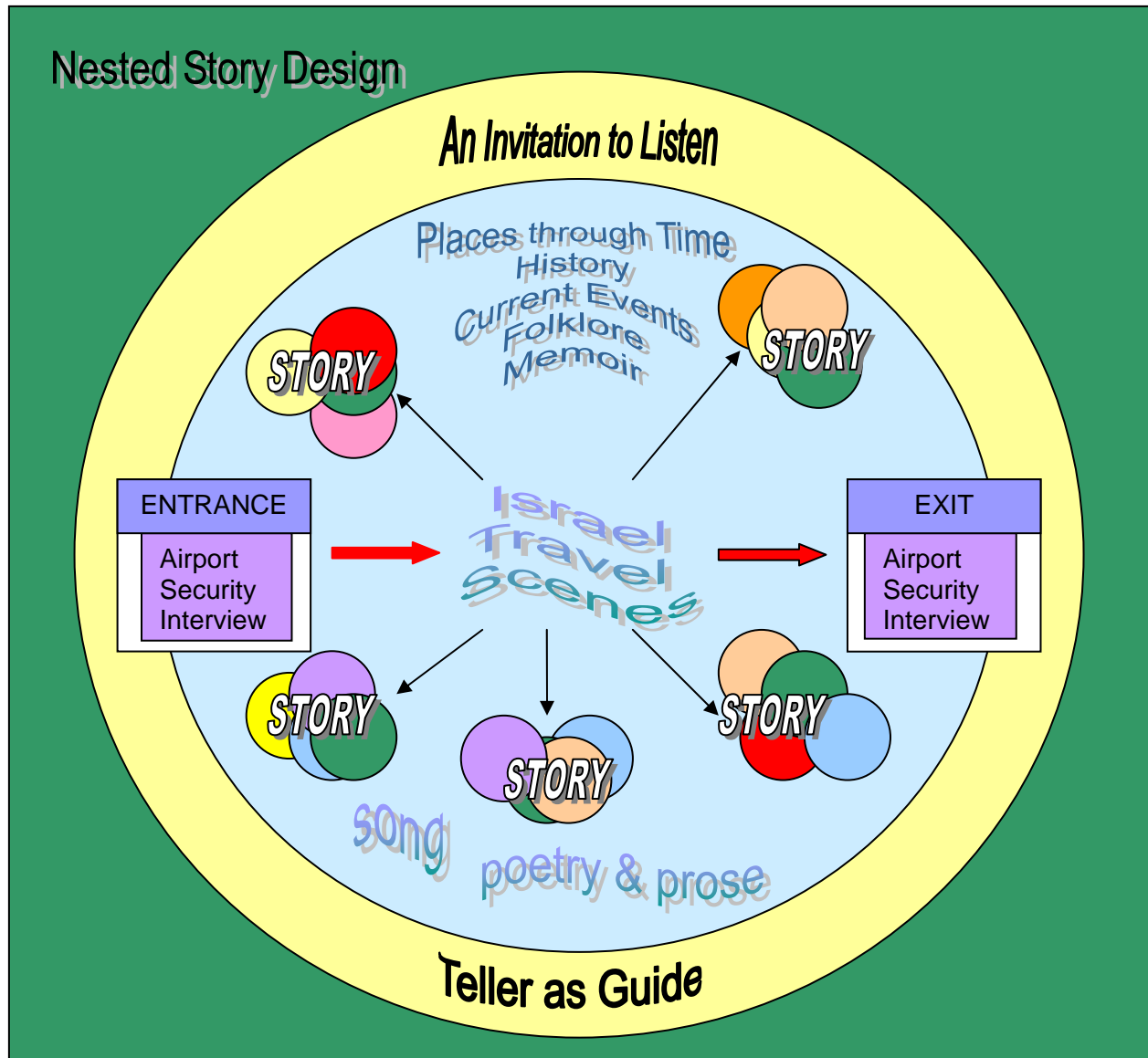
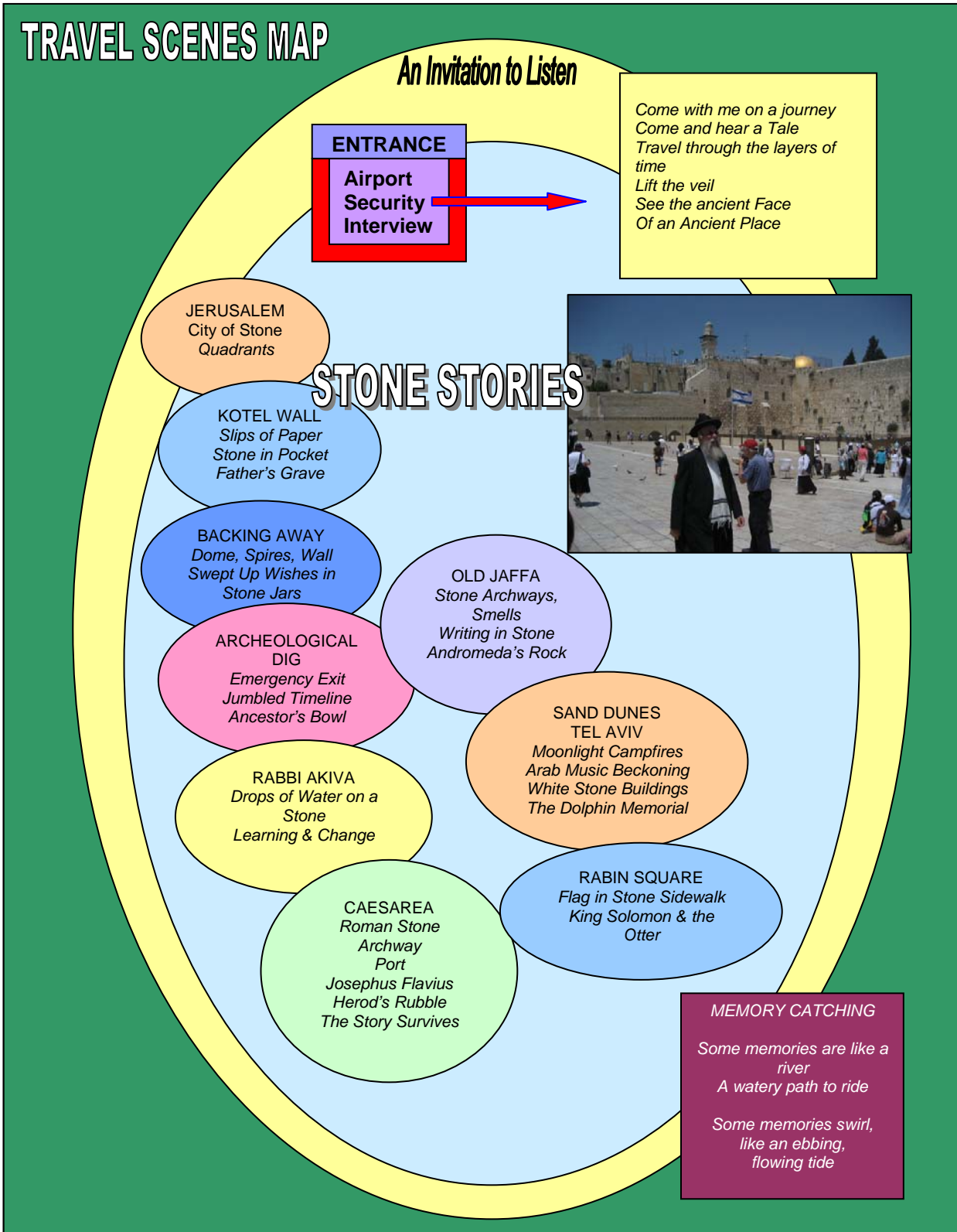
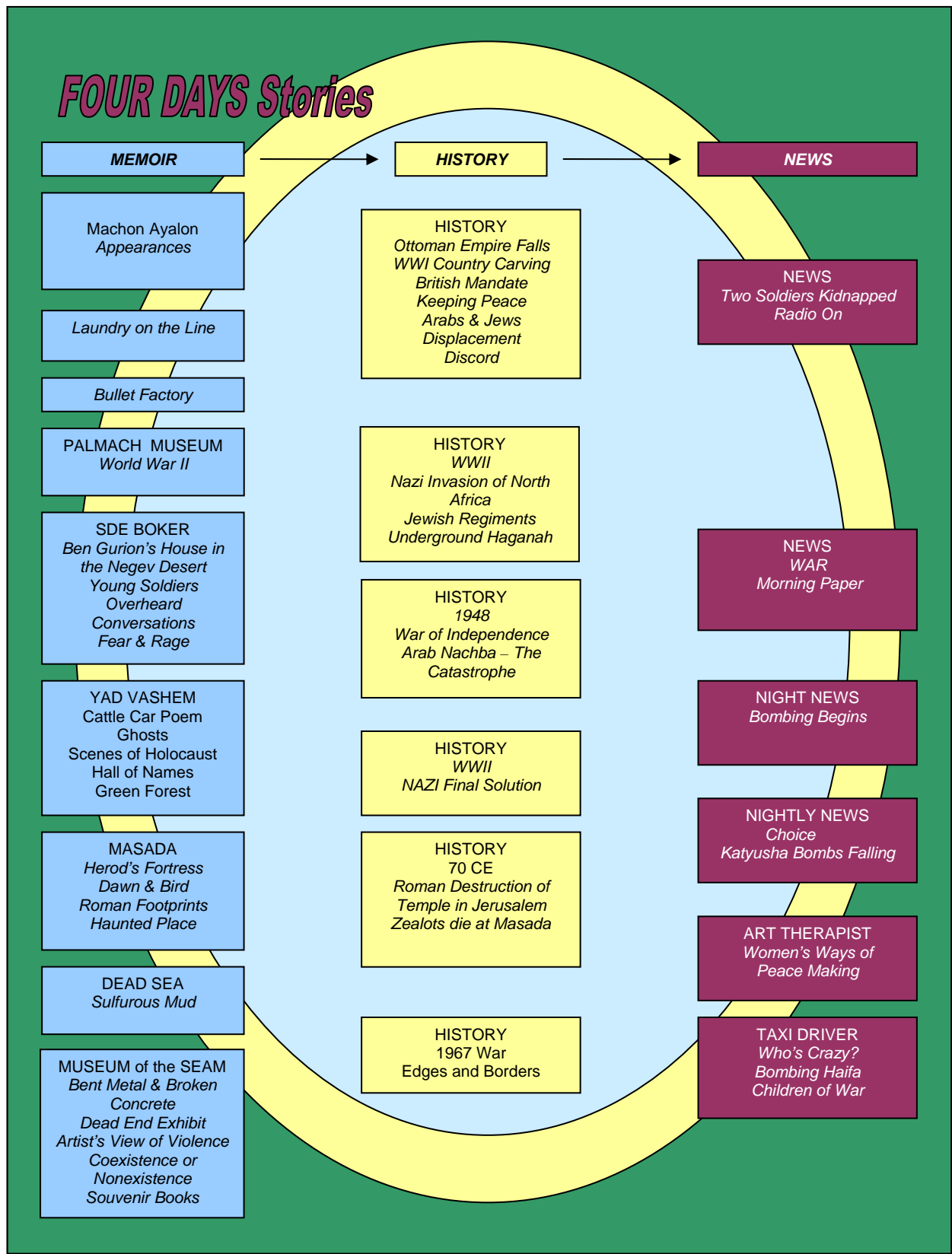


