Teaching Transformation

Progressive Education in Action
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A Collaborative Anthology from the Goddard Graduate Institute

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“It's time for you to tell your story of how you teach here. What you do is very rare,” Elizabeth K. Minnich, author of the widely-acclaimed and deeply-influential book Transforming Knowledge, told our faculty several years ago. She reminded us how Goddard College's pedagogy in theory and action could be a catalyst for positive change in the world of academia. She reminded us that we both teach transformation (guiding students to discover and use their best tools and visions to transform their lives and communities), and we transform teaching through a student-centered pedagogy that challenges traditional academia.

Goddard College has a long history as one of the foremost innovators in experimental education. Founded over 150 years ago as a seminary, in 1938 Goddard took form, under the leadership of Royce “Tim” Pitkin, as a “College of Living” dedicated to “...breaking down of the barriers that separate school from real life” (goddard.edu). Based on the premise that meaningful and enduring education takes into account that life is always in flux, “people learn what they inwardly accept,” and “education is a moral concern,” the college took off, growing into an oasis of creativity, innovative thinking, and scholarship and activism for a changing world (goddard.edu).

The Goddard Graduate Institute (GGI) reflects this history as well as the current mission of the college—“To advance cultures of rigorous inquiry, collaboration, and lifelong learning, where individuals take imaginative and
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Teaching transformation both furthers this vision and responds to Minnich's call for us to tell the stories, in all their complexities and challenges. As Karen Campbell writes in “The Virtual and Place-Based Culture of the Goddard Graduate Institute”:

Inviting into this culture individuals who have taken upon themselves problems to solve, or at least address, and calling them to weave their individual experience, knowledge, questions, skepticism (and fear) together is perhaps only a small step toward addressing the deeply disturbing phenomena of our
time. It apparently “works”; our graduates are doing conscious work in the world that is helping to transform the injustices that drove many of them here.

In this collection, we share stories, insights, visions, and questions that unearth meanings and callings. As Sarah Van Hoy writes in her essay, “Undiagnosed Visionaries,” such education takes courage and perseverance:

We don’t offer a packaged curriculum where someone else has decided what constitutes knowledge, has organized that knowledge, has weeded out what they deem unimportant, and has emphasized what makes most sense to them. Our students don’t sit in classes and receive ideas. They don’t reproduce what already exists. Instead, Goddard students participate in shaping knowledge; they enter the collective conversation and move it in new directions. They are not satisfied with given meanings and comfortable practices. They are co-creating something that doesn’t always fit those givens. They are deciding what is important to them. Like the thawing of springtime, Goddard students take what has been frozen in place and they melt it and rework it, and in so doing they rebirth the world in their vision - their vision of justice, their vision of love, their vision of wellbeing and wholeness.
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Introduction: The Moral, Political Action of Education by Elizabeth K. Minnich

When I was in Eastern Europe some years ago working with educators struggling to re-create the liberal arts in and through higher education, a leader of the conference said, *If we cannot change the way we teach, we will never be able to become democratic.* I agree, and would say the same to all those concerned with education, most assuredly including those who live and work in so-called democracies. I hope we know that we are still only aspiring, that the horizontal virtues of democracy exceed our efforts, and that we have a great deal to learn from the stubborn few who most consciously keep trying anyway—particularly those who enjoy the artfulness of the trying itself. This is why it is my profound conviction, an increasingly urgent one, that this book—a volume on teaching written by committed, experienced teacher-learners reflecting in depth about their art, their calling, and why it matters—ought to be read and talked about as widely as possible.

These authors do not flatly state the *how* of Goddard's highly honed and ever-creative teaching/learning: they reflect on it here in these vivid, engaging papers in ways that make it present to us. They write, that is, as they teach—in their own voices, engaging with others', as they show us, through stories, examples, reflections, learning that *is* living well, justly, meaningfully, creatively rather than being, as so much of education openly and proudly proclaims itself, *preparation* for something else, and other. Writing about experiences central
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to Goddard's programs that have their reality for each and all in the moment—as music does, and theater, and adventure, which are also so very hard to capture later, in writing—they also reflect on the why, the values and purposes that precede and are sought in the effects of it all. When why and how are thus in evidently co-responding communication, we are in a better than usual position to judge for ourselves, just as we ought, the worth of such education. And this is characteristic of Goddard: you do not just assert authority or argue someone into having to agree with you; you invite them to inquire with you. So here we have the telling of personal stories, vivid descriptions, intimate and reasoned reflections that illuminate quests for meaningful, just, creative, connected lives—the why of this living tradition of progressive education.

It is a tradition Goddard has conserved, kept alive, growing, changing. We need it now perhaps as never before, and it is at risk, as always. Socrates, who spent his life conversing with people about how we should live (whatever the topic), was put to death, you may recall, as millions about whom we hear so much less were not even allowed literacy, also often on pain of death. There is courage in many modes always involved in education that is transforming.

Ironic, then, that to focus on the how of teaching strikes many as merely instrumental. They hold that what is taught is all that really matters (so the how becomes, dangerously in my view, anything that works toward a pre-set end). There is a great deal to say about such a view, but here in an introduction to the thoughtful responses of others, I hope you will understand if I invoke some dramatic warnings, suggest some queries and responses, and then get out of the
• Here is the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska who, in her Nobel Prize acceptance lecture, felt the need to remind us of the very real dangers of suppressing the how in favor of what some people are quite sure they know, unquestioned knowledge, certainties closed to experience:

  All sorts of torturers, dictators, fanatics, and demagogues struggle for power with a few loudly shouted slogans...they ‘know,’ and whatever they know is enough for them once and for all...But any knowledge that doesn’t lead to new questions quickly dies out: it fails to maintain the temperature required for sustaining life. In the most extreme cases, cases well known from ancient and modern history, it even poses a lethal threat to society.

  What happens if we recognize the truth of Szymborska's warning—which pertains not only to political ideologies—and, specifically as educators, consider what it asks of us?

  Transformative teaching, Goddard people know, is an ongoing, open process within which teaching is also always re-forming as unique individuals accept responsibilities to each other, to their own questions, but also to contexts from the intimate to the shareable grounds of knowledges; from the particularity of a genuine inquiry to the general, the abstract distilled by others over time; from the local to the global. Not one-sided certainties, then, but generative tensions enliven transformative education.

• Karl Jaspers, a German philosopher and psychologist who stood against the Nazis, and, shortly after their
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defeat, returned to think publicly about “The Question of

German Guilt,” knew the dangers of closed knowledge, but also of a flight from reason into feelings:  

[O]ur feelings are not simply there like given facts of life….They are deepened and clarified in the measure that we think. Feeling as such is unreliable. To plead feelings means to evade naively the objectivity of what we can know and think. It is only after we have thought a thing through and visualized it from all sides, constantly surrounded, led and disturbed by feelings, that we arrive at a true feeling that in its time can be trusted to support our life. (29)

I am struck now by how radical it is to say, “a true feeling.” Perhaps a quest for such a momentous finding can be limned through the reflections in this book. How do we undertake such a quest? How sustain it? How, in a world that can barely think such a thing, make a case for it as a quest at the heart of education?

• John Dewey concluded Democracy and Education with one of those philosophical lines in which, as in poetry, every single word matters: “Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest” (435). Education that fails to awaken, encourage, inform, and practice such interest thus also fails to awaken a moral relation to all of experience, the kind of relation that, in being interested (inter est: to be between), allows us to learn how to engage before we capture what is before us within pre-determined categories, translating it into what is already known. To be interested is to relate, to feel drawn and actively open to learning; its opposite is prejudice, pre-
It comes to me again that knowing, feeling, thinking are intrinsically moral, and political: they concern how we relate, or fail to. This is also why acting and making, during which we are more used to being attentive to social and material possibilities and effects, can be invaluable in learning.

