

A [RE]MEMBERED PLACE:
MISSED OPPORTUNITIES OF THE “EDUCATIONAL”
FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH AND THE ONGOING EFFECTS OF
YORK DETENTION CENTRE’S CLOSURE

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Abstract:

This dissertation investigates the question of what is “educational” in the education of incarcerated youth? Biesta (2012) writes that one goal of education is – or should be – “subjectification,” pointing to “education’s orientation towards...students as subjects of action and responsibility” (2012). If education’s aim, then, is for students to “become” subjects in their own right, what happens when objectification dictates how incarcerated youth are taught? Can that objectification be disrupted from the inside out? Prefaced by a philosophical consideration of concatenated concepts such as the “wasted lives” (Bauman, 2003) of the incarcerated and the *sporadic* identity of the teacher (Biesta, 2013) in such spaces, my research focuses on the continued impact of the “educational” site that was York Detention Centre in Toronto. YDC was formerly the central booking facility for young offenders in Ontario, closed in 2009, and this dissertation is a metaphorical return to what I suggest was an unlikely and, therefore, *missed* “educational” site for incarcerated youth to “become.” The ongoing “educational” impact of the former detention centre emerges through a narrative analysis of remembered stories shared by participant interviewees of both the teaching and learning they experienced within its walls. By compiling the narratives of four former staff and residents, and adding to them my own memories of teaching in that space, this place-based (Till, 2004, 2011) project culminates in an aesthetic narrative curation of *missed* “educational” happenings. This new “educational” story of YDC works to disrupt the limited discourse that exists around incarcerated youth and education in the present day.

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To my parents, my sister and brother-in-law who have been with me from the very start – I know that it is because of your support for that young teacher who wanted so badly to teach on the “inside” that I am here today, writing something that I hope makes you proud.

To Clifford Ward – my husband, my second reader, my facilitator of time to write and discuss and write some more...this project exists today because of your love and care. To Francis Ward – my little boy who was only an idea when this process began. I love you both. Thank you.

Finally, to my interviewees who gave of their time to remember and share stories with me of York Detention Centre. This project is as much yours as it is mine. I hope you feel honoured in this narrative retelling; that the best parts of the place in which we passed time together lives on today in this, our new story of YDC.

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Stories are like searchlights and spotlights; they brighten up parts of the stage while leaving the rest in darkness. Were they to illuminate the whole of the stage evenly, they would not really be of use...it is the mission of stories to select, and it is in their nature to include through exclusion and to illuminate through casting shadows.

Bauman, *Wasted Lives*

Introduction: Setting and “Siting” the Scene

I have been a high school English teacher for almost 15 years. In Biesta’s (2013) *The Beautiful Risk of Education* he argues that the “identity of the teacher has to be understood as a *sporadic*¹ identity, an identity that only emerges at those moments when the gift of teaching is received. It is not an identity that can be in the teacher’s secure possession. It rather is a possibility to reckon with...” (p. 54). According to Biesta it would seem that for over a decade I have essentially been living in what could be called an on-going state of identity crisis – one that started when I was hired in 2003 to teach English Literacy at York Detention Centre, what was then the central booking prison facility for incarcerated youth in Ontario.

I was given the title of Literacy teacher, expected to teach three 50-minute periods a day to youth, ages 12 to 17, who were awaiting trial. Under Section 23 of the Education Act in Ontario all students up to the age of 16 are provincially mandated to receive an education (Ministry of Education, 2006). Students who fall outside the system’s traditional purview, for example those whose stays are extended in hospitals, psychological care and detention facilities, must be provided an education with access to teachers and variations on “classroom” spaces for learning to fulfill the requirements of

¹ I borrow this term from Biesta (2012) who italicizes the word *sporadic* throughout his book *The Beautiful Risk of Education*.

the law. As the Education Act connects with the YCJA (Youth Criminal Justice Act), my classroom was one of those spaces, located in the basement of an adjoined building fronting two streets: 311 Jarvis Street, what still houses the family court building in downtown Toronto, and 354 George Street, what was York Detention Centre's official address. I was a teacher working for a school board but in borrowed space, walking a fine line between two systems that were working in tension. The criminal-legal and educational-legal systems, both mediated by two legislative and policy complexes, had a claim to my classroom. Depending on what entrance I chose in the morning, to get down to my class required either a buzzer for identification or a metal detector. Then I had to sign for keys to get through the three locked doors that took me down to the designated "school" space. I remember feeling lucky that a sliver of natural light would sneak through the small window that butted up against the industrial ceiling of my classroom. But a basement is still a basement – it is dark.

The experience of teaching at York Detention Centre did not encourage me as a young educator to delve into any explicit consideration of the question: "What is education for?" Di Paolantonio writes of education that we "exclusively [privilege] its role in social reproduction or, more narrowly, as a process of inculcating skills for the "real world" (2014, York Syllabus). Thus, hitting the ground running, I learned quickly that to abide within the parameters set out by the legal and educational systems, to rehabilitate for social cohesion in the incarcerated setting essentially meant that training trumped teaching (Biesta, 2013, p. 29). I remember being informed in my phone interview that I was to take on a dual role; I was to act as both a Literacy and a Life Skills teacher. I have since heard prison described as a sort of "perpetual kindergarten" – an

adage I return to and strive to unpack later in this dissertation. With such a descriptor in mind, perhaps, in retrospect, a more accurate title for my role would have been that of a Life Skills “trainer.”

Looking back now, I wonder how my time “inside” might have looked different if “instead of thinking of education as simply an answer to the needs for qualification or socialization, [it looked at how] to recover education as a question of becoming...of tending to the past and taking care of “the new” that emerges in the world?” (Di Paolantonio, 2014, York Syllabus). As a more seasoned teacher I have since acquired the language to ask explicitly what it might mean to think of education as something apart from simply gaining qualification and socialization. Today I find myself asking what role education might play in what it means to be human or in striving to be human. But when I walked through those locked doors as a brand new 23 year-old teacher I did not have such a nuanced vocabulary available to me. All I knew then was that I was hired to “teach” any and all youth who walked through my door, whether they were going to be there for a day or a month. The detention centre referred to these young people as “residents” but perhaps a more apt term might have been “occupants” since they were contained by and then remanded to relegated spaces, moved about on the orders of faceless judges whose office windows faced a patch of untouchable green lawn that separated the detention centre from the courts. The ratio capped out at eight residents to one teacher, with the added adult presence of a guard, a child and youth worker (CYW) who was supposed to sit outside my door ready to jump into action if the students “acted out.” There was no way to plan a traditional lesson for a class list that would change daily based on court appearances and visits from lawyers, psychologists or family. My

definition of what I thought “teaching” should look like changed as I learned quickly to engage and entice a student I might only work with once or twice with high interest literacy-based materials ever kept at the ready. As well, from the rotation of CYWs it did not take me long to figure out who were my educational allies; some saw themselves simply as guards, while others wanted to engage with the residents as students. Every day meant a new and individual lesson for up to 24 young people, a frontline experience with “differentiated instruction” taken to a new level. These memories highlight Biesta’s (2012) notion of the teacher’s *sporadic* identity. My reality was that nothing was in my possession at York Detention – My keys and my attendance lists were both given to me anew every morning.

Biesta (2013) asks what he deems to be a key educational question: “What it is we want to give authority to?” On the subject of the teacher and her authority he writes, “The teacher’s power to teach is a weak, existential power that relies on interaction and encounter.” He points to Derrida’s observation that to give a gift is “to give something that you don’t have” and sees it “as entirely correct where it concerns the gift of teaching” (Biesta, 2013, p. 54). The gift of teaching and the authority of “educational” experiences are not easily explained when looking back at the nuanced realities of life lived in the former youth detention facility. In retrospect, I can still see its spaces of learning, its classrooms and holding cells alike, as symbolic of the educational quandary Biesta presents in his work. Yet I know the gift of teaching was in fact given - and at times, I choose to believe, it was received.

Biesta points to what I see as a key problematic with the education of young people who fall outside the boundaries of an already flawed system – that being the

limitations imposed upon incarcerated youth in terms of growth and “becoming” in an “educational” sense within the marginalizing structures of the youth criminal justice system. When referring to detained and incarcerated youth as “marginalized” I am being quite literal. This is a group of young people who are physically moved to the margins by virtue of their having been relocated outside of societal boundaries, set apart from the world inside prison walls.

Deemed redundant in 2009, the unceremonial closure of YDC begets an important point and solicits a number of questions. I propose that recalling the forgotten and *missed* happenings of those hidden classrooms has the potential to benefit present-day conversations around the education of youth in detention. But how can this time, so many years ago, be presented as “forgotten” if it closed without ceremony and was therefore, never even known to have been *missed*? With this project I suggest that the empty building of York Detention Centre stands as a physical reminder and representation of *missed* “educational” opportunities that need to be brought into the light. Through an unpacking of the word “becoming” in the site-specific context of this project, looking at the term in light of a growing sense of self or “subjectivity” (Biesta, 2012) as a young person comes into appearance in the world, “becoming” is shown to be a determinant of what is truly “educational” in education. From there, what this dissertation seeks to accomplish is two-fold: First, retelling of *missed* “educational” stories will highlight how the process of “becoming” was impacted by the experience of physical incarceration. Second, the stories shared and connected in the chapters that follow will demonstrate how the “educational” did in fact happen in York Detention Centre even though (or because) it was an “unlikely” place of teaching and learning. Both elements of this narrative study

add in and work to disrupt the limitations of a “doing time” discourse that overly simplifies the experiences of education of youth in detention.

Looking backwards, I crane my neck to catch a glimpse of someone I know to be me – now just a shadow of myself, a blur-edged memory. I was young when I so blithely took on the mantle of “teacher” with no real consideration about what that title meant – or would come to mean. With this project, I bring memories forward into the metaphorical and literal space and place of stories worth telling and retelling. I can see now that my years at YDC definitively shaped my views on education. Upon reflection I am keenly aware that my time in the jail determined my *sporadic* identity as a teacher. But it is upon the site’s closing that the identity Biesta sees as a “possibility to reckon with” has now become even greater than my own individual story. I believe that my remembered experiences of the “educational” are necessarily intertwined with the lived experiences of others who “passed time” (Di Paolantonio, 2016) with me in that place. This project unpacks the possibility and reckons with the potential for a recovery of the “educational” in a former place of detention and seeming erasure. It asks how the question of “becoming” can be brought into our present day conversations about detained and incarcerated youth, a key component of the “educational” experience all too easily dismissed or *missed* in the shadow of giant facilities and their impersonal policies. Such an unpacking is necessary to disrupt a pervasive silence that dominates Canadian educational circles on these topics.

The first chapter of this dissertation starts with a literature review to situate and contextualize the project, specifically the space and place that was York Detention Centre. I expand on YDC’s intersection with the criminal-legal and educational-legal systems,

and further contextualize my teaching connection to the former space. Building on both the existing literature and the gaps within it, I then present the statement of the problem, that being the central question of what is “educational” in education? In this section I introduce three key tropes that will run throughout the entirety of the project: what it means to “become,” the *sporadic* “educational” gifts of “passing time” and, in contrast, the *missed* opportunities for teaching and learning in the incarcerated space. These terms will act as a new vocabulary set, seeking to open up and inform what research shows to be a foreclosed understanding of detained youth and education. Finally, this chapter introduces the possibility of “witness-learning” (Eppert, 2004, 2011) through the retelling and reconstituting of York Detention Centre’s *missed* “educational” stories, framing it as a site of ongoing “meaning-making” even in the present day.

In the second chapter I discuss my methodological approach to the project, explaining

- a) how interviews with individuals who inhabited the center will allow for a recovery of memory, and
- b) how a tangible aesthetic curation of “educational” remnant-objects from my time teaching in the prison gives voice to the ruins.

In the vein of memory studies, and as a point of focus, I utilize Till’s (2004) notion of “place-making” in conjunction with how location or space plays an important role in this memory project. I expand on why four interviewees were chosen to participate in the project and how the interviews were analyzed using Narrative Analysis (Merriam, 2009), reading them through McCormack’s (2000) lenses of *language, process* and *moments*. Since the participants “passed time” with residents in different ways in their time at

YDC, each of their varied stories come together to create a fuller picture of the center's "educational" potential. In this chapter I also forefront my lived connection to that place, explicitly naming the "cognitive, affective, and motivational dimensions of meaning making" in my narrative processing of the past (Merriam, 2009, p.33).

Finally, in this second chapter I will explain how a narrative and aesthetic "curation" (Simon, 2005) of the interviewees' "constellated" stories (Benjamin, 1999, Orig. 1931), combined with tangible remnant-objects brought forward from YDC's past, support Eppert's (2011, 2004) presentation of "witness-learning" and how this concept informs this project's end goal (See also Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert, 2000). Eppert writes that social action is connected to "witness-learning [as it] entails becoming more informed...[and] learning, beyond the scope of [one] narrative" (p. 749). To be taken up more explicitly in my final chapter, in chapter two I begin to consider how "witnessing" the *missed* "educational" experiences of "becoming" holds the potential to disrupt the limitations a single narrative, that which dominates the present day discourse around incarcerated youth and education. In this section I explain what is meant by the term "curation" and introduce what I will do in chapter five with the help of physical and symbolic remnants of YDC's ongoing "educational" story.

Chapter three takes a step back from the specifics of York Detention Centre to detail a philosophical consideration of the different terms developed for this project. These terms facilitate a deeper reflection on what is meant here by "becoming" in education. This section looks to notions of "becoming" and "passing time" as needing to be carefully tended to, to help determine what makes experiences of teaching and learning truly "educational." This chapter sets the scene for the remembered stories of

interviewees to be shared in chapter four. By fleshing out the tropes introduced above – what it means to “become,” the *sporadic* “educational” gifts of both teaching and learning and, in contrast, *missed* “educational” opportunities lived out in the incarcerated space – I work to frame the “educational” happenings in what was YDC as “passing time” together (Di Paolantonio, 2015), setting up a counterpoint to the dominant understanding of education in youth prisons as simply “doing time” in the state of incarceration. Cohering Till’s (2004) concept of “place-making” with the “educational” importance of “passing time” with others in environments of teaching and learning, I work to flesh out the importance of fostering a student’s burgeoning sense of self as a “meaning-maker.”

Chapter four is an analysis of four interviews with people who, like me, spent a significant period of time in the former youth detention facility: Mila (a former guard/Child and Youth Worker), Naomi (a former management figure), and two former residents, Alex and Dee. Woven throughout the mining of these interviews are personal reflections on my own role as a former teacher at York Detention Centre. As outlined in chapter two, I used McCormack’s (2000) lenses of *process*, *language* and *moments* to inform my narrative analysis of the transcripts. Built around the vocabulary that was developed and detailed in chapter three, chapter four is divided into three sections using the terms “becoming,” “educational” and *missed* as subtitles. A continued focus on the concept of “becoming,” that which is “educational” and what was *missed* in that unlikely place of both teaching and learning makes the content mined from these conversations about the past into living remembered “interpretive stories” (p. 316) or narratives.

Finally, chapter five shapes a “constellated” (Benjamin, 1999, Orig. 1931) narrative that emerges from a careful reading of both the interviews and educational

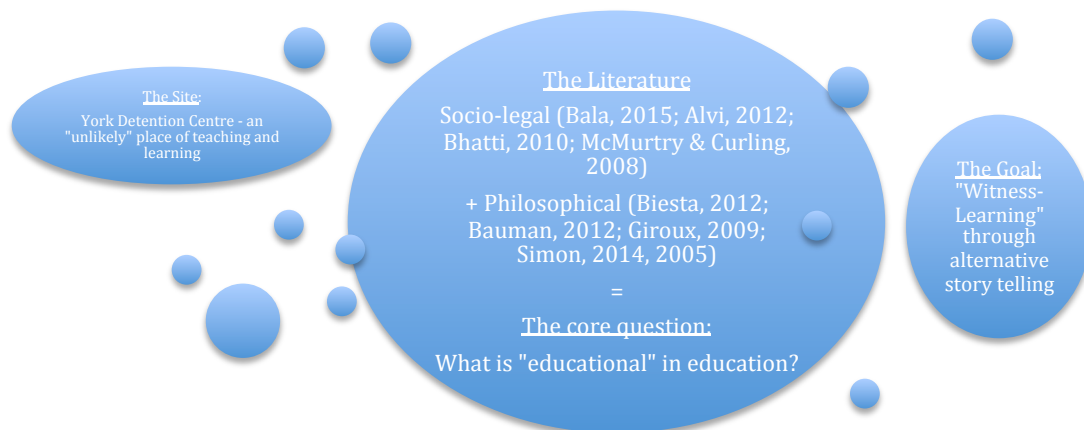
remnant-objects, followed by an exploration of the “witness-learning” that might be gleaned from this curation (Simon, 2005). “Witness-learning” occurs through the act of remembering individual “educational” stories as interconnected in the memory of the space and place where they occurred. To further enhance this narrative process of “witness-learning,” an aesthetically curated framing of that “educational” time and place sits alongside the interviews. Specifically, into a shadow box picture frame I place remembered stories using props such as former student assignments, letters and one solitary photograph. Each acts as an analytical prompt around which this new “educational” narrative of York Detention Centre is shaped. Till writes, “Ghosts...haunt the places where cities are out of joint; out of joint in terms of both time and space” (2004, p. 24). Borrowing from her metaphor, giving a name to this project’s emergent constellation of remembered YDC stories helps to bring into some sort of alignment what I see to be an educational discourse that is “out of joint” – a discourse that does not speak to the ways in which the “educational” is actually possible for incarcerated youth.

...I have been anxious to improve the nick of time...to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.
(p.16)
Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*

Statement of the Problem and Socio-Legal Literature Review:

To begin unpacking the problem of *missed* “educational” experiences for incarcerated youth, I look to literature in the fields of education and memory studies to help situate and contextualize this project. Due to its intersection with various systems of power, most specifically education and youth criminal justice systems in Canada, appropriately locating the former site of York Detention Centre within the world of academic writing is complicated. The impact that both the legal and educational systems had on the physical space, and on those of us who inhabited it, necessitates of this chapter multiple objectives to help set the scene for the project as a whole.

This graphic is one of two “concept maps” used in this chapter to visually represent what I see as a constellation of the various related literatures and concepts that connect throughout the project:



Building on Benjamin’s (1999, Orig. 1931) notion of an interconnected “constellation” of

ideas, I use this first “concept map” to highlight the initial linkages made between this project’s specific site or location, the socio-legal literature from which the research grows, and how that growth expands and connects to the end goal of this constellated work. At the end of the chapter a second “concept map” is expanded to include all of the various interconnected elements of the dissertation as a whole. The expanded map acts as a visual guide to help the reader see how this research project fits in to what one colleague described to me as a larger “discourse community” of associated literature and the implications of its addition to it (Wilson, personal communication, February 10, 2016). The philosophical literature that connects and intersects with the socio-legal base presented in this chapter, specifically Gert Biesta’s (2013) mobilization of the “educational” from both Arendtian and Levinasian perspectives, Karen Till’s (2012, 2004) considerations of “place-making,” and Benjamin’s (1999, Orig. 1931) notion of “constellation,” are all unpacked in greater detail in chapter three.

Alongside a review of the pertinent literature, this chapter also presents a delineation of a specifically located “public vocabulary” (Davis, 2013) that must be defined to scaffold my project’s curatorial conclusion. The vocabulary set is made up of key tropes that run throughout the entirety of the work: what it means to “become,” what is the *sporadic* “educational” gift of “passing time” and, in contrast, what are the *missed* “educational” opportunities for teaching and learning in spaces of incarceration? From a philosophical standpoint I use this vocabulary to shine a light on what I believe is missing from work being done concerning the education of detained and incarcerated.

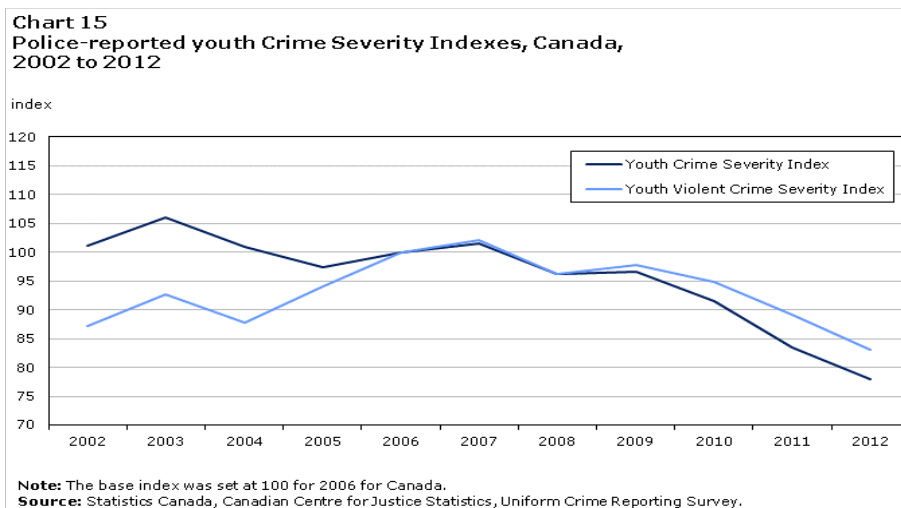
Finally, this chapter introduces the possibility of “witness-learning,” framing York Detention Centre as a site of ongoing “educational” meaning-making into the

present day – that which occurs through the retelling and reconstituting of *missed* “educational” stories that have been both locked away “inside” an abandoned space, while continuing to resonate in the lives of some who moved beyond those prison walls. In *Walden and Other Writings* Thoreau writes, “...I have been anxious to improve the nick of time...to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line” (1854, p.16). Though his essays do not overtly connect to any discourse community affiliated with education or incarcerated youth, I used this quotation as an epigraph for it links, philosophically, to what underpins this dissertation as a whole. Through memory work “educational” experiences that were lived out in the former Toronto youth prison are brought forward and constellated (Benjamin, 1999, Orig. 1931) in the final pages of this project. Forging this “educational” constellation brings out of the shadows nuanced associations and interpretations of the complexities inherent to the teaching and learning inside prison walls. From what is remembered by former residents, staff and of my own experiences as a former teacher in that place, a powerful story of “educational” relationships emerges, connected to a forlorn site that from the outside looking in seems an unlikely place of education.

Context:

To set the scene and paint a picture of this forlorn site, I must first describe, with broad strokes, the creation of a Canadian political landscape that led up to the centre’s closure in Toronto, Ontario, in 2009. In 2003 the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) was passed. What Bala (2015) describes as a “progressive” law, the YCJA was put in place across the country to address issues in, and therefore differ from, its more legally punitive predecessor, the Young Offender’s Act (YOA). The Youth Criminal Justice Act intended

to reduce the use of custody for minor offences, “since Canada had one of the highest youth custody rates in the western world” (Caputo and Vallee, 2013). The YCJA’s two big conceptual and pragmatic shifts focused on rehabilitation and reintegration, but for the purposes of this study one of its most notable foci has been its emphasis on how the “youth justice system must be based on the principle of diminished moral blameworthiness or culpability of young persons” (YCJA, 2012, Amendment). Said another way, the law made it clear that the criminal justice system was to be different for young people, pointing to the formative nature of youth in terms of overall development and, more specifically decision-making. The new Act was not to be a version of the existing adult prison system but on a smaller scale, and its implementation proved to be successful in many respects. According to Statistics Canada (2015), the Act has been effective at lowering the number of youth cycling through the criminal justice system, exemplified in in the government’s youth crime index. The numbers signal a continual decline in the years since the law came into effect:



The shift in legal language from the former YOA to the YCJA also connects to the realm of education. A small section of the Education Act in Ontario lays out the legal

requirements for the provision of schooling to students seventeen years and younger, living in treatment facilities, including institutions of incarceration.² Colloquially called “Section schools” by the educators who work within them, the different amendments to the YCJA, and all Acts that are connected to it, impact the day-to-day interactions of Section teachers and the child and youth workers who support their classrooms. For example, with every amendment made to the various interconnected Acts, Section classrooms are given a new label; over the past decade the language describing the legally mandated education that is to be provided for incarcerated youth has fallen under Section 21, Section 19 and now the present-day Section 23 of the Education Act. Though the student to teacher ratio has not actually changed, smaller class sizes in the detention environment have been a result of the YCJA’s meting out of shorter youth incarceration times and restorative justice practices in final sentencing.

The results of the YCJA’s impact on youth within the criminal justice and education systems have not been unanimously received as positive. It is said that for every action there is a reaction; shown to be true in the years since the Act was introduced, reaction has been seen most clearly as the government has shifted from a liberal to a conservative party leadership. The language of those in power has swung from emphasizing restorative practices for incarcerated youth to what Bala (2015) calls “a ‘law and order’ rhetoric” – a rhetoric that I suggest is tied to the shuttering of smaller institutions like York Detention Centre. Though YDC was central booking for all incarcerated youth in Ontario, the centre did not actually house all of the young people it processed. High profile cases that needed to keep co-accused youth in separate locations

² <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/legislation.html>

for the duration of potentially lengthy trials meant that some of the residents were moved to other partnering centres. A consequence of YDC's smaller inmate population meant it suffered under a neo-conservative agenda that valued larger centrally run and privately funded institutions. In 2001 York Detention Centre was first affected by a political movement towards privatization, as it was sold by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services to a private owner, Cassatta Group. Resulting from factors such as a governmental privileging of such private interests and a conservative political agenda, Ontario has seen a systematic move away from smaller prison facilities for youth spread across the province.

A conservative political influence has also had an impact on the design of prison spaces, with a move to a model of "superjails," which strive to consolidate widespread services into fewer, and therefore larger buildings. When the first "superjail" was opened in the Greater Toronto Area a spokesperson for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services described the space as "campus-style...[providing] dedicated facilities for youth" such as a robotics lab and a fully operational wood shop (Lavoie, 2009). The carefully chosen descriptors used by the Ministry framed this model for constructing youth prisons in a way that was more easily digestible for public consumption. Today, with the Liberal party at the helm once again, the Conservative "superjail" model remains a norm for youth detention and incarceration.