Figure 6.02. Nested Story Design Map.







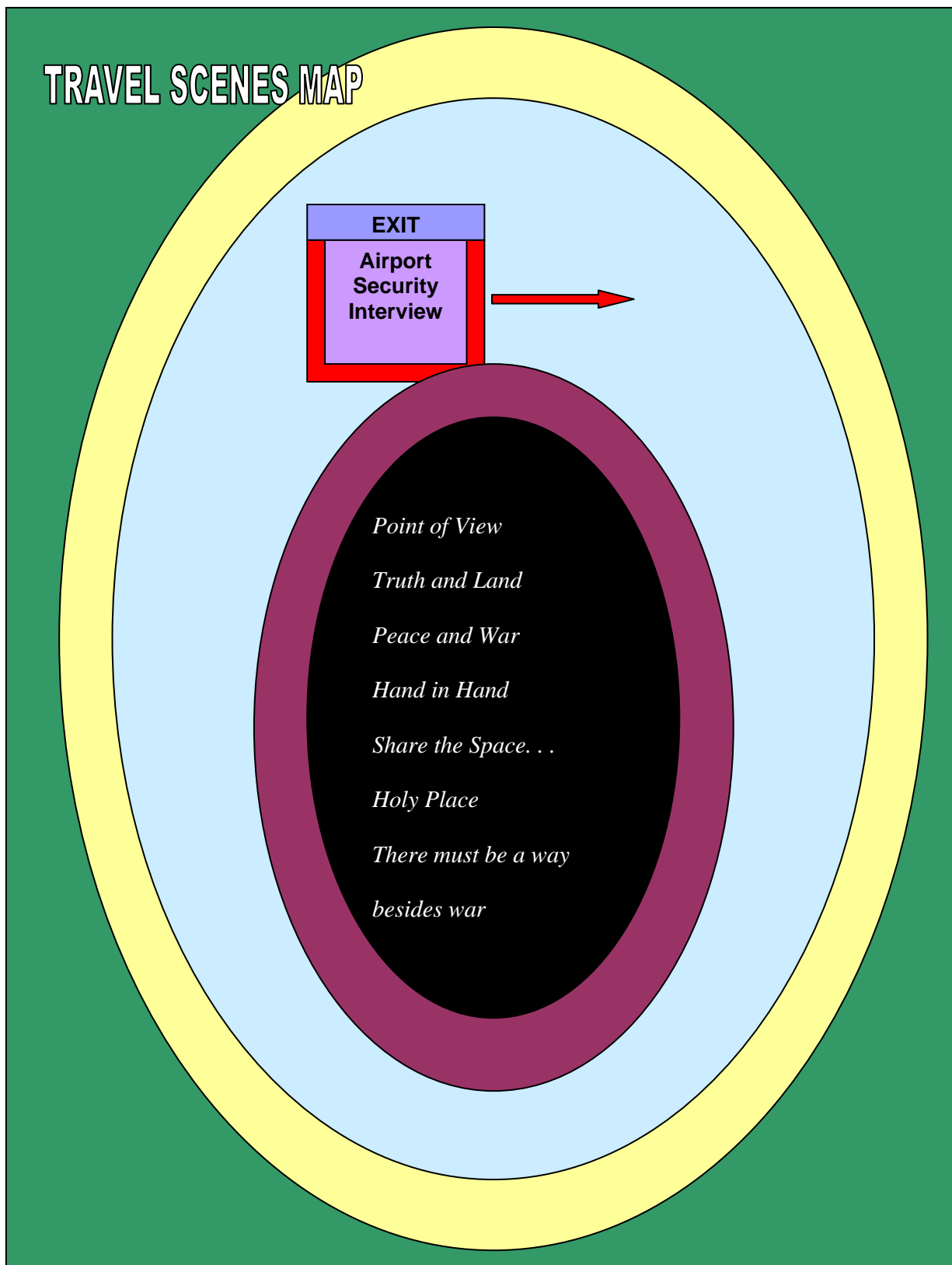


Figure 6.06. Map 4.