How matters. It is not neutral: it is a way, a practice, where the art is. It is intrinsically moral in the modes of relationship it realizes, or fails to realize; similarly, it is intrinsically political because relations have effects on and beyond ourselves. In taking responsibility for publicly thinking through how they teach and learn without avoiding such considerations—quite the contrary—the authors here invite interest in transforming education. It is dangerously past time we did so.

Works Consulted


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There came a point in my life where zigzagging in and out of traffic on my Miyata touring bike through the maze of New York City traffic and running six miles a day and even the periodic 40-, 50-, 60-, 80-mile-a-day bike marathons were not sating what in retrospect I can only describe as an escalating urge to connect my convictions with the rest of my being, to release accumulated angst flowing through my veins and pulsating to the surface of my skin. To tap into something more powerful than myself. This longing, which manifested in an addiction to physical activity and other outlets that are beyond the scope of this essay, is how I ended up in the Albuquerque New Mexico airport with my bike and a trunk holding my belongings, enrolled in the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of New Mexico, with a piece of paper in my pocket that had scribbled across it the phone number of someone who attended the same school I had in Esteli Nicaragua the session before me who might direct me to a cheap place to stay when I arrived.

In New York I worked for a foundation that, among other social and economic justice issues, funded resistance movements rooted in self-determination and connection to “the land.” Places like South Africa and Central America, where people were gunned down while going about their daily lives, places that from my removed perspective seemed as though they were imploding with the knowledge of possi-
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bility and the spirit of resistance. Places where the fight for justice was on, in contrast to home where Reagan’s allegoric indifference to the plight of the urban poor bred a decade of hopelessness and indifference. Where I knew my homeless neighbors better than those who lived in the apartment next door. Where resistance lost its way.

The rhythm of resistance reverberates in response to the loudest calls. Today it is the streets of NYC, Charleston, SC, Ferguson, MO, Cleveland, OH, Baton Rouge, LA that are screaming Black Lives Matter and it is my own children whose lives are among the most vulnerable. I can barely type the words. Today we are coalescing around a narrative struggling to assert hopefulness in the face of continued, horrifying iterations of supremacy and violence and which thankfully continue to be met by the persistent faith of true warriors emboldened by the conversations of generations, by words left suspended in midair.

In northern New Mexico I watched people care for the land with the same unquestioning, deliberate attention one gives a child, and the land reciprocated with sustenance and beauty. Beauty so bold and inimitable it cannot be ignored. Beauty so subtle and unimaginable it sucks you in confidently, like new love, and so arrogant it makes no excuses for its behavior because it knows how captivating it is. I didn’t think I’d ever leave, and although I did, the landscape stayed with me, not in a static way like a post card, but in the way that I continue to be in conversation with it, like I am with friends who are no longer with me, but who continue to reveal new ways of knowing.

In the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, the vestiges of passions and residue of unspeakable complicity are
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reflected in the captive gaze of age-old trees. They linger in tangled clumps of hanging moss and huddle silently in tall marsh grasses and salty air whose consuming stillness is pierced only by the reticent anguish and faith of generations and by the graceful cadence of magnificent birds and Gullah “praise house” reverberations. They have found their way into my will and built a nest.

My work has been driven by the desire to engage. I chose to pursue a planning degree not because I desired to be a “Planner,” in the bureaucratic sense of the word, but because I wanted tools to help turn visions into realities, visions that rose up from the ground. My comprehension of the world that I was about to enter before arriving in New Mexico was informed mostly by Road Runner cartoon images that alerted me to the presence of boulders in the road that would delay my arrival to meetings and tumbleweeds that made me duck and swerve on isolated stretches of road; needless to say the learning curve was steep. I rolled backwards downhill and off the road in my pick-up truck. I forced myself to learn how to split wood with an axe. I made some other comical, but not insignificant stabs at transcending my Westchester County, suburban New York roots. But the lessons did not come from these experiences. They came from listening to the enchanted lands of the high desert and people with eyes full of timeless wisdom.

I found mentors in communities who illuminated the myriad ways that humility and knowing are inseparable. I witnessed the ways in which people are connected to the places they inhabit and through which the value of their knowledge and integrity of their experience becomes visible, particularly in places where the collective experience of
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people over time has ingrained itself in the landscape and includes an intuitive understanding of the rhythms of human and environmental interaction. Such landscapes contain systems of human and environmental relationships invisible to the passerby (or ubiquitous “hiker”) and reveal themselves only gradually and only when you are ready to see them. They have no regard for extraneous timelines and goals or learning curves.

What “sustainability” discourse sometimes overlooks is that you can’t disrupt and stave off destructive development without nourishing the places and livelihoods that reinforce relationship between people and their environment, without respecting all forms of knowing. Sustainability sits at the intersection of people’s interaction with their environment, not in environments void of people and historic and cultural context. Sustainability is about cultural ecology, how people relate to and evolve their relationship with place; it is about reinforcing the connections that sustain both human and non-human life and perpetuating our human proclivity for creativity, relationship and reflection.

Unlike where we were 28 years ago when I started doing this work and “green,” “sustainability” and “organic” were not common lexicons, we are in a place of both increasing environmental fragility and capacity for connectivity, where acting locally is acting globally. The stakes are higher and the earth and its people are more vulnerable. The resultant and very real and constant human and environmental suffering, and all its political and economic manifestations, stares us down daily and dares us to walk away. Shockingly, we do!

The names social innovation and sustainability don’t
do justice to the task of doing work in places where even when sustainability is woven into the fabric of human and ecological connection over generations, and where communities understand their connection to the environment and to each other, poverty and privilege are deeply structural and intertwined and feed well-being’s downward spiral. The main concern of sustainability is not a precarious environment; it the greed that fuels persistent structural poverty, racism and oppression and that manifests in war, food insecurity and despair and stifle the human inclination to affirm life. Just as we are immune to the rising numbers of innocent African American men killed by state-sanctioned police practices, we are also immune to the sweat and knowledge that built this country and to the slow and increasing deaths resulting from the removal of all social safety nets and lack of access to basic health care and attention to human needs, not only in “developing” countries, but right here in our own backyard and particularly in remote rural regions of our country.

The pathway to “sustainability” is increasingly complex. In the face of shifting demographics, escalating economic shock, natural disasters, inequities and social upheaval, affirming human and natural life requires the engagement of a multiplicity of ideas, know-how and paths to understanding and begins with people and their relationship to place. Solutions don’t get worked out in meetings, books and papers on the subject; they get worked out on the ground and with the people who stand on it and our capacity to engage with all conversations past, present and future.

The need to think about how to effectively strengthen community in this critical and changing context is what
brought me to Goddard College. The kids and I were on our way to language school in Guanajuato, Mexico. We were in Jackson MS having just attended the Unita Blackwell Young Women’s Leadership Institute. Ms. Blackwell was the first Black woman mayor in the state of Mississippi. The 1000+ young women from Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia who have attended the Institute over the past ten years go to schools where there are no school books and no one has heard of Starbucks.

That night in Jackson I sent an email inquiring about a Faculty Advisor job at Goddard College. Several months later after a phone interview and being offered a position as a faculty advisor for a Masters degree in Sustainable Business and Communities, at a school that I discovered revered applied learning, self awareness and critical thinking, I found myself in Plainfield Vermont.