The paradigmatic base upon which the "superjail" model is constructed borrows language from trends in education that have been developed within that same paradigm. Mired in a neo-conservative framework, words like "skills-based" or "success criteria" abound in the present-day discourse that dominates both environments. Though this

vocabulary can be constructive when used with care,³ I believe that proponents of the “superjail” model make too quick and casual a use of such terms to promote the position that says these large-scale institutions are better able to facilitate and control “standards” and “measurements of success” in terms of client rehabilitation (Lavoie, 2009). In terms of educating incarcerated youth according to Ministry of Education guidelines, the question of how the stipulated standards and measurements of “success” are carried out inside prison walls begets no easy answer.

Having laid out the context, I move forward with my research channelling Thoreau’s anxious desire to improve the present moment. I believe that something akin to what he calls “improvement” emerges when assumed notions of teaching and learning for incarcerated youth are troubled by a counter narrative of “educational” success as a possibility on the “inside.” Borrowing from Thoreau, I am “anxious to improve the nick of time” and highlight gaps that need to be filled so that a more “educational” narrative might be threaded through a new story of youth and schooling in the Canadian prison system.

Literature Review:

i. Socio-Legal Notions of Incarcerated Youth and Education

Set against this contextual backdrop, I want to bring to the fore some of what has been written about incarcerated youth from a socio-legal perspective, and in doing set up and spotlight gaps in the literature that are specific to education. As gestured to in the contextual framework, Bala (2015) writes that “despite the success of the YCJA in reducing youth incarceration rates without increasing crime” there has still been a

³ For example, Delpit (2006) writes of “skills-based” instruction but presents this practice as supporting teaching from a stance of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. What I refer to here goes back to the teaching vs. training disconnect that was mentioned in the introduction.

conservative bent to "invoke 'law-and-order' rhetoric to criticize [that] law." He writes that since the creation of the YCJA there has been a federal agenda to keep reduced "the use of courts and custody for youth criminal justice if only for financial reasons" (Bala, p. 2) but notes that youth crime in Canada still faces "significant challenges...including the continuing lack of rehabilitative resources and mental health services in...custody facilities...and concerns about conditions in custody facilities" (p. 2). The far-reaching impact of this lack of resources seeps into the school experiences of incarcerated youth and, in turn, those who work with them, namely the child and youth workers and their classroom teachers.

The unpacking of such challenges requires that the “educational” focus of this dissertation is not limited to issues traditionally tied to the physical spaces of schools and classrooms since the special needs of this student population are so varied. When a young person is seen through the lens of criminality, detention and incarceration, difficulty arises when attempting to disentangle their process of “educational becoming” from a fear of their alleged crimes. Whether it is fear of them or for them, the interactions of incarcerated youth with their lawyers, judges, teachers, guards, parent-guardians and other youth are all affected by virtue of them being locked up.

Research suggests (Gooch, 2013; Bhatti, 2010; Alvi, 2012) the education systems-that-be respond to such students as they would to a state of emergency. What is meant here by a “state of emergency” in terms of incarceration and education is embodied in a reactive stance to instruction – an instruction like “Do this!” – as opposed to adopting a proactive position on teaching and learning by posing educational questions such as “What do you think about that?” For example, according to the Toronto District

School Board's website, Section 23 classrooms work in accordance with the Education Act, operating throughout Ontario school boards and funded by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. The TDSB website reads:

The Agency Team works co-operatively with TDSB staff to provide continuity in the care, treatment and education of these students. An important part of these programs is the development of personal life management skills. Individual education and treatment plans are created for each student to address his or her strengths and needs. (TDSB, 2016)

According to these guidelines important issues of life skill instruction are being addressed for "these" students, but noticeably lacking in such a curricula are any references to or questions of what the TDSB calls "metacognitive" learning. In this context "metacognition" refers to the process of asking reflectively oriented "If...Then" questions to help determine why one does what one does. Put simply, it is thinking about thinking. Metacognition is fore fronted throughout the website as an essential educational component for mainstream students who are served by the TDSB. For example, embedded in the website are instructions directing trustees to focus on certain strategies for mainstream school effectiveness, connecting metacognitive practices to the enhancement of "student achievement, well-being and academics." Trustees are to set "learning goals and success criteria that international research has shown to make a difference in contributing to learners' metacognition and improvements in learning" (TDSB, 2016). If the upper echelons of the board believe that "metacognitive" questions lead to the critical work of self reflection and personal assessment, seeing this work as tied to mainstream student achievement and well-being, a notable gap presents itself

when that same emphasis is not placed on their Section 23 student colleagues. This gap, based on the assumption that a student who is not successful in mainstream school must have deficit life-skills, emphasizes the aforementioned focus on training, so as to fit back into the society from which they have been temporarily removed, over academic preparation that would more likely lead to post-secondary and labour market opportunities.

Working to tease out the language of education as connected to the incarcerated experience, in the United Kingdom Bhatti (2010) asks questions about teaching and learning in prison. For example, in “Learning Behind Bars: Education in Prison,” he considers “the negotiated meanings of ‘teaching’ and learning’ in prisons [as] informed by the peripheral experiences of prisoners and the legitimate peripheral participation of their teachers” (p. 31). Using research based on in-depth interviews with four teachers who work in the incarcerated school setting, Bhatti’s findings show that teachers and students are interdependent and feel equally marginalized. Bhatti asks, “How do teachers learn to become teachers of people who inhabit a world ‘which for the most part, remains unseen, barely acknowledged and preferably not thought about or reflected upon by most of us?’” (2010, p. 31). The invisibility of the incarcerated will be echoed in my own considerations of York Detention Centre, and yet, though Bhatti’s questions and ensuing findings are certainly relevant to my project, his focus is limited to adult learners. I see, then, a need for more research that includes the voices of incarcerated youth in terms of their lived experiences of education “inside” detention centers.

In terms of a Canadian literature base there are but a few works that speak of education for incarcerated youth. More research is available regarding the legal history of

the penal system. Alvi's (2012) *Youth Criminal Justice Policy in Canada: a Critical Introduction* looks at the history of youth crime legislation in Canada. He writes of a history that:

[r]eflects a gradual shift away from the attitude that children were no different than adults, through a period where children were seen as in need of protection and welfare, to a situation today which attempts to balance the rights of society with those of the young offender while recognizing, in principle, that the root causes of much crime are social. (p.1)

Echoed by the work of Bala (2015), Alvi writes of a present-day transition in youth crime legislation that reflects “a ‘get tough’ punishment oriented ethos, [while] at the same time [noting], paradoxically [that Canada seems to be] embracing the idea of “getting tough” on the causes of crime” (p. 1). Alvi explicitly states that the central argument of his book is that crime “is best addressed not through greater amounts of control but by increasing social support” (2012, p. 2). Unfortunately Alvi notes of our country's response that,

[D]ecades of research have shown unequivocally that crime is a complicated social problem...[but] Canada's historical approach to the problem of youth crime has been simplistic and ineffective, and it is in danger of repeating past mistakes if current trends continue. (p. 77)

Such trends take the form of a misinformed adherence to the “moral panics” about crime focused on and fueled by the media (p. 78). As well he suggests that in neo-conservative circles there remains a faulty notion, unsupported by data, that crime is “individualized” and therefore “curable” if the criminal is dealt with by the penal system (p. 79). Alvi notes that “from a moral point-of-view, conservatives are only right if it is true that social

life consists only of freely chosen personal decisions and the responsibilities that go with them, and that ultimately, we have no obligations to others” (p. 79).

Referencing Muncie (2006), Alvi sees a need for more “scholarly consideration” because of “the rise of harsh, correctional, and punitive policies towards youth transgressions...occurring in a context in which historical protections afforded to youth have been ‘rapidly dissolving’” (Alvi, 2012, p. 1). Because of what Muncie (2006) describes as “[g]lobalized neo-liberal processes of responsabilization and risk management coupled with traditional neo-conservative authoritarian strategies” he writes of the necessity for a more nuanced approach to “contemporary youth justice [as reliant] on continual negotiations between opposing, yet overlapping, discursive practices” (p. 1). Both Muncie and Alvi’s calls for more scholarly consideration of issues related to incarcerated youth has been taken up by one Canadian academic whose research endeavoured for a time to make a direct link between schools and prisons in the Canadian context (Conrad, 2006). From 2006 to 2011 Conrad’s research focus at the University of Alberta was to look at incarcerated youth and education through the lens of theatre education and its impact on youth in prisons (Conrad, 2011). Her studies were comprised largely of Aboriginal youth because, as Conrad writes, “in Alberta, Aboriginal youth are amongst those most often labeled “at-risk” in schools (Alberta Learning, 2001) and disproportionately over-represented in the prison system (Solicitor General of Alberta, 1991)” (2006, p.4). Now more than ten years old, Conrad’s study of drama education in juvenile detention remains current as her participant sampling still sadly reflects the youth who continue to overpopulate Canadian correctional spaces today, namely a disproportionate representation of Aboriginal youth that is all the more pronounced

among Aboriginal girls (Correctional Services Program, 2014). Other over-represented groups are black boys (Goraya, 2015) and LGBTQ youth where, according to some American statistics, LGBTQ youth make up only 6 percent of the general population but represent 15 percent of people currently in juvenile detention (Palmquist and Robinson-Mock, 2015). Though mine is not a quantitative study, both of the former youth who agreed to be participant-interviewees for my project represent with disheartening accuracy a cross-section of those who are statistically shown to overpopulate youth detention facilities in Canada. I wanted to follow up with Conrad and find out more about her work in this field. But in a recent email exchange she noted that, “There really isn't a lot of educational work being done in jails in Canada with youth... it's been several years since my own work has focused in this area” (January 11, 2016).

The question of why academics might move away from such inquiry is not easily answered. But, answered or not, the resulting gap in available literature does point to a larger societal problem. In “Rethinking Prison Reform” Dlugash (2013) notes that, “one of the most insidious aspects of the modern penal estate is that the public has little interaction with what goes on in prisons and can therefore continue to unquestioningly “consume” the punishment that prisons provide” (p.3). Though Dlugash is not specifically writing about youth imprisonment, he makes a salient observation about the public ignorance of those who are incarcerated and the spaces to which they are relegated to serve their time. To mitigate the inevitability of an ignorant public there are various government resources available that speak to the complex issues surrounding youth and crime in Canada. Such reports endeavour to unpack some of the societal factors that contribute to the lived realities of this student body.

One recent report entitled “It Depends Who’s On: The Youth Reality at the Roy McMurtry Centre” was published by Elman (2013) who is the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in Ontario. It speaks to ongoing issues with staff and inmates at the Roy McMurtry Centre in Brampton, Ontario. Nicknamed “The Roy,” it is the suburban “superjail” that replaced York Detention Centre as one of the main facilities to hold incarcerated youth in Ontario. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth started to receive complaints about the new youth detention facility almost as soon as it was opened. The report lays out parental complaints about inaccessibility due to its geographic location outside Toronto, and youth complained about altercations with staff, thus its title: “It Depends Who’s On.” Though the complaints named in the report were not specifically directed at the school that is housed within the Roy McMurtry Centre, as my own study suggests, the relational challenges lived out between the detention centre’s residents and its staff have had an inevitable impact on its other spaces, classrooms and common rooms alike.

“Review of the Roots of Violence” is another important document written by the man after whom “The Roy” is named. This is the culminating report by McMurtry and Curling who published their findings after being called upon by the Premier of Ontario in 2007 to interrogate factors linked to youth violence in the province. They put forth recommendations for money to be invested in long-term solutions to youth crime such as community hubs and sensitivity training for police (2008). Their research was published under the umbrella of the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services in 2008.

Though there is a five-year differential between the Provincial Youth Advocate’s report, “It Depends Who’s On: The Youth Reality at the Roy McMurtry Centre” (2013)

and McMurtry and Curling's "Roots of Violence" (2008), if read side by side what becomes apparent about the two documents is the glaring disconnect between them. Though they are intertwined by issues of youth violence and both point to the need for the implementation of systemic change, what both reports present come from two ends of a broad spectrum, one from inside and the other from beyond prison walls. (An ironic thread that connects the two reports is their shared link to Ontario's former chief justice Roy McMurtry.) The incongruity of these works strikes to the complex heart of what is being done (or not being done) by policy makers to support criminalized, detained and incarcerated youth. Such a disconnect points to the ongoing challenges of working with youth in spaces of teaching and learning that cut across various competing systems of power and influence. For example, I see a knotted complexity in the timing of when the "Roots of Violence" report was put forward to the public in 2008, while the quiet – almost invisible – closure of York Detention Centre in 2009 occurred on the heels of that report. I struggle to understand how the closure of York Detention Centre fell in line with the report's recommendation "for coordinated planning and close work with communities, agencies and other governments to determine the specifics of what needs to be done... [to] adopt [a] place-based approach" (McMurtry and Curling, 2008). Of note is how the "Roots of Violence" report puts an emphasis on the importance of "place," and how I use this same term throughout the project but align it with Till's work on "place-making" (2011, 2004). In the context of my project, this shared term gestures to just one of many disconnected elements found in my reading on the interwoven topics of youth, criminality, education, memory and location.

The inherent disconnect between governmental motivations towards youth

violence and systemic practices surrounding them are further highlighted by the more recent words of McMurtry himself. The 2013 report entitled “It Depends Who’s On: The Youth Reality at the Roy McMurtry Centre” highlights ongoing issues within the Roy McMurtry Centre that have not yet been fully addressed since they were first laid out by the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth in an earlier report written back in 2009. This report was published in response to the initial complaints made by inmates and parents that started immediately following the centre’s opening in the same year. When such complaints are read alongside McMurtry’s interview with the Globe and Mail newspaper (2013) in which he expresses disappointment at the government’s lack of attention paid to the recommendations made in “Roots of Violence” (2008) that were to help mitigate youth violence, what rings all too clearly is the resounding gong of empty words. These, albeit conflicting, presentations of very real and ongoing issues shine a discomfiting light on the systems that teach and house youth who will one day be released to join the society from which they have been in so many ways dislocated.

Gestured to in the “Roots of Violence” report, Alvi (2012) presents what he believes are similar workable solutions to youth crime by proposing a need for “long-term fundamental changes in social structure and policy, and [calls] for fundamental shifts in the way we think about youth and crime” (p. 77). But Alvi takes it one step further and picks up a dropped thread from Elman’s (2013) report by speaking specifically to how such shifts require a hard look at the need for institutional change in both existing penal and educational systems. Alvi makes explicit a connection between juvenile delinquency and education in his presentation of a historical continuum of youth crime in Canada, when he writes of our country’s early years:

[S]ince education was seen as one way to deal with the problem of delinquency, and because the economy required trained and skilled labourers, compulsory schooling also came to be seen as a major player in the ‘proper’ development and socialization of children. (p. 7)

At this juncture I look to Biesta’s work on teachers as a bridge to connect the socio-legal and philosophical works that have helped me to distill my large question of what is “educational” in education. Biesta’s (2012) belief in the necessity of the teacher troubles the historical notion of schooling for detained and incarcerated youth that Alvi writes of, noting that though we live in a different day and age, still today a “moral panic about an alleged loss of authority in contemporary society” feeds into ideas of what many people determine to be education’s “ultimate purpose” – creating the “good citizen” (2012, p.1). To question the “ultimate purpose” of education, specifically for detained and incarcerated youth, requires that we circle back to the public ignorance Dlugash (2013) writes of. What he says of our societal preference to look the other way regarding the inner workings of the prison system can also be applied to issues stemming from “solutions” to youth crime that choose to ignore the intersections of larger social, political, and economic factors. For example, one such intersection appears in “the way market societies operate to create schools that set students up for ‘success’ and ‘failure,’ [and] marginalize those who do not meet standards” (Alvi, 2012, p. ix). Since the criteria for student success (or failure) in mainstream schooling is determined by “standards” that are set according to a marketplace mentality, a mentality that caters to those who have access to a wide variety of resources, it should be no surprise that for our most vulnerable students, for those young people who struggle to acquire such resources, what our

American colleagues call “the school to prison pipeline” (Porter, 2015; Davis, 2003) becomes for them a reality. The “school-to-prison pipeline” refers to policies and practices that take young people out of classrooms into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. The American Civil Liberties Union (2006) describes:

[T]his pipeline [as reflecting] the prioritization of incarceration over education. For a growing number of students, the path to incarceration include... “stops” [such as] zero tolerance school discipline [and] juvenile detention... which provide few, if any, educational services.

The phrase “school-to-prison pipeline” challenges “the common ‘reflex’ that education is the key instrument for restoring [a socially desired sense of] authority” (Biesta, 2012, p. 1) to a world dominated by a media-fueled fear of youth wearing hoodies – Black and Latino youth in the context of the United States and in Canada, Black and Indigenous youth – for “the imagined youth is always a racialized body” (Nichols, Davey dissertation notes, June 28, 2016). Alvi, Bhatti and others want us to counter these kneejerk reactions by increasing social supports, which requires educating the public as to what is happening systemically with the criminalization and incarceration of youth. Such an education is pointed to, in a general sense, by the recent writing of Bauman and more specifically with Giroux’s work on education and what he calls “the youth crime complex” (Giroux, 2009). In chapter three I return to Biesta (2012), with a close reading of *The Beautiful Risk of Education* that informs an in depth philosophical consideration of the “educational” in education.

ii. Theoretical Considerations of the “Wasted Life” of Detained and Incarcerated Youth

Socio-legal literature explains the complex intersection of systems at play in the lives of

detained and incarcerated youth, but the picture becomes more fully fleshed out when connected to a variety of philosophical works in education. The works of thinkers like Zygmunt Bauman, Henry Giroux, Biesta and Till offer a lens through which to look critically and consider from different angles the complexity of the “educational” place that was York Detention Centre. Bauman’s *Wasted Lives* (2011) does not specifically address historical considerations of incarcerated youth in Canada or even education specifically. Yet, in line with a reflective analysis of past and present, I see Bauman as picking up where Alvi leaves off by writing about modernity in general. According to Bauman modernity is an age of “excessive designing, *a surplus of designs*” defined by waste. He writes, “The underlying strategy and the inevitable effect of designing is the division of the material outcomes of the action into the... ‘useful product’ and ‘waste’” (p. 24-25). Bauman’s definition of “waste” encompasses what he sees as human refuse. He does not just look at the literal garbage we toss into the trash heap, but those wasted lives that get jettisoned when there is no determined “use” for them in societally defined structures.

Of note is Bauman’s question as to whether we moderns really want to help those who are considered “waste” – for example, youth in detention. He writes,

Political governance has become partially dependent on the deviant other and the mobilization of feelings of safety. Political power, and its establishment, as well as its preservation, are today dependent on carefully selected campaign issues, among which safety (and feelings of unsafety) are paramount. (p. 59)

To counter those feelings of “unsafety” the social reaction is to incarcerate, for Angela Davis (2005) writes of the prison, it “becomes a way of disappearing people in the false

hope of disappearing the underlying social problems they represent” (p. 41). As has been gestured to earlier in this chapter, Davis’ ongoing research and anti-prison activism makes explicit who is being systemically “disappeared” because of fear. She writes of the ways in which racism impacts what it means for youth to be criminalized outside and inside prison walls, stating, “Because of the persistent power of racism, “criminals” and “evildoers” are in the collective imagination, fantasized as people of colour” (2003, p. 9).⁴ Considering not only who is “disappeared” but also the forlorn spaces to which they are relegated, the site-specific nature of my project connects to what Davis’ (2003) has written of prison “life.” In *Are Prisons Obsolete?* she writes,

The prison functions ideologically as an abstract site into which the undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers...relieves us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism. (p. 9)

If Bauman and Davis are correct about established systems of power as dependent on society’s feelings of “unsafety,” then the lives of those young people who are deemed the “deviant others” in Canadian society are at risk of forever remaining wasted – unless systemic change at all levels is prioritized. Yet, for change to be prioritized it must first be acknowledged as an issue to be grappled with; how can those who have been “disappeared” ever have the opportunity to appear? My project is working to bring the

⁴ The inside/outside nature of the word “criminalized” points to how some people are criminalized by virtue of the optic they present, not because of any criminal act they may or may not have committed. For the purposes of this study, the specific terms of “detained and incarcerated youth” is more appropriate.

site of the former York Detention Centre out of this state of ideological abstraction so it might appear along with those who made meaning of it both then and now.

As Alvi and others have already pointed out, working towards systemic change takes more than individualized shifts in perspective to affect the negative cycles that are impacting the lives of youth in detention. In the beginning pages of his book Bauman (2011) posits that for something to be created, something else must be consigned to waste (p. 21). By the end of *Wasted Lives* Bauman calls for the reader to ask of herself “whether the inclusion/exclusion game is the only way in which human life in common may be conducted and the only conceivable form our shared world may take – be given – as a result” (p. 133). Bauman is not alone in his concern for the “wasted lives” of those young people who live on the margins of modern society. Alvi refers to the work of Giroux in his analysis of Canadian perceptions of criminalized youth.

Similar to Bauman, Giroux’s research today is “inclined to look into the experience of young people who have become disposable in a failing postmodern society” (Doughty, 2011, p.1). In Doughty’s review of *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* (2009), he writes that Giroux offers a devastating critique of how society has “not only abandoned larger and larger numbers of our youth, but has actually turned on them as potential enemies of the state” (Doughty, 2011, p.5). Giroux (2009) says,

More and more...youth either find themselves in a world with vastly diminishing opportunities or are fed into an ever-expanding system of disciplinary control that dehumanizes and criminalizes their behaviour in multiple sites, extended from the home and school to the criminal justice system. (p. 72)

He makes a direct link to the criminalization of youth and social memory when he states that they “offer a grim reminder of [failed] adult responsibility,” acting to “embody an ethical referent that *should* require adults to question” themselves and the choices they make. When we choose, instead, to turn a blind eye to the varying impacts of what Giroux calls the “market-driven laws of capital accumulation,” adults are all the more affronted by their social failings, making detained and incarcerated youth the “bearers of unwanted memories” (p. 72). As well, not only do notions of youth in detention call up unwanted memories, Davis (2003) suggests that all the more problematic is the lack of a “public vocabulary” which would help to contextualize conversations around major issues such as the “school-to-prison pipeline”, the “prison industrial complex” and what Giroux calls the “youth crime complex” (Giroux, 2009, p. 74).

Without an accessible vocabulary to help put into words the crippling social fears seemingly made manifest in our youth, what are we left with? In a 2010 online article in *Culture Machine*, Giroux writes a piece entitled “Youth in Dark Times: Broken Promises and Dashed Hopes.” According to this article youth are no longer “inscribed in the metaphors of hope” but are seen in society as “both dangerous and disposable” (p. 2). He goes on to consider how such a presentation adds to the complicated negotiation of space that youth, especially criminalized youth, encounter every day:

As the mechanisms of power, containment, and policing merge, the spaces that young people inhabit become increasingly militarized. At the same time such hyper-militarized spaces, extending from the street to the school, are abetted by a cultural apparatus and public pedagogy that jumps at every opportunity to demean

and demonize young people, especially poor minority youth, by representing them as an ever present threat to society. (p. 2)

Such an assessment speaks to the uphill battle youth face when incarcerated. That battle becomes harder to fight upon re-entry into a society that does not want them and an education system that does not know – or chooses to remain blind to – what such a marginalized group of young people need to succeed in school. It is from these considerations that I make the more explicit connection to schooling and incarcerated youth to explore what is in fact “educational” in education, using what I believe is a version of what Davis calls a “public vocabulary” to look at an unlikely “educational” time and place.

iii. A Public Vocabulary of the “Educational”

The specifically located vocabulary that has been developed for this project works to open up and add into a discourse that has been essentially truncated by conservative ideologies that dominate both the realms of criminal justice and education. The following terms must be defined clearly to scaffold this project’s curatorial conclusion. The following key tropes run throughout the entirety of the work:

- a) What does it mean to “become”?
- b) What is the *sporadic* “educational” gift of “passing time”
- c) and, in contrast, what are the *missed* “educational” opportunities for teaching and learning in the incarcerated space that was York Detention Centre?

To “become,” in the “educational” sense, is tied to a growing sense of self or subjectivity that is lived out by students, as they make meaning of both places of learning and the *sporadic* influence of their teachers (Biesta, 2012). “Passing time” (Di Paolantonio, 2016)

together as a community of learners facilitates a space for “educational becoming” to occur, as students work through critical questions of thought, not limited to skills-based instruction. This project focuses on the *missed* opportunities to “become” that happened in the unlikely “educational” place that was York Detention Centre, *missed* being italicized to emphasize a temporal sense of both past and present as imbued in the term. I use this vocabulary to first, spotlight what gaps exist in the work that has and has not been done with incarcerated youth and education; and second, from a philosophical standpoint I use these terms to offer a response to the question “What is ‘educational’ in education?”

Emerging from this “public vocabulary” is the possibility of “witness-learning” (Eppert, 2000, 2011) through the act of reading the curatorial experiment that is chapter five. Eppert describes “witness-learning” to be a vigilant and careful process of “interrogating those moments of memory that threaten to appropriate or deny the radical difference of another’s experience” (2011, p. 749). Thus, by literally framing remnant-objects from York Detention Centre within the new space (or site) afforded to us in the form of a shadow-box picture frame, this project points to the former prison as a site of ongoing “educational” meaning-making all the more in the present day. The new story that emerges from the constellated retelling (Benjamin, 1999, Orig. 1931) of memories from York Detention Centre’s “educational” past disrupts future meaning-making of what the literature has shown to have been a limited discourse.

Expanded Constellated Concept Map (with Key Concepts and Research Questions):



Chapter Two

Methodology – Restorying Place through Narrative Analysis:

My methodological approach with this work was informed by Till (2004) who writes, “[P]laces are never merely back-drops for action, nor are they texts from which the past can be easily read” (p. 9). I embarked on this memory project with the acute awareness that reading the “text” of York Detention Centre would not be an easy task. I hoped that mining the stories lived by those who inhabited the former space of YDC would lay the groundwork for a new “educational” narrative I have long felt needed to be told. The juggling act that defined the process of restorying memories that are connected to a space is summed up by Farrar (2011) who writes, “a memory is never as simple as a story we tell about our past; instead, it lives on in us in ways that we do not fully control” (p. 724). Thus, to stay grounded in the midst of so much remembering, throughout the writing process I sought control over such tangibles as the methods of data collection and narrative structure. The hard “heart” work of going back to another time associated with a site that is still so much meaning-filled required of me a clear path forward – a methodological map.