Chapter Seven

Artful Leadership for Creating Change

The Art of Designing in Time and Space

The creative activity of *designing* is a component of a wide range of human endeavors from city planning to meal making and is a creative act involving both the generating of ideas and the decision-making process of the inclusion and exclusion of ideas. Implementing a design is also a tacitly understood experience in everyday life as we manipulate our environment to solve problems. The making of a story is akin to the making of other conceptual forms such as a plan or a change vision.

Story composition, like any unfolding event, can be perceived as something “out there” with an ontological feel, experienced as an entity, as a structure, or as architecture. Or it can be experienced as something “inside,” as an unfolding imaginal experience. A story that is known “by heart” and yet untold is like a *plan*. While a story is being told it is a relational *event*.

As an *entity*, a story, even about one’s own lived experience, can be reflectively examined and objectively considered. Conversely, a story can manifest as a more nebulous, inner sensibility and can be a *feeling form*, can generate aesthetic pleasure, or can be a poignant stimulus for change.

As a storytelling artist, I designed a performance work based on a personal travel diary written in Israel in July, 2006, during a time of war. Addressing issues of peace, justice, and social change, the storytelling work I composed is a layered, plurivocal (Boje, 2001) presentation of events that includes diverse political points of view and is intended to encourage dialogue and conversation about paradox and choices made during times of war. Artistically investigating the

topic of justice issues has an implicit multi-voice component. Embracing and describing the postmodernism of multiple points of view is embedded in the task. Through the design, rehearsal, and performance of my story threads, songs, and poems, I came to clearer understandings of my own positioning in the unfolding events I experienced in my travels to Israel in July, 2006, and was able to maintain a meta-view of the whole of the tale as I explored the parts twined as neat braids and tangled knots.

Making Sense of Chaos

Making sense of chaos is one of the roles of both the storyteller and a leader who is leading social change. Creating temporal sequencing imposes an order on the swirl of memory and implies an unfolding causality in life's sometimes inexplicable chain of events. However, considering complex events from only one point of view offers limited information. Constructing and deconstructing the events in the segment of time I spent in Israel during the summer of 2006, I composed modular story forms in order to retell those events in non-linear as well as linear ways.

Oral storytelling, as an art form, offers a model for ways to navigate through life's stormy waters. When the pathways in a time of confusion are not clear, but instead are a jumble of multidirectional possibilities, one must be willing to generate new ideas and carve new pathways. Creative thinking skill is a core competency at times of complexity and confusion.

Some Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders

Mindfully exploring the development, composition and performance of a storytelling work, I observed that I engaged in a wide variety of thinking strategies and arts activities that

could be useful in training change leaders. A collection of arts-based core competencies emerged.

Holding the Meta-view.

As a storyteller I built a work that is modular and can be performed in diverse lengths. Yet, as a performance artist whose work unfolds in time and space, I must consistently be capable of holding the meta-view of the *whole* in mind as I manifest the *parts*. I must understand the integrity of the *big picture*. Change leaders need this skill, too. It is not always easy to see the whole of an unfolding form until it happens or until the disparate parts are amalgamated and understood by the audience. Experience in composing conceptual forms in the arts would offer change leaders an *embodied*, experiential understanding of how parts and wholes contribute to coherence. *Embodied* knowledge is authentic, lived experience and intrinsically memorable. *Embodied* knowledge is a form of *common sense* about physical presence in the world and can be applied in diverse ways when problem solving. Designing social change involves the creative ability to see the *whole* while juggling the *parts*.

Improvisation.

As I developed the storytelling work I physically immersed myself in improvisation. Many sections of the performance work are designed as conceptual scenarios that are brought to life through improvised language. Change leaders sometimes need to be able to improvise and invent *in the moment*. Storytelling improvisation is a kind of verbal jazz, where the theme is set but the verbal vamping is not. Skill in improvisation gives fluidity to a work and allows the possibility of adapting the timing and content to fit the situation, setting, and audience. There

must be a solid knowledge base that grounds the work, but once the performance is in play it has to *flow* and be responsive to the context in which it is happening. The change leader also needs to know how and when to change course. Life is not always possible to micro-manage and script, word-for-word. Surprises happen. “In moving from traditional managerial approaches to improvisation, core skills shift from sequential planning-then-doing to simultaneous listening-and-observing while doing” (Adler, 2006, p. 492). This is a form of reflection in action (Schön, (1983). It is a *way of being* while performing a story or implementing a change vision that unfolds in time and space. Improvisation requires *presence*, moment-by-moment to keep the design intact. Presence offers a center of balance and the ability to leap with full creative resources in diverse directions.

Experience with improvisation through the arts would offer change leaders vicarious experience with the mindful practice of thinking and creating while in action. Having *presence* allows for the fullest inspiration and expression in improvisation to occur and creates an imaginal space for new possibilities, discoveries, and solutions.

Embodying a Multi-faceted Process.

The creative process I observed in myself included an inner dialogue with many aspects of myself. I was at once a *creator*, a *critic*, and consistently served as a *meta-viewer* with an eye toward the context in which I would eventually share the work. In collaborative team leadership there are often multiple people who work as an ensemble with different styles of creativity. There are those who innately have the ability to clarify the problem, others who generate ideas, others who develop solutions, and still others who implement solutions (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007). Storytelling artists who are constructing a performance work need to be able to *be*

the whole team. An artist's work engages all the aspects of clarifying, generating, developing, and implementing ideas. Exploring the composition and performance of a conceptual form such as a story offers an experiential opportunity to *embody a team* in action. To develop skill in both composition and performance or in design and implementation, the artist as well as the change leader needs practice. Arts-based training would offer a metaphorical context in which to expand creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Insight into the *essence* of the creative process of constructing a tale offers information about how diverse modes of creative thinking occur.

Embracing Paradox and Ambiguity.

Willingness to engage in divergent thinking and to generate abundant ideas while deferring judgment of the ideas until they have a chance to develop (Puccio, Murdock, Mance, 2007) reveals patience and a tolerance for ambiguity. This is a competency that change leaders could explore through the arts. An artist does not always know how the art will unfold. The creative process is a discovery process. New ideas are generated by actively engaging in the stages of creative process. I noticed that my own process had kinship with the creativity stages described by Graham Wallas (1926): preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. I often left my project to mull it over and I let ideas "incubate." I had startling moments where the mental light bulb went on and my quandary was "illuminated" by juxtaposing, forming or fashioning ideas.