My first semester “advising” at Goddard I watched the Obama debate at a local bar in Montpelier. In 2011, during residency, Troy Davis was executed in Atlanta for murdering a police officer although there was insufficient evidence—a case I had followed closely for some years. In recent years I have begun to recall our residencies by police killings—Trayvon Martin killed during our residency in 2012, and Eric Garner, right before our residency in 2014.

Sustainability is about all of the above. The effects of climate change are becoming more severe and more frequent with devastating consequences to the environment and to the most vulnerable among us. It is not about the environment alone however. Our imperviousness to human suffering and lack of humanity alienate us from natural systems as they alienate us from each other. Natural systems cannot be
sustained when the social and economic fabric of cities and rural communities is unraveling, all of which creates an environment of political volatility and social instability played out in our current presidential election in its ugliest and most unrestrained form. The gap between rich and poor in America is more extreme than at any time in our history. As a nation we are becoming more diverse and we lack the evident tools and structures to facilitate inclusivity. This is the landscape of social innovation.

Goddard is a place where we create the space to think deeply and reflectively about how to do our work in the world with integrity and skill, understanding that we can’t deny who we are in the process. I continue to be amazed and humbled by the endless stream of people who are drawn to Goddard to pursue their visions, often when the obstacles seem overwhelming or insurmountable, and who find that the most significant obstacles to realizing their vision are internal. And, undeniably, we at Goddard are not immune from the issues that plague us as a society. Diversity is an issue. The students and faculty are awkwardly attempting to wrap their minds around how to hold up our ideals for social justice, diversity and inclusion without continuing to mirror and perpetuate the societal failures we came to address; needless to say, we are not there yet. We recognize that we need to take bold action. We need to be willing to admit that progressive education is not achievable without embodying the values we hold up.

The work we are engaged in at Goddard feeds personal reflection and yields insights that enable us to do better both at Goddard and in respective worlds and communities outside of it. The process is not linear and it is
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not complete. Bridging difference, creating connections, storytelling, community engagement, confronting the dynamics of power and privilege don’t produce substantial results in two years. We have learned too that the value of rooftop and urban gardens, sustainable building, cooperative models, technological innovations etc. is to be found not only in the new ways we apply them to addressing community needs but in facilitating dialogue and confronting the underlying power dynamics of power and privilege that obfuscate reality and limit transformation.

Students have designed strategies to promote sustainable fashion and challenge the mindsets that lure us into conspicuous consumption. They have explored the dynamics undergirding the relationship between global and local poverty, elevated the importance of sustaining ourselves (organizers and activists of color) within the larger struggle of social transformation. They have created innovations that engage marginalized communities in shaping the narrative of contemporary experience and models for using art to explore the identities we as a society have marginalized and rendered insignificant. They have explored the obstacles to recruiting, supporting and retaining diverse talent. They have created alternative educational models. Residencies have fostered a virtual community of practice that lives beyond graduation. The Goddard Social Innovation and Sustainability community is a fluid network of practitioners seeding capacities beyond the immediate resources of each of us involved and challenging the assumptions from which we operate. This network creates feedback loops that are shifting ways of knowing, doing and being and are presenting growing and formidable challenges to the status quo.
Social innovation and sustainability work is exhausting and life-giving. It’s messy and critical. It is about making mistakes and figuring out how to move forward. I came to Goddard because I wanted to figure out how to do the work that I do better. What I have learned at Goddard is that the work is not external to who I am. And the work is about connecting. It is about understanding that who I am is contingent upon who we are collectively and that when we are able to move in the world in such a way as to shape something larger than ourselves, we become less limited by our individual capabilities and better able to nurture an infrastructure for real change.
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Leading and Following: A Perspective on Teaching and Learning by Ruth Farmer

Leadership is a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change...[It] implies a process where there is movement—from wherever we are now to some future place or condition that is different. (Harrison 8)

“Follower” is not a pejorative. It is a legitimate and necessary role. Sometimes we lead and sometimes we follow. Both roles are honorable if they are performed with strength and accountability. (Chalef 72)

When considering leaders and followers, we often think of leaders as central and active, while followers are peripheral and passive. In school settings, it is assumed that students are followers and teachers are leaders. More often than not, these positions are considered fixed. True, there are “student leaders” and teachers are expected to develop professionally, which requires becoming students. Still, these shifts in roles tend to exist in separate universes; students lead other students and teachers attain professional development by working with peers.

Too often the term “follower” implies a lower position, one that has very little or insignificant impact on processes and outcomes. The term may even be used as an insult. Further, while many people aspire to become great
leaders, few aspire to become great followers. Awards and recognitions may be given to followers, but not for their excellence in that role. However, following and leading are essential, especially in education.

In the Goddard Graduate Institute (GGI), “student” and “teacher” are fluid positions. Faculty teach concepts, content, and methods, and guide students toward meeting degree criteria and program expectations. Students determine the disciplinary focus of their studies. In this way, they shape what (and sometimes how) faculty teach. GGI students initiate teaching and learning through their questions, modes of inquiry, and searches for answers to compelling, often deeply personal, questions. Faculty members possess disciplinary and professional expertise that enhances student learning; however, they are not expected to be experts in the topics that students pursue. As a result, they do not occupy a fixed position of leader to students’ fixed position of follower.

GGI is a low-residency program that offers Master of Arts degrees in Health Arts & Sciences, Social Innovation and Sustainability, and Individualized Studies. Many GGI students come to Goddard because they want to move beyond traditional pre-designed coursework so that they may fully explore their intellectual curiosity, with the guidance, resources, mentorship, and academic and professional support offered by a learning community. Within this scenario, faculty mentor students in how to produce solid scholarship, which means helping them learn how to think, rather than providing pre-determined curricula that tell them what to think.

As Director of GGI, I come to know students first
through their inquiries about the program in many cases and in all cases through their admissions applications, which I assess along with a faculty committee. The application process offers applicants an opportunity to teach (lead) by describing why they are embarking upon graduate study as well as how personal and professional experiences have prepared them for such a journey. Applicants articulate their research questions and provide a preliminary list of resources, thus demonstrating knowledge of the prevailing scholarship in their fields and the lens through which they plan to explore this scholarship. If they are accepted into our program, the admissions essay and resources are starting points for their studies and indicate learning edges.

Students come to Plainfield Vermont for an eight-day residency at the beginning of each semester. They attend workshops, lectures, and presentations led by faculty, staff, students, and visiting scholars, as well as individual and small group meetings, all in service of developing semester study plans. Faculty and students are in an advisor/advisee relationship, with faculty advising eight or fewer advisees per semester. The small size allows for individualized intellectual engagement.

Between residencies, students implement their plans through independent study guided by faculty advisors. Their education incorporates resources in their communities, such as local scholars and practitioners or museums. They learn by doing: for example, volunteering in organizations or businesses, facilitating workshops, or teaching classes. Critical essays, reflections, annotations, audiovisuals and other forms of expression document discoveries, queries, analyses, and syntheses of theories and practices relevant to their areas of
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interest. Throughout the semester, faculty advisors and student advisees engage in written and verbal dialogues that consist of mini-lectures, questions, resources, provocations, and guidance that deepen students’ scholarship and move them toward completing degree requirements and accomplishing professional goals.

