

# **Performing Identity at The Arts Edge:**

## **Developing Radio Memoir Through the Excavation of Living Inquiry**

**by**

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# Approval

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## Abstract

In this thesis, I explore how community radio is a pedagogical and artistic platform that fosters personal agency, memoir, transformation and the unfolding of identity. Within the forum of an arts-based radio program, I witness how music, lyrics, broadcasting and personal reflections merge to inspire the surfacing of life's lost moments, a collection of personal memories. This discovery evolves into a narrative loop between broadcaster and self, which leads to the excavation and interweaving of music and memory, and the alchemy of the radio tales. To this end, I explore autobiography, my mother's lived experience and personal agency which unfold to become a storied musical memoir.

While my research is largely informed by the scholarly work of Jerome Bruner, Lynn Fels, Walter Gershon, Mary Karr, Karen Meyer, Celeste Snowber, Sean Street, and Maxwell van Manen, it is further influenced by scholars whose work reflects arts and music education and is punctuated by songs and song lyrics. Research data<sup>1</sup> for the radio tales and thesis is generated through several avenues:

- (1) Performative Inquiry explores how radio surfaces musical soundscape while unfolding musical lost moments that reflect lived experience.
- (2) Living Inquiry explores how writing a living document alongside radio production inspires the surfacing of lost moments and a collection of twenty-seven radio tales;
- (3) Acousmatic Modality, explores how reflective listening practices unpack contextual insights of lived experience. New understandings emerge through acousmatic dialogue, is comprised of living inquiry, lost moments. radio tales and one's musical soundscape.

My research reveals that everyone has a living story and a musical soundscape, thereby illustrating the universality of radio tales. Within this pedagogical and artistic platform, community radio acts as a springboard for the surfacing of musical soundscapes, the excavation of lost moments, the alchemy of radio tales and the unfolding of identity.

The radio tales are offered throughout the thesis, as text and audio, with attached hyperlinks to redirect the reader to the SFU Repository where the audio files are stored.

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<sup>1</sup> Research Findings; Research Data; Data. Although these terms are traditionally associated with scientific research, at times I strategically use these terms. With the evolution of the English language – and the blurring and usage of lexicon alongside other languages and modes of communication – within my paper, everyday language merges and overlaps with the lexicon of academic, professional and formal language, and vis-à-vis. As such, I sometimes use academic terminology to disrupt academic formalities as they merge with the arts and my artist practice, and within my research process that has led to this thesis.

**Keywords:** community radio; lived experience; lost moments; radio tales; music

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Margaret Eva Roach, who always believed in me, who encouraged me to sing and to find my voice in the world.

To my father, Timothy Martin Harder, who loved and cared deeply for my mother, who introduced country music into my life, who raised me as his own.

To my other father, the one I never knew, who passed on something I am yet to find.

To those who have informed my life in ways that call me forth, I am grateful – thank you, a hundred times thank you . . . .

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Lynn Fels for her support and encouragement in my exploration of radio as academic research, for reminding me that 'art' is comprised of all parts of the lived experience, and for her kindness and compassion as I excavated the challenging unknowns of my ancestral heritage.

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On a technical note, I would like to acknowledge the Repository Department of SFU, and Alex Garnett in particular, for his assistance with creating an Audio/Metadata platform where The Radio Tales can hang their hat, where they will exist forever. Also, a big thank you to Anise Ladha, SFU's Library Thesis Assistant, for the invaluable time she gave to my thesis and for her tenacity to perfect the aesthetics of the finished product.

On a broadcasting note, I would like to acknowledge SFU's campus radio station, CJSF 90.1 FM and the station's incredible staff for the invaluable training and support they've provided me without whom my radio show, The Arts Edge, and 'the radio tales' would not have come into being. I am especially grateful to David Swanson (for hearing my voice and encouraging me to produce my own show), Magnus Thyvold (for his kind leadership) and my Saturday Night pals (Jagz & The Pirates of the Caribbean and Hip Hop Happens), who are an inspiration in the Saturday night live radio forum.

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On a final note...I would like to acknowledge my childhood family for it is they who had the biggest influence on this ancestral journey, on my life as an artist, and on my musical soundtrack. While the tracks were being laid, linking lived experience with the music of my childhood and beyond, my siblings introduced me to the arts and to the diversity and joy of music; my mother taught me how to sing and to tell stories; my father taught me to appreciate the prairie landscape and the roots of country music; and together as a whole, my family taught me that music was a way to know my life. It is here that my story begins.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>CBC</b>	<b>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation:</b> CBC/Radio-Canada is Canada's national public broadcaster for radio and television. It became a crown corporation in 1939 and is the oldest, existing network in Canada.
<b>CJSF</b>	<b>Community &amp; Campus Radio Station:</b> CJSF 90.1 FM is a non-profit, volunteer-run radio station that broadcast from Simon Fraser University (Burnaby Campus). The station started as a music club (1967), became a radio station (1974) and received its FM license in 2001.
<b>CRTC</b>	<b>Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission:</b> The CRTC, which was created in 1976, is a public organization that is mandated as Canada's regulatory agency for broadcasting and telecommunications.
<b>DNA</b>	<b>Deoxyribonucleic Acid:</b> DNA, which was first identified in 1969 by Friedrich Miescher – a Swiss physiological chemist – is a nucleic acid that contains the genetic code of living beings.
<b>RT</b>	<b>The Radio Tales:</b> For the purpose of this thesis, 27 radio tales have been written, produced and broadcast on the weekly radio program, <i>The Arts Edge</i> , which is broadcast from CJSF 90.1 FM. The tales are personal narratives that are comprised of music, memoir and lost moments.

## Glossary

<b>Acousmatic Modality</b>	This modality, which is the work of Dr. Jacques Daignault, asks that readers and writers write their life, and that they interact and listen to a text to hear what the text and the reader may contribute.
<b>Autobiography</b>	This type of personal writing reflects a writer's lived experience. and includes biography, diary, journal, life-writing, log, memoir, musical lyrics, personal narrative, and/or research data.
<b>Broadcasting Media</b>	This area of communication is comprised of multiple platforms that transmit and/or receive information, and may include books, film, Internet, magazines, newspapers, radio, social media and television.
<b>Embodied Inquiry</b>	The practice of embodied inquiry, which is the work of Dr. Celeste Snowber, involves attending to one's sensual knowledge and expression to inform one's life and to reveal the connections between being, living and creating (Snowber, 2016).
<b>Living Inquiry</b>	The practice of living inquiry, which is the work of Dr. Karen Meyer, is an inquiry into how to live with awareness and appreciation for the everydayness of one's life (Meyer, 2010).
<b>Lost Moments</b>	This autobiographical information is comprised of remembered and reclaimed memory fragments that reflect lived experience.
<b>Musical Soundtrack / Musical Soundscape</b>	Like a movie soundtrack, a music soundtrack is an individual music collection that reflects one's lived experience. This collection spans, and is added to a person's living story, throughout their lifetime.
<b>Performative Inquiry</b>	This methodology, which is the work of Dr. Lynn Fels, invites us to attend to stop moments that arise through performance and reflection. Inquiry is also prompted by questions and lived experience (Fels, 1999, 2012).
<b>Soundscape</b>	This term which was coined by R. Murray Schafer <sup>2</sup> refers to the sonic environment, which includes sounds heard in nature, through daily noises and interactions in the world as well as speech and music.

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<sup>2</sup> Soundscape. This term – which refers to the sonic environment and includes the vast array of sounds that are heard/made – was coined by R. Murray Schafer. Schafer was a Canadian composer, scholar and educator who established the World Soundscape Project in the late 1960s and early 1970s at Simon Fraser University. This project was an educational and research group that explored relationships between people and their acoustic environments (<https://www.the.canadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/r-murray-schafer-emc>, <https://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html>).



Photograph: Verdi Square, New York City. (Harder, 2015)

*There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.*

(Cohen, 1992)

## Preface

If you follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you.

(Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 2011, p. 113)

While attending a creativity workshop in New York City, the leader Barbara Sher<sup>3</sup> asks me to share my big dream, my associated touchstone and any blocks that might prevent me from reaching my goal. Shyly, I stand up and tell Sher and the workshop attendees that I want to become a talk show host, that my touchstone is my ability to draw people out, and that my block is that I have no background or training in broadcasting.

In assuming that I mean radio broadcasting, Sher (2010) suggests that I create an online radio podcast that is linked to a corresponding blog. Unconvinced of Sher's suggestion, I remind her that I have no knowledge or practical training in radio broadcasting.

Sher (2010) assures me: "What I know about the universe is that you can find someone in any field to train you for free," and adds the caveat: "There is one condition. You will eventually need to pay it forward because if you don't, the magic will stop working."

"But where?" I ask.

Barbara shrugs. "Watch for a sign."

Two weeks later, while I am at Simon Fraser University, I get off the elevator on the wrong floor. Within moments, I am standing in front of the campus radio station, and within a year, I am producing my own radio show, *The Arts Edge* – a radio platform that will become the action site of research for my thesis.

As I would later learn in graduate school, through my engagement with academia, the arts and radio, a path was being laid in the walking (Varela, 1987); as I wrote my life, I was digging a trench for my words to follow (Dillard, 1989); as I sounded my world, I was finding my voice (hooks, 1989); and as I watched for a sign, the magic was unfolding.

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<sup>3</sup> Big Cheap Weekend\*, NYC. (2010). I attended this workshop with Barbara Sher, the bestselling author of *Wishcraft*. The focus was to identify goals and to brainstorm a plan to attain goals. Sher has been an instrumental force in helping me to create a creative life; in using Sher's coaching strategies I actualized my life as an artist, a writer, a sign language interpreter, a braille transcriber, a stand-up comic, a school teacher (elementary; secondary English & Creative Writing), and now, a radio broadcaster.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The Invitation

If you are a dreamer, come in.  
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,  
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer  
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire  
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin  
Come in! Come in!

(Silverstein, 1974, p. 9, Lines 1-6)

As you read my thesis, and listen to my radio tales that were broadcasted in my radio show, *The Arts Edge*, I invite you to engage in my ideas as I discuss how various theories, inquiries and practices incorporate the arts into my lived experience to create a musical memoir. While my research is largely informed by the scholarly work of Jerome Bruner, Lynn Fels, Walter Gershon, Mary Karr, Karen Meyer, Celeste Snowber, Sean Street, and Maxwell van Manen, it is further influenced by scholars whose work reflects arts and music education, and is punctuated by song lyrics that resonate with my lived experience; lyrics can be identified as they are italicized and indented on the page.

While there are twenty-seven radio tales (see Appendix A) that encapsulate my musical memoir, my theoretical paper references aspects of specific radio tales and incorporates eleven complete radio tales within the body of the paper. Of these eleven tales, the thesis opens with "Radio Tale #1: The Ledge," a metaphorical narrative that illustrates taking a risk, closes with "Radio Tale #26: Waking Up in Grad School," and thematically locates nine radio tales throughout. To note, attached to each radio tale is a hyperlink that redirects the reader to the SFU Repository where the audio files are stored.

If you are a storyteller, come in.  
If you are a collector of words, music and living moments  
If you're a listener, come sit by my fire  
For we have some radio tales to spin  
Come in! Come in!

(Harder, 2020)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Invitation. Introduction opens with an excerpt from Shel Silverstein's poem, *The Invitation*, and ends by mirroring the poem's stanza using language that pertains to radio, music and the radio tales.

## 1.2. Radio Tale #1: The Ledge

[Listen to Radio Tale #1](#)

I wasn't really going to jump. It was just a thought. A whim. Curiosity really. Like, I wanted to know "how far do you have to fall to die?" And looking down I wondered how my face would feel when it met the pavement head on. And when all the people gathered and pointed up at me, I wondered what they would say if I turned around and went back inside.

And so, I stayed on the ledge. Even when it got cold. Even when it rained. Even when Mama started to cry.

Mama told me I was scaring her, and that I should come back inside before the neighbours started to talk.

"Let them talk," I said. I just needed some time to think.

I thought about the meaning of life. I thought about the struggle. I thought about Robbie Robertson singing, "it is a good day to die".

"Fuck that," I thought, "It is a good day to get my own apartment".

I just hope it has a ledge.

*Lay down your armor  
Lay down your spears  
The chief's eyes were sad  
But showed no sign of fear  
It is a good day to die  
(It is a good day to die)*

(Robertson, 1995, Track 5)



### 1.2.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #1: The Ledge

As can be garnered from “Radio Tale #1: The Ledge” – the first transcribed audio tale above – this personal narrative represents one of life’s key moments when one is faced with a decision to commit to one’s lived experience: to dive into life, to jump in to the unknown, to take a risk. ‘The Ledge’ is a call to action (Fels, 1999, 2012a), a stop.

A stop is moment of listening. A stop is a calling to attention to what is hidden – a vulnerability, an intimacy. It is a new awareness of possibility, a recognition of oneself in relation to others, and one’s location, as if for the first time. A stop calls us to question our habits of engagement and invites us to re-imagine, to engage anew. (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 27)

The ledge itself is literally a stop that calls me to attention (Appelbaum, 1995), and in so doing, the ledge alerts me to radio which becomes instrumental in my research. While the ledge literally stops, to alert, caution or protect, the ledge is also a call to action.

Just as ‘the ledge’ itself is a metaphor, the radio tale, “The Ledge,” is also a metaphor. The metaphor is something that Tharp (2006) deems to be “the lifeblood of all art if not art itself” (p. 4). While the former is a solo image that represents a moment of decision, the latter is a narrative in which the protagonist engages within the image of the ledge as a ledge, whereby a significant moment is represented. Memories may be a “select subset of experiences that [are] regarded as most relevant” to one’s identity (Robinson & Taylor, 1998, p. 141); similarly, some lost moments will appear to be more significant than others. As one cannot recall the entirety of an event or experience, one will likely recall the most pertinent aspects of one’s life (Greene, 1995; Warland, 2010). The ledge, as a place of courage, and the leap, as an act of faith, merges to represent a moment of significance in my life, a moment of decision. It is a moment in which I am called to embrace one of life’s deepest calling: a call into being.

### 1.3. Finding My Way into Lived Experience and Lost Moments

Wanderer, there is no path  
You lay down a path in walking...  
and when turning around  
you see the road you'll  
never stop on again.

(Varela, 1987, p. 62)

All of life is made up of a million moments: Moments that when woven together define the people we have become, the lives we have lived, the paths we have travelled. My academic journey has been one such journey. As a precursor to lost moments, my research begins with unravelling lived experience and identifying the meaning and unfolding of art to determine how art informs my life. There is an art to listening to my life, something Snowber (2005) suggests is not merely an external endeavour, but one that “travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions and practice” (p. 346). In researching my life, I experience the breadth of living within story and song and discover new meaning within radio and memoir (Bruner, 1991; Richardson, 2000).

Through exploratory performance with words and broadcasting, habits of performance are interrupted; my ideas of what is possible are transformed, allowing me to create meaningful art, and to expand increased awareness (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009) of self-identity. For instance, as I create art (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002, 2008; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tharp, 1989) within the realm of community radio, my self identity expands; the radio platform becomes a springboard for the excavation of lost moments, the alchemy of radio tales, where identity unfolds for both radio host and listener.

Thematic patterns become apparent as I write through living inquiry; as these patterns identify aspects of my identity, I am led to construct my musical memoir (Bruner, 1995; van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987). This construction begins with investigating the four themes of living inquiry. As I engage with life writing, past experiences surface as lost moments and “find their way into the present [...merging with] the new and the old” (Dewey, 1934, p. 272). Lost moments take shape as story and song (van Bergen, 2007).

## 1.4. Surfacing Lost Moments

In writing and sounding my lived experience, my living story unfolds into a collection of bite-sized memories that become known as, the lost moments. The lost moments represent lost aspects of my lived experience, my untold story. As these moments are released from memory, to recall lost time and recover lost moments, I reconstruct my living story (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000). Through this reconstruction, I perform my living story in the realm of radio broadcasting when I unfold my radio identity (Baker & Macdonald, 2017). While lost moments inform identity, my recently developed radio identity conversely informs the surfacing as lost moments – a reciprocal relationship.

The lost moments which are essentially memory fragments that are embedded in the body, mind, and heart are recalled through various prompts. While some moments emerge through writing (Goldberg, 2004) through living inquiry (Meyer, 2010), other moments emerge through the creation of radio. Thus, how I write the radio tales is twofold: some radio tales are written prior to production while other radio tales are written during live radio broadcasts. The latter occurs as I perform my living story on radio and sound it with my musical soundscape as well as random music during which time I listen closely for new 'lost moments' that may surface unexpectedly.

Lost moments are lost because they are buried, under the debris of lived experience amid life's details, demands and distractions; lost because other moments take precedence over them; lost because they don't want to be found; lost because they are frozen in time; lost because they are waiting to be remembered. While some moments are forgotten, buried, repressed or packed away, others are simply unknown (Frantzich & Fels, 2017). Lost moments are recalled differently; because some are "vivid or consequential [...and] others may seem mundane or of little relevance for self-definition" (McAdams, 2001, p. 109), the quality of the lost moments may determine when or if they are recalled at all. Additionally, other criteria may influence memory retrieval:

Memorable messages, symbolic messages; originating events, or memories that contain the genesis of an interest, vocation, relationship, life goal, etc.; anchoring events, or memories that affirm and reinforce an ongoing interest, attitude, or commitment; or, 'analogous events, or episodes that are readily compared with similar other events to suggest a pattern or themes that runs through the person's life story. (Pilemer, 1998, pp. 109-110)

Retrieving and reclaiming lost moments recover the living story. My memory and my autobiography expands and I become whole. Through reclamation and transformation, I become more than I am, more than I was; (Kelly, 2010). These recovered moments fill many of the absent gaps of time (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011a), including lost memories and black holes that may block possibility. It is a void that reminds me of Alyson (2014) who speaks of memories, remembering and forgetting:

My memories occupy some kind of liminal space, where things are not quite remembered and yet not completely forgotten either. The thing I need to work on is broadening my sense of interiority such that any difficulty I have revolves around the absence of language for describing my feelings and aspects of inner experience. (Armstrong et al., 2014, p. 11)

With each moment that is retrieved from the liminal space, the language of my life (Meyer, 2010) is returned to me. These moments are precious to me. This memory is poignant. For to remember these moments is "not only the remembrance of things past, but also the recalling of things lost [...which is] particularly true of the human voice" (Street, 2014, pp. 74-75). By recalling lost moments and reclaiming lost voice, I begin to rebuild my living story (Bruner, 1991).

Of the many lost moments that are lived, there are many that one remembers one's entire life. While some are lost, forgotten or dormant (Snowber, 2016), and recalled later, others are forgotten forever; and some are buried "like small translucent creatures that have lived their lives under the stones" (Ricketts, 2011, p. 28). These stones, I carry "in my pocket as a secret, a source of grounding, a mystery" (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 179) to remind me of the silences I long to remember (Snowber, 2017). While my life has textures I can't quite name, I turn to my musical soundscape to listen "for the sound of the colours I can't see [...] to smell the shapes, taste the light and dark" (Liao, 2001, 2006, pp. 54-55). These unknowns are treasures that have been left by the storm; they are the gifts of my struggle (Milloy, 2004; Rilke, 1929, 1984).

Like one's memories that are stored within, the things I have forgotten are housed; by remembering houses and rooms I learn to be at home in my knowing and my not-knowing and to abide within myself (Bachelard, 1958). As a writer, I access my body as a space of deep embodied wisdom (Ricketts & Snowber, 2013; Snowber, 1997) for my body is not only "the site of all memory storage, research, imagination, processing and selection; it is the conduit from which the narrative emits" (Warland, 2010, p. 123). My body represents the house that I live in and my memory is the material that I build from, that I write with. Through the use of these tools, I seek to "replicate, as close to the bone as possible, lived experience" (Warland, 2010, p. 7) and to excavate lost moments that have been housed within this location of stored memory. As these gathered moments are woven through the musical backdrop of my living story, dating back to my ancestral origins, these moments become integral to my autobiographical research.

This autobiographical information is gathered into a tapestry of story and song, creating a document that represents my living identity. It is a document that breathes and performs knowing, crossing time and space to access ancestral lineage. Hogan (1995), notes that this call to origin is deeper, older, and stronger than culture and blood origins, and claims that people seek their origin so that they might know their future. Through story and song, and through "texts that are jointly crafted by the individual...and the culture within that individual's life" (McAdams, 2001, p. 117), my origins are known. These texts bring meaning to my life. It is a knowing that arises not by analysis or speculation but "from intentional engagement with, and experience of, lived reality" (Aoki in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 120).

By reclaiming lost moments, I engage with the chronological timeline of my lived reality and begin to remember how I came to remember (Cayete, 1994): I began the practice of remembering and dwelling in specific places within my lived landscape. I began tracking my own story. As I heard my own voice tell the story and as I relived the experiences through the writing, I noticed new patterns emerging. I then began to follow the threads of connection. I was engaged in the traditional practice of tracking (Davis, 2009; Kelly, 2010). By tracking, surfacing, recalling and retrieving the lost moments, I call into presence my life remembered anew.

## 1.5. Exploring Lived Experience by Writing Through Living Inquiry

Writing is my solitude and my inner life.  
It is where I discover what I think and feel and believe  
And where I articulate the questions that I 'attempt to live'.  
You don't know what you will receive.

(Schiwy, 2002, p. 146)

Living inquiry is an approach that invites me to investigate the meaning of my living story, belonging in the world (Heidegger, 1962), and investigating my worldliness (Meyer, 2010). Just as my research into the meaning of art looks at beauty in daily life, living inquiry helps me to find answers to the question of how I might live with the quality of awareness to recognize and experience newness and truth (Meyer, 2006) within my worldly experience. While writing my life speaks to the experiences that I have in my day-to-day life, narrative speaks to "how stories are composed, performed and received" (Schiff et al., 2017, p. xxxii). As I write my life, content and form become equally important in the performance and the final offering that illustrates my life story.

In composing this living document that records my life, I rename myself "in a language that reflects and echoes [my] experience" (Snowber, 1997, p. 3). Identity also unfolds through the creation of the radio tales and in gathering the songs of my musical soundscape (Schafer, 1977). Together, the living document, radio tales and collection of songs archive my life. As these songs are embedded with language that reflects my life, when I hear these songs I hear my story (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). I hear my voice (Street, 2017; Welch, 2005). Similarly, when I put pen to paper, words arrive to unfold my living story. Although I anticipate much of the content that appears on the page, there are also words, stories, lost moments that unexpectedly appear. This unfolding releases life's autobiographical content that becomes a form unto itself (Hodgins, 1993; van Bergen, 2007; White, 1987). A path is being laid to my living story.

Every time you touch a word, a window opens.  
Behind that word is another story...  
Every word the reader touches, it opens again.

(Allison, 1995; Allison, 2000, p. 474)

With each movement of my pen, as new autobiographical content is recalled or revealed, my artistic direction becomes apparent (Cayete, 2005): I am writing my life (Cixous, 1976) through story and song. Lost moments surface as bite-sized pieces of memory that are linked to musical lyrics and musically-infused personal experiences (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). Just as the arts are illuminated throughout the process of writing my life, specifically, it is the elements of the lost moments, the radio tales and the form itself that become inextricably linked with radio production and musical soundscape (Schafer, 1977). As portals of memory (Belfi et al., 2014; Kelly, 2010; Smith, 1991), music and radio production are instrumental to the excavation of lived experience.

In weaving the everyday into my artistic practice and the writing of my autobiography, personal narrative transposes details of lived experience. These details identify my life as being more real, intimate and vulnerable which invites me to embrace my shift of awareness and the patterns within my interior life (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009). I am learning the art of sewing together shreds of memory and fragments of lived experience in which I “see beauty in a multiplicity of patches” (Anderson, 1995). It is a beauty that invites me to welcome the imperfection of my life (Snowber, 2012) so I can piece together the language of experience that tells the full richness of my story. It is here that I begin to reflect upon the chronology of my life, the times and places I have known, the people I have known along the way, and the person I have become.

I navigate this process through the four themes of living inquiry: time, place, language, and self/other. These themes guide me through the reflection process. This helps me to understand where and how I situate myself in the world (Bruner, 1987; Clarke et al., 2010; van Manen, 1990), how I communicate and express myself and how I embody myself in being and becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Snowber, 2014), to consequently reveal patterns within living.

### **1.5.1. Living Inquiry Within the Realm of Time**

Within living inquiry, time presents itself as concrete and abstract constructs. While time may appear to fly by or drag on, chronological time “appears straight forward, structuring our lives” (Meyer, 2010, p. 87). In considering one’s life, a person can reflect upon the

past, present, and/or future (Meyer, 2006) which allows people to time travel (Belfi et al., 2014), if only in their minds.

In writing through living inquiry, my living document becomes an account of events that occur over 'human time' as opposed to abstract or 'clock' time (Ricoeur, 1985, 1990). These lived events are "expressed in narrative through the conventions of flashback, flash-forward and temporal synecdoche" (Bruner, 1991, p. 6) which allows my lived story to be told experientially. For instance, a radio tale may incorporate multiple ages/periods of my life while also centering around one theme or musical genre. As I explore time in this manner, I attend to "the lived landscapes of my life from a distance in time and space...as though I am looking from the mountaintop and can clearly see both the landscape and my own pathway" (Kelly, 2010, p. 84). By stepping back from my personal story I am able to have perspective on my life.

This living timeline is illuminated, and better understood, through chronological time (static) and abstract time (fluid). In "Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy," I access two watches in order to recall my life: as a researcher (present tense), and as a seventeen year old girl (past tense). The culmination of these two perspectives provides me with a breadth of life experiences: those that "the clock does not show" (Calle-Gruber, 1994, p. 163), e.g., the sensory experience of the restaurant (i.e., odour of burning cigarettes, jukebox tunes and overlapping voices, feelings of nostalgia); the second perspective encompasses memories that the clock does show, e.g. 1, the physicality of the restaurant (i.e., booth with vinyl seating, jukebox, porcelain dishes) and e.g. 2, the chronological timeline of that experience (i.e. 1978-1981, the years I was a patron of the restaurant; Dec 8, 1981, The death of John Lennon; June 12, 1981, high school graduation).

Time variants are further exemplified in each of the radio tales. While the radio tales exhibit fluid timeframes – chronological and non-linear – because they are told from the first person point of view, this causes the stories to be pulled into the present moment. Time merges (past, present and future) to become "another kind of time, a timelessness within time" (Snowber, 2011a, p. 154), in which the radio tales become timeless universal stories that allow the reader to relate "in a personal way" (Mamchur, 2015, p. 130) of which readers find deep meaning.



As I interweave two or more lost moments with songs from my musical soundscape (Schafer, 1977), to create a multi-layers and multi-sensory personal narrative. Such is the case in “Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You.” I address key concepts such as having a crush on the musical idol David Cassidy; I also address wanting to be cool, sexy and sure of myself as is reflected in the music of Suzi Quatro. These songs become associated with these experiences not only for me but for listeners as well. For listeners who recall these songs at the height of their popularity, these songs will resonate with listeners (Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006) who experience a similar nostalgia that “Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You” and the songs within emanate (Abram, 1996). Similarly, listeners of “Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy”, may relate to the music and the narrative and its “rhythm that matches the pulse of the place [restaurant], attuned to the way things happen there to the sharpness of the shadows or the rippling speech of water bubbling up from the ground.” (Abram, 1996, p. 182). In addressing time and place, these narratives conjure up the past, bringing music and the experience back to life.

### **1.5.2. Living Inquiry Through the Places We Know**

Being present at a particular scene  
can be thought of as the source of his knowledge...  
then there is, written into this metaphor,  
the notion of continuity between then and now,  
a physical continuity between past and present.

(Warnock, 1987, p. 51)

While a person’s experience of place is heightened through the senses, the physical and social textures of the surrounding environment will provide a background and context for a person’s memories (Meyer, 2010). Place is therefore more than just a location. It becomes foundational within a person’s living story. Place is the scaffolding whose support allows people to go out into the world. Place is what people take with them when they leave home.

**We are the places we have known.**

The role of place is particularly important in the gathering of information that pertains to lived experience, and the re-authoring of a person’s living story (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1991; Butler, 1997; Salverson, 1996). Just as place is significant (Warland,

2010) in my life, it is equally important as a key element of documenting my life through personal narrative. Since a person's lived story is played out in particular settings and for particular audiences and purposes (Chase, 2005), the resulting personal narratives should be framed within a specific context that contributes to the narrator's' experience and self-views that existed in the original point in time (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). From this perspective, these autobiographical narratives will chronologically reflect a writer's life stories – as seen through a personal and universal lens.

In writing through living inquiry to recall and revisit these places and spaces that inform, people re-visit these environments to re-experience their sensory experience of time. Through sensory recall, people experience “presence within [the] body” (Meyer, 2006, p. 1) which anchors them with the land. While one may become reacquainted with known places (Abram, 1996) through memory, they also become linked through ancestral memory. This knowing anchors itself in the body and connects with identity to place:

I was born so far from my beginnings, follow the bed of my blood.  
My distant blood my foreigner, what a way we have come.

(Cixous, 1994, p. 179)

Despite the distance between myself and my ancestors, our shared geographical space links our ancestral connections which inform my being and becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014). Like the houses, places or lands where I have lived, or where my ancestors have lived, by revisiting these spaces, I reclaim place (Mairs, 1989), ancestry and the history of my ancestors (Cayete, 1994; Hogan, 1995; Kelly, 2011). Land is more than just a physical space; it is a container that holds memory to engage contextual knowing; land is a key that turns the doors inward to reflect upon lived experience. Place determines how these ancestral spaces have shaped (Meyer, 2003, p. 219), and continue to shape, my life and my mother's life. Place is always shaping my experience just as I am always becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014).

This place of being is my ancestral space of knowing. It is “the place where everything I've lost is waiting patiently for me to find my way back” (Liao, 2001; Liao, 2006, pp. 50-51). Upon my return to these places of memory, “the promptings of a forgotten time come back” (Street, 2014, p. 107). I travel back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to reclaim the land that knows me. By returning to these places, to these terrains where I carved my

name, where my mother carved her name, I write “language back into the land” (Abram, 1996, p. 163). I embrace my ancestral story to become a witness and an interpreter of the past (Howell, 2018). Through my presence on the land I listen to the land and voice the silent narratives of the past (Abram, 1996). I am generating new memories from old (Davis, 2009).

### **1.5.3. The Language of Living Inquiry**

We must engage language in a primal incantation  
or poetizing which hearkens back  
to the silence from which the words emanate.

(van Manen, 1990, p. 39)

Language is always with me. Since the voice of my mother was first known to me, before I was born, I have always known her language, her words, our mother tongue (Welch, 2005). Between my mother and I, we share an interweaving of language and music, speech and song. Our shared language that is evidenced through vocal interactions between parent and child (Welch, 2005) remains with people throughout their lives.

I write through living inquiry to draw attention to language, and through speech and song, so I may unravel the language that has been passed on through ancestral lineage to shape my life (Meyer, 2006). Through language I know my life. I narrate my life and understand my life (Bruner, 1991). Because my knowing is “linguistically filtered, contextually grounded,...implicated in a particular social process, [and] shaped by narrative forms” (Berry & Kincheloe, 2004, p. 87), I look to the merging of music, memory and memoir to further shape my life.

Stories, like rhymed poems or songs, readily incorporate themselves into our felt experience; the shifts of action echo and resonate or own encounters-in hearing or telling the story we vicariously live it, and the travails of its characters embed themselves into our own flesh. (Abram, 1996, p. 120)

Abram (1996) proposes that by experiencing a story, people become that story. Story becomes the means through which people narrate their life (Bruner, 1987). As a medium through which I communicate, interact with others, interpret the world and construct my life (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000), the language of narrative is instrumental in shaping my existence. Of this, Meyer (2010) suggests that while language “labels things

and people; holds our traditions, stories, and histories; [and] binds us to each other [...people can only] understand and speak a language by living it" (Meyer, 2010, p. 86). As I am, so shall it be (Revelation, 22:16); as I speak, so shall I live; as I narrate, so I shall live. Just as people need to engage in worldliness to know the world, and live a language to know the language, I propose that people need to know stories to know their life.

The language and the stories hold knowledge.

(Archibald, 2008)

Language is also known intrinsically or through osmosis – as though it were transported underground by the currents that pass between myself and nature (Hogan, 1995). It is as though language has always been present. This intrinsic knowing of language, for instance, is within and merely needs to be awoken. Language is a mode of being, doing and knowing as is exemplified by my experiences within radio production. While radio broadcasting was initially an unfamiliar mode of technology and communication, it was at the same time familiar. Perhaps this familiarity is the result of radio's presence in my family home growing up. By revisiting early memories of radio, to experience wide-awakeness (Greene, 1977, 1995), radio becomes second nature to me as though it lives within my being.

#### **1.5.4. Experiencing Self / Other Through Living Inquiry**

At different points in life all people take on various roles within the identities of self and other (i.e. non-human entities). Through these identities the qualities of sameness and otherness (Meyer, 2010) are expressed. With regard to music and musical influences, radio broadcasting and production, and the roles I perform within life 'self' assumes the roles of self, broadcaster, teacher and writer. Meanwhile, 'other' also assumes multiple roles as other persons or as things/locations such as microphone, music, radio station, recording studio and technology.

## 1.6. Finding the Shape of Story Within Living Inquiry

...my people will sleep for one hundred years,  
but when they awaken, it will be the artists  
who give them their spirit back.

(Riel, 1885, in Wyman, 2004, p. 85)

In writing through living inquiry to find my story the emotional integrity of the narrative is preserved (Adams, 1991; Mamchur, 2012) while lived experience is transformed “into a textual expression of its essence” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). This form invites writers to explore and express their voice, something that is enhanced through the illusion of “speaking through text [...to] develop their voices by repeating the same devices over and over, such as sentence complexity and length, level of language, and sophistication of reference” (Fry, 2012, p. 51). This approach allows writers to diversify their modes of expression to metaphorically stand apart from other writers, the key reason people “can recognize one writer from one another” (Coleman, 2017, p. 4). To exemplify, as I develop voice within my writing to find lost moments and radio tales, I develop a unique way of framing my life, as narrative (Bruner, 1991; Warland, 2010; White, 1987), and of being in the world (Heidegger, 1962). It is as though my lost moments sit up and start to breathe on their own (Hodgins, 1993) and to find a voice of their own (hooks, 1989; Lewis, 2006).

Voice is the sound and tone of your story. It's the piece of you that goes into everything you write. It's your literary fingerprint, your signature style, and it develops over time....Voice is one of the promises you should make to your reader from the very first page. (Pereira, 2016, p. 212)

## 1.7. Revisiting the Past Through Themes of Living Inquiry

We are all archivists; it is part of human instinct  
to collect the material evidence of existence,  
be it books, records and CDs, photographs or letters.

(Street, 2014, p. 74)

Reflecting upon the various elements of living inquiry, as previously note I acquire a knowledge that leads me to revisit the spaces and places I have known throughout my life. In realizing I am affected and shaped by my culture, community and places I come from (Cajete, 1994, 1996, 2005), I revisit these places, cities and building structures that know me. I sense a character within each. The first place I visit is the space where I was

born, St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria, BC. While sussing out the property, and taking photos of the hospital's red brick building, I discover the hospital has been converted into student housing at which time a resident approaches me. After telling her my story, she gives me a tour of the building, revealing posted historic photographs of hospital wards and the nuns who operated the facility.

Apart from the hospital where I began my life, I visit the four houses of my childhood. The first place is a lovely character house on Old Esquimalt Road in Victoria, BC where my family lived until I was four years old; it is here that I envision my early years of possibility and beginnings. The second place is a two-story house in Burnaby, BC where my family lived until I was seven years old. This place is a shadowed space of deep pain and sadness where my mother's illness loomed large. The third place is my family home in Vancouver, BC where I resided until I moved out at age twenty-three; although this place initially emanates pain and sadness, due to my mother's frequent absences, my sadness eventually shifts to become a space of hope, possibility and change. The fourth place is a house where I lived sporadically, with extended family; I stayed with this family, as a preschool child, when my mother was hospitalized for long periods of time; I recall this place as being filled with pain, where emotions ran high as my uncle's alcohol-induced racist rants fuelled the emotional climate. My uncle's hatred for the world seemed to inspire a busyness among his wife and children, perhaps in fear that should they slow down, their blinders might come off. Then there was me, biding my time.

It is here that I first identify with *Cinderella*, trying to stay out of the way, so they don't hurt me with their words. Despite my ability to 'disappear', my aunt's passive-aggressive words always manage to find me to spew subtle putdowns and comparisons between myself and her spoilt daughter (a.k.a., my cousin, the wicked stepsister) and I am called to reflect upon Leslie Ann Warren's portrayal of Cinderella, and her musical rendition of "In My Own Little Corner":

*In my own little corner  
in my own little chair  
I can be whatever I want to be*

*On the wing of my fancy  
I can fly anywhere  
And the world will open its arms to me*

(Rodgers & Hammerstein II, 1957, Track 4)

As I revisit these houses, I realize that these spaces are time capsules that hold memory and emotion (Bruner, 1987; Mairs, 1984; Smith 1991; Warland, 2010). I resided in each of these locations at different ages and in different periods of my life. These places, therefore, hold different moments, memories, music. These memories inform my identity (Fearon, 1999) and my place in the world, and although some memories hold deep sadness, they also illustrate how I have been “transformed by the intervening years” (Mairs, 1989, p. 4). The houses I revisit feel different from what I once knew. This shift allows me to separate memory from emotion. My memories of “arrival and departure, place and displacement, identity and heritage, ancestry and roots” (Ricketts, 2011, p. 5) are what situate me in the world (Bruner, 1991; Clarke et al., 2010; van Manen, 1990).

In revisiting these childhood arrivals and departures, I understand my need for home and belonging (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014). I also understand the choices I have made throughout my life, first as a child and youth trying to belong and to unravel identity, and now as an adult, trying to find my way in the world. I realize that because I had “become familiar with hospitals and psychiatric wards” (Meyer, 1994, p. 14), alcoholic uncles and luring men, changing homes and empty lunch boxes, I made choices that reflected the aesthetics of my early experiences with space and place, selves and others (Meyer, 1994). In having become comfortable with early losses (Fels & Ricketts, 2009), this positioned me to seek out similar experiences in my adult life.

Early childhood experiences influence how researchers select and respond to autobiographical information (Meyer, 2003); my research is therefore informed by lived experience, chronology, place, the people I encountered, the languages I used to express myself, and my identity at different ages and stages of life. Like the houses where I lived, my body continues to be “a dwelling place” (Mairs, 1989, p. 7) that stores living memory. By revisiting childhood homes and spaces of being, and then writing the land and writing my body (Cixous, 1976; Milloy, 2004), I reclaim the deed to my life. In doing so, I live in my house; I live in my body; and I dwell in this land that is me.

I write through living inquiry to navigate a path that paves a way into the past so I can transform the past; I reclaim treasures of being and shape my identity within the slabs of clay. Like the strata that Michaelangelo chips away at to reveal *David* (Nachmanovitch, 1990), I chip away at lived experience to reveal what’s buried within: the treasures of my

life, the wisdom of the lost moments, and the presence of the radio tales. This 'lived' strata illuminates my living story through its representation. In sculpting and reshaping experience, what I am left with represents "memories, images, and emotional states in relation to identity and place" (Meyer, 2010; Ricketts, 2008, p. 26). By incorporating these chipped pieces of memory – that present themselves as strata fragments, lost moments, the forgotten, the dormant (Snowber, 2016) or the hidden – into my research process, I breathe life into my work and am called into presence. I re-orient myself in the world of research, reflection and performance, to carve a path for my words to take shape (van Bergen, 2007). This reorientation is like opening a door, something Annie Dillard (1989) speaks of in *The Writing Life*:

WHEN YOU WRITE, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner's pick, a woodcarver's gouge, a surgeon's probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. (Dillard, 1989, p. 3)

In other words, by writing through living inquiry and then broadcasting through performative inquiry, a path is chartered and the writer is led to new understandings:

In travelling a Pathway we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognize and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves anew. Path denotes structure; way implies a process. (Cayete, 2005, p. 54)

Performance and identity retrieval lead me to find my voice (hooks, 1989; Lewis, 2006), returning me to the land that knows me (Cayete, 1994; Kelly, 2010), returning me to the places I have known where "geography colours my voice" (Rosenfield, 2015, p. 24), the spaces that call me to tell my story. While I also return to spaces of my mother (her family home, the psychiatric hospital, the church where she was married) alongside the spaces of myself, there is a wider spectrum that knows me: ancestral spaces of old. Of this, Davis (2009) suggests that when a person voyages, they create new stories in the tradition of old stories and therefore, create "a new culture out of the old" (p. 35).

As I make such connections between new and old, lost moments surface to reveal my connection to Ireland (Abram, 1996) where my great-grandparents resided prior to their immigration to America in the early 1800s. In knowing that I have roots that reach deep into the Irish culture, I feel a sense of belonging to the land (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014), and a kinship rises up within:



## 1.8. Radio Tale #3: Bloodlines, Leylines & the Luck of the Irish

### [Listen to Radio Tale #3](#)

*In Dublin's fair city where the girls are so pretty  
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone*

(Yorkston, 1884a, Track 6)

As Sinead O'Connor (2003) sings of in her rendition of "Molly Malone" I am called to reflect upon my ancestor's journey to the new land....

In the early 1800s, my great-grandparents set sail from Dublin, Ireland for the Americas. Having feared that the potato famine<sup>5</sup> would wipe them out, my ancestors accepted the American government's offer to settle the prairie landscape of the Midwest in exchange for a parcel of land in the new world. After docking on the east coast and registering at New York's Ellis Island, papers were approved and they were assigned a plot of land in North Dakota. And so, with deed in hand, by horse and buggy my great grand-parents travelled to the Dakotas where they settled along the Red River Valley – in hopes of making a better life for themselves.

*I am the prairie land of North Dakota where my grandmother learned to sew  
While she waited for her husband to take her away*

(Harder, 2006, Lines 8-10)

As the years passed, and as their children grew, at the turn of the century some of their children ventured north to Canada to make a life of their own. Like their parents had done before them, they accepted the Canadian government's offer of a parcel of land to immigrants who were willing to settle the Canadian prairie. After congregating to Leroy, Saskatchewan and having their land parcelled out, each family set out to start their new life – having left the Red River Valley behind – my ancestral memory of which Gene Autry reflects upon in "Red River Valley":

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<sup>5</sup> The Potato Famine (also known as Great Irish Famine) occurred in Ireland between 1845-1849. It was a period of mass starvation and disease that was caused by a potato blight (a disease that destroyed the potato plant with late blight resulting from water mold). As the potato was Ireland's staple crop in the 18th century, this loss took a toll on the country, its economy, food production, death rate, and population. Desperate to survive, many Irish fled to America such that between 1841-1849, 49% of the USA's total immigrants were Irish. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Great-Famine-Irish-history>

*From this valley they say you are leaving  
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile  
For they say you are taking the sunshine  
That has brightened our path for awhile*

(Autry, 1946, Track 2)

Once Grandpa Jeremiah had settled in the small town of McGee, he took Grandma Olive as his bride. Together they worked the land and raised a family of their own – with my mother, Margaret, being the youngest child of seven. Although I never met Grandpa Jeremiah, and I barely knew Grandma Olive, I recall hearing many a story of their homesteading days; these tales send me back as though I had lived the prairie life.

*My grandpa played the violin and he played his song for me  
With a tap and a bang, and a strum and a twang  
He played his jamboree*

(Harder, 2012b, Lines 1-5)

My mom died when she was seventy-two years old, just as I began to tip the scales of forty. As the shock of losing my mom wore down, and as the grief diminished, I began to research her life. My journey began with some old photos and a scrapbook. As I interviewed family and friends who identified people and places Mom had known, I was able to fill in some of the missing pieces of her story. This led me to the flatlands of Saskatchewan and the prairie town of McGee, where my mother grew up, and where her family homestead still stood. It was there that I got an inside view of Mom growing up prairie, and her being schooled in a one-room school house followed by boarding school at a Roman Catholic Convent in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Her life-long friend, her teenage partner in crime, reminisced with me of how she and Mom used to sneak out when the nuns weren't looking to go downtown where they would hang out on Main Street singing Doris Day's hit single "Standing on the Corner":

*I'm the cat, I got the cream  
Haven't got a boy but I can dream  
Haven't got a boy but I can wish*

(Loesser, 1956, Single)

As I reflect on my mother's childhood, and on my ancestor's' lived experiences, I recall stories my mother told me: about her mother's heartache at the fortune she'd left behind in North Dakota and her subsequent loss of family heirlooms that were destroyed when

her matrimonial home was destroyed by a fire, taking the house and all the family belongings, leaving the family homeless. I recall being told that someone ran back in the house to retrieve Grandma Olive's sewing machine – the sole item that guaranteed income for the family, and clothes for the children. I also recall hearing of the sadness and the quiet desperation at the family being separated and the parents having to farm out the little ones while Grandpa Jeremiah and the neighbours rebuilt a three-room shack to house nine people.

I am the big open spaces of Southern Saskatchewan  
where my mother played with paper dolls  
while she waited for the spring to come.

(Harder, 2006, Lines 4-6)

By the nineteen forties, the spring had long since come and gone, and with all the children having grown up and moved away, my mother boarded a train in Saskatoon and headed west – *en route* to join her siblings in Victoria, BC, She was eighteen years old. Once in Victoria, my mother trained to become a nurse's aide at St. Joseph's Hospital, and spent her spare time singing in St. Patrick's Cathedral choir and attending dances through the Catholic Youth Organization where she met my dad and lifelong friends.

As I envision my mom's lived experience – from leaving the prairie to her family losing their home to a fire and having the community farmers come together to build a home for her family – I recall my own visit to the homestead. As I walked that land I thought about the great-greats leaving the Red River Valley for the prairie. I thought about the green hills of Ireland from where my kin rose up, and my Dublin where Molly Malone sold her wares along the ancient cobble-stone streets, the same streets that my kin once walked:

I am the fiery fields of Dublin, Ireland  
where my great-grandmother told tales by candlelight  
while she waited for the struggle of the famine,  
and of the drink, to end.

(Harder, 2006, Lines 11-14)

When my mother died much was lost. Grief pulled at me to understand her life, and her losses. This led me to research her lived experience. As is often the case for many, it takes a death to wake up. Because we come to realize that we do not have all the time in the world, we are called to attention. By researching my mother's life I was able to pull

her silence out the shadows, much like my ancestors, much like my own sweet Molly Malone:

*Now her ghost wheels her barrow  
through the streets broad and narrow  
Crying 'cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh.'*

(Yorkston, 1884b, Track 4)

### **1.8.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #3: Bloodlines, Leylines & the Luck of the Irish**

In reflecting upon my ancestral generations and their immigration to North America, I make meaningful connections to the past and with my mother's people. The silences of my ancestors' lives speak through my writing, acknowledging the unsaid (Butler, 1997; Gaylie, 2002; Norman, 1999), the unspeakable (Gaylie, 2002; van Manen, 1990), the in-between (Gaylie, 2002, p. 4) and the spaces of knowing that have been lost in time. By opening this door that leads to ancestral connections, I dig a trench through time and begin to understand the challenging lives of my ancestors (Howell, 2016). I also understand the plight of my Irish ancestors who in experiencing the potato famine, felt called to immigrate to North America. This understanding provides me with the connection that I have always desired: to be connected with the Irish of old, and with my ancestors' native land, Ireland.

Through these connections I find compassion for my great-greats and for my grandfather who had a devastating impact on my own mother's life. In turn. My compassion conjures up the courage to embrace the silences within my own life: the hidden, the forgotten, the lost moments. Through this courage I embrace the unsaids of lived experience (Butler, 1997; Gaylie, 2002; Norman, 1999) to release the unspeakable (Gaylie, 2002; van Manen, 1990) and the unsayable (Rilke, 1929, 1984). I become an agent of my own transformation.

## 1.9. Passing Through Psychiatric Doorways of Time to Embrace Living Inquiry

Shadow and light are the children  
who bring us to our knees.  
Even so, prayers can be short.  
There are times when what is called for is a song.

(Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 198)

Just as living inquiry requests an examination of time, place, self/other and language, the unravelling of my life requires that my exploration revisit the past. As I write the past through living inquiry, I am stopped (Appelbaum, 1997) by the written expression of my life. I am called to address my perceptions of art, what informs my artistic practice and how I define art. In having previously envisioned that I would create a textual performative piece that would inspire, entertain, and be aesthetically appealing, I am at once resistant to the personal narrative that unfolds. This standstill forces me to address the limitations I have placed on myself and asks that I reflect upon what kinds of content I might consider to be worthy of being called 'art' (Ling, 1999).

Despite the limitations I place on myself, and my resistance to holdfast to this plan, my writing unfolds differently. I write of my childhood years when my mother was unwell and was sent to a psychiatric hospital. I write of these childhood years when I was sent to live with extended family. I write about my mother's lived experience and the chaos that arose by living in the shadow of mental illness. My writing flows.

Regardless of the ease that comes with writing, my resistance persists. I assume that these aspects of my life will be unappealing to an audience. This assumption leads me to edit out the shadowed parts of lived experience, including anything concerning my mother's mental health and the psychiatric wards. My edits make it apparent that my idea of art has resulted in the belief that lived shadows (Tempest Williams, 2012) are not worthy of being the content that informs artistic creations. This limited thinking leads me to conclude: *I will write my lived experience but not that lived experience.*

Despite this resistance, my attempt to erase the past is futile (Karr, 2015). As I reflect upon the possibilities of what art and scholarship might look like, and how lived experience might inform these expressions of being, my resistance begins to crack. Further yet, as I allow myself to write about my mother's hospitalizations, my foster care,

and my feeling of displacement, I eventually find an ease with this subject matter. I pull in the elements (i.e. arts, narrative, music, imagination) that eased my way through these emotionally challenging experiences and arrive at a new perception and definition of art (Ling, 1999). I discover that the psychiatric ward and my childhood chaos are key elements that inform who I am as an artist. These elements inform my art – even though this new definition means that my living story will not be adorned with flower petals, frilly dresses (Hadjipieri, 2019) or sparkles that shine (Karr, 2015).

With art, I am only trying to add my color tints  
In the canvas of the world I want to live in  
Art is not merely a means of entertainment or decoration.  
Art is a medium for change, for changing ourselves  
and for changing the world for the best.

(Hadjipieri, 2019, p. 226)

I cannot change my living story, or the trauma I witnessed in the psychiatric hospitals, yet, by attending to art and radio I can change how I frame (Butler, 1997) and sound (Gershon, 2017) my life. I start by recapturing childhood moments of joy when story, music and play illuminated that which was good. I recall childhood innocence where I embraced imagination as a means to form creative mental images and to mold lived experience “into something new (Greene, 2001, p. 330). It becomes apparent that imagination provided me with hope and images of ‘possibility’ In which I re-framed and re-authored my young life (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Butler, 1997; Salverson, 1996). By welcoming these lost moments that sing to me, my child self sings as do I.

*Sing, sing a song  
Sing out loud, sing out strong  
Don't worry that it's not good enough  
For anyone else to sing  
Just sing, sing a song*

(Raposo, 1974, Track 1)

These recollections help me to realize that my child self somehow knew of the “multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same” (Hadjipieri, 2019. p.116). I had to have known that things in my life would get better. Otherwise, how could I have maintained that sense of hope? Clearly I believed that eventually, there would be flower petals and frilly dresses (Hadjipieri, 2019), and sparkles that shine (Karr, 2015).

Just as my imagination opened up my young life (Greene, 1995), writing does this for me in this present moment. Writing through living inquiry invites me “to explore possibilities for meaningful living in the world [...and] discover how attention to words can open up possibilities for attending to the world and becoming in the world” (Leggo, 2008, p. 171). In writing my life, my world opens up. Specifically, writing about the psychiatric institution, my imagination and the hope that carried me through childhood chaos became my portal, my doorway to reality (Kelly, 2010, p. 94). These memories became my way into my story. Aside from writing through living inquiry as an entry point into the unremembered spaces of time, I found access by exploring and embodying radio through performative inquiry.