As I wrote an autoethnography of my creative process I, *noted* and *named* my thinking modes, I realized that the kinds of creative thinking modes I observed in myself are types that can be explored intentionally and deepened as skill sets. I self-identified a wide range of thinking styles. I *fished for ideas* using a theme or a word for "bait." I engaged in *end-process thinking*

when I knew where I wanted to go but reiteratively devised many ways to get there. I noticed patterns. I formed patterns. I framed and selected particular ideas. I fashioned or assembled component parts. I explored ideas through chronology and deepened the chronology by investigating layers of meaning in particular moments. I asked *what if?* I invented worlds. I took some leaps of faith into the unknown. I held and juxtaposed multiple perspectives. I embraced paradox. As I wrote an extensive list of findings I reflected that the layers of the veil had lifted. I could see that the creative process in which I had been passionately engaged was no longer a mystery. For an artist, there are always more layers to peel away in the creative process. However, this arts-based exploration of documenting and *naming* steps and stages along the way has given me a way to communicate to others about an evanescent and nebulous experience.

Change leaders could benefit from becoming mindful of the personal creative thinking process that underlies the design of a change vision.

Flexible Thinking.

In designing a story I flexibly used many diverse creative thinking modes and strategies for problem solving. I had a palette of ways to engage in creative thinking. Arts-based experiences would offer change leaders a metaphorical vehicle through which to explore and develop skills in diverse creative problem solving strategies. Creativity is not only the invention of something completely *new*. It can also be the framing or fashioning of elements for new purposes.

Flexible thinking encourages the generation of an abundance of ideas and possibilities. Flexible thinking includes the willingness to be *unattached* to one's inventions so that new ideas can enter into consideration. Rigidity and *attachment* to ideas limit creativity.

Mindful Responsiveness.

Oral storytelling is a co-creative art form in which the storyteller, while telling a tale, must have an alert sensitivity and openness to direct feedback from the listener. The teller and the listener are interwoven in the living *event* of sharing a story. The storyteller must be able to subtly adapt the tale for the setting and the audience. By *reading* the body language, sound, and facial expression in listener response, the teller must be able to critically, and often intuitively, assess the needs of the situation, or context of the telling. The storyteller may relate the same storied message, but in varied settings, for different age groups, or for diverse types of audiences, the vocabulary or the nuanced emphasis might appropriately change.

Howard Gardner (1995) has described a wide range of cognitive listening levels from the “unschooled mind” of those who think in simple dualities to those listeners who can appreciate diverse points of view in context. Gardner (1995) encourages leaders to “appreciate the nature of the audience(s), including its changeable features” (p. 302). Training in the art of storytelling could offer change leaders skill in adapting their change vision story to suit the diverse listening capacities of their audiences and the range of settings in which the change tale may be told.

Intentional Engagement in Creative Process.

Creativity is the result of an intentional engagement with creative process. I began my creative work by establishing an environment conducive to personal creativity both inwardly and outwardly. I set up a physical rehearsal studio in *actual* space and made some mental room in *imaginal* space. As I developed my performance piece, I became mindfully aware that new ideas and invention did not just *magically* happen. By slowing down my perceptions during the *design stage*, *rehearsal stage*, and *performance stage* of making a storytelling work I was able to

recognize, note and interpret, through autoethnographic writing process, a wide range of concrete actions that occurred as I purposefully created a conceptual design. Change leaders could benefit from developing a personal work environment that contributes to the comfortable, creative flow of ideas.

Summary Reflections on Arts-Based Skills

Reflecting on my collection of diverse data about *how* a storyteller goes about composing and performing a complex tale intended to be orally shared with listeners, I observed that the creative process in which I immersed myself was not a mysterious endeavor. Peeling away the layers of the creative process, I saw that the *design*, *rehearsal*, and *performance* stages of developing an oral story encompass a diverse collection of arts-based skills, an insatiable intellectual curiosity, and an emotional willingness to explore new territory. By *noting* and *naming* concrete steps in the creative process of composing and performing a multi-layered tale, I have gained new vocabulary through which to describe the creative thinking process to others. Hopefully the descriptions and interpretive categories of arts-based thinking skills that emerged from my deep reflection on personal creative process in storytelling will offer transferable insights for the fields of storytelling studies and change leadership training. Considering the seminal stages of conceptual design process in storytelling can also offer illumination into creative design process for practitioners in other disciplines, such as education and civics, where time-and space-based conceptual designs are employed.

Creative thinking in the art of storytelling is an intentional engagement with wonder and imagination. As an art-form, storytelling offers an experiential, aesthetic way to make sense of the chaos and complexity of life. Storytelling is a powerful medium through which to

deconstruct the past or to describe a change vision for the future. Storytelling ability and creative thinking skills are core competencies for artfully leading change.

A Palette of Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders



Figure 7.01. A Palette of Arts-Based Skills for Change Leaders.

The Art of Leading Change

Leading change is a creative act. Social change, considered as an unfolding process, or, as a conceptual “living” form, has kinship to “live” time/space art forms, such as oral storytelling, music, dance, teaching, and spectacle, that involve creative design, communication skill and implementation or performance abilities. A social change leader must be able to compose a change vision, communicate it well to an audience, and then to shepherd or implement the vision as a positive, constructive action in the social world. Creative thinking is a core competency for change leadership. Innovative, visionary leaders are artists of life.

However, social change leaders do not often consider themselves *artists*. Perhaps the first step in applying knowledge about creative process to leadership and change is to expand the notion of what an *artist* is or does. Elliot Eisner (2002) defines artists as those:

who have developed the ideas, the sensibilities, the skills, and the imagination to create work that is well proportioned, skillfully executed, and imaginative, regardless of the domain in which an individual works. The highest accolade we can confer upon someone is to say that he or she is an artist whether as a carpenter or a surgeon, a cook or an engineer, a physicist or a teacher. The fine arts have no monopoly on the artistic. (pp. 3-4)

Eisner (1991) also points out that, “There are multiple ways in which the world can be known: artists, writers, dancers, as well as scientists, have important things to tell about the world” (p. 7). *What can social change leaders learn from examining the essence of the creative process of an artist? Can a storytelling artist offer insights into designing and leading change? How is a storyteller a change leader?*

There are conceptual connections between the creative thinking process of the storyteller (making and performing a story) and the creative thinking process of a change leader (designing

and leading social change). The *archetypical* role of the teller is ancient. A storyteller leads change through the art of storytelling. My comments in this chapter are based on emergent and tacit knowledge gained from an arts-based research inquiry into the unfolding creative process I experienced while making and performing a complex tale on themes of peace and justice. Using qualitative arts-based research methods and art making as my direct method of inquiry, a deeper, layered understanding of the *essence* of my own design process emerged. This text muses on the connections between telling stories and leading change. It examines how creative thinking, fluent communication skills, and engagement in creative process are core competencies for both the art of storytelling and the art of leading change.

Vision and Possibility

The future must be imagined. A leader who would create positive social change must be able to envision possibilities, inspire, and motivate action. A change leader must be a good storyteller. Others must be able to identify and to see themselves in the story of the future that the change leader presents as a change vision. Designing change requires creativity as well as wisdom, emotional intelligence, and practicality (Sternberg, 2005). Sometimes the way it has *always* been done no longer works in our complex modern world. We need new ways of knowing and new ways of solving complex problems.