The dynamic dialogic process fosters the interplay between leading and following. The willingness of faculty and students to switch roles when necessary is essential. Given that study plans are student-generated, faculty often become familiar with topics while shepherding students through their learning process. In order to impart the appropriate content, methodologies, and skills that ground students in graduate-level study, faculty must understand students’ academic and professional aspirations. This approach is well-suited for adult learners who come to college with valuable experiences and knowledge and seek education to deepen their ability to understand and solve real problems that they are likely already confronting in their personal lives or in their communities or current professions. Consider Eduard Lindeman’s theory of adult education from 1926:

The approach to adult learning will be via the root of problem solving, not subjects… [An adult] cannot begin by studying “subjects” in the hope that this information will be useful. On the contrary, he begins by giving attention to situations in which he finds himself, to problems which include obstacles to his self-fulfillment… In this process the teacher finds a new function. He is no longer the oracle who speaks from the platform of authority, but rather the guide, the pointer-out who also participates in learning in
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proportion to the vitality and relevance of his facts
and experiences. (Ozuah 83)

In other words, education for the adult learner has
real-world implications. The principles of “andragogy” or
adult education are apparent in our program. The questions
that shape students’ graduate work often emerge from their
desire to solve pressing problems that are part of their daily
lives. As they learn more about their areas of interest, they
learn the power of leadership and followership, as did Social
Innovation and Sustainability alumna Campbell-Cobb. In the
introduction to her thesis, “Urban Sustainability from the
Ground Up: Fostering diverse social cohesion and sense of
place through rooftop agriculture,” Rania Campbell-Cobb
describes her journey from managing an edible landscape for
a low-income senior housing development to creating Cloud
9 Rooftop Farm, a nonprofit organization. Throughout this
journey, food justice was a central focus as well as creating a
public space where people of different backgrounds could
find a sense of common purpose and place (Campbell-Cobb
5-6).

Campbell-Cobb came to GGI with extensive know-
ledge about food production. While faculty members are
well-versed in concepts related to her areas of inquiry, her

1 Describing Malcolm Knowles’s theory of andragogy, Sharan Merriam
outlines assumptions that parallel those in GGI: The five assumptions underlying
andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who (1) has an independent self-
concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a
reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning
needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centered and
interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (5) is motivated to learn by
internal rather than external factors (Merriam 5).
particular goals and objectives were unique to her experience, making her the expert or leader while she formulated her research questions and proposed course of studies. Faculty offered content and resources that included prevailing theories and approaches to sustainable gardening, organizational development, and community organizing—to name a few—that would be relevant to any student interested in urban gardening as a form of community building. Through engaging Campbell-Cobb’s specific project, faculty advisors tailored their teaching to help her achieve her academic objectives and meet degree requirements. While it is typical for college students to form their own research inquiries when fulfilling assignments, it is not common for students and faculty to co-create courses of study based on the student’s inquiry.

When designing their study plans, GGI students articulate why their research is important to them, as well as how it might impact others. Engaged practice, applying theory in real-world situations, is an integral component of their graduate studies. As she delved into the practical applications of her graduate work, Campbell-Cobb discovered that “diverse social cohesion” was created among people who gardened together. African-American teenagers, African-American residents of the senior housing development, and young white volunteers worked and ate together creating “opportunities to connect over commonalities and share differences” (40).

Over time, Campbell-Cobb realized that she and her colleagues had to make space for the leadership of community members:

As Cloud 9’s focus on community-driven garden
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development has evolved, it has become increasingly clear that we have put our team at a disadvantage by not enrolling constituents in the leadership structure. Unfortunately, this is a common issue in non-profit leadership structures... I am working with Cloud 9’s board of directors to integrate constituent participation into our leadership structure to carry out our mission of doing community-driven work. We are beginning by meeting with residents to plan the garden and associated programs, with the intention of both forming a site committee and adding resident representation to the board of directors. (85)

In order to create an organization that better serves its constituents, the team would have to become comfortable with following the leadership of community members. This realization reflects GGI’s core values: Students are called upon “to engage in studies that enhance the sustainability and resilience of communities, eco-communities, and individuals” (Goddard Graduate Institute 6). In this case, following became an organizational development strategy.

In “The Gift of Empowerment: A New Perspective to Leading Others,” Gardner and Olson state that “leaders endow others with influence and power, and to empower another person is one of the noblest gifts we are capable of giving” (69). Student empowerment is a value that is embedded in GGI’s mission: “to integrate scholarship, personal development, and social, ecological, artistic, and cultural action to foster and support scholars and practitioners committed to positive change in the world” (Goddard Graduate Institute 8). By encouraging students to take the lead during various stages of their graduate work, faculty help
them to shift “internal estimations of their ability to influence leaders and generate an increased sense of agency and responsibility” (Chalef 77). The information, questions, concepts, and analyses found in faculty response letters (and other communication) directly relate to students’ particular inquiries, academic progress and learning edges; this helps them gain the confidence to empower and support others, as demonstrated by Campbell-Cobb.

Kate Miller found her way to GGI’s Individualized Studies after she retired from her career as a professor of English. Miller looked for writing programs, but could find none that spoke to her until she saw a link to information about GGI’s Transformative Language Arts concentration (TLA). Her graduate work combined TLA and Embodiment Studies and emerged from core questions: “How do I know what I know? How are mind and matter related? What does it mean to be a physical body in a physical world? What does it mean for love, wholeness, our care for our selves and other living things? The earth itself? What does it mean for my writing …”(iii). Her research led her to neuroscience and helped her to better understand the connections among thoughts, the brain, our interactions with the world, and writing:

And if the very way we think, the thoughts we are capable of having, are structured in our brains by our contact with the world—prenatal neurological learning going back to the generations of ancestral knowledge encoded in our cells—our minds are of the flesh of this world. Can we draw upon the wisdom and language of our bodies,
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conscious and unconscious, to heal the body of earth? And what could be the role of writing in this critical task? (38)

In her thesis, “Improvised Duet: Writer-Girl Sings the World,” the words of Miller the theorist and her persona “Writer-Girl” are interwoven with those of theorists who focus on philosophy, neuroscience, phenomenology, embodiment, and ecology, including David Abram, Ellie Epp, Linda Hogan, and Antonio Damasio. “Improvised Duet” describes dialogues with faculty members who guide her and who are instrumental in her discovering a way to reach her authentic voice. Miller calls her work “incarnate writing, writing that is an improvised duet of body and living world” (i). Her thesis is both scholarly and personal and moves fluidly from theorizing to creative nonfiction that highlights the experiential learning that is a foundation of Miller’s graduate studies. By following and deeply engaging a wide range of seemingly unconnected disciplines and theories, Miller has created for herself—and those who wish to follow her lead—an innovative perspective on embodied writing.

The work of Health Arts and Sciences alumna Sara Shields offers another example of leading and following as part of teaching and learning. A nurse for several years when she enrolled in GGI, Shields wanted to change the culture of healthcare facilities, to ameliorate the stressors that prevail and negatively affect nursing staff and patients. Her aim was to heal “not only the current conditions that seem to attack the essence of the profession, but also the historical assaults that have led nursing to this place where spirituality and artful caring seem to no longer have space” (3).