Within the confines of the radio station I access my thinking body which listens to itself (LaBelle, 2006), and releases body memory (Smith, 1991, 1992; Snowber, 2004). This sonic unravelling that reveals itself through body “sensation, perception and tactile knowing” (LaBelle, 2006, pp. 20-21) reminds me that “a body in movement unlocks and unfolds stories, secrets, lost thoughts and treasured images” (Ricketts, 2008 p. 32). I am unlocking the past. I engage in action-based radio production to release storied treasure. I connect with my body knowledge to embrace emotion and sensual faculties of being. In doing so, I access vulnerable spaces that allow new possibilities in storying my life. As these personal narratives unfold, the door of creation swings wide open (Ricketts, 2011)

**I create my life through story.**

**I create story through my life:**

**for all life is by nature, a story (Bruner, 1991).**

**I story my life through memory.**

**I story my life through being, doing, knowing, sensing.**

**I story my life through time**

**I story my life through place.**

**I story my life through language.**

**I story my life through people.**

**I story my life through the world.**

**I story my life through story.**

My story reflects upon the light and the dark (Tempest Williams, 2012), the joy and the sorrow, the story and the un-story (Neumann, 1997) of lived experience. Like all journeys that begin with that first step, my story begins with one moment. A lost moment.

While these lost moments initially unfold through writing, and later when broadcasting through performative inquiry the early moments reveal memory as shadows born of light, not dark, that ask that I investigate that which I don't want to see (Tempest Williams, 2012). After looking closely at these shadow memories, I honour "that dark life [I've] seen" (Hogan, 1995, p. 177). Through the shadows, I find the light to transform the past. This journey of remembering and documenting my life and my mother's life brings with it resolution. In retrieving my mother's memories, I can honour her life by remembering and by passing her story down through family (Johnson, 2014). While my mother couldn't do this for herself, I can do it for her.

This process allows me to reflect upon my life with new eyes, from a new perspective. Through this lens of possibility (Baker & Mezel, 1988; Fels, 1999, 2012a, 2014; Snowber, 2011a), my lived experience is adapted and I come to view my life as art. In turn, art becomes fused with life and memory. Through social collective experiences and activities (Mead, 1934/1967 in Irwin, 2012), my life is an artistic practice.

Through my new lens I write of my beginnings; I write of my mother, the hospitals, the psychiatrists and of her living moments before mental illness. Although my writing flows, I am quickly confronted with the holes in the writing of my mother's story. I discover the frequency with which her lived silences appear when as I am faced with writing "the unspeakable" (van Manen, 1990, p.113). Despite these story gaps (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011a), I continue to write 'our' living story.

**I write me as a young girl.  
I am separated from my mom.  
I am affected by her absence.**

As I arrive at new understandings about my lived experience, this autobiographical information is incorporated into my term one paper, *One Flew Over the Crow's Nest* – an homage to the 1975 film, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Kesey, 1962). My paper is also a nod to my experience of being a member of the Grade Two reading group, The Crows. The film's premise resonates strongly because the storyline reflects my



perception of how hospital doctors and nurses treated my mother and how I viewed the psychiatric institution as a whole. Writing what I know shows me that “the greatest story any of us will tell is the story we tell with our lives” (Shadyac, 2011, n.p.).

This reflection leads to the first lost moments which relate to my family’s move to Vancouver a few weeks before Christmas. The particular moment that I recall is a day when my dad enrolls me in my new school; I am in Grade Two. I want to be happy about the new school and the new house but I’m not. While we unpack boxes at the new house and prepare to set up the Christmas tree, I am aware of my mother’s absence. My mother is a patient at Riverview Psychiatric Institution<sup>6</sup> where she has been for many months now. She is hospitalized in a huge brick building – called Crease Clinic – that has bars on the windows, locks on the doors, and people screaming and laughing hysterically. In recalling this memory and these moments, I reach for something outside of the darkness. I step back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to 1970 to remember how music helps my mother forget her troubles:

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<sup>6</sup> Riverview Psychiatric Institution. This medical facility was situated on almost half an acre of land in Coquitlam, BC. This facility which opened its first building in 1913 eventually operated five psychiatric units (Male Chronic Building; the Boys’ Industrial School for Junvenile Delinquents; Acute Psychopathic Unit; Female Chronic Building; Crease Clinic [previously, the Vererans’ Block]), and by 1956, the institution housed 4600 patients. In Riverview’s early days, the institution was recognized “as a model of psychiatric health care, [and was] one of the most progressive asylums in North America” (CBC, 2014).

Since 1980, the Riverview lands have gone through major changes: some units were closed and sold to developers; some services were moved to smaller facilities; in 2012, the hospital was officially closed. While some buildings are considered to be condemned, the Riverview lands are a heritage site; the hospital site is a popular filming location; and a new mental health facility is scheduled to open in 2020.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/riverview-hospital-a-brief-history-1.2876488>

## 1.10. Radio Tale #4: Downtown, the Great Escape

### [Listen to Radio Tale #4](#)

*When you're alone and life is making you lonely  
You can always go downtown  
When you got worries, all the noise and the hurry  
Seems to help I know, downtown*

(Hatch, 1964, Track 11)

As Petula Clark (1965) sings of in “Downtown,” going downtown was a way for my mother to forget her troubles and yet, it was so much more. The idea of ‘downtown’ gave its listener a way to step into another world. Surrounded by store displays, beautiful things, and bright lights, you could lose yourself in imagining another life.

In the 1999 film, *Girl, Interrupted*, where the autobiographical premise is situated around Suzanna Kaysen's experience of surviving a psychiatric ward in the 1960s, one scene depicts a situation where Kaysen and another patient attempt to help soothe a patient who is locked up in solitary confinement. It is the middle of the night. As they sit outside her barred door, one patient plays the guitar while the other sings through the door vent. Although the patient is distraught, she is quickly appeased by the music and the lyric's suggestion of forgetting your worries. These images call me to reflect upon my mother's experience; it is as though “Downtown” was written as a message to my mother:

*Just listen to the rhythm of the gentle Bossa Nova  
You'll be dancing with him too before the night is over  
Happy again, the lights are much brighter there  
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares  
So go downtown*

(Hatch, 1964, Track 11)

This scene reminds me of my mom; like these women, my mom found solace in music. It gave her a way to escape her pain. She could ride the wave to hopefully reach the other side of an earlier psychotic episode. If patients were permitted to feel their feelings and talk about the inciting incident that led to their psychosis, it might aide their healing. If psychiatrists allowed patients to talk through their pain and go through the wild side of feelings – maybe they would come out the other end differently.

In the memoir, Kaysen (1993) surmises that insanity is perhaps, “just a matter of dropping the act” (p. 41), suggesting that crazy isn't being broken or having a secret but rather, it's any of us, amplified. In the film, Kaysen (1993) keeps a journal in which she writes about the other women in her ward; the film portrays these characters as women who struggle with getting to the root of their issues, the truth of their situation. Of this, American memoirist Mary Karr (2015) argues that truth is not the memoirist's enemy, but rather, truth is “the banister they grab for when feeling around on the dark cellar stairs. It is the solution” (Karr, 2015, p. xviii). When we allow ourselves that truth, and can feel grounded in it, we are more apt to effectively communicate with others. In Kaysen's situation, she found solace and healing through her writing and by becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014) able to tell the truth of her life (Mamchur, 2012).

Life is like that sometimes. People need to be able to be in their issues without others trying to fix them. They need to be able to work things out without drugs, shock treatment, barred doors – or nurses who have too much power and too many keys. The psychiatric ward was too restrictive for my mom, and the doctors only got in the way of her healing; in fact, she was prevented from getting to the other side of her sadness.

Although my mom never got the formal help she needed within that system, I believe she survived her mental health challenges (and the psych wards) by accessing music in the real world. It carried her out of her pain and gave her hope. As far back as I can remember, my mom loved music and was a huge fan of musicals, Bing Crosby, and Julie Andrews. Music brought her much joy. She could be in a pit of despair, in the lowest of lows, and yet, music could pull her out from that shroud of darkness. As such, in “A Spoonful of Sugar,” Mom and Julie Andrews (1964) remind me to keep hope alive:

*A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down  
The medicine go down, the medicine go down  
Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down*

(Sherman & Sherman, 1964, Track 5)

I think music was my mother's spoon full of sugar. It gave her hope, and the combination of the two made life go down a little easier for her, in the most delightful way.

### 1.10.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #4: Downtown, the Great Escape

In reflecting upon my mother's horrific experience in the psychiatric institution as is illuminated in "Radio Tale #4: Downtown," I recognize a parallel in my own life. I am alerted to Vancouver's by-law that permitted corporal punishment in public schools. It is 1970. These punishments are something that my Grade Two teacher enforced daily. My teacher used a wooden ruler as a means to demand scholastic excellence, to command attention from children who did not obey or who behaved badly. While the threat of the ruler was enough to command overall obedience of most students, it was not for a select few. Hence, each school day was overshadowed with the knowledge that eventually two of the boys in the class would be taken into the cloakroom to be hit five or six times as was apparent by the smack of the ruler on flesh, and the child's moans.

Aside from the stress that the ruler created for me, the curriculum was an added stress. My teacher assigned students to one of four reading groups. I was in the low reading group, The Crows. The teacher routinely belittled and shamed the crows and cautioned other children to practice their reading otherwise they might also become crows. I did not want to be a crow. I wanted to be a chickadee.

In recalling these memories of Grade Two, I recall that my mother was in the hospital that Christmas. Likewise, when I tell an increment from the story of my mother's life, I conjure up memories of my own life, my own story. This telling results in wide-awakeness (Greene, 1995), an experience that alerts me to my life and calls me into presence to see my life anew. A rich literary, sonic and musical landscape exudes from this newness to illuminate the racism and classism I observed in my new school, my family's move to Vancouver, and my mother's absence amid her psychiatric experiences. By reflecting upon these periods of my young life, I arrive at the realization that my lived experience, and my mother's lived experiences *count* as being art (Ling, 1999).

Works of art may induce  
exceptional emotional effects.

(Dissanayake, 1988, p. 39)

Art and the living landscape (Kelly, 2010) reveal many connections that free me to embrace all parts of my life, especially the visits to Riverview Psychiatric Institution. Crease Clinic, the building where my mother was housed, was a gothic four-story structure, built of brick and mortar, with huge barred windows and triple lock doors. Located on ten acres, on a land of rolling hills and winding roads, and lampposts to light the way, the hospital represented something out of a horror film.

Despite the building's dark and gloomy allure, Crease Clinic – with its gothic-like structure and winding marble staircase - I was mesmerized by, and in awe, of the hospital's mystique. As a young child I perceived the hospital to be straight out of a fairy tale, with my mother locked up in a castle, and me, the heroine who will one day rescue her from the clutches of psychosis and the grips of psychiatry. Without knowing it, my mother's frequent hospitalizations resulted in her becoming institutionalized. She found "a different voice for self, one that require[d] a new vocabulary that included her need ...not only to heal, but to survive" (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 52). Feeling unable to move "outside the sayable" (Salverson, 2008, pp. 251-252), my mother remained silent, having succumbed to the institution's stronghold, and yet, all the while she waited desperately to be saved.

Just as the desperate hankering to be rescued from a psychiatric hospital was common enough, so too were the haunting gothic-like structures of the seventies. American rock singer Storm Large (2009) speaks of the haunting aspects of the institution as she shares her experience of visiting her mother in a psychiatric hospital:

*Sadville* was a mental institution that looked exactly like you would expect a loony bin to look like had you only seen them depicted in horror films: a monolithic, gothic-type building with walls the color of yellowing chicken bone. (Large, 2009, pp. 25-26)

Despite my childhood fascination, in more recent years, remembrance of the institution conjures up a deep sadness within. My sorrow arises after my mother dies, resulting in an overwhelming grief for never having rescued her from the castle's tower or from the institution's stronghold. It seemed to me that the psychiatrists' intention, within the psychiatric system, was never to heal patients. The doctors I observed never seemed to meet the patients as they were, but instead, they 'treated' them until the patients met "society's standards of normalization" (Keller, 1962, p. 40). Each time that my mother's past reared its ugly head to gnash its ugly teeth at her (Sendak, 1963), sending her into

fits of mania, she never got the help she needed. Instead, she received shock treatment (Harder, 2011a, p. 25) three times a week for six weeks, and then the doctors sent her home with a bag of medication, a hope and a prayer.

Today I view my mother's plight with mental illness as resulting from adolescent trauma in her family home. As a young woman, my mother was "interrupted in the music of being seventeen...one moment made to stand still and to stand for all the other moments" (Kaysen, 1993, p. 167). My mother's trauma was something she never recovered from. Her life predicaments led her to this ongoing health crisis, first as a seventeen year old girl, and later as a mother. My mother.

*She comes down from Yellow Mountain  
On a dark, flat land she rides  
On a pony she named Wildfire  
With a whirlwind by her side*

(Murphey & Cansley, 1975, Track 1)

Just as Murphey (1975) sings of in "Wildfire," I often felt that my mother was trying to escape demons in her life and it seemed that maybe – this time – the psychiatric hospital would help her to get better. Yet, as a child I was aware that the psychiatric hospital was not helping my mother: "each time my mother is 'fixed up' she returns home a little more broken than she had been before she left [home]: a little bit sadder, a little bit sleepier, and little bit lost-er [...having] lost her sense of self such that she has become a sleepwalker in her own life" (Harder, 2011a, p. 24). Although I was told that my mother was in the hospital so she could 'get better,' I knew otherwise:

With each visit to the psychiatric hospital, I enter the common room which is filled with couches, coffee tables and overflowing ashtrays, one television set in the corner and a ping pong table off to the side. This room - 'the living room' is jam packed with men and women who don't appear to be going anywhere anytime soon. With docile, drugged-up patients pacing the room aimlessly, and with patients ranging from those who have fits on *Manic Monday* (The Bangles, 1986) to those who are comatose on *Melancholic Tuesday* – many of whom speak frantically, mutter senselessly, scream wildly, laugh hysterically and blend every so nicely into the *yellow wall paper* (Gilman, 1892), I know this hospital is not a place where people get better. (Harder, 2020)

Just as the atmosphere of a place can "change the experience of the place" (Hadjiipieri, 2019, p. 90), the insanity and hopelessness of this one room within the psychiatric hospital informed my experience. My perception of the institution is something that never

changes. In between those hospital walls, and among the patients and nurses, I sensed a rhetoric that screams of fear and a loss of control. This rhetoric has continued to inform my experience of Riverview Psychiatric Institution for my entire life.

Ironically, Keyesen (1993) suggests that one's insanity is perhaps an attempt at dropping the act; a further irony is that the psychiatric system's 'healing' tactics are actually an attempt to put patients back to sleep. Regardless of what the truth is, my devastation arises in not having saved my mother. Despite this sadness, as I return to the hospital memories of childhood, and stand below the hospital tower, I am once again mesmerized by the psychiatric institution's daunting allure.

Throughout the chaotic years of childhood, with my family being so fractured, I was fostered out to extended family. This scenario darkens the shadows (Tempest Williams, 2012) of my young life. While I lived with a family that appeared to have sparkles all over them (Karr, 2015), I saw past their façade; hence, as I was routinely scrutinized and compared to my cousin, I took solace in imagining myself to be *Cinderella* and my cousin, the wicked step-sister, with the hope that one day I would surpass my cousin in beauty and glory. By identifying with such fictional characters, and in reading and rereading other fairy tales that emanated my own childhood, the patterns of experience and the rhythms of my voice became preserved within my culture (Abram, 1996). Fairy tales became a means through which I documented my life story.

Through fairy tales I was provided with not only the pleasure of the narrative, but also the underlying message of the text and the imagery both of which provide me with hope and a means for emotional escape. I was schooled in these stories that helped me to understand my environment as a storied place (Kelly, 2015, p. 6). These stories provided solace in ways I was yet too young to understand or articulate.

...even in the void of not-knowing, we nonetheless come to know, how even when we have no interpretation, we nonetheless construct one, gathering wisps of sight and sound that surround us into images that, through the weaving of interpretation, become real for us. (Neumann, 1997, p. 96)

Neumann (1997) suggests that story helps young children to make sense of their lives and to find solace in the difficult aspects of living. As a child, I found solace through friends, playtime, and imagination. I also found comfort in knowing that many classmates

also came from chaotic homes - just a different kind of crazy. High school was similar. My friends and I each had shadowed experiences within our individual families of which we seldom spoke discomfort of being scattered and unable to remember chunks of my chaotic life. I resolved uneasiness through my appearance of being unaffected by all things crazy. Similarly, Mairs (1989) read books that provided her with insights that helped her make sense of her chaotic life, “captured in diaries and journals as well as memory, into a story that made sense to [her] and later to others for whom that life also became text” (p. 4-5). This process of reading and journaling her life helped Mairs grow up (1989), an activity that Greene (1989, 1995) suggests is helpful to children.

Relating to other kids also helped me deal with the chaos as did journaling my life. I tried to keep track of the details of my life for fear of missing chunks of time that resembled “smudge(s) on a school blackboard that call[ed] attention to itself by its vagueness” (Karr, 2015, p. 97). These smudges called out to me to remember my life just as my narratives haunted me until I wrote them down (Karr, 2015; Mamchur, 2012; Warland, 2010). These hauntings led me to voice (Rosenfield, 2015), a nudging that would eventually lead me to story. By embracing these smudges and hauntings, memory gaps (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011a) have become the stops that call me to attention (Appelbaum, 1995):

These gaps exist in-between the beginning and the end of the search and the discovery. This in-between space acts as a hinge that accesses all time, past, present and future. It is the stop. (Appelbaum, 1995, pp. 15-16)

Just as memory falls through the cracks, and falls through the gaps, and is not easily seen (Karr, 2015), smudges of lived experience are also not easily seen. Gaps may take the form of words and images that rest on the tip of my tongue; memory fragments may allude to something I can’t quite name or explain. Although my memory may be hazy at times, I know that these gaps of forgotten time (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011a) reside below the surface of knowing. I feel their presence. Their haunting calls out to me. This is something Neumann (1997) alludes to in her promise that “Even in the silence of a story that exists without words, there exists a text to know, though its telling may occur in unexpected ways” (p. 92). I am ever hopeful that these silences will arrive.



After graduating from high school, and later college, I set out to move past these hauntings of childhood to have what I perceived as a 'normal' life. I sought out friendships with different groups of people; first, creative types who weren't afraid to explore life through the arts; second, people who were ambitious and who hadn't experienced the crazy childhood chaos I'd known. Despite my attempts at normalcy, limitations abided at every turn, especially with friends who didn't have similar challenges. While no one's life is perfect, it seemed that the division between the privileged and the underprivileged is something that never goes away. For instance, a long-time friend – who grew up amid money, affluence, and opportunity – makes frequent ill-educated assumptions as she calls me to reminisce with her:

**Remember Sparks, Brownies, Girl Guides?  
Remember piano lessons, ballet, jazz dance?  
Remember Paris?**

(Personal Communication, 2000)

When I remind my friend that I had a different childhood than she, that I was never a Brownie nor a ballerina, she stares at me blankly and asks: "What did you do?"

"Oh, we had alcohol and cablevision," I tell her.

"And of course, we had the castle – Riverview."

## **1.11. Finding Ancestry in Living Inquiry**

By visiting my mother's homestead, and then generating significant moments (Warland, 2010) of inquiry that pertain to my mother's story, I travel through time. I drop down into the past to embrace this ancient sensory modality; within this space, I reclaim memory fossils, from the 1930s and 1940s, fossils that inform the lives of my mother, myself and my ancestors. These nuggets of time are significant in that they relate to early research that inspires me to visit the land of my kin, Ireland:

I'm going on an ancestral hunt and I'm not afraid  
I've got my quest in my bag;  
my lived curriculum in my cells;  
I've got my family tree in my pocket;  
And my mom at my side.

(Harder, 2011b, Lines 1-5)

My ancestral journey is an act of mining my life for a heart of gold (Young, 1971, Track 3), for nuggets of memory (Greene, 1995) and for storied relics (King, 2000). I am in search of ‘me’ of long ago of which Milloy (2007) might suggest, I am seeking “a child of duration” (p. 129). I am looking for my child self who not only endured that time period but who also continued to exhibit personal strength and endurance. In reclaiming lost moments, music and my child of duration, I am gathering personal information for the hunt – autobiographical details that will represent foundational elements of early identity. This ancestral hunt illustrates how my early life experiences inform my artist self as well as my artistic development. From my childhood reading experiences of identifying with the wisdom and the protection of the crow to my familiarity with psychiatric hospitals whose barred doors kept my mother’s voice silenced, writing becomes a compass that guides me through the shadowed, silent spaces of time.

Silence creates a pathway to peace through pain.  
The pain of a distracted and frantic mind before it becomes still.  
What I wouldn’t give to follow my mother’s tracks  
before she covered them up with her silence.

(Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 59)

## **1.12. Accessing Art to Navigate the Psychiatric Experience**

My reflections lead me to understand how the arts are significant (Warland, 2010) in helping me make sense of my life. I recall the psychiatric hospital. Music, fairy tales, and stories help me get through my mother’s absence (Greene, 1995). While fairy tales gave me hope and while stories provide companionship, music soothed me like no other (Sacks, 2007).

In reclaiming the memories of lived experience – of how the arts have been an ally (De Nora, 2000) throughout my life – I encounter my life twice: “once in the world and once again on the page” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 33). I am as Nin (1976) declares, tasting “my life twice” (p. 13).

**Music sparks memories  
of the places and circumstances when experience was first known  
(Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Warland, 2010),  
when music became significant in my young life (Greene, 1995; Street, 2017).**

These rememberings of music – along with art and stories – enliven me. Art awakens the past, calls me into presence, and startles me into “the beauty of being alive” (Snowber in Richmond & Snowber, 2009, p. 4). I am inspired to explore more deeply who I am as an artist and how art might inform this unfolding (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002, 2008; Greene, 1995; Kelly, 2010, 2011):

**Who am I?**

**What is art?** (Ling, 1999)

**What is music?**

**What is lived experience?**

**Am I art? Am I music?**

**Am I lived experience and who decides?**

My questions lead me to explore further:

**How might I construct my life through the arts?** (Bruner, 1991)

**How might music and lived experience merge to form something new?**

### **1.13. Uncovering the Meaning of Art, My Place Within, and How Lived Experience Informs Artistic Practice**

Art is a portal, an access point to another world -  
a world of impermanence and interpenetration,  
a molecular world of becoming.

(Sullivan, 2013, p. 16)

I always thought I knew what art was. I thought art was an aesthetic expression that was selectively inspired by feelings, beliefs and lived experience. I thought art did not include unwanted content, and thus, could be edited out should it arise. I thought the inspiration and creation of art was dually controlled. I thought I could replace the darkness of lived experience with less vulnerable content like flowers (Hadjipieri, 2019), happy thoughts, and feel good songs.

Despite my beliefs about what constitutes real art, my places of inner knowing (Pereira, 2016; Schiwy, 2002; Snowber & Wiebe, 2009) call on me to reflect upon my life for definition. I am challenged to look more deeply at my lived experience (van Vanen, 1990), my mother’s lived experience and the ways in which each informs the other.

These reflections shift perceptions and lead me to a new understanding of art (Ling, 1999).

### **“What is an artist?” I ask myself.**

As artists are defined as people who develop “the ideas, the sensibilities, the skills, and the imagination to create work that is well proportioned, skilful executed, and imaginative, regardless of the domain in which an individual works” (Eisner, 2002, p. 8), I believe I have the necessary means for living my life as an artist. I possess most of the attributes Eisner (2002) speaks of which suggests that everyone who meets these criteria has the potential to be an artist, I surmise that I am already an artist. In this vein, I further surmise that anything can be classified as art provided it is creative, imaginative, thoughtful and essentially aesthetic.

Additionally, art becomes a creative manifestation that makes a statement. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey (1934) professes that through artistic practice, one can break through conventional ways of behaviour, thinking and “the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness” (p. 40). Art has the potential to be a catalyst for change. While art is often viewed as a reflection of lived experience, art’s ability to ‘change’ people (Salverson, 1996) offers them hope, “the prospect of discovery; [and] it offers light” (Greene, 1995, p. 133). Art is a means for transformation, in that it opens people up to communicate their lived experiences, beliefs and any challenges they may be working through. By infusing emotions, perceptions and one’s appreciation into art, artists become “the real purveyors of news” (Dewey, 1934, p. 40). Artists become change-makers in which dialogues occur between artist, art and audiences.

When art communicates, to be commented upon and contributed to, artists are elevated to create vibrant works that embrace the ‘light’ within and engage with the authentic self. In doing so, art speaks. When I engage authentically with my artistic practices within writing and radio, my work is original, meaningful and universal (Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Snowber, 2016). In writing the stories of my mom, I am pulled inward to a place where old stories re-emerge (Abram, 1996; Davis, 2009; Hogan, 1995). Story authenticity is revealed through not only their universal quality and their ability to resonate through memory, moments, music and the subsequent moments and stories that arise.

With each authentic work that transpires in the stories of my mom, my resistance to what can be defined as art cracks. The lived stories of my mother become art. Additionally, I view other memory fragments and lost moments as foundational material for creating radio tales. These memory nuggets individually act as story seeds and story starters that function “as a hinge on which the door to the narrative opens to the reader” (Warland, 2010, p. 2). These story seeds, and resulting narratives, tap into my inner landscape (Cardillo et al., 2012; Schiwy, 2002; Snowber & Wiebe, 2009) as a place of knowing. It is here, within my body, that long-buried memories surface (LaBelle, 2006; Smith, 1991, 1992) as raw data (Snowber, 2005), as straw that is spun into gold (Grimm & Grimm, 1812).

Art shows up in many forms and through varied content. Just as writing is a language “that ranges from the theoretical to the abstract, to the playful and punning, to slang and colloquialisms” (Newman, 1993, pp. 102-146), art is an expression that is inspired through multiple lived experiences, informed by diverse creative content and constructed within various mediums. Artistic expression can therefore be channelled through the senses and one’s essential nature which is realized through one’s “own living experience” (Yamada, 2004, p. 9). By creating art that represents life, artistic creations become an analogue to formations of sensing the human experience (Langer, 1957). Art is, therefore, both an aesthetic experience and an archived experience.

These concepts of art call me to reflect upon the correlations between lived experience, music, writing, performance and curriculum. Lived curriculum “characterizes what takes place in the margins of learning where...the nuances of gesture, smell, touch, song and sight, shape us and inform our lives” (Snowber in Bagley & Cancienne, 2002, p. 21). By engaging in my sensory faculties, I attend to deep listening, where internal and external worlds merge, allowing authentic personal living stories to inform practice.

After shifting my perspective on art and lived experience, I merge “social experience and activity” (Mead, 1934; Mead, 1967, p. 135) to round out the experiential content of my life as art. I arrive at the realization that my life, in its entirety, informs who I am and that which I create. I am an artist, “not through one ‘becoming-event’ but rather, through a multiplicity of events that are social and collective” (Irwin, 2013, p. 207). The breadth of life interweaves to reveal lived experience as the ‘clay’ with which I sculpt my life as an art-work (Snowber, 2005). Within this “materiality of form...sound, movement, word, or

image” (Snowber in Richmond & Snowber, 2009, p. 2) I sculpt my living story as a multi-sensory construct.

In having allowed myself to broach the challenging topics of my mother’s mental illness, psychiatric wards and chaotic homes that are infused with alcohol and dysfunction and being uprooted and fostered out, I am released from the stigma of my story. At the same time, I am able to free my mother’s voice to give her story wings – a story that for forty years was quelled by fear, medication, shock treatment and societal stigmas. No longer is her story silenced. No longer is my story stigmatized.

What needs to be counted to have a voice?  
Courage? Anger. Love. Someone to say;  
Someone to speak to; someone to listen.

(Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 44)

In shifting my thinking about my relationship with self, art and lived experience, I shift who I am in radio and education. I re-author my identity (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Salverson, 1996; Wojeki, 2007). By reclaiming my early experiences, and thus, my mother’s experiences in the psychiatric ward, my mother finds her way back onto the page. With each story comes a renewed compassion for her trauma and heartache. I also embrace gratitude for my father’s sacrifices and commitment to the family and find resolve in my sadness at having been fostered out. Again I am stopped.

These stops (Appelbaum, 1995) lead me to look more closely at the telling of my mother’s story. Each time I tell her story, I also tell my story because my mother’s story is where mine began (Albom, 2004). My mother’s biography, like all autobiographies and like all narratives “tells one story in place of another” (Cixous, 1977, p. 178); her ‘other’ story resides in the gaps of time (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011a). By filling in the blanks of my mother’s unsaid story I reclaim that which my mother left me: my storied inheritance (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Tempest Williams, 2012). While I am my mother, her mother, and my ancestors, (Harder, 2006), at the same time, I am none of them.

I am my mother, but I’m not.  
I am my grandmother, but I’m not.  
I am my great-grandmother, but I’m not.

(Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 168)

As I embrace art within the ancestral experience, it becomes apparent that culture informs my identity as an artist (Ling, 1999). With the arts being a strong proponent to release, express and record one's life, art becomes a cultural construct (Bruner, 1991; Mairs, 1989) through which I construct and navigate my life (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000). In being "wedded to the culture that creates" me (Koza, 1994, p. 79), my artistic and political expressions are intrinsically linked to the culture I am raised in. At the same time, just as art is ever in flux, my cultural identity is continuously being transformed. I belong to the future and the past, such that my cultural identity is "not something which already exists, transcending time, place, history and culture" (Hall, 2001, p. 103). Instead, my identity exists in all realms of time (McLuhan, 2003).

Like other artists and community members my research draws on "reservoirs of cultural memory and reinvents the past in order to understand and change the present" (Goldard, 2006, p. 107). I reclaim and reinvent elements of my living story (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000) as a means to reside in the present moment. I retrieve lost moments and silenced stories that inform my life, and subsequently unfold into art, radio tales, musical memoir and *The Walls that Jeremiah Built*.

These artistic creations are the result my explorations and a dynamic state of always becoming. With each life experience, thought and action, I sculpt myself anew. I am unfolding my life as an art-work (Snowber, 2005). This process of becoming is additionally informed by the elements of art, language, musical soundscapes (Schafer, 1977), radio broadcasts as well as performance and creation, and the ability to read and write my life. I perform my life to "write the word and write the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 18), and all the while, I am unfolding, transcribing and archiving my life. In doing so, I am transforming personal experience into new understandings that will inform my research and artistic creations. As this depth of carnal learning transforms experience and leads me to explore the multiple layers of lived experience, this process invites me to step into the role of a multi-media experience-based artist. I begin to recognize my life as art (Ling, 1999) at the same time that I identify with life experience and artistic expression. I am me, music, moments, and memoir.

Much like the miller's daughter who spun straw into gold (Grimm & Grimm, 1812), and represented all aspects within the tale *Rumpelstiltskin*, I also represent all parts of my own story: the straw, the gold, the spinning wheel and the magic that transforms life into

narrative (ban Breathnach, 1995). The magic of my story is alchemy. By merging the layers of music and moments with my living story and my mother's living story, I spin straw into gold (ban Breathnach, 1995; Grimm & Grimm, 1812). I am transformed, and lived experience is enriched (Foucault, 1988). Yet, I am in a state of perpetual flux, ever creating my life (Greene, 1995), ever shifting my state of being:

My story is an embroidery  
with many beginnings  
and no ending.

(Manson & St. Cyr, 2017, n.p.)

### **1.14. Embracing Art's Presence Within Lived Experience**

Once I break through my initial resistance to write about my young life and my mother's illness, it becomes apparent that art was significant (Greene, 1995; Warland, 2010) in helping me through the challenges that my young life presented. As a young girl, art helped me to aesthetically navigate the difficult emotions and experiences that I endured; this is especially true of visiting and witnessing my mother in the psychiatric hospital. Through the arts, I found solace.

As I now embrace my lived experience (van Manen, 1990) as art, I become open to accessing my living story as a means to transform my life. My new understanding of art opens me up to the possibilities for what I might create. That which can be seen, heard and perceived in the everydayness of my life (Greene, 1995; Meyer, 2010) becomes the substance from which I can now create (Ling, 1999). This newly defined pathway leads me to revisit the Riverview Hospital lands, and specifically Crease Clinic Psychiatric Hospital where my mother was housed. It is here that I begin to tell my mother's story (Albom, 2006; Tempest Williams, 2012).

In returning to this place of my childhood, the grief of losing my mother returns. Aside from being sad at her absence, I am sad for our lost time. I am filled with the ache of my mother having been locked up behind the bars of the institution. I have a "gnawing desire to know" (Davey, 2009, p.110) what happened in her life that resulted in her depth of despair. I want to know what was so bad that she never recovered.



**Why did my mother never get the therapeutic counselling she needed?**

**Why did the psychiatric system fail her?**

**Why did the doctors resist and disbelieve her story?**

**All she tried to do was awaken to her past.**

During my visit to the hospital grounds, this seemingly abandoned place, I take photos of the building and the surrounding lands. Although the hospital building is empty, I sense that I am being watched. The building comes to life in my presence. This space, once again, is the haunted place I recall from childhood, reminding me of Stegner (1992) who surmises that “no place is a place until things that have happened in it are remembered” (p. 203). The hospital is a place I remember, and is as creepy and chilling as I recall. This place is alive with memory. The creepiness of the buildings and the hospital grounds illuminate the past trauma of my mother, my self, and the unspoken stories that envelop the hospital grounds. The eeriness erases time, which helps to explain and bring meaning to the inhumanity of the psychiatric institution (Kesey, 1962).

This visit inspires me to dialogue with my mother’s sisters about the time my mother spent in the psychiatric hospital. I am hopeful that our conversations will reveal my mother’s lost moments, her silenced unsaids and the spaces where shadows (Tempest Williams, 2012) hide. My mother’s sisters are quietly evasive. Rather than relay their familial secrets of the past, they serve me tea. As I sip Red Rose tea from a delicate china teacup that has been passed down through the family, I am reminded of Kaysen (1993) who proposes:

Often an entire family is crazy, but since an entire family can’t go into the hospital, one person is designated as crazy. (Kaysen, 1993, p. 95)

I wonder if my mother’s family is crazy.

My curiosity of the past and my family’s need to silence it, leads me to journey back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). I return to my mother’s prairie homestead in McGee, Saskatchewan where her family’s three room cabin – that was built in 1932 – still stands. During my visit, I speak with some of my mother’s childhood neighbours and friends, and ask them what they remember about my mother and her mental health. Many of them are tense and appear to hold their breath. I suspect they have been holding their breath for a long time. A long-kept secret lurks in the air. It seems that the townsfolk want to

speak of the past but I suspect they do not know how (Jouve, 1990). Their reticence prompts me to return a second time to ask more questions; I am hoping that my presence will call forth storied silences. Before too long, the harvest is upon me:

The stories begin to uproot themselves:  
 the memories, to surface, the pain, to arise,  
 and the words, to flow.

My mother knows prairie hardship  
 like the back of her hand she tells me.  
 Barren lands. Empty cellars. Hungry children.

My mother knows heartache,  
 like pain in the pit of her stomach she says.  
 Drunken father. Absent mother. Unlocked doors.

(Harder 2011a, p. 18)

While I already have the stories that my mother told me before she died, as well as my suspicions, my mother's secret is confirmed by her childhood friend. During one of my visits to my mother's hometown in Saskatchewan I met with my mom's friend to talk about her memories of the years that she and my mother boarded at the Roman Catholic Convent of Adoration in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Within minutes my mother's friend confides that my mother's illness was prompted by Mom's experience of being molested by her father. Mom's friend tells me that my mother believed that the townspeople knew of the abuse, and so, never wanted to return to her hometown for fear that the townsfolk would talk about her.

I am grateful for her candour. I am grateful for the story. My mother's silence had been a shadow for far too long. While the townsfolk had – as my mother surmised – known her secret, they also observed her “depth and substance and her refusal to be known” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 210). My mother, however, knew herself, “and kept her silence as a possession” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 60), likely as a means to protect herself. Her secret dwelled with her and was a silence that lived in the shadows.

During my visit, to my mother's childhood home – a three-room cabin that is situated on a prairie hill with a view towards nowhere – I feel a presence in the house. I am not alone. I sense trauma in the cabin walls, fear in the floorboards, and a stifling concealment in the muggy prairie air. Just by my being there, I am tracking the memory of my mother's life (Cayete, 1994, 2005; Davis, 2009; Kelly, 2010). It feels as though

something is there with me, “something old, some secret thing” (Hogan, 1995, p. 75). The cabin is alive with the grief of my mother, the heartache of the family, the surfacing of past silences – awakened through my presence.

*Broken windows and empty hallways  
A pale dead moon in a sky streaked with grey  
Human kindness is overflowing,  
And I think it's gonna rain today*

(Newman, 1968, Track 4)

As Bette Midler (1990) sings of in “I Think it’s Going to Rain,” I sense grief and a great abandonment within this cabin, and compassion for my mother is overflowing. After gathering the resurfaced buried memories, I prepare to leave the property. I take one last look through the broken windows of my mother’s homestead cabin, and I understand her silence. Throughout her childhood, that cabin, like the psychiatric hospital in later years, “put walls around her memories, her secrets, and her silence. The walls kept the secret contained, and it kept her standing strong” (Harder, 2011a, n.p.). By embracing this knowledge, and releasing my mother’s shadow, she is free:

I am reclaiming the summer winds of my mother’s childhood... On my final day, I made that arduous climb up the dusty dirt road. Once inside her family cabin, I scavenged for what remained. I located my mother’s wrought iron bed frame that I claimed as my own. I retrieved a window frame that I thought would help me to ‘frame’ my experience of the farm. Under the Saskatchewan skies I gathered my things together. I knew that my time on the land had brought me clarity. I knew that my presence would help me to know my mother’s life. I am hoping that this experience will help me to understand my mother’s childhood, her time in the psychiatric hospital and the affects that her absence had on my childhood, and on my life as a whole.

After eight days on the land of my Irish ancestors, I have a sense of what it was like for my mother growing up prairie, and have gained insight into what it was like to live during *the dirty thirties* (Howell, 2018). This sensory experience inspires me to write about my mother’s life, and my place within her life. By engaging with my senses, it becomes apparent that my mother’s silence is actually “her strength” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 16), a gift offered to me through courage. And so, just as an artist may chip away at the strata of creation to liberate art (Nachmanovitch, 1990), I research my mother’s life to

liberate her story. While the events of my mother's childhood belong to the place of origin, my telling of her story "of those events is to let the place itself speak through the telling" (Abram, 1996, p. 163). And so, as I sit to write, drawing upon 'our' collective memory (Ellis, 2007), *The Walls that Jeremiah Built* begins to take form (Bruner, 1991; Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000; van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987). My mother's story comes to life.

## 1.15. The Walls that Jeremiah Built

Stories are medicine.  
They do not require that we do, be, act, anything.  
We need only listen.

(Pinkola Estes, 1992, n.p.)

After researching my mother's life and my visit to her Saskatchewan family homestead of McGee, and the nearby town of Rosetown where I met with her childhood friends and neighbours, I am inspired to write *The Walls that Jeremiah Built* (Harder, 2011c), a biographical narrative. My research provides me with the understanding of my mother's childhood and the traumas she endured that lead to a lifetime of psychosis. *The Walls* tells my mother's story before, during and after the psychiatric hospital, how she told a childhood friend and myself that she had been molested by her father in small-town Saskatchewan, and how this event was secreted and denied by those who knew her as a girl on the prairie.

While this non-fictional narrative is biographically based, it is written in metaphor to lighten the intensity of the subject of family trauma and to ease the telling. The narrative is also illustrated with whimsical, metaphorical imagery as a means to lessen the blow, to tell it slant (Dickinson, 1868; Miller & Paola, 2004).

Behind the story I tell is the one I don't.  
Behind the story you hear  
is the one I wish I could make you hear.

(Allison, 1995; Allison, 2000, p. 471)

The title of this illustrated book, *The Walls that Jeremiah Built*, is chosen to reflect the well-known children's picture book, *The House that Jack Built* (Caldecott, 1878), and to juxtapose playful content with serious content. By replacing the word house with wall,

the reader perceives the story as having a dark edge; the title conveys the irony that while a house may enclose and protect people, walls separate people, leaving them vulnerable and exposed to the elements of betrayal.

**The townspeople knew  
and did nothing...even the wolves knew**  
(Harder, 2011c, P. 16)

My mother never recovered from her childhood trauma, a woundedness she carried throughout her life. She was forever affected by the trauma, and by her silence, as was I. My mother was often absent even in her presence, and so, there were many things I never knew about her life, things she could never tell me.

## **1.16. Storytelling and Lyrical Storylines as Inquiry**

Stories are a major conduit of memory,  
be they ancient myths, personal experience narratives,  
urban legends, religious texts  
or the allegories of prophets taught in parables  
...and to understand the stories of a culture  
is to understand its people.

(Street, 2014, p. 15)

Through story, I find my voice.

Stories help people to know themselves and to understand their lives (Bruner, 1991), offering them insight and the possibility for transformation (Baker & Mezel, 1988; Fels, 1999, 2010, 2012a; Salverson, 1996; Snowber, 2011a, 2011b). Documentary filmmaker, Tom Shadyac (2011) discusses this in his film, *I Am* (2011) noting that storytellers and listeners see themselves reflected within narrative. Whether audiences relate to story through plot, action or character, these elements can become a driving force for change. As Shadyac (2011) claims, stories are a similar driving force in my life. I believe I have come to graduate school, and specifically to storytelling, to engage with, and to understand, my lived experience. I have come to story to find myself. Through story, humour, and ritual, people remember to remember who they are (Cayete, 1994). I am remembering who I am.

In that people live and reflect experience through narrative (Allison, 1995, 2000; Bruner, 1987, 1991, 2004; Buechner, 1992; Clandinin, 2006), the stories that people experience – be they internal or external – merge to become an extension of their own living story and culture (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Lawrence, 2007). We become the stories we tell (Abram, 2006; Bruner, 1987, 1991, 2004).

While storytelling is traditionally a vehicle that offers communities the means for knowledge sharing as well as history, memory and ancestral preservation, it “pre-figure[s] the emergence of written language, as [is] evidenced in the revered, and sometimes feared, role of seers and storytellers in pre-literate cultures” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 8). Prior to the invention of writing, people lived in acoustic space (McLuhan & Carpenter, 1953, 1959) and had no choice but to communicate directly speech and through story. While storytelling adapts through time, it continues to be a cultural way of being for many peoples of the world be they the Indigenous peoples of Canada, the Aborigines of Australia, or my Irish ancestors in Dublin, Ireland.

In North American culture, storytelling is a means for entertainment and takes many forms. Apart from literary forms, storytelling includes spoken word, stand-up comedy, television, feature film, documentary film, dance, music, fine art, and of course, radio. Storytelling is a platform that invites truth-telling (Mamchur, 2012) and telling it slant (Dickinson, 1868; Miller & Paola, 2004), knowledge sharing and gathering as well as healing and transformation. By using storytelling to share one’s story, voice is released to illuminate and celebrate identity – the wildest thing each one of us possesses (Tempest Williams, 2012). My story, expressed through memoir, music and radio, is empowered by a voice that speaks.

You find your identity in your wounds, in your scars,  
In the places where you’ve been beat up and you turn them into a medal.  
We all wear the things we’ve survived with some honor.

(Springsteen, 2009, n.p.)

Storytelling is an invitation and an opportunity to re-author my living story (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1991, 1992; Butler, 1997; Salverson, 1996), a means to which I gain perspective on my life (Bruner 1987, 1991, 1992). In the anthology, *Arresting Hope: Women Taking Action in Prison Health Inside Out*, the stories profile the incarcerated women writers who fill the pages, and how they got there. These stories shine a light on

these women's lives to identifying their dysfunctional childhoods as having laid the groundwork for chaotic adult lives that paved the path towards prison. In having grown up in an environment that was rife with trauma, insanity, and no plan for the future, many of these stories resonate with me.

While my family home was one kind of crazy, the family-foster home that I often lived in – as a young child – was a different kind of crazy. While both were dysfunctional and chaotic, unlike the foster home, my family home had love, community and joy. My family home was filled with people, lots of friends and visiting cousins. The foster home, on the other hand, was filled with people who did not talk to each other and was blanketed by the unspeakable presence of alcohol. Regardless of where I lived, I had stories, storytelling, my imagination and music to ease the chaos and the uncertainty of my life.

Looking back, one story that resonated with me throughout childhood was *Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgren, 1950). Not only was this my favourite fictional book, but Pippi herself was a role model for me. Her father was a sea captain who is seldom around, leaving Pippi to grow up with minimal supervision or parental guidance and the freedom to do as she pleased. Pippi was a believable character who in my mind, was a courageous survivor who could do and survive anything. Her fictionalized lived experience mirrored my life, and thus, helped me to feel less alone in the world. Pippi's presence in my life brought me great solace.

The arts, and such stories as *Pippi Longstocking* truly help children to navigate the dysfunctional worlds they are thrown into. Greene (1995) suggests that children use literature – much like they use art – to address the issues and circumstances of their lives. Moreover, as Alterio (2001) suggests, my early childhood memories of books and stories, movies and fairy tales are the means to which I make sense of my life.

I am especially grateful for the fairy tales that crossed my path; fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *The Little Match Girl* provided lessons that helped me navigate my young life. These stories also helped me to remain open to the mystery and wonder (Greene, 2001) of childhood. Through the transmission of stories, a change occurred within, to “elicit a transformation of self at [my] very core” (Cayete, 2005, p.178). Story was a portal through which experience of the world could be interpreted and made personally meaningful (Clandinin, 2006). Story provided safety,

and as is reflected in “Rainbow Connection” (Ascher & Williams, 1979), the world of fairy tales gave me the hope that there might be something incredible on the other side of my living story:

*Why are there so many songs about rainbows  
And what's on the other side  
Rainbows are visions, they're only illusions  
And rainbows have nothing to hide*

(Ascher & Williams, 1979, Track 1)

Aside from literature, I also accessed music as a tool with which to navigate my life. I turned to music in the most difficult periods of my young life for I sensed it would help me emotionally. Looking back, I believe that literature – like music – helped me to survive (Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007). Similar to Greene (1995) who professes that literature helps children to work through challenging situations researchers also suggest that children use music to navigate their lives. Mercier De-Shon (2012) suggests that children construct their musical identities and “actively live in music, as a way of understanding ‘identities in music’ (Macdonald et al., 2002)” (p. 11) as well as their lives. Likewise, I recall using music to romanticize my mother’s experience in the psychiatric institution. In an odd way, music was both a shield that protected me and a promise for what may lie ahead. As Debby Boone (1977) sings of in “You Light Up My Life,” music was the hope, the promise and the actualization of good things to come:

*So many nights I'd sit by my window  
Waiting for someone to sing me his song  
So many dreams I kept deep inside me  
Alone in the dark but now you've come along*

(Brooks, 1977, Track 1)

The music and stories of my childhood became scaffolding that framed my daily life. During early childhood, my mother was often taken away by men in white and housed in psychiatric institutions, I was traumatized by her absence. I believe that by viewing my mother as a woman who was locked in a castle tower – imagery that was often illustrated in fairy tales – this metaphorical narrative helped me to envision my mom as a princess who would escape or be rescued from the castle’s tower of doom. The gothic-like structure of Crease Clinic – the place where my mother was hospitalized – only adds to my narrative. My vision of my mother being rescued was further reflected in the 1975 television movie *Sweet Hostage*. This film portrayed a man who escaped from a



psychiatric hospital to later fall in love with a rebellious teenager. The movie's theme song, "Strangers on a Carousel", appeased my adolescent fantasy of the castle's mystique; it created scaffolding upon which my emotional childhood experience was perhaps structured which may also be how such experiences and memories become endurable (Cardillo et al., 2012; Greene, 1995; LaBelle, 2006; Sacks, 2007). After all, I recall that this movie and the theme song provided me with, albeit naïve, the solace that my mother's situation might not be so dire:

*She was young and kind of pretty with a love that someone lost  
He was running from the city, to be free at any cost  
They were like strangers on a carousel, the world was all outside  
And they were waiting for the starting bell, to take them on a ride*

(Barrie & Larimer, 1975, mp3 file)

## Chapter 2.

### The Sonic Landscape of Lived Experience

Listen. Can you hear it? The music.  
I can hear it everywhere.  
In the wind, in the air, in the light. It's all around us.  
All you have to do is open yourself up.  
All you have to do is listen.

(Castle & Hart, 2007, n.p.)

#### 2.1. The Sonic Space of Everydayness

The sonic landscape is a vast area of space filled with sound. While this space is comprised of many different sounds, people must often engage in deep listening to discern one sound from another and to make sense of the sonic environment. As Gershon (2017) explains,

Deep listening is listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, or one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds. (Gershon, 2017, p. 196)

Just as Gershon (2017) notes above, the world is filled with an array of sound that is dynamic yet ever present. While some sounds stand alone, other sounds merge to create new sounds – much like a symphony. Throughout this sound orchestration, a person may detect variations of pitch, tempo, beat and volume. Sounds may occur as foreground noise or background noise from animate or inanimate objects (in or of the environments) and may also be generated by others who undoubtedly contribute to this symphony of sound. Whether one partakes through speech, laughter, breathing or basic movements such as walking, opening doors or pushing buttons, sound unfolds collectively. Through deep listening, people “allow the colours, sounds, shapes, and textures to sink into [their] beings” (Snowber in Richmond & Snowber, 2009, p. 68), inviting people to live multi-sensory lives.

## 2.2. Merging the Sonic Space with Text

In writing, or listening to music,  
I forget where I end and the text begins,  
The boundaries become blurred.

(Milloy, 2004, p. 94)

Throughout my simultaneous engagement with the written and sonic landscape, the two merge to become a third landscape, 'the other.' As do I. I am sonic and the sonic is me. My musically-infused lost moments are an accumulation of narratives and sounds, that make up my autobiographical soundscape and my sonic memoir.

By gathering and merging song and story fragments about my life, my memoir acquires a depth of meaning. This merging illuminates place and memory as speaking "through pure sound" (Street, 2014, p. 9) to emerge as audio sound bytes. By releasing sonic expression that resonates through "bodies, feelings, ideas, ideals, and processes" (Gershon, 2013a, p. 261), my sound is experienced through multiple senses. Through "the tone and tenor of prosody (see Erickson, 2003) to the combined sonic stories of spaces and places" (Gershon, 2013a, p. 259) I compile my sonic memories. These connections to the sonic is something I recognize during my visit to my mother's prairie homestead, and later employ in the recording of the radio tales.

In connecting with my mother's childhood, and then bringing the sonic stories we had shared to this landscape, I find a sense of place, identity and belonging (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014). I become connected to the prairie world my mother was born into. While camped out on the prairie land of my mother's childhood homestead, I sing the country songs my parents had raised me with. I sing at dawn, and I sing into the night air. I listen to the radio tales that reflect my family's 1975 road trip to the Canadian prairies, calling these memories back into being.

In looking at how sound might be made – be it through talk, music, noise (Bruner, 2000; Erickson, 2004), radio broadcasts – I acquire a vast sonic soundscape from which to sound my life (Street, 2017; Welch, 2005). Sound is everywhere and ever present. Sound resides "at the root of [my] existence" (Street, 2017, p. 100). Sound leads me to

music. I listen to music. I absorb music. I become the sound. I make music. For a moment, I am music.

As I explore this vast soundscape that is all around me, sound resonates to release emotional memory through the reflective process (Gershon, 2013a). Sound invites me to experiment with audio storytelling. I enter radio productions – an extension of me (McLuhan, 1964) – to perform technology as it performs me (Fels & Ricketts, 2009).