In explaining why a Masters of Fine Arts is more valuable than a Masters of Business Administration in the globalized, interconnected world of the 21st century, Nancy Adler (2006) recently writes, “The scarce resource is innovative designers not financial analysts (p. 488) . . . Creating the next great thing demands constant innovation; it’s a design task, not merely an analytical or administrative function” (p. 490).

Today, rapid, massive change is not only possible, it is inevitable. The discrete, circumscribed strategies of yesterday are no longer appropriate or effective . . . Leaders search for successful strategies, only to discover that the most viable options need to be invented; they cannot simply be replicated. Designing innovative options requires more than the traditional analytical and decision-making skills taught during the past half century in most M.B.A. programs. Rather, it requires skills that creative artists have used for years. (Adler, 2006, p. 489)

Gerald Puccio, Mary Murdock, and Marie Mance, scholars from the International Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo State College, State University of New York, write, “More and more, creativity is recognized as a force that drives our economy and impacts our lives” (2007, p. xiii). Economist Richard Florida (2004) reiterates this thought:

We are embarking on an age of pervasive creativity that permeates all sectors of the economy and society – not just seeing bursts of innovation from high-tech industries. We are truly in the midst of a creative transformation with the onset of a creative economy. (In Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007, p. xiii)

In their recent book *Creative Leadership, Skills that Drive Change*, Puccio, Murdock, and Mance (2007) bring together contemporary theory on leadership and change and assert “Creativity is a process that leads to change” . . . “Because leaders bring about change, creativity is a core leadership competence” (p. xii). Considering the triad of leadership, change, and creativity, they propose, “An individual’s ability to think creatively and to facilitate creative thinking in others can be enhanced” (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007, p. xii). They further elaborate:

If we juxtapose change leadership with creativity, the issue of change is the essence of both. A leader often acts as a catalyst for change while creative thinking is a process that leads to change. Further we have found that the deliberate use of creative thinking provides a set of principles and procedures that enhances a leader's ability both to foster change and to respond to it. In short, the ability to successfully manage the creative process must be one of the core competencies of leadership. (Puccio, Murdock, Mance, 2007, p. xvi)

Creativity theorist Robert Sternberg (2005, p. 237) has identified three types of creative leadership in which leaders engage in creative thinking strategies and problem solving-approaches:

- Accepts the current paradigms but enhances it with replication, redefinition, and forward incrementation
- Rejects the current paradigm and replaces it through redirection, reconstruction, re-initiation
- Integrates existing paradigms and creates new ones through synthesis.

Effective creative leadership involves a wide pallet of flexible thinking approaches when solving problems. Artists also utilize a wide range of thinking strategies when composing a work of art.

Making connections to leadership literature, Puccio, Murdock, and Mance (2007) point out that Kouzes and Posner's (1995) research found that leaders who facilitate extraordinary accomplishments tend to:

- Challenge the process
- Inspire a shared vision

- Enable others to act
- Model the way
- Encourage the heart

They assert that there is a commonality in the skills and behaviors of effective leaders described by Kouzes and Posner (1995) and the skills and behaviors of highly creative people who “challenge the status quo, take risks, experiment with new approaches and examine alternate ways of solving problems” (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007, p. 9).

Highly creative people also focus on future possibilities, daydream about potential outcomes, think in terms of “what if” or “what might be” and are adept at getting others to buy into their ideas”. . . “In today’s complex work and social environments, creativity plays a crucial role in helping leaders to be more effective at facilitating change. (Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2007, p. 10)

Cutting-Edge Leadership Training through the Arts

Leadership skills can be enhanced with training through the arts. There is a growing academic interest in how the arts can serve leadership education that is reflected in the establishment of AACORN (*Arts, Aesthetics, Creativity, and Organization Research Network*) <http://www.aacorn.net>, a global forum for sharing arts-in-business research, and in the inclusion of “arts-based cases integrated into business school curricula at such leading institutions as Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, McGill, The Banff Centre, New York University, and the University of Chicago, among others” (Darsø, 2005, p. 59).

In Europe arts-based learning has become prominent during the last decade. Examples are the Cranfield School of Management in the UK, Nyenrode University in the

Netherlands, BI Norwegian School of Management in Oslo, Copenhagen Business School and Learning Lab, Denmark. (Darsø, 2005, p. 60)

An exemplar of cutting-edge, arts-based leadership training in Denmark is the Learning Lab's *The Creative Alliance*, "which has the goal of accentuating the learning potential of the interplay between arts and business, and advancing the understanding of how artful approaches can contribute to organizational and societal change" (Darsø, 2005, p. 60). Lotte Darsø's (2004) groundbreaking book, *Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business* offers case studies, an evolving theoretical framework, and maps the emerging field of Arts-in-Business. Her research reports on the work of 53 international artists and business people who are currently experientially exploring the integration of arts-based knowledge and organizational leadership and innovation.

As a storytelling artist and a researcher in the field of leadership and change, I speculate that the art of storytelling would be particularly well suited as a form to explore to advance knowledge of artful approaches to leadership. Both change leaders and storytellers need similar skills to create conceptual forms that unfold in time and space.

Commonalities: Storytellers and Change Leaders

During my arts-based study on the creative process of the storyteller, I deconstructed my creative thinking strategies while making a complex, multi-faceted story and slowed down my perception of the creative process until I could observe, in detail, the modes of thinking in which I engaged, the kinds of activities in which I entered, and how I generated, developed, and shaped my ideas through improvisation, intuition, and critical decision making. As an artist and student of leadership and change, I have noticed some commonalities between the storyteller and the

change leader. Storytellers and change leaders both devise abstract, conceptual forms that *happen* over time. A change vision is like a story. Both storytellers and change leaders:

- engage in creative visioning
- engage in conceptual design
- engage in co-creative relational activities in time and space with listeners
- engage in a primal influence activity
- utilize words/symbols/action in communication
- can be catalytic
- can challenge the status quo or create a new one

Teller as Leader

The *storyteller* is an ancient archetype. The teller, *or* one who *tells* could be considered as a meta-category for many leadership roles in our contemporary world, from the hierarchical to the non-hierarchical, from politics to parenting, the ministry to teaching, therapy to entertaining, to anyone who is expressing "leadership in place" (Wergin, 2007). The archetypal *storyteller* speaks from wherever he or she stands in society through symbolic, metaphorical communication that touches the emotions of listeners and can be deeply influential. Stories allow listeners to imagine the world in new ways. Through the art of the teller, seeds of new ideas can be planted in the minds of listeners, and, for the good or for the bad, take root and blossom over time.

In-place leadership is emergent. It springs from the soil, so to speak. It is not a quality of people, nor a prerequisite of position, but is instead a quality of behavior that compels others to pay attention, to see things anew, and to join forces in a common cause. It is

neither permanent, nor is it always wholly successful. But it brings honesty, sincerity, openness, and transparency to a challenge. It fosters mutuality and trust, because it is based not on power, but on deeply human exchange. (Leslie, 2007, p. xvii)

Leaders with both positional power *and* storytelling skill have led societies. But more often, traditional storytellers throughout history have not had *positional* power. The wandering minstrels of old shaped the news and defined history through sung ballads. In ancient Greece, the black slave Aesop questioned authority with metaphorical animal stories that illuminated the foibles of people. Stories passed from one generation to the next have preserved culture and worldview around the globe. Stories told by storytellers have also preserved old wounds. Instead of *positional* power, the storytelling artist wields *metaphorical* power.