Shields had comprehensive knowledge of the policies
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and procedures of the facilities in which she worked over the years. Faculty advisors helped her to deepen her understanding of how to investigate historical and current nursing practices and, ultimately, discover alternatives. She created a chakra-inspired leadership model and toolkit intended to transform the healthcare environment “while creating a healthy balance of art, science, and revenue” (Shields 8). Combining her professional expertise with knowledge and skills acquired through graduate-level study, Shields created resources that can improve leadership, alleviate healthcare workers’ stress and, by extension, make positive changes in how patient care is approached:

This leadership model began with questions: How can the essence—the heart and soul—of nursing be restored? What would it take to move us to an authentic and caring presence with our patients, and help us to become more caring nurses? How can we deal with the burnout and compassion fatigue that come with the territory? And how can we cope with the science and technology that are becoming increasingly present in our field while still maintaining the human components of our work? (77)

Shields’ questions led her to research self-care, which she viewed as “a ladder, or hierarchy… similar to the approach we use while nursing—in the order that we were taught by Maslow” (77). Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs informed her understanding of energy balance and chakras. Implementing the practices that emerged from energy and chakra work brought more balance to her personal life. She recognized that transformation of the working environment was also needed:
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Hospitals, offices, agencies, corporations, and communities take on lives of their own. They develop their own consciousness—their own energies. They become living, breathing, dynamic entities that require the same care and balance as an individual human being. It then becomes the onus of the leadership of these agencies or communities to keep energy flowing and balanced. In that sense, nursing and other health-care leaders become organizers of energy hygiene. The answers to my questions began to take shape through this realization. (81)

Based upon her research, Shields began applying her knowledge in her workplace:

In my clinic, there are 60-70 employees who each work in different departments. Every quarter I sit down with each employee individually to discuss areas in which they feel they are struggling or where they feel “stagnated”. We also talk about what is going well for them…I then ask them what they are doing to take care of themselves. In addition, I require that supervisors of each team have this same conversation on a more frequent basis (usually monthly). This is not a time for clinical supervision or performance evaluation; this is exclusive time set aside for promoting individual balance and energy flow…Essentially the goal is to display leadership concern for employee welfare and self-care so that employees can feel supported in focusing on their own growth. (84)

Shields’ thesis correlates chakras to the various aspects of an organization. For example, the root chakra deals with “first-order needs or basic necessities; and its strength is
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necessary before a successful climb to further levels of personal growth or organizational development” (86).

According to Joseph Jaworski, the founder of the American Leadership Forum, “leaders trying to create new realities require the capacity to unite the separated” (Kahane 36). Jaworski and Otto Scharmer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology developed the U-Process, an important aspect of which is “uniting the creative leader with other stakeholders, with the larger context, and with his or her own higher self” (37). The U represents the three movements of innovation: sensing (the left, descending side of the U), presencing (the bottom of the U), and realizing, the ascending right side. These three components describe an awareness of a system’s current reality, understanding one’s role within that system, and actions that lead to a new reality (37). The U process parallels principles that shape GGI’s degree criteria: knowing (acquisition of knowledge), being (development of self), and doing (experiential learning and thoughtful action). Shields’ investigations, analyses, and solutions exemplify both the U process and GGI’s principles. Because systemic transformation was integral to her studies, Shields had to articulate her understanding of the current dynamics that define healthcare facilities and the nursing field. Her attitudes, biases, and roles had to be examined as these determined which questions were asked. As a result, she could offer persuasive rationales for changing administrative practices and contribute scholarship to the field of nursing leadership.

As Shields’, Miller’s and Campbell-Cobb’s studies illustrate, adult education in GGI is both academic and personal and presents opportunities for students to lead while
meeting learning goals that are specific to their needs.

In many traditional colleges and universities, faculty determine what knowledge is considered important and how best to demonstrate acquisition of that knowledge. A class of 20 students might yield research papers with 20 different topics, but the culminating project is the same for all students. In GGI, critical essays are required and writing is the primary form of expression; however, final products frequently include forms that are unique to the student. One year, several GGI students in different degree tracks focused their studies on food and nutrition. Though they had researched the same field (coincidentally), their culminating final products took different forms, including critical essays, websites, curricula, and workshop series.

If we reconsider how we view the roles of followers and leaders, students and teachers, we might come to value the ways in which followers strengthen educational processes, or learning dynamics. While it is true that local, regional, and global groups and organizations need strong leaders, strong followers are also necessary. Focusing exclusively on students’ leadership capabilities may signal that following isn’t respected. In her article “Rethinking Leadership and Followership: A Student’s Perspective,” Krista Kleiner reflects on the tensions between the message given at a followership conference and expectations placed on college applicants:

The pressure that the college admissions system produces has led me, and countless others, to calculate where we can describe our leadership with impressive sounding titles, rather than where we can make the biggest day-to-day contributions. If there were a process that allowed students to show their
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strength not only as leaders but also as followers and contributors, students would feel less compelled to obtain titles and would be more comfortable in making contributions regardless of the formal positions they hold. (92)

The principles of knowing, being, and doing encourage GGI students to experience themselves in more complex ways and to bring their whole selves to their graduate studies. When they apply to our program, students are asked to explain what a graduate degree would mean for them personally and professionally. They must articulate an inquiry question or statement that will form the basis for their studies. Though they are asked about their prior experiences, as well as their professional aspirations, applicants are not required to “describe [their] leadership with impressive sounding titles.”

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Alvesson and Blom write that leadership should be considered “not just as a process in which leaders issue instructions to followers, but as a relational phenomenon in which followership is a key element, calling for people to see themselves as followers” (267). As the Director of the Goddard Graduate Institute, I frequently experience the “relational phenomenon” of followership and leadership that Alvesson and Blom describe above. Faculty and I share academic leadership, though from different perspectives. My role is macroscopic by necessity. For example, in designing the residency schedule I work closely with faculty and students to insure that workshops offer skills and content needed for students to meet their learning goals. I’m charged with understanding policies and procedures and how they
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impact teaching and learning. These responsibilities require both leading and following. Ultimately, the fluidity between leadership and followership serves the students by creating an environment in which learning is not managed, as is typical in many colleges and universities. Rather, learning is facilitated so that students thrive in an atmosphere of intellectual empowerment.

Works Consulted


Goddard Graduate Institute Handbook Addendum


Kleiner, Krista, “Rethinking Leadership and Followership: A
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Student’s Perspective.” Riggio, et al 89-94.
The Virtual and Place-Based Culture of the Goddard Graduate Institute by Karen Campbell

How is it that Goddard, with such a lack of traditional academic structure, led me to far more intensive, critical and meaningful work than the more “competitive” schools I had attended in the past? It is tempting to use words such as “magic” when trying to describe a process that is so non-directed—but yet seems to lead exactly where one needs to go… ~ Britta Love, GGI graduate, 2015

Commencing

During the bubbling excitement of a Goddard Graduate Institute (GGI) graduation weekend when the graduates, their family, friends and faculty are proudly hugging, choking back tears and some surely thinking, “Wow, how did I/he/she/they manage that??!” the word “magic” does indeed get bandied about with regularity. As does the declaration by graduates during the ceremony, “This place changed my life.”

Decades ago I was one of those Goddard GGI students who left each residency wildly exhilarated, internally torn at the thought of leaving this vibrant community (dreading reality again), and quite incoherent when trying to explain to friends back home what had caused my babbling exuberance about my studies. I know the journey our
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graduates have taken, the hugeness of their achievements, and that time will gape for a while once there’s no excuse to return to “Planet G,” where thoughts speed like comets around the campus day and night.

Goddard faculty, graduates and students have long tried to articulate just what constituents of the pedagogy (or, arguably, andragogy) at Goddard coalesce to ensure that each student reaches their potential, stretches beyond their originally imagined goals, discovers/creates (new) knowledge that changes their entire way of being and doing in the world, contributes to social justice…and documents all in a significant piece of well-tested, rigorous research. All the while (largely) enjoying the journey.