Research Process and Participants

According to Merriam’s (2009) guide to qualitative research, “Narrative Analysis” (NA) was the qualitative research methodology best suited to the aims of my research. Though it shares similarities with other qualitative research methodologies, my study focused on the interconnected narratives (and narrations) of restoried “educational” experiences that were told to me in four different interviews with members of the former

YDC community.⁵ As well, my own restorying of that “educational” place was informed by a discovery of remnant-objects from the former school setting, making for another sort of overlapping narrative. Thus, I chose to use NA because the “text” of this approach is made up of first-person accounts of experience and I saw, early on, that I had many varied texts to analyze. The interview participants are made up of a sampling from those who “passed time” with me when I was teaching in the prison, specifically two former residents, a former guard/Child and Youth Worker, as well as a former management figure. Though none of the interviewees are close friends at present, with the help of social networking tools we have all remained loosely tied to each other because of our past connection to YDC. Throughout the interviewing, and ensuing writing, their stories became tied to my own first person account of specifically located remembered experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). I wanted to facilitate the interviews in as open a manner as possible in an effort to provide a narrative voicing of a “neglected, but significant area of the human realm” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 482). Striving to bring forward into the present memories of our shared “educational” pasts, I recognized that though I “cannot give voice, [I] do hear voices that [I] record and interpret” (Riessman, 1993, p. 8). Therefore, this project has explored the voices and stories of some who have been “traditionally marginalized...[while striving to] provid[e] a less exploitative research method than other modes” (Hendry, 2007, cited in J. Arendt, 2011, p. 268). The methodology was less exploitative in that my double role as both researcher and participant complicated the more traditional position of power associated with a researcher. My own experiences of restorying YDC obligated of me a vulnerable position

⁵ For the sake of privacy, interviewee names, as well as those names used in the remnant-object analysis, have been changed to pseudonyms.

from which to begin.

In the course of speaking with and listening to the interviewees, and then transcribing their restorying of York Detention Centre, I worked hard to mitigate the challenge of representation regarding their voices. When determining how to narrate a profile for each, it was tempting to simply describe my participants as they appear to me. But when I asked the four different interviewees to self-identify with descriptors of their choice, one chose to fore front a First Nations background while another said, “I identify as a product of the diaspora.” One interviewee said simply, “I was born in Toronto” while the last participant specified being from Rexdale, located within the GTA. I was struck by the self-identifying details that each chose to forefront, details that were certainly more layered than what I might have written on my own. The short participant profiles that appear in chapter four reveal some of what they did – and did not say – of themselves.

In regards to the interviews with the two former residents, I had to make a conscious effort not to “idealize the individual to the point that he or she becomes a static stereotype” (J. Arendt, 2011, p. 268). I focused on keeping Geertz’s (1973) concept of “thick description” as a means to “challenge the dominant discourses” without “romanticizing [their] struggles” (p. 287). These interviews necessitated my looking “beyond the sensationalized aspects and pathologized discourse of incarcerated juvenile lives” (J. Arendt, 2011, p. 268). From what emerged in the interviews, I worked to present a shared remembering of *missed* “educational” experiences that occurred in that forlorn space, seeing an opportunity in this remembering to work towards new enlivened questions of the pedagogical in relation to incarcerated youth.

My project takes up what Clendinin and Connelly (1990) describe to be the educational importance of narrative inquiry in that “it brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived” (p. 3). This study sees the past, present and future life of York Detention Centre, what I believe to be a place of meaning-making, exemplifying both human and educational experiences “as lived.” Their main claim for the use of the narrative in educational research is that “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (p. 1). Zeroing in on their use of the phrase “experience[ing] the world,” and using Till’s (2008, 2005, 2004) work on “place-making” as a foundation upon which I built the temporal focus of my project, my methodological approach to the interview process was to use narrative inquiry and analysis to look closely at educational experiences associated with the world of youth incarceration.

Though I have defined it as a site-situated memory project, unlike other studies located in prison settings, this endeavour did not afford any of the participants the opportunity to physically return to the detention centre to inform their remembering. One can stand on George Street in downtown Toronto and look at the former detention centre’s exterior walls, as well as the door through which many of us entered, but access to the interior of the building is prohibited. For example, our arrested re-entry to the memoried space was unlike that of Aguiar (2015), of McLaughlin’s *The Prison Memory Archive* (2006), who had the chance to analyze stories recorded with interviewees after they were brought back to the Maze and Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland. Because it was a site of such intense memory for the participants, she writes that the “the

materiality of the site stimulated the process of recalling and enabled [them] to re-enact past experiences” (p. 227). A return to the materiality of YDC as a site was not an option for my participants, yet recalling and restorying past “educational” experiences is what this project set out to do. Therefore, even though none of my interviewees physically re-entered the site, “place-making” still happened as we remembered it through story.

Aguiar looks at “*what* stories are recalled and *how* they are recalled when people are brought back to the traumatic place of memory” (p. 228). Similarly, with this work I have been interested in what stories the interviewees and I remember from our shared time spent “inside.” To help tease out the importance of what was a site of incarceration but was also a school and, in many ways, an ironic “safe house” from the hardships of street life, throughout the research process I have looked to Till’s work on what she calls “place making;” specifically “how particular places [like the former detention centre] embody and narrate distinct...pasts and futures, stories of belonging, and the absences and presences of social memory-work” (Till, 2005, Front matter).

Both language and word choice play a central role in the process of narrative inquiry and analysis, thus the word “place,” as borrowed from Aguiar, takes on new meaning when tied to Till’s notion of “place-making” or what she calls a “placed-based ethics of care” (Till, 2011). Till (2008) writes of place-making in connection to her ethnographic research on large-scale traumas in the realm of urban geography. Her work spans from post-war Germany to a more recent research project based on a post-apartheid mass grave discovery in Cape Town, South Africa. What she posits around place-based memory, care and identity is echoed in the voices of those I interviewed: “A sense of place is inextricably linked to memory formation, which is, of course, crucial to identity

formation, both at the individual and collective levels” (p. 4). Of her “place-based ethics of care” she writes about “attending to, caring for and being cared for by place and those that inhabit place” in working towards constituting more “democratic urban realms” (2011, p. 5). In my reading I found that the ethics of attending to and caring for a place were feebly attempted by one lone journalist who wrote a line in a short editorial piece published in the days just before YDC’s closing. He writes, “Here's why we should care...” in reference to the impending shut down of YDC, pointing to what he suggests to be a societal necessity of caring for “kids who will eventually come out” (Fiorito, 2009). Taking the notion of care that one step further, this project’s participant interviews offer narrative examples of what it means to be cared for by place through those who formerly inhabited it. The unexpected care proffered by the specific space of incarceration, as remembered in the participant narratives, speaks to the complexity that defined the relationships people had with the site, both residents and care-givers alike.

Though Till is writing about cityscapes and this project is about one singular building within a larger setting, the bridge that I believe connects my work to hers is a shared desire to unpack, through memory-work, how this former site of incarceration “might sustain more just possible futures” (2011, p. 5). In relationship with that site, the experience of caring for and being cared for by a place as connected to a sense of self is inherently tied to what I present as “educational” throughout this project.⁶ In this restorying of YDC I chose to adopt Till’s notion of place-making because, though the site of my project is microscopic in size compared to the focus of her work on the widespread trauma of apartheid in South Africa, her conceptualization of “place” versus “space” is an

⁶ The link between the physical environment, or space, and the “educational” meaning-making that stories a space into a “place” of care is a concept I tease out more fully in chapter three.

aspect of memory work that cuts across a vast spectrum of experience. Till herself, acknowledges recent discussions and a diversity of viewpoints in the interdisciplinary field of Memory studies about what is meant by a sense of “place.” She calls for a “memory studies agenda that remains sensitive to the ways individuals and groups understand their pasts and possible futures through the relationships they and others have with place” (p. 3). Other voices echo her call, writing of the danger of ignoring the “spatial register of being, [in that] we [then] risk not fully comprehending how embodied memory functions in our lives” (Farrar, 2009, p. 725). This project has worked to narrate a unified shape of the embodied memory of YDC, influenced by Till who says, “places and sites of memory have meanings that exceed their forms as authored representations of the past because of the ways [we] experience them affectively” (2011, p. 7). Restated, the “educational” potential of York Detention Centre is located in the ongoing affective meaning that the site still holds for the participants.

Because the former detention centre site is (still) located in the downtown core of Toronto, I looked to further support my research process with scholarly direction from those who have used narrative inquiry and analysis in the study of both memory and the urban environment. These two areas intersect in the work of Farrar (2011) who writes: “How we attend to the past through the medium of the built environment has political implications for our future” (p. 723). Though the political implications of YDC’s closure could be contested, what this dissertation speaks to more specifically is how the operation and closure of the former youth detention facility had “educational” implications for a future discourse around the schooling of incarcerated youth. What a narrative analysis of the four interviews points to is a collective memory of “inside” experiences; as

summarized by Aguiar (2015): "...[M]emory is a phenomenon of 'the present that can be conditioned by circumstances. People remember differently, not only over time, but also depending on the physic and physical spaces that are inhabited'" (p. 228). Farrar (2011) supports this notion of physical space as literally placed in the process of meaning making when she writes: "Historically marginalized and oppressed groups often use place as a way to forge oppositional identities, and populations who choose to build communities located in particular" (p. 727). Gestured to in the opening pages of my study, I say again that the incarcerated are certainly marginalized, made so all the more pointedly by having been physically relocated outside of societal boundaries. Yet, because of relationships forged for a time inside those walls "educational becoming" and place-making was, then, as much about community building as it was about a determination of the self.

I learned early on that I would have to dig for information about the centre's closure. For example, with only one article documenting its closing found in a search of all three of the major city newspapers (*The Toronto Star*, 2009), questions arose for me as to whether YDC was in fact "a site of either willful or accidental amnesia, where the powers of place are neutralized by ignoring them or removing them from history" (Farrar, p. 727). Was a "willful amnesia" (see also Russel Jacoby's *Social Amnesia*, 1997) set in motion to neutralize the "powers of place" associated with this site? Because YDC was such an unlikely place of education, using the method of conducting and transcribing interviews to access narrative data was especially effective in facilitating for each of the interviewees a chance to give voice to a place that had been muted since its silent closure.

The analysis of these interviews afforded me, both as researcher and as

participant, the narrative space to reconsider what I continue to remember as my own.

Calling upon Michael Rothberg, Eshel (2013) writes,

Group memories do not necessarily compete with or exclude the memories of "others" in a 'zero-sum struggle for preeminence' (p. 3). Rather, memory is... "multidirectional," the result of an ongoing process by which different actors and agents negotiate their memories with those of others and by doing so evolve.

(Notes)

In this negotiation of group memories, where my own connected with those of my interviewees, I was keenly aware of my position in this memory project; specifically how my interpretive analysis was necessarily bound up in my personal history with YDC.

That personal history explicitly shaped the crafting of chapter five's experiment in "witness-learning." The final aesthetic product tells a new story of York Detention Centre informed by both narrative fragments shared by the interviewees and a textual analysis of remnant-objects (Simon, 2010) or "props" brought forward from my own personal experiences teaching there. From the very start of this process I recognized that this methodology was highly interpretive, thus a central goal of the research was to develop an understanding of the meaning and import YDC held for each of the participants of the study – not just for myself and my ongoing storying of the that time and place (Merriam, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, in its final iteration, this project's constellation narrative includes excerpts from the interview transcripts, pieces of old assignments written by former YDC students, and one photograph⁷; these are all that remain for me of the former

"educational" space. These physical props add layers of memory to my narrative analysis

⁷ The faces in the photograph have been blurred to protect the privacy of any former student or staff who were captured in the shot.

and overall textual “reading” with the recognition that:

Meaning is continually constructed and reconstructed. This construction and reconstruction occurs within, and is made visible through, stories. We not only live our lives as a story, as we tell our stories we relive, reconstruct, and reinterpret our experience for later retelling and further reconstruction and reinterpretation. Stories both reflect experience and are constitutive of experience. (McCormack, 2000, p. 286)

The interview content was gathered using a variety of question types deemed by the 2009 Merriam text to be “good”: Experience and Behaviour questions, Opinion and Values questions, Feeling questions, Knowledge questions and, because I was analyzing the physical space of YDC, Sensory questions were used as they “try to elicit more specific data about what is or was seen, heard, [and] touched” (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). These types of questions helped to open up what had been, for the most part, a closed subject of conversation for the interviewees since the detention center was shuttered in 2009. My own awareness of how difficult it was and still is to talk about that time and place informed my careful creation of questions to help tease out the past stories of the “educational” from the participants.

By adding my own stories from that time and place to such a small cohort of interviews, I was clearly not putting forth a project that was longitudinal. But, critical research is not about sample size, and as Merriam (2009) writes, operating from a critical stance means “seek[ing] to critique the way things are in the hopes of bringing about a more just society [and therefore] can be combined with other qualitative methodologies” (p. 35). Thus, from Merriam’s perspective, my adoption of a critical stance through

narrative analysis and aesthetic curation meant that as all of our stories emerged from the mining of the interview transcripts, what became constellated in the restorying process was, essentially, YDC's "educational" legacy. Because the current discourse around the education of detained and incarcerated youth is so dominated by a focus on the standardization and streamlining of systems through the creation of larger more impersonal facilities, from the very start this project's methodological approach assumed a stance of critical inquiry with the desire to "critique and challenge, to transform and empower."

In his research around youth in detention I found in OISE's Jonathan Arendt (2011) an ally close to home. His work "[In]Subordination: Inmate Photography and Narrative Elicitation in a Youth Incarceration Facility" also seeks to critique and challenge notions around the incarceration of youth through the aesthetic act of photographing a prison from the inside out. J. Arendt puts cameras into the hands of detained youth so that the pictures tell stories from their very specific and personal vantage points. The premise of both our projects is similar in that they recognize a willfully ignorant society that prefers to keep incarcerated youth locked away, not seen and certainly not heard. My own project is similar to J. Arendt's in two ways. Both work to share stories from the "inside" out, and both culminate by harnessing the narrative power of symbolic aesthetic objects. What sets my project apart is the way it explicitly connects research around incarcerated youth to education. The stories remembered by the participants of this study helped me to shine a light on how the place-making that occurred in York Detention Centre served to open up, thereby offering insight into the *missed* "educational" potential to "become" for those who passed time inside those walls.

To unpack the narrative restorying of participant time passed in YDC, the process for mining and coding the interview transcripts was influenced by McCormack's (2000) narrative analysis of her conversations with female academics. In her work to better understand their notions and lived experiences of leisure time, McCormack speaks to the importance of adopting "lenses" for the work of narrative analysis. The slow work of transcript analysis requires time and patience as the researcher pours over pages and pages of material, searching for a larger concatenated story. In my work to re-story YDC, patience and attention to detail informed how I drew on McCormack's lenses to help me get the most out of the material brought forward in the interviews. She writes that viewing the interview transcript through multiple lenses involves a process of:

Immersing oneself in the transcript through a process of *active listening*;
identifying the narrative *processes* used by the storyteller; paying attention to the *language* of the text; acknowledging the *context* in which the text was produced;
and identifying *moments* in the text where the unexpected [occurs]. (p. 285)

J. Arendt (2011) writes about the importance of adding "layers of significance in the narrative process" (p. 265), and in this project interpretive layers were added with every new lens I adopted throughout my analysis.

Clandenin and Connelly (1990) emphasize the importance of listening when using narrative inquiry and analysis for research. They state, "It is the [participant] who first tells his or her story...[in what is a] process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds" (p. 4). I went into the experience of each interview trying to remain open, ready to listen and receive, but was amazed at my own unanticipated desire to speak first. I battled myself in terms of what McCormack calls

Active Listening as it was not an intuitive process in my conversations with the four participants. I had to be explicit in my efforts to ask questions of myself as I went along such as: Who are the characters in this conversation? What are the main events? Where and when do they occur? As a researcher, how am I positioned during this conversation? As a researcher, how am I positioned in relation to the participant? How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to this participant? I also adopted the lens of *Processes* where I was to theorize about the interview content and try to figure out the “why” for different acts (or non-acts) in their stories. It was especially interesting to note in myself how, at various points, the conversations stimulated a recollection of additional story pieces, or what McCormack calls *Augmentation* (2000, p. 286).

I followed by adopting the lens of *Language* to help “construct [my own] ‘sense of self, [my] subjectivity’” (McCormack, p. 287, quoting Richardson, 1994, p. 518). I found this lens to be especially interesting because my work to create a “public vocabulary” was not just for those on the outside looking in, but could be used by and for youth and their caregivers concerning an understanding of subjectivity or the self. That vocabulary was a missing piece of the puzzle in the search for YDC’s narrative unity; I started this project with no such language available to story an incarcerated youth’s “educational” experience. That language grew out of what the interviewees. Brown and Gilligan (1992) say that this lens allows the researcher to see how the interviewee “speaks of herself before we speak of her” (pp. 26-27). Such a perspective is necessary to strive towards when a lack of youth voice is noticeably absent in the research and literature written about youth – not necessarily by them. McCormack writes of three

language features with this lens: what is said, how it is said and what remains unsaid (p. 291).

That which remains “unsaid” informed my working through of different *Moments* in the transcript analysis, a lens that required a nuanced examination of how I would present the interviewees in their short profiles, as well as a reading of how they shared their stories as much as the stories themselves. Of this lens McCormack (see also Denzin, 1994) writes,

Often the stories we recall represent significant moments—epiphanies or turning points—that then lead us to tell other stories about what happened before and after these moments. There may also be times during a story where particular phrases or key words signify something different or unexpected is happening. Whether these moments occur as stories or within stories, they are times that ‘alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects.’ (p. 287)

Thus, these significant *moments* may be signified by key words or phrases, sometimes showing up as memories retold during the interview or spontaneous conversational outbursts. Denzin (1994) refers to “radical” moments, for example a turning point or self-questioning moment of personal reflection (p. 510). These are the points in the interview that the researcher cannot plan for but must be open to and pay attention to so as to honour them and include the information shared in the final piece. I was struck by the power of the “radical” moments as they emerged in the interviews. The participants expressed surprise at their own reactions to these various “radical” moments, most notably documented in my analysis of their shifts in posture and language choice. All the

more striking was my personal experience of these “radical” moments, played out in my head again and again, even after the interviews had ended. Clendinin and Connelly (1990) describe this complex researcher experience as “temporally continuous and socially interactive” based on how both participant and researcher are “living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others” (p. 4). Based on my growing familiarity with the process of narrative inquiry and the emotional “necessity of time, relationship, space and voice in establishing the collaborative relationship,” perhaps I should not have been surprised at my repeated responses to the “radical” moments of my participants (p. 4). Yet, again and again, I was amazed at how the heaviness of certain interview moments continued to weigh on me even after our conversation had ended, moments that were lived out by four people I had only just reconnected with.

The visceral weight of the shared narrative experiences necessitated for me the use of these different lenses to complete the interview transcription. They helped to ground what was a very personal experience in the realm of research methods. McCormack (2000) used her donning of these lenses to develop “interpretive stories using the views highlighted through” them (p. 4). My own version of “interpretive storying” was developed with the help of these same lenses. Borrowing an “*au courant*” term in education right now, they provided various “look-fors” to help me organize the scattered stories of four participants and my own. They helped to create the narrative space for a concentrated look back at this “other time” of teaching and learning, as what emerged in the transcription analysis was a recognition of how YDC has had a continued impact even after its closing. I followed the direction of Clendenin and Connelly (1990)

in my narrative structuring of the interview data, striving to unify the various shared elements, the uniquely personal restorings, of a certain time and place. In “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry” they state that setting the narrative scene requires of the researcher the written task of composing characters, a physical environment and context. By context they mean that which is “out of sight,” striking at the heart of what was this project’s key challenge: with its closure the site of YDC was rendered inaccessible and, therefore, “out of sight” – but not out of mind (p. 8).

Using the lenses to guide my narrative analysis allowed for what Clandenin and Connelly (1990) describe as multiple “Is,” thus informing my story selection and reconstruction in the movement towards an end product (p. 10). What Eisner (1982) calls “forms of representation” (p. 11) were teased out in my collaborative efforts with the other interviewees, as researcher and participants came together to create something new of memory. In the movement towards the project’s final curation, “remnants-objects” from the time passed in YDC were brought forward: a photograph, a small number of school assignments and letters addressed to me, their former teacher. I borrowed vocabulary from Smith’s (2013) essay “Photography between Desire and Grief” to help me read the photograph and used the same strategies to read the remnants of student writing. Smith plays with Barthes’ photographic notion of “affective intentionality” which:

[s]uggests an active and deliberate method of regarding a photograph...[with the] hopes to do more than passively record the emotional effects images have on [the viewer]. [Barthes] seeks to use affect as one of the lenses through which he sees and grasps an image. (Smith, p. 31)

The affective act of reading the photograph and the other textual remnants was done to honour the impact their content had on me in different ways in the years since the centre's closure. Specific to the picture, being both the photographer and a spectator of what it contains, my narrative analysis of it pointed to all that I remembered of that time and, ironically, what all I had forgotten.

To help me unpack my affective reading of these remnants I borrowed further from Barthes, using his photographic term "wound" or *punctum* as the emotional hook upon which I hung my (self)-analysis. This term, as defined in distinction to the *studium*, is based on,

[T]he cultural knowledge that informs one's reading of a photograph, [for] the punctum is an unanticipated personal response to certain details in an image that emotionally pierce the viewer, breaking through the trained reading of the studium. (p. 34)

My specific "cultural knowledge" of the education system and the former York Detention Centre meant for this project that I had an insider's access to a certain kind of information. The memory work of this dissertation triggered a "trained reading" of the photograph's studium and in chapter five I speak to how such a reading meant calling upon a "cultural knowledge" of who predominantly populates our prisons, youth and adult facilities alike (as detailed on pp. 25-26 of chapter one). I also write about how in the midst of my reading, a punctum moment occurred as I experienced an unanticipated personal response to a detail in this image; it emotionally pierced me. Part of my restorying work to document YDC's "educational" impact emerged in the details of that punctum moment and the way that photograph has played a key part of the curative

whole I present in the final chapter.

Though the narrative work of restorying is not new in the “doing” of narrative inquiry, it is in the curatorial experiment of chapter five where this complex process of restorying is set apart from other research around incarcerated youth. Because I was not merely a theoretical element of the temporal restorying of place – in fact I was and am still an ongoing interwoven character in the new “educational” story – what emerged in the final section of this project might be considered a chorus of voices still continuing to story what was deemed an “end place,” making it into one of pedagogical “ongoingness” (Manguso, 2015). As is apparent in my writing thus far, during my research I found useful the terms “curation” and “constellation” for they aided in my shaping of the many intersecting stories and artifacts brought forward from the time of the detention centre. Both terms are deeply rooted in the work of memory studies. To situate the term “curation” I look to the work of Simon, who was influenced by Benjamin’s use of the term “constellation.”⁸ Di Paolantonio (2014) unpacks Simon’s (2010) consideration of the potential for a “point of connection” found in “the art of curation,” seeing a potency in the “art of forging a constellation [that] involves judging how to re-compose the past into a living interpretation with the present” (Di Paolantonio, p. 10). Simon uses the term “mise-en-scene” to encapsulate a pedagogical arrangement of remnant-objects so as to “help frame, forge and support a mode of looking” not just outward but inward (Di Paolantonio, p. 9). Though Simon and Di Paolantonio are writing about difficult histories at the level of mass social traumas, I believe that their curatorial vocabulary transcends

⁸ I started this project with a nebulous notion of what I was calling a “constellation of stories” with no knowledge of Walter Benjamin’s work with the same term. My stumbling upon his work added meaning for me to the (potentially clichéd but apt) phrase: Standing on the shoulders of giants...I borrow most explicitly from Benjamin’s description of a “constellation” effect, first mentioned in chapter one and described in detail in chapter five.

even as it is scaled down to the microcosmic scope of one forlorn building located in the downtown core of Toronto.

Through a restorying of York Detention Centre I have worked to marry Till's notion of place-making with my overarching question of what it means to "become" in the "educational" sense, in that "we can understand place as always becoming, as within and beyond us" (Till, 2011, p. 11). Essentially, chapter five was the culmination of my search for what Cavarerro (2000) calls "narrative unity" brought into shape through our group memories and that "narrative unity" was what I discovered in the final stages of the project. Till gives a detailed description of a social art project that she asserts works to bring healing to a wounded urban site. In her unpacking of the project she uses the phrase "temporary communities of the imagination" to describe those who have come together, artist and everyday citizen alike. She frames this coming together as "a form of political witnessing" (p. 12). Taking elements from the stories told to me and by me, as well as curating the different remnant-objects brought forward from my time in the YDC classroom, I used a physical prop upon which to build this new constellated story, a foundation upon which to build such a "temporary community of the imagination." I used a wooden shadow box frame that was filled with the remnant-objects from the former detention centre for the purpose of meaning-making. In that framing of a new and tangible place, an "educational" experience of "witness-learning" was opened up.

Eppert's notion of "witness-learning" grew out of her connection to and writing of the memory-based research of Simon (2000, 2004). In her more recent writing where she writes about the pedagogical reading of a specific novel, Eppert (2011) expands in detail about what she means by "witness-learning." She states that reading through the lens of

“witness-learning” means a person is:

mindful of one’s own and another’s remembrance-learning. It entails being vigilant to and interrogating those moments of memory that threaten to appropriate or deny the radical difference of another’s experience... Witness-learning entails becoming more informed...[and] learning, beyond the scope of [one] narrative. (p. 749)

Therefore, making the explicit link to this project, “witness-learning” is the process of becoming more informed about discourses that dominate the thinking around incarcerated youth and their educational experiences. What Eppert believes can emerge from the careful reading of a book is akin to the “witness-learning” potentially gleaned from the reading of the interviews in chapter four and chapter five’s curatorial framing of YDC.