**I write my life in audio sound bytes.**

**Personal narrative is spoken into cyberspace.**

**Ideas become soundtracks.**

**My life merges as music, moments and me.**

Soon my writing turns itself inside out “to discover the pleasure and power of turning [...] making writing perform...shaping, shifting, testing language” (Pollack, 1998, p. 75).

Radio reveals who I am as an artist and what I can bring to radio. From production, broadcasting and programming content to interviewing artist and guests, I spin LPs and record audio narratives and commentary pieces. Within this dynamic acoustic space that is radio, and has no fixed boundaries, radio productions are “created by the method or process itself” (McLuhan & Powers, 1989, p. 15). In producing radio soundscapes that lay tracks that explore language, ideas and music, I investigate the sound of me. I am creating my life in audio.

## **2.3. Music, a Sonic Space that Sounds Lived Experience**

Sing from sadness.  
Sing in joy. Sing with faith.  
Because each one of us  
has a soundtrack.

(Safran, 2019, n.p.)

Music is the key that unlocks the door to the rhythmical elements of lived experience, to release memory. Listeners may hear a song they haven’t heard in a long time and the floodgates of memory open to become immersed in remembering (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). Music reveals sonic memories back to me.

While music may release memory spontaneously, memory is also released by writing through living inquiry. Either way, I travel through portals of time (Belfi et al., 2014) to reclaim the music of the past and the stories that are embedded within the music. This journey leads me to reclaim the songs of childhood, the love songs of my youth; and it leads me to reclaim the sonic that is left behind, lost, forgotten, sometimes broken. These musical elements of my life are my silent in-betweens. As Gaylie (2002) suggests, by acknowledging these in-between spaces that house the lost moments – those easily recovered and those of time immemorial – I open the door to heal and transform old wounds and old stories of long ago.

A song acts as a unique cue,  
a key that unlocks all the experiences  
associated with a song's memory, time and place.

(Levin, 2015, p. 166)

The connections that I make between my life, lyrics, music and memory indicate that my choice of music and song lyrics are a direct reflection of lived experience (preference), thus becoming my living musical soundscape. Through these connections I “make sense of, and find significance in, the patterns of sound that are organized as music within [my] culture” (Welch, 2005, p. 117). To exemplify, my parent's love of country music is a key component of my familial culture, and therefore my early introduction into music. Country music, therefore, becomes a key element in my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Welch, 2005), influencing sonic and lyrical patterns in music selection throughout my life.

Such patterns are visibly noticeable in my musical collection, revealing various ages of song gathering and emotional climates that temper musical selection. The emotional climate that links my relationship to music also forges relationships to transcend language, economics and social barriers (Leavy, 2005). Music is the great equalizer in my life, transcending and bridging difference, recognizing similarity and uniting people through my life and throughout lived experience. Through these patterns and relationships, and the connections between the two, my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012) finds form (van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987) – something that is metaphorically illustrated in Brandi Carlile's rendition of “The Story” (2009):

*All of these lines across my face  
Tell you the story of who I am  
So many stories of where I've been  
And how I got to where I am*

(Haneroth, 2007, Track 2)

In exploring music on *The Arts Edge* radio platform, I create an aesthetic experience that embodies lived experience. Music and lyrics become a platform for listeners to explore their lives through music, and to reap the significance within:

A melody is like seeing someone for the first time, the physical attraction as you get to know the person, that's the lyrics – their story, who they are underneath. It's the combination of the two that makes it magical.  
(Lawrence, 2007, n.p.)

As I am musical (Welch, 2005), and seek significance within lyrical storylines (Greene, 1995; Warland, 2010), I develop my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012) through musical selection. My musical soundscape and my musical self merge to illuminate music as a “place of memories” (Smith 1992, p.87).

In being a memory container, music transports me “to the great spaces for which it was [first] conceived” (Street, 2014, p. 96). Music transports me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to replay and rehear music that acquired “personal significance...through long association and repeated listening” (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 167). To reconnect with these songs is “to receive an extremely available source of recollection, bringing the memory to life” (LaBelle, 2006, p. 21) in which I return to special moments in time.

In recalling these musical moments, music teaches me “to stop, look and listen” (Buechner, 1992, p. 57). I attend to this music that reflects my life. Thematic lyrical storylines (DeDiego, 2013) are revealed and I arrive at a new understanding of my life (Bruner, 1987). I discover music and lyrics to be an extension of my living story (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007), a thread that weaves throughout (Solnit, 2013). As I compile these songs through radio airplay and audio storytelling transmissions, my musical soundtrack that spans a lifetime takes form (Warland, 2010; White, 1987).

Like most human beings who experience the sonic landscape, from early in life, everyone has a soundtrack that spans their lifetime. For most people, the sense of hearing sound is first experienced within the womb, just after the first sonic sense is

switched on. Sound specialist, Walter Murch (1994), suggests that this initiation into the sonic is followed by “intimate and varied pulses of [a] mother’s heart breath; her song and voice” (p. vii). These sonic experiences are among the first sounds that are heard in life. These ‘songs’ are some of the first tracks on a newborn baby’s soundtrack.

As a baby, I entered the world to the sound of my mother, a sound that acted as a thread that linked sonic identity to my “first awareness of sound” (Street, 2017, p. 107). These sounds were perhaps my first invitations to share music, story and song with my mother (Welch, 2005). These songs of infancy are the first signs of belonging to a sonic conversation that is musical (Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Welch, 2005), indicating that I am a signature of sound (Mercier De-Shon, 2006; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Pereira, 2016; Street, 2017).

## 2.4. Musical Identity

*My life has been a tapestry of rich and royal hue  
An everlasting vision of the ever-changing view  
A wondrous woven magic in bits of blue and gold  
A tapestry to feel and see, impossible to hold*

(King, 1971, Track 11)

Just as Carole King (1971) sings of in “Tapestry,” my musical identity is an unfixed entity that has built upon itself throughout my life such that my musical identity is comprised of interwoven “elements of [my] past, present, and future musical lives” (Mercier De-Shon, 2012, p. 6). These musical aspects of identity (Macdonald, 2012) are shaped through self-directed music participation and provide a “context for its expression through both musical and social roles” (Mercier De-Shon, 2012, p. 7). It can therefore be said that music is a means to express and re-author the musical self within the context of other (Goodall, 2000). Through music, and the dialogue that occurs within and between the notes, I come to know myself more fully.

Much like a soundtrack to a Hollywood film, music reflects and mirrors lived experience: an alternative multi-textual document that tells my story to create new texts. This musical memoir reveals autobiographical content that surfaces as “fragments, broken pieces, or vaguely sensed lost memories disconnected from my own consciously told life story” (Frantzich & Fels, 2017, p. 2). These memory fragments reveal newly-recognized

connections between music and memory, story and song; they result in this multi-layered exploration that illuminates how my living stories are cohesive wholes that surpass individual worlds of story to be informed and enhanced by the *world* world.

Aside from that which mirrors my life, music attaches itself to events throughout my life (Cardillo et al., 2012, Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Street, 2017). This is especially true of experiences that occurred during high school. In fact, music has a significant affect upon a person's life from adolescence through the late teen years; this period in a person's life is full of 'first time' poignant moments such as memories of school and college or university, their first car, their first boy or girlfriend, their first kiss, falling in love, leaving home, getting married and so on (Stewart, in Street, 2014, p. 65). Music, as such, becomes a way to mark one's life. As music "marks and orchestrates the ways in which people experience the world" (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 1), their musical soundtracks unfolds, linking music with lived experience.

When you hear a great song,  
you can think of where you were  
when you first heard it, the sounds, the smells.  
It takes the emotions of a moment and holds it for years to come.  
It transcends time.

(Jay-Z, 2011, n.p.)

As a person's music identity (Macdonald, 2012) develops throughout life – to include such an array of music, genres and performers – their identity branches off into "individualized musical selves" (Buller-Peters, 2004, p. 9). For instance, a concert attendee may dress down when going to a rock concert, they may conversely dress up when attending the opera; this illustrates how musical preferences influence and regulate everyday moods and behaviours with regards to how one presents oneself (Hargreaves et al., 2002). Musical taste is therefore an indication of listeners' values and attitudes, and "how composers and performers use music to express their distinctive views of the world" (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 1). Just as music is a resource that reflects emotional, intellectual and physical states of being, music is a tool that provides listeners with creative and expressive modes of expression and appreciation – something that Sam Phillips (2004) explores in "Reflecting Light":



*Now that I've worn out  
I've worn out the world  
I'm on my knees in fascination  
Looking through the night  
And the moon's never seen me before  
But I'm reflecting light*

(Phillips, 2004, Track 6)

My musical preferences reflect my identity (Macdonald, 2012), and indicate how my relationship to music, sounds and music-making “relates to [my] socio-cultural norms and values” (Schafer, 1977, p. 31). This reveals that my musical choices are influenced by lived experience. At the same time that experiences mold my musical preferences, I am conversely impacting and shaping music. As a social construction that is used “to interpret socio-cultural ways of knowing” (Gershon, 2018, p. 31), music helps me understand my world and to make sense of my lived experience. Yet, as a dynamic mode of expression, music has the capacity to “reinvent cultural norms and values” (Brandt et al., 2009; Feld, 1991; Feld, 1996, p. 27). For this reason, music is always reinventing itself.

At the same time that a song can be entertaining, it can also be funny, romantic or political. In having varied appeals for different listening audiences, while one song may speak to one listener, that same song may have no effect on another. While one listener may be drawn to music for its beat and rhythm, another may be drawn to a song's lyrical storyline that might convey a strong, inspiring, and powerful message that speaks to, or resonates with, their lived experience (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012). Sometimes listeners are drawn to a song – without knowing why; a song may conjure up feelings or nostalgia and remind them of a period of their life (Clarke et al., 2010; Jay-Z, 2011; LaBelle, 2006; Levin, 2015); nostalgic connections may also be more specific and remind a listener of a parent, a friend, a childhood friend or an ex-boyfriend. Listeners might also be drawn to a specific singer or band for their politics or personas, or their status as musical cultural icons. Regardless of why a person is drawn to specific songs or musical genres, music fills a need in people and can be a comfort, a remedy or tonic for the human spirit (Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007). If for no other reason, music draws its listeners in because it makes them feel good.

As musical identity develops throughout people's lives (Hallam, 2017), their repertoire changes to inform, and to be informed by, lived experience. For this reason, some songs

impact listeners while others do not. Just as some lost moments appear to be more significant (Greene, 1995; Warland, 2010) than others, the same is true of music and the sonic experience. In a research poll that looks at musical preferences among 16 to 64 year olds, pop and rock music are identified as being the most listened to genres and electronic music is the “third most popular music genre, with an estimated 1.5 billion listeners” (Grogan, 2019, n.p.). Despite statistics, I consider electronic music to be unintelligible noise which Gershon (2019) concludes is influenced by lived experience. These musical preferences and perceptions of the musical world are “shaped by the interaction of physical, biological, psychological, and cultural factors” (Clarke, 2010, p. 77). Lyrical and musical preferences (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012) can be determined by three categories: lyrics that reflect personal connections to life events; lyrics that inspire feelings such as hope, empowerment, happiness, sadness, relaxation, and peace; and lyrics that evoke a strong emotional response (Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007). It can therefore be concluded that one’s song and music selection is reflective of one’s life and state of being.

Apart from individual preferences that reflect musical identity, and the pleasure gleaned from music listening and music making, music has the capacity to impact personal connections with others. As a channel of communication “by which people can share emotions, intentions and meanings” (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 1), music impacts a person’s “innermost being” (Sacks, 2007, p. xii). Music does this through sound while lyrics impact listeners through story threads that speak to or reflect their lives (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). In having the capacity to communicate emotions in ways that people may be incapable of (Skudrzyk et al., 2009), music becomes an effective approach (Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007) when all else fails.

A song can awaken the soul.  
When we listen to music, we might get goose bumps,  
breathe more deeply,  
or feel a flood of emotions that brings us to tears.  
Old memories might surface.

(Borysenko, 2012, p. ix)

As a source of identification and entertainment, listeners return to music in an attempt to recapture this pleasure, and to rekindle music’s “pure effect” (Barthes, 1989, p. 299).

Listeners revisit the music of their lives because music helps them to access fond memories and to resonate with the spirit and because, music makes people feel good.

Furthermore, while a musical soundtrack informs and impacts a person's life, this same soundtrack has the capacity to achieve specific purposes. For instance, a person can revisit their favourite songs from their playlist "to enhance [their] overall mental and physical performance" (Sting, 2012, n.p.). To exemplify, a person can use songs to train their brain to get them "into a mood, out of a mood, and through a mood" (Cardillo et al., 2012, p. 6), i.e. play select music to enhance physical workout, to create romantic ambiance; or to get oneself into a relaxing or meditative state. In doing so, music becomes an effective tool for change.

Scientifically, if all things vibrate, this suggests that music has the "potential to affect and be affected by another" (Gershon, 2013a, p. 258). By influencing the emotional and spiritual states of being, music affects the heart directly (Sacks, 2007). As such, I am emotionally engaged and linked with the music that sounds my life.

## 2.5. Music as Inquiry

*See me, feel me, touch me, heal me  
Listening to you, I get the music  
Gazing at you, I get the heat  
I get excitement at your feet*

(Townshend, 1969, Track 5)

I come to music like I would a journal or a friend. To sound my world; to document my life; to express myself; and sometimes, I come to music for comfort. As is reflected in *See Me, Feel Me*," (Pink Floyd, 1969), music moves through me to impact me as a sensual being. Aside from the sheer pleasure that music brings my life, song lyrics reflect my life (Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007; Levin, 2015) and become a means through which I record and document my life story. Music is therefore a legitimate signifier (Aoki, 1996, p. 14) within my research, my lived curriculum, and my artistic-educative practice. Given that music and narrative merge to become a sonic soundscape, a musical memoir, and the radio tales, my musical soundscape resides at the foundation of my research. My research evolves to become a research model in which lost moments, music and memoir merge

to become music lived curriculum. With song lyrics revealing themselves as an extension of my living story (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007), my musical soundscape expresses my inner world (Baker & Macdonald, 2017; Snowber, 2016). and transforms the ordinary into the sacred (Mercier De-Shon, 2012). As such, I come to music to write my life.

In being a significant educative platform (Brooks, 2009; Kelly, 2011) from which I learn and acquire information, and express myself, music provides a powerful means from which I record my life (Murch, 1994; Pinar, 1994; Street, 2017). By recording my life sonically (Gershon, 2013, 2016; Welch, 2005) music and sound enrich my life at the same time that they deepen and widen worldly perspectives while also celebrating humanity (Fleming, 2012). Through my work in radio, and my research of music education amid music's effects upon my life, a "phenomenological understanding of who am I and who am I becoming" (Snowber, 2014, p. 2) unfolds to reveal music as a dynamic means for knowing (Allen, 1995), and a means to form identity.

This experience of music and sound has the capacity to nurture and sustain my "sense of aliveness to the world" (Bowman, 1994, p. 18). For this reason, as I express through the sonic landscape of speech, song and music within radio, I become in tune with my body (Greene, 1995). Because rhythm, music, and song have historically been used as a way "to tune the mind, to heal the body, and to strengthen the spirit" (Cardillo et al., 2012, p. 2), through music, I link my physical, emotional and spiritual self with my beliefs and values (Bruscia, 1998). My experience and appreciation for music, consequently, becomes a deeply personal undertaking that leads me to become the music (Sims, 1992) as Barry Manilow (1975) declares in "I Write the Songs":

*I've been alive forever  
And I wrote the very first song  
I put the words and the melodies together  
I am music and I write the songs*

(Johnston, 1975, Track 7)

As all beings are born with the physical capability to sing and move, whereby the rhythm of life is embodied within (Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Snowber, 2002, 2004, 2014; Street, 2017), listener's soundtracks are woven throughout their lives (Bruscia, 1998; Murch

1994; Solnit, 2013). Music, that reflects a person's life and experience, therefore is ever present in its accompaniment and sounding of each lived experience.

As the years pass, songs bear witness to our lives. They allow us to relieve [sic] the past, examine the present, and to voice our dreams of the future. Songs weave tales of our joys and sorrows, they reveal our innermost secrets, and they express our hopes and disappointments, our fears and triumphs. They are our musical diaries, our life stories. (Bruscia, 1998, p. 9)

As Bruscia (1998) suggests, song lyrics that have witnessed lived experience inform lived curriculum at the same time that they reflect the sacredness of the inner world (Baker & Macdonald, 2017). This sacredness is illuminated through my early memory of first hearing the music of David Cassidy and that memory's ability to conjure up my emotional response of first hearing his music (Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Sacks, 2007). Because music and lyrics are etched in the memory, people's musically-infused memories can "all come rushing back at once by just hearing [one] song" (Cardillo et al., 2012, p. 154). Hence, in recalling the memory of David Cassidy, my seven year old self becomes tangible. Nostalgia pulls at my heartstrings and I am summoned back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). I embody this memory to write "Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You." This personal narrative illustrates the significant impact that David Cassidy's music had on my musical evolution, and in music's capacity to pierce my heart emotionally (Sacks, 2007):

## 2.6. Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You

### [Listen to Radio Tale #6](#)

It was my first Christmas in Vancouver. I was seven years old, with Santa on my mind. As the winds blew outside, a snowstorm was brewing and little did I know David Cassidy was on the horizon of my life. However, that morning, when my older sister opened her Christmas gift from Santa Claus – The Partridge Family red album – there he was. As she played that vinyl album over and over again, with my Dad shouting for her to turn it down, David Cassidy kept right on singing on that snowy Christmas morning:

*I think I love you so what am I so afraid of*

Starry eyed, I sang along – thinking that maybe David Cassidy could be my boyfriend, despite my crossed eyes and broken glasses. As I reflect upon this, I am in awe of me at that age; who knew that I could be transported – in the blink of an eye – from twinkle, twinkle little star into the frenzied love soundscape of David Cassidy.

Reflecting on my insatiable ability to fall in love with love songs, I am taken to yet another time in my life. I am in Grade Nine, and Suzie Quatro has topped the charts with her 1978 runaway hit “Stumbling In”:

*Our love is alive, and so it begins  
Foolishly laying our hearts on the table  
Stumblin' in...  
I've fallen for you whatever you do  
'Cause baby you've shown me so many things  
That I never knew*

(Chapman & Chinn, 1978, Track 11)

As I recall those teenage nights – singing alongside Quatro as she belted out her regrets of unrequited love: “I may have been young but baby that’s not what I wanted to be,” – I think of me and David Cassidy. He, a Hollywood superstar, and me, a Grade Two girl who wondered where life might take me. At the time however, I was a seven-year-old girl with two years under my belt, two years of chasing boys – through school halls and baseball fields – and if truth be known, I was ready for some new music and a teen heartthrob who sang of love and all things romance. Too young to kiss, but thinking that

maybe it was a good idea. I also thought that maybe I might meet David Cassidy when I get older.

It was a pivotal year for me, 1970. The Partridge Family aside, it was also the year I discovered there is no Santa. I blame the educational system for this because had I never learned to count, Santa might still be getting a Christmas letter from me; however, counting changed my life forever, and Santa's too, I'm sure.

There's a sadness in discovering that a jolly old man would not be coming down the chimney, and come to think of it, if there was, you should probably be calling the police. Sometimes I wonder if this sadness is about the loss of Christmas magic, or perhaps a loss of hope. A hope that if you're having a hard time making your Christmas happen, you know, there's a jolly old man who's going to show up and help you out.

Regardless of what I woke up to that year, while I may have stopped believing in Santa Claus, that seven year old girl did believe in music. And I did believe in David Cassidy. And that was something.

Merry Christmas David Cassidy, I think I loved you.

*This morning, I woke up with this feeling  
I didn't know how to deal with  
And so I just decided to myself I'd hide it to myself  
And never talk about it  
And didn't I go and shout it when you walked into the room  
"I think I love you"*

(Romeo, 1970, Track 10)

### **2.6.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You**

In weaving the lost moment threads that inspire the narrative about David Cassidy, I recall my insatiable ability to fall in love with love songs. While this radio tale focuses on my childhood crush on David Cassidy, it also refers to two impressionable songs in my young life. The first song, "I Think I Love You," which was Cassidy's signature tune, is a song that I first heard at age seven. The second song, "Stumblin' In", which was a hit single for Suzi Quatro, is a song that I first heard at age fourteen. Both of these songs have a similar impact in that they equally influence and empower me both musically and

emotionally (Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007) irregardless of the age I was at the time of impact of each song. Both songs represent universal themes of hope, love, and coming of age. Of this, research has shown music to have a profound impact on listeners' "physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being" (Cardillo et al., 2012, p. 1) regardless of age or lived experience. That said, I was a seven year old who, to put it simply, wanted to be the girlfriend of David Cassidy, and later, as a fourteen year old girl, I want to be cool like Suzie Quatro.

During this span of seven years, from ages seven through fourteen, without realizing it I was forming a musical backdrop that would be with me for my entire life. These two songs, as well as other songs that were captured during this time period, became key songs within the foundation of my musical soundtrack that would later inform this radio tale, and my musical memoir.



## Chapter 3.

### Acousmatic Modality: On Listening Well

Autobiography can be written in one genre and interpreted by its reader in another [...and] while autobiography exists, as it were, in the private intentions of the autobiographer, it also exists for its public interpretive uses, as part of a general and perpetual conversation about life possibilities.

(Bruner, 1995, p. 163)

#### 3.1. Listening as Inquiry, as a Way to Know One's Life

There is always something to see, something to hear. There are ambient sounds all around us, even in silence [...where] our capacity to listen is heightened by our ability to embrace quiet.

(Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 64)

In the work of Daignault (2005), the reader is asked what it is to listen, what it is to listen well, and why listening well is so precious. Listening is not something one does primarily with the ears. One listens with the whole body; with whole body listening (Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2002, 2004), and with the thinking body (LaBelle, 2006).

While a person may read a text with eyes and ears, the text is also read through the perspective of lived experience. The same can be said of a piece of music, an art sculpture, a theatrical presentation, a choreographed dance performance, or a baseball game. Whatever that reader/listener 'reads', his/her experience will be formed and informed by who that person is and what that person has lived. In short, as Bruner (1995) suggests,

Life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography...a way of construing experience...and the shape of a life as *experienced* is as much dependent upon the narrative skill of the autobiographer as is the story he or she tells about it. (p. 161)

It can therefore be garnered that everyone is the story they tell, and the story one tells becomes one's life. These narratives are constructed through the cognitive and linguistic process. Experience is structured while memory is organized organizing memory such that people become the autobiographical narratives they tell about their lives (Bruner, 1991, p. 694).

The term acousmatic modality is borrowed from the ancient Greek and refers to the ancient practice of listening to a text; within this context, the speaker is hidden and the listener is unseen, a phenomenon that is akin to overhearing a conversation (LaBelle, 2006). As a 'listener' engages in a text that has "layers of hearing not only [in] the words on the page, but [also in] the rivulets of meaning which rise to the surface" (Snowber in Richmond & Snowber, 2009, p. 5), the 'listener' experiences and responds to that text from multiple perspectives (Daignault, 2005). By 'listening' to a subject, and responding by incorporating his/her own experience into that text (LaBelle, 2006), the original text changes; the 'listener' becomes a co-writer and the text "becomes his or her own text" (Daignault, 2005, p. 7). Similarly, as listeners 'listen' to the radio tales, and make personal connections and responses to, they are, as Daignault (2005) suggests, making the radio tales their own.

In my having recorded the radio tales as both text and audio, 'listeners' are offered a multi-sensory experience, and may therefore develop multiple sensory interpretations, of these personal narratives. Because sound penetrates to engage its listener "on a bodily level in fundamentally different ways than the visual" (Gershon, 2013, n.p.), the affect of the given media will determine how 'listeners' engage with the radio tales. Sound may also impact how memories are received compared to how they are received when "expressed through the written word" (Street, 2014, p. 81). As the sonic landscape brings the radio tales to life (Hodgins, 1993; Murch, 1994; Sacks, 2007; Welch, 2005), listeners engage in a multi-sensory experience which Leggo (2015) suggests, invites them to "grow in wisdom and intimacy" (n.p.).

### 3.2. Listening to Life & Writing One's Life Through Story

To be educated is to be ever open to the call  
of what it is to be deeply human  
and heeding the call to walk with others.

(Aoki in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 180)

I am not writing this thesis alone. I do not create radio alone. Instead, I write alongside other writers, artists, academics and educators. With each radio tale that I record, and with each word that I write, my living story unfolds. I am becoming (Greene, 1995; Snowber, 2014).

As I walk with other writers, I 'read' their work; I interact with their text; I enter a dialogue in which I bring myself, my life and my responses to their text. Through my responses I engage to create a new text: an acousmatic text (Daignault, 2005). In writing with and alongside other writers, I join "a tradition of writers that dates thousands of years back and includes Homer and Toni Morrison and cave artists sketching buffalo," (Karr, 2015, p. 218). Within this community that writes lived experience words reflect the human condition:

The individual pieces of creative nonfiction are based on the authors' first-person experiences of coming to understand what matters most to them (and others), what sustains them (and others) and the places they inhabit, and what they have given their hearts to. (Chambers et al., 2012, p. xx)

Like these authors, writing invites me to reflect upon what matters most, what sustains me, what speaks to me and through me and as Leggo (2012) might suggest, what it is that I give my heart to. Autobiographical writing reveals that while the quality of direct experiences may appear lost, forgotten or unappreciated, through recollection the real flavour of lived experience can be grasped (Proust, 1924).

As Proust (1924) suggests, I discover the richness of lived experience by looking closely at my life. Through this researcher's eye (van Manen, 1990), I gain perspective on the past to see my life anew. The lost and forgotten are revealed to illuminate the nuance of experience, bringing me closer to the emotional truth of my story (Mamchur, 2012; Rosenfield, 2015).

The core of my story comes into focus. My words are ageless, as though they existed pre-birth (Hogan, 1995; Karr, 2015; Meyer, 2010) – much like my sound (Welch, 2005), my voice (hooks, 1989; Rosenfield, 2015) and my everyday beingness in radio. Through this core I am connected with other writers and co-exist in a shared community of words (Aoki, 2005). My story becomes the story of other writers; their story becomes mine; our stories become linked “forever in a tangle of language” (Mairs, 1989, p. 9).

I engage within this community of writers as we share this overlapping of language and story amid “entangled lines of events, intensities, and movements” (Irwin, 2013, p. 209), and am reminded by Irwin (2015) that “This is how we relate, this is how we connect, but [that] it is in dialogue that we come to understand one another and come to new understandings about ourselves (p. 371). As I write through living inquiry to engage with the words of research scholars, memoirists and songwriters, once again I dialogue with these writers’ texts such that an acousmatic text arises (Daignault, 2005).

**I read and I respond and I write;  
and then I write and I read and I respond.  
I listen to the text  
and the text listens to me.**

In walking alongside the words of these writers (Aoki, 1994), I arrive at new understandings: as our words become interwoven, our storied community connects not only our words, but also, our worlds. Through this engagement I gain a perspective on how to interweave research theory with autobiography and musical song lyrics. In doing so, the song lyrics become a representation of my life; my autobiography becomes my research; my research becomes a song. As I lay this path of words (Cayete, 1994, 2005; Dillard, 1989; Varela, 1987) I arrive at voice and an acousmatic text arises:

One must pull down the veil of illusion and write in a way that lays bare your mind, your heart, your secrets, and your longings...an act of claiming yourself and saying: This is me. (Rosenfield, 2015, pp. 21-22)

### 3.3. Radio Broadcasting and Lived Experience

The subjects' life is there, here, present.  
Recording it via words; conceptualizing it.  
Bringing the past to the present by printing it.  
The words coalesce to form a photograph.

(Pinar, 1994, p. 24)

Community and campus radio is an affirmative space that exists within the margins and caters to a diverse population. Within this space, listeners can explore their voice to articulate a sense of the world (hooks, 1989). As a champion for the voice of the voiceless (Lewis, 2006), community radio exists on a platform that encourages hosts, participants and listeners “to tell their lived stories and to become creators and contributors of media” (Lewis, 2006, p. 16).

Within this realm, each radio program is richly informed. Content is built around the arts and community content, music and sonic play, interviews and artist profiles, music and art backgrounds, and personal narrative and storytelling.

The radio is an empowering performative space. Given that a platform may be a statement of belief, a space of performance, a framework to create boundaries around a piece of work, or a way of seeing or being within that work (Merriam-Webster, 2017), radio's platform invites me to create, perform and re-author my story (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1991; Butler, 1997; Salverson, 1996) as a musical memoir.

This platform also invites me to embrace pedagogy and artistry, within radio, as spaces of inquiry. Through the advent of new media which “softened the distinction and participation [of broadcasters]” (Goldard, 2006, p. 24) radio draws me forth to explore what and how I might create within this forum. My sonic explorations generate radio content which resonates to “form educational systems of knowledge” (Gershon, 2013a, p. 257) that act as pedagogically sound understandings.

New understandings emerge as a result of residing within the margins. Before community radio exists within the margins, however, radio broadcasting was unavailable to the masses. Like all things, however, radio had its beginning. In 1909, after several years of governmental experiments with communications, audio transmissions were successfully made overseas. At a time when experts and scientists re-imagined a

technological world with expanded possibility (Baker & Mezel, 1988; Fels, 1999, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Snowber, 2011a), their vision led to sonic experiments and the technological advancement for communication. As a result, in the 1930s audio communication started to become a popular medium in the home (CBC, 1929) as is described by a family member who recalls her experience of first hearing radio:

**It was 1937 and my dad had just taken off the crop and sold it in town. He used some of the money from the wheat to buy the radio. It was just a box, and it could talk.**

(Personal Communication, October 2014)

Ever since radio became available to the public, there has been an initiative to produce programming to appeal to different listening audiences. While my early music and radio influences were transmitted through the sound waves of commercial radio, my current broadcasting influences and productions are transmitted through community radio sound waves.

Since I entered the world of radio, the arts have invited me to read and write my life (Freire, 1970). Through radio's platform, I bring together various creative elements as a means to "write the word and write the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 18). I accomplish this by incorporating interviews and commentaries with art, music and story; through performing and being performed; and by exploring my lived experience and my mother's lived experience. By telling the stories of my life through music, moments and memoir, I live my story through art. I create art (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002, 2008; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tharp, 1989) for listeners so that the arts contribute to my life beyond the aesthetics of creation. This broadcasting forum empowers me by providing a platform where I produce radio shows, narrate scripts and create autobiographical musically-infused radio tales that incorporate universal themes that are relevant to listeners (Bruner, 1991). By narrating and then reflecting upon the radio generated content, I embrace the medium of radio as a way of knowing. I look critically at this media culture that has shaped me, and embrace it as a means to "move toward reflection and positive action upon the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 205). This work unfolds into the universality of the radio tales.

Community radio affords me the freedom to conduct research in diverse areas: musical genres, themes, time periods and performers. As I explore the depth of radio, and begin

hosting radio shows, I am enamoured with this medium and called into presence. I want nothing more than to speak into a microphone while I spin albums. I manipulate gadgets and gadgets and turn dials and knobs – all the while knowing that I have found something special. I can feel it. I am called into presence at the same time that I call others into presence. Through my research of lived experience and my musical soundscape – that result in the radio tales – I am establishing my place in radio. Stories emerge (Bruner, 1991, 1992) and gain momentum (Fludernik, 2005), with each tale reflecting a specific period of my lived experience, it becomes apparent that the tales are cumulatively taking form as a musical memoir. It is here that my research and the radio tales take flight.

Community radio mandates diverse content in radio programming. My radio program, *The Arts Edge*, has a diverse focus and incorporates an eclectic mix of diverse and popular music, i.e. Indie music; a varied range of singer-songwriters; and a breadth of programming topics. In offering a unique arts-based radio program, many of my interviews and singer profiles reflect lived experience and become a platform that invites listeners to engage with the program. Being that community radio exists within “a space of resistance” (hooks, 1989, p. 206), I address topics in radio that are innovative, inspiring, introspective, and inviting. I produce personal narratives that gives listeners the impression that voice matters, that their voice matters. I embrace the radio platform to create these personal narratives that reflect clarity, change and alchemy within lived experience. Radio provides me with the space to create art (Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002, 2008; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tharp, 1989). Radio has given me the gift of spinning straw into gold (ban Breathnach, 1995; Grimm & Grimm, 1812) for myself and my listeners.

While the tales have the power to change me, they also have the power to change listeners (Salverson, 1996). When I first begin producing radio, I did not know how radio would change my life or what it would reveal about myself as an artist. Without realizing it, since the inception of radio into my life, radio has pulled me into a “moment of possibility” (Snowber, 2011a, p.154). While I was unaware of radio’s power to surface memory, radio was the stop (Applebaum, 1995) that initiated remembering. Through radio, the music of my life that once “seeped into my bones” (Thindal, 2019, p. 24) – to become my musical soundscape – was released as “body memory” (Smith, 1991, p.160). The release of this music opened a pathway for remembering and celebrating my life by recording my life as the radio tales. The bare bones of story (lost moments)

became the scaffolding that frame the radio tales and give form to musical memoir. This pathway was traversed through community radio in which I explored personal narrative and musical memoir as a means of release and record memory.

The telling of my stories, like singing and praying, would seem to be an almost ceremonial act, an ancient and necessary mode of speech that tends the earthly rootedness of human language (Abram, 1996, p. 163) and is celebrated through musical memoir and radio performance.

Within this capacity, my radio content is uniquely artistic, personal and inspiring. While I approach radio unedited so that programming is creative, raw and exploratory, in being an arts-based researcher, I come to live shows with a partial set list with live and/or pre-recorded radio tales. Although my roles within radio production (artist, researcher, academic) are sculpted to fit radio, identity also shifts with media experience, i.e., interviews, commentaries, discovery of new music, performers, genres and lyrical themes. Identity is fluid as is the musical soundscape. By scaffolding song upon song within given contexts listeners' identities are revealed and musical preferences are identified

A continuum of engagement with music that depends, in part, on individual preference, the local context for listening or enjoying music, the availability of musical styles and genres and also on one's perception and emotional 'tagging' of previous musical experiences – all of which shape the extent to which we regard ourselves as 'musical.' (Welch, 2005, p. 117)

As noted, through radio production – and the airing and profiling of new music and old familiars – identity is shaped and re-shaped. Through music, and my research of music, arts and education, I experience myself and my life as 'musical' (Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Murch, 1994; Welch, 2005). This identity emerges through the discovery of my proclivity for producing arts-based radio that reflects personal stories. Radio is "a creative interactive space within which participants negotiate multiple possibilities of action" (Fels & McGivern, 2002, p. 5) such as stop moments, personal insights and learning experiences that have led me to write my living musical memoir. By means of research, interviews, live broadcasts, narration, storytelling and the production of radio documentaries, radio production contributes to the emergence of a sonic and musical identity (LaBelle, 2006; Murch, 1994; Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Welch, 2005). As it is through radio production that my personal narratives arise, Eisner (2008) suggests that radio itself "has set the direction" (p. 7) for the radio tales; this infers that my artistic



process is a discovery and a conversation, rather than a dictation. This would therefore suggest that the radio tales are a dynamic form for writing autobiographical memoir.

### **3.4. Performing Radio through Living Inquiry**

Time and place share a mystery with music,  
And the common denominator is radio  
And, more generally, audio listening.

(Street, 2014, p. 35)

As my entry into radio began after I had already started to write through living inquiry, my performance in radio, and the performative content that was generated throughout production, was informed by the autobiographical content that had previously been generated during the writing process. Apart from these text influences, audio narratives that were created during production have been informed by music and music associations with lived experience (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). The audio narratives have been further explored within radio production by embracing the themes of living inquiry (Meyer, 2010): time (real and recorded time; childhood; present experience of radio), language (radio broadcasting jargon; music); and self/other (roles; composite self: artist, academic, announcer; 'other' in reference to things: radio, technology, music, airwaves, cyberspace, audience).

#### **3.4.1. The Language of Radio, Spoken through Time and Technology**

During my initial introduction to the language of radio and the technology of the broadcasting studio, I feel overwhelmed. Radio challenges me to “embody the moment and, through action/reflection, create meaning” (Fels & Ricketts, 2009, p. 6), a technological act I am unfamiliar with. Over time, as I interact with radio technology and radio’s reverberations, my understanding of this media phenomena shifts. I develop an ease with radio technology, learn to operate the equipment, and embrace the broadcasting studio as a space of creation. Through technology I curate my sonic life and tap into radio’s “potential for unique and intimate forms of sound memory preservation” (Street, 2014, p. 109). In having broken through my initial resistance of radio technology, I learn the language of radio, and the language of radio is rolling off my tongue.

**I turn the soundboard to 'on'.  
I push buttons, turn dials and knobs.  
I insert CDs, spin LPs.  
Increase volume.  
Decrease bass.  
Adjust microphone.  
Speak, pause, narrate.**

My experience of radio production invites me to move from impulse to impulse (Fels & Ricketts, 2009). My interactions with radio reflects a dance of give and take in which I create radio in real time. Technology responds by transporting my voice through space, to be sounded (Gershon, 2013a, 2018; Murch, 1994; Welch, 2005) first as digital airwaves in the radio air space and then as sonic vibrations, somewhere in cyberspace. Radio performs me (Fels, 2012a), exemplifying itself as a dynamic mode of communication. In turn, I perform radio technology.

**I am performing identity.**

From my engagements in radio broadcasting new learning emerges through “many complex interactions and relationships within” this medium (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 24). As this new learning invites me to construct an “understanding based on experience of the data” (Taylor, 2006, p. 11), steps unfold:

**I play music. I respond to music.  
I connect music to lived experience.  
Lost moments arise.  
I reflect upon these lost moments.  
I recall a song of childhood.**

Within each radio production, I speak into the microphone, improvising what I shall say, and knowing how to introduce music, profiles and guests. I am getting the jargon down (Meyer, 2010; Salverson, 2004). In recording the radio tales, my perception and interpretation of this new literary and auditory representation of my life is deepened. I discover that radio technology is the same in real time and pre-recorded time; the only thing that changes is how participants behave, be they radio announcer or guest. I speak and live this new language (Salverson, 2004) through reciprocity; I perform the language

of radio and the language of radio performs me (Leggo, 2004a). As I immerse myself in the language of radio, I experience the world in a new way. Language enables me to make “perceptible, visible, and audible that which is no longer, or not yet, perceived, said, and heard in everyday life” (p.139). This new understanding makes radio dance.

In having acquired this fluency of radio technology, this new language expands what is possible for me to achieve within this medium. My familiarity with radio results in entrainment, a quality that enhances my presence in radio. As a state that draws me “into deeper and more sacred areas of the psyche [in which I am] carried away, or rather carried inward, by the rhythmic, mantic qualities of music” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.164), entrainment invites me to fully experience radio production. By experiencing such rhythmic qualities, the language of radio resonates within my being and is expelled to create the persona of me as a radio host within the realm of radio broadcasting. My newfound entrainment and engagement with the psyche calls on me to make further connections with technology to uncover “blending between the organic [me] and the technological [radio]” (Causey & Walsh, 2013, p. 11). In doing so, I become one with radio and relate the language of radio to music and lyrics. Consequently, musical memories spring forth to “make a life from words” (Britzman, 2006, p. xiii). This is my musical memoir.

### **3.4.2. Radio Technology as Place and Self / Other**

In having embraced radio broadcasting, and in having translated the language of radio to become a language that is mine, the technology of radio becomes an extension of me (McLuhan, 1964). Radio production welcomes my voice as an “ultimate shared expression of the self [...in which the radio tale is] the form of expression of which all else is an extension” (Street, 2017, p. 108). That said, my radio voice becomes the bridge that connects my musical soundscape to my living stories. The music and song lyrics has therefore become an extension of my living story (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2010; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). For a moment, I am the song.

Similarly, as culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives...structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and [to] purpose-build the very 'events' of a life...we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives. (Bruner, 1987; Bruner, 2004, p. 694)

Just as Bruner (1987, 2004) outlines above, I am the story at the same time that I am the teller of the tale. I am the self and the other. Similarly,

**when I initially enter radio I am both 'self' and 'other;'  
radio is unfamiliar;  
it is strange; it is technology; it is 'other;'  
all things radio are 'other.'**

Given the unfamiliarity and strangeness of this new medium, radio is a space that invites me to explore the newness of broadcasting and technology. This is an invitation to explore the vulnerability of knowing and not-knowing. This is a stop (Appelbaum, 1995). I am called to step away from my habitual practices of performance (Fels, 2012a, 2012b) to attend to this new self and other. I attend to myself and radio technology. I explore "how I observe others, and what I do and say in the presence of others [my listener], including technology non-human entities [the other]" (Meyer, 2006, p. 2). In attending to these spaces of being, I begin a new relationship with radio that entails improvisation, interaction, dialogue, reflection and entrainment. I have entered an ongoing engagement of performing radio and radio performing me.

By embracing this act of entrainment, I reflectively turn inward to "encounter [my] own otherness" (Armstrong et al., 2014, p. 6), that inner space where I am both inner and outer, where my resonance lies. My resonance emits my radio experience and conversely, radio technology emits my broadcaster voice of tone, pitch and cadence. I am message, music and memoir. This I bring to my experience of radio production.

As I broadcast through performative inquiry to create radio shows, I interact with technology (other) to discover how we interact. Through the other that is created by the self I am provided with a platform in which I perform self in the presence of technology (other). My performance within this technical space prompts me to inquire who it is I have become in the presence of the other, in the presence of radio. My investigation clarifies:

**I am the self. Radio is other.  
Radio and I engage to become the self.  
Radio and I engage to become the other.  
Radio adopts my human persona, my non-technological entities.  
I adopt radio's technological persona, its non-human entities.  
Together, we call each other into presence, and create radio.**

Through technology and the performative space, radio production leads me to discover lost moments alongside my musical soundscape. A soundscape can be any acoustic field of study whereas "a musical composition can be a soundscape, as can a radio program or an acoustic environment" (Schafer, 1977, p. 7). That said, my radio program is a soundscape as is a radio tale audio or a musical sound byte. While these are examples of organized soundscapes, the sonic experience is also a random and regularly occurring expression of the world.

Through my experience of worldliness, I observe the sonic landscape. The sonic is always there, always sounding itself. My interactions with and responses to the sonic are also unending. Our relationship is built on an ongoing dialogue of sound and respond, give and take, self and other. This new understanding of my relationship with self and other, or self and sound, deepens through exploring my musical soundscape as it relates to everyday worldliness (Meyer, 2010).

My engagement with worldliness invites me to celebrate "the mundane world where people's everyday lives are lived" (Aoki in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 232). I procure meaning from my worldliness to *really* see the world and to know myself more intimately. In this awakened state, I access lived experience as an invaluable resource "for the mining of ideas and themes that have the potential for high personal relevance" (Leggo & Kelly, 2006, p. 35) which I later access in the writing of the radio tales. This autobiographical investigation leads to more than a mere reflection of my life but rather, my investigation becomes "living itself" (Aoki in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 447). While I research my life and the music that sounds my life, in this very moment I am creating my life.

### 3.5. Radio as a Child

*When I was just a little girl  
I asked my mother what will I be  
Will I be pretty will I be rich  
Here's what she said to me:  
Que sera sera  
Whatever will be will be  
The future's not our's to see  
Que sera sera*

(Livingston, 1956, Track 1)

As a young girl, music was a constant in my life. Just as Doris Day (1956) sings to her own mother in “Que Sera Sera,” I also sang to and with my mother. Music was a catalyst that informed and shaped my life (Armstrong et al., 2014; Buser et al., 2005; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). Without my knowing, music was a compass that navigated me through my daily life experiences, helping me to find myself through adolescence. Through musical favourites I reaped the benefits of insightful lyrics that offered counsel to a young girl in search of who she was going to be and towards the unfolding of an artistic practice, ripe with promise.

*A great song  
doesn't attempt to be anything –  
It just is.*

(Jay-Z, 2011, n.p.)

Today I see radio as a platform that champions music, radio drama and local newscasts. Consequently, radio holds a presence in my life. In being a source of information and entertainment throughout my young life, radio is my primary mode of accessing up-to-date popular music. With parents who appreciated country music and a yodeling cowboy with flair, country music was often heard playing on the radio in the kitchen or my family car. It was there, in my family home that my parents, and their appreciation for country music, became key players that influenced my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2006; Welch, 2005). The presence of country music laid the foundation for other musical genres that would eventually come down the pike. My parents' appreciation for music was an inheritance passed down to me (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). While my musical identity continues to unfold through new music and through my exploration in radio broadcasting, my music foundation was laid when my

parents taught me the importance of music. Through my parents' example, I discovered that music was a compass that would guide me throughout my life.

As country music fills the confines of my musical memory, a lost moment surfaces to take me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). It is 1975 and my family is venturing on a road trip to the Canadian Prairies:

### 3.6. Radio Tale #7: Riding the Prairie Airwaves

#### [Listen to Radio Tale #7](#)

As my family drove across the barren prairie flatlands, *en route* to a family reunion, the music of the seventies carried us across the miles. Karen Carpenter sang into the night air lulling us kids to sleep in the back of the station wagon, reminding me of “Yesterday Once More”, and how I used to sing along:

*When I was young I'd listen to the radio,  
Waiting for my favorite song,  
When they played I'd sing along, it made me smile*

(Bettis & Carpenter, 1973, Track 15)

Although the ride was long, the music kept me distracted, and deterred me from being impatient to get to our destination. With the sun beating down through the windshield, and the dusty prairie winds blowing through my hair, the winds carried the sounds of the whistling air, the smells of manure, and the warmth of the day soaking into my sun burnt face. Meanwhile, Helen Reddy (1973) sang of good old Ruby Red Dress talking to herself, something my eleven-year-old self could relate to:

*Big ole Ruby red dress runs around the town  
Talkin' to herself now, sometimes sittin' down*

(Laurie, 1973, Track 1)

After camping for the night in Edmonton, at sunrise we packed up for the long day ahead. At the Husky station, Dad filled up with gas and topped up the cooler with frozen ice. Mom and us kids went into the store to stock up on sundries, snacks, soda pop, and of course Rothman cigarettes and Husky matches. As Dad merged onto highway one, Mom sang along to Jud Strunk's “A Daisy a Day”; as she waved her hand to keep with the beat, Mom turned to sing to us kids as we ripped open our bags of Old Dutch chips:

*I'll give you a daisy a day  
I'll love you until the rivers run still  
And the four winds we know blow away*

(Strunk, 1972, Track 1)



The day wore on as we tired from the heat. Driving for long stretches with the prairie sun beating down, the inside of the car became a sauna so that the vinyl seats stuck to our bare skin while cigarette smoke filled the confined space of the station wagon. Nearing the Alberta border – *en route* for Edmonton – the car's engine began to overheat. Nothing a needle and thread couldn't fix, I'm sure. Before too long we exited the freeway to Smalltown, BC – Revelstoke, population, seven hundred.

*Highway 3 to the valley  
Lord I'm coming home to you  
Now I've driven this road so many times  
I'm finally stopping in your town for awhile*

(Barley Wik, 2002, Track 1)

As is reflected upon in Barley Wik's "Highway 3," I became familiar with small country towns. Having driven for two days – pulling in to every two-bit town every few hundred miles to fill up on gas, and to stop for a bathroom break and a bite to eat – we were stranded as Dad waited for the engine part to arrive so his car could be repaired. With dusk setting in, we pitched out tent and camped for the night.

Listening, as the pace slowed down, and the crickets came together in harmony, I knew Dad's home was near. Although he didn't say it, I knew Dad prided himself in bringing his family back to the land where he was raised; back to the farm he once toiled; back to the people he called family.

The smell of cows filled the air as did the arrival of much anticipated kinfolk. When we arrived at the farm, my dad's younger brother came out of the house and my cousins came running from the field inviting us to explore the farm. I looked up into the night sky, alit with stars, and realized that this must be *the big open sky* I'd heard so much about. I wondered why the prairie fold had more sky than we did in the city. With crickets singing in the background and the adults drinking brewed ale and homemade cider, we kids traipsed around the farm drinking sodas and eating cherries that had been purchased earlier that day. We popped cherries into our mouths – one after the other – spitting out the pits – to see who could spit the furthest. As the night got long my dad's sister-in-law pulled out her guitar to sing what I would come to recognize as one of the many songs in her repertoire – a song that reflected my experience of the Canadian prairie as reflected in Haggard's version of "Green, Green Grass of Home":

*Down the lane I look at and there runs Mary  
Hair of gold and lips like cherries  
It's good to touch the green, green grass of home*

(Putnam, 1965 Track 2)

Spending time on the prairies was strange for me. My narrow city thinking left me naïve to the world and the realities of the country. Although I would later become aware that my ignorance left me arrogant, as I spent time on the prairies, I wondered about the prairie folks we were visiting. They lived in towns that played movies that we'd seen in the city the year before, which seemed backward to me. I thought of their small town street signs and sensibilities. I thought of them living in farmhouses that had no flush toilets – on acreage that was littered with cattle, livestock, chickens, pigs, and tattered and broken down barns from the days when my father was a boy on the prairies.

While my thinking would change in the first week of our stay, my immediate thoughts were crass. I wouldn't say I looked down on these country folk but in my young mind I thought they hadn't caught up with the city cousins. They seemed two steps behind us – like their clothes were different, and they seemed less fancy compared to those of us from the city – I thought they were out of date with the times.

This thinking would change though. I found myself looking at the country folk differently. I liked them. My city cousin who I'd grown up with continued to make fun of them though and soon I realized that she spoke of them in derogatory terms, not unlike how she'd always treated me.

As our visit drew to a close I could see they had more than us – the city cousins – they had the country as their home; they also had the city for when they wanted it and always had the country to go back to. Unlike us, they had space to move around in. And they had the music, my aunt's guitar, and crickets singing in the background.

Camping on the farm changed me. There was much to take away from my family's road trip to the Canadian prairies: camping on the land, eating peanut butter sandwiches in my cousins' broken-down milk-truck at dusk, watching my brother and cousin chasing arthritic pigs around the farmyard, drinking Baby Duck at family reunion hall, seeing my Uncle Ray and recalling something strange and creepy, something I couldn't place; eating macaroni salad, marshmallow salad, Jell-O salad, Rice Krispie squares;

Matrimonial cake, Nanaimo bars and tomato soup cake; burgers, hot dogs, and my dad chewing on pigs feet.

As my family made our way home – back the way we came – across the prairie flatlands, through Albertan wheat-fields, soaking up the rays of Radium Hot Springs, driving along the cityscapes into the sound of buzzing lights, I knew that home was near. The smell of manure had dissipated, John Denver was nowhere in sight, but his music lingered on as though I were still traipsing around my father's childhood farm, as reflected in "Back Home Again":

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like lost friend  
Yes, 'n, hey, it's good to be back home again*

(Denver, 1973, Track 1)

Crawling into bed that night, reflective of my country cousins, and knowing that we weren't so different, the twang of Neil Young danced along the horizon to remind me that I had experienced something precious in my prairie visit, illuminated in "Heart of Gold":

*I've been to Hollywood, I've been to Redwood  
I've crossed the ocean for a heart of gold*

(Young, 1972, Track 4)

City and country aside, I was grateful to have met my cousins. Maybe we city dwellers were more up to date with regard to movies and fashion but if truth be told, we were the ones who were behind the times. Too often city folks were too busy and too distracted to connect with ourselves, our family and our ancestral roots – as is celebrated by country legend Hank Williams with "Hey Good Lookin'." Not to mention, too busy to make marshmallow salad. After all, it takes prairie folks to make a really good marshmallow salad. I should know, my mother was a prairie girl.