I’ll posit that for those who’ve designed their own degree (rather than pursued one in a conventional institution) one key difference may lie in the personal risk in continuing to the end. Ideal as a self-designed degree may sound, to meet GGI’s standards of integrity and rigor is initially daunting.

Yes, there’s a handbook that describes degree criteria—the core of which are “knowing, being, and doing”—but these are not disparate tasks shaped by required readings that can be checked off one by one. Rather, as Elizabeth K. Minnich so carefully describes, our work is about prying open “closed systems of meaning” and determining “how dominant systems do their work and are legitimated by knowledge” (*Transforming Knowledge* 248-249). In other words, each student must identify dominant knowledges in their

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2 Including the wrestle to squeeze time without destroying existing personal/familial, professional and local community commitments.

3 Hereafter abbreviated to *TK*. 
field(s), how they’re authorized, and what effects they have in different locations (who benefits, and not). They must then unearth suppressed or ignored knowledges—*experiences that have not counted*—and through them interrogate accepted knowledges. But they/we cannot stop at having learned from, even celebrated, the discovery of marginalized experience. Rather we must question “the constructed nature of experience… *how subjects are constituted as different in the first place*” and if/how we might be complicit in maintaining that constituted difference (Scott 777, my emphasis).

But I am getting ahead of myself. When in the early ‘90s I encountered Minnich’s first edition of *Transforming Knowledge* I read in gulps (never breathing quite enough), as triumphant indignation zapped around my head. Minnich named and problematized so much that had been disgruntling my wild searches for the “something” that was “off” in the world of higher education (among others).

I’d ventured into colonial/postcolonial cultural studies (at first alone—then spottily through the odd graduate course) and my initial encounter with the languages of this blousy field(s)—rarefied theories of colonial/postcolonial cultural studies, and postmodernism—had dismayed because it took so much energy to parse their oddly convoluted grammars. They also thrilled (once I thought I’d “got” them) because they made me see anew. And yet, as new theoretical vocabularies became established, scholarly articles seemed remote from those for whom they purported to speak, often impenetrable to those—even within the academy—who’d not been initiated.\(^4\) They seemed in danger of betraying Cultural

\(^4\) Since then, Routledge has cannily produced “key concepts” dictionaries with lengthy entries for much of that vocabulary and its theorists.
Studies’ origins, its mission. ‘Theory’ had become academic action; scholars did theory, argued it, applying it in the abstract but often in relation to non-privileged, subjugated “others” whose grim realities allowed no access to the academy. Minnich seemed to share this concern: ‘Theory’ seems to be taking on the role of arbiter of what is real, and of imposing only one way of speaking to that reality, for allies as well as opponents (TK 391-392).

Back at my own university in Japan, visionary colleagues who’d transformed our department, a tiny but significant island in the still, vast loch that was our institution, were dispersing in illness or defeat as new conservative forces pushed faculty to churn out said theory and ensure students demonstrate their recognition of it in multiple choice tests. What Fromm calls “moral aloneness” threatened and I needed inspiration. I’d tried graduate programs in Singapore and the US but their curricula seemed to stop short at ensuring students become familiar with accepted theory. It was as if each course was a script we memorized but never got to rehearse, or (importantly) interpret from our experience.

I was searching for the kind of community that takes on the difficult, wrestles with the impossible and helps transform knowledges. And “not just [by] trying to extend them or correct them here and there …[but] changing what and, just as important, how we think so that we no longer perpetuate the old exclusions and devaluations of the majority of humankind that have pervaded informal as well as formal schooling …” (Minnich, TK 837; my emphasis).

Theories, I came to think, are their thinkers’ well-intentioned stories about what really happened and will likely
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happen again. Fog warnings, if you like. They aim to uncover truths, “real” motivations, culprits, even (perhaps unconscious) conspiracies. Once established, though, they have the potential to imprison all in an almost Orwellian “doublespeak” that pervades and clouds thought.

My Goddard advisors helped me give myself permission to query Theory—sit with excruciating contradictions, like the injustices of colonial/postcolonial cultures and the seeming impossibility of ever identifying another way—rather than cave in to platitudes. So I’d wait, bring this theory tentatively to that—Gramsci’s “hegemony” to Foucault’s “discourses” to Suleri’s critique of the then accepted mutual exclusivity of oppressor-oppressed; the “static binarism between colonizer and colonized” to, say, Adaora Lily Ulasi’s novel, Many Thing You No Understand—until the clouds split, letting in a rare bolt of light that allowed me to identify how the story was changing and, crucially, changeable: where I might act, and imagine the possibly far-flung consequences of my actions (Suleri 2-4).

Though I cannot do justice to Minnich’s ground-breaking analysis of knowledge, it turned out that Goddard’s GGI was in tune with her concerns, encouraging her methods, and so became my community of thinkers and doers. But describing, coherently, why Goddard is that place is still not easy.

Cultural Values in Low Residency Education?

Together with my colleague, Paul McGrath, teaching in a low residency graduate program at Nagoya Gakuin University (NGU), Japan, I have long tried to explain quite
what creates the sheer exhilaration so many Goddard graduates (myself included) express over their low residency experience.5 Recently, as MOOCs and the falling birthrate threaten unconventional Japanese universities too, we have been comparing the NGU and GGI models, although NGU’s students attend classes for a total of 8 days over their first year and select courses from a planned curriculum while GGI students have two 8-day spells on campus annually and design their own curriculum. We, with many Goddard colleagues, believe that “low-residency programs have the potential to play an increasingly crucial and radical role in bridging the online/classroom/community divide” (Lissard & Campbell) even as we occasionally fear our vision is befuddled by nostalgia.

McGrath and I reviewed much literature on reducing student isolation, often diagnosed as the major cause of high dropout rates reported by distance learning programs. Intriguing was a 2008 study by Linda Dale Bloomberg that examined the role of shared cultural values in developing community in a Jewish distance learning masters program delivered via videoconferencing. Shared values were not the only significant factor, it seems, for the main recommendation of the study “was that to enhance learning, educators in videoconferencing programs should work toward making the learning community a visible entity, and should facilitate collaborative learning opportunities for students both within and across sites,” suggesting even tightly shared values do not quite bridge the physical distances of

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5 It was he who “discovered” Goddard, encouraged me to go (and later our Japanese friend Hide Kasuga) and we were all involved in trying to bring Goddard to NGU/Japan in the late 1990s—until the bubble burst and it was too late.
such education (Bloomberg 1; my emphasis).

Living in Japan where the homogeneity of Japanese values is doctrinal, we wondered if that assumption of sameness supports NGU students despite the briefness of residencies (McGrath & Campbell, 2016). Our study is ongoing but over 95% of the students claim the residencies are vital, providing opportunities for face-to-face exchange, peer learning, motivation, and support. A significant number say they’d have dropped out if there were no residency which seems to indicate that even a few days of in-person contact is compelling. As for GGI, anecdotal evidence almost overwhelmingly suggests that the residency functions as generator of a shared—if always shifting—culture that’s vital to sustaining students’ studies. Recent GGI graduate, Britta Love, is adamant:

[C]rucial … is the environment of residency, where students cross-pollinate ideas and resources, where the seeds of inquiry to be pursued in the semester are first germinated, where advisors hold workshops that set the tone of Goddard values such as questioning the status quo, unpacking one’s privilege, investigating “other-ed” forms of knowledge, and learning to use personal and embodied experience as raw data for critical research. Nobody is told what they “must” do, but the residency provides a rich and nutritious soil from which the Goddard student extracts what they need to grow.