“Witness-learning,” then, emerges from the narrative work of mining the interviews, coupled with a physical “mise-en-scene” set in relief inside the square wooden frame, as they both lend themselves to an active response from a viewer. Regarding the possibility of public response I was influenced by Di Paolantonio’s (2014) reference to Groys (2009) who describes the necessity of curation to inform a reading of art, to cure it of an inherent helplessness to “assert its presence” (p. 2). Groys takes an etymological approach in his work to situate the importance of curatorial work, writing:

It seems the work of art is sick, helpless; in order to see it, viewers must be brought to it as visitors are brought to a bedridden patient by hospital staff. It is no coincidence that the word “curator” is etymologically related to “cure”: to curate is to cure. Curating cures the powerlessness of the image, its inability to show itself by itself. (p. 2)

As the curator for the shadow box frame's assemblage, I knew that the simple placement of remnant-objects within its wooden walls would not be enough to tell a new story of incarceration and education. Without some sort of explanatory postscript to accompany the aesthetic experiment, the art of this project would risk remaining "ill" and in many ways voiceless, thus propagating the negation of "educational" storying of the incarcerated that this project strives to disrupt. Without the help of curation, one might look at the frame's contents and only see the Other. But by bringing together all of the project's various curatorial elements, including the shadow box frame and a constellated photographic map that explains how remnant-objects from that unlikely "educational" past interconnect, a viewer is gifted the opportunity to *see* both self and Other today in the present. Therefore, in the project's final section the narrative act of "witnessing" YDC's *missed* gifts of "becoming," what was the "educational" in education appearing now in the present, emphasizes how these stories are not just about the incarcerated youth from a time before but a solicitation to the outside world to be interested in such youth now.

With the shadow box and the accompanying narrative explanation, what might have been *missed* of the "educational" experiences of "becoming" for a small number of interconnected voices reads instead as an alternative narrative "witnessing." The goal achieved by restorying the "educational" impact of the former detention centre works to "broaden the scope of the possible, expand the audience, and allow for a wider range of responses" – to make possible a new "becoming" for an attentive public of witnesses (Till, 2011, p. 12). It is in the reading and receiving of this new story that the process of

“witness-learning” brings forward past presents/ce of *sporadic* educational gifts still lived and living in the place of YDC, past, present and future.

Chapter Three

“Becoming” and Education:

Communication is an art. The beauty of carefully chosen words, nuanced turns of phrase or modified metaphors for example, is the way they can be used to cut to the heart of ideas that are only with difficulty spoken or written about. I have written and deleted more times than I can count various attempts to begin this chapter for it is in these next few pages that I hope to grow a garden of words, carefully, from seed. In chapters one and two I introduced the term “becoming” as integrally tied to that which is “educational.” But in relation to incarcerated youth I chose to define the term by what it is not. I looked to how an associated word like “criminal” carries with it a loaded and potentially negating power, a power that might actually stunt an incarcerated youth’s process of “becoming” as it takes shape in the midst of their arrested life. The inference one can make from this non-definition is that, like their mainstream counterparts, incarcerated youth are “becoming” but do so encumbered with the added weight of simultaneously being a part of and disappeared from a society that fears them (Giroux, 2006; Bauman, 2011; and Davis, 2003). Moving beyond a definition of what “becoming” is not, this chapter looks to a variety of terms to help unpack the notion of what it does, in fact, mean to “become” in the realm of the “educational.”

In my efforts to answer the question “What is educational in education?” the difficult process of defining loose concepts like “becoming” and *missed* has been at times daunting. Each of the words I reach for comes loaded with meaning and value, and not necessarily that which I am intending in my explanations. Even my choice to put one in quotation marks and the other in italics has been a process of great deliberation.

Developed and refined in this dissertation experience, the stance I have come to is that quotation marks point to how the word “becoming” – and I do it again with the term “educational” – already has an accepted dictionary meaning that I want to build upon. Italicizing the word *missed* adds a layer of temporal significance in that for this project the word is unpacked as having a double meaning. That which was *missed* looks at the ongoing “educational” impact of what did happen at YDC but was not seen, overlooked both then and now unless attended to through remembered story. To illustrate my process of vocabulary development, and to set the scene for what I believe it means to “become” in the educational sense, I will start by doing a close reading of a short adage sometimes used to describe prison life to see what emerges from that small seed.

I have heard prison described as “perpetual kindergarten” because of its training-based system of operations: waking, eating and sleeping on command. Methods of behaviour control are used to “teach” or train the incarcerated individual to behave appropriately upon re-entry into the society from which he or she has been removed. The term is a pointed reference to an infantilizing of individuals, though no longer children, who are deemed – perhaps, at some level, correctly – in need of behaviour modification. In light of this project’s focus on *missed* “educational” happenings that I believe did occur in a space of incarceration, the breakdown of what might have been a potentially useful metaphor begins with the use of the word “kindergarten,” that which refers to the start of formal education for most children.

Whilst striving to encapsulate the *missed* “educational” experiences that were contained in and by York Detention Centre, I am troubled by this adage’s reference to kindergarten, which necessarily conjures up notions of early schooling and, therefore,

education. Instead, for this project I believe an alternative and more accurate iteration of this descriptive term is “perpetual infancy.” I do not believe that I am simply parsing words with the choice to substitute one word for the other since a central goal of this project is to shine a light on how training and teaching – though both necessary – are inherently different. Thus, I see the term “perpetual infancy” as a more accurate encapsulation of what the literature presents as the normative experience of “learning” in the incarcerated setting. The temporality imbued in the term “perpetual,” that which is never ending, appropriately connects with the back and forth nature of criminalization and incarceration, a difficult cycle to break for those caught in its systemic loop. Second, in this context the word “infancy” points to the powerlessness the prison environment imposes on such an individual. “Infancy,” from the Latin word *infāns*, literally means “speechless,”⁹ the lack the vocabulary or voice with which to grow. Training may provide a framework for how to act but it does not address why one is or who one might become. Such a perpetual voicelessness, or wordlessness, is something this research project strives to disrupt.

Thus, I encounter the term “becoming” as tied to the “educational” in the way that the process of subjectivity or an emerging sense of self is inherently tied to school, or more loosely, the physical spaces of education. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define what they mean by “becoming” in their research on rhizomes. Though their work does not connect explicitly with my own, rhizomatic thinking has been used as a metaphor in educational discourse and I think their sense of “becoming,” albeit tangentially, offers something to my own efforts in defining the term. Nealon

⁹ infant. (n.d.) *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged*. (1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003). Retrieved July 16 2015 from <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/infant>

(2015) unpacks what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as “becoming,” calling it a process of “bringing forth individuation and *environment*” (p. 86). Nealon writes of their research that, “In the process of becoming, the world...coappears with individuation” (p. 86). I see value in the language of “coappearance,” connecting location to individuation, or for the purposes of this project, subjectivity. More specifically, in what follows I am tying together a sense of “place-making” (Till, 2004) and the subjectivity of incarcerated youth. Political theorist Farrar (2011) writes of place that “recent work on memory neglects or disparages” its role but believes instead that “a nuanced politics of place should be tied to an understanding of memory as lived viscerally” (p. 724). It is almost impossible to disentangle systems of education and the law from politics thus the phrase “politics of place” seems apt in gauging what defines the visceral experience of “becoming” for an youth in detention who passes a significant time of growth inside prison walls. Thus, even if only gestured to, a rhizomatic underpinning for the restorying of York Detention Centre seems on point as I strive to link the physical space or *environment* of the former prison to the “educational” memories of those impacted by its walls.

Pulling from philosophers who have come before me, in this chapter I work towards a definition of “becoming” and its interconnection and intersection with the “educational” in the former site of YDC. If for young people “becoming” means moving beyond a state of infancy or *infāns*, to literally grow up and out, than for youth in detention that process must be teased out all the more carefully. Once a child enters the school system she has moved beyond the known space of the home to something altogether different. In her ever expanding experiences of this new world the process of “becoming” takes shape as she starts to push – or is pushed by virtue of life’s

circumstances – beyond the lived boundaries of the self into encounters with the “Other.”¹⁰ Through exposure to various curriculums, both explicit and hidden, the boundaries of “becoming” are pushed in the classroom for the environment of education is charged – electric with meaning. A democratic touchstone of Canadian society mandates public education for “all.” This is a notion that is simultaneously well-intentioned and complex, as experienced by students whose various needs fall outside of what a more traditional classroom offers, like the former residents of York Detention Centre.

Yet, in whatever form it takes, the physical space-turned-place (Till, 2004) of the classroom has great impact on the process of “becoming.” Thus, Till’s memory-based notion of place-making informs this project’s remembered storying of such a site.¹¹ She describes what she means by place-making in this way:

Places become part of us, even when held in common, through the intimate relationships individuals and groups have with them. Places described as wounded are understood to be present to the pain of others and to embody difficult social pasts. (Till, 2008, p.108)

Till goes on to locate her definition of place-making in the recent work of social psychology and urban sociology that she believes “also highlights the significance of place for the environmental and psychological well-being of individuals and

¹⁰ I believe the process of “becoming” to be ongoing, lived beyond one’s years as a full time student, and through the interviews this project uses participant responses to show how it occurs into adulthood.

¹¹ Till’s research and writing falls under the broad category of memory studies. She writes that what she means “by memory-work...[is] the difficult process of working through the losses and traumas resulting from (revisiting) past violence and injustice, and of imagining more socially just futures (Till, 2005; Jelin, 2006)” (Till, 2008, p. 110).

communities” (p. 108). Till and others are adamant about the importance of “place” as it falls under the umbrella of memory studies since “[o]ur memories are almost always *in situ*...Places become written on the body, wired into memory; places become part of us, quite literally” (Farrar, 2011, p. 725). Such a perspective is key to this project’s located nature in that it speaks to the meaning-making that is remembered by those who passed time in its various spaces. An effort to narratively restory a dead space into a place alive with meaning falls in line with Till’s research. She gestures toward the realm of artistic and activist “place-based practice” as key to new learning for scholars in the arena of memory work so as to “begin building responsible research agendas that contribute to more socially just futures” (p. 109). Social justice, memory work and place-making each have a seat at the table in the necessary work of facilitating the “becoming” process for incarcerated youth.

The classroom is a place that imparts meaning both literally and metaphorically contained by walls that are erected or torn down in the arena of education. In this arena “becoming” occurs in the ways a student has the opportunity to wander, passing time as he slides in and out of both classrooms and relationships. The physical space of the school building, more specifically the meaning-filled place of a classroom, brings students together, obligating them for a time to learn to be together. It is a space where they are faced by that which they do not necessarily choose, in the hopes that they might, upon their eventual exit, be better prepared to participate in a world made up of a very different set of walls. Deprived of the right to wander – for this is what it means to be in prison – there exists an imposed impoverishment that adds to the power of “meaning-making” when located in the incarcerated school setting. In such a space/place students

do not control time or, for the most part, their movements. This project points to how the process of “becoming” in such an educational environment is, therefore, all the more charged.

Chapter one refers to the research of Bhatti, Alvi, Dlugash and others who point to the need for a systemic overhaul at a societal level for any real change to occur in terms of the aforementioned cycle of criminalization and incarceration. At this juncture I return to the work of J. Arendt (2011) to act as a bridge between the bigger picture of “wasted lives” to a more considered focus of incarcerated youth, specifically the education of youth in detention. J. Arendt (2011) states that there is a “growing urgency...regarding the lives and experiences of incarcerated juveniles” (p. 265). In his study of six incarcerated youth in Louisiana, Arendt facilitated for them the use of cameras so as to document, for a short time and from the inside out, their experiences of jail. Though his project is not explicitly educational in nature, its pedagogical use of what he calls “photoethnography” allows for an analysis of their snapshots to act as teaching tools that point to “how the systemic, institutionalized oppression influences their understanding of their role as incarcerated juveniles while serving their sentence” (p. 265). I have previously noted similarities between his and my own project, such as J. Arendt’s use of narrative analysis to guide his interviews, a process that is further supported with his use of the photographs. He believes the photographs enrich the “otherwise textual descriptions of their three-dimensional lived space” (p. 266). His study is pertinent to my own work of defining what was “educational” in a former prison site, but not just because we both look at the experiences of incarcerated youth. Our studies are linked at a level of deeper significance in how we observe “becoming” for

incarcerated youth as connected to the space of their imprisonment. J. Arendt looks explicitly at how through their storying of that space, and the personal insight they glean from seeing it through the camera lens, the incarcerated juveniles quite literally frame their understanding of self within its enclosed space.

Recently I read an essay by a Canadian writer who has been incarcerated since he was 18 years old. In it he presents a stark picture of the systemic loop that defines prison life. In this piece written for the magazine *The Walrus* Rafay explains, “Prison teaches above all that the future will have no cure for the past, and life no end but the tomb” (Rafay, 2011, p. 35). He points to a subtle cruelty inherent to existing in prison – a reference to the tomb, built to house the dead, is used in this quote as a spatial metaphor for the incarcerated experience. Once inside its walls a voicelessness threatens to take hold; once inured to the silence of the tomb, how does one regain speech? And in the case of youth who are still in the process of “becoming,” the prison lesson most forcefully communicated, the lesson that is hardest to combat in the silence is this: An existence defined by a prison-mandated state of *infans* means one’s speech does not count. The tone of hopelessness in Rafay’s essay mirrors the dismal photographs taken by the incarcerated youth in Arendt’s study. A picture of a barren bathroom area devoid of any option for privacy, and an image of a security camera installed in the limited recreational space of the gymnasium (J. Arendt, 2011, p. 271) both symbolize the infantilizing nature of prison life for incarcerated youth. Prison presents as a space where the incarcerated are to be constantly watched, with little to no agency over one’s self. In his own way, Rafay and J. Arendt each point to the high stakes inherent in my own project’s work of “educational” recovery. York Detention Centre was an imperfect institution in the midst

of multiple imperfect systems of power, yet it did afford various *sporadic* gifts of teaching that counter the hopelessness of Rafay’s vision for the future; the hope I have as a teacher is that normative prison lessons taught at YDC were disrupted from the inside out by *sporadic* “educational” happenings.

Thus, I posit that one location in which to situate the beginning of such a systemic overhaul is the classroom. In all of its various configurations, the classroom has the potential to act as a bridge for incarcerated youth to move from speechlessness to voice. For such a crossing to occur work is needed from the ground up to bring a more nuanced vocabulary around education and incarcerated youth to the fore. More digging must be done to unearth fresh meaning from words like “classroom” and “student” and, with the greatest care, the growing seeds of what we mean by and for the role of a “teacher” need to be tended to. This vocabulary supports the site-specific nature of this project that locates and situates “place-making” as that which gets to the heart of *missed* “educational” opportunities – meaningful opportunities that I believe are still tied to the former site. But first, stepping back briefly from the specifics of YDC as a place of teaching and learning, this chapter forefronts a general consideration of the “educational” by asking questions of and developing a vocabulary for “becoming” in education and what happens when aspects of that process are *missed*.

A Speculative-Philosophical Exploration of what is “Educational” in Education:

In my efforts to develop a carefully nuanced vocabulary set to answer the question “What is ‘educational’ in education?” I start from my own position as a teacher and from that perspective, similar to how the concept of “becoming” has been teased out, consider first what the “educational” is *not*. French philosopher Philippe Meirieu,

translated and paraphrased by Biesta, says an “*infantile* attitude towards education...operates on the assumption that the world is at our disposal and thus should obey our whims” (2012, 36). From my vantage point as a long time educator, I believe that the opposite of an *infantile* attitude is one of educational maturity, and by maturity I mean that which necessitates looking beyond personal whims, beyond the self, to the Other.¹² One beautiful aspect of the classroom is the way it can present as a microcosmic version of the world at large, and in it, through the time passed together in that “educational” space, a reflective teacher has the power to examine for her students what it can look like to see beyond the self.

How, then, is “educational” maturity represented? What does it look like to see beyond the self to the Other? To see the self through the eyes of another? As a jumping off point, I turn to Biesta’s writing on the role of the educator with a focus on the teacher’s *sporadic* [sic] identity, “an identity that only emerges at those moments when the gift of teaching is [given and] received” (2013, p. 54). This almost intangible identity is representative of a move away from the *infantile* towards the complexity involved in educational “maturity” or, at the very least, a more developed sense of “educational” subjectivity. To understand this notion of a “gift exchange,” the “becoming” of both teacher and student must be considered for the world of education is made up of both; one cannot *be* without the other. And, in light of this project’s site-specific location, a notion of “being” can be taken one step further by intertwining the educator and the educated in the intimate space of a classroom. With such intimacies in mind, if “becoming” is inherently tied to the intersecting teacher/student experience of the

¹² In this chapter the term “Other” is inspired by the work of Emmanuel Levinas, as used in Biesta’s (2013) *The Beautiful Risk of Education*.

“educational,” a problematic presents itself: At the time of arrest one cannot simply press pause on a youth’s process of “educational becoming.” A developing sense of self is not necessarily erased within the confines of a detention centre. Yet I ask if and how the process of “educational becoming” is impacted for a youth in detention when the dominant lens through which she is judged upon arrest sees her as one thing first – a “criminal.” For incarcerated youth – and for the educators and caregivers who work closely with them – the educative process of “becoming” is made all the more complex inside prison walls.

Yet, this project hinges on my positing that mature full-fledged experiences of the “educational” and “becoming” did in fact occur in what was an “unlikely” place of teaching and learning. Because of the located nature of this research project, the power of “place-making,” initially referred to in chapter two, continues to be fleshed out in this construction of a truly “educational” narrative (Till, 2004). The story of too many would be incomplete if York Detention Centre’s “educational” life was dismissed as lived and, upon its closure, simply terminated, limited to a cursory, and therefore *infantile* attitude towards (and expectation of) the teaching and learning once contained in such a space. What the interviews and remnant objects in chapters four and five work to bring forward is a narrative of an, at times reluctant, community of teachers and learners who *sporadically* saw themselves in and through those who passed time with them in the former detention centre. The stories shared of “educational” gifts that were, in fact, given and received point to the ongoing nature of YDC’s *missed* “educational” potential to impact education in detention centres today. But a nuanced reading of those stories requires the careful use of specifically developed terms and ideas to help in the

subsequent telling and retelling when the goal is systemic change from the inside out.

Delving further into the question of what is “educational” in education, Di Paolantonio (2015) suggests that “passing time” together is what gives “the educational” its power in that, “education, in this sense, is the place and time where, through our passing time together, we can sense our exposure to the other and to a world that charges me and calls me out in a singular way beyond my own duration in myself” (p. 10). This movement away from an isolated focus on the self to what I suggest is a more mature and inclusive worldview is taken up when we choose to see the world as “exist[ing] independently from us” (Biesta, 2012, p. 36). This “educational” notion of “passing time” presents as inherently different from the normative and anticipated experience for incarcerated youth of “doing time.” The activity of “doing time” for a youth in detention relates to the punishment they are completing, but I suggest that “passing time” in an “educational” sense is all the more active as varied experiences of passing in and out of both spaces and relationships relates to a “subject-ness” that is missing from the act of “doing.” Thus, regarding youth in detention, “doing” one’s time is not as active as the verb suggests. Instead, biding one’s time seems a more accurate unpacking of this phrase, speaking to the inertia and boredom that define so much of a prison experience.

Yet, with “place-making” in mind, the experience of the “educational” could mean giving young learners, no matter where they find themselves, more than simply a space in which to learn or “do” school. Perhaps what is truly “educational” means offering a place in which to appear even within the incarcerated space. I have already suggested that “becoming” for a young person means pushing beyond the lived boundaries of the self into encounters with the “Other.” And in the context of education,

it is through exposure to various curriculums, both explicit and hidden, that the boundaries of “becoming” are pushed in the classroom. Because the environment of education is so charged with meaning, it can never be simply a space or structure unto itself. The meaning-making that occurs within its walls makes it a place of appearance where students make experimental entrances and exits as they make their way towards adulthood. In contrast to the hopeless future Rafay writes about from inside his adult prison cell, youth detention is supposed to be different from its adult counterpart. These institutions exist as a “necessary” evil within a society that feels it must incarcerate children, yet the existence of separate youth detention facilities suggests that at some societal level there is awareness that one “becomes” and grows into adulthood over time. That there should be a chance afforded a young person to encounter the “Other” and push curricular boundaries to “become” and then appear in the world. I suggest that process was most possible in a youth detention facility like York Detention Centre.

To have “appeared” in a space of seeming erasure like the prison that was YDC points to the question of whether “educational” experiences in the incarcerated state mean trying to bring into symbolization things that were essentially at the level of the reactive such as frustration, anger and instinctive lashing out. In other words, navigating the self and others occurs through the movements into, out of and in between the different prison spaces. It is not in an isolated cell-block formation where the “educational” has power, but in the moments of encounter, be it with other residents or those who work with them, when the place for appearance is revealed. The necessity of a vocabulary to encapsulate such layered educational experiences stems from the desire to move in a narrative direction that tells stories of those who passed time within its walls, and who, looking

backwards now, see in the present day the potential for the remembering of *sporadic* gifts of teaching that were given and received in that place. In those such moments the “educational” was dynamic – moments of “becoming” in the midst of “passing time” together that supplanted the mundane and static nature of life skills training dictated by systems of power.

The static nature of “doing time” in the incarcerated state must be separated from what is meant by “passing time” in the “educational” sense. Systems of training and rehabilitation are important aspects of what it means to complete or “do time,” to learn from the incarcerated period that is mandated by the legal system. Yet, to call this pedantic process of learning “educational” is something Biesta sees as problematic in *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013). He is wary of what he calls the “learnification” of education, that being a mindset or perspective of classroom learning that looks to such training systems as valuable because they are determined by definitive outcomes and “measures of success.” Biesta’s understanding of the “educational” is inherently different from what he calls “a basic process of learning” and would say that training systems are not “educational” in any way. He writes about education as functioning in three key areas: qualification, socialization and subjectification, and situates the first two in the arena of what is tangible, “the domain of knowledge and skills...[flanked by] encounters with cultures and traditions” (Biesta, 2012, p. 39). Where Biesta points to the “educational” is when he expands upon his consideration of subjectification using written “conversations” with different philosophers to tease out his thoughts. His writerly

conversation with Emmanuel Levinas and my own negotiations with Hannah Arendt add layers to my own framework for what is “educational” in education.¹³

From a philosophical stance that is informed by Levinasian ideals, in his explanation of subjectivity, Biesta refers to students as subjects of action and responsibility (Biesta, 2013, pp.17- 18). Biesta’s mobilization of Levinas here presents responsibility as an “essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity” and he encourages his reader to consider responsibility in “ethical terms, that is, in terms of being made responsible and taking up one’s responsibility” (pp. 20-21). In light of education Biesta goes on to say of this responsibility that “what makes me unique, what singles me out, what singularizes me, is the fact that my responsibility is not transferable” – and all of this is in relation to the Other. Biesta writes that “subjectivity or subject-ness...becomes an *event*: something that can *occur* from time to time...” (p. 22). It is not to be confused with responsibility, which is already there: “Our subjectivity, in contrast, has to do with what we do with that responsibility.” Thus, Biesta explains that this Levinasian ethical subjectivity is “an ethical event, something that might happen, but where there is never a guarantee that it will happen” for such responsibility cannot be forced (p. 22).

The Biestan notion of subjectivity connects to my definition of “becoming” as key to defining what is “educational.” The intangibility of the ethical event, like the *sporadic*

¹³ I have worked to constellate notions from these different scholars by making narrative connections between their work and my own. Thus, I have made the conscious writerly decision to use certain terms associated with these philosophers but at times differently than what was originally intended in their famous works (i.e. Arendt’s “public” and “private”). For example, I refer to a more colloquial understanding of what is meant when we speak of private interests, as in connecting the world of business and money-making to education – not an Arendtian presentation of the “private realm.” For the sake of clarity, when using a term like “private” in its overtly Arendtian sense I have placed it in quotation marks to set it apart from my own usage.

identity of the teacher, falls in line with Meirieu's dismissal of an *infantile* education that is focused only on the self. Though not easily grasped hold of by teacher or student, a *sporadic* sense of responsibility to the Other – to the world outside the self – drives the importance of determining “educational” experiences necessary for young people to “become” and then participate in the world. When tied to the aforementioned research of Alvi and Bhatti, the ethics of subjectivity and the overarching “educational” question weigh all the heavier since what their work suggests is that what has been disrupted in the “educational” experience of incarcerated youth is the responsibility that comes with subjectivity. These students might receive instruction and training in the areas of qualification and socialization so as to fit in when “rehabilitated” and sent back into mainstream society. But as the educative process occurs inside prison walls the potential for the “ethical event of subjectivity” has the potential to simply be ignored when the penal and education systems are more focused on the incarcerated youth as “criminals” than as students. In other words, if a truly educational aim is for students “to become” subjects in their own right, what happens to this idea when objectification, as lived out in incarcerated training exercises, dictates notions of who youth in prison are? By virtue of their incarceration, once removed from the world what are the chances afforded incarcerated youth to process something new of what it means to be in that world?

An Arendtian view of the world and what it means to be in it further shapes this philosophical exploration of the “educational.”¹⁴ In her essay “Labor, Work and Action”

¹⁴ In *The Human Condition* Arendt lays out what she deems to be the three fundamental categories of the *vita activa*: labor, work, and action. Running through her work is the distinction between the public and private realms. Her observations stem from considerations of the Greek *polis* where the freedom to act took place in the political or public realm and that the necessities of life (or “labor”) took place in the private realm of the household. An understanding of Arendtian philosophy means recognizing changes over time in the relationships between action

she writes of humanity living in the world together saying, “[W]hen I insert myself into the world, it is a world where others are already present...and the specifically human act must always...answer the question...‘Who are you?’” (Arendt, 2000, p. 179). For Arendt action and speech are inherently tied to the answering of this question, writing that “To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin” (p. 179). I see Arendt’s use of the word “begin” as connected to what I suggest it means to “become” in the sense of how a young person starts to form her “educational” sense of self in the various spaces and places of life’s educative happenings. One’s subjectivity is encompassed for me in Arendt’s question “Who are you?” thereby adding depth and breadth of meaning to my argument in support of a careful vocabulary that helps unpack potentially *missed* opportunities for “becoming” by detained and incarcerated youth.

I also look to Arendt from another angle, pulling from her conception of what d’Entreves (2014) describes as her “spatial quality of politics.” Her writing on the “public” and “private” realms helps to flesh out what is meant in this project by “becoming” and “passing time” together in the realm of the “educational.” Her belief that politics are part of the “public” life, imbuing that life with a certain kind of action and way of speaking about the world, means one cannot be part of the world without in some sense being present in the “public” space. In her chapter “The Public and the Private Realm,” from *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt describes how the term “public” signifies two things: First, appearance in the “public” constitutes reality and second, that which is “public” is common to all, thereby “distinguished from our privately owned place in it” (p. 52). As an example of what she means by “common to all” she describes

and labor as connected to changes in the relationship between the public and the private. One such change is what she notes as “the rise of the social” (Arendt, 1958; Mazzeno, 2010).

how a table draws people together, be it to share a meal or have a discussion, but simultaneously it also physically separates those who sit around it. She writes of this metaphor that, “The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak” (p. 52). Since, for Arendt, politics are tied to the “public” space that is “common to all” the result is that if one is not present in that space one cannot engage in the action of politics. As a future action that she believes should be aspired to, for incarcerated youth this Arendtian focal point is challenged by both their removal from the world at such a “new” age, as well as the added complication of private interests having influence over their education.