Because of the power of metaphor, the ones who *tell* are often the first to be suppressed in times of political upheaval. Storytelling artists can move the masses from the heart. Storytelling, whether it is in a contemporary theatre, a political rally, at a tribunal, or around an ancient hearth fire, is a form of leading minds through the power of words. It is indirect, embodied leadership (Gardner, 1995) and can deeply influence people/society/culture by planting seeds of change as new metaphor. Storytelling communication instigates attention because it is engaging and draws on a listener's curiosity and wonder.

As an art communication, storytelling offers aesthetic forms that are symbolic, vicarious, and memorable. Complex ideas can be shared by linking abstract ideas to concrete ideas in story forms. Through storytelling we can understand abstract ideas such as leadership, love, loyalty, heroics, and compassion by empathizing with the exploits of characters in the tales. We can learn from cautionary tales depicting both the wise and the foolish. Stories are power tools and can be

influential for the good or the bad. Storytelling, like leading change involves social responsibility.

Co-creative Relational Exchange

Both storytellers and creative change leaders need to exercise imagination. Both have a tale to tell. Creative leaders of social change and oral storytelling artists compose conceptual, abstract forms that unfold in time and space. A story or a social change vision cannot be held in the hand like an object such as a cup or a ball. Both a story and a social change vision are *abstract* concepts that can be *experienced*.

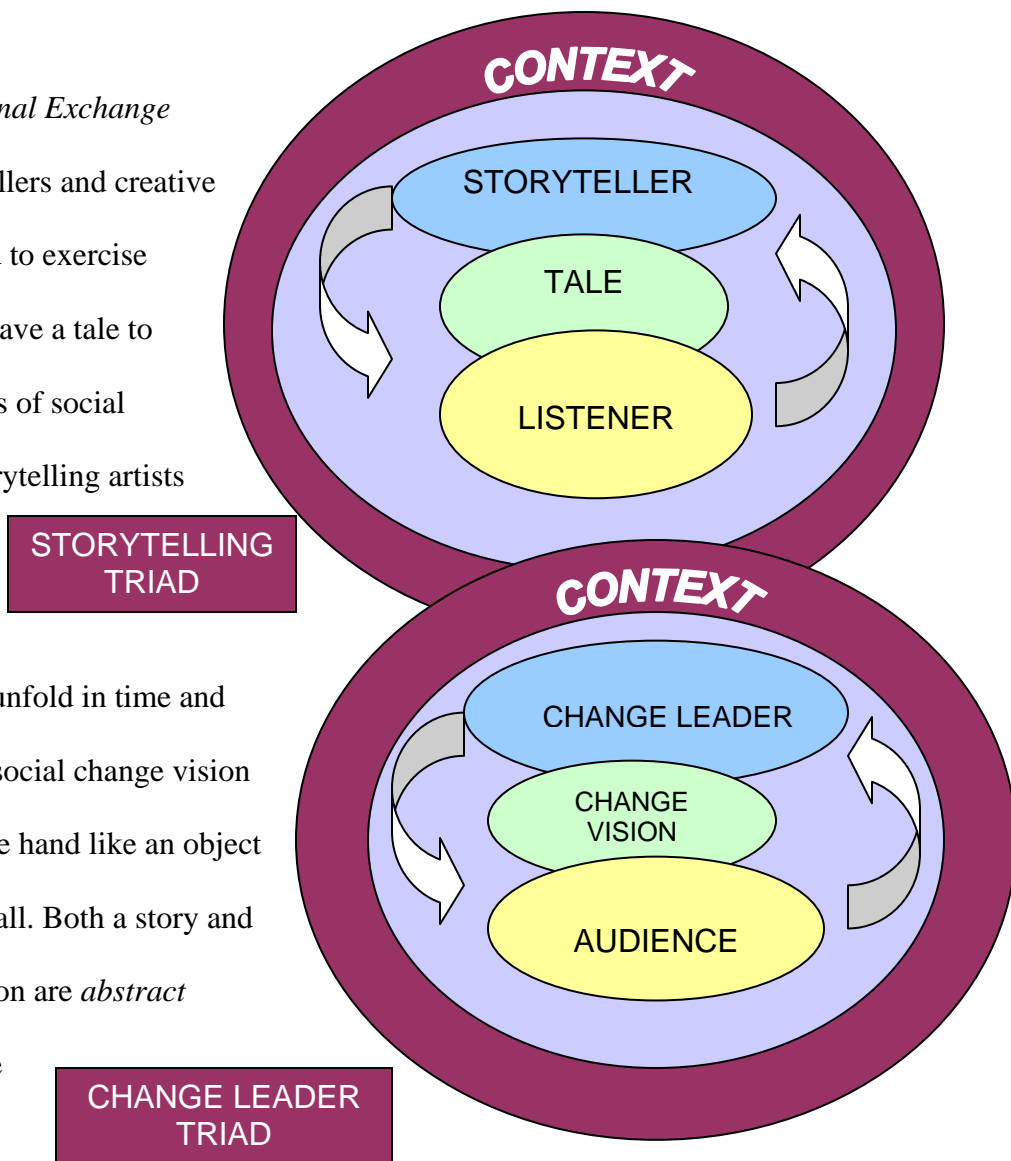


Figure 7.02. Storytelling Triad, Change Leader Triad.

The oral communication of a story and the oral communication of a change vision are co-creative storytelling events. Both teller and listener influence each other in the exchange. Represented as a *storytelling triad*, the story exchange event involving a teller, tale, and listener is comparable to the *change leadership triad* of the change leader, the change vision,

and the audience. The storyteller's tale is like the change leader's change vision. Just as the teller or change leader influences the listener or the audience, the listener or audience may also subtly influence the teller or change leader. The audience response interactively affects and shapes the communication in the present exchange and in future exchanges (in)formed by the interaction. It is a *looped* process. As a communication *event* the sharing of a story or change vision is a *living* form that unfolds over time and may be shaped by the context or the setting of the sharing.

Looped Communication Process

To elaborate on the *looped* interaction between the teller and the listener and the change leader and the audience for the change vision, consider the difference between a written story and an oral tale. A book may tell a story to a reader but the printed text on the page does not change for each reader. The printed text does not organically respond to feedback from the reader. However dynamically one may *interpret* the text, *rant* at it, or *agree* with it, the printed words on the page remain the same. In contrast, oral storytelling and the oral communication of a change vision are mutable and responsive to visceral exchange with an audience. Oral stories and a change vision communicated as a story are evanescent and at the same time, because of the metaphorical nature of stories, can be resonant and influential.

The oral telling of a story or a change vision is then a *collaborative event*. It requires the physical *presence* of a teller or change leader, a listener, and a narrative composition designed and then enacted by the speaker. This type of oral communication can be highly structured or spontaneously improvisational. The listener is *led* by the speaker, through words, sound, body language, facial expression, gesture, and metaphor, along a co-constructed imaginary sequence. The experience can be emotionally influential for both speaker and listener. In this simple

description, a skilled teller or change leader is like a tour guide responsible for shepherding travelers along a route. The tale or change vision is, metaphorically, a journey navigated by the speaker and listener. On deeper levels, a skilled teller or change leader can emotionally shape the journey for the listener using verbal and physical nuance and carefully selected images and language. The teller or change leader can *amplify* embedded messages, inspire, motivate, and link new ideas to prior embodied knowledge.