However confident students are about their semester plans at the start of a residency, their exposure to the multiplicity of unusual projects proffered for discussion at any meal, advising group, workshop, or water-cooler chat
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tends to rattle certainty. And yet, for many students and faculty, there is definitely a sense of being in a space where we can flounder, fall, admit confusion, and be supported. As Britta puts it:

Unique as well is the sense of community on the Goddard campus, in the truest sense of the word. I don’t believe I’m alone in saying that coming to Goddard was the first time that I truly understood what that word meant, a feeling of being connected to every other person on campus, of being supported and held through my process, of truly belonging. Part of this is owing to the small size of the school of course, but there’s also an assumption and understanding of interconnectivity that creates a remarkable social atmosphere.

Perhaps the compressed swiftness of the residency—we’re together often for fifteen hours a day—offers this education an edge for it plunges all into an abrupt familiarity that provokes eager sharing of the multifarious experiences, knowledge(s) and expertise brought together in that place.

For me a good sprinkling of what Britta calls “magic” emerges from the demand that Goddard’s faculty, staff, and students together tend to what Minnich calls “the wellspring of our being”:

By “wellsprings,” I mean the needs and gifts of our human being—not just some kinds and capacities of bodies, or of intelligence or learning, and not just some emotional predispositions or expressions of spirit, but, rather, the given that we are, or always anew can become, questions for ourselves, so no particular answers of any era or culture or kind of
knowledge can capture once and for all either what or who we are. (Minnich “Reflections” 2, my emphasis)
This intent—that admittedly can buckle at times—to nurture each other, create spaces for being and always becoming, is evident throughout the events of the residency that starts each student’s journey. Graduate Jeanne Chambers, who preceded Britta by some years, recounts: “Workshops proved paradisical. People gathered together, talking, questioning, probing topics that interest you but drive your engineer husband to the edge—what’s not to love about that?”

Again, Britta bears witness to that intangible “something” we’re endeavoring to describe here:
When I arrive on campus, I never fail to sense what feels almost like a physical electric charge, something palpable in the air. Perhaps it is the energy of the students who have come here for decades now to seed their idealistic and visionary ideas for a better world. It feels like it is this energy that charges one up during residency and keeps one going through the semester back home.

I submit that the “charge” to a residency draws from the stunning diversity of studies students undertake that almost guarantees they cannot be in competition. They are engaged in entirely different inquiries and (with few exceptions) practices, so they aren’t all reading the same text and trying (consciously or otherwise) to impress a teacher with their superior grasp of the issues. In daily meetings with their small advising group, when a student describes their study planning progress and the research sources they’ve identified, others spontaneously offer ideas and resources that may bring different perspectives to that student’s area of inquiry. This
sharing of inspirations continues randomly across the semester with small groups meeting virtually, on the phone or through occasional shout-outs on Facebook or Twitter, each knowing that whatever their focus, someone will pitch something that proves helpful.

And it is that charge that provides the momentum to carry us home and through the focused and potentially isolated work of the semester.

Also key is the fact that most recognize (or come to recognize) the political nature of the education they are designing and the role of their project in the wider world. As noted, they are setting out to re/form knowledge and as such are scrutinizing the known and the lesser known, and sabotaging conclusions ostensibly set in stone, indeed transforming some of those very “conceptual errors” Minnich identified in Transforming Knowledge as she pried apart the circular reasoning that masks them.

Then there’s the nature of the faculty-student relationship:

Faculty members were quite accessible, not exhibiting that hoity-toity, holier-than-thou behavior that characterizes many academic institutions. Instead of looking down at us from their ivory tower, they sat beside us and joined in the conversation and reverie. For a gal like me who flat-out and unabashedly owns her authority issues, the affability and approachability was key. And just as I long suspected could be the case, being personable did not erode the vast storehouses of knowledge and expertise possessed by faculty members (Chambers, 2015).

This is not to suggest that faculty do not evaluate
students’ work carefully. Despite the supposed looseness of our ways\(^6\) faculty take seriously our responsibility for the standards of the institution—but do so as collaboratively, with each student, as is conceivable at present,\(^7\) as I will describe below.

**Culture/Cultural Memory: For and By Whom?**

One rather robust aspect of Goddard’s institutional culture is its (collective) “cultural memory” of having been a “laboratory” for educational experiments, and for democratic “real living” with strong student participation in governance, a memory with which new students soon become familiar (Assman; goddard.edu).

In terms of educational experiments, the school no longer authors major projects; the students themselves do. And their scholarly practices can take many forms: from leading rooftop gardening in Philadelphia, to gathering skills to contribute to building a solidarity economy in New Orleans, to using already-honed scientific skills to free the benefits of Ayurveda from the limiting structures of biomedical research, to creating a temporary memorial project at the intersection of Heritage/Cultural Memory/Place Studies, Public History/Art and arts-informed research methodologies, or a series of colorful, mathematical designs interpreting/becoming new oracles of the *I Ching/Yijing*. The

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\(^6\) Long-term residents of Vermont sometimes comment wryly, if often affectionately, on the goings-on at Goddard. Some may be surprised that we’ve never lost our academic accreditation. (The notion that accreditation suggests pressure to conform wears at our ideological souls, but is a discussion for another time.)

\(^7\) Though each of these processes undergoes constant review and modification as needs dictate.
A commitment to social justice is still core to the college’s culture as a whole but since the residential program closed in 2002, and because we’re now more apart than together, it’s nigh on impossible for the entire community to find time and space to attend to the different injustices individuals, or groups, want to address within the institution as well as within their own studies. Students are active back in their own communities during the semester and many see their time on campus as a precious respite, a space in which to pause, breathe, and reconsider their studies in light of the previous semester’s learning.

Nonetheless, in GGI one small way we call upon our communal commitment to democracy/social justice is through collectively choosing a residency theme that provides a place-based forum to bring different perspectives together through visiting scholars’ presentations, student and faculty workshops. Themes have included “Crossing Boundaries,” “Roots of Change” and recently “Journey.”

Another GGI characteristic is that we are striving to be alert to the trap of complacency: to note who’s excluded and ask why, to identify institutional/unconscious racism, in the interest of an even healthier transformation of knowledge. To help increase awareness GGI students are required to continually explore their individual cultural identity as change agents, identify cultural blinkers, and learn how we can become a community more welcoming of ethnic diversity.

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8 E.g. many in the institution feel “Black Lives Matter” is a call Goddard must heed. So groups of students and faculty are engaged in small cross-program consciousness-raising study groups toward designing effective action plans until the semester has been signed off.
Goddard’s “texts” from pedagogical principles, to degree criteria, advising group practices, to students’ “packets” of work and faculty response letters, to students’ finished products (or theses), to the archives, the photo-history gallery on the community center walls, to our language, and now our disputes/discussions on Facebook—are objects of culture, evidence of cultural memory, and stories that seem to inspire many, even as each student contributes anew to that memory.

One pedagogical principle is to receive each new student as they are. Gentle, probing conversations before and during residencies extend membranes of comfort that allow students to appraise their skills and resources, and identify those they’ll need for the study they wish to undertake. Thence we nudge each one to articulate how they will meet the fundamental requirements of their degree while pursuing with integrity their chosen area(s) of inquiry, assuring help if they flounder. Questions and musings—rarely lectures—secure the net.

Another is the (Deweyan) centrality of reflection on learning, one concrete component of which is narrative evaluation: the student’s self-evaluation and the advisor’s end-of-semester evaluation of the student’s work.⁹

But the main component is the continuous reflective process that is faculty-student dialogue—the thinking together—over the semester we’re physically away from each other.