I am taking some license with what I have chosen to highlight of Arendt’s description of the “public realm” for it is not necessarily or obviously applicable to her own very specific notion of education. Both are terms she takes great pains to carefully explain. In “The Crisis of Education” Arendt (1954) calls for “not just teachers and educators, but all of us, insofar as we live in one world together with our children and with young people, [to] take toward them an attitude radically different from the one we take toward one another” (p. 13). When we are a society that incarcerates both adults and children, I struggle to reconcile her powerful statement that so contrasts our very practices of imprisonment; Arendt highlights the newness of children, positioning them as ones who must be protected, yet I spent two years teaching young people to read in the day time and at night they slept behind bars. What is radically different in that act? When Arendt says that, “We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the realm of public [and] political life” (p. 13) in my heart I agree, yet I am also using this project to point to what I see as the muddled complexity of a classroom located deep in the

basement of what was both a public and political space: a prison. Thus, making a leap, I am choosing to reframe my Arendtian reading as bounded by the physical removal and ensuing hiddenness of detained and incarcerated youth from society. In strict Arendtian terms students in an educational environment are not yet in what she calls the “public” or under the “public” light. As she does, this research project sees the realm of education as something unto itself; but when I bring Arendt down into the basement with me, into that unlikely place of remembered “educational” happenings, the boundaries that for her were so clear-cut become, for me, blurred.

Upon their removal from the world, does the onus not fall on the education system to support incarcerated youth who may struggle to develop the skills to engage when they are eventually released into the harsh light of the “public realm.” Does the educational work done inside prison walks have any obligation to the world that these eventual public citizens will some day be a part of? According to Arendt, political activity is a means “to realize the principles intrinsic to political life, such as freedom, equality, justice, and solidarity” (d’Entreves, 2014). Yet instead of “educational” frameworks set forth to facilitate opportunities for youth in detention to “become” research has already been shown to suggest that life skill training is the real focus of schooling for incarcerated youth. Looking through an Arendtian lens at this pedagogical quandary what becomes clear is how this already marginalized student population, and those in their immediate circle of care, live in a messy state of blurred boundaries with no realm protected or clearly delineated whilst incarcerated. Due to their physical removal from “the world,” incarcerated youth are at risk of missing out on the potential for

“educational” opportunities to be brought to the “table” of human speech and (future) action.

Inspired by the language of Arendt, specifically her use of the term “private,” I use the term more colloquially when considering another complex issue for the education of youth in detention, namely how private interests can negatively impact the education of incarcerated students and how that reality diminishes their chances to “become” in the “educational” sense. Along Arendtian lines, the privatization I point to here is more aligned with what she calls the “social”¹⁵ but, as already footnoted, I am picking my way through the dropped threads of a vocabulary in development, thus I am using this term in a multi-faceted sense. Arendt’s definition of the word “private” speaks to a danger where one dominant opinion taken on by many diminishes what she deems to be the necessary impact of the public realm to hold real societal power and influence. Exemplified in the closure of York Detention Centre, there exists an ongoing push and pull between what I am calling private interests and the aspiration to “education for all” as experienced by both teachers and students in the incarcerated setting. No matter how isolated one’s classroom sits from ‘the world’ education does not happen in a vacuum. Ironically, as they are removed from the common world, the absence of incarcerated youth from what is discussed in the public realm creates an external vacuum. The experience of being out of sight and out of mind adds to the creation of a singular story of youth in prison that,

¹⁵ When Arendt writes of “the rise of the social” she is referring to what she sees as a muddying of the waters between what she determines should be the clearly delineated spaces of the private and the public. For her human freedom is found in the political realm; when the political and social realms “flow into each other like waves in the never-resting stream of the life process itself” that inter-flow means the public and private realms are becoming blurred (Arendt, 1958, p. 33). One writer interprets “the rise of the social,” what is linked with mass society and bureaucracy, as “confu[sing] the human activities of labour, work and action so that action as the most singular political activity becomes increasingly lost” (Kattago, 2012, p.101).

according to Arendt, should be storied as a “plurality” of experiences (Arendt, 1958, p. 58). She believes that, “plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (p. 8). Therefore, in the individual answering of the Arendtian question “Who are you?” what should occur every time the question is posed is for “one [to have] the chance for a new beginning and a new story” (Kattago, 2012, p.100). By its very nature a singular story of incarcerated youth negates this plurality – negating, for Arendt, a condition that is connected to what makes one inherently human. She writes of the danger present in a singular perspective, an example we see played out today in the dominant discourse around incarcerated youth and their predominantly skills-based education. She says,

When [people] have become entirely private...they have been deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them. They are all imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times. (p. 58)

York Detention Centre’s closure is a glaring example of the loss of Arendt’s sense of a common world. Though formally run by the Ministry of Corrections in Ontario, it was privatized in 2000. With this change of hands it became increasingly difficult to see or hear from incarcerated youth and their caregivers, both made more invisible and voiceless behind its prison walls. Regarding the closure of YDC, private monetary interests held sway in terms of the building’s ownership and its maintenance. Concerns around costs fuelled a one-sided “argument” that favoured the more efficient “superjail”

model, thereby negating any debate of what “value” could be placed on “educational” goals for those young people who sat in my English classroom.

For “educational” goals to gain traction beyond the realm of pedagogical discourse, I move from Arendt’s interpretation of the term “public” and shine a light on Meirieu’s (2008) differing use of the same term, what he calls the “public role of the teacher.” Meirieu reflects on the responsibilities that come with calling teachers “public servants.” He describes teachers as individuals who have to navigate the challenges of serving the public they are paid to educate in the ongoing negotiation of moving beyond the “egocentrisme infantile” of the private to “l’espace public,” the public space that Meirieu believes encompasses “l’intelligence d’autres univers,” the knowledge of what I translate as the “universal other” (2008, p. 1). He writes,

A cet egard, etre au service due “public”, c’est contribuer a la construction de la *polis*; c’est permettre aux individus de s’inscrire dans un collectif sans renoncer, pour autant, a leur identite. C’est travailler a la difficile articulation du de “je” et du “nous”, au moment ou notre societe...fait craindre le triomphe systematique du “on” (2008, p. 1).

[My translation: “To be in public service means contributing to the creation of the *polis*. This means making room for individuals to come together as a collective without losing a sense of personal identity – moving along the difficult path from “I” to “We” – to a state of <<*on*>> or “Together,” lived out in a society brought together through a common understanding.”]

According to Meirieu, then, moving beyond individualism, as implied in his use of the singular “je” and mono-group of “nous,” to an inclusive mentality inferred in the French

word “on,” is what drives his sense of the “public role of the teacher” (2013, Biesta, p. 57). Interestingly, the English language does not have a word with the nuance of [the French] “on” – literally a sense of commonality that is lost in translation.

Working through their notions of public responsibility, Arendt and Meirieu point to another question that deepens my consideration of what is “educational” in education: Who is responsible for the *missed* “educational” opportunities lived inside a space like the former York Detention Centre? In earlier chapters I have highlighted the double-nature of the term *missed*. First, this project strives to show that the *sporadic* gifts of teaching and “the educational” did take place at YDC, lived out in the ways teachers, guards and residents “passed time” together, but these gifts were *missed* out on, in that we did not necessarily recognize them at that time. Secondly, I look to Till’s (2004) understanding of place-making for direction in unpacking the temporal sense of that which was *missed* in that time and place but is in fact imbued with “ongoingness” (Manguso, 2015), thus occurring still in our present day. Of large social traumas Till writes that it is, “[t]hrough place [where] multiple and discontinuous histories intersect, each of which have distinctive spaces and times [that the memory work of] place-making” occurs (2004, p. 7). It follows then that there is a difference between the physical space of experience and the emotional place created in its remembering. Though most of her research on “place-making” is located in spaces that are affected by memory-based trauma on a massive scale, I think that this project connects with the language of “place” at a microcosmic level. A space like the empty building of 354 George Street also has multiple intersecting and discontinuous histories that speak into the lives lived under its influence. I harken back to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of “becoming” as that which

signifies the “coappearance” of both the environment and the individual. I believe that what remains of the environment (or space) of the former detention centre, physically and emotionally locates what was and continues to be “educationally” *missed* of those who “became” in that place.

These stories, then, live on in an existing present and future. Put another way, I borrow from Azoulay (2005) her description of “reading” a photograph. Though my project requires a reading of another kind, specifically a remembered restorying of a physical space-turned-place, Azoulay’s words sum up the way in which I see “place-making” as informing what I mean by *missed* “educational” moments of “becoming.” She writes, “What was indeed existed, but not necessarily this way, and it has not necessarily ended” (p. 6). That is to say, with this project I use narrative analysis to explore how the spatial-temporal movements of memory are made “tangible through the very places and bodies designated as marginal” (Till, 2010). Spaces of incarceration are marginalized by virtue of their societal invisibility, and when we incarcerate children they are all the more marginalized in the way they are rendered voiceless; it is a silence attributed to those who are simply ignored. Therefore, an infantilizing of the incarcerated youth voice makes them a marginalized group who are present and absent at the same time.

Yet, I believe that located in the “educational” place of what was York Detention Centre something still grows. Farrar (2011) refers to geographer John Brinkerhoff Jackson (1980) who “spoke of the ‘necessity for ruins’ to spur renewal” (p. 726). Recognition of its ruins makes the memory and restorying of YDC necessary to spur renewal when it comes to thinking about incarcerated youth and their education. Both

Farrar and Brinkerhoff are philosophizing and writing about the urban landscape, and that is exactly where the building that housed York Detention Centre sits. Through the narratives that emerge in chapter four, the “ruins” of 354 George Street are shown to resonate with continued affective meaning-making. In their restorying of the now-empty space, the interviewees point to an “educational” existence that has not necessarily ended.

Therefore, in the spirit of Azoulay and the “educational becoming” that presents in the ensuing narratives as alive and ongoing, I tie my project back to Till (2010) and what she means by “re-visioning” a space like YDC. With care that re-visioning might “stimulate a process of critical self-reflection about difficult social issues” which is exactly what this dissertation sets out to do (Till, 2010). In the next chapter, through my reading of interviews with other people who “passed time” with me back then and there, I strive to demonstrate how *missed* moments of the “educational” not only co-appear in our ongoing restorying of YDC, but that even after all these years following its closure, the future acts as a real character in its new story. Through this project both understandings of what was and is *missed* leads to a critical regard of how the present discourse of incarcerated youth was and is missing out on the “educational.”

Chapter Four

[There were] moments when I was forced to admit that beginnings and ends are illusory. That history doesn't begin or end, but it continues.
Manguso, *Ongoingness: The End of a Diary*

Chapter four is an analysis of four interviews with people who, like me, spent a significant period of time in the former youth detention facility: Mila, Dee, Alex and Naomi. Mila is a former YDC Child and Youth Worker who spent four years on the detention centre's staff roster. As a full time staff Mila was the primary case-worker for youth assigned to her care whilst they were incarcerated. One such a former youth was Dee. The two have remained in contact as unofficial mentor and mentee in the years since the centre's closure. Because of her various arrests, Dee was a "regular" at York Detention Centre, and as she grew older was incarcerated in the youth "superjail" that replaced YDC in 2009. In our conversation Dee informed me that she had also spent a two-month stint in an adult prison facility. Alex, the other former youth participant, was not "in and out" like Dee, but spent two straight years inside York Detention Centre due to the severity of his charges. Alex and Dee crossed paths during his two-year stay but neither have been in contact with the other in the years since their release. Finally, Naomi was hired first as a CYW when York Detention Centre was still operated by the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. She stayed on with the centre, through privatization, to become a part of management as School Coordinator. Naomi was with YDC for 11 years in total. Personal reflections on my own role as a former teacher at York Detention Centre also weave their way through the mining of these interviews.

Though Naomi was the only one of us who was formerly connected to York

Detention Centre at the time of its closure, both Alex and I remember where we were when we heard that it was no longer in operation. In 2009 he was working part-time in a grocery store and found out about the centre's closure in passing from his former court van driver who happened to see him in the check out aisle. In 2009 I was teaching in a mainstream high school and found out about the centre's closure through a random Facebook update from another former staff member. Dee's was perhaps the most jarring experience in that it was upon an arrest in 2009 where she found herself being taken to another facility instead of the place she had expected – YDC.

Using McCormack's (2000) lenses of *process*, *language* and *moments* to inform my narrative analysis of the transcripts, I shape this chapter's structure around the vocabulary developed in chapter three, entitling its three sub-sections using those terms. The concept of "becoming," that which is "educational" and what was *missed* in that unlikely place of both teaching and learning delineate the narrative analysis that emerges from the lens-based reading of the interviews. What is mined from those conversations about the past is then represented in the form of remembered "interpretive stories" (p. 316) and present-day narratives. The lenses allow for multiple layers of meaning to be mined from the data, therefore I used some phrases from the participant narratives more than once throughout the chapter, working to restory with them as rich a portrayal of YDC as possible. For myself, in this analysis I strive to take up what Merriam refers to as the "psychological approach" (Merriam, 2009, p.33). Because it "concentrates more on the personal, including thoughts and motivations" and "[it] is holistic in that it acknowledges the cognitive, affective, and motivational dimensions of meaning making," such a stance holds me to account in my interpretive processing of the interviews (p. 33).

This dissertation's end-goal is to present a curatorial experiment that tells a new constellated story of "educational becoming" in what was York Detention Centre; to create a new place of meaning-making through "witness-learning." To arrive at that point in the process depends on my narrative analysis of the interviews. This step gives the individual remembered experiences of the "educational" in YDC's past the narrative space to appear. I am acting here in the capacity of both story-taker¹⁶ and teller, acting as "the one who solicits and listens to life-stories told by others, in order to then transcribe them" (Cavarerro, 2014), thereby carving out a new space for this appearance. In "From Transcript to Story" McCormack (2000) speaks to the two-fold challenge of a researcher using the methodology of narrative analysis:

Ethical and accountable research demands that when we write these stories we do not write research participants out of their lives. It demands that researchers do not become "colonizer of the subjects through re-telling their stories" (Garrick 1999:152)...It is also important that when we as researchers write stories, we do not write our selves out of the story by including only our voice as disembodied reporter of another's experiences. (p. 312)

In this chapter I strive to do both with careful listening, using the aforementioned lenses and terms to inform my reading of each interview, all while recognizing that the resulting shape of the remembered stories shared will be varied for "how this process works for each individual is unique" (p. 312). McCormack writes of "sharing the nitty-gritty" of narrative analysis as meaning more than simply "describing the steps in the process of moving from interview transcript to interpretive story...[thus] describing what it felt like

¹⁶ I was introduced to the term "story-taker" at the York University's Faculty of Education Summer Institute (2015) in a paper presentation given by Dr. Paula M. Salvio.

and the complications faced along the way for both the researcher and the participant” (p. 314). My analysis of the transcripts felt like a trip to the optometrist, trying on pair after pair of new glasses, seeing my own face differently with each change in frame. Every reading was nuanced by the adoption and discarding of lenses that helped determine how I framed and shaped the restoried face of York Detention Centre. In what follows I strive to tell authentically voiced narratives as they have been told to me, analyzing them in light of my own place in the those stories, explicitly positioning myself as represented in each sub-section with italicized text.

Foreword - An Embodied Site:

After more than ten years without any contact beyond a cursory Facebook “hello,” I started my fieldwork for this project by reconnecting with Mila, Alex, Dee and Naomi online. The build-up to these interviews was intense and long-lived. In preparation for this project, much time was spent anticipating meeting with each of them – people who, like me, were physically, psychologically and emotionally affected by the space that was YDC. Being on the other side of those conversations invokes a strange feeling of loss for with all of the anticipatory years spent looking backwards. But it is now time to move forward.

Each interview felt like a modified copy of the same experience, and not simply because I started to become more practiced with the questions I was asking.¹⁷ The “sameness” of the different conversations showed up in my body – in the repeated physical feeling of frantic remembering, a quickness of breath, of not quite having the words or the time to fully explain the “why” of what I was doing there with them all these

¹⁷ See Appendix A for guiding questions used in the interview process.

years later – meeting over coffee. Caffeinated memories. I felt like a character from one of my infant son’s picture books, a red squirrel, busily remembering in my scrabbling after scraps of unfinished story, bits of dead leaves, making an effort to pad a storied nest. In his essay “The Enchantment of Slow Stories” Tyee Bridge (2010) also uses the metaphor of dead leaves when he writes of the growth found “[i]n the places of rot low down in the woods, in the bottom-land muck, [where he points to] fertility, the ground of being. How what is dead nourishes life” (p. 7). Upon asking the very first question, I recognized that these interviews would nourish life from the “bottom-land muck” of memory.

The Process of “Becoming”:

An observation made early on in the transcript analysis was the way in which a common language for “becoming” in York Detention Centre emerged across the three interviews. Throughout this project I have emphasized that a young person’s process of “becoming” in the realm of the “educational” is tied to the necessity for encounter beyond the self, informed by time spent in the presence of the Other. Though they did not explicitly use the word “become” in the midst of our conversations, each of the interviewees referenced aspects of the “becoming” process in their memories of various locations within the unlikely “educational” place that was YDC. Much of the interview time was spent focused on two areas in the former detention centre: the school and “the unit.” The school area was made up of a stairwell, a hallway and three small classrooms located in the basement of the building. The second location of focus, “the unit,” was made up of the resident cells and staff/resident common area found on the building’s third floor. From four very different vantage points, each interviewee agreed that what

was provided in the school and “on the unit” were opportunities for “one on one” time to talk, time to create in some capacity, and chances to learn about both themselves and others in the long hours spent together locked away from the outside world.

One specific aspect of “becoming” that weaves its way through this project as having inherent “educational” value is the experience afforded a learning community to “pass time” together. The interviewees referred to experiences of having spent extended periods of time in YDC, each unwittingly pointing to this integral component of “becoming” as manifested in their different memories of the space. Of the participants, Naomi most pointedly gestured to the “educational” quality of “passing time” together in a place of learning, even one as unlikely as a prison may appear to be from the outside looking in. Throughout our conversation Naomi referred to what I described as a “passing of time” as, instead, “a duration of time.” As she was working her way through question one’s focus on sensory recall of YDC’s physical space, Naomi corrected me outright when I interjected with a reference to the “educational” impact of “passing time” within its walls. Upon reflection I see that her phrase “the duration of time” is actually more appropriate for her memory of that incarcerated space. It is a phrase that it speaks to the hours – and in Alex’s case years – without exit that all of them endured there.

By way of example, and tangentially connected to Naomi’s specific word choice, Dee’s interview began with her description of the two months she endured in adult prison upon being arrested as an 18 year-old. In response to question three, specifically the knowledge-based question that asked “Did your knowledge of the legal and/or education system impact on your experience of “school life” at YDC?” Dee contextualized her memory of YDC in light of her very different and more recent experience in an adult

prison facility. She described:

So many women coming down off of drugs. Like heroin. So many. And there was nothing to do. We just moved in and out of our cells. Watched a little tv, maybe some chores and then more time in the cell.

What could not be captured in the recording was Dee's posture as she stared straight ahead, eyes narrowed, recounting the 60 days of deadening repetition. The writer Rafay (2011) describes incarceration this way:

What prison life impresses on me perhaps most terribly is not just fragility of soul, but unlively contempt for what remains: the diminishing expectations, the compromise of aspiration, as each unrecoverable day goes by, accumulating memories that are the stuff of nightmare. (Rafay, web version)

For a grownup this painful description of diminishing expectations and any aspiration for life beyond the walls of a prison can (perhaps) be reconciled, albeit problematically; as disruptive as this picture presents a life lived "inside," our society believes that adults have the ability to make decisions, and those decisions come with consequences. Yet, bringing to the table insider knowledge of three different prisons, Dee went on to remember incarcerated time that she also spent – or endured – in the "superjail" that replaced YDC upon its closure. What was most disturbing for me in her storying of that space was how she remembered the multimillion dollar youth prison facility as simply a space striving to look and feel more like adult prison. Dee remembered:

When they locked you down they locked you down. You could just be gone for a couple of days. They tried to treat it like adult jail.

Incarcerated youth are still in the process of "becoming" adults, thus the glaring

disconnect for me in the design of a youth detention facility that strives to mimic its adult counterparts. For someone like Dee, in such a space there seems to exist a greater risk for *sporadic* “educational” moments not just to be *missed* but to be erased completely.

For Naomi, even amidst the challenges of monotony and routine, the “duration of time” in YDC was mitigated by the time youth passed in its small school. She believed it was the place with the most “educational” potential:

Being the coordinator at the time...trying to have that inviting school feel. ‘Cause I always felt safe and invited in school when I was growing up. I just felt that it was so static in so many other areas that school was going to be that place that was right and safe...it was school I woke up for! Having our brief every morning with the teachers – and then upstairs again with the staff – it gave me a sense...

And then she stopped. After listening to her interview many times I admit to feeling disappointed that Naomi never finished what struck me as an important summary sentence. I wanted to know what “sense” she was about to refer to. But upon rereading the whole of her remembered accounts of the school space particularly, I realized that to this day her storying of that place is, like the sentence, ongoing. Naomi continues to live in the midst of a thought that has not yet come to a close. Who she was to “become” in her time at YDC is still lived out in her present day reality. In her interview she spoke of her continued “practice” working with what she termed “disenfranchised youth,” busily creating supports and providing resources with the recognition that:

If a seed is planted somewhere, who knows how it will show up in their lives later.

One such seed was unearthed in my conversation with Alex when he remembered of my English classroom particularly that:

You would always push us to expand our thinking.

If, as I have suggested, the “educational” experience of “becoming” is directly tied to thinking beyond the self to the Other, then something pedagogical is implicit in his memory of the residents being pushed to think in some expanded capacity during their “passing [of] time” in that classroom. Another version of a similar experience was remembered by Mila as she recalled using the movie *American History X* on the unit as way to generate conversation so that the residents could have their minds exercised and expanded with a supportive adult. She explained that the youth were not allowed to watch the news when so many of their trials were being publically broadcasted. Mila found a creative way to, as Alex said, “expand [their] thinking” outside of school hours. Thus, from these storied fragments I read that an “educational” atmosphere was created both upstairs and down.

The former detention centre was a space built to literally enclose rather than expand an incarcerated youth’s worldview, so it was no surprise to me that the interviewees remembered growing pains associated with the subjectivity of “becoming” in the time each spent inside the confines of YDC. When I asked what Alex felt waking up there he said:

In the beginning I felt kind’of numb to it...it was very surreal...’cause I’d never experienced anything like that before...

Dee told her story from a different perspective for she had been locked up a number of times from the early age of 14. She remembered:

I got used to the routine pretty quick, but waking up in the morning I was like why am I still here? I wanna go home.

Similarly, even in Mila's staff position as a Child and Youth worker, she said much the same when she remembered starting her job at YDC. She recalled:

I'd never been in an environment of being in trouble so this really felt like jail to me.

Inmates and guard, both, lived out incarcerated experiences of "doing time" in some fashion.

And even as "doing time" became a more nuanced and educationally imbued "passing of time," it was noted by all five of us that, in our various roles, each of us was impacted by having entered the space at an age of great influence. A shared experience brought out in the interviews was that time spent inside the prison walls affected all of our developing sense of selves and the world around us. In his two long years spent "inside," for Alex the school was a space where he said he felt "kind'of like...normal."

When asked if there was comfort in that feeling he said:

I treated it as regular school except that it was smaller...and closer to where I sleep...it was a little like having a bit of normalcy in life.

Alex went on to say that he recognized those years in YDC as having impacted what he understood about himself as a person even today, having learned hard lessons in a place that was the opposite of what he knew to be "normal."

For Dee it was the routine of her days at York Detention Centre that brought some comfort into the midst of what was an uncomfortable space. When I asked Dee to think

about question two, specifically whether she remembered the routine of school as a good part of her day at YDC, her answer encompassed the centre as a whole. She said:

Ya it was. Because they didn't have us locked up all day so it wasn't just like we were prisoners. A little gym in there. A little rec room. I felt like I was somewhere but just couldn't go home till the judge said so.

I was struck by her use of the word “somewhere” – a term that describes, through her remembered storying, the meaning-making she still associates with the place she returned to with each arrest. In contrast to what Till (2011) refers to as “non-places,” the gym and recreation room were spaces that became real places of subjectivity and learning for Dee as she shared parts of her developing story with staff at YDC that she did not feel able share with her own mother. In her interview Dee said to me of this “somewhere,” this place of becoming that “I like girls. I couldn't talk about that with my mom. But I could with Mila.” During her time at YDC Dee did not yet have a vocabulary with which to name this part of herself. It would not have been easy to explicitly discuss what was not a heteronormative sexual preference in a detention environment that was both male dominated and all the more charged when a girl arrived on the unit. In Canada research shows that LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ youth of colour are over-represented in detention facilities, and are more at risk of homelessness than their cisgendered peers (Abramovitch, 2013; Springer, et al, 2013; Gaetz, et al, 2013). Dee's story fits this narrative in many respects, and yet she counters that it was inside prison walls, through her positive relationship with Mila and other supportive staff, where a deepened sense of self – of “becoming” – was constructed. For Dee that place of “becoming” was informed

by the *sporadic* moments of teaching and learning that were facilitated on the unit through caring conversation.

Perhaps that care was made possible because, though not incarcerated herself, as a staff member Mila still spoke of having been “institutionalized” and said of her own past life:

There were a lot of moments where a lot of us didn’t know what we were doing – it was messy a lot of the time...it was in the mess moments that I figured out after in the midst of a lot of other mess – right?

Slowing down the pace of her story telling, Mila carefully chose her words to express the following personal insight:

...Because I struggled trying to fit in or...um...trying to figure it out...I used them seeing me as human as a way to be human with them...I think I went into YDC thinking I’d be working with a bunch of criminals...thinking ‘what am I going to do with them?’ But when I was leaving I felt I’d miss the kids more than the staff. I engaged with them - they taught me as much as I taught them.