It is an art to convey complex, nuanced ideas in such a way that diverse listeners with differing points of view can remain engaged. The capacity to embrace paradox, the willingness to explore, and a tolerance for ambiguity are some qualities artists embody and utilize to make art. These same qualities could be useful to leaders contemplating and creating coherent social change vision.

The Neuroscience of Storytelling: Stories and Memory

Stories are an acknowledged, time honored way to make a point. *How* this useful tool is artistically made is a core question in my arts-based study. In considering tales as social change tools, I have often wondered *why* stories work to make a point. Recent discoveries from the field of neuroscience offer insight. It is easier to remember a vivid story than a list of disconnected facts (Caine & Caine, 1994). Neurologically, humans have two separate memory storage systems, *taxon* memory and *spatial* memory. Disconnected facts are stored in *taxon* memory and are difficult to retrieve in times of danger or stress (Caine & Caine, 1994). Stories are stored in *spatial* memory along with narratives from direct lived experience in time and space (Caine & Caine, 1994). Information *embedded* in a story will be easier to recall since the lived experience

of hearing a story is processed as an *experiential* activity and stored in spatial memory (Caine & Caine, 1990).

The implication of this information is relevant to both storytellers and change leaders. Embedding important or relevant information *inside* of stories offers a greater likelihood that the information will be remembered by listeners based on how stories are physically stored in the brain. More needs to be known about the effectiveness of teaching factual information through stories as opposed to teaching facts through the use of lists and other disconnected formats.

Since stories are processed in spatial memory and are easier to remember than disconnected facts, we can learn from the experiences of wise and foolish characters in stories. As a tool for teaching about life's trials and tribulations, stories are powerful. One does not need to *actually* go into the *deep dark woods* and meet the *big bad wolf*. One can travel there *vicariously* through the metaphor of a story and learn about danger in safe ways. Storytelling is one of the oldest educational methods utilized by cultures globally since ancient times. As a teaching method, stories both maintain and change culture by embodying values and world view through plot, heroic characters, language, naming, and the selective remembering of the past. It is worth considering that if storytellers or leaders *change the words* or images embedded in stories, we *change the world*.

Neurons that Fire Together Wire Together: Metaphors and Thinking

Recent work in neuroscience and linguistics has illuminated how language use fundamentally reflects the metaphors and neurological linkages that organize our cognitive thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, 2003). We reason and understand abstract ideas by conceptually linking them to concrete embodied experience such as physical orientation,

sensation, and movement (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, 2003). These types of concept connections appear ubiquitously in everyday language when we speak of abstract ideas. *Love is sweet. Terror gripped me. Time stood still. I am in trouble.* It makes sense to speak of a story or a change in vision as a *journey that will be long* or a *seed that will take root and blossom over time*. Both stories and change in vision are abstract concepts that can be more easily understood by linking them to concrete physical ideas. A journey is an *embodied* understanding that has its roots in physical orientation and movement. A seed is something that can be held in the hand. Metaphors help us make sense of the world of abstract ideas.

Poetic, sense-making, neuro-linkages between abstract concepts and embodied experience begin to cognitively develop in infancy and continue to proliferate throughout life as we learn (Abram, 1996; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, 2003; Lawley & Tompkins, 2000). New understanding, or, learning, is incorporated into our conscious and unconscious realms whenever disparate ideas are literally chemically wired together in the neural mappings of the brain. “*Neurons that fire together wire together*” is now common knowledge in the neuroscience community (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 256).

Metaphorical language use is “thick” (Geertz, 1973) with meaning. As listeners we interpret metaphorical language and curiously puzzle over the connection between the abstract and the concrete. *Love is sweet. Sweetness is a physical sensation and pleasant. Therefore, love is pleasant.* Because of the increased thought activity, the point of the communication is remembered. David Gordon (1978) explains this unconscious process of engagement in his book, *Therapeutic Metaphors*, stating, “The process of going back through our world models in order to make sense of our experiences is called the *transderivational search* (p. 17). Experientially, a question or a concept puzzle such as a metaphor creates a flurry of activity in the mind. Upon

experiencing new information, the listener quickly and unconsciously searches through his or her vast personal storage of prior knowledge to construct meaning by linking the new concept to existent knowledge. This mental engagement or “transderivational searching” makes the new information memorable and motivating. Gordon (1978) proposes, “It is precisely this process of correlating sensory input with one’s world model that makes metaphors so powerful as agents of change” (p. 17). A change leader who understands how the mind processes metaphor can constructively shape reality through effective use of language. The aesthetic choice of words, images, and metaphor is at the heart of the storyteller’s art and must be rooted in ethics.

Ethics and the Use of Metaphor

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003) point out that, linguistically speaking, “most of our metaphors have evolved in our culture over a long period of time, but many are imposed upon us by people in power: political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, advertisers, the media, etc.” (pp. 159-160). People can be deeply *motivated* or *manipulated* by the metaphorical language used by leaders.

Once, when I walked through an exhibit on the Holocaust at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, I came to a room where anti-Jew propaganda was on display. I watched a newsreel with images of scurrying rats, depicted as a river of vermin, filling the street of a village. The voice-over spoke of Jews. The metaphorical linking was powerful. By conceptually connecting graphic images of rats with Jewish people, the Nazi propaganda set the stage for a linguistically logical and chilling extension of these linked ideas: *extermination*. As I stood absorbing the Nazi’s powerful public relations campaign against the Jews of Europe, I solemnly reflected that

good people can become followers of evil leaders when their reality is manipulatively shaped by metaphor and language.

Journalist, Larry Tye's (1998) book, *The Father of Spin*, reports on the power of metaphorical manipulation by exposing the exploits of Edward Bernays, an early 20th century developer of the field of public relations. Bernays' voluminous personal papers have recently been donated to the Library of Congress. One poignant example of public manipulation through metaphor cited by Tye (1998, p. 28) describes how Edward Bernays coaxed a group of debutantes to march, during the 1929 Easter Parade in New York City, with lit cigarettes. Bernays metaphorically dubbed their cigarettes, *torches of freedom*. At the time it was considered highly improper for women to smoke in public, as men did. The protest event was photographed and extensively documented as a women's liberation issue in newspapers from coast to coast. Unknown to the women who marched for women's liberation with lit cigarettes, was the fact that Bernays was employed as a public relations consultant by the American Tobacco Company at the time. He had been charged with the task of increasing cigarette sales.

Interestingly, Edward Bernays was the nephew of world renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Sigmund Freud. Deeply influenced by his uncle's theories of the unconscious, Bernays was a pioneer in applying the newest psychological principles to stimulate desire for products and to shape the way people perceived issues (Tye, 2004). Although scholars debate the influence, Bernays' (1923) pivotal book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* was seen on Nazi propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels' bookshelf (Tye, 1998, p. 111).

It is ethically essential that storytellers and change leaders use the power of words responsibly.

Considering New Possibilities in Imaginal Space

Storytelling offers the listener a vicarious world in imaginal space where problem solving can take place outside of the actual fray. Storytelling is a way to contemplate and describe the chaos without being *in* the chaos. Unbound to the “real” world, in imaginal space, the storyteller can create new endings, new explanations, and new views of the scene. A well-told story or change vision can be a powerful tool when it presents future possibility as well as offering a way to deconstructing the past swirl in a new coherent sequence. Accepting the paradox that there can be many valid and yet contradictory sequences to describe in an event is a step toward justice and fairness. In imaginal space there is room for multiple and contradictory versions of an event. Both the storyteller and the change leader with a wide enough heart can use this expansive vicarious space to give voice to unspoken stories as well as the oft-heard versions. In imaginal space we can dream of a world that embodies peace and justice. The first step in actually creating a new world is to imagine one.