*Hey good looking  
Whatcha got cookin'  
How's about cooking somethin' up with me  
Hey sweet baby  
Don't you think maybe  
We could find us a brand new recipe*

(Williams, 1964, Track A)

### 3.6.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #7: Riding the Prairie Airwaves

While the prairie songs of my family road trip, as noted in Radio Tale #7, stayed with me long after the family road trip was over, and school had started up in September, with the new school year, came new music. As I grew out of childhood and into adolescence, I left *singsong* hand-clapping games behind me and turned to pop music and rock 'n roll. I incorporated the music I'd been exposed to in childhood – from the country music greats my parents introduced me to and the music of my siblings – and made it a part of my musical soundscape. My access to radio became a new source of music, which meant I could control my musical “repertoire and performance practices in the more private spaces” (Marsh, 1999, p. 3) of my bedroom and when hanging out with friends.

During this period, song sharing with friends became a way to connect with my peers, and to express myself (Malchiodi, 2008). After a friend scribed song lyrics, we would memorize and practice singing in front of a mirror. At another friend's house, we would lip sync the lyrics to “Little Old Lady from Pasadena” as she twirled and sashayed in front of her bedroom mirror. At another friend's house, my friend performed her rock 'n roll rendition of Elton John's radical song, “The Bitch is Back,” with lyrics that shocked me.

Throughout the adolescent years of becoming, music played a significant role in my personal development and understanding of the world; while the lyrical and audio aspects were aesthetically appealing and emotionally uplifting and soothing, the musical beat invited me to explore within my emotions, and my body and to understand and to negotiate music within “everyday experiences. (Gershon, 2011, p. vii)

Sound became anything that was conceptualized as sonic and was considered to be sound knowledge (Gershon, 2011). Hence, while the singing voices and musical sounds vastly contributed to my sound knowledge, my response to the songs of my childhood (singing along, humming, tapping my feet to the music) also contributed to my sound knowledge (Borysenko, 2012; Brandt et al., 2009; Gershon, 2011, 2013; Street, 2017) and contributed to how I identified my musical self (Welch, 2005).

While music was heard daily in my family home – on the radio, the television or the phonograph – improvised music and singing was also heard in my mother's singing. Just as Jann Arden (1994) sings of in “Good Mother,” my mother's voice was comforting to me and had become “a lullaby in my cells.” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 17):

*I've got a good mother  
And her voice is what keeps me here  
Feet on ground, heart in hand  
Facing forward, be yourself*

(Arden, 1994, Track 9)

### **3.7. Radio's Influence – Passed Down Through the Generations**

Having grown up in the Great Depression, on the Canadian prairies, my parents' primary source of news and entertainment was the radio. I think it was for this reason, that the radio remained a priority throughout their entire lives. Their fondness of old-time radio impacted me as a child such that I too was drawn to the radio in my family home. Upon leaving home, with the convenience of stereo sound systems, I made music CDs my priority, leaving radio behind. In later years, however, I found my way back to radio. My research came later - after my parents passed away. In researching my parents' lives, I wanted to understand the draw that radio had for my parents, and what country music brought to their lives.

My parents grew up in small, isolated, farming communities on the Canadian prairies. Their families had no means for getting to town in the winter, so both my parents' families were reliant on the radio as a source for news and entertainment, especially during the long cold winter months. During the thirties, it was common for prairie families to gather around the radio to listen to the news of the war as well as radio dramas, comedians and musical concerts.

While the radio was considered to be a luxury, with so many people struggling throughout the 'dirty thirties', radio was a favourite pastime for most. My mother's kin were one such a family. As noted in a personal conversation, a family member – who was a prairie native – tells of her first experience of gathering around the radio:

**The war was on, and so my family wanted to know what was happening in Europe. So, when the British Prime Minister came on the radio the neighbours from the next farm over would come over to listen to the BBC.**

(Personal Communication, October 2014)

I believe it is sentiments such as these that resulted in my parents' fondness of radio and the reason they raised their own children with radio sounded in the background, and country music on the turntable. Similarly, radio had become a backdrop for my adult life. Music and lyrics are a storyline that run through my life – like a thread that connects (Solnit, 2013) my lived experiences moment to moment. In recent years, I discovered this woven lifescape within me, wherever I go – a gift unexpected. As is reflected by Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson in “Winter Song (2016), music is a guiding force in my life:

*This is my winter song to you  
The storm is coming soon  
It rolls in from the sea  
My voice a beacon in the night  
My words will be your light  
To carry you to me*

(Bareilles & Michaelson, 2016, Track 6)

Just as radio held court in my family home growing up, country music also had a strong presence in my family home. One of my earliest memories of music centred around my parents listening to country music. A familiar image takes me back:

**My father turns on the radio and tunes in to CKNW to listen to a radio documentary of legendary country singer, Johnny Cash. My mother joins him at the kitchen table. As my parents drink old stout, they sing along to Cash's lyrics, words that sing of the plight of the working man.**

As I listen in on this audio-memory, I imagine my parents' lives as children – when they first heard the radio; they grew up in remote prairie communities where, like Cash, they endure the working class' struggle, throughout the *Great Depression*. No wonder they loved Johnny Cash so much. As the music of Johnny Cash reflects my Dad's life, so too does the music of many other country singer-songwriters; many a country song reflects the life of the working man. Such is the case of Kenny Rogers' “Factory”:

*Forty years cut across his back  
Fightin' it tooth and nail  
Work was hard enough to make  
A man forgets his fear of Hell  
He was a thankful man  
He had a job down at the fact'ry*

(McGuire, 1988, Track 8)

Listening to this song, I am taken back to early mornings as a child:

**My mother is in the kitchen making poached eggs on toast  
for my father who is preparing to go to work.  
It is five in the morning when I am awoken to the sound in the kitchen.  
I crawl out of bed and make my way to the kitchen  
to help my dad eat his poached eggs on toast.**

While this song helps me realize just how hard my dad worked, Thindal (2019) draws my attention to Dieser (2014) who similarly reflects upon lyrics that reflect his dad's life. Like me, song lyrics helps Dieser (2014) to “re-conceptualize’ how he thought of his father from ‘an adult perspective’ and aided his understanding of the social factors that impacted his working-class life, remembering his father as the construction worker who ‘would come home from work, eat, and disengage” (p.15). While Dieser’s father was a construction worker and my father was a hospital custodian, both men were blue collar workers who worked labour jobs. In all likelihood, both men probably returned home night after night to have dinner, to do household tasks and to wake up early the following day to do it all over again.

Songs that recognize the working man are an acknowledgement of their lives. These songs are a way of saying: “I know how hard you worked. I know what you gave up. I see and I appreciate you.” Because art “makes the invisible, visible” (Johnson, 2002, p. 52), the music about a working man’s life has the power to acknowledge and celebrate his life.

My father loved country music, and was especially drawn to Johnny Cash, an iconic singer who sang of the plight of the workingman. I suspect that my dad could relate to Cash, and to the lyrics that he and other country singers penned. Singing country songs was a way for my father to tell his story, without actually telling his story. These songs within my father’s musical repertoire illustrated his life “through the telling” (Abram, 1996, p. 163). His musical soundscape was his living story (Bruner, 1991; Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000) as is celebrated and exemplified by Carroll O’Connor and Jean Stapleton (1971) in “Those Were the Days: All in the Family Theme Song”:

*Boy, the way Glenn Miller played,  
Songs that made the hit parade  
Guys like me we had it made, those were the days*

(Adams & Strouse, 1971, Single)

Music was possibly the greatest thing in my dad's life. Apart from the joy and entertainment it provided, music gave my dad a sense of belonging; if he was ever at a low point or feeling out of sorts the music of his prairie comrades could make him right as rain. Music was his platform of expression, and with songs whose lyrics reflected his life, it was as though those country singers had written their songs just for my dad:

Here was the power of song,  
the power of live performance  
And the power of music  
as a pedagogical tool on full display.

(Thindal, 2019, p. 93)

In having grown up with country music, and in witnessing country music's impact on my parents (Bruscia, 1998), country music continues to be a major influence in my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012; Street, 2010, 2017; Welch, 2005). Aside from my parent's musical influences on me, there are many other influences throughout my life – from my parents, siblings and friends to radio, media, film and MTV. As a teenager, once I began to listen closely for a song's meaning, I discovered that music could be a platform for expression.

I discovered that through music a person could say something important. I realized early on that I could say something through music. It was there, in my childhood kitchen where Loretta Lynn sang of being a coalminer's daughter, that I first began to write poetry.

In reflecting upon possible musical influences, the multiple people and situations that influence, or could influence, my musical world, a lost moment surfaces. I am taken back in time to the 1970s (Belfi et al., 2014) when rock music is entering the horizon of my musical soundscape: I am leafing through my brother's record collection and when come across the 1979 album, *Another Brick in the Wall*, from the English band, Pink Floyd. A lost moment surfaces to reveal my appreciation for the political bent that comes with this album.



At the time of its original release, this album is immensely popular and the title track became “the voice of many children and adults across the world” (Thindal, 2019, p. 28), and the title track became a sort of mantra for anyone who feels like they are under the control of a regime, a system or another person. This song empowers listeners and for many, acts as a “platform for exploring political and social issues that [are] relevant to young people” (Snell, 2007, p. 50). For me, this song represents a significant moment (Greene, 1995; Warland, 2010) in which music speaks to me, and reflects the situation at hand.

In hearing Pink Floyd's signature tune, I recognize music as a platform for social change (McLaren, 1989). This is the moment when I first identify the power of music through which the radio forum with its musical and narrative content woven becomes a platform for communication, expression and advocacy for social justice (McLaren, 1989; Thindal, 2019). As I reflect upon radio - then and now - I am called to explore the power of radio and my identity within music (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012), and my place within:

### 3.8. Radio Tales #12: On the Cover of Musical Influence

#### [Listen to Radio Tale #12](#)

While music has influenced my life in many way, and many realms, music was especially powerful during the teen years when my friends and I sought out a sense of empowerment in our young lives, something that is clearly expressed in Pink Floyd's signature tune, "The Wall":

*We don't need no education  
We don't need no thought control  
No dark sarcasm in the classroom  
Teachers leave them kids alone  
Hey! Teachers! Leave them kids alone!*

(Waters, 1979, Track 3)

Music has woven itself throughout my life and has touched on themes that reflect my lived experience. All the while, my early musical education has been informed by my family, and especially by my older sister and older brother. I was introduced to my brother's music – either directly or indirectly as it was sounded throughout the house. Aside from his music collection, my brother's bedroom floor was strewn with stacks of Mad magazines, the sports section of that day's newspaper, and the latest edition of the Rolling Stone magazine. As such, I paid attention – as is outlined in Joni Mitchell's metaphorical lyrical content in "California":

*Went to a party down a red dirt road  
There were lots of pretty people there,  
Reading "Rolling Stone," reading "Vogue."  
They said, "How long can you hang around?"*

(Mitchell, 1971, Track 6)

From my younger sister eyes, it looked like my brother knew a lot about music – rock 'n roll mostly – which made him seem cool somehow. He had albums of the most popular bands of the day – Led Zeppelin, The Who, Pink Floyd, Supertramp, The Stones. Then there were the solo artists: Meatloaf, Blondie, Pat Benetar, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and Rickie Lee Jones.

*How come he don't come and PIP with me  
Down at the meter no more?  
And how come he turn off the TV?  
And he hang that sign on the door?*

*We call and we call  
"How come?" we say.  
What could make a boy behave this way? ...  
That means that Chuck Es in love*

(Jones, 1979, Track 1)

As Jones (1979) surmises in "Chuck Es in Love," we teenagers questioned the changes we saw in one another which often came down to love. Young love.

Aside from my brother's music collection I liked that he paid attention to the critics as was apparent by the stack of *Rolling Stone* magazines and the pile of art reviews on his bedroom floor. I think he recognized the influence that critics and the media had on an artist's musical career. A strong review could make or break a career, as could a song with a pointed message – something that Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show sings so pointedly of in their signature tune "On the Cover of the Rolling Stone":

*Hey, Ray, hey, Sugar, tell them who we are  
Well, we're big rock singers, we got golden fingers  
And we're loved everywhere we go (sounds like us)  
We sing about beauty and we sing about truth  
At ten thousand dollars a show (right!)*

*We take all kinds of pills that give us all kinds of thrills  
But the thrill we've never known  
Is the thrill that'll gitcha when you get your picture  
On the cover of the Rolling Stone*

(Silverstein, 1972, Track 11)

Music comes to us in many ways and through many avenues, influences, and soundtracks. As the music's bass pounds through the floorboards of my neighbour's apartment, I think about who my brother was as a young man, and how music – his music – came to inform who he would become.

When my brother was younger, as he made his way home from baseball practice, he'd often stop in at the Victoria Drive furniture store – the same store that sponsored his little league baseball team. In the back of the store there was a selection of "45s" for sale – which back in the day were music singles that had been posted on the *Billboard Hot*

100s earlier that week. One such tune I recall from his 45s collection is the 1978 novelty song, "The Streak," by Toronto actor Ray Stevens:

*REPORTER:*

*Hello everyone, this is your action news reporter  
with all the news that is news across the nation  
on the scene at the supermarket  
There seems to have been some disturbance here  
Pardon me, sir, did you see what happened?*

*WITNESS:*

*Yeah, I did, I's standin' overe there by the tomaters  
and here he come running through the pole beans,  
through the fruits and vegetablesnekkid as a jay bird  
And I hollered over t' Ethel I said, "Don't look, Ethel!"  
But it's too late, she's already been incensed*

(Stevens, 1973, Track 1)

With age, my brother moved on from hit singles to full length "33" albums. As his collection grew, and as he went through phases of listening to certain artists, so too did my awareness of music change and shift and grow – mostly from hearing the music as it reverberated through my brother's bedroom walls. I recall his Joe Cocker phase with the UK singer's version of The Beatle tune "A Little Help from My Friends," a song that reflects the importance of loyalty among high school friends:

*What would you do if I sang out of tune?  
Would you stand up and walk out on me?  
Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song  
And I'll try not to sing out of key*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1967a, Track 9)

I don't know where my brother heard the music. Probably the radio, perhaps his friends. Or like me, by osmosis. Regardless, he seemed to be up to date with musical trends. Similarly, my parents and my older sister also followed musical trends – in country music. Others who influenced my music repertoire were friends, boyfriends and media outlets. Aside from hearing music around the house, I was also informed and influenced by the radio – of which Harry Chapin (1980) illuminates in "Remember When the Music,":

*Remember when the music  
Came from wooden boxes strung with silver wire  
As we sang the words, it would set our minds on fire  
For we believed in things, and so we'd sing*

(Chapin, 1980, Track 31)

As I got older, someone in my family was usually tuning in to the local radio station. If it wasn't my parents listening to CKNW, my older sisters dialed in to CKLG or CFUN while my brother tuned in to CFOX. As for me, I listened to CFUN hoping that eventually my favourite cover tunes and Billboard hits would be played – as is reflected in Queen's "Radio Ga-ga":

*I'd sit alone and watch your light  
I only played through teenage nights  
And everything I had to know  
I heard it on my radio*

(Mercury, 1983, Track 1)

While we are drawn to a song's lyrics by the stories they tell and their reflection upon our lives, we are also drawn to various aspects of the music itself – the rhythm, the beat, the genres. This is explored in *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, when Oliver Sacks (2007) suggests that there are "inherent tendencies to repetition in music itself" (p.110) such that:

Our poetry, our ballads, our songs are full of repetition; nursery rhymes and the little chants and songs we use to teach young children have choruses and refrains. We are attracted to repetition, even as adults; we want the stimulus and the reward again and again, and in music we get it. (Sacks, 2007, p. 110)

It is therefore not surprising that we are drawn to stories and nursery rhymes, as children, and later, and song's music and lyrics, as teenagers. While we may benefit through a song's influence on language and embodiment, we also benefit emotionally. Not only can a song render us vulnerable, it also has the ability to "lift us out of depression or move us to tears [as] a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear...to express inner states or feelings [...and to] pierce the heart directly" (Sacks, 2007, p. 329). As such, regardless of how music came into my life, because its ability to affect all lives is so dramatic, personal and experience specific, each song in my musical soundtrack somewhere, somehow informs my life. These songs represent an extension

of my voice and my living story, something that ABBA (1977) speaks to in “Thank You for the Music”:

*I'm nothing special, in fact I'm a bit of a bore  
If I tell a joke, you've probably heard it before  
But I have a talent, a wonderful thing  
Cause everyone listens when I start to sing  
I'm so grateful and proud  
All I want to do is sing it out loud*

*So I say thank you for the music  
The song I'm singing*

(Andersson & Uvaeus, 1977, Track 7)

### **3.8.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #12: On the Cover of Musical Influence**

As noted in “Radio Tale #12” while musical influences may be instrumental in illuminating a person's character with regard to interests, beliefs and/or emotions, this aspect of identity formation and definition is not static. Listeners are dynamic beings who are always changing. Thus, whoever a person looks to as a mentor or a musical influence will also change. A person's musical preferences will therefore also change.

In having explored an array of lived experiences, and the music of that reflects those time periods – from early childhood to the later teenage years – music's capacity to hold memory (Smith, 1991, 1992) is apparent. From looking at the music, memories and lost moments that reflect and illuminate my life, I look to narrative themes throughout my life. This are exemplified in radio tales that illustrate my early life experiences: trauma amidst my mother's illness (“Radio Tale # 4: Downtown, The Great Escape”); determine ‘what makes us, us?’ (“Radio Tale #2: You're a Song”); explore ‘who am I?’ (“Radio Tale #10: Who are You?”); reveal shared music with friends (“Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy and Three Songs for a Quarter”), and finally, illuminate musical influences within family (“Radio Tale #7: Riding the Prairie Airwaves” and “Radio Tale #11: On the Cover of Musical Influence”).

### 3.9. Performative Inquiry Within Radio Broadcasting

After unpacking my life by writing through living inquiry, I turn to radio broadcasting as a platform to further uncover my lived experience, and a space to perform my life through performative inquiry. Through performative inquiry, I explore new ways of being in performance.

While performative inquiry provides a framework – of engagement, noticing, reflection – from which I view radio production, this form of inquiry helps me identify stumbling blocks within radio. Performative inquiry asks that I attend to my learning and to be aware of how I perform in relation to others and my newly discovered location of radio. Through performative inquiry I am invited to embody in action my interactions with others, and to attend to stop moments that arise throughout the broadcasting process:

Our narratives, our histories in relationship with place and time, relationships and experiences remembered, and newly realized in an ongoing unfolding of new possibilities. (Ricketts, 2011, p. 27)

Each stop calls me - as an artist, an announcer, and an academic - to notice how I am shaped by behaviours and habitual behaviours of performance in radio. Some areas of interest include “action, language, authority, location, and context” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 6). By attending to these elements of inquiry, I develop an understanding of radio broadcasting, media politics as well as media and radio and media terminology.

The stop is a moment that invites me to leap into the unknown, which, as a radio announcer, I apply to my learning of radio technology. For instance, in the early stages of radio broadcasting I lack confidence in operating studio equipment. As I am challenged to break through this stumbling block, I explore the elements of performance that performative inquiry asks of me.

I give myself permission to interrupt ways of being in performance and to explore new ways of being in performance (Fels, 1999, 2012a, 2012b). I start by giving myself the freedom to improvise throughout my live one-hour radio programs. Although I pre-select music, interviews and radio tales, the organization and presentation of each show is unscripted. While this approach not only shifts a key habit of performance, by being unscripted, this allows me to be spontaneous and present throughout my radio broadcast and performance. In turn, this approach helps me to become comfortable

within the radio station, which makes me feel like the studio is 'mine'. I feel a sense of belonging (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014) within the radio space which eases my comfort with technology, and in operating studio equipment.

This engagement with radio becomes a dance of give and take, a co-creation in which I dialogue with technology to discover the power of live broadcasting, recording, editing, tweaking. I use my voice to express, explore, enunciate. Radio technology and I produce radio programming in which I discover my signature style within radio broadcasting. It unfolds as personal narrative, improvised commentaries, ease with interviews and connections with music and unfolding my musical soundtrack as it relates to and reflects upon lived experience. Personal narrative becomes a key aspect of my broadcasting style in radio production. Through narration and radio storytelling, I create content in the moment, and shift the aforementioned habits of performance (Fels & Ricketts, 2009). These discoveries reveal "untapped possibilities" (Greene, 1995, p. 90), such that *The Arts Edge* evolves to take the form (van Bergen, 2007) of a one-woman show comprised of music and memoir.

As I explore my experience with the radio and radio storytelling, through performative inquiry, questions emerge, calling me to be reflective of radio programming, during production as well as post-production:

**As I engage with radio technology, in what ways am I more alive?  
What performative strategies help me perform to an empty room  
(as though an audience is physically present and listening to me)?  
How do I perform when I believe that listeners are really listening?  
What do I hear when my voice is sounded through the studio?  
How does this my broadcasted voice call me into presence?  
How does this my voice impact the broadcast?**

These reflections help me to develop my radio program and to look closely at primary and secondary roles as a radio broadcaster. My key role as a broadcaster reveals dual roles embedded within: announcer and performer. These two roles are played out so different aspects of my key role play out differently. While the role of 'announcer' reveals



the subset roles of public speaker, commentator, educator and producer, the role of performer reveals the subset roles of narrator, storyteller, comedian and memoirist.

Each of these roles provides me with multiple routes to performance in which I create content in the sub-areas of radio broadcasting: interviews, music and artist biographies/ profiles, narration, radio drama, narrative essays, autobiographical essays and live reflections. While some roles require professionally informed content, other roles inspire personally informed content. For instance, various aspect of radio production invite new ways of being in performance (Fels, 1999, 2012a, 2012b) such that I move between interviews and music focused content to personal content that included radio tales and my reflections of music and memories.

This process invites me to perform myself in many facets of myself, as “patient, mirror and analyst [...so that, the] thing-that-writes is in a sense the-thing-that-is-being-written” (Jouve, 1990, pp. 43-44). I am the observer and the observed; I am the self and the other; I am present and reflective; I am the broadcaster and the broadcasted; I am the medium and the message (McLuhan, 1964).

Through these reflections, I experience a multitude of stops that call me to attention. I am stopped by the realization that during radio broadcasts I become visible to the listening audience and they become visible to me. It is as though time and space is suspended, allowing us to see one another. Within this state of illusion my voice is transmitted through the airwaves, I am ‘seen’:

**I speak into a microphone  
Technology transmits the sonic  
My voice is transmitted through radio sound waves.  
Sound travels upwards into the satellite and transmits the sonic:  
into peoples’ homes, cars, mobile phones, computer devices.  
My words, my stories, my music are transported through cyberspace.**

I am, as performance scholar Phelan (1993) concludes, “suspended in-between” (p. 167). Within this liminal space, radio is an action site of learning to which I bring new understandings, recognitions and possibilities (Fels & Strothers, 1996; Fels, 1998). I am a voice in radio, a voice in the ether in which I experience myself through technology. This intimate engagement with radio production invites to see myself anew. My new

discoveries are stops that reveal technology to be way of seeing myself, as a sort of lantern (Nietzsche, 1976) that will lead me to the radio tales. Through this research I am out with lanterns looking for myself (Dickinson, 1876) which metaphorically illuminates radio production as a platform for expression and self-discovery. This illumination calls me to attention, revealing my identity and signature within radio production. It is a space of becoming. My exploration calls me to attend to the newness of radio:

Even if the distance is very far, or...if the story told is very large, you talk like you're talking to one person at a time....Radio goes out in all directions within a circle, to be heard, altogether at once....But the words fall from the sky and into the ears of always one person at a time. (Allison, 2006, p. 188)

Hidden moments of vulnerability, intimacy and a new awareness of possibility (Fels, 1999, 2012a, 2012b; Fels & Strothers, 1996) surface. As the voice behind the radio curtain is revealed to create a space of dialogue and companionship between myself and the audience, I am aware that I am seen. My visibility creates an intimate space through "the sound of the human voice" (Biewen, 2010, p. 14) to create a sense of my presence, as though I am speaking directly to each listener. Through this sonic landscape, the sound my voice contains breath and lives in time through the radio.

As I become more present within this intimate realm that is radio, my presence invites new memories that unfold personal narrative. The 'hidden' is thus revealed, inviting lost moments to surface. I explore me and my life within radio. I improvise. I play. My play leads me to dig deep within to welcome additional fragments into the radio moment. These nuggets of time merge with musical sound bytes to unpack the unclaimed treasures of my life, and to invite the possibility of what else I might remember:

**What if I play the music of childhood, what will I recall?**

**What if I play the music of my mother, will the silences be revealed?**

**What if I play the music of my grandmother, what will it tell me?**

**What if I play the music of my Irish kinfolk, will I travel back in time?**

**If music is an extension of my voice, what might this mean? What if...?**

The arena of radio invites me to investigate my chronological experience with radio the music of my life and the personal narratives within ancestry. These spaces are containers or organic places "to house all the parts of me – my artist, researcher, educator" (Snowber, 2013, p. 7). Amid the spaces that radio offers, radio performance

becomes my home, my place of inquiry, performance and arrival, and my place of re-connecting with my ancestors.

Within the house of radio, all parts of me come into being (Heidegger, 1962; Snowber, 2013). This space invites the unfolding of identity, and the expansion of my memoir self, for whenever a space is “a performative space of exploration and engagement where the ‘walls disappear,’” creativity invariably goes up (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 72). That said, within the realm of radio, my creativity expands to unfold my personal narrative.

While I initially approach radio as a blank canvas that is without form (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tharp, 2006), when I make that one single mark on the canvas I know I am creating a new world and setting a new creation in motion (Nachmanovitch, 1990). The radio station is my blank canvas. In having made that ‘one mark’, that was followed by one song, one memory, one world, the radio tales come into being; radio tales becomes my artistic canvas, my musical memoir.

Through my unleashing of this musically-sounded memoir, my individual story is illuminated (Baker & Macdonald, 2017) and my musical identity takes form (Viega, 2013). To understand my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012) I engage with music-making and listening and am provided with a rich context “for nurturing, forming and informing the positive and ethical growth of people’s self-identity, self-other identities, and musical identities” (Elliott & Silverman, 2017, p. 27). Radio thus becomes an ideal space in which my musical praxis unfolds through which I reclaim the music of my life and my musical identity .

In identifying my musical identity and musical praxis, I “dwell more richly in the territory of the sensual life, where all of life is both sensual and sacred” (Snowber, 2016, p. 25). The music is heard through listening, yet is also experienced through the senses and the ‘thinking’ body (LaBelle, 2006). This sensuality invites me to connect more deeply with the music of my life and to be impacted by the momentous content that arises. In “Radio Tale #2: You’re a, Song,” as I consider the notion of “what makes us, us?”, I explore how music informs creativity, uniqueness, ways of knowing and body memory. This radio tale reveals music’s primary function as being to understand music’s intrinsic power as art (Reimer, 1989). While music reflects and mirrors the human condition, this radio tale

illustrates that all people have a sonic and a musical soundscape that sounds (Gershon, 2013a; Murch, 1994; Street, 2017) their entire life:

### 3.10. Radio Tale #2: You're a Song

#### [Listen to Radio Tale #2](#)

I don't know what makes any of us who we are. For the most part, we are a mathematical equation gone right, a science experiment in the making, a creative endeavour, a work in progress. In terms of our biological make-up, our DNA, most of us share the same elements of design – give or take. But what makes us, "us"?

As far back as I can remember I have been exploring this question. First, as a pre-school child who was always engaged in free play and stretching the imagination. Then as a grade school student. The first song I remember learning in school was "Punchinello", a song that explored the possibilities of imagination within movement and voice. A group of children form a circle around one child who has been chosen to enact a physical and sonic performance, as is illustrated by Little Fox in their rendition of "Punchinello":

*What can you do Punchinello, Punchinello  
What can you do  
Punchinello from the zoo*

(Traditional, n.d., mp3 file)

The child in the circle then makes a motion and a sound that the other children imitate:

*Oh we can do it too Punchinello, Punchinello  
We can do it too  
Punchinello from the zoo*

(Traditional, n.d., mp3 file)

I also recall songs that helped me identify with my body. In hindsight, my grade school teachers used music to teach the parts of the body as well as language that incorporated such concepts as dance and embodiment, drama and performance, and science and metacognition. One such song I take from my childhood is the traditional song, as performed by Larry LaPrise, "The Hokey Pokey":

*You put your right foot in, you take your right foot out  
You put your right foot in, and you shake it all about  
You do the hokey pokey and you turn yourself around  
That's what it's all about*

(LaPrise, 1940, Track 2)

While both songs are ways to learn about the body while being silly, as children grow up with these songs, they come to realize how our body is so much more than the sum of all its parts and functions. Our body is, in fact, a vessel of knowledge and a way of knowing, something Helene Cixous (1976) speaks to in *The Laugh of the Medusa*: “Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard” (pp. 875-893).

Similarly, SFU professor, Dr. Celeste Snowber, who notes that there is “an art to listening to our lives for research is “not only an outward endeavour but it travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions and practice” (2005, p. 346) notes how to listen:

It is not just an activity of the mind, but everything within us: mind, heart, body, soul, imagination and cognition. Or one could say it is fingers, toes, pelvis, hips, neck, breath and shoulders. Listening to the body is one of the greatest gifts we are given as humans. Listening is hearing the bold proclamations and subtle sensations. (Snowber, 2004)

Writing the body can also be an opportunity to use the arts to speak out against injustice – something Lady Gaga achieves through her recording of “Till it Happens to You,” a song that she co-wrote with Diane Warren for the 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground*, which addresses campus rape in the United States:

*You tell me it gets better, it gets better in time  
You say I'll pull myself together: “Pull it together. You'll be fine”  
Tell me how the hell do you know, what do you know...  
'Til it happens to you, you don't know how it feels*

(Lady Gaga & Warren, 2015, DVD)

In another example, Canadian songwriter Melanie Safka (1970) uses her music to speak out against the “tumultuous relationship between the advertising industry and the music industry as is illustrated in “Look What They've Done to My Song, Ma.” Originally written and recorded by Safka in 1970, the song was later recorded by Miley Cyrus in her 2015 *Backyard Sessions*. Both versions present the lyrics in a ‘playful oh-well’ sort of way:

*Look what they've done to my song, Ma  
Look what they've done to my song  
well it's the only thing that I could do half right  
And it's turning out wrong, Ma*

(Safka, 2015, Track 5)

So, what makes any of us 'us'? What content exemplifies our gifts as individuals? What frame best fits the story we have to tell? The song we yearn to sing? The identity we long to unfold?

In 2001 Colombian singer Shakira championed people in recognition of people as unique beings, as an extension of a song – as is illustrated through metaphor in her hit single “Underneath Your Clothes”:

*You're a song written by the hand of God*

(Shakira & Mendez, 2011, Track 2)

We are as Shakira (2011) suggests, unique just as we are similar – a song – and in possessing our own song – we have an imprint on the world. A signature, if you will. This is something Cowboy Junkies' front-woman (Margo Timmins) sings of in “Musical Key,” a song off the band's 1996 album *Lay It Down* – *with lyrics that reflects the musical experience I shared with my mother.*

*My mother sang the sweetest melody  
Although she never sang in a musical key  
I'd hear her through the house my name called out loud  
She'd say, girl you are a part of me, I have made you strong  
When you grow up and are on your own  
Remember to win them with your song*

(Timmins & Timmins, 1996, Track 10)

Regardless of the art that we bring forward, how we contribute will determine how and if we are heard. American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham – whose technique reshaped American dance and is still taught worldwide – suggests that “great dancers are not great because of their technique [...but] because of their passion” (as quoted in Gilbert, 2013, p. 42). That said, regardless of whether our gifts (Rilke, 1929, 1984) are woven into works of art that embody words, music, film, dance, canvases or art books, stage or song, it is our intention and enthusiast behind the work that makes it great.

While a skill is a technique that we learn and a talent is something one is born with, it is through hard work, intention and passion that we bring the two together, and dream our passion into being. If we believe as many suggest, that a talent is a gift from God, a calling, a responsibility – that is specific to us – this would suggest that if we don't use our gifts they will, as noted above, never exist again. Being a powerful thought to consider, it indicates just how unique each of us really is.

*You're a song written by the hand of God*

As previous radio tales indicated, for the duration of my graduate school years, and the writing and recording of radio tales throughout, I often reflect upon my mother's lived experience. This process has not only shone a light on my mom's heartache but as well, on her tenacity to becoming happy. As a result, despite the difficult parts of her life – the breakdowns, the hospitalizations, the many bouts of shock treatment and the effects – in the end my mother just wanted to be happy. Perhaps that is why she loved the arts so much – music, films, stories of plight and triumph. These were spaces of hope where she could lose herself. If I could sum up my mom's life in one lyrical motto, it might be The Carpenters' 1973 hit single, "Sing." Although this song was originally written in 1971 by Joe Raposo, for the children's television show *Sesame Street*, it gained notoriety when recorded by the said brother and sister duet, reaching #3 on the *1973 Billboard Hot 100*, and is a song that reflects my mother's lived experience:

*Sing, sing a song  
Make it simple to last your whole life long  
Don't worry that it's not good enough for anyone else to hear  
Just sing, sing a song*

(Raposo, 1973, Track 1)

In many respects, my mother kept it simple. Perhaps this is why – despite the hardships of life – that she lived as long as she did. Because, after all, she'd always managed to: *sing, sing a song.*

### **3.10.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #2: You're a Song**

As noted in "You're a Song," the music that informs my life has its roots in early childhood, starting with songs that pertain to the body and one's sense of self as well as movement and imitating movements.



As a teenager, my musical influences were a part of my day-to-day life. In reflecting upon these years, I am led to a pile of record albums at the radio station – LPs that I suspect have not been played for many years. I discover an old, tattered record album from the 1970s. A lost moment jumps out at me.

I am taken back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to a song of my youth. The song is from the 1975 LP, *Dreamboat Annie*, is the debut album from Seattle’s iconic band, Heart, and is fronted by sisters Ann and Nancy Wilson. I slide the vinyl LP out of the album sleeve and place it on the studio’s turn-table. I push play and release the needle onto the LPs vinyl grooves and am promptly reminded of my high school years when my friends and I hung out at the E & B Restaurant, one of East Van’s popular greasy spoon hangouts.

The title track of this album is especially resonant because the record’s physical condition indicates that the album has been played repeatedly for the song sounds ‘old’: “sounds different – with its pop, clicks, and surface noise – than one whose historical journey has been shorter or less momentous” (Street, 2017, p. 106). As I read the back of the tattered album cover and listen to the scratched-up LP, I journey back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to reclaim this radio tale of my youth:

### 3.11. Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy and Three Songs for a Quarter

#### [Listen to Radio Tale #15](#)

As seven girls nestled into a booth, at the E & B Restaurant, ladled in red vinyl seating and sounded by jukebox favourites, the waitress approached the table ready to take the order and to respond to quick-thinking quips. I recall she found us funny and complimentary, and if any of us were ever rude she was quick to tell us. I remember one time someone was especially mouthy towards her and she seemed genuinely hurt, probably because we were regulars and I think she liked us as much as we liked her.

Like clockwork, I ordered fries and gravy at \$1.35 a plate. Thinking back, my mouth begins to water. What I wouldn't do for a plate of the E & B's fries and gravy. I remember them like it's yesterday: a large oval 1970s style plate of fries smothered in beef gravy. If I had a dollar for every plate I ordered in the four years we frequented the E & B, I would be retired by now – in some exotic country, no doubt, eating fries and gravy I'm sure. Yet in that moment, I am immersed in Arlo Guthrie's spectacular lyrical tune, "Alice's Restaurant," a story-song that speaks to my lived experience that encapsulated the magic of my teenage years:

*You can get anything you want at Alice's restaurant  
Just walk right in, it's around the back  
Just a half mile around the railroad track  
You can get anything you want at Alice's restaurant*

(Guthrie, 1967, Track 1)

While we waited for our orders, we took turns playing favourite tunes; at three for a quarter, I'd make a selection and offer out the other two until my turn came around again. We played songs that spanned the years: "Ruby Tuesday," "Nights in White Satin," "Stairway to Heaven," "Angie," "Dreamboat Annie." And then there was my favourite, a song whose storyline spoke to my artist self, to my youthful and whimsical fancy of living a life of empowerment, a song from British singer-songwriter Al Stewart's "Year of the Cat":

*On a morning from a Bogart movie  
In a country where they turn back time  
You go strolling through the crowd like Peter Lorre  
Contemplating a crime*

(Stewart, 1976, Track 9)

In having found a place that we branded our own, we found solace. We even had our own booth – close to the phone, close to the bathroom, close to our hearts, you could say. It was our hangout for many a lunch hour, often taking us into the afternoon. Extended lunch hours could be determined by disliked classes or teachers, overdue assignments and emotional teenage-girl upsets to be cried over cold cups of tea and coffee, and smouldering cigarettes – imagery that Olivia Newton John (1975) creates in her hit single “Please Mr. Please”:

*In the corner of the bar there stands a jukebox  
With the best of country music, old and new  
You can hear your five selections for a quarter  
And somebody else’s songs when yours are through*

(Rostill & Welch, 1975, Track 11)

Known for its eccentrics, the restaurant housed blue-collar sorts from nightshift workers, longshoreman, and tradesmen as well as police officers, drug dealers, and a few junkies working off a fix. With coffee at fifty cents a cup (and free refills), the cups kept coming. Although cops working the beat, or passing through Vancouver’s east side, would stop in for a cheap meal, once they entered the establishment, they were off duty and the restaurant was off limits. Like passing over into another world, as Peter did in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, once inside, the cops turned a blind eye to the goings on within. Although it struck me odd that the police officers never questioned where we teenagers were supposed to be, over time it became apparent that the restaurant was a sanctioned place, that law enforcement of any of the regulars – including the teenagers – would have somehow been like breaking code. This code of loyalty is reflected in Led Zeppelin’s signature tune, “All of My Love”:

*Your’s is the cloth  
Mine is the hand that sews time  
His is the force that lies within  
Our’s is the fire, all the warmth we can find*

(Page, Plant & Jones, 1979, Track 5)

We weren't always a group of seven. Most of us met each other at Gladstone Secondary School, with many transferring in at different points, from other schools – Little Flower Academy, Notre Dame, Templeton and Vancouver Technical – so that, by Grade Eleven we were seven. While our little group gave us a cohesiveness, our varied origins also provided us a sense of independence – something that is illuminated in The Rolling Stones' tune "Goodbye Ruby Tuesday":

*She would never say where she came from  
Yesterday don't matter if it's gone  
While the sun is bright, or in the darkest night  
No one knows, she comes and goes*

(Jagger & Richards, 1967, Track 3)

Life changed. Aside from going in different directions and figuring out our place in the world, friendships fizzled and plans waned. Although many of us tried to stay in touch after high school, it was hard to hang on as is reflected in T-Rex's tune, "Bang a Gong":

*Well you're dirty and sweet  
Clad in black don't look back and I love you  
You're dirty and sweet, oh yeah  
Well you're slim and you're weak  
You've got the teeth of the hydra upon you*

(T-Rex, 1971, Track 6)

As I have gone through life there have been many times where I have thought of these girls and how they helped to form who I became and how they informed the music that I gravitated towards. There are just so many fond memories . It's a sort of paradox when you lose touch with people who were there during your formative years when you were either a young child or a teenager trying to find your way in the world. Perhaps going our own separate ways over time is to be expected. It's not necessarily a bad thing. It just means that our paths are taking us in different directions. Perhaps it was all just a part of growing up. Then again, maybe it was all just a "Dreamboat Annie" – an allusive imagery that is reflected upon in Heart's lyrical content:

*Going down the city sidewalk alone in the crowds  
No one knows the lonely one whose head's in the clouds  
Sad faces painted over with those magazine smiles  
Heading out to somewhere won't be back for a while*

(Wilson & Wilson, 1975, Track 5)

### **3.11.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy and Three Songs for a Quarter**

Many lost moments are incorporated in “Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy and Three Songs for a Quarter” that remind me of my teenage years, the girl I once was, and of the music that informed who I was to become.

Music is a significant aspect of my daily life (Green, 2006; Warland, 2010), so much so that my musical soundtrack was prominent in my life as a high school student (Nikleva, 2009). Through the scratchings of a turntable, nostalgic rumblings transport me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014; Kelly, 2010) to recall playing old 45s. Once the needle is placed in the groove of that age-old LP, “a physical connection between the past and the present” (Suissman, 2009, p. 15) is made, taking me back to recall my scratched-up vinyl records of my youth.

Emotional marks are left (Cardillo et al., 2012; Sacks, 2007), reminding me of my musical soundscape in which “time has carved its sound on my being” (Street, 2017, p. 107). These connections call me to embrace technology, as my sonic toolbox, to record these physically archived sonic experiences; in doing so I create “the physical evidence of [my musical soundscape’s bodily] existence through sound” (Street, 2017, p. 107). These sounds, like music and memory’s messages, become trigger points for remembering other sounds and other memories. Much like the songs themselves, the needle’s sound on the LP is also a portal of memory (Kelly, 2010) of my teenaged years.

While this metaphorical walk unfolds into lost moments that become radio tales, such as “Fries & Gravy,” I dwell in spaces of memory within my living landscape (Kelly, 2010). I retrace the steps of my youth (Davis, 2009), tracking “concentric circles of relationship” (Kelly, 2010, p. 58) that help me understand and appreciate the teenage years (Bruner, 1995; Cocke, 2004; Gibb, 2015). By retracing these steps, fragmented pieces of memory emerge (Cardillo et al., 2012; Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Snowber, 2013). Places, persons and memories that reflect “the formative teenage years, when [I was] experiencing life and emotions for the first time” (Street, 2015, p. 63) rise to the surface. I re-story memories of my youth through these “fragmented narratives [that] become the faschia linking us one to another” (Ricketts, 2013, p. 8), and me to the past. By sharing these memories, embedded in the format of the radio tales, I invite listeners to reflect upon, and identify, the musical footprints of their own teenage experience.

Looking back on this memory I realize that youth is a time when musical preferences reflects one's personal identity (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017). Music empowers teenagers in many ways. By relating to song lyrics, singers and bands and musical performances, music becomes an extension of listener's lives and their living stories (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). In being an empowering means for communication, music provides listeners with a sense of control over their lives and to help people cope with life challenges (Cardillo et al., 2012; McFerran & Hense, 2017; Sacks, 2007) that may arise. Music is also empowering for teenagers and so, can help them to shift "the power relationship between [themselves] and adults" (Marsh, 1999, p. 3), something which has been true in my life.

Personal connections with music and musical lyrics indicate that music has a positive impact on young lives and has the potential to guide and inform its listener. Music is a construct that taught me about the world, provided me with life lessons and helped me to know what I believed (Allen, 1995; Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Cardillo et al., 2012; Gibb, 2015). It is as though music was a friend who was helping me to figure out my life.

Similar to the later teenage years that I spent at the E&B Restaurant, the music that sounded my early high school experience also helped to unravel my musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Macdonald et al., 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012). This unravelling is illustrated in "Radio Tale #10: Who Are You?":

### 3.12. Radio Tale #10: Who Are You?

#### [Listen to Radio Tale #10](#)

It was all so confusing when we walked through the double doors and into a crowd of kids, of different sizes, so much bigger than us. Pushing. Shoving. Rushing to get to their lockers, to their next class, or outside for a smoke.

Since the spring of Grade Seven, when my class had visited the high school for a tour and a meeting in the cafeteria where we were served chocolate milk and donuts with sprinkles, where the principal and the Grade Eight counsellor had told us about how great high school was going to be - I couldn't wait to get here. But now, I wasn't so sure.

Sure the chocolate milk was here and sure the donuts with sprinkles were here but there were all these kids, and it was so crowded. It was daunting unlike in Grade Seven, where I had been one of the oldest students, and one of the tallest, it felt like I was in control somehow. The previous year when I was in Grade Six, I had read *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. Somehow reading that book made me feel better about myself; it gave me the sense of, oh I don't know, that I could take care of myself. Sure the story was about boys, but it was also about social classes and the attitudes between two social groups, and I found I could relate. I guess because my family had lived on the east side of Vancouver, and we were obviously on the low end of the totem, the pecking order so to speak. My family had had some experience with poverty, in my younger years. There were also issues with mental health, alcohol, alcoholism. There were a lot of alcoholics, maybe not directly in my family but in extended family there were a lot of alcoholics. And chaos. And it felt like all that added chaos added to our credit. I guess you could say, *The Outsiders* was my kind of book.

*I woke up in a Soho doorway, a policeman knew my name  
He said you can go sleep at home tonight  
If you can get up and walk away [...]  
Well, who are you? (who are you? who, who, who, who?)”  
I really wanna know*

(Townshend, 1977, Track 9)

Thinking back I recall my brother and his music. I was very influenced by his musical choices as well as the choices of my friends, my other siblings. In those early years you

could say that through music there was a lot that I would come to discover about myself. I think back to that period of my life when The Who's hit single "Who Are You?" blared through the kitchen floor from my brother's bedroom below. And I could relate.

I didn't know who I was, or where I was going – and I guess you could say leaving the security of my Grade Seven school for a high school where there must have been fifteen hundred students was very scary. Aside from it being scary and the sheer velocity of students and the size of the school, high school was also a new time. Being amid the younger group of the teenagers, yeah it was scary. It was like a coming of age.

Aside from just growing up and trying to figure out who you are and your place in the world, you wanted the guys to notice you. It seemed to matter more. You wanted to be accepted by your peers. Although it mattered in elementary school, you got comfortable there. In high school, in Grade Eight, you weren't comfortable. And that was really scary.

There was a song that I really related to in high school. It was a song that was written in 1973. It became a huge hit for American singer-songwriter Janis Ian. And it was a song that so many girls could relate to. One of the things that I did when I went to high school is, I had worn glasses since I was like two years old, and I had this tendency to go cross eyed if I wasn't wearing my glasses, if I was tired, if I'd been reading too much. Well, I forgot all that. I got to high school and I took off the glasses. Put them in my purse, totally forgetting that not wearing my glasses meant my eye was going inside my head. So if I thought I wasn't pretty before now I was even more not pretty only this time with my eye going inside my head. Like a Cyclops.

Anyways, Janis Ian's "At Seventeen" captures my teenage girl's experience to a tee:

*I learned the truth at seventeen  
That love was meant for beauty queens  
And high school girls with clear skinned smiles  
Who married young and then retired*

(Ian, 1974, Track 2)

As difficult as I thought Grade Eight was, it passed quickly. I eventually settled in, became comfortable. By the time I got to Grade Nine I had made more friends, I got invited to more parties and I got a good haircut. I got a little bit of style. I think when you're in high school, I think a haircut, a good haircut, can go a long way. I mean you



can be the biggest nerd on the planet but if you have some brand name clothes, a good haircut...I mean you can fool a lot of people. You can seem like not such a nerd. Well, I never thought I was a nerd because I didn't think I was smart. I thought to be a nerd you had to be smart. Thank God I thought that. I just thought I was uncool. Who knew that a good hairstyle could do so much for a girl, especially in Grade Nine.

Despite the onslaught of peer pressured activities like smoking, drinking and skipping out, I began to find my way. Me and my haircut. In Grade Nine it became fashionable to go to roller-skating parties. It was really a fun thing to do. So my friends and I would meet up at the high school after dinner and we'd board the school bus that would take us to Stardust Roller Rink in Richmond. When we got off that bus to engage in a night of roller-skating, falling and getting back up, and circling the rink all night long – to awesome music – we really felt like we were somebody. We really felt like we could rule the world. Sometimes music can do that for you. You just feel so empowered, so invincible, and a lot of the music really did that. I mean music can do that for you your whole life. But as teenagers somehow it just felt really special.

And we actually believed Queen's promise. A song that Freddy Mercury sang, talking about being champions, fighting 'til the end. We thought that in high school. Those are great memories. Although roller-skating were never the same as they were in high school, Queen's hit single "We Are the Champions" became a sort of a salute to those high school years, a beacon to find our way. Whenever that might be.

*I've paid my dues, time after time  
I've done my sentence but committed no crime  
And bad mistakes, I've made a few  
I've had my share of sand kicked in my face  
But I've come through*

*We are the champions, my friends  
And we'll keep on fighting till the end*

(Mercury, 1977, Track 2)

### 3.12.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #10: Who are You?

As I revisit the early teenage years, I recall the unease and insecurity that came with transitioning from elementary school to high school. I also recall the difficulties that came with high school and moving out of childhood and into adolescence. While I now realize that these insecurities were true of many of classmates – and teenagers in general – at the time I thought it was just me. This is something The Boomtown Rats (1979) speak to in “I Don’t Like Mondays”:

*The silicon chip inside her head  
Gets switched to overload  
And nobody's gonna go to school today  
She's going to make them stay at home...*

*Tell me why I don't like Mondays  
I want to shoot the whole day down*

(Geldof, 1979, Track 6)

As noted in “Radio Tale #10 Who are You?,” while I found solace in music (Sacks, 2007), it was the lyrical story that inspired me most. Lyrical narratives reflected everydayness (Meyer, 2010) and became a witness to my life (Bruscia, 1998). Insights that were embedded within song lyrics made “audible the voices, experiences, and meanings of individuals and communities engaged in music” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 19). The lyrics that I gravitated towards provided me with a personal narrative that wove through my life, bringing a sense of community to my experience and helping me feel that I belonged.

During those early teen years that emanated the insecurity of growing up and finding one’s place in high school, my age brought with it a new perspective of my generation. Song lyrics demonstrated the power and the platform of song. I began to see justice could be sought through music. Of this, McLaren (1989) professes that the role of the critical storyteller is “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (p. 160) which was something I found appealing as a teenager who was trying to figure out her place in the world (Heidegger, 1962). This is illuminated by Cher (1971) in “Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves”:

*I was born in the wagon of a travellin' show  
My mama used to dance for the money they'd throw  
Papa would do whatever he could  
Preach a little gospel, sell a couple bottles of doctor good*

*Gypsy's, tramps, and thieves  
We'd hear it from the people of the town*

(Stone, 1971, Track 2)

While many songs speak to a listener's personal journey, this may suggest that these songs reflect some aspect of that listener's life and/or identity. Such a reflection will likely indicate why a person is drawn to particular songs, genres, performers and/or musical themes, interests and politics.

### **3.13. Exploring Identity Through Radio Broadcasting**

In my capacity as a radio host, I bring lived experience to the forum to unfold identity. As a social construct, identity may be broken down as:

(a) a social category, defined by membership rules and [alleged] characteristic attributes or expected behaviours, or

(b) socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential, or (a) and (b) at once.

(Fearon, 1999, p. 1)

As per this definition, radio meets both criteria. One, it is a social construct in which I find membership (as a host who creates radio programs and a listener) and two, I take pride in my membership (as a host and a listener). In providing a diversity of music (which I share with listeners, friends and family), the radio is a social outlet and construct; through music and the radio environment itself, radio is a social environment in which I engage in artistic and educative practices. Radio contributes to identity which is determined and identified through programming. While my lived experience may pin me "to a unique and fundamental story" (Aoki in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 445) my living story takes many forms within the realm of radio broadcasting.

Through radio production, I unfold identity. As I experiment with broadcasting, music, audio narrative and sounding my life, identity unfolds. Within the recording studio I unpack my living story to reveal the essence of me as a performative being (van Manen, 1990).

**Who am I in the presence of radio?**

**Who do I become?**

**What do I bring to radio?**

**What context of my living story enhances the radio experience?**

My contributions to radio are largely influenced by my lived experience and essentially the essence of me (van Manen, 1990). Although I am initially intimidated by the technology of radio, I am immediately comfortable with speaking, narrating and improvising while I am 'on the air.' My presence is apparent; radio resonates as a unique imprint and a signature of my intrinsic being. I simply know what to do. This imprint illuminates the rich, deep patterning within my "original nature that impresses itself like a seal upon everything" I do or am (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 27).

In the forum of radio I generate narrative content through broadcasting and performance (*The Arts Edge*) and in writing and producing audio files (The Radio Tales). One of the key influences of these processes are the content that arises as I merge my experiences of radio, first as a child, and second, as a radio host. Radio memory is a key element of my identity, and is "a signature that has been with me, perhaps since the beginning of time" (Harder, 2012, p. 12). If radio have always with me, perhaps they existed prior to my inception into radio; perhaps my personal narratives had lain dormant and were . waiting to be excavated, released, realized (Snowber, 2013, 2016). Perhaps my stories are as King (2010) proposes: "part of an undiscovered pre-existing world" (p. 163).