Mila went on to build lasting relationships started in YDC, going as far as to pull out her phone in the midst of our interview to call Dee.

In our conversation Mila’s focus on relationships was more punctuated than it was for Alex, but he still told one story that mirrored something of his relational experiences with “becoming” on the “inside.” Alex had always loved to draw. Due to the high profile nature of his case and seriousness of his charges, he was held for a longer period of time than the average two-week stay of his peers (Fiorito, 2009), thus he did “a lot of reading

and drawing.” He spoke with some fondness as he remembered one specific staff member:

I did a lot of reading and drawing...the times I did do it out in the common area sometimes people would sit and do it with me...so it was kind’of cool that way...the first year I was there, there was a staff who was co-oping and became staff later...he would draw with me.

Highlighted in his remembered story is the importance of human connection, of “becoming” (more) human and humane through the practice of listening and learning from those with who the space was shared. The importance of even the smallest of moments was amped up in the incarcerated setting due to the reality of having nowhere else to go. For Alex the importance of this memory seemed to be tied to how this staff member had made the choice to draw alongside him at a table in the common space.

Though he did not go on to talk about it, my own memory was tweaked by his story for I recalled that because of the horror associated with his charges, many people avoided sharing space with him. He often sat alone in the cafeteria and on the unit.

In the midst of their interviews and in my ensuing transcript analysis I recognized that outside of the school and the unit, other remembered spaces in YDC were narratively transformed into places of great meaning. Triggered in his spontaneous recall of the courtyard, the importance of time spent with others, drawing or otherwise, punctuated Alex’s interview with his repeated use of the word “bonding.” The moment occurred when I asked him about memories attached to specific conversations or people at YDC. Alex then made an important “educational” point about time spent in the courtyard, one I read as connected to the notion of “becoming.” He said:

For me I remember a lot of their faces...but some names have also just...disappeared...but ya, me and Mr. A. we would play catch a lot in the courtyard...like we bonded through that ...I think...

Mila recalled the courtyard space in more visceral terms, remembering how her body felt when she was on duty in the limited outside space that was the cement yard. She described it saying:

I just remember feeling I was in the middle of a box. You'd look up and it was a structure that you'd have to look up to see that you were outside...even though you were outside.

Their powerfully storied memories of the courtyard are especially interesting to me since it was such a nondescript part of the building. The small space was barren of anything that would suggest being outdoors but technically it provided access to something resembling fresh air and, therefore, it represented a version of “freedom.”

Simultaneously, within its four brick windowless walls, it housed all of the pent up energy of staff and residents alike, human beings who were obligated to spend hours upon hours together in a maze of small spaces. Though Alex and Mila remembered it in different ways, contained within their stories of the courtyard lives a common truth – it was a space that became a place of meaning for them both.

The “Educational”:

Throughout this project I write about the “educational” as inherently connected to the chance for one to “become” something. In contrast to what presents as youthful promise, I find helpful the words of Sarah Manguso (2015) who describes, instead, a sense of world-weariness that I witnessed in the eyes of the interviewees at different points in our

conversations. Manguso writes, “Recently I became not quantifiably old but qualitatively old. Old as a state of being. As an acceptance that I’ve more or less become the person I had a chance to become” (p. 69). If this project is a chance to “become” again, what freezes me in this present moment of writing is the pressure I feel to retell their stories, to make them mean something this time around...Am I choosing the right words to strike at the “educational” heart of our experiences?

Throughout her interview Mila referred to the “educational” nature of the relationships she formed with residents in “one on one conversations” on the unit, in the courtyard and even in the cafeteria:

You got to talk with them. Sit at tables with them during lunch. All the kids thought I was so naïve and didn’t know anything about the world so they spent a lot of their time teaching me...educating me about the ‘rough life’...so I spent a lot of time talking to them.

In this section that I have entitled “The ‘Educational’” my narrative analysis begins beyond the boundaries of what was the classroom setting because what Mila pointed to in her memory of the cafeteria was echoed in some way by all of the interviewees: no matter where it happened, any of the teaching and learning that occurred in York Detention Centre stemmed from relationships that were developed over time between staff, students and teachers. Questions one, two and three asked the participants to think about different aspects of school in the former detention centre, but a traditional understanding of or reference to any sort of explicit school curriculum was never mentioned in any of our conversations. There was no time spent speaking to “measurable outcomes” or “standards,” both terms Biesta would connect to the nomenclature of what he calls the

“learnification” of education. If anything, what emerged in the interviews, and is supported by the research around youth in the incarcerated setting, is that such measures are next to impossible to regulate in the swinging door environment that defines youth imprisonment. Of that swinging door Alex remembered feeling jealous of his peers:

Like when you’re there for so long, and some kids are in and out two or three times in a few months. That was frustrating. I saw a LOT of faces go through...and a lot of them were the same faces...

As a resident who was locked up for two years in a row without release, Alex’s experience was not representative of the average stay, therefore making his remembered stories and observations of that extended time all the more unique and impacting to this project.

Alex’s extenuating circumstances aside, in the “educational” context of YDC the systemic “in and out policy” that determined the youth detention experience for so many young people was something Naomi wanted to counter in her leadership of the prison’s school. Naomi described having expended great energy in her role as school supervisor, specifically in trying to create a positive “educational” atmosphere and real “school” experience for all the residents who were obligated to enter the YDC classrooms. The different spaces inside the larger building that were allotted to the school included a stairwell. It connected the unit upstairs to the school that was located in the basement. Because she was very attuned to what she called the “super-restrictive” nature of the other interior sites such as the courtyard and the gym, she said:

Even when they came down the stairs I always tried to have like the news board or theme for the month...trying to have that welcoming meet you at the door thing...having that feel.

Alex referred to the same set of stairs in his storying of time spent in YDC's school.

When I asked him about the routine of going to class he remembered:

There was some bonding experience [in the stairwell] because we'd have to be in a tight line going up and down the stairs...you did get to learn a little bit about people as we joke around...

The reference to humour and time spent in such close proximity interests me for these were strangers upon initial entry to the prison. The intimate nature of movement through the detention centre's various spaces added to their learning, and therefore "educational" experiences of what quickly became a "place" for Alex and Naomi both.

Of his time passed in the actual classroom space Alex recalled:

In class we'd have to talk with people we wouldn't really talk to upstairs. With the other kids it was like school all the time. Or like camp. Even though I've never been to camp. But I've been camping...so it was like camp.

Alex struggled to find an appropriate comparison to describe his "educational" experiences in these non-traditional spaces – and I read the quirky simile of it being "like camp" as unsurprising for the memories of both the stairwell and basement classrooms highlight how unlikely were these places of teaching and learning. What did surprise me was that all of these years later, and with no connection or conversation between them in the time since their release from prison, Dee used the same descriptive simile in her remembering of the "educational" place that was YDC to her. She recounted:

I did it and I got to deal with it. So to me YDC was like a little like a camp – but camp where you can't go home till the judge says ok you can go home. It was ok. I dunno I can use the word fun but at the same time you're in there and it's discipline at the same time.

Her careful use of the words “fun” and “discipline” was preempted with awareness that she needed to take responsibility for her actions. What could be fun about such a place? Why would her adult self remember her childhood time of legal “discipline” with what reads as a positive memory? From both narrative fragments what emerged for me was the memory of human relationships that Alex and Dee returned to throughout their interviews. Regarding Alex, I infer from his use of words like “bond” and “learn,” as well as meandering his way through an attempted description of camp, that YDC came to symbolize for him a place of human connection during a time of great isolation. Both stories point to Alex and Dee's negotiation of complicated relationships that make up what was the “educational” environment of YDC.

When I asked Dee and Alex to think back on the physical space of YDC asking if there was anything that felt like “school” to them, Dee said:

D: I remember teachers, pencils, books.

ND: Did you get credits while you were there?

D: I did! My school sent over my OSR or whatever and when I came out they transferred over whatever I did in there – I actually got a credit. I got something in there...like even a certificate thing!

Dee went on to share with me that when she was arrested at 16 and was sent to the “superjail” facility located outside the city, the one that replaced YDC thus obligating its

closure, she never went to the school it ran for its incarcerated youth. When I asked her why she never chose to attend Dee did not really have a concrete reason. Again she said of the “superjail”:

It was just different. Just different... They tried to treat it like adult jail.

When I asked her to tell me in more detail about how they were different she said:

At YDC you guys were in your own clothes but at [the superjail] they were wearing like the actual correctional outfits – ya – so they would actually treat us like prisoners – they would act like they were real cops and at YDC you guys were like teachers or Youth Workers. Uniform meant their chest was too high so they would talk to you like this or like that – and at YDC they actually talk to you...like a person.

What emerged for me as a “story-taker” was how these places were imbued with meaning by virtue of the relationships formed within and acted upon those who spent time within their corridors and walls. The cliché that “The clothes make the man” was true for Dee, separating people from mere actors in her “educational” experiences on the “inside.”

When I asked Alex the same question he took me beyond the classroom with his response. Premised by a thoughtful pause, Alex reframed my query about the physical space of school with his own word, substituting “school” for “learn.” Like Mila, he connected his “schooling” experiences to what he learned “on the unit,” even though it was the physical space that was comprised of lock-up cells and a common area for residents and staff:

Ummm...well obviously the school felt like a really small school...ummm...but other than that, like in the resident area you could learn some things from the staff...or other residents.

It was on the unit where residents had the most intimate contact with staff for their shifts would run eight to twelve hours long. In his response Alex went on to use the word “learn” three more times:

You could learn some things...by just like hanging out and like playing different kinds of little board games or just even talking...you would learn something either about them...it was like...you were always learning something new about ummm...people.

Alex used this word thoughtfully, carefully, describing his memories from a distance, reflected in his choice to tell this story using the “second person” voice. Analysis of the transcribed text pointed to how Alex’s repetition of “you” deflected the story he was telling away from himself. He took on a narrative stance that created a distance between the present-day interview and what was both experienced and learned in that painful past. We returned to the notion of “learning” as the interview came to a close where, in his remembered storying of that time, Alex described another truly “educational” moment. Denzin (1994) refers to a “radical” moment as, for example, “a turning point or self-questioning moment of personal reflection” (p. 510). Sliding in and out of using both “second person” and “first person” statements, Alex looked at the table and said quietly:

It was a very emotional space but everyone was keeping to themselves...there might be moments when you’d hear someone crying. I think I found my center, if

you will, there because you always have to keep you emotions in check... A lot of learning about myself.

This moment was unanticipated by either of us. Alex's words brought me back to the essay written by Rafay (2011) who, in his own incarcerated experience writes of the fear he lives with that is one of losing the ability to feel emotions in prison. Rafay writes, "To lose [the ability to feel] would be to have relinquished all expectations of a possible world governed by living ideas of care and beauty" (web version). His words echo Alex's experience of hearing the sounds of crying through the cell walls when Rafay explains:

The lesson impressed upon me most forcefully is how utterly our ears render us the prisoners of others...Not even the best earplugs will do for hearing what we do for vision whenever we, mercifully, shut our eyes. (Web version)

Written for *The Walrus* from prison, Rafay's poignantly narrated experiences of life "inside" are echoed by what Alex recounted to me. Where Alex spent his incarcerated time had left an indelible mark, for no amount of prodding or specifically worded questions could have elicited from him such an unprompted and crystalline description of what it looked like to "become" in that "educational" place, Of this this unlikely place of learning, Alex immediately followed this "radical" moment saying:

I don't know how to explain it...it's just that I don't know how to word it...

His attempt to find the words to express what is still, to this day, difficult to share points to why the vocabulary developed in this project is necessary and how difficult it is for the voiceless to speak.

As Manguso (2014) wonders, so too do I:

Could I claim a memory even if I couldn't access it via language? I didn't mind that perception is partial or that recollection is worse, but I minded that I didn't know why I remembered what I remembered – or why I thought I remembered what I remembered (p. 39).

That which was *Missed*:

None of the people I interviewed were friends. The only thing any of them had in common was a shared experience of having spent time in the former youth detention facility. Therefore, I was struck when each of the interviewees asked about the others in our separate conversations. They wanted to know how the other participants remembered them. I was strangely comforted by this, having felt for so long trapped by insecurities of seeing them again. This project has been a series of meandering steps forward, leading up to what was the culminating experiences of the interviews. Each conversation required that I open up an emotional door to allow strangers in and potentially mess about in an interior space that I had for years worked hard to put into order.

Trying to encapsulate the term *missed* in a translatable definition has been like trying to hold water in a cupped hand – it is never quite contained. The double nature of the word points to the tenuous temporality lived out in the *missed* opportunities of the past educational happenings in YDC, as well as the present day potential for these moments to continue being *missed* if not storied and voiced by those who were there at that time and place. In their interviews Naomi, Mila, Alex and Dee each told stories from their past experiences at York Detention Centre, and from those stories some *missed* moments of “educational becoming” have been teased out. Each interviewee described

very personal feelings attached to the former detention centre and how those feelings informed their interactions with and movements in the place that was YDC.

At various points in their different interviews, the participants all expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk about a yesterday-place that has continued to impact them even today. All four participants told me of having recently experienced a renewed and unexpected desire to share stories about YDC as the centre had been brought to mind in unexpected conversations with various people in their lives. For Alex YDC had come up in talks with a new girlfriend, for Dee there was the phone call from Mila that occurred in the midst of our very interview, and for both Naomi and Mila, each had recently run in to old detention centre colleagues at separate social events. I have connected their desire to talk with one aspect of what I mean by *missed*, namely the present day potential for past “educational” moments to continue being *missed* if not storied and shared.

The desire to talk was most explicitly named by Dee and Alex who remembered their time at YDC as impacted by or even controlled by silence. For Dee silence controlled her own growing awareness of a sexual preference for women. In our conversation Dee remembered that what she could not discuss with her mother she could in fact open up about with one or two staff members. Mila and one other staff were recalled by Dee as having shown sensitivity to and awareness of her striving for language to express herself. She said to me:

They would actually talk to you. Bring you back to your room, put you in your cell, but wait for you to calm down and ask what's wrong with you Dee? Like care.¹⁸

Till's (2011) place-based ethics of care comes to mind in light of Dee's revelation. The growing pains of a young girl, shuffled in and out of the legal and educational systems, could have so easily been *missed*. Yet, in her present day restorying of that time and place, YDC's windowless unit is shown to have been – for a short time – cracked open.

While Dee's silence stemmed from an internal process of "becoming," Alex' silence was encouraged by the external forces of both his family and lawyer. They wanted him to stay quiet about anything to do with his trial since everything was fair game in court. But the silence wore on Alex:

Alex: For me I would keep bottling and then eventually some days it would just explode out of me. It's kind'of like being a monk I guess.

N: How?

A: Always having to control yourself.

I see the remembered silence of both former residents as shining a narrative light on the isolating nature of the prison environment. In Alex's case the effects of silence were double edged since his silence benefited his legal case, but it also manifested in his feelings of being "like a monk," an expression that points to a complicated interplay between *missed* memories twice lived, by the teenager he was then and the man he has grown into now. The challenge both he and Dee experienced in their present day retelling of these *missed* moments gestures to the struggle in finding the right words to summarize

¹⁸ This quotation is used in chapters four and five.

the long contained feelings from the past that if brought forward into the light could be *missed* again if misused, misunderstood or completely mistaken. Silence is, then, safer for how to talk about positive “educational” happenings in what was deemed societally a wasted space filled with “wasted lives”?

His recall of an imposed obligation to remain under control fascinated me in that the memory was so layered. Alex was detained in a space that controlled his movements, and then the necessity for self-control, as dictated to him by outside forces, added another “layer of significance” on to his restorying of that place and time. And yet Alex’s remembered sense of isolation, symbolized in his use of the word “monk,” was countered in his present day retelling of what so greatly impacted him then and still continues to do so even now. His choice of language spoke to me of what was *missed* then and might have continued to be now if not countered and mitigated with the sharing of positive relational stories. One example was his restorying of enjoying the time passed drawing with the staff member on the unit. A second restory happened after he and I had ended our interview. In passing I told him of a positive memory that I had of when he completed an art project with a guest artist I had brought into the school in my second year at YDC. To disrupt the monotony of the daily routine, such an extra-curricular endeavor was necessary for all of our sanity, replacing the standard school field trips we could not go on. He smiled and said that he remembered the painting that he had made with wax. I could not believe that he remembered the event with such a precise detail. Both of these past *sporadic* moments had been first lived with no awareness of their “educational” quality. We were all simply passing time. These potentially *missed*

moments of “becoming” grew in their “educational” impact once retold and, therefore, reframed in the present day.

One of this project’s greatest challenges was the work to pin down the *missed sporadic* moments of “educational becoming” that connected to the materiality of the former detention centre. These moments, not necessarily forgotten but *missed* even by those most affected at the time, has made for slow reading and writing. The “educational” impact of the physical space on “becoming” was a thread that had risked being *missed* had the transcripts not been read using multiple lenses. A gesture to physical space was mentioned in each of the five categories of questions; whether they were sensory-based or knowledge-based queries of teaching and learning in the detention centre, what emerged were the ways in which space impacted the different relationships that played out between residents, staff, management and teachers. For example, some spaces like the cells and classrooms were more closely monitored than others, thus other spaces such as the common area tables facilitated more opportunities for conversation, and as already referred to by both Alex and Mila, learning in the detention setting happened in the time and space people spent together talking. Even though the site had the legal right and power to control resident movements and activities, feelings are “leaky,” (R. Davey, 2014) seeping through and under bars, into conversations with staff and other residents who were all connected at some level.

Along with Alex’s repeated use of the relational word “bond” in his storying of YDC, his narrative was dotted with references to different locations in the building such as the courtyard and the unit. He smiled at the memory of winning a table tennis competition in his second year at YDC and said simply “That was a good day.”

Such a memory presents in stark narrative contrast to Dee's remembered experience of her time spent in the suburban superjail. Throughout her interview, when I would ask about physical memories of YDC as an educational space and place, Dee would often respond by comparing mental pictures of both settings. She said of the superjail's layout:

It was different...Different corridors. It was a small space with different corridors.

Her remembered processing of each space struck me in that the meaning-making for YDC was inherently connected to memories of specific staff; memories of the superjail were limited to the empty hallways or corridors. Ironic to me now is that how the place that sits empty today is still full of meaning for her, while the detention centre that is at present staffed and operating is remembered by Dee as barren. For Dee it seems that what York Detention Centre offered, and what the superjail *missed* was a focus on relationships.

Of relationships "inside," Alex used the word "bond" yet again when he described fellow residents:

They're almost like distant family. You may not know them or like them very much but you ... you share those experiences.

Naomi echoed this sentiment around shared experiences specifically connected to the relational focus of YDC's classroom structure:

I mean obviously safety was number one...but having such a small – I mean the way YDC was designed – and having one teacher with a max number of students allowed for creativity and relationship building.

What both Alex and Naomi gestured to in these descriptions were *missed* relational moments of “educational” success, certainly *missed* in that the dominant discourse around incarcerated youth today. Their restorying of an obligatory passing of time points to the creation of tenuous relational bonds (to borrow from Alex) that shaped (and according to his story still shape) the experiences of teaching and learning between the resident-students and their caregivers.

I remember that *sporadic* moments of teaching and learning were gifted in such moments as an unplanned Scrabble game in my English classroom, but question four asked the participants to think back on one of the most unlikely and potentially *missed* spaces of “educational becoming:” the “wandering” line-up. “Wandering” was a security procedure performed by staff who were to frisk the residents with a metal detector before and after travel between the school setting and the rest of the building. Naomi fought to have the security measure thrown out and in our interview was viscerally affected by her memory of the action. She said with great passion:

My issue was really that it was a non-trust right off the bat. Right? They’re already in a secure detention facility and all was good upstairs in terms of counting pencils or whatever the case may be before coming down. I didn’t understand why they would have to enter a learning space without being felt like we trusted them. I mean we were telling them to come into a space, be in a class, trust the teacher that’s teaching you...feel safe...

But Naomi was overruled by her superiors, and decided to buck the system from the inside out. She said:

There should have been more trust...I just felt it should be different so [I took] that opportunity and had, you know, the conversations, saying the good mornings, finding out what happened the night before, and using that moment of what might have felt an uncomfortable thing...colouring outside those lines!

Naomi's mixed feelings towards what she called the centre's "policy and procedure" drove her to action. That action was lived out as she fostered relationships with staff and students in the wandering line-up, what should have been one of the most foreclosed spaces in the detention centre.

Meaning-making in the midst of such unexpected relational spaces is what I suggest was symptomatic of the YDC environment as a whole. What was *missed* in the closure of the facility but what the interviews showed in story after remembered story was that almost in spite of itself, the institutional and environmental makeup of YDC facilitated "educational" moments that positively fostered who those "inside" were to "become" over time. If these stories had made their way into the larger talking points that determined the eventual shift from YDC's structure to the superjail residents were moved to after its closure, would the end result have looked different? There is no way to truly answer this question, but we can respond to it with the retelling of these stories. By bringing these potentially *missed* moments forward into what Bauman (2004) calls the spotlight, the reader's attention becomes focused on the very human experience of what was then and is still now.

Chapter Five

[There were] moments when I was forced to admit that beginnings and ends are illusory. That history doesn't begin or end, but it continues.
Manguso, *Ongoingness*

A man who lived by a pond, was awakened one night by a great noise. He went out into the night and headed for the pond, but in the darkness, running up and down, back and forth, guided only by the noise, he stumbled and fell repeatedly. At last, he found a leak in the dike, from which water and fish were escaping. He set to work to plugging the leak and only when he had finished went back to bed. The next morning, looking out of the window, he saw with surprise that his footprints had traced the figure of a stork on the ground.
Cavarero "A Stork for an Introduction," *Relating Narratives*

"It's Written in the Stars" – Curation through Witness-Learning:

Chapter three of this dissertation carefully explicated what it means to "become," what I mean by the term "educational," and what was *missed* in the closing of York Detention Centre. It is the linking of these terms and tropes to the specific and forlorn place of YDC that has brought me to this point in the writing process where the emergent narratives have to be shaped into something new: something that has the potential to give voice to those the legal and education systems deem to be "wasted lives." The creation and curation (detailed in chapter two) of a different "educational" story of incarceration – with all of the nuances such a space presents – works to speak into what I see as the existing [non]conversation around incarcerated youth and their education. What the gap in the dominant literature on this topic shows to be a lack of interest in and limited understanding of the teaching and learning of incarcerated children, this project's final story wants to suggest otherwise. What is presented here is, instead, an opportunity to literally reframe the former YDC as an "educational" place where the *sporadic* gift of

teaching occurred many times over, “becoming” was in fact possible, and today it still has the potential to give such a gift – if it is received.

In *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Cavarero (2000) asserts, “the design [of the stork] is what life, without ever being able to predict or even imagine it, leaves behind” (p. 1). Cavarero suggests that there is narrative unity to a life lived and perhaps, all the more, a unity to lives lived together. Borrowing from her notion of narrativity, and looking back at the design left behind by the “life” that was lived in the now-closed detention facility, I ask what can be learned of that “stork?” What can be brought into shape and focus today through this project’s interviews, my own collected classroom remnant-objects and their telling of a new “constellation” story of YDC? I borrow from Benjamin’s conceptualization of a constellation, what Till describes as “a figural truth that emerges at a particular moment, when and where the knowledge of the what-has-been becomes suddenly recognizable” (2004, p. 76). Benjamin writes:

It’s not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather [the dialectical] image is that wherein ‘what has been’ comes together in a flash with ‘the now’ to form a constellation...For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression, but image, suddenly emergent. (Benjamin, 1999, Orig. 1931, p.462)

By connecting my own with the stories of others, the temporal nature of the educational happenings in that space are shaken up, no longer dry bones, rattling in the now-uninhabited basement rooms, but enfolded with the narrative unity of a place remembered. The linking of stories shared by the interviewees to my own story acts to

shape a new place of “educational” potential constructed through the use of memories and stories instead of bricks and bars.

As it happened in YDC’s past, “witness-learning” occurs now in this new and equally “unlikely” narrative place of teaching and learning. As the different “educational” stories are brought forward and reframed, the potential for action is engendered when what was *missed* with the centre’s closure is read afresh today. Eppert (2011) describes “witness-learning” as a process of asking questions. As stories emerged from the participant interviews with the help of some carefully crafted questions, a further “interrogation of those moments of memory” occurs in the reframing of YDC (p. 749). What culminates in this final section of my memory project is the narrative act of “witnessing” YDC’s *missed* gifts of “becoming.” Our group memories of “educational” happenings in that place constellate but, at the same time, work to avoid the “appropria[tion] or den[ial of] the radical difference of another’s experience” (p.749). Said another way, the different stories of “becoming” and time passed in YDC help to inform, from the inside out, a deeper understanding of its complex “educational” potential. My hope is that what is essentially a curatorial experiment will afford the closed space of 354 George Street the chance to, once again, become a living “educational” place newly formed. But how to have others take up this new story as “witness-learning”?

Like the man in Cavarrero’s retelling, throughout my research I have felt as if I have been stumbling along in the dark, especially in moments when I would try to explain aloud what I meant by a “new story” of York Detention Centre. But as the figure of the stork appeared to the man in the new light of day, so too did YDC’s elusive “new

story” appear to me when I happened upon a flyer that advertised an open call to artists interested in having their work displayed at an upcoming art exhibit. The title of the exhibit was “Curio – Shadow Box Show” and was to be curated by an art supply store and gallery in the Toronto neighbourhood of The Junction. In my search for what Cavarerro calls the “narrative unity” of YDC’s “educational” story I saw a connection between this show and my project. The construction of a shadow box frame presented to me as a tangible metaphor for a new narrative of “becoming.” The non-descript wooden structure is a three-dimensional cube frame built to hold in relief chosen objects. Once those objects are secured within its boundaries they are then displayed behind glass. The shape of the frame is meant to allow an artist to layer multiple images and objects for a desired effect. Inspired, I walked into the store, bought one of the empty frames on display and took it home with me for with this plain wooden box the ever-elusive ending of a story waiting to be told now seemed to me possible to write.