We are living at a complex time when the world urgently needs leaders whose core competencies include creative thinking and communication skill. We need creative change leaders who are willing to explore, who can compose a change vision and then describe it evocatively to others; leaders who are inventive, improvisational, imaginative, flexible, and can embrace paradox. The artist embodies hope and offers a model of visionary thinking. Creativity is a form of dynamic change. Art embraces possibility. We need leaders who are trained in possibility. We need leaders to become artists of life.

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Appendix

Original Notebook Map Sketches

Map 1

Story MAP

- Segmented threads
- parts or whole
- transitions

Invitation Song

Transition → trial & swirl memories

security interview (mix of reality & daydream) ^{character detail}

Transition → Fishing for memories

Stone

Carab Seed

Hidden children

Jerusalem

Garden of Righteous Gentiles

Wailing wall

father's grave
Stone in pocket
slips of paper

Carab Seed in Pocket

Planting trees

youthful memory

slips of paper

dome, spires, wall

Avshalom Feinberg

Jew's grave - Death rebirch

backen
over

Honi stories

Heszel's cypress

Stop

Rabbi Akiva
drops of water on
stone - Rigidity
learning & change

growing well

Carab Seed Planted

Caesaria

Stone archways

Herod's rubble

marching
for
Circumcision!

Stratigraphic
layers
greek
Ramon

assimilate

Transition → Place - old Jaffa arabs & Jews

Stones & archways

walking the sand dunes
to Tel Aviv

Wall white
Stone
buildings

dunes

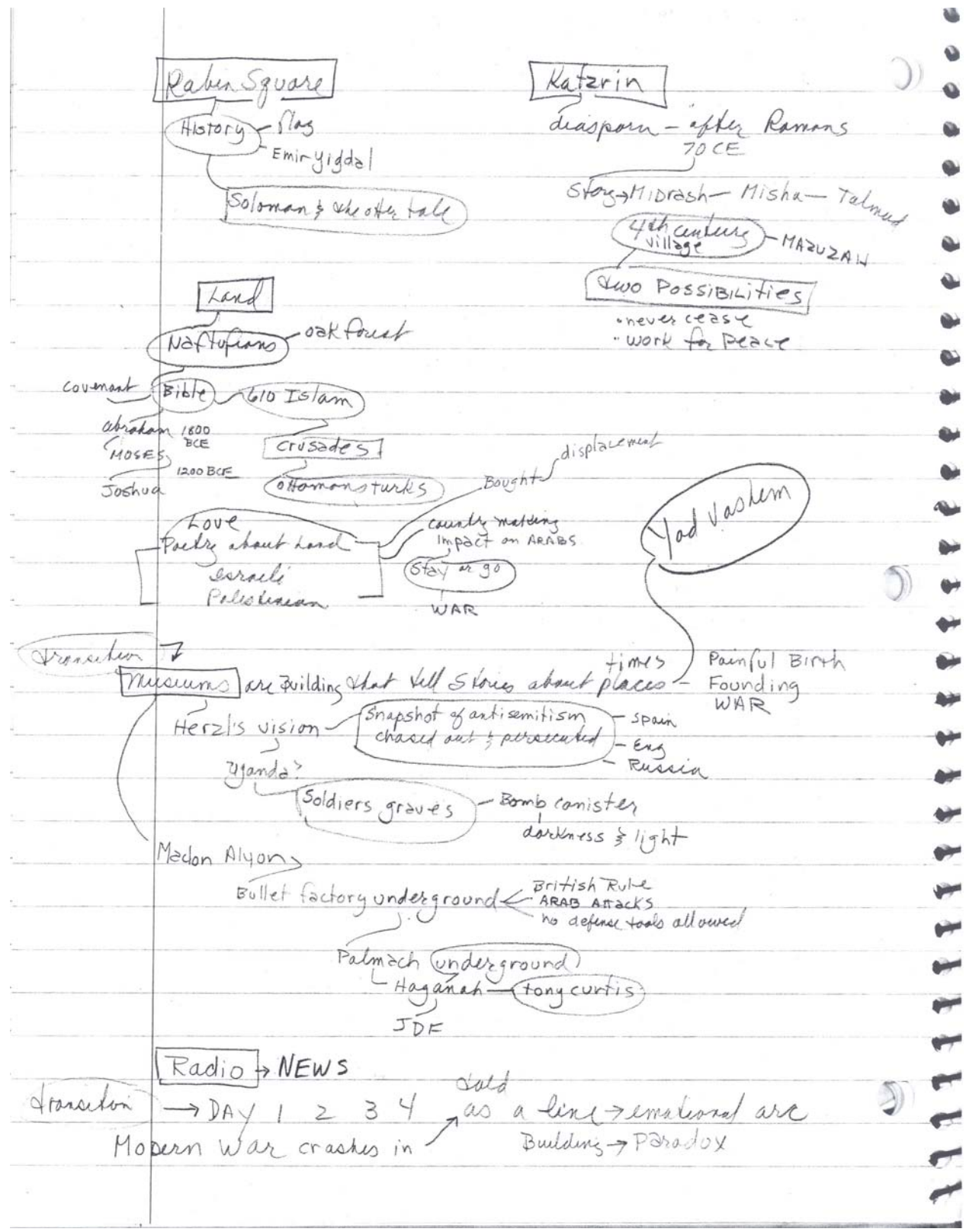
feeling

walkin
alone

travelling worlds
dolphin

disco pulsing
bomb blasting

Map 2



Map 3

4 DAYS

①

Machon Ayalon

Things are not always what they seem to be

laundry on the lines

Bullet factory under the stairs

HISTORY

British
Ottoman's defeat
country carving
maintain order
ARABS & Jewish settlements

→ brought land
early Zionists
BUT discord & displacement

News > soldiers

Background sound of Radio

Palmach

WWII

Romans in desert in north Africa
BRITISH protecting interests

after war Palmach went underground → Hagannah

②

MORNING PAPER

WAR

Dog CAT MOUSE CHOICES!

→ Bombing Begins

Sde Boker

Ben-Gurion's House

Young soldiers
VOICES on the street
FEAR RAGE

NEWS

night news

③

yad Vashem

cattle car - unfinished lives
unfinished poem

ghosts - story starts in Harmony
living together

fractures FEAR RAGE HATRED

Scenes - HAUNTING green trees outside

NEWS

How can this happen? oppressed / oppressors

Map 4

④

MASADA

HISTORY

Back 2000 years

Zealots

Footprints of Romans in the sand
haunted place

Slathered myself in
Sulphurous grey mud
Submerged myself
in the Dead Sea
careful not to
taste the poisonous
waters.

Taxi
DRIVER
who is crazy?
FEAR

NEWS

Edge between Reason & Madness

Museum of the Seam

1967 war
Jordan/ISRAEL
BORDER

Bent metal
Broken concrete

ART EXHIBIT - DEAD END

Book & Pictures ARTISTS
RESPONSE

co-existence
or non-existence

OR →

New ways!
NEW CHOICES?
LISTENING & talking
Negotiation
creative social change

AIRPORT
IDENTITY INTERVIEW