Alongside this pre-existing sonic signature (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Pereira, 2016; Street, 2017; Welch, 2005) that I embrace, I discover music to be a key factor within this essential imprint of me. In having produced the radio tale audio files – that are now permanently archived in SFU's Repository – a sonic imprint of my voice exists in cyberspace. I am a sonic being in cyberspace. "on the very objects that carry the signals to which [I] listen" (Street, 2017, p. 106). This audio archive indicates that my sonic self will exist forever. This realization leads me to explore the common link between all sonic identities from inception that yearn to announce themselves (Street, 2017, p. 107). Consequently, I reclaim and re-perform musical identity (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Mercier De-Shon, 2012).

Within this space of sonic memory (Gershon, 2018), I enter the sensory space of memory. As I enter the body to remember (Snowber, 2004, 2013) I access multiple modalities of music – from sensory, emotional and cognitive – “which encode the past and...release it, transformed, into the present [...I am] making sense of my past” (Mairs, 1989, pp. 8-9). My body loops back to itself and resonates with itself to remember and to listen (Nancy, 2007). This sonic landscape is a space which hears, creates and stores sound as a key contributor that informs identity. This sonic remembering (Gershon, 2018) is a fluid act of being (Heidegger, 1962).

After looping back and listening to the body to capturing the sounds it releases, I write my body in words. I release my story to myself and the world (Milloy, 2004) and write language back into the land (Abram, 1996, p. 163). Memories are released (Smith, 1991, 1992; Snowber, 2014) as lost moments that connect to music, making creative connections that speak. And sing.

I am a sonic interactive instrument that is linked “by a transparent thread to the world” (Street, 2017, p. 110; Wilder & Woods, 2013), I express and access sound from the world. This worldly sonic expression courses through my body (Welch, 2005; Street, 2010) in waves so I can be informed and formed by sound knowledge and the sonic landscape that negotiates and resounds my everyday experience (Gershon, 2018). Just as I am affected, I too exist sonically in the world.

While I am sonically placed in the world, I exist through shared “social, cultural, and biological characteristics [...as well as] shared values, personal histories, and interests” (Buckingham, 2008, p. 2). My being is also determined by family, socio-economics, the environment, and pre-selected traits through DNA and the genetic code (Galton, 1883; Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019). Just as sound is pre-existing (Street, 2010; Welch, 2005), and I am pre-existing (Meyer, 2010), so too is the genesis of my biology. Like the earth itself, I am connected to all things such that “deep [with]in our bones and under our skin, there is a sense that we are all part of the DNA of the universe” (Snowber, 2016, p. 78). Moreover, through “the selection of desired heritable characteristics in order to improve future generations” (Wilson, 2019, n.p.) my ancestors pass down genetics. My exploration of this pre-existence leads me to make connections between the past and the present, and see how the old becomes new (Davis, 2009; Hogan, 2010). This knowing forms and informs the whys of my life, linking me to my Irish ancestry

I am the fiery fields of Dublin, Ireland  
where my great-grandmother told tales by candlelight  
while she waited for the struggle of the famine  
and of the drink, to end.

(Harder, 2006, p. 41, Lines 11-14)

I have come to identify myself as a radio broadcaster. I speak into microphones and hear my voice transmitted throughout the university campus, and beyond. In real time, a listening audience hears my voice from my campus radio booth. In realizing that I am seen by my listeners, I see myself differently. I become more knowable to myself (van Manen, 1990). In wanting to share radio tales, I take my listener on a literary, musical journey as is illuminated by Brad Kane and Lee Salonga (1992) in "A Whole New World":

*I can show you the world...  
I can open your eyes  
Take you wonder by wonder  
Over, sideways and under  
On a magic carpet ride*

(Menken, 1992, Track 10)

As my shared musical journey unfolds, so too do I. Identity becomes an unfolding that illuminates who I am in radio. This knowing leads me to transform the empty space of radio into a theatrical stage. Like Brook (1968), "I can take any 'empty space' and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this 'empty space' and the space becomes a stage" (p. 4).

Radio has become my act of theatre.

## Chapter 4.

# Lost Moments: The Past Rises Up Through Story & Song

### 4.1. The Beginning of Lost Moments: Finding Memory Through Radio Broadcasting

Radio is sound. This is why its imaginative power is so great, and why we can summon its prompts from memory when provoked to do so by the right question or an involuntary trigger. Beyond the technical, we might see ourselves as receivers, with the capacity for tuning in to the world around us.

(Street, 2015, p. 39)

Within text and sound bytes, lost moments reside. From the sonic space of radio – where music, the sonic and musical soundscape merge – a lost moment surfaces to reveal that music and lyrics are deeply reflective of my lived experience. This lost moment informs me that, like the sonic landscape, lost moments have been with me since before I was born, since my mother first carried me (Welch, 2005). This suggests connections between music and personal story, which can “stir particular memories of a place, a time, a person” (Meyer, 2008, p. 92). This stirring elicits the past to split open “the hard seed of the past, and soon memory pours forth from every direction” (Karr, 2015, p. 2). And the lost moments abound aplenty.

While these memory retrievals or seeds of the past may transport me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) – to recall and retrieve forgotten memories, lost moments, fragments of time – it is not immediately apparent just where this journey will take me. For example, during the broadcast of a radio program that features country music, I am called to reflect on how music has impacted my life. As I reach the album, *Back Home Again*, recorded by country icon John Denver (1974), I think I am merely choosing to play a lyrical country tune. However, as I hold the LP album other memories surface: I remember attending concerts and musicals with my sister – Paul Anka, Joan Baez, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John – and then there were the musicals, *Flashdance*, *Fame*, *American Graffiti*, *The*

*Sound of Music*. But in that moment, as I sit before the soundboard in the radio studio, I recall that memory of long ago:

My older sister has been listening to the music of John Denver for hours. As the music is sounded through the basement ceiling, my dad shouts at my sister to turn the music down. Meanwhile, I sing along:

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Yes, 'n, hey it's good to be back home again*

(Denver, 1974, Track 1)

This moment is a stop, a reflective moment of surprise: “That this memory of sound is accessed through mental imagery is fundamental to the power of radio” (Street, 2015, p. 31), and the power of music. As this memory of John Denver’s music surfaces to recall “my initial introduction to this song (LaBelle, 2006, p. 20), it seems that it is linked with “another positive or negative event” (Clarke et al., 2010, p. 84). My emotion is so strong (Sacks, 2007) that when I listen to Denver’s voice that is sounded (Gershon, 2013, 2018; Murch, 1994; Welch, 2005) across the radio station campus, I sense that I have produced an special moment on air. In sharing the story and music of my sister, intimacy graces the airwaves. While I hadn’t thought about Denver’s iconic tune in many years, the memory and its association with my older sister, “invites new questions, new perspectives, and new understandings” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 12):

**How did this song impact my life?**

**Why does this song make me feel so nostalgic?**

**Why does this song resonate so strongly with how I see my sister?**

**How did my sister influence my musical choices?**

In reflecting upon the music that prompted this lost moment, I am further inspired to write and record “Radio Tale #9: Sixteen Candles & Four Girls on a Saturday Night.” This narrative illuminates music that I shared with my sister, and my adolescent years when my sister, as my big sister, watched over me:



## 4.2. Radio Tale #9: Sixteen Candles & Four Girls on a Saturday Night

### [Listen to Radio Tale #9](#)

I was eleven years old when my older sister took me to my first grown up movie. It was sort of grown-up because the movie was about teenagers dating and going off to war, and there was kissing. Lots of kissing actually which in my mind, made it a grown-up movie. There was also dancing, fast cars, drive in restaurants and music to remind me how music added to the romance of it all – something Bill Haley & the Comets reminds me of in “Sweet Sixteen”:

*Happy Birthday, happy birthday baby, oh I love you so  
Sixteen candles make a lovely light  
But not as bright as your eyes tonight  
Blow out the candles, make your wish come true*

(Greenfield & Sedaka, 1961, 1973, Track 2)

Earlier that night I had been writing in my diary when my sister knocked on my bedroom door to ask if I wanted to go to the movies. She and her friend were going to *American Graffiti*. Her friend was bringing her younger sister who was in my grade, so they thought I might also like to go. I jumped off my bed. This was going to be my first grown-up movie with 50s music, dancing and kissing. There just had to be kissing. Besides going to a movie in downtown Vancouver – on a Saturday night – didn't happen everyday.

In the film, there were many scenes where characters called into the radio station to request a song, and many scenes where the music was DJ'd by Wolfman Jack, the town's infamous disc jockey. I liked his approach because, as someone who listened to the radio everyday, I got to see the inside of a radio station. It also illustrated the power that radio and a media personality could have on its audience. As a tribute to the film's infamous DJ, The Guess Who penned the iconic song, “Clap for the Wolfman”:

*Clap for the Wolfman  
He gonna rate your record high  
Clap for the Wolfman  
You gonna dig him till the day you die*

(Cummings, Wallace & Winters, 1974, Track 6)

As it turned out, the movie was more than I dreamed it would be. From “Sixteen Candles” that were sure to make my dreams come true to Bill Haley’s “One, two, three o’clock, four o’clock rock,” my favourite tune was Johnny Burnette’s “You’re Beautiful and You’re Mine” – a song that reflected my younger self’s dream of falling in love:

*You come on like a dream, peaches and cream  
Lips like strawberry wine  
You’re sixteen, you’re beautiful and you’re mine...*

(Sherman & Sherman, 1960, Track 30)

I sat on the edge of my seat for much of the movie. It was thrilling to be there, and to be out with my older sister. With each love scene came dancing and kissing in the back seat that made my friend and I giggle wildly. Our older sisters laughed at our silliness while they were more reserved with their girlishness and thoughtful crushes on boys. Yet, the thought of romance – although exciting – sent us into fits of laughter. And of course, there was Sonny Till & the Orioles’ rendition of “Crying in the Chapel”:

*You saw me crying in the chapel  
The tears I shed were tears of joy  
I know the meaning of contentment  
I am happy with the Lord*

(Glenn, 1953, Track 35)

On the bus ride home, my sister asked if I liked the movie. “Oh yes,” I said starry eyed, “I liked the music, and the dancing, and the dresses too.” And of course, the kissing.

*One, two, three o’clock, four o’clock, rock  
Five, six, seven o’clock, eight o’clock, rock  
Nine, ten, eleven o’clock, twelve o’clock, rock  
We’re gonna rock around the clock tonight*

(Freedman & Myers, 1952, Track 1)

As I reflect on this memory – celebrated in Bill Haley & the Comet’s “Rock Around the Clock” – I am once again thoughtful of this event, and am almost left pining for my youth. That innocence. It was a time when my sister was both sister and my friend. She was a young woman who helped to ease my way through adolescence, into adulthood. I am grateful for that time and for her kindness, despite the years that would follow – of silence, spurred on by unspoken moments in our young lives.

After writing this radio tale, I got ready for bed, turned off the lights, and travelled back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). Back to those sixteen candles that “made my dreams come true” (Greenfield & Sedaka, 1961, 1973, Track 2). It made me think about my sister: I wonder if she still goes to the movies; I wonder if she still sits under big open skies to wish upon falling stars or sixteen candles; and I wonder if her wishes came true. I hope so.

In reflecting upon that Saturday night in downtown Vancouver with my big sister, I savour that memory while The Spaniels (1973) sing long into the night, “Goodnight Sweetheart”:

*Goodnight, sweetheart, well, it's time to go  
Goodnight, sweetheart, well, it's time to go  
I hate to leave you, but I really must say  
So goodnight, sweetheart, goodnight*

(Carter & Hudson, 1953, Track 40)

Good night big sister.

#### **4.2.1. Reflecting Upon Radio Tale #9: Sixteen Candles & Four Girls on a Saturday Night**

In writing this radio tale, I embrace nostalgia and the appreciation I have for time gone by, for previous relationships, for places and spaces of long ago, and for lyrics that take me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). This narrative represents a snapshot moment within my lived experience. In watching the film *American Graffiti* – as a twelve year old girl who was full of wonder and giddiness – I got to experience a small piece of magic that music offered listeners who are open to possibility.

Music has the capacity to hold memory, as exemplified here, and so, the film *American Graffiti* acts as a musical time capsule that embodies my life for that moment in time.

*Goodnight, sweetheart, goodnight*

### 4.3. Excavating Lost Moments: Through Focused Writing & Sounding My Life

*I have a tale to tell  
Sometimes it gets so hard to hide it well  
I was not ready for the fall  
Too blind to see the writing on the wall*

(Ciccone & Leonard, 1986, Track 4)

As I explore the thematic patterns of memory within lost moments and memory fragments, I recognize gaps (Armstrong et al., 2014; Karr, 2015; Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2011) within my collection of bite-sized memories. Within my collection of lost moments, I notice that specific ages, experiences, musical genres and influences that are never reflected upon while some are never included. In having already surfaced many lost moments, be they lost, forgotten, hidden (Kohak, 1984) or perhaps, “dormant within [my] own pulsing body” waiting to be awakened (Snowber, 2016, p. 4), I wonder what other lost moments might exist within my memory. Due to childhood remembrances being a key source of pedagogical understanding (Smith, 1991) I am called to excavate these areas of my life to round out my life memories and to ascertain “a continuity of events that inform [my] experience of the present” (Smith, 1992, p. 91).

The beauty of the lost moments is that everydayness and worldliness (Meyer, 2010) shines through each moment, probably because these moments are spectacular and sensational at the same time they are sweet and simple. Thus, we become open to the possibility of what may be revealed, and in doing so we recall and reclaim the simplicity of our lives such that we aim to:

...find those moments that were never defined as learning – but their meaning is still with us; the time we walked in the snow and listened intently to our footsteps, or the time we fell down in the ocean and couldn’t catch our breath. We have to remember that our learning, when we were very young, was not linear. (Smith, 1992, p. 98)

Learning was focused and yet random, planned but unexpected, boring and yet exciting; it ran the gamut and as children, we simply accepted this. Just as learning could be unpredictable, so too are lost moments. While lost moments arise through random and unexpected encounters, they are also excavated and awaited, “like fossils in the ground” (King, 2000, p. 163).

My approach to excavate lost moments is varied. I use three key writing and/or audio strategies to prompt memory and these moments. After generating a chronological timeline of my lived experience and my musical soundtrack, I access this research data as memory prompts to inform life-writing. I also refer to living inquiry themes (time, language, self/other and place) as writing prompts to generate additional lost moments.

While rhythm is often a catalyst for musical memory, remembering also occurs through the muscles such as “hand and foot and head and heart and respiratory apparatus” (Parker, 1946, p. 139). By tapping a rhythm on a drum, one’s memory can be jarred. In fact, music emotionally impacts individuals on two levels: “through the depth and effects of rhythm [...and] by association, not with the rhythmic elements of music alone, but with the tone-color, intensity, and melody” (Parker, 1946, pp. 138-139). This impact is so significant because, when a person recalls a song from an earlier time, that memory “carries the same emotional weight it had when [they] last remembered it” (Cardillo et al., 2012, p. 61). The sonic landscape, therefore, has the capacity to impact a listener’s full emotion through the sensory landscape of being (Sacks, 2007; Snowber, 2013).

In hearing songs from the past listeners can be transported “back in time, triggering the sights, sounds, and feelings of a specific event” (Belfi et al., 2014, p. 979). Because music attaches itself to particular moments and experiences in one’s life, music envelops these moments “with melody, lyric, or the beat of a drum piercing with a given emotional register the unfolding of an event [...such that] these events become memorable... available for recollections or riveted to consciousness” (LaBelle, 2006, p. 20). Music is therefore a catalyst for remembering my life.

Through these spaces of radio making and music excavation – along with the writing of personal narrative – I pave the way for additional lost moments to surface back into being. I explore the chronological and thematic spectrum of my life stories (Pennebaker, Maye & Francis, 1997), and excavate body memory (Milloy, 2004; Snowber, 2002, 2016) to navigate lived experience “from senses to sentences” (Snowber, 2013, p. 4). These focused writing and audio sessions, illustrate once again that music is an invaluable witness to my life (Bruscia, 1998). These moments that are stored within my body, that are stored within this “memorial container – as itself a ‘place’ of memories – furnishes an unmediated access to the remembered past” (Casey, 1987, p. 179). My body holds all

the music I have ever known, and just needs to be sounded (Gershon, 2018; Murch, 1994; Welch, 2005) back into being.

I carry in my body all the stories  
I have ever been told.

(Allison, 1995; Allison, 2000, p. 471)

By incorporating the remembered past into writing the radio tales, I construct a narrative identity (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000) to re-author my living landscape (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1991; Butler, 1997; Salverson, 1996). Without knowing it, I write to transcend my life, and “to reach beyond it” (Nin, 1976, p. 13). As I transform “the sentences [I] have been given” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 224) as a means to re-author my life within the embrace of my musical memoir and sonic landscape, I am writing myself anew.

By initially surfacing lost moments (unbeknownst to me), and then, by reaching within to excavate lost moments, I find the breadth of the music of my life. This process leads me to reflect upon the breadth of my emotional life. While I discover and embrace uplifting moments of memory, I also excavate lost moments that “speak and comprehend words of wounding [...to] elevate darkness to the realm of stars” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 224). As I pour these transformed memories into the creative process – into personal narrative and audio memoir – I find solace for myself. While my artistic process has the power to transform my living story, and my emotional and spiritual states of being, it also has the potential to serve others:

By taking a troubled and devastating history and expressing the emotions of that in art, power is returning to those people – power to tell their story, express their feelings, and create something that will impact others as well as themselves’ [Paulette, R5]. (Leddy, 2018, p. 122)

As I attend to such moments that trouble (Fels, 2010; Saverson, 2008), this practice of wide-awakeness (Greene, 1977, 1995) is enhanced not only through my artistic living practice but also through it’s offering to others. This engagement of writing my life allows me to “truly make the steps dance” (Snowber, 2012, p. 189), and to have my voice sing.

## Chapter 5.

### Alchemy: Turning Lost Moments into Radio Tales

#### 5.1. Alchemy as a Way of Knowing

*Still don't know what I was waitin' for  
And my time was runnin' wild  
A million dead end streets and  
Every time I thought I'd got it made  
It seemed the taste was not so sweet  
So I turned myself to face me...  
Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes*

(Bowie, 1971, Track 1)

Alchemy is a way of knowing – a way to identity, and a way to define and amalgamate lived experience. This amalgamation reveals a narrative mode that acts as a form of communication that generates meaning, reasoning, knowing and understanding, and is not merely a means for construing and constructing reality (Bruner, 1986; Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000).

As I write through living inquiry at the same time that I broadcast through performative inquiry, music is woven throughout these two inquiries as a means to find common ground, to identify significant moments (Warland, 2010) and to arrive at new understandings of my autobiography (lost moments and music). Throughout this process I borrow schemata “from these genres of the past and contemporary and through the personality of the artist, [my] artwork is transformed into new creations that challenge and recognize conventions” (Hadjipieri, 2019, p. 208). Hence, as the elements of my living story (lost moments and lived experience) merge with my musical soundscape, an alchemization occurs, thereby creating the radio tales (Bruner, 1991; van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987).

While conventions of narrative storytelling are maintained in the writing of the radio tales, the unconventional approach of weaving musical lyrics into the narrative illustrates music as being an extension of the narrator/writer's voice (Boyne et al., 2009; Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; LaBelle, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). This aspect of the radio

tales is one of the key elements that alters and transforms the conventional narrative writing format.

Through this reclaiming, merging and alchemizing of lost moments and their musical counterpart, my personal narratives unfold in time and context, to make and re-make meaning (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Bruner, 1995). While each variant maintains its original meaning, a secondary meaning is acquired through its association with other variants. To clarify, each radio tale is themed and its individual parts have specific significance in that “they are placed within the context of the whole narrative” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 95). The alchemy is what gives the radio tales their magic.

**Radio tales become a container for sonic and narrative models of telling.**

**Radio tales are the alchemization of music and memory.**

**Radio tales reflect lived experience that spans time: past, present and future.**

**Radio tales range from great big tales to bite sized memories.**

**Radio tales tell the story that is one’s life.**

**And all the while, radio tales reside within a format that eases the telling.**

By piecing together seemingly disconnected fragments that resemble a broken boxed-up puzzle, I make sense of my life. In creating these personal narratives radio tales that document my life, I am preserving the past (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Bruner, 1995; Parker, 1946). Through the radio tales’ “form-content relationship, a relationship that is most vivid in the arts,” (Eisner, 2002, p. 11), each of my personal narratives becomes a universal document (Bruner, 1991; Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016), and offers a creative approach to writing one’s musical memory through story and song.

Before the radio tales are alchemized, they are a collection of lost moments and song lyrics borrowed from my musical soundscape. As musical lyrics and moments are woven, they become radio tales. By layering intertextual (Pollack, 1998) elements of lost moments, I make connections “in the spaces between textual, visual, musical and kinaesthetic encounters” (Ricketts, 2008, p. 26). I find the richness of my story.

Moreover, because kinesthetic and musical structures generate stories, “the interconnected language of the body, text and sound” (Snowber, 2013, p. 6) within radio informs this weaving. Through this practice of weaving, the radio tales come into being,



and my narrative life unfolds (Bruner, 1991, 1995), to reveal alchemical gold within (Greene, 1995; Milloy, 2004; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tempest Williams, 2012): the radio tales.

Like the lost moments that are alchemized into radio tales, I am changed. While this alchemy transforms my personal narratives and the format (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000; Warland, 2010; White, 1987) through which I tell my living story, it also transforms “the way I perceive myself within the world and [thus,] begin[s] an inner metamorphosis” (Hadjipieri, 2019, p. 238). This alchemy is empowering for it illuminates the value and beauty within this life and punctuates the profound moments that are born of my lived experience.

Like catching fire flies in the dark I move to catch the fragments of narrative and to pull them into my heart. What does it mean to capture the resonations of narratives seasoned with time? Are these iterations like old friends or new visitors to the soul? (Ricketts & Snowber, 2013, p. 7)

To be an artist is to know alchemy. While some artists knowingly create what is always known, many other artists may create by means of intuition, osmosis, or through personal transformation. As alchemy is a “power or a process that changes or transforms something in a mysterious or impressive way” (Merriam-Webster, 2017, n.p.). Radio tales were created through the unexpected merging of memory, story, and music, and can therefore be said that an alchemy has transpired. Sound also “resonate[s] in the form of feelings, ideas, and processes [...and] alchemize[s] to become sonic memory” (Gershon, 2013a, p. 260). Hence, by merging sound with lost moments this ‘alchemization’ is further enhanced to strengthen the sonic memory (Gershon, 2018).

Although the lost moments begin as scraps of paper and fragments of memory (Hodgins, 1993), as I give them space to find their own structure or form (van Bergen, 2007), my personal narratives emerge in the form of the radio tales (White, 1987); this structure embodies autobiographical narratives. As a universal concept (Bruner, 1991; Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016) it is a form that the host and listener can pour their lived experience and musical soundscape into (Goldberg, 2012). This form is a container for memories and is a container that “holds language, narrative, form, and the page, [...and] is often the predicament against which narrative asserts itself and comes into being” (Warland, 2010, p. 91). Of this, White (1987) argues that narrative will never emerge on its own, not “without the bearing of the

form” (xiii). That said, once the radio tale format is constructed (Bruner, 1991; Van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987), each tale presents itself as I write and perform through living inquiry. As each story emerges and gains momentum (Alber & Fludernik, 2010; Fludernik, 2005), it is apparent that the tales are unfolding as a musical memoir for my life.

This newly generated form that provides a template for excavating lived experience comprises my own personal narrative style. The structure invites a new way to write (Van Bergen, 2007; Warland, 2010; White, 1987) memoir while generating “possibilities for understanding the complex, mysterious, even ineffable experiences that comprise human living” (Leggo, 2010, p. 2). By weaving together story and song that illuminate lived experience, this format invites writers to discover how they might “look at [and write their] original experience” (Hibbitts, 2009, p. 61). Just as in all creations of art, the bringing of one’s attention to personal narrative is “to make [one’s living content] special or recognize specialness” (Dissanayake, 1988, p. 128). Through the radio tales’ format and content I recognize the specialness within lived experience. By understanding this creative process I increase the value of my writing process as well as my life (Bruner, 1991).

In merging these elements that reflect my life, a personal ‘alchemization’ has occurred. By creating the collection of radio tales, the result is a musical memoir. My lived experience becomes documented to uncover the past and “a very old feeling, something that has been with me forever but that has never before surfaced” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 111) and my past comes back to life.

The radio tales bring me closer to the emotional truth of my story (Mamchur, 2012; Rosenfield, 2015). I face the unknown in my writing. As I await “for the narrative to unveil itself” (Warland, 2010, p. 132), my writing shows me where it wants to go (Snowber in Snowber & Richmond, 2009). Similarly, through radio broadcasting the direction of music’s unfolding unveils itself to reveal musically-infused lost moments as being instrumental to understanding my life. Like music was as a teenager, this process becomes a compass that leads to the truth of my story where musical memoir abounds in lyrical riches.

Through the techniques of life-writing and living inquiry that illuminate my everyday worldliness (Meyer, 2010), writers are led out of the elusive space of fictionalized life-writing and into the autobiographic space of memoir to re-author their lives (Bruner, 1991; Salverson, 1996). Organic musical genres contribute to this process to inform the construction of a living story (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000) that is constantly “transforming and interpenetrating the permeable borders” (Greene, 1995, p. 18) of personal narrative. At the same time, because technology provides the means for “representational possibilities to be extended and diversified “ (Eisner, 2008, p. 5), my personal narrative unfolds in various media. I create the radio tales within multi-media formats, in both text and audio formats. These two formats invite reader and listener to locate each other and to have multi-sensory experiences. Within these storytelling spaces, writers ascertain how best to locate the past (Pinar, 1994), which brings multi-layered meaning to the living story.

Through the alchemization of my living story, personal narrative becomes more than a recollection of memory; it becomes a sensual representation that embodies a dynamic sonic experience (Smith, 1992). Moreover, “the onset of music elicits a basic orienting response” (Clarke et al., 2010, p.113) in its response to the sonic within the narrative. Together, this dual representation aids me in gauging how I orient myself (van Manen, 1990) in my research. As I write sonic narratives, and gain agency (Bruner, 1987), my path unfolds to become a sonic performance in radio.

In having undergone this alchemic process (Hodgins, 1993; Hogan, 1995; Nachmanovitch, 1990), that excavates and reclaims lived experience, I transform the storms of my life into sunrises (Harder, 2011b). I write and reflect upon these shadowed spaces of living – such as my mother’s absences and the frequent visits to the psychiatric hospitals – and become open to transforming the past. In facing these challenges within these spaces, silver linings abound and the seeds of sorrow bear fruit (Milloy, 2004; Rilke, 1929, 1984). These gifts arise as lost moments, music, memory and radio tales; and they shine like sparkles (Karr, 2015).

## Chapter 6.

### Coming Full Circle: Life's Moments, Lost & Found

*I know nothing stays the same  
But if you're willing to play the game  
It's coming around again*

(Simon, 1986, Track 2)

#### 6.1. Research From Start to Finish

*I'm trying to tell you something 'bout my life  
Maybe give me insight between black and white  
And the best thing you've ever done for me  
Is to help me take my life less seriously  
It's only life after all*

(Saliers, 1989, Track 1)

Since the onset of graduate school, my coursework has invited me to scaffold my research within the framework of lived experience. While this process has uncovered autobiographical memory fragments which I refer to as lost moments, the end result is my musical memoir. These new understandings are realized by writing through living inquiry and then broadcasting through performative inquiry. This process reveals multiple connections within radio, music and memoir. Once these three elements are interwoven my musical memoir transpires, allowing me to hear my true voice (hooks, 1989; Pereira, 2016; Rosenfield, 2015). As I reframe the language of memory (Butler, 1997) and translate lived experience into words (van Manen, 1990; Schiff et al., 2017), I discover a format for writing and recording my living story. Through this format, and the musically-infused personal narratives themselves, my life is illuminated to become more (Kelly, 2010; Proust, 1924). Herein lies the gift of my research: the radio tales.

## 6.2. The Offering of The Radio Tales as a Way to Tell One's Story

*Listen children to a story  
That was written long ago  
'Bout a kingdom on a mountain  
And the valley folk below*

(Potter & Lambert, 1969, Track 1)

In having uncovered lost moments and radio tales through the merging of lived experience, radio broadcasting and my musical soundscape, my research concludes with the offering of the autobiographical collection of radio tales.

### 6.2.1. The Universality of Personal Narrative

This is my story.  
But it is not my story only.

(Miller, 2005, p. 176)

Like all stories that are social in nature and exist in all human cultures (McAdams, 2001), personal narrative and autobiography unite and bring people together (Dewey, 1934; Gross, 1897; Snowber, 2013). When listeners see their lives reflected in personal narrative, and “in the plots of the journey, the romance, the mystery” (Hessler & Lambert, 2020, p. 8), a connection is fused between the listener and the storyteller. The relatability of story (Bruner, 1991) is what is most meaningful to the listener. This type of connection is common with personal narrative because “when works of art are profoundly individual [their] meaning is universalized” (Parker, 1946, p. 41). Through the universality of story (Bruner, 1991, 1995; Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016) readers experience “involvement, relevance and thinking” (Glasser, 1969, p. 115) which connect and anchor them in their own lived experience. Readers and listeners are thus, inspired “to share their own footsteps, as a way to honor the complexity and beauty of their own [life stories]” (Ricketts & Snowber, 2013, p. 3) which, to bring it full circle, is something the radio tales are known for.

Many literary models speak to the universality of narrative (Bruner, 1991, 1995; Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016) and appeal to readers in a profoundly personal way. From personal narrative, such as life-writing, journals,

diaries, logs, autobiographical stories, and now the radio tales to historical fiction and other literary and media sources, the universality of narrative is so compelling because it invites listeners “to honor their own life passages” (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009, p. 1) and to hear and appreciate their own stories and voices (Cocke, 2004).

The radio tales are one such honouring. As these tales breathe life into memory to “make the facts seem in the world” (Bruner, 1995, p. 167), they come to life (Hodgins, 1993) for the listener. The radio tales arrive to exist in present time. Stories that reside in the present moment need to include all parts of the story; this includes the unsaid of one’s life and the “*not story* inscribed between the words of text’ in the story of the past which lives in the present” (Neumann, 1997, p. 108 in Norman, 1999, p. 55). After all, these aspects of story contain the lost moments, be they buried, forgotten, or hidden.

By sharing the radio tales on the radio platform, this audio community of listeners becomes a space for storytelling and story sharing. The stories that sound my life become the stories of those who hear them (Bruner, 1991; Snowber, 2013). For this reason, it is important that stories not only be read but also heard, sounded, experienced, performed and voiced. As Gershon (2013a) suggests,

Sounds resonate in ways the text cannot and requires a different way of being than reading text....Listening unfolds temporarily in ways that reading does not. Skimming through sounds is not the same as skimming through text. (n.p.)

When one hears personal narrative through the sonic landscape, these sounds become richly layered and multi-sensory experiences for listeners. The text jumps off the page to become animated, voiced and sounded (Gershon, 2018; Street, 2010, 2017; Welch, 2005). The text that speak of past musical moments becomes alive (Hodgins, 1993) in the here and now. As personal narrative finds voice (Warland, 2010) – building autonomy, independence and a resolve that inspires listeners to create their own resonant work (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009) – listeners are invited into the multi-sensory conversation that is audio storytelling. Within this intimate forum the living story is embodied, performed, narrated, sounded, recorded, heard, known.

### 6.2.2. The Offering

Memories that hold up without romanticizing childhood, sentient but not sentimental memories, nostalgic but not self-indulgent memories, such memories can give conviction to [one's] thoughts of how the present ought to be.

(Smith, 1991, p. 8)

Just as universal stories are relatable, and therefore narratable (Bruner, 1991), so too are the radio tales. Radio tales are universal story narratives (Bruner, 1991; Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016) that reflect the everydayness of lived experience (Meyer, 2008). People organize their experience and memory “mainly in the form of narratives – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4) which brings that everydayness quality to the telling of their lives. Mamchur (2015) stresses that in order for readers/listeners to personally engage with a text “the work has to be generalizeable, having universal appeal” (p. 116).

If readers/listeners identify and with personal narrative/audio, there will be more at stake for them; the narrative will matter more to the reader/listener. As this state of being puts the reader/listener in touch “with their souls” (Bonnet, 2006, p. 243) – this takes the narrative from the personal to the universal. For this reason, because universal stories ask readers/listeners to reflect upon what matters in their lives, this encourages them to “have voice and [to] archive the lived curriculum” (Snowber, 2014, p. 3). These stories therefore generate a vulnerability (Simons, 2014; Snowber & Wiebe, 2009) and intimacy (Simons, 2014) between listener and storyteller.

Through the lens of the radio tale, listeners witness another person's living story, and are called to reflect upon this story and to perhaps be “changed by it” (Salverson, 1996, p. 3). By responding to the radio tales, that are autobiographical in nature and reflective of listeners' own lives (Norman, 1999), listeners engage with these audios through the acousmatic modality in which they respond to become co-writers of audio/text (Daignault, 2005). Given that the format of the radio tales eases the telling of the tale, and weave aspects of lived experience into a creative structure, listeners may be drawn to this format as a means to explore their life experiences “in a more sensitive way” (Bohm, 1998, p. 28). The radio tales, as such, can help listeners to experience their lives in a perceptual way.

The universality of the radio tales (Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016), for instance, are insightful and reflective just as they are inspiring and entertaining. These tales bring people together and help them to make sense of their lives (Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Bonnet, 2006; Cardillo et al., 2012; Gibb, 2015). While listeners may not have the same life experiences, or may not like the same music, they will have had lived experiences to draw from (Goldard, 2006) as a means to generate their own radio tales— a key element to which the radio tales speak.

The radio tales recognize the value of people's lives by celebrating the everydayness (Meyer, 2010) of lived experience. As this demonstrates that "the lives of ordinary people can be the basis for skillfully executed and powerful art works...a strongly positive social statement" (Goldard, 2006, p. 55), the radio tales help listeners to appreciate their living story and their voice (Bruner, 1991; Cocke, 2004). Just as I have excavated from, and then transcribed my lived experience into creation of radio tales, so too can listeners (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1995).

To exemplify, while a reader (who has never lived in a yellow house) may read a story about a child who lived in a yellow house, that reader will still identify with the story in some way. The reader will instinctively envision their own childhood house – that they will inject into the narrated story through their mind's eye – as though "something beloved, once lost, has been redeemed" (Mairs, 1989, p. 12). Like the yellow house metaphor, in listening to a radio tale listeners will likely be reminded of a similar aspect of their own childhood home, as it were, to be reminded of a lost moment. Memory recall will likely provide them with a sense of nostalgia, perhaps redemption, and quite possibly, a way to dream that memory back into being (Mairs, 1989) – with music.

In order to attain this gift, listeners must harness their creativity within the realm of the lived curriculum. To do so, they embark on a personal journey with their artist self by "offering a suggestion, opening a door, planting an idea" (Mamchur, 2009, pp. 272-273). In having opened the door myself, as my thesis illustrates, I began the process of discovering the universality of the radio tales by embracing the aforementioned three steps.



1. Open up to possibility (Research Reflection: lived experience as curriculum)
2. Open the door (Write through living inquiry)
3. Plant Idea: Explore radio, music and memory through performative inquiry.

A person's story is not "a fixed, knowable, finite thing, but an open one that changes and carries with it the possibility of reforming and retellings" (Salverson, 1996, p. 4). As I write through living inquiry I write myself (Cixous, 1976) to reclaim memory that resides in the flesh (Abram, 1996; Milloy, 2004, 2007; Snowber, 2002), and to re-author my life (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Bruner, 1995; Salverson, 1996). By writing myself, I write my life (Neimeyer in Neimeyer & Ruskin, 2000). I release fragments of time, those that were remembered and those that were lost. By writing through living inquiry to release lived experience, I unfold my inner story of being.

### 6.2.3. Coming into Being

*This is your song  
 From the hills of my heart there's a melody playing  
 This is your song  
 There's a home for a poem that's a long time coming  
 This is your song  
 Very soon you're a tune that the whole world's humming*

(Goodwin, 1974, Track 1)

As I arrive at this intersection of inquiry and knowing, I am faced with the new question of 'where shall it take me?', I realize I have come full circle. As Don Goodwin (1974) sings of in "This is Your Song," I have arrived at an end point which is also the beginning of something new. Since my first graduate course that asked, 'who are you?', 'what have you lived?' and 'what is the land that knows you?' (Cayete, 1994; Hogan, 1995; Kelly, 2011) to the writing of my thesis that asked, 'what might you discover?', 'what did you discover?' and 'why does it matter?' (Fels, 2012a), this academic journey reveals that I have been on a path that does not end. Like the academy, my identity is fluid and ever changing (Greene, 1995). While my ideas may seem original and solely belonging to me, they are not exclusively mine; who I am has been with me since before I was born (Meyer, 2010; Welch, 2005), and that which I create passes through me, as though I am walking "on a living past" (Hogan, 1995, p, 79).

Walking, I can almost hear the redwoods beating.  
Whichever road I follow, I walk in the land of many gods.  
All my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say.  
Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands.

(Hogan, 1995, p. 158)

My educative and artistic practices reveals personal and professional growth, development, and renewal (Baker & Mezel, 1988) to illuminate my thesis as a living document that evolves over time. Just as music has been my compass throughout this educative journey, it continues to enrich my artistic teaching practice.

As art is always being created, and as I am ever-changing, music genres that influence my life and my personal development also change, grow and expand throughout my life. This fluidity calls me to look to Irwin (2013) who asks what one's arts education practice is "set in motion to do?" (p. 200). I believe that my artistic practice is intended to shine a light, and ease the path, for storied silences to come out of the shadows (Tempest Williams, 2012) – in a way that is engaging, inspirational and transformative. Yet, I also believe that the radio tales are a forum, and a format, for entertainment and celebration.

Like some of the broadcasters that have gone before me – Ira Glass of *This American Life* or the late Stuart McLean of *The Vinyl Café* – their platforms celebrate all aspect of life. I wonder if there is a space in the airwaves where *The Radio Tales* might find their place; where listeners will be inspired to reflect upon their lives, to write through living inquiry and to create their own radio tales, where universal stories (Mairs, 1989; Mamchur & Apps, 2009; Mamchur, 2015; Snowber, 2016) may take root. As is celebrated by The New Seekers (1972) in "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing," I would also like to bring my research forward:

*I'd like to teach the world to sing  
In perfect harmony  
I'd like to hold it in my arms  
And keep it company*

(Backer et al., 1972, Track 10)

The radio tales are not merely a form (Apps & Mamchur, 2009; Mamchur, 2012; Nachmanovitch, 1990, White, 1987) for story or memoir. Instead, the radio tales are a form that represent a structure (Hodgins, 1993) and a way of framing the world. As Bachelard (1960) suggests, by creating radio tales and scaffolding lived experience

(Mairs, 1989) I am re-imagining childhood for myself and my listener, “capturing the qualities of past events within an imagination for what the present might possibly hold” (p. 100). I return to the idea of Michaelangelo in that I have chipped away at my life story (Nachmanovitch, 1990) to reveal personal narratives within. Through these narratives, I hold my inner story and my outer lived experience close to me, and use a framework that supports my life and my living stories, to house the details and emotions of story. This scaffolding provides me with a supportive space (LaBelle, 2006; Mairs, 1994) in which I can figure out what my narratives mean for my life, and for the life of my mother.

My mother’s life has always carried “the weight of a question” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 48). The unspoken chapters of her story resemble the emptiness of Tempest Williams’ mother’s journals; both are the same in that they mirror resistance, caution, modesty. Through the many silent conversations I have had with my mother, she passed her lost memories on to me (Tempest Williams, 2012). Through the wisdom she left me, I write her living story alongside mine; together, they are two stories that cross generations through time and space. Yet, they are one story, for –

**I am my mother who played with paper dolls  
while she waited for the spring to come**

(Harder, 2006)

My mother and I shared a deep connection through our individual musical soundscapes. Our shared songs are linked by our common language, our ‘mother’ tongue, and by my mother’s longing to be known. I believe that my mother’s words will continue to be heard for her words and her memory is “the longest sentence, a question unanswered” (Milloy, 2004, p. 111), and in many respects, a life unrealized.

As I move forward and across the stage that is my life, I embrace each moment and invite my students and my audience to accompany me. While the stages that we all walk across may at times appear empty (Brook, 1968) and the pages may appear blank (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Tharp, 2006), when we reach for our lived experience to extract lost moments, we remember that everyone’s life is rich in experience (Goldard, 2006). This richness means that the moment we step onto the stage or the page, the path is laid in the making (Cayete, 1994, 2005; Dillard, 1989; Snowber, 2013; Varela, 1987). We

are always becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014).

When a person waves their hand through the air – as though it were a paint brush – it leaves a mark on the world (Snowber, 2013). As autobiography is “by its nature always incomplete” (Mairs, 1989; Mairs, 1995, p. xiii), one is always leaving a mark upon the world. A signature. Be it upon a stage, a canvas, a radio studio, or a page in time, one always leaves one’s mark. It is this first mark that propels one forward into the fantastic spaces of creation. Lost moments have been my stop moments; radio broadcasting has been my platform; the radio tales have been my mark. It is here that the marks of my life perform identity so that I might come to know myself more fully. It is here that I come into being.

## 6.3. Radio Tale #26: Waking Up in Grad School

[Listen to Radio Tale #26](#)

### Finding My Way into Graduate School

*Hello? Hello? Hello?  
Is there anybody in there?  
Just nod if you can hear me  
Is there anyone at home?*

(Waters, 1979, Track 15)

Before graduate school I was asleep in my life, and as is illustrated in Pink Floyd's "The Wall," I was called to awaken to my life.

While I have always been somewhat self-aware, street smart and observant of the world around me, there was something I wasn't seeing. I just didn't see the big picture. While I failed to see the forest through the trees (or the branches), I also couldn't see some things within my own family. It seems that I had a skewed perspective of my lived experience which prevented me from seeing what was right in front of me.

Little did I know, I have been asking the right questions my entire life. My inquiry has always been in the right ballpark, so to speak – as I ask questions about my ancestry (maternal and paternal) and questions about my DNA (Galton, 1883; Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019): "Who do I look like? Who do I take after? What was my grandfather like? From where do our people descend?" Despite my incessant questioning that rises up every few years, my family avoided my inquiry, and so, the information that I sought in my mind was out of reach. Little did I realize, the answers were closer than I thought – nipping at my heels, in fact.

Wait, the moment whispers, you know me. (Fels, 1998, p. 28)

Although I eventually stopped asking questions regarding my ancestry, my inquiry started up again after my mother died. I began to ask questions about family, genealogy, ancestry. After I had excavated all that I could through family documents and interviews with family and friends, I journeyed to my mother's childhood homestead in McGee, Saskatchewan; while visiting I spent time with Mom's lifelong friend, a woman she met

while attending boarding school at the Catholic Convent in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Although Mom's friend provided me with much information about Mom's childhood, and her consequential plight with mental illness, there were still many questions that only time could reveal – of which Heart alludes to in "Alone":

*I hear the ticking of the clock  
I'm lying here the room's pitch dark*

(Kelly & Steinberg, 1987, Track 2)

As Maria Rainer Rilke (1929, 1984) suggests in *Letters to a Young Poet*, I needed to live the questions:

Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. (Rilke, 1929; Rilke, 1984, pp. 33-34)

Having hit a wall, I approached my father with questions about our ancestry only to discover that he was irritated by my inquiries, and so I stopped asking questions. The next step I assumed was to go to my mom's older sisters and ask them the questions. But like my father, they too were vague and feigned ignorance; in hindsight, I realized that their vagueness was an escape; they didn't want to be the one to break the news .

Although my ancestral journey kept me occupied and distracted from grieving the loss of my mother, each time that I resurfaced, to remember that my mom was gone, I spiralled back into grief. And so, like Alice, I fell, and I kept falling – **down**

**down**

**down**

**down**

After hitting bottom – a place of hopeless indifference – I succumbed to stay there for a few years, believing that I would never find my way out. Fortunately for me, life had other plans.

*Wake up, little Susie, wake up  
We've both been sound asleep  
Wake up, little Susie*

(Bryant & Bryant, 1957, Track 7)

And so, I was awoken to my life, as Simon & Garfunkel (1982) speak of in "Wake Up, Little Suzie." Just when I thought "this is it" my grief unfolded into a space of hopeful

imagining, an unfolding that leads to academia - a place that without knowing it, would lead me to the answers I had been looking for. It was a place that called me to attention (Fels, 1999, 2012a); it was a place that I was awakened to (Greene, 1995); it was a moment when I was called to follow the yellow brick road as was advised in “Follow the Yellow Brick Road/We’re Off to See the Wizard,” by Judy Garland and Cast (1939) in the film classic, *The Wizard of Oz*:

*Follow, follow, follow, follow  
Follow the yellow brick road  
We’re off to see the wizard  
The wonderful wizard of oz*

(Arlen & Harburg, 1939, Track 2)

## **Graduate School: A New Way of Being**

On the first night of classes, my classmates and I are introduced to Karen Meyer’s Living Inquiry, a practice that asks that students reflect upon their lives and document their lived experience. And so begins the process of unravelling my life story, of taking it apart and putting it back together again. As the writing unfolds in this class, and as I focus on writing through living inquiry, much of my life unfolds. Many aspects of my life that I had forgotten, repressed, denied, packed away in boxes all came rushing back. And so, as I engage in the work of Dr. Lynn Fels – in performative inquiry – I begin to incorporate these new understandings of my lived experience into my work in radio broadcasting.

As lost moments surface, a path is laid in the walking - a journey for my words to travel upon and towards. Or, as Annie Dillard (1989) suggests, I am digging a trench that my words will follow, so my writing can forge its path, so that story can find its’ way. I am making connections with music, memory and memoir – just as Terry Jacks (1975) sings of in “Rock ‘n Roll (I Gave You the Best Years of My Life)”:

*Oh, I can still remember when I bought my first guitar  
Remember walking from the shop to put it proudly in my car  
And my family listened fifty times to my two-song repertoire  
I told my Mom her only son was gonna be a star*

(Johnson, 1974, Track 10)

As I gather my personal collection of songs – with a lyrical soundscape that reflects my life – I see that this musical repertoire is a living biography – much like The Beatles’ “The Long and Winding Road” – will never end.

*The long and winding road that leads to your door  
Will never disappear, I’ve seen that road before  
It always leads me here, lead me to your door*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1970b, Track 14)

As my thesis takes form, I weave living inquiry with lost moments and radio tales, and then illustrate how the performative inquiry breathes life into my text to illuminate and unfold identity. Further to this process, I am surprised to find myself on unfamiliar ground when new identity laden information is presented in the latter stages of my thesis writing. The content I refer to which is related to my inquiries into my familial “ancestry”, as was noted earlier in this radio tale, led to an ancestral DNA test (Galton, 1883; Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019). The results confirm that my father is not my biological father. It is a moment of re-framing my lived experience, shifting identity, and starting over somehow as is illuminated by Alanis Morissette in “Not as We”:

*Reborn and shivering  
Spat out on new terrain  
Unsure unconvincing  
This faint and shaky hour*

*Day one, day one  
Start over again*

(Morissette, 2008, Track 5).

While this new information doesn’t change the content of my academic findings to date, it changes many of the filters that I used to get to arrive where I am now, living in this moment. For instance, my lived experience filter is altered; the filters through which I have made meaning of my life have changed. I now have an explanation for other people’s behaviour; one, the reason my father treated me as though I were guilty of something; two, the reason some of my dad’s relatives treated me like I was outside of the family; three, why some of my aunts whispered about me; and four, why some of my cousins and some of the neighbourhood kids teased me and told me I was adopted, that my parents hadn’t wanted me, that I was an Indian, that I had been left in a ditch. You know how kids can be. I heard so many things when I was little. Only now that I know



that my father wasn't my father, all of that makes sense. All of it. And although the kids who teased me didn't get everything right, they got the basis of it right. There was so much whispering, and there were so many stories, stories that never made sense and would take many years to piece together as is illustrated in the words of Creedence Clearwater Revival's 1970 hit single, "Who'll Stop the Rain":

*Long as I remember the rain been comin' down.  
Clouds of mystery pourin' confusion on the ground.  
Good men through the ages trying to find the sun.  
And I wonder still I wonder who'll stop the rain*

(Fogerty, 1970, Track 4)

Knowing what I now know changes things for me. It changes my perspective and makes me understand things differently. Although I can't go back and live things differently, having things make sense helps me to be at ease with the past. I also understand my father differently. I now understand why he looked at me sideways, as though I were guilty of something. As though I had done something wrong. My father was a man who couldn't hide his pain, his anger, his heartache. He was a man without a poker face who wore his anger on his face and his heart on his sleeve, and come hell or high water, he didn't try to hide either.

I think the saddest part about finding out that my dad was not my biological father is the shame that he would have carried about this; although my mom wasn't a woman whose character led her to have affairs, her mental illness was of the sort that she had mania-induced flings. The sad part about her promiscuity is that my mom must've also felt deep shame about this, which, in turn, would have fed into her depression and her low self-esteem. The even sadder part about this is that my parents didn't get out from under their shame. Consequently, my parents kept living it again and again and never got beyond it – something Pink (2016) speaks to in "What's Up":

*Twenty-five years and my life is still  
Trying to get up this great big hill of hope  
for a destination*

(Perry, 1992, Track 15)

Like all under-privileged groups, their rise from the ashes takes longer as does clawing their way out of their bottomless pit of hopelessness. And so, for many, they are left to fend for themselves, with many remaining forever on the outside looking in.

To further illuminate this idea of being on the outside looking in, we look to British songwriter Bernie Taupin's depiction of such class divisions in "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters." This metaphorical song that was released on Elton John's 1972 album *Honky Chateau* is based on Taupin's "take on New York City after hearing a gun go off near his hotel window during his first visit to the city," and speaks to the dichotomies between the rich and the poor. The song illustrates how people who don't follow their dreams are left standing at the edge - on the outside looking in - while the privileged who do not always see the big picture are left to write history. While the privileged often takes the cake and calls the shots, the underdog takes his place *on the edge*.

In having awoken in grad school to unravel my lived experience, I am inspired to explore how music wove itself throughout my life to illuminate a chronological musical soundscape interspersed with a multitude of lost moments. After these lost moments intertwine with other lost moments, they are further explored through a performative inquiry in the realm of radio broadcasting. This process breathes life into text and audio to solidify emerge as radio tales. As a result, the compilation of living inquiry, lost moments, and the radio tales becomes a living document, which, in turn, reflects the unfolding of a living identity. Makes me wonder why'd it take me so long to get here.

Little did I realize that by documenting my lived experience – and then exploring it further through the creation of the radio tales – that I would get to this place of quiet reflective understanding. I am so grateful. After so many half-finished dreams, dead ends, and questions about which way to go when I hit the fork in the road, it is such a gift.

*Now I know  
Spanish Harlem are not just pretty words to say  
I thought I knew  
but now I know that rose trees never grow  
In New York City*

*Until you've seen this trash can dream come true,  
You stand at the edge while people run you through...  
While Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters  
Sons of bankers, sons of lawyers  
Turn around and say good morning to the night  
For unless they see the sky  
But they can't and that is why  
They know not if it's dark outside or light*

(John & Taupin, 1972, Track 9)

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# Appendix A. The Radio Tales

## Introduction

### [Listen to Collection of The Radio Tales](#)

*The above link provides direct access to the entire collection of The Radio Tales (#1-27).*

This collection of twenty seven radio tales<sup>7</sup> spans my life – from pre-birth to the present.