For the making of my own memory shadow box I decided that my materials would be limited to only what I had access to in my former YDC classroom:

- tape
- a stapler
- a pair of scissors

To that small pile I added a small number of remnant-objects that I had saved for the past ten years, carefully stowed away in a manila envelope:

- one photograph
- three folded sheets of generic lined paper with student writing from YDC
- one personal journal entry from 2003

With these basic tools I set for myself the task of taking *missed* moments of *sporadic* teaching and learning and attempted to rework them into a visual that might reframe what was “educational” in that unlikely place of education.

The final constellation story told within the curation of this frame is new as it is contained in a new space and place: a never before filled 6X6 wooden picture frame. By framing and sharing the contents of this shadow box the experience of “witness-learning” is made possible. A reading of both the frame’s contents and the explanatory narrative that is this final chapter presents an alternative constellated story of “educational becoming” that acts to disrupt the dominant narrative of incarcerated youth and their “wasted lives.”

“I Want to Tell the Story Again”: A Restorying of York Detention Centre:



Figure 1. Completed YDC Shadow Box, December 2015

The goal of this alternative narrative is to “broaden the scope of the possible, expand the audience, and allow for a wider range of responses” to make possible a new “becoming” for an attentive public of witnesses (Taylor, 1997, cited by Till, 2011, p. 12). With the shadow box frame I wanted to present, in a tactile and tangible fashion, the emergent “educational” shape of how it was that a group of us passed time together in that place, and why those shared memories are important to bring forward into the present. Through careful and critical analysis I took elements of the stories shared with me by the interviewees and linked them to the physical remnants of a past “educational” time. The end result is one that strives to take the reader of the frame forward from Biesta's “educational” notion of subjectification to something more. In summary, throughout this project I have circled around one idea presented in different ways, positing that the narrative act of witnessing YDC’s *missed* gifts of “becoming,” specifically naming what was the “educational” in education for incarcerated youth then, can still appear even now in the present. In each chapter I have come back to this notion to emphasize how these stories are not just about the incarcerated youth from a time before but a solicitation to the outside world to be interested in such youth now.

For it to serve as a pedagogical tool for witness-learning the empty frame needed to be filled with *missed* “educational” stories from York Detention Centre, most that would require some translation. The frame’s small size did not constrain my curatorial re-storying. As I started to lay out in relief what I had been striving towards with every chapter, the size of the frame itself is what brought the story into being. As I mined both the interviews and the remnant-objects that had for ten years been carefully set aside, what had always felt to me too big a story to tell on my own, now seemed possible with

the support of additional story tellers. I set to work channeling Simon (2010, 2011a, 2011b) and his thinking around the constellated potential for a “point of connection” found in “the art of curation” With echoes of Benjamin’s temporally imbued metaphor of a constellation in mind, my effort to re-compose what Simon calls a “mise-en-scene” using these remnant-objects, coupled with snippets from my conversations with the interviewees, meant for me an effort to encapsulate a pedagogical arrangement of them to “help frame, forge and support a mode of looking” not just outward but inward (Di Paolantonio, 2014, p. 9). With so nebulous a starting point for this visual narrative endeavour, I thought it ironic that I had to create in the dark since my son was sleeping in the same room. I propped up a flashlight, recalling Bauman’s (2004) notion of storytelling and spotlights as inspiration. In *Wasted Lives* he writes,

Stories are like searchlights and spotlights; they brighten up parts of the stage while leaving the rest in darkness. Were they to illuminate the whole of the stage evenly, they would not really be of use...it is the mission of stories to select, and it is in their nature to include through exclusion and to illuminate through casting shadows. (p. 17)

More than ever, sitting in the dark, I felt a sense of urgency in what has been for me an ongoing effort to illuminate the *missed* “educational” stories of the former detention centre. This curatorial experiment could not wait till morning. There was something fragile about the tenuously available moment I was sitting in and the potential for *missing* it even now was not lost on me.

For the frame’s background I used part of an envelope that had stored for a decade the remnant-objects I had unwittingly kept from my time teaching at York

Detention Centre. This envelope was for me a literal first “layer of significance” in my curatorial endeavour (J. Arendt, 2011). In the years since I taught in the prison I have moved houses three times; this envelope has (miraculously) been packed and unpacked, to the point where I could convince myself that I forgot it ever existed. If I am honest with myself though, it was never really forgotten. The truth is that it sat in the shadows of my memory, gathering dust with other painful stories that I have worked hard to shelve. I do not know what came first – teaching in that forlorn space or the windowless reality of my own dissolving home life. I have worn glasses since I was a child; my eyes blur the edges around forms that stand only a few feet away. Yet I remember and can still see with painful, sharp-outlined clarity the moment in time where York Detention Centre and the “safe space” that was my own home traded places; the process of meaning-making made manifest in still-lived memories:

Waiting for G_____ to come home so I could vent to him about yet another long day, I sat filled with tales of prison life, needing to share the burden somehow.

“I can’t compete with your stories” he said, and walked past me, upstairs.

Today I try and reframe: We were so young...



Figure 2. Close up of completed YDC Shadow Box, December 2015.

With every house move I tried to make meaning in new spaces, storying them into places where I could begin again. And still the envelope that was filled with evidence of an unlikely place of both teaching and learning was never cast aside. As a “story-taker” (Salvio, 2015), I have carried forward in time the assignments – and therefore stories – of former residents like Jerome, Alex, Errol and Johnny. Together we might “begin again” by restorying a space of endings and closed doors into a more nuanced tale of a place that remains filled with meaning. The envelope has protected what were pieces of seeming insignificance, writing samples of a few students who attended my class because they had

no real choice. They were marched downstairs from their cells, shepherded in and out of the three basement classrooms, each of us playing at the game of “school” for a few hours, pretending we could leave the space for lunch at any time. Alex summed it up best in his interview when he said, “I treated it as regular school except that it was smaller...and closer to where I sleep...it was a little like having a bit of normalcy in life.” In their individual attempts at normalcy, they handed me their assignment at the end of one specific class and for some reason I chose to put those papers aside.

The rediscovery of the envelope has afforded me a chance to reshape the assignments initially given to those students as “busy work” into tangible examples of what was truly “educational” in that place. The remnant-objects are innocuous half page responses to short answer questions that were made up in my desire to get us through yet another 45-minute period of class. They represent my strained effort to create “meaningful” lessons for students I might never see again. The physical structure of York Detention Centre held us in and, therefore, together. On a smaller scale, the envelope did the same for these paper-based “educational” remnants in that they have more meaning together. From one perspective, for years they wasted away lost in my desk’s bottom drawer. From another vantage point they were protected in the safety of a manila prison. Whatever truth is read into this first layer of significance, the remnant-objects that the envelope used to contain are now framed as a new constellated narrative image of “educational becoming,” newly cut and pasted atop what had for years held them in and together.

In the midst of taping the envelope to the interior of the frame, I had the choice to work and re-work its placement, finally choosing to leave the bottom left corner

imperfectly askew. As a teacher and one who likes to feel in control of her surroundings, I know of my tendency is to try and “fix” things. This personal quality was challenged in every way during my time passed at YDC and no doubt part of why my years there were so difficult and necessary. It was not a perfect place and we were anything but perfect people – not the teachers, guards or students. To honour the truth of our difficult stories of “becoming,” and for them to carry “educational” weight in their telling, I left the corner as it was first laid down. I wanted to visually mitigate the danger J. Arendt (2011) speaks to regarding a researcher’s potential to romanticize the experiences of criminalized youth and prison, risking the perpetuation of an already limited discourse around education in an environment of incarceration.

Tucked just inside the envelope background I re-placed one of the remnant-objects I had discovered upon first opening it. I found that I had not only put aside three assignments from former students, but had also folded up with them a journal entry I had written during a free writing exercise I remember doing with one specific group of residents. The pen I used was a red pen, what my mother – also a teacher – has always called “blood on the page.” The colour is symbolic of the pain felt by a student who gets work back from her teacher, inevitably feeling judgement of some kind by the one who held the power of the pen. Such a phrase is ironic in the context of restorying this journal entry in that I felt little power in that space yet I acknowledge that it existed. We all used our varying forms of power in whatever ways we could to get through the day. I remember having to use whatever pen I could find in my desk drawer since all of my allotted pencils, six in total, were used by students in that class. For some reason I had a full group of eight students that day. No one was at court or with the psychologist or even

a lawyer. No one's family was visiting. For a few moments we were together, separated only by the Arendtian table we sat around, a borrowed metaphor that was made literal in the small space of my classroom.

I reread what I wrote years ago, a short journal entry written in red ink that described an “educational” moment I had seen play out a few feet from my desk. In what was a true reversal of power, I watched one small boy named Johnny teach another much larger boy, Ahmed, to use the alphabet in an effort to help him read. Many of the residents struggled with their literacy skills, as was true for both Johnny and Ahmed. Johnny's small size was due, in part, to his living with sickle cell anemia. Because of his size he was a favourite amongst the other residents and even the guards since his diminutive stature made him almost cuddly. Every time he was arrested and brought back to YDC – something that happened twice in my time there – his littleness presented as a strangely welcome contrast to the hard lines and edges adopted by most residents. Residents like Ahmed wore their hard expressions like a uniform, one of many coping mechanisms for survival inside and beyond prison walls. Yet, as I watched Johnny write out the alphabet on his own paper, I also observed how Ahmed's stiff shoulders softened a little. Johnny's “student” moved his chair a little closer to his “teacher” and then, together, they sounded out each short word Johnny had worked so hard to make accessible by writing them in large block letters. Perhaps Johnny was remembering his own elementary school teacher's writing, or lessons learned at home that he brought with him into what was an unlikely place of learning.

Natalie: Johnny...

Alex: He was a good kid. Very rambunctious.

Natalie: Ya, he had sickle cell – he’s back in – for...a... murder.

Alex: Ah.

Natalie: Ya, having to be little for your whole adult life...and...

Alex: Uh...I thought he would straighten out a bit.

Natalie: I think Jammal’s death rocked him.

Alex: Ya...

I must have written the “educational” moment down as a journal entry of sorts so as not to forget it had happened. If it was documented I could take it home and read it again. Though I did not have the vocabulary to express it, I must have had an awareness, even then, that if I *missed* such an encouraging “educational” interaction I would struggle all the more to return the next day to work. That example of teaching and learning was what my father would call a “funding moment” for me. A moment of relational abundance to call upon in a space of so many limitations, *sporadic* in its appearance – just like the faces of my students. With Johnny and Ahmed in mind, into the shadow box frame I tucked a part of my old journal entry, deciding to keep visible the red inked words “teacher” and “twelve year old boy” (See Figure 3). In this reframed story of “becoming” and the “educational” I still know who the “twelve year old boy” represents but I am less clear about who was and continues to be the “teacher.” Though life has moved us all relentlessly forward, as Johnny was a teacher to Ahmed in that “educational” moment of “becoming” for them both, today I am still learning from the memory of their interaction with each other.

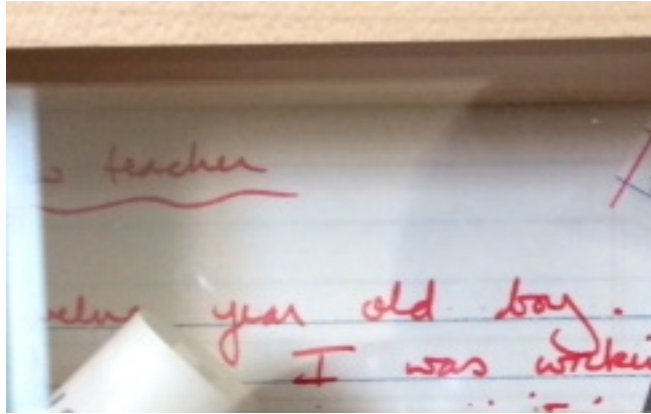


Figure 3

As I did with the discovery of my old journal entry, in the curation of my shadow box I decided to use only certain words from the different student assignments I found tucked away in that envelope. From one folded piece of paper I chose to cut out and reuse Errol's words "the truth. Amen" (See Figure 4). I taped this small cut-out to pieces I had trimmed from another important find that I had recovered from the manila envelope: a solitary photograph of YDC. Since I could not re-enter the building to take pictures for the project, I knew this find was the only photographic evidence I had of "educational" time passed in that place. I wanted to use parts of the photograph to anchor the shadow box presentation. To accentuate Errol's powerful words I cut a section of the picture's white frame and used the pieces to represent bent prison bars in the background:

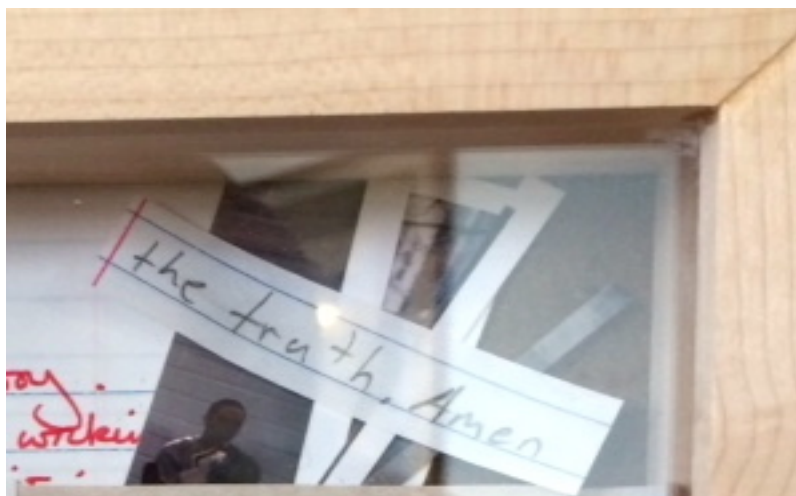


Figure 4

Alex: Umm...I haven't really kept in touch with anybody...I mean there was one white guy who lived in the Scarborough area...I see him around sometimes. I never really talk with him much...I didn't really click with him...but I see him around sometimes.

Natalie: And I guess a shared experience like that will at least get one a head nod...

Alex: Ya...we did like talk for a little bit and say like "back then" and stuff like that...

In this reframed narrative of York Detention Centre, bars are only part of the story. In their different stories the interviewees all highlighted how complex a space it was, defined in many ways by the relationships they formed with and within its walls. "The truth" of those relationships "back then" is still being lived out for all of us today. Dee remains in cellular contact with Mila and Alex recently contacted me over Facebook to say "Merry Christmas." In figure 4 "the truth" is reframed with the flexibility of the white paper bars, metaphorically layered and made "new" as fragments of the picture from which they have been cut. An unnamed shadowy face appears in the background to symbolize the complexity of human "becoming" for all of us who entered and exited YDC's doors. Like Errol I say: Amen.

From another paper remnant given to me by a student named Jerome, I cut out the graffiti lettering he had used to sign his assignment. The word reads "Mytkit." I taped it to the bottom left hand corner of the frame (See Figure 5). A repeated theme found in the narratives of incarcerated youth is that of illiteracy (Alvi, 2012; J. Arendt, 2011). In his estimation the word he had designed so carefully spelled out his adopted street name

“Musket.” Musket was the name he claimed for himself, a word that channeled one part of his life dominated by violence and guns, yet in the misspelling of his street name I saw a simultaneous fragility that impacted Jerome’s life as much as the weapons he handled. That fragility is what I chose to highlight by showcasing his chosen name in the shadow box frame. Violence did not infringe on the *sporadic* “educational” moments I shared with Jerome at YDC. What impacted our relationship was the fact that Jerome could not read. His struggles with literacy made him hard to work with for he would get frustrated with himself and then with me when faced with the obstacle of sounding out simple words. Yet, with fondness, I also remember him adopting the role of frustrated teacher and coach with me. With his fellow residents called away to different appointments, we were gifted over an hour of one on one “class” time in the cement courtyard. No matter how hard he tried Musket could not instruct me to shoot a basketball to his liking. At what he deemed to be the end of our useless basketball coaching session he demanded of the nearby guard to please just send him back upstairs! Jerome was both my teacher and my student as we both struggled to teach and learn new skills. *Sporadic* gifts of teaching and *missed* moments of “becoming,” now reframed (see Figure 5):



Figure 5

Anchoring the bottom right of the shadow box frame is the picture from which I fashioned the symbolic bars tucked behind Errol's statement of truth. The remains of the photograph show a scene of YDC school life that was taken in the room one floor up from the school's basement classrooms. I bent the photograph to secure it within the confines of the shadow box, symbolic of the bent nature of teaching in a space of enclosure. To make room for teaching and learning in this space of incarceration, there were times when rules had to be bent.

Naomi: Even though we had to follow the rules and regulations...if you had people on board who had the same sort of sense of purpose for further learning... having such a small – I mean the way YDC was designed – allowed for creativity and relationship building. And the same teachers meant consistency. For me too! I mean the staff and youth would filter through but the core team was the school.

Looking at the photograph together during our conversation, Naomi reminisced about the school assembly, pointing to how the “educational” happenings pictured in it exemplify what was possible in the incarcerated setting because there were “those people who are able to adapt to that creativity, who [could] teach with a different style, instead of that traditional style according to [a set] curriculum” (see Figure 6).



Figure 6

The picture is one of an afternoon YDC school awards assembly, an event that included all of the trappings expected at a school function, down to the personalized certificates handed out to each student. It would be easy to critique this part of my remembered story as a band-aid “solution” to larger societal problems of crime and violence, but I can remember the impact felt by simply moving school for a day to a room with natural light, shining in blocks that line the top of the picture. This movement brought the outside world in, if only for a few hours. Daylight and dollar store diplomas offered the students a tangible, if fleeting, moment of recognition to “appear” as learners first and inmates second.

Natalie: What do you remember of the school itself?

Dee: I remember teachers, pencils, books.

Natalie: Did you get credits while you were there?

Dee: I did! My school sent over my OSR or whatever and when I came out they transferred over whatever I did in there – I actually got a credit. I got something in there! Like even a certificate thingy!

The photograph shows the residents to be wearing institution-issued grey jumpsuits. I remember that the clothing was cleaned by the students as a part of their chores, aided by their child and youth workers who are also pictured here, standing watch in the photograph's background. More than just "guards," the CYWs acted in many ways as guardians for they helped the young people to learn and practice a "laundry list" of life skills whilst doing their incarcerated time.

Dee: When you were upstairs it was a different relationship. There was some staff that was like rough but there was some good ones. The bad ones, ok whatever, but if you went upstairs you were like ok! Gaskin's here or Mila's here! You know? I'm going to enjoy – I mean even though I'm in jail I'm still going to be ok because it's a good staff tonight.

Natalie: Alex said the same thing.

Dee: Exactly. They would actually talk to you. Bring you back to your room, put you in your cell, but wait for you to calm down and ask what's wrong with you Dee? Like care.

The photograph shows the residents sitting slumped. Reading the image now I observe the mandatory adoption of a uniform of "cool" worn by incarcerated teenage bodies, the majority of them male and racialized. A Barthesian "trained reading" of what he calls the photograph's "studium" requires that I call upon a cultural knowledge of who

predominantly populates our prisons, youth and adult facilities alike.¹⁹ The bent photograph placed inside the shadow box frame symbolizes a new story this picture tells today as I experience what Barthes calls a “punctum” in my present-day reading of the altered image.

While reading this old photograph anew an “educational” experience of “becoming” occurred for me in a moment of personal disruption. As I sat in the dark, working to curate the items placed within the shadow box frame, something happened. As I carefully bent the paper something caught my eye. A punctum, specifically an unanticipated personal response to this detail in this image, emotionally pierced me: a pair of eyes looking right at me. Everyone in the photograph is looking forward to the front of the room while I am taking the picture standing off to the side. Though I remember the school coordinator to be speaking while I stood silently off to the side, the camera I held captured the attention of one student who looked directly into the lens when the shot was taken. With the distance of ten years from that moment, as I reread the image in the flashlight’s glow, the boy’s eyes pierced me. They are fatigued, knowing. Leaned forward, his hands are held together loosely, the roundness of his young face contrasted with the growing arms of a man. What pierced me was the look in his eyes. They did not just see me then but continue to see me now.

Rereading the picture, as I placed it in the shadow box frame, I wanted to speak to

¹⁹ I borrow vocabulary from Barthes, specifically his photographic terms *punctum* and *studium*. To define them I look to Smith’s (2014) use of term “wound” or *punctum* as defined in distinction to *studium*, when she writes:

The [studium is the] cultural knowledge that informs one’s reading of a photograph, [for] the punctum is an unanticipated personal response to certain details in an image that emotionally pierce the viewer, breaking through the trained reading of the studium. (p. 34)

the boy, to tell him that I could see him too. But the hard reality of my punctum moment came with a realization that I had snipped his name from my memory long before I had ever picked up the pair of scissors for this project's curation. With that realization I recognized that our roles were now reversed in a painful present-day "educational" moment of "becoming." In the form of this deconstructed picture the forgotten student now took on the role of teacher, and he gifted me with a lesson already learned by the incarcerated: an important part of what it means to "become" requires having a name.

Because of the temporal nature of my relationship to it, another term of Barthes' that spoke into my reading of this photograph is what he deems the "photograph's essential provocation – *that-has-been*." Beyond the punctum being a detail visible in the image, he states, "I know that there exists another *punctum* [beyond] the 'detail'... which is no longer of form but of intensity; [it] is Time" (Smith, 2014, p. 38). This notion of time, the "that-has-been" of the "educational" exemplified in this image, is essential to understanding and witnessing the photograph's importance to a narrative around criminalized youth and education. The temporal nature of my punctum moment shines a light on limitations that are imposed on the realm of education. First there are limitations built in to the metaphorical structures of language, such as the labels attached to who is seen as a student and what is deemed a "real" classroom. Such labels get in the way of us asking what alternative notions teaching and learning might look like. Second, there are physical structures that contain these ideas. For example, would the still standing structure of York Detention Centre have been closed without public acknowledgement and ceremony had its "educational" qualities been explored or, more importantly, valued by those with political power? The room presented in this photograph may not look like a

traditional classroom with rows of desks and a blackboard, but a reading the photograph anew as it is located in the place of meaning-making – the shadow box frame – points to a Barthesian *that-has-been*. In other words, the time that has long passed since the taking of this photograph has become imbued, by virtue of this project, with an intense meaning attached to the “educational” passing of time spent together in that place.

This temporal reading of location gestures to how the different forms of YDC were and, with this restorying, are still “educational” places of “becoming.” In his essay “A Short History of Photography” Benjamin (1977, Orig, 1931) speaks to this notion of Time in another way, writing:

No matter how artful the photographer...the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny part of contingency, of the Here and Now, with what reality has...seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. (p. 1)

Thus, the eyes that pierced me in this picture act as mirrors that reflect back what society needs to do better, and what the education system needs to do more of: self-reflection. This rich image is a remnant-object that anchors the shadow box frame’s “mise-en-scene.” Its various components work together to bring to the fore what learners can witness of the tenuous grasp educators of criminalized and incarcerated youth have on past failures, lessons learned and future gains. Such an experience of “witness-learning,” though, requires of the viewer to look at the whole picture and truly see the lived stories of all students and those involved in their efforts to “become.”

As an epigraph for my restorying of York Detention Centre's *missed* "educational" happenings, I borrowed a quotation from Manguso's (2014) memoir entitled *Ongoingness: The End of a Diary*. She writes, "[There were] moments when I was forced to admit that beginnings and ends are illusory. That history doesn't begin or end, but it continues" (p. 41). In the remnant-object of the photograph, and the "mise-en-scene" of the frame as a whole, a symbolic "ongoingness" is represented in the light that shines through one pane of the centre's windows. When I took a picture of the completed shadow box frame I also captured the light of the sun with my camera's lens, adding another layer of significance to my analysis. The light of both suns points to one truth: the passing of time. In the ten years since York Detention Centre was closed time has passed inside prison walls and beyond them, just as the sun has continued to rise and set. Thus, if in this curation the sun's light symbolizes a sense of hope, and what Manguso suggests to be a continuation of history, a question I have of this new narrative asks which of these suns sets on its conclusion? Is it the hope of a past "educational" light or the "ongoingness" of the sun captured in the unfinished story of the shadow box (see Figure 7)?

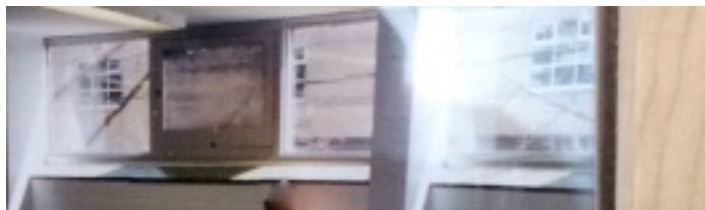


Figure 7

An added complication underscoring the temporal nature of this constellated narrative is the stark reality of illusory endings still lived by some of YDC's former residents. A restorying of their "educational becoming" would not be a true tale of York Detention Centre if the "ongoingness" Manguso writes of was simplified to paint over all

of its characters with one broad brushstroke. A few “educational” opportunities to “become” have not negated the power of the dominant narrative concerning incarcerated youth and their “wasted lives.” I have seen on social media links, verified in newspapers, that little Johnny is now incarcerated as an adult. Like Dee, his journey post-YDC has been dominated by stints spent inside various prisons. After two months in an adult prison facility Dee made the conscious decision never to go back; based on Johnny’s charges he will remain forever “inside.” No doubt his reality has been affected by the death of his brother Jammal, another former YDC “favourite,” a man-boy with the face of a model who loved his little brother so much that prison could not separate them. Incarcerated at the same time, they humoured me and coerced their classmates into participating in yet another school experiment: a yoga class. Standing beside Jammal and Johnny in the front row, struggling to balance in the yogic pose of “Tree” I can still hear Alex hiss, “Only for Miss!” Jammal was shot and killed shortly after his release. At his funeral Mila told me that she remembered standing close to Johnny in the parking lot, trying to guard him even on the outside, for after a second shooting occurred during his brother’s service a police officer passed by the grieving child and said, within earshot of Mila, “Who has your back now Johnny?”