A radio tale is a personal narrative that reflects lived experience and has musical lyrics interwoven throughout the narrative. While the woven lyrics are reflective of lived experience (of that particular radio tale) the lyrics are also an extension of the story itself, and of the writer's voice (Buser et al., 2005; Cardillo et al., 2012; LaBelle, 2006).

The inception of the radio tales begins with the seeds of lost moments which surface when writing through living inquiry or broadcasting through performative inquiry. The key influences of lost moment's surfacing are linked with lived experience that is recalled through life-writing, live radio productions (that includes music, sonic, speech, narration, themes, holidays and/or special events) and music listening.

As the songs, senses, and lost moments come together to solidify as stories from my life, this collection of thematic and chronological radio tales evolves through the process of weaving lived experience with the lost moments and storied music that reflect my living soundscape. Once written, the radio tales are further explored through performative inquiry within the performative space of radio broadcasting (Arts-based radio show *The Arts Edge*, and show's segment *Story Corner*).

Although the lost moments are not initially sought out, since discovering writing and radio production to be effective means for tapping the unconscious space of memory, I access writing and recording through inquiry for excavating additional lost moments. Memory is excavated through the reflection of the musical backdrop of my lived experience as determined by music, genres and eras; performers, personas and politics; other memory prompts include themes and specific periods and or events in my life.

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<sup>7</sup> This collection of *The Radio Tales* is taken from radio broadcasts (2015-2020) that were aired on The Arts Edge, on CJSF 90.1 FM, Simon Fraser University's Community and Campus radio station. This collection is presented as text and audio and is available on SFU's Repository (hyperlinks are embedded throughout the thesis).

## Radio Tale #1: The Ledge

### [Listen to Radio Tale #1](#)

I wasn't really going to jump. It was just a thought. A whim. Curiosity really. Like, I wanted to know "how far do you have to fall to die?" And looking down I wondered how my face would feel when it met the pavement head on. And when all the people gathered and pointed up at me, I wondered what they would say if I turned around and went back inside.

And so, I stayed on the ledge. Even when it got cold. Even when it rained. Even when Mama started to cry.

Mama told me I was scaring her, and that I should come back inside before the neighbours started to talk.

"Let them talk," I told her. I just needed some time to think.

I thought about the meaning of life. I thought about the struggle. I thought about Robbie Robertson singing, "it is a good day to die".

"Fuck that," I thought, "It is a good day to get my own apartment".

I just hope it has a ledge.

*Lay down your armor  
Lay down your spears  
The chief's eyes were sad  
But showed no sign of fear  
It is a good day to die  
(It is a good day to die)*

(Robertson, 1995, Track)

## Radio Tale #2: You're a Song

### [Listen to Radio Tale #2](#)

*You are the sun, I am the moon  
You are the song, I am the words  
Play me*

(Diamond, 1972, Track 6)

I don't know what makes any of us who we are. For the most part, we are a mathematical equation gone right, a science experiment in the making, a creative endeavour, a work in progress. In terms of our biological make-up, our DNA, most of us share the same elements of design – give or take. But what makes us, "us"?

As far back as I can remember I have been exploring this question. First, as a pre-school child who was always engaged in free play and stretching the imagination. Then as a grade school student. The first song I remember learning in school was "Punchinello", a song that explored the possibilities of imagination within movement and voice. A group of children form a circle around one child who has been chosen to enact a physical and sonic performance, as is illustrated by Little Fox in their rendition of "Punchinello":

*What can you do Punchinello, Punchinello  
What can you do  
Punchinello from the zoo*

(Traditional, n.d., mp3 file)

The child in the circle then makes a motion and a sound that the other children imitate:

*Oh we can do it too Punchinello, Punchinello  
We can do it too  
Punchinello from the zoo*

(Traditional, n.d., mp3 file)

I also recall songs that helped me identify with my body. In hindsight, my grade school teachers used music to teach the parts of the body as well as language that incorporated such concepts as dance and embodiment, drama and performance, and science and meta-cognition. One such song I take from my childhood is the traditional song, as performed by Larry LaPrise, "The Hokey Pokey":

*You put your right foot in, you take your right foot out  
You put your right foot in, and you shake it all about  
You do the hokey pokey and you turn yourself around  
That's what it's all about*

(LaPrise, 1940, Track 2)

While both songs are ways to learn about the body while being silly, as children grow up with these songs, they come to realize how our body is so much more than the sum of all its parts and functions. Our body is, in fact, a vessel of knowledge and a way of knowing, something Helene Cixous (1976) speaks to in *The Laugh of the Medusa*: “Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write yourself. Your body must be heard” (pp. 875-893).

Similarly, SFU professor, Dr. Celeste Snowber, who notes that there is “an art to listening to our lives for research is “not only an outward endeavour but it travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions and practice” (2005, p. 346) notes how to listen:

It is not just an activity of the mind, but everything within us: mind, heart, body, soul, imagination and cognition. Or one could say it is fingers, toes, pelvis, hips, neck, breath and shoulders. Listening to the body is one of the greatest gifts we are given as humans. Listening is hearing the bold proclamations and subtle sensations. (Snowber, 2004)

Writing the body can also be an opportunity to use the arts to speak out against injustice – something Lady Gaga achieves through her recording of “Till it Happens to You,” a song that she co-wrote with Diane Warren for the 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground*, which addresses campus rape in the United States:

*You tell me it gets better, it gets better in time  
You say I'll pull myself together: “Pull it together. You'll be fine”  
Tell me how the hell do you know, what do you know...  
'Till it happens to you, you don't know how it feels*

(Lady Gaga & Warren, 2015, DVD)

In another example, Canadian songwriter Melanie Safka (1970) uses her music to speak out against the “tumultuous relationship between the advertising industry and the music industry as is illustrated in “Look What They’ve Done to My Song, Ma.” Originally written and recorded by Safka in 1970, the song was later recorded by Miley Cyrus in her 2015 *Backyard Sessions*. Both versions present the lyrics in a ‘playful oh-well’ sort of way:

*Look what they've done to my song, Ma  
Look what they've done to my song  
well it's the only thing that I could do half right  
And it's turning out wrong, Ma*

(Safka, 2015, Track 5)

So, what makes any of us 'us'? What content exemplifies our gifts as individuals? What frame best fits the story we have to tell? The song we yearn to sing? The identity we long to unfold?

In 2001 Colombian singer Shakira championed people in recognition of people as unique beings, as an extension of a song – as is illustrated through metaphor in her hit single “Underneath Your Clothes”:

*You're a song written by the hand of God*

(Shakira & Mendez, 2011, Track 2)

We are as Shakira (2011) suggests, unique just as we are similar – a song – and in possessing our own song – we have an imprint on the world. A signature, if you will. This is something Cowboy Junkies' front-woman (Margo Timmins) sings of in “Musical Key,” a song off the band's 1996 album *Lay It Down* – with lyrics that reflects the musical experience I shared with my mother:

*My mother sang the sweetest melody  
Although she never sang in a musical key  
I'd hear her through the house my name called out loud  
She'd say, girl you are a part of me, I have made you strong  
When you grow up and are on your own  
Remember to win them with your song*

(Timmins & Timmins, 1996, Track 10)

Regardless of the art that we bring forward, how we contribute will determine how and if we are heard. American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham – whose technique reshaped American dance and is still taught worldwide – suggests that “great dancers are not great because of their technique [...but] because of their passion” (as quoted in Gilbert, 2013, p. 42). That said, regardless of whether our gifts (Rilke, 1929, 1984) are woven into works of art that embody words, music, film, dance, canvases or art books, stage or song, it is our intention and enthusiast behind the work that makes it great.

While a skill is a technique that we learn and a talent is something one is born with, it is through hard work, intention and passion that we bring the two together, and dream our passion into being. If we believe as many suggest, that a talent is a gift from God, a calling, a responsibility – that is specific to us – this would suggest that if we don't use our gifts they will, as noted above, never exist again. Being a powerful thought to consider, it indicates just how unique each of us really is.

*You're a song written by the hand of God*

As previous radio tales indicated, for the duration of my graduate school years, and the writing and recording of radio tales throughout, I often reflect upon my mother's lived experience. This process has not only shone a light on my mom's heartache but as well, on her tenacity to becoming happy. As a result, despite the difficult parts of her life – the breakdowns, the hospitalizations, the many bouts of shock treatment and the effects – in the end my mother just wanted to be happy. Perhaps that is why she loved the arts so much – music, films, stories of plight and triumph. These were spaces of hope where she could lose herself. If I could sum up my mom's life in one lyrical motto, it might be The Carpenters' 1973 hit single, "Sing." Although this song was originally written in 1971 by Joe Raposo, for the children's television show *Sesame Street*, it gained notoriety when recorded by the said brother and sister duet, reaching #3 on the *1973 Billboard Hot 100*, and is a song that reflects my mother's lived experience:

*Sing, sing a song  
Make it simple to last your whole life long  
Don't worry that it's not good enough for anyone else to hear  
Just sing, sing a song*

(Raposo, 1973, Track 1)

In many respects, my mother kept it simple. Perhaps this is why – despite the hardships of life – that she lived as long as she did. Because, after all, she'd always managed to: *sing, sing a song.*

## Radio Tale #3: Bloodlines, Leylines & the Luck of the Irish

### [Listen to Radio Tale #3](#)

*In Dublin's fair city where the girls are so pretty  
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone*

(Yorkston, 1884a, Track 6)

As Sinead O'Connor (2003) sings of in her rendition of "Molly Malone" I am called to reflect upon my ancestor's journey to the new land....

In the early 1800s, my great-grandparents set sail from Dublin, Ireland for the Americas. Having feared that the potato famine would wipe them out, my ancestors accepted the American government's offer to settle the prairie landscape of the Midwest in exchange for a parcel of land in the new world. After docking on the east coast and registering at New York's Ellis Island, papers were approved and they were assigned a plot of land in North Dakota. And so, with deed in hand, by horse and buggy my great grand-parents travelled to the Dakotas where they settled along the Red River Valley – in hopes of making a better life for themselves.

*I am the prairie land of North Dakota  
Where my grandmother learned to sew  
While she waited for her husband to take her away*

(Harder, 2006, Lines 8-10)

As the years passed, and as their children grew, at the turn of the century some of their children ventured north to Canada to make a life of their own. Like their parents had done before them, they accepted the Canadian government's offer of a parcel of land to immigrants who were willing to settle the Canadian prairie. After congregating to Leroy, Saskatchewan and having their land parcelled out, each family set out to start their new life – having left the Red River Valley behind – my ancestral memory of which Gene Autry reflects upon in "Red River Valley":

*From this valley they say you are leaving  
We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile  
For they say you are taking the sunshine  
That has brightened our path for awhile*

(Autry, 1946, Track 2)



Once Grandpa Jeremiah had settled in the small town of McGee, he took Grandma Olive as his bride. Together they worked the land and raised a family of their own – with my mother, Margaret, being the youngest child of seven. Although I never met Grandpa Jeremiah, and I barely knew Grandma Olive, I recall hearing many a story of their homesteading days; these tales send me back as though I had lived the prairie life.

My grandpa played the violin and he played his song for me  
With a tap and a bang, and a strum and a twang  
He played his jamboree

(Harder, 2012b, Lines 1-5)

My mom died when she was seventy-two years old, just as I began to tip the scales of forty. As the shock of losing my mom wore down, and as the grief diminished, I began to research her life. My journey began with some old photos and a scrapbook. As I interviewed family and friends who identified people and places Mom had known, I was able to fill in some of the missing pieces of her story. This led me to the flatlands of Saskatchewan and the prairie town of McGee, where my mother grew up, and where her family homestead still stood. It was there that I got an inside view of Mom growing up prairie, and her being schooled in a one-room school house followed by boarding school at a Roman Catholic Convent in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Her life-long friend, her teenage partner in crime, reminisced with me of how she and Mom used to sneak out when the nuns weren't looking to go downtown where they would hang out on Main Street singing Doris Day's hit single "Standing on the Corner":

*I'm the cat, I got the cream  
Haven't got a boy but I can dream  
Haven't got a boy but I can wish*

(Loesser, 1956, Single)

As I reflect on my mother's childhood, and on my ancestor's' lived experiences, I recall stories my mother told me: about her mother's heartache at the fortune she'd left behind in North Dakota and her subsequent loss of family heirlooms that were destroyed when her matrimonial home was destroyed by a fire, taking the house and all the family belongings, leaving the family homeless. I recall being told that someone ran back in the house to retrieve Grandma Olive's sewing machine – the sole item that guaranteed income for the family, and clothes for the children. I also recall hearing of the sadness and the quiet desperation at the family being separated and the parents having to farm

out the little ones while Grandpa Jeremiah and the neighbours rebuilt a three-room shack to house nine people.

I am the big open spaces of Southern Saskatchewan  
where my mother played with paper dolls  
while she waited for the spring to come.

(Harder, 2006, Lines 4-6)

By the nineteen forties, the spring had long since come and gone, and with all the children having grown up and moved away, my mother boarded a train in Saskatoon and headed west – *en route* to join her siblings in Victoria, BC, She was eighteen years old. Once in Victoria, my mother trained to become a nurse's aide at St. Joseph's Hospital, and spent her spare time singing in St. Patrick's Cathedral choir and attending dances through the Catholic Youth Organization where she met my dad and lifelong friends.

As I envision my mom's lived experience – from leaving the prairie to her family losing their home to a fire and having the community farmers come together to build a home for her family – I recall my own visit to the homestead. As I walked that land I thought about the great-greats leaving the Red River Valley for the prairie. I thought about the green hills of Ireland from where my kin rose up, and my Dublin where Molly Malone sold her wares along the ancient cobble-stone streets, the same streets that my kin once walked:

I am the fiery fields of Dublin, Ireland  
where my great-grandmother told tales by candlelight  
while she waited for the struggle of the famine, and of the drink, to end.

(Harder, 2006, Lines 11-14)

When my mother died much was lost. Grief pulled at me to understand her life, and her losses. This led me to research her lived experience. As is often the case for many, it takes a death to wake up. Because we come to realize that we do not have all the time in the world, we are called to attention. By researching my mother's life I was able to pull her silence out the shadows, much like my ancestors, much like my own sweet Molly Malone:

*Now her ghost wheels her barrow  
Through the streets broad and narrow  
Crying 'cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh.'*

(Yorkston, 1884b, Track 4)

## Radio Tale #4: Downtown, the Great Escape

### [Listen to Radio Tale #4](#)

*When you're alone and life is making you lonely  
You can always go downtown  
When you got worries, all the noise and the hurry  
Seems to help I know, downtown*

(Hatch, 1964, Track 11)

As Petula Clark (1965) sings of in “Downtown,” going downtown was a way for my mother to forget her troubles and yet, it was so much more. The idea of ‘downtown’ gave its listener a way to step into another world. Surrounded by store displays, beautiful things, and bright lights, you could lose yourself in imagining another life.

In the 1999 film, *Girl, Interrupted*, where the autobiographical premise is situated around Suzanna Kaysen's experience of surviving a psychiatric ward in the 1960s, one scene depicts a situation where Kaysen and another patient attempt to help soothe a patient who is locked up in solitary confinement. It is the middle of the night. As they sit outside her barred door, one patient plays the guitar while the other sings through the door vent. Although the patient is distraught, she is quickly appeased by the music and the lyric's suggestion of forgetting your worries. These images call me to reflect upon my mother's experience; it is as though “Downtown” was written as a message to my mother:

*Just listen to the rhythm of the gentle Bossa Nova  
You'll be dancing with him too before the night is over  
Happy again, the lights are much brighter there  
You can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares  
So go downtown*

(Hatch, 1964, Track 11)

This scene reminds me of my mom; like these women, my mom found solace in music. It gave her a way to escape her pain. She could ride the wave to hopefully reach the other side of an earlier psychotic episode. If patients were permitted to feel their feelings and talk about the inciting incident that led to their psychosis, it might aide their healing. If psychiatrists allowed patients to talk through their pain and go through the wild side of feelings – maybe they would come out the other end differently.

In the memoir, Kaysen (1993) surmises that insanity is perhaps, “just a matter of dropping the act” (p. 41), suggesting that crazy isn't being broken or having a secret but rather, it's any of us, amplified. In the film, Kaysen (1993) keeps a journal in which she writes about the other women in her ward; the film portrays these characters as women who struggle with getting to the root of their issues, the truth of their situation. Of this, American memoirist Mary Karr (2015) argues that truth is not the memoirist's enemy, but rather, truth is “the banister they grab for when feeling around on the dark cellar stairs. It is the solution” (Karr, 2015, p. xviii). When we allow ourselves that truth, and can feel grounded in it, we are more apt to effectively communicate with others. In Kaysen's situation, she found solace and healing through her writing and by becoming (Frantzich & Fels, 2017; Greene, 1995; Irwin, 2012; Leggo, 2008; Snowber, 2014) able to tell the truth of her life (Mamchur, 2012).

Life is like that sometimes. People need to be able to be in their issues without others trying to fix them. They need to be able to work things out without drugs, shock treatment, barred doors – or nurses who have too much power and too many keys. The psychiatric ward was too restrictive for my mom, and the doctors only got in the way of her healing; in fact, she was prevented from getting to the other side of her sadness.

Although my mom never got the formal help she needed within that system, I believe she survived her mental health challenges (and the psych wards) by accessing music in the real world. It carried her out of her pain and gave her hope. As far back as I can remember, my mom loved music and was a huge fan of musicals, Bing Crosby, and Julie Andrews. Music brought her much joy. She could be in a pit of despair, in the lowest of lows, and yet, music could pull her out from that shroud of darkness. As such, in “A Spoonful of Sugar,” Mom and Julie Andrews (1964) remind me to keep hope alive:

*A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down  
The medicine go down, the medicine go down  
Just a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down*

(Sherman & Sherman, 1964, Track 5)

I think music was my mother's spoon full of sugar. It gave her hope, and the combination of the two made life go down a little easier for her, in the most delightful way.

## Radio Tale #5: Losers Weep

### [Listen to Radio Tale #5](#)

*I'm goin' back where I came from  
I'm goin' looking for someone, someone I left behind  
We were both babies at the time when my family moved away  
Wanted you to go, but you had to stay.*

(Earle & Stuart, 2001, Track 7).

As Christmas approached, in the season of my second year of grade school, my family moved away from the house that had been my home since I was four years old. As we drove away in our green Dodge four-door, I looked back at the empty house as it disappeared into a sea of falling snowflakes to see my friend who I was leaving behind – a memory that is illuminated in Stacey Earle's lyrical memory "Loser's Weep":

*Out the back window I waved good-bye,  
Your mother held you as you cried*

(Earle & Stuart, 2001, Track 7)

Although I was sad to leave, I remember being excited about moving to Vancouver. I was especially excited that Mom would be coming home from the hospital, to see the new house. It felt like a new start and made my heart sing. This is something Graham Nash sang about in "Our House" – a song he wrote in 1970 while he was nestled up in Lauren Canyon, California with Joni Mitchell. Moving to a new house made me feel like this, like things could be different, and it was as though the song were written for me:

*Our house is a very, very fine house  
With two cats in the yard, life used to be so hard  
Now everything is easy 'cause of you*

(Nash, 1970, Track 7)

As my dad pulled into the driveway of the new house in Vancouver, I was in awe of the new house – it was huge! Situated on a street with a constant stream of traffic, I thought back to the old house that was on a quiet street. Because there were so few cars we could toboggan down the back alley as we had just the night before we left. Being that the yard was at the tip of a triangle where two streets met, it meant we had ditches on either side – making it feel like the house was surrounded by a moat. It was our very

own castle. Our yard always seemed so big, with its trees and bushy shrubs surrounding the perimeter of the property. Funny how things look different when you move away; you realize just how much you liked the old place. I remember once, our tree got a nest of caterpillars that was so bad we had to burn it up. My dad got some men to come to our yard and smoke them out. The men smoked them out real good. Poor caterpillars.

I was sad for the caterpillars and I was sad for the tree because it lost two branches but mostly I was sad for me. How would I ever climb that tree again? How could I hang down now that the branches were gone? And what would the trees do, now that we were gone? Who would climb them?

Years later, after my father died, I returned to my childhood home in Burnaby, hoping to see the house and to say hello to the trees. In anticipation of seeing the old place, I thought that I might introduce myself to the owners, and perhaps they'd let me have a look around. Perhaps. But as my car turned the corner onto Sixteenth Avenue, from the end of the street all I could see was an empty lot. The house was gone, pummelled. The shrubs were gone; dug up, taken away. The tree was gone. My tree – the tree I had once climbed, whose branches once reached for the sky, was gone; I wondered if maybe the tree had been dug up and was planted elsewhere, if perhaps another child somewhere now climbed my tree. Maybe.

I walked over to the plank that bridged the space between the road's pavement and my home of long ago. I walked toward the piles of garbage. From out beneath the rubble I spotted a branch from my tree – which I tugged at, freeing it from the pile that would soon be gone – and tucked my precious childhood find into the trunk of my beat-up Honda Civic. Funny how someone can take such care in planting a tree that their child will climb upon, and then another can uproot it like it's nothing. This calls me to reflect upon Joni Mitchell's lament of deforestation in "Big Yellow Taxi":

*They took all the trees and put 'em in a tree museum  
And they charged the people a dollar and a half to see 'em  
No, no, no, don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone  
They paved paradise and put up a parking lot*

(Mitchell, 1970a, Track 1)

Even though I hadn't climbed that tree in forty years I knew I would miss it forever. It was a tree that I thought I could always come back to. Like my childhood friend who saved me from a prickly bush so many years ago, I thought the tree would always be there, to reach for the sky, to offer me shade as I sat below making mud pies – something I had done so long ago. With both now gone, I hoped that in some distant far away place my tree stood in the shade, with my childhood friend at its' side.

After recovering a few other things from the piles of garbage – some rocks, a brick – knew it was time to go. With my dad's shrubs gone and nothing to circle the property, the place felt abandoned. The land that I once knew was now a stranger. And so, I said good-bye to the earth; I said good-bye to the piles of rubbish; I said good-bye to the ditches of childhood days. Then I got into my car.

As I sat in my car, I thought back to that winter morning when my childhood friend stood in the laneway, watching as my family drove away, leaving our empty house behind – the same laneway where she saved me from a prickly bush the summer before kindergarten. As nostalgia took me back it time, I was reminded of my childhood memories, reflected in Stacey Earle's "Loser's Weep":

*We play hide and seek, finders keep  
Only the loser is left to weep, got a secret can I keep it  
Better cross my heart and hope to die*

(Earle, 2001, Track 7)

As I drove away, out the rear view mirror I saw a time in my life that was gone. For real this time. Sure I'd moved away as a child. But now with the house gone, my tree gone, and both of my parents gone, I was somehow better able to grasp that this time in my life was actually gone, having moved itself into the realm of memory. Although I was weirdly surprised by this, in thinking that as long as the house existed so too would my experience of it, the empty lot represented a new time for me. It rendered childhood a thing of the past and pulled at me to reflect upon Canadian icon Paul Anka's melody, "The Times of Your Life", and to recall my own yesterdays:

*Good morning yesterday  
You wake up and time has slipped away  
And suddenly it's hard to find the memories you left behind*

(Anka, 1975, Track 5)

Reflecting on this memory, I return to my early childhood days when everything was more simple. Things weren't really more simple, but in my memory I like to tell myself they were. Like when I think back to the days of kindergarten when I sat in a circle and sang about Christopher Robin and his adventures with Pooh. The simplicity of childhood is echoed through Kenny Loggins' lyrical reminiscence in "Back to Pooh Corner":

*Help me if you can  
I've got to get back to the house at Pooh Corner by one  
You'd be surprised, there's so much to be done,  
Count all the bees in the hive, chase all the clouds from the sky*

(Loggins, 1971, Track 3)

I wonder why we do that. Why do we try to convince ourselves that things were easier when in actuality, they weren't. Not in my life. Not even for Winnie the Pooh or Christopher Robin. Sure they had adventures but they also had bees to count and honey to make. Such moments as these remind me of the human condition and the emotional capacity that nostalgia can bring, something Barbra Streisand sings so eloquently of in the title track of the Hollywood film, *The Way We Were*. It makes me wonder, how it is that two things can exist at the same time. And why is it that a person can love someone so deeply – yet be unable to share a life together – as was the case when we felt the heartbreak between Streisand's character, Katie, and Robert Redford's portrayal of Hubble Garner. Despite their respect and love for one another, they could not make it work. The memory of this movie, like my childhood memory of moving away becomes one in a collection of moments of time gone by, as reflected in Streisand's signature tune, "The Way We Were":

*Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind  
Smiles we gave to one another for the way we were  
  
Can it be that it was all so simple then  
or has time rewritten every line  
If we had the chance to do it all again, tell me, would we?*

(Bergman, Bergman & Hamlish, 1973, Track 4)

Could we?

Well, if I had it my way, I wouldn't change a thing.

Neither would the branch



## Radio Tale #6: David Cassidy, I Think I Loved You

### [Listen to Radio Tale #6](#)

It was my first Christmas in Vancouver. I was seven years old, with Santa on my mind. As the winds blew outside, a snowstorm was brewing and little did I know that David Cassidy was on the horizon of my life. That morning, when my older sister opened her Christmas gift from Santa Claus – The Partridge Family red album – there he was. As she played that vinyl album over and over again, with my Dad shouting for her to turn it down, David Cassidy kept right on singing on that snowy Christmas morning:

*I think I love you so what am I so afraid of*

Starry eyed, I sang along – thinking that maybe David Cassidy could be my boyfriend, despite my crossed eyes and broken glasses. As I reflect upon this, I am in awe of me at that age; who knew that I could be transported – in the blink of an eye – from twinkle, twinkle little star into the frenzied love soundscape of David Cassidy.

Reflecting on my insatiable ability to fall in love with love songs, I am taken to yet another time in my life. I am in Grade Nine, and Suzie Quatro has topped the charts with her 1978 runaway hit “Stumbling In”:

*Our love is alive, and so it begins  
Foolishly laying our hearts on the table  
Stumblin' in...  
I've fallen for you whatever you do  
'Cause baby you've shown me so many things  
That I never knew*

(Chapman & Chinn, 1978, Track 11)

As I recall those teenage nights – singing alongside Quatro as she belted out her regrets of unrequited love: “I may have been young but baby that’s not what I wanted to be,” – I think of me and David Cassidy. He, a Hollywood superstar, and me, a Grade Two girl who wondered where life might take me. At the time however, I was a seven-year-old girl with two years under my belt, two years of chasing boys – through school halls and baseball fields – and if truth be known, I was ready for some new music and a teen heartthrob who sang of love and all things romance. Too young to kiss, but thinking that

maybe it was a good idea. I also thought that maybe I might meet David Cassidy when I get older.

It was a pivotal year for me, 1970. The Partridge Family aside, it was also the year I discovered there is no Santa. I blame the educational system for this because had I never learned to count, Santa might still be getting a Christmas letter from me; however, counting changed my life forever, and Santa's too, I'm sure.

There's a sadness in discovering that a jolly old man would not be coming down the chimney, and come to think of it, if there was, you should probably be calling the police. Sometimes I wonder if this sadness is about the loss of Christmas magic, or perhaps a loss of hope. A hope that if you're having a hard time making your Christmas happen, you know, there's a jolly old man who's going to show up and help you out.

Regardless of what I woke up to that year, while I may have stopped believing in Santa Claus, that seven year old girl did believe in music. And I did believe in David Cassidy. And that was something.

Merry Christmas David Cassidy, I think I loved you.

*This morning, I woke up with this feeling  
I didn't know how to deal with  
And so I just decided to myself I'd hide it to myself  
And never talk about it  
And didn't I go and shout it when you walked into the room  
"I think I love you"*

(Romeo, 1970, Track 10)

## Radio Tale #7: Prairie Airwaves

### [Listen to Radio Tale #7](#)

As my family drove across the barren prairie flatlands, *en route* to a family reunion, the music of the seventies carried us across the miles. Karen Carpenter sang into the night air lulling us kids to sleep in the back of the station wagon, reminding me of “Yesterday Once More”, and how I used to sing along:

*When I was young I'd listen to the radio,  
Waiting for my favorite song,  
When they played I'd sing along, it made me smile*

(Bettis & Carpenter, 1973, Track 15)

Although the ride was long, the music kept me distracted, and deterred me from being impatient to get to our destination. With the sun beating down through the windshield, and the dusty prairie winds blowing through my hair, the winds carried the sounds of the whistling air, the smells of manure, and the warmth of the day soaking into my sun burnt face. Meanwhile, Helen Reddy (1973) sang of good old Ruby Red Dress talking to herself, something my eleven-year-old self could relate to:

*Big ole Ruby red dress runs around the town  
Talkin' to herself now, sometimes sittin' down*

(Laurie, 1973, Track 1)

After camping for the night in Edmonton, at sunrise we packed up for the long day ahead. At the Husky station, Dad filled up with gas and topped up the cooler with frozen ice. Mom and us kids went into the store to stock up on sundries, snacks, soda pop, and of course Rothman cigarettes and Husky matches. As Dad merged onto highway one, Mom sang along to Jud Strunk's “A Daisy a Day”; as she waved her hand to keep with the beat, Mom turned to sing to us kids as we ripped open our bags of Old Dutch chips:

*I'll give you a daisy a day  
I'll love you until the rivers run still  
And the four winds we know blow away*

(Strunk, 1972, Track 1)

The day wore on as we tired from the heat. Driving for long stretches with the prairie sun beating down, the inside of the car became a sauna so that the vinyl seats stuck to our bare skin while cigarette smoke filled the confined space of the station wagon. Nearing the Alberta border – *en route* for Edmonton – the car's engine began to overheat. Nothing a needle and thread couldn't fix, I'm sure. Before too long we exited the freeway to Smalltown, BC – Revelstoke, population, seven hundred.

*Highway 3 to the valley, Lord I'm coming home to you  
Now I've driven this road so many times  
I'm finally stopping in your town for awhile*

(Barley Wik, 2002, Track 1)

As is reflected upon in Barley Wik's "Highway 3," I became familiar with small country towns. Having driven for two days – pulling in to every two-bit town every few hundred miles to fill up on gas, and to stop for a bathroom break and a bite to eat – we were stranded as Dad waited for the engine part to arrive so his car could be repaired. With dusk setting in, we pitched out tent and camped for the night.

Listening, as the pace slowed down, and the crickets came together in harmony, I knew Dad's home was near. Although he didn't say it, I knew Dad prided himself in bringing his family back to the land where he was raised; back to the farm he once toiled; back to the people he called family.

The smell of cows filled the air as did the arrival of much anticipated kinfolk. When we arrived at the farm, my dad's younger brother came out of the house and my cousins came running from the field inviting us to explore the farm. I looked up into the night sky, alit with stars, and realized that this must be *the big open sky* I'd heard so much about. I wondered why the prairie fold had more sky than we did in the city. With crickets singing in the background and the adults drinking brewed ale and homemade cider, we kids traipsed around the farm drinking sodas and eating cherries that had been purchased earlier that day. We popped cherries into our mouths – one after the other – spitting out the pits – to see who could spit the furthest. As the night got long my dad's sister-in-law pulled out her guitar to sing what I would come to recognize as one of the many songs in her repertoire – a song that reflected my experience of the Canadian prairie as reflected in Haggard's version of "Green, Green Grass of Home":

*Down the lane I look at and there runs Mary  
Hair of gold and lips like cherries  
It's good to touch the green, green grass of home*

(Putnam, 1965 Track 2)

Spending time on the prairies was strange for me. My narrow city thinking left me naïve to the world and the realities of the country. Although I would later become aware that my ignorance left me arrogant, as I spent time on the prairies, I wondered about the prairie folks we were visiting. They lived in towns that played movies that we'd seen in the city the year before, which seemed backward to me. I thought of their small town street signs and sensibilities. I thought of them living in farmhouses that had no flush toilets – on acreage that was littered with cattle, livestock, chickens, pigs, and tattered and broken down barns from the days when my father was a boy on the prairies.

While my thinking would change in the first week of our stay, my immediate thoughts were crass. I wouldn't say I looked down on these country folk but in my young mind I thought they hadn't caught up with the city cousins. They seemed two steps behind us – like their clothes were different, and they seemed less fancy compared to those of us from the city – I thought they were out of date with the times.

This thinking would change though. I found myself looking at the country folk differently. I liked them. My city cousin who I'd grown up with continued to make fun of them though and soon I realized that she spoke of them in derogatory terms, not unlike how she'd always treated me.

As our visit drew to a close I could see they had more than us – the city cousins – they had the country as their home; they also had the city for when they wanted it and always had the country to go back to. Unlike us, they had space to move around in. And they had the music, my aunt's guitar, and crickets singing in the background.

Camping on the farm changed me. There was much to take away from my family's road trip to the Canadian prairies: camping on the land, eating peanut butter sandwiches in my cousins' broken-down milk-truck at dusk, watching my brother and cousin chasing arthritic pigs around the farmyard, drinking Baby Duck at family reunion hall, seeing my Uncle Ray and recalling something strange and creepy, something I couldn't place; eating macaroni salad, marshmallow salad, Jell-O salad, Rice Krispie squares;

Matrimonial cake, Nanaimo bars and tomato soup cake; burgers, hot dogs, and my dad chewing on pigs feet.

As my family made our way home – back the way we came – across the prairie flatlands, through Albertan wheat-fields, soaking up the rays of Radium Hot Springs, driving along the cityscapes into the sound of buzzing lights, I knew that home was near. The smell of manure had dissipated, John Denver was nowhere in sight, but his music lingered on as though I were still traipsing around my father's childhood farm, as reflected in "Back Home Again":

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like lost friend  
Yes, 'n, hey, it's good to be back home again*

(Denver, 1973, Track 1)

Crawling into bed that night, reflective of my country cousins, and knowing that we weren't so different, the twang of Neil Young danced along the horizon to remind me that I had experienced something precious in my prairie visit, illuminated in "Heart of Gold":

*I've been to Hollywood, I've been to Redwood  
I've crossed the ocean for a heart of gold*

(Young, 1972, Track 4)

City and country aside, I was grateful to have met my cousins. Maybe we city dwellers were more up to date with regard to movies and fashion but if truth be told, we were the ones who were behind the times. Too often city folks were too busy and too distracted to connect with ourselves, our family and our ancestral roots – as is celebrated by country legend Hank Williams with "Hey Good Lookin'." Not to mention, too busy to make marshmallow salad. After all, it takes prairie folks to make a really good marshmallow salad. I should know, my mother was a prairie girl.

*Hey good looking  
Whatcha got cookin'  
How's about cooking somethin' up with me  
Hey sweet baby  
Don't you think maybe  
We could find us a brand new recipe*

(Williams, 1964, Track A)

## Radio Tale #8: Pardon me if I'm Sentimental

### [Listen to Radio Tale #8](#)

As my family drove across the prairies  
that hot summer  
those humid days, those humid nights  
Across the miles, across the land  
Dirt blowing in my face  
Bugs in the windshield  
Music filled the air

As my family made that four day trek  
Along lonesome highways and through The Rocky Mountains  
Beside Lake Louise, and Radium Hot Springs  
The music of the airwaves came along for the ride  
To remind me of my prairie roots  
As is illuminated by Gene Autry's rendition of Red River Valley:

*Come and sit by my side if you love me  
Do not hasten to bid me farewell  
Just remember the Red River Valley  
And the cowboy that loved you so true*

(Autry, 1946, Track 2)

We had Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton, Stompin' Tom O'Connor, Helen Reddy, and Delta Dawn. We had a little bit of country and a little bit of rock 'n roll. And we had Dad's favourite – Hank Snow – to lead us down that long lonesome highway. We even had a little Jackson Browne and "The Load Out":

*Now we've got country and western on the bus, R&B  
We got disco in eight track and cassettes in stereo  
We've got rural scenes and magazines  
We've got truckers on CB  
We've got Richard Pryor on the video  
We got time to think of the ones we love  
While the miles rolled away*

(Browne, 1977, Track 9)

Hank Snow was a mainstay in my home growing up, and he was one of the singers in my family car that summer. To this day, Hank Snow remains nostalgic to me – a country singer who can transport me back in time (Belfi et al., 2014), to conjure up fond memories of that prairie summer of my youth. Of that road trip so long ago.

As I reflect upon that summer so long ago, Hank Snow's "Fool Such as I" plays in the background, and I can't help but wonder if Hank Snow has fond memories too . . .

*Pardon me if I'm sentimental  
When we said good-bye  
Don't be angry with me should I cry  
When you're gone yet I'll dream  
A little as dreams go by  
Now and then there's a fool such as I*

(Dylan & Trader, 1952, Single)



## Radio Tale #9: Sixteen Candles & Four Girls on a Saturday Night

### [Listen to Radio Tale #9](#)

I was eleven years old when my older sister took me to my first grown up movie. It was sort of grown-up because the movie was about teenagers dating and going off to war, and there was kissing. Lots of kissing actually which in my mind, made it a grown-up movie. There was also dancing, fast cars, drive in restaurants and music to remind me how music added to the romance of it all – something Bill Haley & the Comets reminds me of in “Sweet Sixteen”:

*Happy Birthday, happy birthday baby, oh I love you so  
Sixteen candles make a lovely light  
But not as bright as your eyes tonight  
Blow out the candles, make your wish come true*

(Greenfield & Sedaka, 1961, 1973, Track 2)

Earlier that night I had been writing in my diary when my sister knocked on my bedroom door to ask if I wanted to go to the movies. She and her friend were going to *American Graffiti*. Her friend was bringing her younger sister who was in my grade, so they thought I might also like to go. I jumped off my bed. This was going to be my first grown-up movie with 50s music, dancing and kissing. There just had to be kissing. Besides going to a movie in downtown Vancouver – on a Saturday night – didn't happen everyday.

In the film, there were many scenes where characters called into the radio station to request a song, and many scenes where the music was DJ'd by Wolfman Jack, the town's infamous disc jockey. I liked his approach because, as someone who listened to the radio everyday, I got to see the inside of a radio station. It also illustrated the power that radio and a media personality could have on its audience. As a tribute to the film's infamous DJ, The Guess Who penned the iconic song, “Clap for the Wolfman”:

*Clap for the Wolfman  
He gonna rate your record high  
Clap for the Wolfman  
You gonna dig him till the day you die*

(Cummings, Wallace & Winters, 1974, Track 6)

As it turned out, the movie was more than I dreamed it would be. From “Sixteen Candles” that were sure to make my dreams come true to Bill Haley’s “One, two, three o’clock, four o’clock rock,” my favourite tune was Johnny Burnette’s “You’re Beautiful and You’re Mine” – a song that reflected my younger self’s dream of falling in love:

*You come on like a dream, peaches and cream  
Lips like strawberry wine  
You’re sixteen, you’re beautiful and you’re mine...*

(Sherman & Sherman, 1960, Track 30)

I sat on the edge of my seat for much of the movie. It was thrilling to be there, and to be out with my older sister. With each love scene came dancing and kissing in the back seat that made my friend and I giggle wildly. Our older sisters laughed at our silliness while they were more reserved with their girlishness and thoughtful crushes on boys. Yet, the thought of romance – although exciting – sent us into fits of laughter. And of course, there was Sonny Till & the Orioles’ rendition of “Crying in the Chapel”:

*You saw me crying in the chapel  
The tears I shed were tears of joy  
I know the meaning of contentment  
I am happy with the Lord*

(Glenn, 1953, Track 35)

On the bus ride home, my sister asked if I liked the movie. “Oh yes,” I said starry eyed, “I liked the music, and the dancing, and the dresses too.” And of course, the kissing.

*One, two, three o’clock, four o’clock, rock  
Five, six, seven o’clock, eight o’clock, rock  
Nine, ten, eleven o’clock, twelve o’clock, rock  
We’re gonna rock around the clock tonight*

(Freedman & Myers, 1952, Track 1)

As I reflect on this memory – celebrated in Bill Haley & the Comets’ “Rock Around the Clock” – I am once again thoughtful of this event, and am almost left pining for my youth. That innocence. It was a time when my sister was both sister and my friend. She was a young woman who helped to ease my way through adolescence, into adulthood. I am grateful for that time and for her kindness, despite the years that would follow – of silence, spurred on by unspoken moments in our young lives.

After writing this radio tale, I got ready for bed, turned off the lights, and travelled back in time (Belfi et al., 2014). Back to those sixteen candles that “made my dreams come true” (Greenfield & Sedaka, 1961, 1973, Track 2). It made me think about my sister: I wonder if she still goes to the movies; I wonder if she still sits under big open skies to wish upon falling stars or sixteen candles; and I wonder if her wishes came true. I hope so.

In reflecting upon that Saturday night in downtown Vancouver with my big sister, I savour that memory while The Spaniels (1973) sing long into the night, “Goodnight Sweetheart”:

*Goodnight, sweetheart, well, it's time to go  
Goodnight, sweetheart, well, it's time to go  
I hate to leave you, but I really must say  
So goodnight, sweetheart, goodnight*

(Carter & Hudson, 1953, Track 40)

Good night big sister.

## Radio Tale #10: Who Are You?

### [Listen to Radio Tale #10](#)

It was all so confusing when we walked through the double doors and into a crowd of kids, of different sizes, so much bigger than us. Pushing. Shoving. Rushing to get to their lockers, to their next class, or outside for a smoke.

Since the spring of Grade Seven, when my class had visited the high school for a tour and a meeting in the cafeteria where we were served chocolate milk and donuts with sprinkles, where the principal and the Grade Eight counsellor had told us about how great high school was going to be - I couldn't wait to get here. But now, I wasn't so sure.

Sure the chocolate milk was here and sure the donuts with sprinkles were here but there were all these kids, and it was so crowded. It was daunting unlike in Grade Seven, where I had been one of the oldest students, and one of the tallest, it felt like I was in control somehow. The previous year when I was in Grade Six, I had read *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. Somehow reading that book made me feel better about myself; it gave me the sense of, oh I don't know, that I could take care of myself. Sure the story was about boys, but it was also about social classes and the attitudes between two social groups, and I found I could relate. I guess because my family had lived on the east side of Vancouver, and we were obviously on the low end of the totem, the pecking order so to speak. My family had had some experience with poverty, in my younger years. There were also issues with mental health, alcohol, alcoholism. There were a lot of alcoholics, maybe not directly in my family but in extended family there were a lot of alcoholics. And chaos. And it felt like all that added chaos added to our credit. I guess you could say, *The Outsiders* was my kind of book.

*I woke up in a Soho doorway, a policeman knew my name  
He said you can go sleep at home tonight  
If you can get up and walk away [...]  
Well, who are you? (who are you? who, who, who, who?)”  
I really wanna know*

(Townshend, 1977, Track 9)

Thinking back I recall my brother and his music. I was very influenced by his musical choices as well as the choices of my friends, my other siblings. In those early years you

could say that through music there was a lot that I would come to discover about myself. I think back to that period of my life when The Who's hit single "Who Are You?" blared through the kitchen floor from my brother's bedroom below. And I could relate.

I didn't know who I was, or where I was going – and I guess you could say leaving the security of my Grade Seven school for a high school where there must have been fifteen hundred students was very scary. Aside from it being scary and the sheer velocity of students and the size of the school, high school was also a new time. Being amid the younger group of the teenagers, yeah it was scary. It was like a coming of age.

Aside from just growing up and trying to figure out who you are and your place in the world, you wanted the guys to notice you. It seemed to matter more. You wanted to be accepted by your peers. Although it mattered in elementary school, you got comfortable there. In high school, in Grade Eight, you weren't comfortable. And that was really scary.

There was a song that I really related to in high school. It was a song that was written in 1973. It became a huge hit for American singer-songwriter Janis Ian. And it was a song that so many girls could relate to. One of the things that I did when I went to high school is, I had worn glasses since I was like two years old, and I had this tendency to go cross eyed if I wasn't wearing my glasses, if I was tired, if I'd been reading too much. Well, I forgot all that. I got to high school and I took off the glasses. Put them in my purse, totally forgetting that not wearing my glasses meant my eye was going inside my head. So if I thought I wasn't pretty before now I was even more not pretty only this time with my eye going inside my head. Like a Cyclops.

Anyways, Janis Ian's "At Seventeen" captures my teenage girl's experience to a tee:

*I learned the truth at seventeen  
That love was meant for beauty queens  
And high school girls with clear skinned smiles  
Who married young and then retired*

(Ian, 1974, Track 2)

As difficult as I thought Grade Eight was, it passed quickly. I eventually settled in, became comfortable. By the time I got to Grade Nine I had made more friends, I got invited to more parties and I got a good haircut. I got a little bit of style. I think when you're in high school, I think a haircut, a good haircut, can go a long way. I mean you

can be the biggest nerd on the planet but if you have some brand name clothes, a good haircut...I mean you can fool a lot of people. You can seem like not such a nerd. Well, I never thought I was a nerd because I didn't think I was smart. I thought to be a nerd you had to be smart. Thank God I thought that. I just thought I was uncool. Who knew that a good hairstyle could do so much for a girl, especially in Grade Nine.

Despite the onslaught of peer pressured activities like smoking, drinking and skipping out, I began to find my way. Me and my haircut. In Grade Nine it became fashionable to go to roller-skating parties. It was really a fun thing to do. So my friends and I would meet up at the high school after dinner and we'd board the school bus that would take us to *Stardust Roller Rink* in Richmond. When we got off that bus to engage in a night of roller-skating, falling and getting back up, and circling the rink all night long – to awesome music – we really felt like we were somebody. We really felt like we could rule the world. Sometimes music can do that for you. You just feel so empowered, so invincible, and a lot of the music really did that. I mean music can do that for you your whole life. But as teenagers somehow it just felt really special.

And we actually believed Queen's promise. A song that Freddy Mercury sang, talking about being champions, fighting 'til the end. We thought that in high school. Those are great memories. Although roller-skating were never the same as they were in high school, Queen's hit single "We Are the Champions" became a sort of a salute to those high school years, a beacon to find our way. Whenever that might be.

*I've paid my dues, time after time  
I've done my sentence but committed no crime  
And bad mistakes, I've made a few  
I've had my share of sand kicked in my face  
But I've come through*

*We are the champions, my friends  
And we'll keep on fighting till the end*

(Mercury, 1977, Track 2)

## Radio Tale #11: Rumours, Surprises and Little White Lies

### [Listen to Radio Tale #11](#)

*Now here you go again, you say you want your freedom  
Well who am I to keep you down  
It's only right that you should play the way you feel it  
But listen carefully to the sound of your loneliness*

(Nicks, 1976, Track 2)

Surviving high school was a careful balance of figuring out what and who you should listen to, and learning to trust yourself – as suggested by Fleetwood Mac in “Dreams”:

It had been over a decade since I graduated from high school when I received a phone call from a high school friend I'd kept in touch with. She'd called to tell me of a phone call she'd received from one of our classmates. In that phone call this woman told her she shouldn't be friends with me, making claims I had been a slut throughout high school.

I was stunned: “Me, a slut?” – when in high school my idea of foreplay was crying.

As I was not what this woman claimed it was especially shocking coming from someone who had spent her final two years of high school climbing in and out of the backseat of a two-door four-cylinder hot rod Chrysler. Or maybe it was a Dodge Ram. Or maybe it was both. Who knows. Regardless, I never told stories about her in high school, or after high school for that matter. Yet, ten years after high school she could be spreading these stories about me. Whatever the case, I guess the Billy Joel song wasn't about her because she did get into the car.

Regardless of the kinds of stories that are told about somebody, at the same time that they may ruin someone's reputation, such stories are also unpleasant to hear – as reflected in Adele's lyrical storyline in “Rumor Has It”:

*You've been telling people things you shouldn't be  
Like when we creep out and she ain't around  
Haven't you heard the rumours?...  
All of these words whispered in my ear  
Tell a story that I cannot bear to hear...*

(Adele & Tedder, 2011, Track 2)

It didn't matter what the truth was. Or that the story didn't fit the bill let alone the person. A rumour was a rumour and this one was going in circles and coming back around again. Oddly, it had been almost ten years since it'd come around again smacking me in the face and taking me back to those days when boys who you didn't give what they wanted could be vindictive and spread rumours that weren't true, and how mean girls could be. One of the things I realized is that once a story is told; once it is started, it is out there and so often a girl just couldn't win. People seem to think that if a story was out there, the girl must've done something to cause this story to be in the airwaves. Sadly, it is this same mindset that causes people to believe that if a girl is raped she must've done something to make it happen.

As I reflect upon the event that brought credence to this rumour I am reminded of Billy Joel's song, "Only the Good Die Young." This song has always seemed to be fun and sassy, a sort of anthem to high school – egging girls on to come out and play. Although the song also seemed innocent with its sassy tongue in cheek feel, as I listen to it now – this time with new ears – I sense a mocking quality in the song and the narrator's plea:

*Come out Virginia, don't let 'em wait  
You Catholic girls start much too late  
Aw but sooner or later it comes down to faith  
I might as well as be the one*

(Joel, 1977, Track 6)

Sure it's still a fun song to sing but in today world it's so much harder to ignore the fact that the boy is ignoring the girl's decision to not have sex. He is trying to talk her into having sex. He is accusing her of being a tease. And so often after the fact he tells stories about her. This conversation has been in the news a lot: about consensual about non-consensual sexual encounters and about what it means to say no. With cases in the courts in Canada, be it the Jian Ghomeshi trial, or down in the States with the Bill Cosby trial, it certainly has a lot of people talking about it and reflecting upon what the law is and on what no means. In the Billy Joel song, the singer, the narrator is ignoring the fact that this girl is saying no. He is trying to talk her into having sex with him. And ironically he says "only the good die young." I mean, what does that really mean? Do the good really die young? OK, it's not a literal meaning but it's like somehow they get left out.



Something in the news that has been so interesting is what happened with the June trial of Jian Ghomeshi. It's been so interesting to listen to the reports following that case: how Kathryn Borel, one of the plaintiffs, accepted Ghomeshi's apology. So many people thought that that would be that. And then Borel had that incredibly inspiring speech that she made to the media at the end of the trial. Anne Kingston, of McLean's Online, wrote a brilliant article about Borel's speech and referred to Borel as the surprise. In the case, in the courts, Marie Heinin was often the surprise. She'd pull out these facts, these emails, photos, old letters, whatever she could find – to challenge the credibility of each of the plaintiffs. Yet, in the end, Kathryn Borel was the surprise.

So the next time you listen to Billy Joel's infamous song about Virginia in "Only the Good Die Young," listen a little bit differently. Who knows, you might be surprised.

*So come on Virginia show me a sign  
Send up a signal and I'll throw you the line  
The stained-glass curtain you're hiding behind  
Never let's in the sun  
Darlin' only the good die young*

(Joel, 1977, Track 6)

## Radio Tale #12: On the Cover of Musical Influence

### [Listen to Radio Tale #12](#)

While music has influenced my life in many way, and many realms, music was especially powerful during the teen years when my friends and I sought out a sense of empowerment in our young lives, something that is clearly expressed in Pink Floyd's signature tune, "The Wall":

*We don't need no education  
We don't need no thought control  
No dark sarcasm in the classroom  
Teachers leave them kids alone  
Hey! Teachers! Leave them kids alone!*

(Waters, 1979, Track 3)

Music has woven itself throughout my life and has touched on themes that reflect my lived experience. All the while, my early musical education has been informed by my family, and especially by my older sister and older brother. I was introduced to my brother's music – either directly or indirectly as it was sounded throughout the house. Aside from his music collection, my brother's bedroom floor was strewn with stacks of Mad magazines, the sports section of that day's newspaper, and the latest edition of the Rolling Stone magazine. As such, I paid attention – as is outlined in Joni Mitchell's metaphorical lyrical content in "California":

*Went to a party down a red dirt road  
There were lots of pretty people there,  
Reading "Rolling Stone," reading "Vogue."  
They said, "How long can you hang around?"*

(Mitchell, 1971, Track 6)

From my younger sister eyes, it looked like my brother knew a lot about music – rock 'n roll mostly – which made him seem cool somehow. He had albums of the most popular bands of the day – Led Zeppelin, The Who, Pink Floyd, Supertramp, The Stones. Then there were the solo artists: Meatloaf, Blondie, Pat Benetar, Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and Rickie Lee Jones.

*How come he don't come and PIP with me  
Down at the meter no more?  
And how come he turn off the TV?  
And he hang that sign on the door?*

*We call and we call  
"How come?" we say.  
What could make a boy behave this way? ...  
That means that Chuck Es in love*

(Jones, 1979, Track 1)

As Jones (1979) surmises in "Chuck Es in Love," we teenagers questioned the changes we saw in one another which often came down to love. Young love.

Aside from my brother's music collection I liked that he paid attention to the critics as was apparent by the stack of *Rolling Stone* magazines and the pile of art reviews on his bedroom floor. I think he recognized the influence that critics and the media had on an artist's musical career. A strong review could make or break a career, as could a song with a pointed message – something that Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show sings so pointedly of in their signature tune "On the Cover of the Rolling Stone":

*Hey, Ray, hey, Sugar, tell them who we are  
Well, we're big rock singers, we got golden fingers  
And we're loved everywhere we go (sounds like us)  
We sing about beauty and we sing about truth  
At ten thousand dollars a show (right!)*

*We take all kinds of pills that give us all kinds of thrills  
But the thrill we've never known  
Is the thrill that'll gitcha when you get your picture  
On the cover of the Rolling Stone*

(Silverstein, 1972, Track 11)

Music comes to us in many ways and through many avenues, influences, and soundtracks. As the music's bass pounds through the floorboards of my neighbour's apartment, I think about who my brother was as a young man, and how music – his music – came to inform who he would become.

When my brother was younger, as he made his way home from baseball practice, he'd often stop in at the Victoria Drive furniture store – the same store that sponsored his little league baseball team. In the back of the store there was a selection of "45s" for sale – which back in the day were music singles that had been posted on the *Billboard Hot*

100s earlier that week. One such tune I recall from his 45s collection is the 1978 novelty song, “The Streak,” by Toronto actor Ray Stevens:

*REPORTER:*

*Hello everyone, this is your action news reporter  
with all the news that is news across the nation  
on the scene at the supermarket  
There seems to have been some disturbance here  
Pardon me, sir, did you see what happened?*

*WITNESS:*

*Yeah, I did, I's standin' overe there by the tomaters  
and here he come running through the pole beans,  
through the fruits and vegetablesnekkid as a jay bird  
And I hollered over t' Ethel I said, “Don't look, Ethel!”  
But it's too late, she's already been incensed*

(Stevens, 1973, Track 1)

With age, my brother moved on from hit singles to full length “33” albums. As his collection grew, and as he went through phases of listening to certain artists, so too did my awareness of music change and shift and grow – mostly from hearing the music as it reverberated through my brother's bedroom walls. I recall his Joe Cocker phase with the UK singer's version of The Beatle tune “A Little Help from My Friends,” a song that reflects the importance of loyalty among high school friends:

*What would you do if I sang out of tune?  
Would you stand up and walk out on me?  
Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song  
And I'll try not to sing out of key*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1967a, Track 9)

I don't know where my brother heard the music. Probably the radio, perhaps his friends. Or like me, by osmosis. Regardless, he seemed to be up to date with musical trends. Similarly, my parents and my older sister also followed musical trends – in country music. Others who influenced my music repertoire were friends, boyfriends and media outlets. Aside from hearing music around the house, I was also informed and influenced by the radio – of which Harry Chapin (1980) illuminates in “Remember When the Music,”:

*Remember when the music  
Came from wooden boxes strung with silver wire  
As we sang the words, it would set our minds on fire  
For we believed in things, and so we'd sing*

(Chapin, 1980, Track 31)

As I got older, someone in my family was usually tuning in to the local radio station. If it wasn't my parents listening to CKNW, my older sisters dialed in to CKLG or CFUN while my brother tuned in to CFOX. As for me, I listened to CFUN hoping that eventually my favourite cover tunes and Billboard hits would be played – as is reflected in Queen's "Radio Ga-ga":

*I'd sit alone and watch your light  
I only played through teenage nights  
And everything I had to know  
I heard it on my radio*

(Mercury, 1983, Track 1)

While we are drawn to a song's lyrics by the stories they tell and their reflection upon our lives, we are also drawn to various aspects of the music itself – the rhythm, the beat, the genres. This is explored in *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, when Oliver Sacks (2007) suggests that there are "inherent tendencies to repetition in music itself" (p.110) such that:

Our poetry, our ballads, our songs are full of repetition; nursery rhymes and the little chants and songs we use to teach young children have choruses and refrains. We are attracted to repetition, even as adults; we want the stimulus and the reward again and again, and in music we get it. (Sacks, 2007, p. 110)

It is therefore not surprising that we are drawn to stories and nursery rhymes, as children, and later, and song's music and lyrics, as teenagers. While we may benefit through a song's influence on language and embodiment, we also benefit emotionally. Not only can a song render us vulnerable, it also has the ability to "lift us out of depression or move us to tears [as] a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear...to express inner states or feelings [...and to] pierce the heart directly" (Sacks, 2007, p. 329). As such, regardless of how music came into my life, because its ability to affect all lives is so dramatic, personal and experience specific, each song in my musical soundtrack somewhere, somehow informs my life. These songs represent an extension

of my voice and my living story, something that ABBA (1977) speaks to in “Thank You for the Music”:

*I'm nothing special, in fact I'm a bit of a bore  
If I tell a joke, you've probably heard it before  
But I have a talent, a wonderful thing  
Cause everyone listens when I start to sing  
I'm so grateful and proud  
All I want to do is sing it out loud*

*So I say thank you for the music  
The song I'm singing*

(Andersson & Uvaeus, 1977, Track 7)

## Radio Tale #13: Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

### [Listen to Radio Tale #13](#)

*One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small  
And the ones that mother gives you don't do anything at all  
Go ask Alice — when she's ten feet tall*

(Slick, 1967, Track 10)

Just as Jefferson Starship (1967) suggests in “White Rabbit,” it seemed to be the thing to do, the thing to try. We were in Grade Ten after all. But getting stoned with your friend’s dad wasn’t what we had in mind. It was a boundary I didn’t want to cross but was too scared to say this to my friend, or her dad for that matter. It felt like we didn’t have a choice; and although we never talked about it I could tell that my friend thought so too. It was all so twisted.

How it unfolded is like this. My friend’s dad sat her down for “the talk”. At first she thought she was in trouble. Then she thought she was in for a lecture: Don’t do drugs. As it turned out the message was: I know you’re going to do drugs and I want to ensure your safety. So I want to be the first person you smoke a joint with, and get stoned with. Given that he was a swinger, a playboy, a ladies man I knew his rationale was a crock; if anything he wanted to be seen as the cool dad. We knew this had nothing to do with safety but no matter, we were teenagers. What could we say? We were at the bottom of the food chain, pawns in this game of power struggle. We wanted to belong, and so, as Eric Clapton (1977) suggests in “Cocaine,” we went along with her father’s narrative:

*If you got that lose, you want to kick them blues, cocaine  
When your day is done, and you want to ride on cocaine  
She don't lie, she don't lie, she don't lie, cocaine*

(Cale, 1975, Track 1)

Anyways, back to the drug trials. As we sat around the table, my friend and I giggled. The thought of getting high with her father felt weird. Edgy. Questionable. Although we went with it, I think the truth was, he wanted to be one of us. In hindsight, I think the truth was, he wanted to be the cool dad. He wanted to be one of us. And although we were in agreement with Cheap Trick’s sentiments in “Surrender,” we told ourselves that although it felt weird to get stoned with your friend’s father it was also kinda cool:

*Mama's alright, Daddy's alright  
They just seem a little strange  
Surrender, surrender, but don't give yourself away*

(Nielsen, 1978, Track 8)

That was our initiation into drugs – my entrance and for the most part, my exit. I think I always saw drugs – period – as playing with fire. This left me sitting at home many a night while my friends were out partying. Fortunately, one night over Christmas break – having opted to not go out – I was inspired to write “Obstacle Dimensions,” a poem that addresses drug addiction, the illusion of greatness, and how overuse can lead to overdose:

Stung up in the clouds with fantasies of superstardom  
Wanting to emerge  
from a dynamic spaceship.  
Escaping a world of resentments,  
where nothing dissolves but you  
as a dimension of an obstacle race.

(Harder, 1980, Lines 17-22)

Despite my aversion to drugs, my early twenties would invite the occasional engagement in drug-induced experiences that would involve unending fits of laughter, bouts of creativity and insightful writing. However, because of a few horrible experiences where pot made me feel radically out of control, drugs and alcohol have played a small part in my life. As for my high school friend she would eventually move on to experiment with other drugs, calling me boring, and even making an attempt to spike my drink with acid. Needless to say as she moved on to other drugs, and as I moved away from them, we drifted. And our friendship fizzled as we moved into adulthood.

As for the lyrics, although “White Rabbit” became a sort of psychedelic anthem to the sixties, that encouraged experimentation with drugs, Jefferson Starship’s front woman, Grace Slick, insists that she did not write the song for this purpose. Instead, she argues that “White Rabbit” was intended to let “parents know that they had been reading us books written by British authors, the British had control over the far east...and they had found new drugs which the writers took and then wrote about; Alice in Wonderland’s sitting on a psychedelic mushrooms, there is a worm that is going to turn into a butterfly who hands her a piece of this mushroom and she gets literally high. She grows. The parents were down on us for taking drugs so I was saying ‘look, you’ve been reading us



drug books forever'...." So, as promised in Jefferson Starship's signature tune "White Rabbit," Grace Slick (1967) reminds us that:

*If you go chasing rabbits  
and you know you're going to fall  
Tell them a hookah smoking caterpillar  
has given you the call  
Call Alice,  
when she was just small*

(Slick, 1967, Track 10)

I think Slick (1967) has a point. But if you still don't know, you might want to ask Alice,

*when she was just small*

I think she'll know.

## Radio Tale #14: He Called Me a Writer

### [Listen to Radio Tale #14](#)

It was my senior year of high school when I had a writing teacher who would influence my life as a writer. He was a teacher who would change things for me. This became apparent when he returned my first assignment – journals about my life. He smiled at me curiously. Embarrassed, I returned to my seat and opened up my writing folder. He had written notes all over my journals.

**Well thought out topics, Insightful.  
Effective use of language. Good writing.  
You are a writer, Elaine.**

(Personal Communication, October 1979)

His comments took me by surprise. He'd called *me* a writer. As I walked down the hall after class with my journals clutched under my arm, I sang The Beatles tune "Paperback Writer," and I smiled. I was a writer.

*Paperback writer, paperback writer  
Please sir or madam, can you read my book?  
It took me years to write, will you take a look?  
It's based on a novel by a man named Lear  
And I need a job  
So I want to be a paperback writer*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1966, Track 65)

Although I liked that he called me a writer I felt embarrassed, shy, exposed. "He actually read these," I muttered to myself. I say *actually* because teachers usually marked up the work in red only to make comments about spelling, punctuation, misplaced pronouns, but never the story.

I'd written about drama class, movies, hanging out at the E & B. I'd written a poem about a guy I had a crush on, who'd be graduating in a few months, a year before me. In red marker my teacher wrote, "Why don't you give it a shot? Otherwise you'll never know." The red words made his feedback stand out. Made it seem more permanent somehow. For a moment I was regretful for having written about my crush. Feeling seen, I blushed like a school girl (which of course I was) – a sentiment which is reflected upon in Gordon

Lightfoot's "If You Could Read My Mind" – a school girl's desire to be seen and yet, not seen:

*If you could read my mind love  
What a tale my thoughts could tell  
Just like an old time movie  
About a ghost in a wishing well*

(Lightfoot, 1970, Track 20)

As the school year progressed, I continued to write stories and journals about my life and my teacher continued to give me encouraging and promising feedback about my writing, encouraging me to continue writing and to continue expressing myself and talking about what was important to me. If I were to choose one class from high school that made a difference in my life this would be it. It would definitely be this teacher and this English class. While he was a good teacher – the best to that point in my eleven years of school – his biggest impact was that he saw me.

The following school year, in having spoken so much about my teacher, many of my friends registered for his Grade 12 English course. Unfortunately, I was very influenced by my friends, which meant when they skipped out, I skipped out. And so, I didn't benefit from his teachings as I had the previously year. Regardless, when it came time for our final assignment – a poetry project, he was especially impressed by a poem I had written that concerned drug addiction: *Obstacle Dimensions, OD*. My teacher was impressed to the point that he asked me if I had actually written this poem – as it demonstrated maturity, poetics, metaphor and life experience.

Throughout high school, and even after high school, I was never a drug user. I smoked pot with friends on occasion but for the most part I said, "no, not for me." However, I did have friends who were heavy pot smokers who experimented with other drugs. There were also some drug users and alcoholics in my extended family and so, I saw what substances could do to a person's life and how it could take them down to a really dark place. And so I used personal observations to inform the writing of this poem. That's where my insight came from.

Years into the galaxy  
Floating into space  
Creating the masterpiece of all time  
Of flight into sound  
Through the speed of superstardom

(Harder, 1980, Lines 1-5)

I was flattered by my teacher's question. In my thinking, this suggested that my writing was that good.

It would be ten years before I found myself in another class with a teacher who saw something in my writing worth exploring. This time I was in college at the UCFC and my teacher, Jim Andersen, who was a kind, attentive and humble man had a style that was gentle, insightful and encouraging. Like Jim Carey's rendition of "I am the Walrus" in 2000, my college teacher told me that my writing was eclectic. He'd tell me: You have some work to do with grammar and with organizing your ideas but your ideas and your style are both strong, and you, yourself, are a good writer."

*I am he as you are he as you are me  
And we are all together  
See how they fly like pings from a gun, see how they fly  
I'm crying*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1967b, Track 6).

Like my high school teacher of so many years become, this college professor had a huge affect on my writing and on the direction that my writing would take. Mr. Anderson got the wheels rolling for this insecure girl who wasn't sure of which path lay before her. Aside from teaching me how to edit and polish up my grammar, more importantly he helped me to find my voice.

Years later, after completing an English degree, I enrolled in teacher's college where I once again found myself in the company of a teacher who saw me, and recognized my writing potential:

**You're a writer; you have a style; a signature within your writing.  
As I read each of your pieces your other pieces I recognize as being yours  
because the voice is developed, the voice is similar.**  
(Personal Communication, July 2008)

She suggested that I exclusively become a writing teacher. Although I love being a teacher, above all else, I see myself as a writer. Yet, the idea of choosing one profession over another reminds me of Simon & Garfunkel's poetic sentiments in their rendition of "El Condor Pasa (If I Could)":

*I'd rather be a sparrow than a snail  
Yes I would, if I could, I surely would  
I'd rather be a hammer than a nail  
Yes I would, if I could, I surely would*

(Simon, 1970, Track 2)

I do love being a teacher but above all else I feel called to writing and I feel called to teach through my writing. I feel like I have something to say.

*Come writers and critics  
And keep your eyes wide the chance won't come again  
and don't speak too soon for the wheel's still in spin  
and there's no telling who that it's naming*

(Dylan, 1967, Track 3)

When we have teachers, mentors and guides who see us, it can change things for us. Isn't that what we all want, to be seen? And to be engaged in something that we care about? We are who we are. Even with the passing of time, as we age and grow up we still want to be seen for who we are. In the words of Simon & Garfunkel (1974) "after changes upon changes, we are more or less the same" (Track 11). Despite our dreams and flights of fancy, we are in the end as Plant and Page (1972) suggest in "The Song Remains the Same," on some wild ride that takes us to the same place that we started:

*I had a dream  
Oh yeah, crazy dream, un-huh...  
California sunlight, sweet Calcutta rain  
Honolulu star-bright  
The song remains the same*

(Page & Plant, 1972, Track 1)

## Radio Tale #15: Fries & Gravy and Three Songs for a Quarter

### [Listen to Radio Tale #15](#)

As seven girls nestled into a booth, at the E & B Restaurant, ladled in red vinyl seating and sounded by jukebox favourites, the waitress approached the table ready to take the order and to respond to quick-thinking quips. I recall she found us funny and complimentary, and if any of us were ever rude she was quick to tell us. I remember one time someone was especially mouthy towards her and she seemed genuinely hurt, probably because we were regulars and I think she liked us as much as we liked her.

Like clockwork, I ordered fries and gravy at \$1.35 a plate. Thinking back, my mouth begins to water. What I wouldn't do for a plate of the E & B's fries and gravy. I remember them like it's yesterday: a large oval 1970s style plate of fries smothered in beef gravy. If I had a dollar for every plate I ordered in the four years we frequented the E & B, I would be retired by now – in some exotic country, no doubt, eating fries and gravy I'm sure. Yet in that moment, I am immersed in Arlo Guthrie's spectacular lyrical tune, "Alice's Restaurant," a story-song that speaks to my lived experience that encapsulated the magic of my teenage years:

*You can get anything you want at Alice's restaurant  
Just walk right in, it's around the back  
Just a half mile around the railroad track  
You can get anything you want at Alice's restaurant*

(Guthrie, 1967, Track 1)

While we waited for our orders, we took turns playing favourite tunes; at three for a quarter, I'd make a selection and offer out the other two until my turn came around again. We played songs that spanned the years: "Ruby Tuesday," "Nights in White Satin," "Stairway to Heaven," "Angie," "Dreamboat Annie." And then there was my favourite, a song whose storyline spoke to my artist self, to my youthful and whimsical fancy of living a life of empowerment, a song from British singer-songwriter Al Stewart's "Year of the Cat":

*On a morning from a Bogart movie in a country where they turn back time  
You go strolling through the crowd like Peter Lorre  
Contemplating a crime*

(Stewart, 1976, Track 9)

In having found a place that we branded our own, we found solace. We even had our own booth – close to the phone, close to the bathroom, close to our hearts, you could say. It was our hangout for many a lunch hour, often taking us into the afternoon. Extended lunch hours could be determined by disliked classes or teachers, overdue assignments and emotional teenage-girl upsets to be cried over cold cups of tea and coffee, and smouldering cigarettes – imagery that Olivia Newton John (1975) creates in her hit single “Please Mr. Please”:

*In the corner of the bar there stands a jukebox  
With the best of country music, old and new  
You can hear your five selections for a quarter  
And somebody else’s songs when yours are through*

(Rostill & Welch, 1975, Track 11)

Known for its eccentrics, the restaurant housed blue-collar sorts from nightshift workers, longshoreman, and tradesmen as well as police officers, drug dealers, and a few junkies working off a fix. With coffee at fifty cents a cup (and free refills), the cups kept coming. Although cops working the beat, or passing through Vancouver’s east side, would stop in for a cheap meal, once they entered the establishment, they were off duty and the restaurant was off limits. Like passing over into another world, as Peter did in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, once inside, the cops turned a blind eye to the goings on within. Although it struck me odd that the police officers never questioned where we teenagers were supposed to be, over time it became apparent that the restaurant was a sanctioned place, that law enforcement of any of the regulars – including the teenagers – would have somehow been like breaking code. This code of loyalty is reflected in Led Zeppelin’s signature tune, “All of My Love”:

*Your’s is the cloth  
Mine is the hand that sews time  
His is the force that lies within  
Our’s is the fire  
All the warmth we can find*

(Page, Plant & Jones, 1979, Track 5)

We weren't always a group of seven. Most of us met each other at Gladstone Secondary School, with many transferring in at different points, from other schools – Little Flower Academy, Notre Dame, Templeton and Vancouver Technical – so that, by Grade Eleven we were seven. While our little group gave us a cohesiveness, our varied origins also provided us a sense of independence – something that is illuminated in The Rolling Stones' tune "Goodbye Ruby Tuesday":

*She would never say where she came from  
Yesterday don't matter if it's gone  
While the sun is bright, or in the darkest night  
No one knows, she comes and goes*

(Jagger & Richards, 1967, Track 3)

Life changed. Aside from going in different directions and figuring out our place in the world, friendships fizzled and plans waned. Although many of us tried to stay in touch after high school, it was hard to hang on as is reflected in T-Rex's tune, "Bang a Gong":

*Well you're dirty and sweet  
Clad in black don't look back and I love you  
You're dirty and sweet, oh yeah  
Well you're slim and you're weak  
You've got the teeth of the hydra upon you*

(T-Rex, 1971, Track 6)

As I have gone through life there have been many times where I have thought of these girls and how they helped to form who I became and how they informed the music that I gravitated towards. There are just so many fond memories . It's a sort of paradox when you lose touch with people who were there during your formative years when you were either a young child or a teenager trying to find your way in the world. Perhaps going our own separate ways over time is to be expected. It's not necessarily a bad thing. It just means that our paths are taking us in different directions. Perhaps it was all just a part of growing up. Then again, maybe it was all just a "Dreamboat Annie" – an allusive imagery that is reflected upon in Heart's lyrical content:

*Going down the city sidewalk alone in the crowds  
No one knows the lonely one whose head's in the clouds  
Sad faces painted over with those magazine smiles  
Heading out to somewhere won't be back for a while*

(Wilson & Wilson, 1975, Track 5)



## Radio Tale #16: I Was Just Bad at Math

### [Listen to Radio Tale #16](#)

*Well I remember every little thing  
As if it happened only yesterday  
Parking by the lake and there was not another car in sight  
And I never had a boy  
Looking any better than you did*

(Steinman, 1976, Track 6)

Just as Meatloaf (1976) espouses in his recollection about parking by the lake, this song could've been written about me, or by me. Like false rumours, gossip, and made-up malicious stories, since the beginning of time there have been societal myths about women and girls that, like stone, are hard to eradicate. One such myth is that young women are notorious for getting pregnant as a strategy to force their boyfriend's hand at marriage. This is a myth that I came to know of too soon in life.

Shortly after I became legal to vote, drink, and be merry the "trapping your boyfriend" myth began to circulate – about me. By the time I got wind of the story, my boyfriend who started the rumour was dust in the wind. Apart from the sting of the false accusation, I felt sad: he never knew me. If he had known me he would've known that I wasn't trying to trap him; I was just bad at math. It is a personal storyline that is all too common in young love as is characteristically illustrated by Meatloaf (1976) in his hit single "Paradise By the Dashboard Light":

*Though it's cold and lonely in the deep dark night  
I can see paradise by the dashboard light  
Ain't no doubt about it we were doubly blessed  
'Cause we were barely seventeen  
And we were barely dressed*

(Steinman, 1976, Track 6)

Well, that was long ago and it was far away, so it can't hurt to rewind the memory tapes. So, here's how the memory goes: In the still of the night – moon overhead, stars aligned – he parked his truck alongside the inlet shoreline under the Second Narrows Bridge. Nervous, he reached over to pull my face towards his. And looked into my eyes. It was that moment I knew that I loved him, as is illuminated in Springsteen's "Thunder Road":

*The screen door slams, Mary's dress waves  
Like a vision she dances across the porch  
as the radio plays  
Roy Orbison singing for the lonely  
Hey, that's me and I want you only  
Don't turn me home again  
I just can't face myself alone again*

(Springsteen, 1975, Track 1)

Nervously, he asked me if it was safe. Surprised by the question, I pulled my birth control pills out of my purse. Staring at me distrustfully, I started to count the blue pills in the bubble pack. At first, I counted silently on my fingers, and then again aloud: “two, four, six, eight, eleven, twelve thirteen...wait...let me start again. Two, four, six.... It’s the second pack so it must be safe. Yeah, I think it is.”

As the moon shone down through the front windshield of his beat-up Chevy, he stared at me like a deer lost in the headlights. I stared back, like his doe in the headlights – once again, reminded of Meatloaf’s lyrics in “Paradise by the Dashboard Light”:

*Let me sleep on it  
Baby, baby, let me sleep on it  
Let me sleep on it  
I'll give you an answer in the morning*

(Steinman, 1977, Track 6)

We’d been dating for almost eight months and although I wasn’t thinking babies or marriage or anything beyond the weekend, I also wasn’t anticipating that we would ever end. However, after the demonstration of my inept skills at mathematics – and Meatloaf didn’t help matters – he was gone. Could I blame him? I mean, nothing says *run* faster than a nineteen year old girl practicing her times table under a bridge, in the moonlight. This was a moment that led me to an important life lesson that R.E.M. would later sing about in “Losing My Religion”:

*Oh life is bigger  
It's bigger than you and you are not me  
The lengths that I will go to  
The distance in your eyes*

(Stipe et al., 1991, Track 2)

In hindsight, I hadn't expected to fall for him. The only reason I went out with him was because he insisted I have coffee with him, and I was too polite to say no. I thought we'd have coffee and that'd be that. He, however, had other ideas. I guess he saw something I didn't. I think he knew that once we had that first date, he'd win me over. He was right.

He was the kind of guy who made thoughtful decisions, who was not quick to act. Raised in the city, he had a small town feel to him and reminded me of the prairie folk I'd grown up around – simple, kind, unassuming. Yet he was also had a city feel. Aside from his plans to become rich by thirty-five, he liked the conveniences of the city, and was up on music and the British Invasion – something I always thought that was kind of cool.

Although we were together a short time, he had a big influence on my life. What he did for me was open up my eyes to the possibility of my life. Before we dated, I was a girl out of high school who had no plan. I was floundering, lost, unfocused. In our brief time together, however, he encouraged me to think about my future, to do something with my life. So when we broke up, I took the good of our relationship, and made a plan for my life. That was thirty-five years ago. In later years, he found me again. We went out a few times, in what would be a string of random dates, over random years – as is reflected in Dan Fogelberg's "Same Auld Lang Syne":

*Met my old lover in the grocery store  
The snow was falling Christmas Eve  
I stood behind him in the frozen foods  
And I touched him on the sleeve*

*He didn't recognize the face at first  
But then his eyes flew open wide  
He went to hug me and I spilled my purse  
And we laughed until we cried*

(Fogelberg, 1981, Track 10)

The last time I saw him we went for brunch, laughed a lot, told stories. And as he dropped me off, he asked me to call him but I never did. That stubborn-girl-in-me was waiting for an apology, an explanation for why he had lied about me all those years before. An apology that never came. Instead, I never heard from him again.

In hindsight, he was a twenty year old guy who had heard stories about girls who trapped guys, and had even seen that happen to a good friend of his. My ineptness at

math didn't help matters. I suspect that he realized he'd gotten it wrong, otherwise he wouldn't have come back so many times.

Getting older has helped me to forgive, and to let go. Although he broke that nineteen year old girl's heart, I have since evolved to focus on what he left me with. The fact that he opened my eyes to the possibilities of my life, of what I could become was something I will never forget. For that, I am grateful – something of which Alanis Morissette (1998) sings so profoundly of in “Thank U”:

*Thank you India*  
*Thank you terror*  
*Thank you disillusionment*  
*Thank you frailty*  
*Thank you consequence*  
*Thank you, thank you silence*

(Morissette, 1998, Track 1)

## Radio Tale #17: Boyfriends, Boxes and Books

### [Listen to Radio Tale #17](#)

*When I left my home and my family  
I was no more than a girl  
In the company of strangers  
In the quiet of the railway station  
Running scared,*

(Simon, 1961, Track 6)

As I reflect upon the first time I heard Simon & Garfunkel's "The Boxer," I am reminded that it was my first time away from home, away from friends, away from family. My decision to pack up my boxes and books came on the heels of a breakup that had left me feeling lost in myself. I was nineteen-years old. Little did I know that my year away would be a gift in disguise that would awaken me to my life's path that would eventually unfold before me. In the meantime, I got to see that by placing myself in the big city of Toronto, on the other side of Canada – unfocused – made a young woman such as myself more vulnerable. A moment in life that Tom Petty (1989) illuminates in his metaphorical tune, "Free Falling":

*Now all the vampires walking through the valley  
Move west down Ventura Boulevard  
And all the bad boys are standing in the shadows  
And the good girls are home with broken hearts  
And I'm free, free falling*

(Petty & Lynne, 1989, Track 1)

I found Toronto to be a cold city – year round. Unlike other cities in Canada, Toronto was especially unfriendly. There seemed to be a lot of lost people wandering aimlessly and others, lurking, waiting to pounce. Perhaps my experience was no different than any young woman who moves to an unfamiliar city where she is without community. In hindsight, I am not surprised by this; from where I sit thirty years later this is a no brainer, but oh well, hindsight is fifty-fifty.

In need of a sense of community, I found a place in music. In being drawn to the Irish culture within Toronto, I frequented The Unicorn pub and attended other Irish events –

learning the Irish music of the city, and embracing the culture of my ancestors. This bitter-sweet melancholy is something John McDermott (1992) sings of in “Danny Boy”:

*Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling  
From glen to glen and down the mountain side  
The summer's is gone and all the roses falling  
It's you, it's you must go and I must fight*

(Weatherly, 1913, Track 3)

Complimenting the Irish tunes of yore was the folk music of Toronto's Free Times Café, located in The Annex. It was here that I found solace in the music of the sixties, prompting me to explore the musical stylings of Simon & Garfunkle, the beauty of Joan Baez, and the wisdom of Bob Dylan as illustrated in “The Times They are a Changin”:

*Come gather 'round people wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters around you have grown  
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth saving  
And you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone*

(Dylan, 1967, Track 3)

Aside from these communities new music was on the rise. With my memories of unrequited love, the music of the eighties didn't help. Songs like Wham's “Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go,” although uplifting in its beat, it was downtrodden in its lyrical content – at least where my life was concerned. In fact, every time I heard the song, the song's sugary sweet lyrics made me want to break the record as is exemplified in the lyrics:

*You put the boom boom into my heart (hoo, hoo)  
You send my soul sky high when your lovin' starts  
Jitterbug into my brain (yeah, yeah)  
Goes a bang-bang-bang 'til my feet do the same  
Wake me up go go 'cause I'm not planning on going solo*

(Michaels, 1984, Track 1)

Unlike George Michaels and the rest of Wham!, I had gone solo and found camaraderie in the new music of Madonna. Having hit the scene running, Madonna was inspiring masses of young girls and women the world over. By the time my train pulled into Vancouver's Pacific Station I was attuned to Madonna. I found myself identifying with her song lyrics that spoke to her celebration of having survived another one of life's struggles – a narrative that is illuminated in Madonna's signature tune, “Like a Virgin”:

*I made it through the wilderness  
Somehow I made it through  
Didn't know how lost I was until I found you*

(Kelly & Steinberg, 1984, Track 3)

Like any success story, we need to reach a pinnacle to take credit. In arriving back home, I was able to bring some credibility to Madonna's lyrical declaration of "I made it through the wilderness/Somehow I made it through." In having made it through Toronto's wilderness and my own biographical wilderness, I felt I had earned the right to say I'd made it through something. In *Writing Down the Bones*, Natalie Goldberg (1986) speaks of this phenomenon through her description of Ernest Hemingway's perspective on his life: "away from Paris I could write about Paris as in Paris I could write about Michigan" (p. 15). Similar to Hemingway, by physically distancing myself from Vancouver, my childhood home, I acquired a perspective that allowed me to see my life more clearly.

On the last leg of my year I boarded a train in Toronto's Union Station *en route* to Vancouver, my childhood home. This journey, along with the music and the year away, helped me to awaken to the fact that I had never had an anchor to ground me. I only thought I had an anchor when actually I had merely been distracted – by family, friends, my ex-boyfriend. There were no distractions to hide the fact that I was lost. Toronto did not make me lost; it was what woke me up. Ironically, it was my previous inability to see life fully that kept me asleep and unaware. As afraid and alone as I felt during my year in Toronto, it truly was a gift. This awakening led me out of the dark, and into my life – sentiments that are celebrated in Simon & Garfunkel's lyrics "The Boxer":

*Hello darkness my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping*

(Simon, 1963/1981, Track 11)

One of the key things that I awoke to was the early years of my life. Distance allowed me to recognize that I had been affected by my early separations from my mom. These separations were prompted by my mother's mental health which led to her frequent hospitalizations at Riverview Psychiatric Hospital and resulted in my being farmed fostered out to extended family. My reflections of these years of separation brought on a sense of loss, sadness and loneliness.

How ironic it is that finding myself would make me feel lost. Winter didn't help. Instead, I created a sort of romanticism around my experience, which once again, can be further illuminated through my identification with the lyrical storyline of "The Boxer":

*Laying out my winter clothes  
And wishing I was gone, going home  
Where the New York City winters aren't not bleeding me*

(Simon, 1961, Track 6)

Throughout the winter months in snowy Toronto, I played this song often, bringing a solace to my experience. Although I didn't understand it at the time, Simon's lyrics made me feel enveloped by the music, less alone, and protected somehow. And so, as I looked out the window at the falling snow I often dreamt myself into tomorrow – and knew that my time here was for a reason and that I would be home soon enough

Music can be the great healer. In the case of "The Boxer," as Paul Simon (1969) wove his pain and loss throughout the song, the emotion seeped through his music and lyrics and into my experience, to sooth me. That I first heard this song while living in Toronto, at a time when I felt lost, it seems a pro pos – as though it had been written for me. Despite this romanticism, I also realized that home would never be the same again. I would never be young again. I would never un-know what I now knew. I could never go back to sleep. As Thomas Wolfe's infamous quote suggests, I could never *go home again* (1940). When we leave home, how we see things shifts. Our lens changes. Our filter. Our perspective. As a result, our entire world changes, and for this reason, home will never be the same. Yet, while we are forever changed, the fighter within remains, as is illustrated in "The Boxer":

*In the clearing stands a boxer and a fighter by his trade  
And he carries the reminders of every glove that laid him down  
Or cut him 'till he cried out.  
In his anger and his shame "I am leaving. I am leaving."  
But the fighter still remains.*

(Simon, 1969, Track 6)



## Radio Tale #18A: Finding Truth in Comedy

### [Listen to Radio Tale #18A](#)

In the 1988 film *Punchline*, starring Tom Hanks and Sally Fields, Hanks has this great line that encapsulates the beauty of comedy, suggesting that at the root of all comedy lies truth. It draws attention to the fact that comedy has two sides to it: the two sides of the coin; the two faces of theatre; black and white; yin and yang; yes and no; opposites; all of which create synergy and balance. The line I am referring to is as follows:

Sally Fields: Is everything a joke to you?

Tom Hanks: Nothing is a joke to me

Like Hanks' character in *Punchline*, nothing is a joke to me. Comedy is actually a way of looking at truth, a way of framing our lives. Writing comedy requires that we reflect on our lives, our thoughts and our opinions so that we may write a monologue we care about. It also requires that we delve into our lived experience. In doing so, the deeper we dig, the better the comedy; the closer we get to the truth of our lives, the richer the comedy. Conversely, when we deflect the truth we often end up with superficial jokes that scratch the surface of our experience; we often end up talking about the external aspects of our experience – the weather, sports, shopping – superfluous stuff that doesn't touch us emotionally, that can't hurt us. But if we choose to go inward, that's where the good stuff is. Unfortunately, when we wake up we get the whole shebang – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Picking and choosing isn't really an option. Instead, when we excavate our lives as American singer-songwriter, Amy Sky, forewarns:

*It's a little secret your friends won't tell  
Heaven's highway sometimes takes you through hell  
Love is work and work is hard  
There are ghosts inside the dark*

*And it takes  
Love, pain, the whole damn thing  
If you want my heart you get everything*

(Sky, 1998, Track 1)

In wanting the whole damn thing, I left comedy to explore other avenues of my life. A year later my mom died which prompted my to research my family genealogy; although I

didn't know what I was looking for beyond the regular ancestry, I felt compelled to interview extended family and to return to my mother's childhood home. In doing so, this road less travelled lead me to the most unexpected places. I soon found myself moving in a new direction, where for the next ten years, I would reside within the walls of academia. Three degrees of separation later – having studied education, the arts, performance, and memoir – I eventually stumbled upon radio broadcasting. This medium became a space where I learned how to weave the arts and writing into performance – all of which were informed by my lived experience.

## Radio Tale #18B: The Comedy Greats

Laughter opens the doors to perception  
It allows the thoughts to get in  
'Cause you're completely unguarded and zen-like  
when you're laughing.

(Carlin, 2007, n.p.)

In reflecting upon comedy and how it came into my life, I realize it has a lot to do with my mother who was a great storyteller, had a great laugh, and was resilient to life's hardships.

*Don't mind the rain drops  
Wait till the rain stops  
Smile through your tears  
Laughing at life*

(Kenney et al., 1951, Track 2)

I was also influenced by television of the seventies, a boyfriend in the eighties, and a theatre coach Alex Bruhanski. Having grown up in the seventies – the age of the variety show, with daytime talk shows on demand and late night talk shows on the rise – I was exposed to some cutting edge *The Tonight Show*, comedy. On the heels of Ed Sullivan and his “really good shew,” Johnny Carson — who would become the king of late night — entered stage left nightly with straight man Ed McMahon at his side:

*And here's Johnny*

Carson's opening orchestrated theme song, which was followed by his monologue, was punctuated with his infamous golf swing. The theme song which was credited to musical icon, Paul Anka (1962) – Canada's own “Lonely Boy” – would go down in television history as “Johnny's Theme.” In fact, when Carson retired and passed the torch to Jay Leno, the show's theme song went with him, and of course, so did his golf swing.

While the lights shone brightly on CBS's *The Tonight Show* for over thirty years (1962-1992), the NBC studios featured *Late Nite with David Letterman* for thirty-three years (1982-2015). While Carson and Letterman were competitive arch rivals, they were also complementary to each other in that they had different styles.

*You like potato and I like potahto  
You like tomato and I like tomahto...  
You say laughter and I say larfter  
Let's call the whole thing off*

(Gershwin & Gershwin, 1937, Track 10)

Having left the sixties behind us, the climate was ripe for comedy. The seventies, although it presented a media platform of opportunity, with it came the challenge of pushing the edge without going over it. At the same time, American society still harboured a climate of racism and a culture of intolerance where bullies were widely accepted and tolerated, and where justice was unjust. Yet, it was also a time when people were blowing the lid off of injustice, as was done with Richard Nixon, *Watergate*, and *All the President's Men*, and of course, *Serpico* – the police officer who became the whistleblower of all whistleblowers. He was one of the first to address corruption from the inside, in his case, as a New York police officer; and he lived to tell about it.

Meanwhile, another great comedic stronghold in the industry was Saturday Night Live, having first graced the stage on October 11, 1975. With creator Lorne Michaels at the helm and developer Dick Ebersol at his side, the best in improv comedy were rallied together to form the infamous “No Name Players”: there were the guys, John Belushi, Dan Ackroyd, Bill Murray, Steve Martin and then there were the girls, Gilda Radner, Jane Curtain, Laraine Newman. This was year one.

The show's comedy sketches parodied contemporary culture and politics, with each episode hosted by a celebrity guest and featuring performances by a musical guest. The show is infamously known for opening each episode with a comedy sketch that ends with someone breaking character to formally open the show, by announcing:

*Live from New York, it's Saturday Night!* (Ebersol & Michaels, 1975)

With the show bordering on the fringes of late night, comedy took centre stage in a whole new way. And so it was, for anyone who graced the late night stage of *Saturday Night Live*, it was one of the greatest honours.

By the time we got to the eighties, political correctness was on the rise, and was soon to be front and centre – tipping the edge of change. While this constituted much needed change – like tolerance, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, equity, to name a few – we often went to far. In needing to edit our content, we became careful with our humour,

irony, sarcasm, puns, mixed-metaphors, and in many ways our words became stilted. They had become sanitized. We had to learn a new way to poke fun at life, in way that was respectful when talking about our differences. We had to find a way to talk about our humanness. Many learned to dance around language, and didn't actually change a thing. In wanting to appease, and not offend with words, many comedians did a sidestep in the arts. What had once been apparently humorous to comedians, and to many a listening audience, had become offensive overnight. In actuality, much of it had always been offensive; it had just been tolerated for too long which made it seem normal.

Despite comedy that was peppered with intelligence, insight, and ingenuity that reflected the human condition, politically incorrect content could no longer be tolerated. Things needed to change. With changing policies that rightly championed human rights, equity and equality platforms, by the late eighties the climate of comedy began to change. Political correctness was on the rise.

Comics, and people in general, were being challenged for racism, sexism, homophobic, etc. comics began to feel stifled, something has continued to this day. Although it seems like political correctness has relaxed a little in the last ten years, legendary filmmaker Mel Brooks (2017) argues that the demand for political correctness undermines comedians' abilities to perform social satire. Brooks (2017) further suggests that we "have become stupidly politically correct, which is the death of comedy," he said on BBC Radio.

*I started a joke which started the whole world crying  
But I didn't see that the joke was on me, oh no*

(Gibb, 1968, Track 10)

With political correctness on the rise, the eighties were quick to put a muzzle on comedy. Live comedy was at the risk of becoming washed out jokes, careful not to offend, edited to the death. ism was on the rise. In "Give Peace a Chance," Lennon (1969) uses music to explore how people that have become afraid of being accused of using isms: "This-ism, that-ism, is-m, is-m, is-m," racism, sexism, elitism, ableism, ageism.

*Everybody's talking about  
Bagism, Shagism, Dragism  
Madism, Ragism, Tagism  
This-ism, that-ism  
is-m, is-m, is-m...*

*C'mon, ev'rybody's talking about  
Ministers, sinisters, banisters and canisters  
Bishops and Fishops and Rabbis and Popeyes  
And bye-bye, bye-byes*

*All we are saying is give peace a chance*

(Lennon, 1969, Track 1)

In the late nineties, once again things started to change. Political correctness did an about face. Suddenly, it was okay to call attention to and to make fun of our differences. Our peculiarities. Maybe, we'd learned something. While tolerance, acceptance, and respect imperative to our living in socially just communities, sterilizing our humanness and scraping off the shine could only hurt us in the end. Is this why the muzzle has been removed? Have we perhaps come full circle?

All we are saying is give comedy a chance

## Radio Tale #19: Settling or Settling Down?

### [Listen to Radio Tale #19](#)

*Oh, you get me ready in your 56 Chevy  
Why don't we go sit down in the shade  
To shelter on my front porch  
That dandy lion sun scorching  
Like a glass of cold lemonade  
I will do the laundry if you pay all the bills*

*Where is my John Wayne  
Where is my prairie song  
Where is my happy ending  
Where have all the cowboys gone*

(Cole, 1997, Track 4)

While relationships are a balance of give and take, yin and yang, this and that, and undoubtedly a negotiation, Paula Cole's expose in "Where Have all the Cowboy's Gone" speaks to, or calls for, the desired payoff: the happy ending.

When I was younger I balked at the idea of settling down. The idea marriage, laying down roots, buying a house in the suburbs, and working 9-5 for the next thirty years turned my stomach. Then I met someone and fell head over heels and things turned on a dime. A year later we were living together, planning a wedding. In Smalltown, BC, no less. As fate would have it, however, my happy ending was short lived. Some serious drugs got in the way and suddenly I didn't know who I was living with, neither did he. I hate when that happens.

I guess the silver lining is this: I realized that settling down wasn't so bad, not when it's the right guy. I also realized that I love small towns. I like the eclectic mix of people they attract: artists, worker-bees, farmers. Sure, there are the rednecks, the demented types, and the hermits...but that's another short story.

After two years of living in bliss – me in my wedding planner-denial-bliss, and he in his drug-induced bliss, the shine started to wear off. Without that gleam to conceal the bleakness of love gone awry, I started to feel hemmed in, like I couldn't breathe. This is illustrated in Metric's signature tune "Breathing Under Water":

*They were right when they said we were breathing underwater  
Out of place all the time in a world that wasn't mine to take – I'll wait  
Is this my life? Am I breathing underwater*

(Shankar & Kale, 2012, Track 4)

I eventually came to the realization that were I to stay this would no longer be settling down; it would be settling. And so, as Smalltown, BC became unbearable, semantics became everything.

During our last Christmas together I gave my fiancé the DVD *What's Love Got to Do with It?* – a film that portrayed Tina Turner's rise to fame under the thumb of her then abusive, drug-addicted husband-producer-manager Ike Turner. I'm not sure why I gave him that movie. Was it an act of passive aggression? Was I giving him an ultimatum: the drugs or me? Days after we'd watched the DVD, as we drove up Cypress Mountain he repeatedly motioned to drive off an icy embankment. He said it was a joke. Yet, if the truck lost traction, would it be a joke? I guess I threatened him with the DVD and he threatened me with the side of a cliff – something that ironically is illuminated in "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off":

*Things have come to a pretty pass  
Our romance is growing flat  
For you like this and the other  
While I go for this and that...  
Let's call the whole thing off*

(Gershwin & Gershwin, 1937, Track 10)

Besides, in the words of Tom Hanks, "Nothing is a joke." I moved out a week later. In being single again, I re-evaluated the engagement promise we had made to each other when I first moved in with him. This led me to Doris Day who also explored the unfolding of relationship as is reflected in her signature tune, "Que Sera Sera,"

*When I grew up and fell in love  
I asked my sweetheart what lies ahead  
Will we have rainbows day after day  
Here's what my sweetheart said:*

*"Que sera sera, whatever will be will be".  
The future's not ours to see, que sera, sera"*

(Livingston & Evans, 1956. Track 1)



In the next six years I had two relationships. One, with an addictions counsellor – a man who was stoned several nights a week and who proudly purchased his pot from a former patient. Then I dated a Catholic school teacher, who did his masters in theology to become a priest – a man who taught marriage preparation yet was sexist and wanted me to wear more white, to serve God more, and insisted I should be more like The Book of Ruth (a.k.a. The Bible). This calls me to reflect upon Hozier who cautions listeners in “Take Me to Church”:

*Take me to church  
I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of your life  
I'll tell you my sins and you can sharpen your knife...  
Good God, let me give you my life*

(Hozier, 2013, Track 1)

The silver lining is that the Catholic showed me that I'd been locked in a pattern of dating the wrong guys – by unconscious design. Interesting to note is that they all had addictive compulsions and many of them were practicing alcoholics or addicts – with a few in training. It seems that I was addicted to a pattern of behaviour. As such, it was not their pattern to break; it was mine. To do so I thought it best to opt out of relationships. Period. As a result, this gave me time to focus in on writing, getting an English degree, and finding my path in life.

*Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen*

(Dylan, 1967, Track 3)

My shift in awareness, regarding relationships, was paramount. It got me thinking about the statistics of assault, abuse and domestic violence, and made me realize how lucky I am. I am especially in awe of artists who write of their personal experience, or of an issue that requires attention. Being that discussions of sexual assault is something we are hearing more of in recent years what with the court cases of Jian Ghomeshi and Bill Cosby and the recent testimonials by women regarding Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. Aside from it being in the news, the courts, and legislation, it's in the arts. Books. Films. Songs. I am reminded of Shawn Colvin's hit single, “Sunny Came Home.” The song portrays the emotional plight of a woman's escape from domestic abuse. After calmly arriving home, she gathers her thoughts, the children and some items, and set the house afire:

*Sunny came home to her favorite room  
Sunny sat down in the kitchen  
She opened a book and a box of tools  
Sunny came home with a mission*

*She says, 'Days go by, I'm hypnotized, I'm walking on a wire  
I close my eyes and fly out of my mind into the fire'*

(Colvin, 1996, Track 1)

Rather than leave women to their own devices that lead them to fly out of their mind, as is suggested in *Arresting Hope: Women Taking Action in Prison Health Inside Out*, we invite women “to reimagine their lives through creative and meaningful action [...we] offer each woman...a lifetime of possibility, a narrative of renewal” (Fels in Martin et al., 2014, p. 223).

By making such an offer, hopefully women will see that they have agency over their lives. They won't have to sell themselves short as a means to get a man to love them, to be taken care of, to be provided for. They won't have to enter into an unspoken agreement that tethers them to traditional roles that might leave them nameless, faceless, and invisible. Again, I am reminded of Paula Cole (1996) who negotiates her life away in hopes of finding love, a happy ending, and her John Wayne:

*I will raise the children if you pay all the bills  
(Cole, 1996, Track 4)*

Negotiations and compromises are par for the course in any relationship – if they are to last. When person A controls person B, and when that other person B submits in order to avoid conflict this suggests that person B has settled and surrendered. Although it statistically is usually the woman who submits in these situations, this is not explicit; men also submit where their partner dominates or controls. In both cases, it is heart-breaking to see such a surrendering (resulting in a half life). On the other hand, there must be a trade-off to selling out, to going along with the illusion; otherwise, why would you do it?; the price is too high. So my question is, Did you settle, or did you settle down?

*Where is my Marlborough man  
Where is his shiny gun  
Where is my lonely ranger  
Where have all the cowboys gone*

(Cole, 1996, Track 4)

## Radio Tale #20: Just Until I Get My Bearings

### [Listen to Radio Tale #20](#)

We met one fall afternoon when the leaves were falling and the sky was clear. I fell quickly. Too quickly. And although that should have told me something, should have raised red flags, sent up smoke signals. I kept falling.

*Wise men say only fools rush in  
But I can't help falling in love with you  
Shall I stay?  
Would it be a sin  
If I can't help falling in love with you?*

(Creatore, Peretti & Weiss, 1961, Track 4)

Like Haley Reinhart (2016) sings of in “Can’t Help Falling in Love,” I couldn’t help falling in love. I guess I liked the idea of falling. I thought it was an indication of love. Not the kind of love your parents had but a passionate love. You know, a fairy tale kind of love. Or as New York based singer-songwriter Amy Rachman (2007) suggests in “Movie Kind of Love”, I had that movie kind of love. Or so I thought so at the time.

*We’ve got that movie kind of love  
And every reel plays in my mind  
And all the memories above*

(Rachman, 2007, Track 1)

Like Alice, I kept falling. Down, down, down.... After falling for almost a year and ending up down a rabbit hole, in the middle of a wood, I climbed to the surface and took stock of my forested surroundings. Having been snowed in that winter, I decided to wait for the smoke to clear, the dust to settle, and until I got my bearings.

Although I never did get my bearing, I moved in the spring of that year, just as the snows were beginning to melt. With the help of Budget Rental and many friends, I moved my life’s belongings into storage. “Just until I get my bearings,” I told myself. As I closed the elevator door I leaned in to read the graffiti carved into the elevator’s wooden slats:

this is where you go when love breaks your heart

(Anonymous, Graffiti, 1995)

As the words pierced my heart, **pow**, I started to cry. It seemed *apropos* that this is where I finally broke.

When I returned to my wounded heart to take stock, the ice began to thaw, then crack, then give way to the memories of the emotional relationship I'd been living in as is reflected in Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart":

*Come on and take it  
Take it  
Take another piece of my heart now, baby*

(Berns & Ragovoy, 1967, Track 4)

I soon came to realize that I had been caught in an unconscious pattern of writing the bad romance – a pattern that drew me toward addictive men. Although I was determined to shift this pattern it would take a few more tries at bat before this pattern would begin to break apart. Having grown up with too many alcoholics and not enough guidance, I saw addiction as par for the course. It would take a badass hypocritical Catholic school teacher – and his bout with addiction – to dismount my patterns of addiction for I came to see two things:

1) Love is blind

and D E A F

in one e—a—r

2) One more

I o I i  
a c h o c

and I've got a **Yahtzee . . . .**

(Harder, 1999)

As Lady Gaga (2009) suggests, I had immersed myself in a “Bad Romance”:

*Gaga, ohh la-la  
Want your bad romance  
I want your ugly  
I want your disease  
I want your everything  
as long as it's free  
I want your love  
Love, love, love  
I want your love*

(Germanotto & Khaya, 2009, Track 1)

Had my love life been just a kids' game that would have been one thing. However, given that the numbers were adding up – and not in my favour – I knew it was time to reboot my love life and start re-programming. In other words, I needed to step out of the ring, take some time, and start over. It would be some years after I had made this decision that I would turn on the radio to hear the Alanis Morissette's single "Not as We," a song that would reflect my experience of love a-new.