There is nothing redeemably “educational” in the story of Johnny’s systemic demise. But restorying it with details that help fill out and put a face on the bare bones of a media sound bite informs a bigger picture. In that same vein, the desire to forge and constellate a new narrative for the “educational” life of incarcerated youth meant that what was curated and displayed in the shadow box had to tell very human stories, both beautiful and ugly. The interviews, the remnant-objects and my own memories of that

time and place point to *sporadic* moments of “educational” beauty, but the meaning-making of life is not be confined to any one set of walls. Stories of Johnny’s life “inside” and out exemplify how it moves relentlessly forward. Thus, for one of the final curatorial acts I chose to cut out, roll up and insert into the frame the name of the student who wrote out the aforementioned words “the truth. Amen.” Errol left YDC and, always one to talk, said the wrong thing to the wrong person in a larger, more impersonal prison facility. According to Naomi, in the ensuing fight his head bounced off of a brick wall and cognitively Errol was never the same again. Left with his short assignment that I believe highlights what was a *sporadic* true moment of “educational becoming” for Errol, I cut out where he had written his name from the top of the paper, and as I rolled it up I pondered what his “truth” was now? I placed the scroll-like fragment within the shadow box, leaving the date of “6/04” visible (see Figure 8).

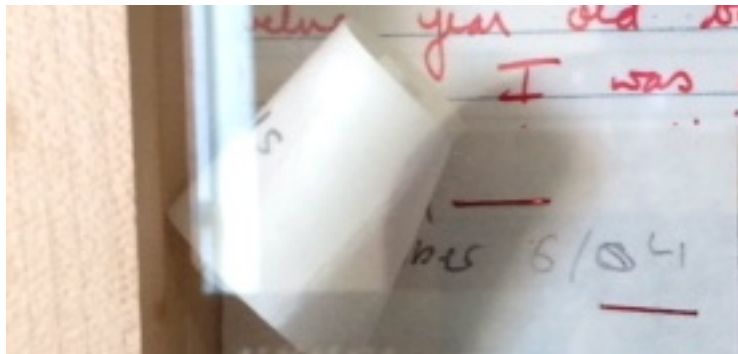


Figure 8

I wanted to show the date while simultaneously hiding his name to showcase the fragility of a student’s life in the incarcerated setting, highlighting the dichotomous temporal nature of such a place. Like this piece of paper, time rolls forward, hiding the names, faces and stories of so many *missed* moments for young people who have “become,” even on the “inside,” more than the sum of their charges.

As the shadow box began to take shape, I chose to use red staples to help secure Errol's scroll. Similar to the red ink in the frame's background, one interpretation of the staples' colour could symbolize "blood on the page." Staples were one of the few classroom supplies teachers at YDC were allowed to use on their walls. When I was first hired Naomi told me that residents were known to take items from the classrooms and use them to make marks on the walls – or themselves – on the unit. Since control was necessary in such a space of incarceration, policies and procedures determined even the smallest items that could or could not be removed from the school. As Naomi recalled, "Safety was priority number one." Thus, the red staples in the shadow box have the symbolic potential to connote and conjure up images of violence. The hidden name rolled up in the paper fragment gestures to the challenge for an incarcerated student to make a mark beyond their crime since they are attached to a societally loaded space of potential erasure. Carving one's name into the painted brick of a prison cell, or the skin on the inside of one's arm, are violent examples of acting out, pointing to a very human desire for appearance.

The curatorial process of meaning-making, of place-making within the confines of the shadow box, did not stop when I stapled and taped the final items to its backing. Nor did the process end when I carefully reset the glass, even though the art shop owner's instructions were to lay it in place only once. She said that the small metal hooks meant to affix the glass in place had a tendency to snap off if they were overworked, therefore it was to be a one-shot deal. On the night of its creation I used the flashlight to look closely at the final constellated story and, satisfied with my curatorial effort, I secured the glass in its place. Yet, the meaning-making continued in the sunlight of the following day when

I found myself looking at the shadow box through yet another lens. The flashlight I had used to forge the “mise-en-scene” had cast a certain glow on the individual details that I chose to set within the frame. Now, in the sunlight, I believed that what I had in front of me was a true representation of the narrative unity of YDC. Thus, I assumed a life-chapter was closed. Using my phone’s camera I took a picture of the completed constellated frame in the sunlight, wanting to document its “completion” for analysis. What I saw when I looked at the picture of the frame on my phone screen was yet another potentially *missed* detail “educational becoming” (see Figure 9). The phone’s camera flash had reflected off the shadow box frame’s glass insert, thus capturing a shadowy outline of my head and shoulders. I looked at the picture yet again as it appeared on my computer monitor and this time I saw myself reflected both in the picture I had just taken of the project and now also faintly imposed again on the screen.



Figure 9

The shadowy outlines are symbolic of the potentially *missed* moment of “educational becoming” that would have occurred had I deemed the process of meaning-making to

have concluded upon affixing the frame's glass in place. What would have been *missed* had I left the narrative unity of YDC's constellated story as something to be only looked at behind glass? The shadow box frame is key, yes, but the potential to have its very human stories of "educational becoming" reflected back to the viewer through the glass is what makes the curated whole, the narrative unity of this project, an ongoing experience of "witness-learning."

By including my own shadow in the final picture taken of the shadow box frame I am trying to communicate a final layer of significance to those who read this new story, those who choose to peer into the shadow box to see what it contains. In the midst of this project's curatorial work I came to understand, anew, something more of how I remain implicated in the restorying of YDC and the larger encompassing narrative that exists around incarcerated youth and their education. Even though I am an educator who has insider knowledge of the discourse that swirls around the "wasted lives" of incarcerated children, such knowledge means very little without action; becoming a part of York Detention Centre again by restorying what was *missed* of its "educational" life makes me a witness today. To witness and learn of that place's "educational" ongoingness is one way new stories of incarcerated youth and their "becoming" can be shared. Unless YDC's constellated stories, and others like them, are given voice, a single story of incarcerated youth and what they are expected to "learn" in prison will continue to be propagated. When that kind of "learning" only concerns itself with the promotion of punishment as "justice," what is really expected of incarcerated students once they have been "taught" by the system and then sent back into "the world" upon release?

This chapter's new narrative of incarcerated youth and education, the constellated stories of *missed* "educational becoming" that occurred in the former York Detention Centre, have shown that it is only through relationships where real teaching and learning are found on the "inside." To find what is *missing* of the "educational" in the education of present-day incarceration stories, the model of large and impersonal "superjail" facilities must be addressed from the inside out. Dee described her time in one as "just a space with corridors." The design of such a facility negates, by its very structure, the relational benefits that a place like York Detention Centre once provided. For the interconnected realms of youth criminal justice and education, it is not easy to disrupt a course that is more definitively set with the construction of each new "superjail," Shining a light on the relational void that is built into the basic structure and running of such facilities is not enough to cause a lasting systemic change. An inherent valuing of the "educational" lives lived in such spaces must first exist for the spotlight to even be turned on.

An awareness of the invisible Other means humanizing those who, like the incarcerated, are set aside, distanced from our everyday lives. Restorying the not-so-wasted lives of those who passed time in a place like the former York Detention Centre is a part of that humanizing process. If tended to, a more nuanced narrative of the "educational" lives of incarcerated youth could perhaps facilitate the beginnings of societal and systemic shifts – shifts towards once again valuing relationships as key to the growth and rehabilitation of incarcerated youth.

Curatorial Postscript: A [Re]membered Story

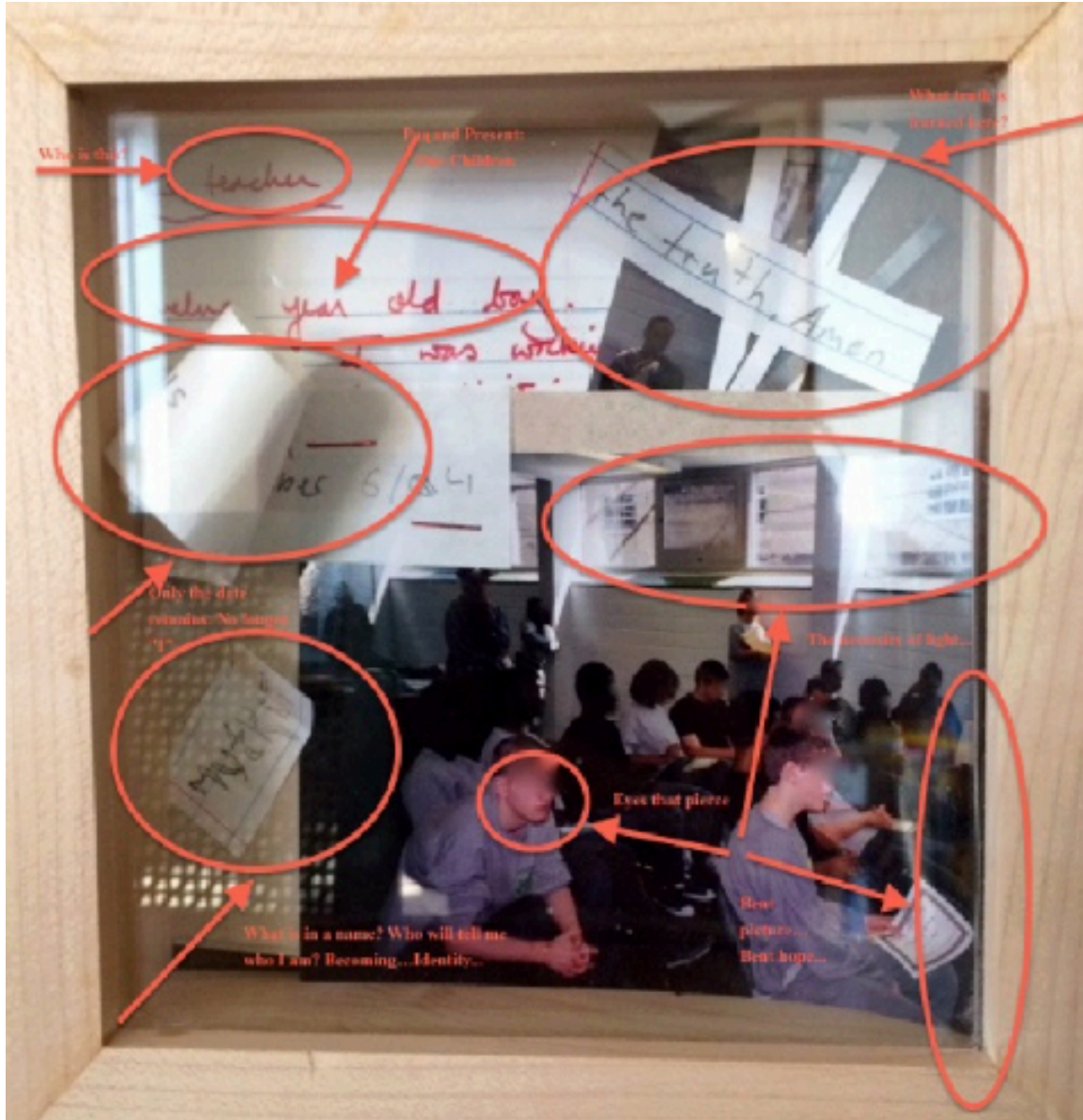


Figure 10

...I have been anxious to improve the nick of time...to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.
Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*

It is never too late to give up our prejudices.
Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*

Conclusion and Implications of the Study:

I prefaced the first chapter of this dissertation with a quotation from Thoreau (1853), inspired by his eloquent description of a desire to fuse the past and future together in his writing. I chose to use his words of wisdom as an entry point to my project despite the fact that his is not a voice typically associated with either a discourse of education or the incarceration of youth. In fact, I chose the words of Thoreau because his writing falls outside of any assumed discourse communities to do with either of these important topics – to make a point.

There are two specific details from *Walden and Other Writings* that connect to what has been presented in this memory project about York Detention Centre and its continued “educational” impact. First, Thoreau was deeply inspired by the natural world. He had the opportunity to spend two focused years on what was essentially an extended writer’s retreat, living in a small cabin that overlooked a pond, located on the property owned by his “friend and mentor”²⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson. Second, in light of *Walden’s* specifically located site of inspiration, another detail of note is what was for Thoreau the necessity of both mental and physical space for this seminal work to emerge, these being a group of essays assigned to the “canon” of great American literature.

²⁰ Retrieved from Wikipedia on February 6, 2016 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walden>)

The opportunity to think and write at leisure in an open outdoor space, and the benefit of a friend with the resources to provide access to such a place of meaning-making reads in ironic contrast to the “educational” experiences of the incarcerated that were lived out in York Detention Centre. These were experiences grown out of a constrained space, what Davis (2003) deems to be a space of “disappearing.” The small site of the former detention centre was nothing like the wide open expanse of Walden Pond, and unlike Thoreau the interviewees were – for the most part – individuals who had little access to different resources. Yet, the philosophical insights shared in the restorying of York Detention Centre, what has now been curatorially framed in the literal space of the shadow box, exemplify the power of “witness-learning” that I believe Thoreau points to: “the meeting of two eternities” (1854, p. 16) now located in a new “educational” place of “becoming” that has with this study been opened up in the present.

I conclude with a return to the connections made between socio-legal literature and educational philosophy (specifically Biesta, 2012, 2013 and Till, 2004) concerning the dual impact of both teachers and place-making on the subjective “becoming” of incarcerated youth. By way of storytelling, my analysis of York Detention Centre’s ongoing “educational” impact acts as a point of intersection and confluence. In the writerly tradition of circling back to the beginning of a text for closure, the narrative unity of YDC that has been seen through various and at times competing lenses is best summed up by another quote from Thoreau’s *Walden and Other Writings*. I borrow from the great essayist once again to bookend this work of memory and future “educational becoming” with his observation that, “It is never too late to give up our prejudices” (p. 16).

It is the prejudices that affect what is “educational” in education for incarcerated youth that are unpacked in the act of restorying York Detention Centre’s *missed* “educational” experiences. Though the word “prejudice” has not been used throughout the writing of this project as one of the terms focused on in the developed “educational” vocabulary of “becoming,” looking back now I wonder if perhaps it should have been. Be they prejudices contained within a rhetoric of “law and order” that limits the language of education to that of training, or the prejudices lived out in the assumed binary power dynamics of teacher and student or guard and inmate, a hard truth gleaned from this study’s restorying work is that even with the laws created to protect them and the shiny new buildings erected to “better” do the job of housing them, prejudices enacted on the “wasted lives” of incarcerated youth continue to render them so – wasted. The hope invested in this project’s final three-dimensional restorying of one small detention centre is that it might disrupt our commonly held prejudices of the incarcerated Other and what life looks like for youth inside prison walls. The disruptive act of narrative appearance, lived out by both the interviewees and the reframed remnant-objects, works to shine a light on the prejudices that can and do get in the way of truly seeing those who have been removed from view. The ensuing “witness-learning” that comes from reading anew the stories and remnant-objects of YDC, now unified in a wooden frame, speaks to the ongoingness of sharing complicated stories. The “educational” restorying today of interconnected lives that were brought together under one roof in the past, points to a future symbolized by a new and emerging narrative: no longer can what remains of York Detention Centre be deemed simply a forlorn site or an unlikely space of education. Instead, curated and framed to appear, it now has the renewed potential to be a place of

“ongoingness,” a place of meaning-making with its own “public vocabulary” (Davis, 2013).

I believe that a sense of hope has underscored key concepts that are threaded throughout this dissertation. I see it in Till’s ethics of care and place-making, and in Biesta’s notion of a *sporadic* identity regarding what it means to be a teacher. I also see it in Di Paolantonio’s presentation of the classroom community as informed by our “passing time” together. The process of unpacking these ideas throughout this project required the development of a vocabulary that could describe clearly the meaning of each nuanced idea of the “educational.” An added layer of significance is added to “educational” terms like “becoming” and what happens when they are *missed*, when one must translate such terminology to make it accessible for those who are not directly connected to the discourse communities of education and criminal justice. Using what Davis and Giroux (2009) call a “public vocabulary,” this project has worked to present a narrative that speaks to how human relationships developed behind bars can and do have the potential to facilitate “educational” communities of care.

In light of what this project has worked towards opening up – acting as a disruptive entry into the single-storied landscape of what education looks like for incarcerated youth – I harken back to Groys (2009) and what he says of the power of curation. He would suggest that, in this study’s context, the power of art needs to be translated for the viewer to truly see the shape defined as “narrative unity” that I discovered in its final stages; thus the necessity of curing my aesthetic experiment of its inherent helplessness to “assert its presence” (p. 2). When I read what Groys writes of art as needing “viewers [to] be brought to it as visitors are brought to a bedridden patient by

hospital staff” I realized all the more the impact of having no physical access to the interior site of York Detention Centre (p. 2). Even as the building remains standing, its shuttering meant that I did not have the option to bring viewers inside the space to help “cure it,” to make it an “educational” place of meaning-making. Fighting the feeling of powerlessness that reared its head many times throughout the research process, I was comforted by the power Groys gives to the work of curation and connect it to Till’s notion of art and place-making as informed by an ethics of care. If, as Groys writes, curation literally “cures the powerlessness of the image, its inability to show itself by itself” then all of the project participants should feel empowered by the efforts of restorying both the place and memory of YDC (p. 2). Therefore, in my own curatorial efforts with the participant narratives, I have connected this project’s aesthetic symbolizing of a “narrative unity” to an “ethics of [place-based] care” (Till, 2011, p. 5). The restorying of YDC fostered for the small group of us as sense of “attending to, caring for and being cared for by place” (p. 5).

The physical “mise-en-scene,” that which worked to encapsulate a pedagogical arrangement of remnant-objects to “help frame, forge and support a mode of looking” not just outward but inward, was set in relief behind a thin pane of glass (Simon cited in Di Paolantonio, 2014, p. 9). This pedagogical arrangement has created the space for an active response or “mode of looking” from a viewer. To determine who is that viewer or witness or “witness-learner,” I look to Till’s observations of another social art project that she believed worked to bring healing to a wounded urban site. She describes the site’s healing as coming from “temporary communities of the imagination” (Till, 2011, p. 12). Such a community is made up of those who have come together, artist and everyday

citizen alike, and this coming together is “a form of political witnessing” (p. 12).

According to Till the process of “witness-learning” started when the participants joined me in restorying a place where we had once “come together.” Looking through the glass of the shadow box frame at the restoried placement of all the various remnant-objects is a “form of political witnessing.” The frame and its curated contents offer a new lens through which to see and read moments of “educational becoming” that were *missed* by most who walked through the old building when it was operational. Perhaps, in some respects, it took the closing of a “wounded urban site” for the inherent “educational” value of YDC to be seen at all.

Alongside the curation of the frame and its contents, in the process of restorying York Detention Centre through narrative analysis I have worked to “transform memories of [a certain kind] of violence” (Till, 2011, p. 5) as experienced by a small group of formally incarcerated youth and their care-givers. The violence of a single story has the power to render people voiceless in the spaces and places they inhabit, but with this project the constellated restorying of what it meant to “educationally become” inside prison walls has been given voice. By sharing their stories, the “place-making” that underscored participant narratives of YDC can work to foster a “temporary community of the imagination” so that “we can [work to better] understand place as always becoming, as within and beyond us” (p. 11). Therefore, I have used both the narrative analysis of a restoried space and the new “place” of the shadow box frame pedagogically for the purpose of “witness-learning,” to broaden the limited public discourse related to incarcerated youth and their education.²¹

²¹Beyond its value as a tangible place within which to create the “narrative unity” of YDC’s “educational” story, upon further analysis of the completed project, I have seen that there was

Limitations of the study:

The process of completing this work was an elusive endeavour as it fore fronted space and place as important and necessary, yet I felt place-less much of the time. There was nowhere tangible to return to, to recharge, except in the “temporary community of the imagination” formed during the interviews, or in the editing of the various chapters. Even the intermittent viewings by friends and family of the final curated frame have been exactly that – temporary. The size of the site, considered “small” in contrast to the present day “superjail” model, definitively excludes data collected with this study from the potential for quantitative analysis. Though Narrative Analysis can be used to support quantitative methods of data collection, determining the “importance” of new findings is still hard to disentangle from value associated with numbers. Yet, the value inherent in the humanizing stories of those young people who are a part of, and very much acted upon by systems of penal and educational power, underpins the public fear pointed to in

added value in the actual experience of creating and curating the shadow box or, in a Winnicottian sense, “playing” with it as a “transitional object” (Winnicott, 1971). According to Winnicott it is the “transitional object” that allows us to constantly make the transition between inner and outer realities (Cranfield, 2014). In the context of this study the inner reality refers to the time passed inside YDC located in my own memories, while the outer reality has been informed by time spent beyond its walls and how those years have impacted my memories of the former jail, changing them as my own process of “becoming” has continued. For Winnicott “playing” is the activity whereby objects are rendered transitional, or, said another way, the “ongoingness” of an object’s emotional impact changes or comes to an end (Winnicott, 1971). In the time I spent playing with and working on the frame’s contents it became a place that afforded me the space for “the exciting interweave of subjectivity and objective observation” (Cranfield, 2014). Once I found a way to share the “narrative unity” of YDC’s “educational” restorying with the help of the frame, the opportunity for “creativity occur[ed]” through the curation of the piece (Winnicott, 1971). In some respects, the shadow box has since taken on qualities of a “transitional object,” transitioning into something that helps move the constellated narrative forward towards “witness-learning” but is not the narrative in of itself. I still see great value in a consideration of the frame’s contents, read alongside what was gleaned from the participant-interviews. But I also believe it is important to note that the “witness-learning” this project aspires to does not hinge on the contents of the shadow box. Yet, as it has transitioned with me, the frame now marks a place of continued “educational” meaning-making and for that I am grateful.

the early pages of this dissertation. Specifically, incarcerated youth will, according to the basic tenets of the law, re-enter society. With that reality in mind, I believe that the importance of qualitative educational questions, ones that have the potential to impact those who emerge from the “inside out,” will ring all the more true to a wider audience than just those who were directly impacted by the former site of York Detention Centre.

Future Projections:

The enduring nature of this work does not lie in the specific stories told but in what happens by virtue of them having been told at all. The disruptive “educational” act of narration and art that literally fits in my hands in the small created and curated place of a 6X6 shadow box frame presents as the metaphorical water I wanted so badly to contain. Biesta’s (2013) notion of a teacher’s *sporadic* identity resonates with the curation of the frame and the “temporary communities of imagination” formed in the stories that it tells. The explanatory postscript that accompanies the frame works to mitigate the risk of the project remaining yet another “ill” and voiceless untold tale of incarcerated life. Without the help of curation, one might look at the frame’s contents and only see the Other. But by bringing together all of the project’s various curatorial elements, including the constellated photographic map that explains how remnant-objects from that unlikely “educational” past interconnect, a viewer is gifted the opportunity to *see* both self and Other today in the present. I have already stated that this project was not just about the “becoming” of learners but the becoming of “witnesses” in a public who consumes the stories retold in this project and is then called out as witness to those who live them. But, as Biesta notes of the teacher, there is no guarantee that this *sporadic* gift will be received.

The goal of inserting an alternative narrative into the dominant discourse around incarcerated youth and their experiences of education has required that I focus on “broaden[ing] the scope of the possible, expand[ing] the audience, and allow[ing] for a wider range of responses” to make possible a new “becoming” for an attentive public of witnesses (Taylor, 1997, cited by Till, 2011, p. 12). I have had to navigate a personal sense of vulnerability in “allowing for a wider range of responses” since I am so intertwined with the restorying of the former “educational” place. The work of education, by which I mean really interrogating what is in fact “educational” in education, has meant for me an active and introspective consideration of my own culpability in the single story of incarcerated youth. I admit to having felt guilty for years after leaving York Detention Centre behind and all the more so when it was closed, but if I am honest I felt – in some small way – equally relieved that it was gone. Upon its closure I had naïve hopes that the stories of those affected by that space would now truly become out of sight and therefore out of mind.

I am not proud of my own mental and emotional need for space from those Bauman (2004) calls “wasted lives.” But the reality was that though the space was closed in 2009, the impact of that place has lived on in my life to this day. In the September that followed my exit from YDC, one of the first students I encountered in my new mainstream classroom was a former resident who was now struggling to reintegrate post-release. In our first class together neither of us could make eye contact. And yet, our bond was real; he was with me as I had been “inside” with him, bringing me to what I believe is this dissertation’s most important addition to any “educational” discourse around incarcerated youth. In the reading and receiving of this project’s alternative “educational”

story of incarcerated youth, I hope that the power of relationship building and personal connection between teacher and student-resident, as well as student-resident and those hired to provide care inside prison walls, will be acknowledged as real and therefore worthy of both analysis and investment.

I believe that this project, read in conjunction with reports like “It Depends Who’s On” (Elman, 2013), speak to the necessity of “witness-learning” for social change regarding an “educational” investment made into the “becoming” of incarcerated youth. The classroom reunion story with my former resident-student, located in the outside world of a mainstream high school, highlights some important questions that emerge from this project. If the Youth Criminal Justice Act’s goal is for youth in detention to be reintegrated upon release, what responsibility lies with the public, and public education specifically, to make sure they have the “educational” skills to navigate the world from which they have been removed for a time? And if, as this dissertation has suggested, those skills are connected to the positive “educational” relationships created in the midst of “passing of time” together in places of learning, I ask how there might be an “educational” reshaping of the larger seemingly impersonal superjails that have been constructed to house incarcerated youth en masse? Is it possible for them to “become” places of meaning-making that the example of York Detention Centre was at one time...and continues to be. Such questions speak to the importance of what has been a process of bringing forward past presents/ce of *sporadic* educational gifts that are still lived and living in the relationships formed within the place of YDC, past, present and future.

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Appendix A:

Interview questions:

The interviews were free-flowing to allow space for memories to be recalled. The guiding questions were organized around five thematics, thus providing a framework for myself and the interviewees:

1. Sensory questions (related to the physical space of YDC) as they “try to elicit more specific data about what is or was seen, heard, [and] touched” (2009, Merriam, p. 96):

- A question like: What stands out to you when you think back on the physical space of the old English classroom? The Math room? Was there anything that felt like “school” in that space for you?

2. Opinion and Values:

- The sensory question could open the door to ask an opinion-based question such as “Was the routine of “school” a good part of your day? Please explain why “yes” or “no” – or an iteration of that idea.

3. Knowledge:

- Knowledge-based questions like: Did your knowledge of the legal and/or education system impact on your experience of “school life” at YDC? How so if yes? And, if no, what was it that DID shape your understanding of “school life” in that space?

4. Experience and Behaviour:

- How did the experience of “wandering” or being “wanded” impact school at YDC for you? I actually remember laughter and at times, positive banter, when we stood in line for room changes and wandering...how was that possible?

5. Feelings:

- Finally, leading up to questions of feelings – if the interviewee is willing – “How did you feel when you woke up in YDC?” or to myself as a teacher, “How did you feel entering and exiting the building every day?”