I have started over again:

*Day one, day one, start over again  
Step one, step one  
I'm barely making sense for now  
I'm faking it 'til I'm pseudo making it*

(Morissette, 2008, Track 5)

## Radio Tale #21: Facebook, Fiction & the Trouble with Fame

### [Listen to Radio Tale #21](#)

*Fame, (fame) what you like is in the limo  
Fame, (fame) what you get is no tomorrow  
Fame, (fame) what you need you have to borrow  
Fame, (fame) it's mine, it's mine, it's just his line*

(Bowie, Alomar & Lennon.1975, Track 1)

As David Bowie (1975) sings of in “Fame,” the cost of fame is high. Regardless, maybe we all want a piece of forever, and to know that we will live beyond our lived experience. Maybe we want to create a piece of us that will impact beyond the immediate moment. Maybe we all just want to be seen, to be known, to be remembered.

*Facebook* is one such invitation to be seen. To ensure longevity. To be acknowledged, admired, and for some, envied and worshiped. For those of us who post photos: of our spouse, the new haircut, the size six body, loved ones, the scenic destination of us lying on a beach, and finally, that infamous plate of *pasta fabulosa* – this very act begs the question: who is that? Where are you? Where do you live? What does your husband do? It creates the environment where people are likely to be acknowledged, admired, envied, seen – and observed. But how much do we really want people to know of us? How close do we want people to get? How much information is too much before they acquire an inside view on our lives? Do we want acquaintances, co-workers, or God forbid, strangers to follow our online profiles? And what sort of online profile have we created, and is this persona true to life?

*Look at me, I'm Sandra Dee  
Lousy with virginity  
Won't go to bed till I'm legally wed  
I can't, I'm Sandra Dee*

*I don't drink or swear, I don't rat my hair  
I get ill from one cigarette  
Keep your filthy paws off my silky drawers  
Would you pull that crap with Annette*

(Jacobs & Casey, 1978, Track 3)

While Stockard Channing (1978) may present this song, “Look at Me, I’m Sandra Dee,” as tongue-in-cheek, the song also has serious undertones. This is an example of how a person might represent themselves on Facebook. If so, this personal information would be carefully constructed to attract specific friends and/ or followers. Portrayals, personas and presentations have a target audience in mind.

On the flip side, what do we hope for when friend-ing? How might it serve us? I suspect we are searching for connection and of course it is nice to see what old friends are up to. And let’s not lie, we’re also curious about old boyfriends. Yet, sadly, some of us hold up a yardstick to the lives of others (in comparison to our own).

**Why else would creeping be so popular?**

**But what if you aren’t in a position to pose life extraordinaire?**

**Will a can of alpha-getti do?**

**Will a hometown beach suffice?**

**Will a random Porsche-on-the-street convince?**

**What about Prince Charming-in-a-box?**

**Whatever we live, however we pose,  
who will know the difference?**

Why has *Facebook* become important to so many? Why do so many aim to grow their status? Is it to appear famous? Celebrities do this to grow their star status. In a sense, non-celebrities are also growing their star status – increasing the number of friends. I often get *friend-ed* by strangers; at first I thought it was a mistake, then realized they either viewed me on another friend’s page, or are *friend-ing* strangers to increase their number of friends. What do we gain from doing this? What is the incentive if not the fame? To say I was here? To be seen?

The trouble with fame is that sooner or later people look at you differently (the public, strangers, acquaintances, even family and friends). Their perspective causes them to wait for you to do something spectacular. The trouble with social media is that you’re always being watched which forces *Facebook* users to always be “on.” As a result, this pressures many to be conscientious about what they say and do online. It’s as though they are on display. This is something Madonna (2012) speaks to in “Masterpiece” – a



song that was written for the film W.E. but also speaks to the Mona Lisa, art galleries, masterpieces, and Madonna herself:

*If you were the Mona Lisa  
You'd be hanging in the Louvre  
Everyone would come to see you  
You'd be impossible to move*

(Ciccone, Frost & Harry, 2012, Track 1)

Because fame denies those on display to be anonymous people are left feeling they must protect their privacy. Take celebrities, for example. Take Madonna. Last summer while in NYC, I took a city bus to the upper east side and strolled past Madonna's home – a brownstone which is half a block long. Her property is surrounded by other brownstone walk-ups and many quaint storefronts, boutiques and cafes that give the neighbourhood a nice ambiance. But when you notice that Madonna's home is barricaded by a bullet-proof metal gate you quickly realize that the only thing missing is the changing of the guards. While Madonna is steps away from Lexington Avenue and a fifteen-minute walk from the MET, she is still somewhat confined. Although she is neither the queen nor the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, she is nonetheless a celebrity, encased like a shrine.

Unlike a person's home, body, or presence, social media is a distant construct. Where it has its affect is in its illusion of boundaries and privacy; by viewing this platform as social, people often become too comfortable in their circle of *Facebook* "friends" which causes them to over-share. While some users want a space where they can flaunt their lives, and sell their "brand," there are others who don't engage for this purpose, but engage nonetheless. In failing to see themselves as being on display, this lack of awareness makes them more vulnerable.

As such, it seems there are five key groups of *Facebook* users with an active profile who regularly share their lives; randomly share their lives; flaunt their lives, or aim to sell their business or their "brand". And then there are those who don't share online but are curious about others. Some people are probably online in hopes that they will meet someone online. Perhaps they just want to meet a nice guy or nice girl. Then again, maybe they are voyeurs, creepers, stalkers. This sense of being 'watched' is addressed in The Police's hit single "Every breath You Take":

*Every breath you take, every move you make  
Every bond you break, every step you take  
I'll be watching you*

(Sting, 1991, Track 3)

Regardless of who our *friends* are, we should take stock in what we post. After all, personal information that we post online never goes away, and you never know who's watching, creeping, or keeping track. Research has shown that the *Facebook* forum has sparked depression among many a *friend*. It is presumed that this phenomenon has arisen as a result of users viewing and comparing their lives with the lives of others. The irony here is that you will likely never know which friends are depressed because like you, they also are posting beautiful photos and fabulous stories of their lives – all in the name of wanting to inform, inspire, impress, or perhaps to acquire 'fame.' This is something Irene Cara (1980) speaks to in the film's title track, "Fame." So now, let me ask you: is this real or is this *Memorex*?

*Baby, look at me  
And tell me what you see  
You ain't seen the best of me yet  
Give me time  
And I'll make you forget the rest...*

*Fame  
I'm gonna live forever  
I'm gonna learn how to fly, high...  
Baby, remember my name*

(Gore & Pitchford, 1980, Track 1)

## Radio Tale #22: Two Days and One Final Hour

### [Listen to Radio Tale #22](#)

*It's five o'clock this morning and the sun is on the rise  
There's frosting on the window pane and sorrow in your eyes  
The stars are fading quietly, the night is nearly gone  
And so you turn away from me and tears begin to come  
And it's goodbye again*

(Denver, 1972, Track 7)

When I got the call I packed a bag. As John Denver sings of in “Goodbye Again,” I knew that good bye was close at hand. And so, I cancelled my schedule, got in my car and drove east — *en route* to the Fraser Valley to see my father.

Upon my arrival at his nursing home, as soon as I saw my dad laid up in his bed it was apparent that the end was near for him. The nurse had told my eldest sister that my dad had two week left but I could see she was wrong. My father had two days to live, if that. It was just a matter of time.

After I kissed my dad hello, and ensued he was comfortable, I set my things down on his armchair, and got down to preparing for his final days. Because I was told that this stage of his aging left him unable to eat, speak or open his eyes, I was surprised upon my arrival when my father's eyes opened and remained open for the next two days, apart from his periods of rest. Aware that his senses were astute, I pulled out my laptop, turned it on and opened to *I-Tunes*.

“Dad,” I said, “I’ve brought you music.”

At that the nurse entered the room to let me know that my brother was calling me from Ontario. I took the phone from her and asked my brother to hang on a moment. Then I pushed the play button and Hank Williams voice filled the room with his signature tune, “Hey Good Looking”:

*Hey good looking, whatcha got cooking  
How's about cooking something up with me*

(Williams, 1951, Single)

Returning to the phone my brother was on the edge of tears: “What are you doing?” he asked, “that’s Dad’s music.”

“Yeah,” I said, “It’s Dad’s music and he’s going to have country music for the rest of his life.

As the twang in Williams’ voice emanated from my laptop I noticed my Dad’s breathing change. But Hank Williams does that to me too.

With each song, my dad became more present. While he was not able to express in words, from the shine in his eyes, I saw gratitude. For the music. For the company. He was not going to die alone, and this he knew. Knowing that the end was near for my father, a played a song to reflect that he would soon be seeing my mother, a sentiment that is suggested by Charlie Pride’s in his famous tune, “Kiss an Angel Good Morning”:

*You’ve got to kiss an angel good morning  
and let her know you think about her when you’re gone  
Kiss an angel good morning  
and love her like the devil when you get back home*

(Peters, 1971, Track 4)

I held the phone to my Dad’s ear so my brother could talk to him, and again I saw my Dad’s breathing change. From there to here, and then to now, and now from across the miles, from Ontario to BC and through the years of childhood to our middle-aged years here we were: saying goodbye to our father. There was so much going on in that conversation – much more than words could ever say. The strained words that only a good bye can say.

*Here you come again  
Just when I’ve begun to get myself together  
You waltz right in the door  
Just like you’ve done before  
And wrap my heart ‘round your little finger*

(Mann & Weil, 1975, Track 1)

After a few minutes I took the phone away from dad’s ear and went into the hall to speak with my brother. While country music played on in the background with Andy Williams singing of his sweetheart Mary, “heading down the road with lips of cherry, it’s good to touch the green, green grass of home” (Putman, 1965, mp3 file) I was reminded of a

road trip my family took back in the seventies, where we headed east across the BC landscape toward the Saskatchewan prairie flatlands where my dad had been raised. We drove in my dad's station wagon – across the miles – the miles that took us back in time (Belfi et al., 2014) to another day as my dad touched back on his childhood days on his family's Saskatchewan homestead in that little town called Leroy. With other families also *en route* to the family reunion, upon arrival we set up camp on the farmland, the same land where my father was raised.

I spent that first day in Dad's room, playing country music and talking about the singers he had grown to love. When night came the nurses brought a mattress into the room on for me; I was grateful for their consideration, not for the mattress but that they were aware that I needed to be there with my dad. I awoke throughout the night – quite frequently – to the sounds of my father's laborious breathing, a reminder that he was still here something of which I was grateful for. Upon waking I dressed and had breakfast at my dad's side, and again, we spent the day with music. While our morning started with the music of Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash and Hank Snow, we also listened to one of Dad's favourites, Wilf Carter's Yodelling Cowboy”:

*My cowboy life is so happy and free  
Out west where the laws don't bother me  
I take my troubles like a toy, I'm just a yodeling cowboy*

(McWilliams & Rodgers, n.d., Single)

As the music of old friends filled his room, I reflected upon the memories of he and my mother playing these country tunes throughout my childhood. We listened to the country greats of his life. While I told him stories of what I knew of these songs and singers, I drew on my knowledge from my work in radio and from my memories of what I had learnt from he and Mom. At other times, we sat quietly as the music played – allowing the country greats to fill the room: Hank Williams, Hank Snow, Loretta Lynn, Kenny Rogers, Tommy Hunter. Me and Dad were in good company as we sang along with Johnny Cash and “I Walk the Line”:

*I keep a close watch on this heart of mine  
I keep my eyes wide open all the time  
I keep the ends out for the tie that binds  
Because you're mine, I walk the line*

(Cash, 1956/1964, Track 1)

I knew that this day would be my dad's final day with me. With anyone. And so, as the afternoon wore on I spoke to him about things other than the music. I was grateful that we had these last two days of his life together, without the presence of my siblings. I spoke of all he had done for our family, for my mom, and how he'd stood by her side, helped her along. Because our family had been broken for a long time, I needed to tell him that it was up to each of us to work through our stuff. I told him we would all be okay and that he didn't need to worry about us. I spoke of the accomplishments of my siblings and the good in all of our lives. I also spoke of the brokenness between us, and assured him it was up to each of us to live our best selves. That he couldn't worry about any of our struggles. I spoke of my brother in Ontario, who had his pain of life, and the pain of losing his daughter Meaghan too young. I spoke of the sisters, how they had their pain and anger and would have to get through it their own way. And I spoke of my gratitude that he and I had found peace between us and I thanked him for all he had done for me in my life (although I didn't yet know the extent of what he'd done). My gratitude was apparent though, as is illuminated in Alanis Morissette's "Thank U":

*Thank you India, thank you providence  
Thank you disillusionment, thank you nothingness  
Thank you clarity, thank you, thank you silence  
(Morissette, 1998, Track 1)*

In these final days with my father, he became solely present. I've never seen anything so beautiful; it reminded me of the exquisite presence I have experienced each time I've completed a twelve-day silent meditation retreat. My father was unable to eat, speak or move his body, yet his eye contact with me was powerful; it reminded me of a baby who holds eye contact with his mother, or primary caretaker. My dad eyes were fixed on me. I was a beacon in the night, helping him to find his way and hold his place so he wouldn't drift away, or get blown to the winds. He did not get blown to the winds – something that is illuminated within Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson's "Winter Song":

*This is my winter song to you, the storm is coming soon  
It rolls in from the sea, my voice; a beacon in the night  
My words will be your light*

(Bareilles & Michaelson, 2016, Track 6)

In his final twenty minutes, as his struggle for breath increased, I held his hand and talked him through it. Again, I told him he could go when he was ready, and assured him

that he had done his work here, that we kids would be okay on our own now, and that he was going to a good place to be with Mom. In his last few minutes, I saw he was leaving; with his eyes fixed on me as I saw his fear increase, I held his hands in mine and again, assured him: "You can go when you're ready. I've got you." With his eyes fixed on me, my father allowed me to guide his process right through to his last breath; meanwhile, Kenny Rogers voice echoed into the night, singing the of the departure of "Lucille":

*You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille  
With four hungry children and a crop in the field  
I've had some bad time, lived through some hard times  
But this time the hurtin' won't heal*

(Bowling & Bynum, 1977, Track 7)

And he was gone, with the wisdom of "Lucille," and the irony of life.

## Radio Tale #23: Return to the Prairie Homestead

### [Listen to Radio Tale #23](#)

I didn't know why I needed to go there. But I did. And I needed to go alone. Upon arriving at my mom's childhood homestead in McGee Saskatchewan, I felt like I was right where I needed to be. I sensed that, by coming to this farm, I was doing something courageous. I didn't know what that meant but I trusted that whatever it was, it would be revealed to me. And hopefully, by morning. And so, I walked the land, trusting that courageous was a good word for me.

I arrived at the abandoned farmhouse on a scorching hot summer's day, just before lunch, and explored the barren land until after the sun had risen the following day. You could say I stayed until the cows came home (and I wouldn't be lying!). I was there for my mom. She loved that land, and it was only after something awful happened that she left her home. As the day progressed, nothing I sang or did seemed cliché anymore. By evening, I realized I had come to the farm to take back something my mother had left behind.

As I kicked at the dirt I envisioned my mom kicking at the dirt. We had come full circle somehow. In being at my mother's home I became sad about the brokenness across the generations, and the patterns that perpetuated across the miles. It was as though my mother never had a chance, and so, never had the strength to awaken to the possibility of her life, something George Harrison sings of in "While My Guitar Gently Weeps":

*I look at you all see the love there that's sleeping  
While my guitar gently weeps*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1968, Track 4)

The beauty in Harrison's words lead me to reflect upon my mom's life. I recalled stories of Grandpa's jovial nature, and realized his two sides must've confused my mom and her sisters. Yet, I thought of him playing the violin, how the children gathered to listen:

*My grandpa played the violin and he played his song for me  
With a tap and a bang and a strum and a twang,  
How his prairie tune made history.*

(Harder, 2011, Lines 1-4)



This image of Grandpa makes me realize how music adds to your life; when he lost the violin in the house fire, he lost a piece of himself. In the case of John Denver's ballad, "This Old Guitar," we see how music can mold a life:

*This old guitar taught me to sing a love song  
It showed me how to laugh and how to cry  
It introduced me to some friends of mine*

*And brightened up some days  
It helped me make it through some lonely nights  
Oh, what a friend to have on a cold and lonely night*

(Denver, 1974, Track 12)

The songwriting of John Denver, and his ability to conjure up images of old makes me envision Denver on a farm somewhere in Colorado – working the land, singing his song and reminiscing of being "Back Home Again":

*There's a storm across the valley, clouds are rollin' in  
The afternoon is heavy on your shoulders  
There's a truck out on the four lane, a mile or more away  
The whinin' of his wheels just makes it colder ...*

*Hey, it's good to be back home again  
Sometimes this old farm feels like a long lost friend  
Yes, 'n, hey it's good to be back home again*

(Denver, 1974, Track 1)

As I walked through the surreal experience of being *back home again*, with each artefact I stumbled upon I realized just how much there was to think about. This trip back to the old homestead allowed me to recoup my mother's loss, and the strength she'd left behind. At the same time, it made me realize just how resilient and strong she had been, especially given the pain and heartache she had endured. I think she was graced by her faith; she often attributed her belief in God as giving her strength – something I suspect helped her get through the darkness of her memories and the psychiatric world. My mother's faith is illuminated through the words of George Harrison and "My Sweet Lord":

*My sweet Lord...I really want to see you  
Really want to be with you  
Really want to see you, Lord*

(Harrison, 1970, Track 2)

Throughout the day I tried to get a sense of what my mom's life might have been like on this farm. I walked into the house and around it; I walked up and down the hills; I walked through the pasture; and I rolled under the barbed wire fence. Then I spread a blanket across the land and leaned against the house as I ate my lunch (*dinner* in prairie-speak) and I wrote poetry about Mom's life as a girl on the prairie.

My mom knows the prairie,  
like the back of her hand  
she once told me.

My mom told me stories of the prairie  
and so, when I went there,  
I walked the land.

I lay under the big open skies.  
I watched the grass blowing.  
like wind on water, for miles.

(Harder, 2008, Lines 1-2, 18-22)

My mom knew the richness of the prairie life all right ... but she also knew hardship, the wounded parts, the sadness – *the B-sides*:

My mom knows prairie hardships  
like the back of her hand she once told me.  
Barren lands, empty cellars, hungry children.

My mom knows heartache  
like the fear in the pit of her stomach, she once told me.  
Drunken father, absent mother, unlocked doors.

I remember her stories well,  
like the back of my hand....

(Harder, 2008/2020, n.p.)

I wrote what I knew and what my mother had told me, and then, as the sun turned I turned with it. I wrote stories about my mom's life as a girl on the farm, as a girl in the convent, and as a young woman leaving the prairie.

I went into the old farm house, decrepit with age – smelling of musk, reeking of old memories, of secrets buried in the walls. I thought of the stories my mother had told me of when she was incarcerated in the psych ward – how she used to hide when her father came home, how he came looking for her, how her mother did nothing. I located that

space she had told me about, that space where she hid, and spoke aloud to the memory of my mother. I told her she was safe now.

Then I lay on the blanket and looked into the big open sky. I thought about the poetry I had written since I'd arrived at my mother's farm. I remembered that my mother wanted me to tell the stories she could never tell, to sing the songs she could never sing, to live life in a way she had never lived. Some of her last words to me were:

***Do what you want in your life.***

***Do what makes you happy.***

*(Personal Communication, May 2002)*

As I remembered these words – standing outside of my mother's childhood house looking in through a broken window – I understood my mother's silence. This house, like the psychiatric hospital, had put walls around her memories, her secrets, and her silence. The walls kept the secret contained, and somehow, it kept her standing strong. It was what made her tell me that I could do anything.

After returning to my blanket, I held my writing book close to my chest and looked up into the big open sky – the same sky that my mother looked up at, as a child. And I knew that my mother was right: anything was possible.

I don't know if, when my mom looked up into that big open sky, if she thought about poetry. I don't know if she thought about what was possible for her life. But I do know that once she left the farm, she tried hard not to remember the awful parts. And I know that when the sun turned, my mom turned with it.

In going back to the land that was littered with Grandpa Jeremiah's farming equipment, I discovered that the land was also littered with rusted memories that no one in the family wanted to talk about. Not to me, not to anyone, and probably not even to each other.

After sunrise on the last day, I packed up some of the memories I had gathered and although the house called out to me, I didn't go back inside. I had gotten what I had come for: my mother's courage. And so, as I tucked that courage into my pocket – along with my mother's story, her faith, her strength, her laughter, and her love – I knew that

with my mother's courage safely tucked away in my pocket anything was possible. And so, as the sun turned, I turned with it.

### **Epilogue:**

My mom, Margaret Eva Roach, was born in a little hospital room in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. The year was 1930. She grew up on a farm, twenty miles from town. After seven years at Belnamoon School, a one room school house, she went to the Catholic Convent in Rosetown until she was sixteen years old. During these years she met one of her lifetime friends, who would tell me years later of my mother being molested by her father, Jeremiah. When my mother was sixteen she was pulled out of the convent and was housed on the farm. At age eighteen, my mother's sisters arranged for her to take the train to Victoria, BC. The year was 1948.

Years later, while at a dance put on by the Catholic Youth Organization dance my mother met my father whom she married later that year; it was 1955. My parents raised four children on the west coast of BC, in the cities of Victoria, Burnaby and Vancouver.

Although the Roach Family homestead remains, I don't know if my mom ever returned to the prairies. She did, however, see her father one more time – in 1958 during his visit to Victoria. His presence brought grief, shame and remorse to my mother, as was apparent by mother's change in behaviour, captured in photographs taken during his visit.

During my teen and adult years, my mom often talked to me about real things and encouraged me become a singer, an actress and to write about my life. She liked that I was an artist and was hopeful that I would eventually become a published author.

As I am drawn to write about my mother, I like to think that my writing helps her somehow. That her story being known makes it real, and removes it from the land of shame and stigma. Because my mom spent so many months through so many years in psychiatric hospitals, and yet never got the counselling she needed, I often sensed that she was ready to burst. No wonder she used to talk to me about real stuff.

In 1997, my mother had a nervous breakdown that seemed to open up a door to memory; it was as though a light went on; and although she was in a manic state, she had more clarity than she had had in a long time. This breakdown resulted in a hospitalization of six months at Valleyview Psychiatric Hospital during which time she

underwent two rounds of shock treatment. During what would be her last hospitalization, my mother told me about her father, the farm, the baby and her family secret; she asked me to help her get help, adding “so I can get better.” Unfortunately, when I spoke to her psychiatrist, he had this to say:

**That’s just the mania talking.  
Once she has shock treatment for a few weeks  
The stories will stop.**

(Riverview Psychiatrist, Personal Conversation, May 1998)

As promised by the psychiatrist, my mother had shock treatment three times a week for the next six weeks and by the end of the second week, she no longer spoke about farms, fathers or forgotten fetuses. The light inside her went out. When my mother was released from the stronghold grip of the hospital, she was somehow silenced. Her manic episodes were gone. Her personal narratives were gone. Her requests for help “so she could get better” were gone. It was as though she had given up.

The year following my mother’s hospitalization, her health rapidly declined. It seemed that the shock treatment had made her weak and somehow had ravaged her immune system. Within two years my mother was in a wheelchair and within five years later, a urine infection overtook her body and septic poisoning set in, taking her life within a week.

It has been almost twenty years since my mother died. I see her in me, so much that I am. Although she is gone from this world, I like to think that as my life turns, my mother’s turns too.

## Radio Tale #24: Me and Huckleberry Finn

### [Listen to Radio Tale #24](#)

*Moon river, wider than a mile  
I'm crossing you in style some day  
Old dream maker, you heart breaker  
Wherever you're going I'm going there too*

*Two drifters off to see the world  
There's such a lot of world to see  
We're after the same rainbow's end, waitin' round the bend  
My huckleberry friend, Moon River and me*

(Mancini & Mercer, 1961, Track 1)

I sang that song at my mother's gravesite. It was a song that she loved and that I loved. When I look back on my life and my childhood in particular, the lyrics to "Moon River" – as recorded by Audrey Hepburn in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* – have always been with me, at the root of my memory, at the forefront of my experience. You could say this song was on the set-list with my mom – it has always been there. The words of Henry Mancini and Johnny Mercer have always been with me. Whether it was Mom singing to me or me to her, she, my huckleberry friend, it was always one of our favourites.

I had always felt a deep connection with my mom. After completing a 12-day silent meditation in British Columbia's interior, I returned to the city and I knew that my mother would be gone soon. I went to see her and I told her I was afraid she was going to die soon and she said, "Well, I won't if you won't let me," and then she laughed. Before Christmas, I told this to my siblings. Although my mother wasn't sick I knew that she would be. And I knew that it would be an illness that would take her fast.

In the last six weeks of my mother's life, whenever I visited she'd ask if we could sing. And we would sing. We had a roster of songs to cover – some show tunes, some old tunes, many traditionals. We sang "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," The Beatles' "Let it Be," and of course "Moon River." I'd sing the first few lines and would cue my mom to join in. She sang with verve, passion and her best scratchy Edith Bunker impersonation.

After a few repetitions we drew a crowd. Visitors and nursing staff would peek in to the room, usually to laugh. Always to laugh. I'd laugh too. And mom would smile, pleased

that people enjoyed our singing. And she was darn proud of her singing. Proud that she had gotten people to laugh. Their laughter, it seemed, was as good as applause to my mother.

As the music moved her, mom would run through the set list: "Okay, what should we sing now?"

Let's sing "Let it Be by The Beatles," she would say. "You start."

And so, as was expected I'd start:

*When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me*

Then I would cue her:

*Speeeeeeeeeaaaaking werrrrrrds of wizzzzdom, let it beeeeeeeeeeeee*

My mom always loved to sing and I loved to sing, and she always encouraged me to sing. One of her dreams was that I become a professional singer. I always remember her wanting me to do that with my life. My mother was a visionary in some ways and she had a lot of faith and just as The Beatles sang "Let it Be," somehow my mother knew how to let it be, something I was yet to learn. She knew how to let it be.

So when I did eventually go into acting and performing she loved that but she never let go of that dream that I could be a singer. And when I was much younger, a child and a young teen, she would often call me into the kitchen where she sat at the kitchen table – drinking her Red Rose tea while smoking her Rothman's cigarettes – and she'd ask that I sing with her. We'd sing all sorts of tunes. It's a great memory for me. We sure loved singing "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore" in the tradition of Peter, Paul & Mary.

*Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Sister, help to trim the sails, hallelujah  
Sister, help to trim the sails, hallelujah*

(Peter, Paul & Mary, 1998, Track 14)

It's funny how you can not know things about your parents. I realized when my mother died there were many things I didn't know about her. So I interviewed people and visited places where she had been, where she had spent time. I talked with people about

things my mother had done as a child and as a young woman – before she was my mom. I realized that she was more, she was more than what I knew of her. And she didn't always share those old stories; maybe she felt like she lost something.

A year after my mother passed away, I returned to Victoria to revisit some old haunts of her single days. I went to Sunday mass at Our Lady of Peace Church – which is where my parents were married and where my siblings and myself were christened. Then I took a walk down Old Esquimalt Road to stand outside of my parents first home together where I lived as a child until I was four years old. I went to St. Patrick's Cathedral in downtown Victoria where my mother sang in the choir before she got married. Inside the awestruck cathedral I felt a presence. A chill up my spine made me wonder: Is this God? Is it Spirit? Is this Mom? I don't know for sure what I felt on that cold October night but I do know one thing: as I go through my life, with its peaks and its valleys, in my hour of darkness my mother is standing right in front of me “speaking words of wisdom: let it be” (Lennon & McCartney, 1970a, Track 13).

“As I move forward in my life, Mom, I try to remind myself to let it be – something hasn't always been easy for me. Something else I realized is that you and I were a little bit like Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. I don't know if you remember the final scene of the movie but after she shoos the cat away into a littered alleyway, she realizes she misses the cat, that the cat is actually a metaphor for her life. I hate to spoil the ending but as you may have guessed, she returns to the alley, finds the cat, takes it home and they live happily ever after. Like Hepburn's character and the cat, you and I are two drifters Mom, off to see the world.”

*Moon river, wider than a mile  
I'm crossing you in style some day  
Old dream maker, you heart breaker  
Wherever you're going I'm going there too*

*Two drifters off to see the world  
There's such a lot of world to see  
We're after the same rainbow's end, waitin' round the bend  
My huckleberry friend, Moon River and me*

(Mancini & Mercer, 1961, Track 1)



## Radio Tale #25A: My Dad – A Story of a Life

### [Listen to Radio Tale #25](#)

*I can see my dad it's a golden sunrise  
Young boy open up your eyes, it's supposed to be your day  
Now off you go horizon bound  
And you won't stop until you've found your own kind of way...*

*And all the towns that you walk through  
And all the people that you talk to sing you their songs  
And there are times you change your stride  
There are times you can't decide, still you go on*

(Chapin, 1980, Track 14)

As Harry Chapin sings of in “Story of a Life,” my father was a prairie boy who awoke to golden sunrises and looked toward new horizons to build a life of his own.

After growing up on the Saskatchewan prairies – as the third eldest of nine children (and the oldest son) of second generation Canadians of Irish-German descent – my father explored various parts of Canada in search for his livelihood, and a life apart from his prairie family. After a few years of working the mines in southern Ontario, my father headed to the west coast of Canada where he made his home in Victoria, BC and made his living in the town sawmill. It was there that he met my mother, also a third generation Canadian with her ancestors being descendants of Ireland and France. Together my parents raised four children. While they initially set up home in Victoria, my family relocated to Burnaby when my father went into business as a co-owner of a sawmill. I was four years old at the time, and the youngest of four. When the business proved to be a scam, my father lost everything, his investment, his home and all of his life-savings. He acted quickly, however and took a secure union job as a janitor in a hospital as a means to ensure his family's housing and livelihood.

Meanwhile, with my mother having had bouts of depression and mental illness since the early years of their marriage, my father was left to fend for the family – not only financially but also in terms of cooking and homecare, as well as the care of the children. With the help municipal Social Services, my family received some homecare and after school childcare. Needless to say, the childhood years were lean years. As suggested

by Merle Haggard (1973) in “If We Make it Through December,” my father knew that if we got through the coldest time of the year – winter – my family would be okay.

*If we make it through December  
Everything's gonna be alright, I know  
It's the coldest time of winter  
And I shiver when I see the falling snow*

(Haggard, 1973, Track 1)

Despite the hard times and the lean years, my father always made sure there was enough to go around, and if there wasn't enough, he went without. While my father was very generous in his caring for his family, my father and I had a strained relationship. I used to think that this strain was associated with my having a mind of my own, as it only got worse as I got older and began to form my own opinions.

As far back as I can remember my dad often looked at me sideways, as though I were guilty of something. It seemed that there was something unspoken between us, something that I was never able to figure out. Although we found peace in my father's final years, the unspoken between us never went away. Instead, it was like a wedge that stopped us, a niggling that pulled at me, a riddle that begged to be solved, a question that longed to be answered. Yet, as irony would have it, I had to first let it go before my answer would arrive.

In *Letters to a Young Poet*, Rainer Maria Rilke (1929, 1984) eloquently speaks of this human condition, advising me to be patient:

*...try to love the questions themselves  
as if they were locked rooms  
or books written in a very foreign language.  
Don't search for the answers,  
which could not be given to you now,  
because you would not be able to live them.*

(Rilke, 1929; Rilke, 1984, p. 34)

## **Finding Out: Me, My Dad and My DNA**

A few years after my father died my brother dropped a bomb. He let me in on a family secret that many family members had known about for many years.

This information named the unspoken between my father and I, and the wedge that had kept us at odds with each another for so long. This information also helped me to understand the silent whispers at family gatherings. While many of my relatives had always been aware of “the family secret,” my siblings only found out as adults.

As a young woman my mother experienced frequent depression and by the time she was in her late thirties she was diagnosed with, and treated for, bipolar disorder. Her illness was so bad at times that she was admitted to the hospital, Riverview Psychiatric Institution, where she was treated for about three months or longer.

When my mother was in her late sixties she had a nervous breakdown that resulted in a four month hospitalization at Riverview’s geriatric hospital, Valleyview. During this period, my siblings became privy to the family secret. As my mother had begun to talk about the secret to select visitors, my father felt it was time I knew the secret. Because of the wedge between us, he asked my siblings to tell me the secret. To this day, my sisters have never mentioned the secret; as for my brother, my brother waited eighteen years to tell me.

My brother’s rationale for telling me now was twofold. First, he was concerned that he would die, and then I might never know. Second, he feared another family member might throw it in my face.

Unfortunately, my brother sat on this information for eighteen years – and sprang it on me the night before I was to fly home after having spent a week with he and his family. I knew something was up because our last dinner together was overshadowed by a sense of gloom. Whatever it was, the sad apologetic eyes that met mine from across the table, indicated that something was looming. Once the house had been emptied of guests and those sad apologetic eyes, the grim of the night was confirmed by my brother’s invitation to join him on the back deck on that humid, mosquito-infested night. As the screen door slammed behind us, my brother turned to announce that he had something serious to tell me which was quickly followed by his apologetic qualifier, “it’s about you.”

I'd barely sat down when – after eighteen years of sitting on something that was mine to know, information that would've helped me had I known it before my parents had died – my brother cut to the chase: "Our father is not your father."

Pow.

Although my brother's words initially registered shock, it only took a few stabs at denial before I realized that I already knew; my brother's words merely confirmed this knowing. Yet, something in his words "hit me with the impact that only a deep truth can have" (Leddy, 2018, p. 3).

It was almost immediately that I began to piece it together, and to navigate time. I thought back to medical records I could access to confirm dates that my mother was in the hospital. I thought back to conversations with other siblings. I thought back to all the clues along the way. I returned to my early years of childhood to reclaim "whispers coming forward in time" (Davis, 2009, p. 62).

**I had always known that I knew something.**

**I just didn't know what it was that I knew.**

Upon my flight home the following day I thought of nothing else. I voiced aloud the reasons I believed his declaration to be true. I cited conversations that I recalled from childhood of neighbourhood friends and visiting cousins teasing me:

**telling me I was adopted**

**telling me I was Indian<sup>8</sup>**

**telling me I had been left in a ditch**

**telling me that I wasn't like them**

I remember moving to Vancouver in Grade Two and noticing that nobody called me Indian anymore. I remember gravitating towards the Indian kids in my new elementary

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<sup>8</sup> Based on the information provided by my father and my mother's family, my biological father is an Indian man (First Nations) who my mother met while she was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward in Victoria, BC. From what I know of this man, he likely originated on Vancouver Island or the west coast of BC and is a descendant of the Coast-Salish people. As my mother would've been 2-3 months pregnant when she was discharged from the psychiatric ward, my biological father may have known of my existence.

school. I remember that my teachers treated the Indian kids differently and that it “troubled me in a way I could not then fully articulate” (Leddy, 2018, p.2).

I remember thinking that I didn’t look like anyone in my family. I remember asking my father if I looked like anyone in his family, and I remember how my questions made him angry, irritated. I remember how my questions made him look away.

I recall how my father would buy and prepare special food for me – and only me:

**salmon jerky      -      slabs of fried fat      -      pepperoni      -      berries**

I remember how extended family whispered about me at family functions. I remember how some aunts and cousins would comment that my skin was darker than my siblings, how they’d smile and laugh. I remember thinking, “Why would someone laugh about that? What a weirdo!”

I recall visiting my aunt and uncle in Chilliwack and how my uncle used to take me to the Indian reservation. My uncle told me about colonialism. He told me stories of injustice, how the English settlers did bad things to the Indians. He told me I was special. He called me his little Indian Princess.

As I gather these memories, I realize that these people were dropping hints for me. Their words were like breadcrumbs that could lead me out of the forest. I gather this information – memory by memory, detail by detail, story by story – and realize that this process is akin to gathering information for a research paper. Just as I have done so many times before in gathering relevant information for university research, I am once again gathering facts, dates, quotes, primary sources and secondary sources. This process resembles the preparation I undergo when I am writing a research paper, only the new understandings that I now arrive at reflect my lived experience.

How ironic that I should find myself here. At the start of graduate school I embarked on a journey to explore how lived experience and the arts informed identity. Now, at the end of graduate school, this identity-laden research data (Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019) arrives. While I initially referred to this new information as a bomb that had been dropped, it is actually a gift. It is as Milloy (2004) suggests, one of life’s challenges that bears fruit. This new information pertains to the very core of my research, personal identity. How ironic that this process would bring me full circle:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

(Eliot, 1942, Part 5, Lines 26-30)

In having this new information, I reflect upon the experience of spending the final two days of my dad's life with him. Although I thanked him for all he had done for my mom and us kids, I wish I had known at the time what I know now. We needed that conversation. We needed that connection. He needed to know that I knew, and that I was grateful. However, I was grateful regardless of this new information which I believe was evident by my having spent his last two days with him. I helped my father with perhaps the most difficult and fearful life event – the end – one of the greatest privileges there probably is.

At this point it is paramount that I recognize that it is what it is. That I am on the right path. That I am where I am supposed to be. That just as I was grateful to be present for my father in his final days, he too was grateful for my presence. This was apparent by me, a beacon in the night, and he, by his presence right up to his last breath – calling me to reflect upon the music we shared, as is encapsulated in Shari Ulrich's "Oh Daddy" a lyrical tribute to her own father.

Good-bye, Dad.

God speed.

*I just looked at your face, we didn't speak or embrace  
But I could tell you knew what the music could bring  
to life in child's wings  
Oh Daddy  
Too bad you had to leave so soon*

(Ulrich, 1980, Track 1)

## Radio Tale #25B: Eggs on Toast

### [Listen to Radio Tale #25B](#)

As I reach up for another piece of toast, my dad lifts me up onto his lap. I jiggle to get comfortable. He pulls me closer to him.

“You want to help Dad eat his eggs?” he asks looking down into my eyes.

My smile gives me away.

My dad gives me a bite and rubs his unshaven cheek against mine. I pull away from his bristly cheek and rub my own with the back of my hand. He laughs.

“Okay, come on,” he says and puts his fork to my mouth. I smile and open my mouth. I take a bite and chew the poached eggs on toast that are heavily peppered – a taste that I have acquired. I have been here before through my early childhood years of waking up to the kitchen light where Dad ate his breakfast before going off to work at the hospital.

If I remember it right, back in the day, my dad ate poached eggs every morning before he went to work which meant I did, too. Once I started school, however, I eventually stopped waking up early for our poached eggs on toast ritual.

I wonder if he waited for me, if he wondered if I would ever again crawl out of bed to share his eggs, to crawl up onto his lap. This phenomenon of changing relationships between parents and children as they transition from childhood into the teen years is something that Harry Chapin sings about, and reflects upon, in “Tangled Up Puppet.” As I got older I came to miss these moments that we shared together. I wonder if he missed them too.

*There was a time that you curled up in my lap, like a child  
You'd cling to me smiling, yours eyes wide and wild  
Now you slip through my arms, wave a passing hello  
Twist away and toss a kiss, laughing as you go...*

*I'm a tangled up puppet all hanging in your strings  
I'm a butterfly in a spider's web, fluttering my wings*

(Chapin, 1975, Track 7)

## Radio Tale #26: Waking Up in Grad School

[Listen to Radio Tale #26](#)

### Finding My Way into Graduate School

*Hello? Hello? Hello?  
Is there anybody in there?  
Just nod if you can hear me  
Is there anyone at home?*

(Waters, 1979, Track 15)

Before graduate school I was asleep in my life, and as is illustrated in Pink Floyd's "The Wall," I was called to awaken to my life.

While I have always been somewhat self-aware, street smart and observant of the world around me, there was something I wasn't seeing. I just didn't see the big picture. While I failed to see the forest through the trees (or the branches), I also couldn't see some things within my own family. It seems that I had a skewed perspective of my lived experience which prevented me from seeing what was right in front of me.

Little did I know, I have been asking the right questions my entire life. My inquiry has always been in the right ballpark, so to speak – as I ask questions about my ancestry (maternal and paternal) and questions about my DNA (Galton, 1883; Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019): "Who do I look like? Who do I take after? What was my grandfather like? From where do our people descend?" Despite my incessant questioning that rises up every few years, my family avoided my inquiry, and so, the information that I sought in my mind was out of reach. Little did I realize, the answers were closer than I thought – nipping at my heels, in fact.

Wait, the moment whispers, you know me. (Fels, 1998, p. 28)

Although I eventually stopped asking questions regarding my ancestry, my inquiry started up again after my mother died. I began to ask questions about family, genealogy, ancestry. After I had excavated all that I could through family documents and interviews with family and friends, I journeyed to my mother's childhood homestead in McGee, Saskatchewan; while visiting I spent time with Mom's lifelong friend, a woman she met



while attending boarding school at the Catholic Convent in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Although Mom's friend provided me with much information about Mom's childhood, and her consequential plight with mental illness, there were still many questions that only time could reveal – of which Heart alludes to in "Alone":

*I hear the ticking of the clock  
I'm lying here the room's pitch dark*

(Kelly & Steinberg, 1987, Track 2)

As Maria Rainer Rilke (1929, 1984) suggests in *Letters to a Young Poet*, I needed to live the questions:

Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. (Rilke, 1929; Rilke, 1984, pp. 33-34)

Having hit a wall, I approached my father with questions about our ancestry only to discover that he was irritated by my inquiries, and so I stopped asking questions. The next step I assumed was to go to my mom's older sisters and ask them the questions. But like my father, they too were vague and feigned ignorance; in hindsight, I realized that their vagueness was an escape; they didn't want to be the one to break the news .

Although my ancestral journey kept me occupied and distracted from grieving the loss of my mother, each time that I resurfaced, to remember that my mom was gone, I spiralled back into grief. And so, like Alice, I fell, and I kept falling – **down**

**down**

**down**

**down**

After hitting bottom – a place of hopeless indifference – I succumbed to stay there for a few years, believing that I would never find my way out. Fortunately for me, life had other plans.

*Wake up, little Susie, wake up  
We've both been sound asleep  
Wake up, little Susie*

(Bryant & Bryant, 1957, Track 7)

And so, I was awoken to my life, as Simon & Garfunkel (1982) speak of in "Wake Up, Little Suzie." Just when I thought "this is it" my grief unfolded into a space of hopeful

imagining, an unfolding that leads to academia - a place that without knowing it, would lead me to the answers I had been looking for. It was a place that called me to attention (Fels, 2008); it was a place that I was awakened to (Greene, 1995); it was a moment when I was called to follow the yellow brick road as was advised in “Follow the Yellow Brick Road/We’re Off to See the Wizard,” by Judy Garland and Cast (1939) in the film classic, *The Wizard of Oz*:

*Follow, follow, follow, follow  
Follow the yellow brick road  
We’re off to see the wizard  
The wonderful wizard of oz*

(Arlen & Harburg, 1939, Track 2)

## **Graduate School: A New Way of Being**

On the first night of classes, my classmates and I are introduced to Karen Meyer’s Living Inquiry, a practice that asks that students reflect upon their lives and document their lived experience. And so begins the process of unravelling my life story, of taking it apart and putting it back together again. As the writing unfolds in this class, and as I focus on writing through living inquiry, much of my life unfolds. Many aspects of my life that I had forgotten, repressed, denied, packed away in boxes all came rushing back. And so, as I engage in the work of Dr. Lynn Fels – in performative inquiry – I begin to incorporate these new understandings of my lived experience into my work in radio broadcasting.

As lost moments surface, a path is laid in the walking - a journey for my words to travel upon and towards. Or, as Annie Dillard (1989) suggests, I am digging a trench that my words will follow, so my writing can forge its path, so that story can find its’ way. I am making connections with music, memory and memoir – just as Terry Jacks (1975) sings of in “Rock ‘n Roll (I Gave You the Best Years of My Life)”:

*Oh, I can still remember when I bought my first guitar  
Remember walking from the shop to put it proudly in my car  
And my family listened fifty times to my two-song repertoire  
I told my Mom her only son was gonna be a star*

(Johnson, 1974, Track 10)

As I gather my personal collection of songs – with a lyrical soundscape that reflects my life – I see that this musical repertoire is a living biography – much like The Beatles’ “The Long and Winding Road” – will never end.

*The long and winding road that leads to your door  
Will never disappear, I’ve seen that road before  
It always leads me here, lead me to your door*

(Lennon & McCartney, 1970b, Track 14)

As my thesis takes form, I weave living inquiry with lost moments and radio tales, and then illustrate how the performative inquiry breathes life into my text to illuminate and unfold identity. Further to this process, I am surprised to find myself on unfamiliar ground when new identity laden information is presented in the latter stages of my thesis writing. The content I refer to which is related to my inquiries into my familial “ancestry”, as was noted earlier in this radio tale, led to an ancestral DNA test (Galton, 1883; Loike, 2018; Wilson, 2019). The results confirm that my father is not my biological father. It is a moment of re-framing my lived experience, shifting identity, and starting over somehow as is illuminated by Alanis Morissette in “Not as We”:

*Reborn and shivering  
Spat out on new terrain  
Unsure unconvincing  
This faint and shaky hour*

*Day one, day one  
Start over again*

(Morissette, 2008, Track 5).

While this new information doesn’t change the content of my academic findings to date, it changes many of the filters that I used to get to arrive where I am now, living in this moment. For instance, my lived experience filter is altered; the filters through which I have made meaning of my life have changed. I now have an explanation for other people’s behaviour; one, the reason my father treated me as though I were guilty of something; two, the reason some of my dad’s relatives treated me like I was outside of the family; three, why some of my aunts whispered about me; and four, why some of my cousins and some of the neighbourhood kids teased me and told me I was adopted, that my parents hadn’t wanted me, that I was an Indian, that I had been left in a ditch. You know how kids can be. I heard so many things when I was little. Only now that I know

that my father wasn't my father, all of that makes sense. All of it. And although the kids who teased me didn't get everything right, they got the basis of it right. There was so much whispering, and there were so many stories, stories that never made sense and would take many years to piece together as is illustrated in the words of Creedence Clearwater Revival's 1970 hit single, "Who'll Stop the Rain":

*Long as I remember the rain been comin' down.  
Clouds of mystery pourin' confusion on the ground.  
Good men through the ages trying to find the sun.  
And I wonder still I wonder who'll stop the rain*

(Fogerty, 1970, Track 4)

Knowing what I now know changes things for me. It changes my perspective and makes me understand things differently. Although I can't go back and live things differently, having things make sense helps me to be at ease with the past. I also understand my father differently. I now understand why he looked at me sideways, as though I were guilty of something. As though I had done something wrong. My father was a man who couldn't hide his pain, his anger, his heartache. He was a man without a poker face who wore his anger on his face and his heart on his sleeve, and come hell or high water, he didn't try to hide either.

I think the saddest part about finding out that my dad was not my biological father is the shame that he would have carried about this; although my mom wasn't a woman whose character led her to have affairs, her mental illness was of the sort that she had mania-induced flings. The sad part about her promiscuity is that my mom must've also felt deep shame about this, which, in turn, would have fed into her depression and her low self-esteem. The even sadder part about this is that my parents didn't get out from under their shame. Consequently, my parents kept living it again and again and never got beyond it – something Pink (2016) speaks to in "What's Up":

*Twenty-five years and my life is still  
Trying to get up this great big hill of hope  
for a destination*

(Perry, 1992, Track 15)

Like all under-privileged groups, their rise from the ashes takes longer as does clawing their way out of their bottomless pit of hopelessness. And so, for many, they are left to fend for themselves, with many remaining forever on the outside looking in.

To further illuminate this idea of being on the outside looking in, we look to British songwriter Bernie Taupin's depiction of such class divisions in "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters." This metaphorical song that was released on Elton John's 1972 album *Honky Chateau* is based on Taupin's "take on New York City after hearing a gun go off near his hotel window during his first visit to the city," and speaks to the dichotomies between the rich and the poor. The song illustrates how people who don't follow their dreams are left standing at the edge - on the outside looking in - while the privileged who do not always see the big picture are left to write history. While the privileged often takes the cake and calls the shots, the underdog takes his place *on the edge*.

In having awoken in grad school to unravel my lived experience, I am inspired to explore how music wove itself throughout my life to illuminate a chronological musical soundscape interspersed with a multitude of lost moments. After these lost moments intertwine with other lost moments, they are further explored through a performative inquiry in the realm of radio broadcasting. This process breathes life into text and audio to solidify emerge as radio tales. As a result, the compilation of living inquiry, lost moments, and the radio tales becomes a living document, which, in turn, reflects the unfolding of a living identity. Makes me wonder why'd it take me so long to get here.

Little did I realize that by documenting my lived experience and then exploring it further through the performative inquiry that I would get to this place of quiet reflective understanding. I am so grateful. After so many half-finished dreams, dead ends, and questions about which way to go when I hit the fork in the road, it is such a gift.

*Now I know  
Spanish Harlem are not just pretty words to say  
I thought I knew  
but now I know that rose trees never grow  
In New York City*

*Until you've seen this trash can dream come true,  
You stand at the edge while people run you through...  
While Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters  
Sons of bankers, sons of lawyers  
Turn around and say good morning to the night  
For unless they see the sky  
But they can't and that is why  
They know not if it's dark outside or light*

(John & Taupin, 1972, Track 9)

## Radio Tale #27: The Path

### [Listen to Radio Tale #27](#)

As I entered the realm of academia to walk upon a long and winding road

I came upon a ledge and I was shown a path that would be laid before me

A path that is reflected upon in Harry Chapin's "Story of a Life":

*I can see myself it's golden sunrise  
Young [girl] open up your eyes, it's supposed to be your day  
Now off you go arise and bound  
And you won't stop until you've found your own kind of way  
And the wind would whip your tousled hair  
The sun, the rain, the sweet despair, great bales of love and strive  
And somewhere on your path to glory  
You will write your story of a life  
(Chapin, 1980, Track 14)*

A path that indeed was laid before me

Guiding me to reflect upon my lived experience

To unfold, to excavate, to alchemize life's lost moments

And to weave a story of a life

Upon this path, I reflected upon my life

I was transported back, back to the days of Christopher Robin

Back to the days of my childhood

To remember how music filled my life

To remember how music painted a backdrop for my lived experience

I was transported back to the days of childhood, of music and memory

When my family piled into our brown panel station wagon

And drove east for four days

Until we reached the flatlands of southern Saskatchewan

And now, I think back to The Carpenters,  
and how their music filled my family car that summer with their melodic song,  
“Yesterday Once More”:  
How the lyrics reflected upon the past,  
a past that hadn’t yet happened for me  
a past that only now can exist, here in this present moment  
I think back...

*When I was young I'd listen to the radio  
Waitin' for my favourite song  
When they played I'd sing along, it made me smile*

(Bettis & Carpenter, 1973, Track 15)

## Appendix B. Poetry & Prose

### I am a Thousand Years

I am a seed in the wind:  
Blowing.  
I am the moon, the trees, the dirt between your toes.  
I am all of it and none of it.

I am the big open spaces of Southern Saskatchewan  
where my mother played with paper dolls  
while she waited for the spring to come.

I am the prairie land of North Dakota  
where my grandmother learned to sew  
while she waited for her husband to take her away.

I am the fiery fields of Dublin, Ireland  
where my great-grandmother told tales by candlelight  
while she waited for the struggle of the famine  
and of the drink, to end.

I am the stories of my mother,  
of her mother,  
and of her mother's mother.

I am the memory of the homestead  
of the ancestral land  
of the Irish kin.

I am a thousand years of legend,  
of story,  
of song.

I am the story that writes itself.  
I am the song that sings.  
I am the tale of a thousand years,  
and yet,  
I am only one word.

(Harder, 2006, n.p.)



## **I'm Going on a Pilgrimage**

I'm going on an ancestral hunt  
And I'm not afraid

I've got my quest in my bag  
My lived curriculum in my cells  
I've got my family tree in my pocket  
And my mom at my side

I've got my heart and soul  
And there are stories to be told  
And tracks to unfold

Come on wayfinders,  
let's go....

(Harder, 2011b, p. 38)

**“As each life unfolds  
a story told....”**

(1998, Elaine Margaret Roach)