For me as a student, returning home (to fulltime work

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⁹ Students send their self-evaluation to their advisor. In turn I send my draft evaluation to my advisees so that they have an opportunity to raise issues, or point out aspects of their work they feel I may have slighted or missed. Not all take the opportunity to respond, but most do. Students also evaluate their advisor at the end of both residency and semester.
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and study) with armfuls of sources, research was a blur of breathless “roaming and pouncing”\textsuperscript{10} with each yielded nugget of insight becoming an urgent spur to the next. My wild searches were fired by the depth and detail of exchanges with my advisors through “packets” of work and letters. These dialogues cleared spaces for deep reflection. An advisor in front of whom I was initially horribly tongue-tied, then Program Director Margo MacLeod, constantly wrote “IR” in the margins of my papers and ruminations—a genial, even humble prod to unravel for the “Ignorant Reader” the jargon of my field. In a pale sense it made me the expert but in a vital ‘mother, it forced me out of hiding to examine the soundness of my knowing. Had I really grasped the nuanced implications of my declarations, my demonstrations of “familiarity with theory”? If I had then surely I might state plainly—without the subterfuge of academic disguise—the meanings I had divined amidst the thick theories I’d explored; and claim my own insights, however tentative.

As Britta writes:

Working so intensely with one advisor per semester is an intimate and profound process that allows space for truly deep and uncharted inquiry—as well as a hand to hold during the inevitable challenges therein. The Goddard advisor holds space for the student’s unique trajectory, offers resources and support, critiques new work and points out stones yet unturned—but with no agenda except the fullest expression of their student’s abilities and passions (my emphasis).

Every three weeks faculty advisors field “packets” of

\textsuperscript{10}Former colleague Ellie Epp’s naming of stages in the “Wild Research” process.
(See: http://www.ellieepp.com/mbo/bodies/workshops/wildresearch.html )
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student papers, notes, artistic creations, and sift, perhaps reword sections to mirror back our understanding of student thought, or to elicit further clarity, suggest divergent angles of vision, offer more resources. Faculty advisors are attentive to the meaning each student is making and respond with detailed written feedback—all the while praying it will not injure or upset. It is a delicate balance. And yes, sometimes it goes awry. Still, we plug on, resolved to mend fraying filaments of our communication and come to places of understanding that will enlighten both sides of our—yes, intimate—equation. Intimate not because we’re chums, cozy, or affectionate, but because we are passionate about the struggle to bring ornery, conflicting, incongruous visions into fresh communion, and are determined to hang in with this vexed process of learning to see anew.\textsuperscript{11}

This intimacy of our attentiveness is not confined to the advisor-student relationship. Students find that all the staff from admissions to financial aid, kitchen, housekeeping, IT, academic services and maintenance staff recognize them, ask how they and their families are doing, and celebrate their achievements. In many ways, I believe that this intimacy, albeit occasionally precarious, defines our culture and is its most valuable legacy—the strength we pass on and can employ to fortify our efforts toward communally supporting greater diversity.

\textsuperscript{11}Over twenty years later I’ve still not brought myself to destroy my packets nor my advisors’ letters of response; the dialogue was so thick, attentive, illuminating and continually motivating.
Cultural Bonding: Flashes of Memory

During my first residency as a faculty advisor at Goddard I was assigned a group of temperamentally as well as academically dissimilar individuals and despaired of their ever bonding sufficiently to support each other. Desperate, I took to calling our advising meetings bondage sessions (to raise a laugh but also, I hoped, a twinge of serious attention to each other). I should have trusted the process. They couldn’t help but convert their initial grudging tolerance of different interests to active listening and offer each other resources; on the last day of the residency they had themselves photographed as they all twisted into a physical knot on the lawn. And they were there for each other in the audience of their respective graduating presentations at subsequent residencies, though the Hollywood actress who’d wanted to study angels had resolved by then to become an episcopal priest (and is), and the bad lad of the program had crafted what had seemed impossible, a rich thesis on the movie *Fight Club* with faculty misgivings quashed in dramatic conversations between postmodern scholars.

In recent semesters, my advising groups included Britta (Consciousness Studies)—exploring sex, drugs, and consciousness, Jennye—writing creative non-fiction on embodiment, embroidery, queer theory and transforming conventions of addressing survivors of sexual violence, and Dave—synthesizing and reinterpreting much-needed research into how white American identity has been constructed by

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12 Not that, coming from the more restrained cultures of Japan and the UK, I felt too comfortable with some of Goddard’s rather “woo woo” vocabulary, like “bonding.”
manipulating American Indians’ identities over hundreds of years (these latter two are what I term “very individualized” studies). Their generous sharing of work and perspectives across the semesters undoubtedly introduced them to perspectives they might not otherwise have encountered, even though they were engaged in very different studies.

I also recall a residency in which almost every GGI student, whatever their professed area of inquiry, attended seminars on embodiment and one (the last of the residency) on colonial/post colonial and postmodern cultural theory that went way past its allotted time frame into the dark of evening, so reluctant were they to abandon that final conversation.

Inviting into this culture individuals who have taken upon themselves problems to solve, or at least address, and calling them to weave their individual experience, knowledge, questions, skepticism (and fear) together is perhaps only a small step toward addressing the deeply disturbing phenomena of our time. It apparently “works”; our graduates are doing conscious work in the world that is helping to transform the injustices that drove many of them here.

13 And editing a collection of transformative writings: Jennifer Patterson edited Queering Sexual Violence: Radical Voices from Within the Anti Violence Movement, available on Amazon Kindle.
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Rigor, the Ridiculous, and Radical Resonance: Transitory Community and the Construction of History by Katt Lissard

Rigor: What Happens at a Residency?

If Residency is anything, it’s about opportunities to break from well-worn paths and explore anew. ~ Lucas Oster, Fall 2015, Consciousness Studies student

At the beginning of every Graduate Institute semester, faculty and students gather together on the Goddard College campus in rural Vermont. While arrivals at the residency are staggered—with faculty arriving first, on Tuesday, for two days of meetings, and new students arriving on Thursday for an initial round of orientation—by Friday noon, everyone (new and returning students, along with those who are about to graduate) has checked in and registered. A mid-day Opening Session marks the “official” start of the semester. The eight days and nights that follow are filled with presentations, workshops, advising sessions, one-on-one mentoring meetings, communal meals, endless conversations, a 24-hour stream of coffee, and either the exulted, possibly terrifying, beginning of graduate studies (for new students) or the continuation and deepening of ongoing thesis investigations (for everyone else).

The schedule and overall structure of the residency
have been consistently revisited and revised over the years to ensure that the progression of events maximizes student involvement as well as student benefit. The first two days of the residency highlight the work of students who have completed their degrees and will be graduating. Throughout the day on Saturday (and often continuing into Sunday morning) each graduating student offers a 45-minute presentation of their thesis work, which includes feedback and a Q&A with the audience. A few titles from a recent round of presentations, Spring 2016, give a sense of the breadth and depth of Graduate Institute pursuits:

- “The Aesthetics of Consciousness,”
- “Rosie’s Second Shift: The Domestic Lives of Women Workers During World War II,”
- “The Poison is the Medicine: How Sex and Drugs Saved My Life (and Could Save the World),”
- “That's Just How She Is: Using Improvisational Techniques to Cultivate an Integrated Self,”
- “Cloud 9 Rooftop Farm: Community, Food, and the Urban Landscape,” and
- “Irregular Therapy: Self-Discovery and Collective Integration Through a Creative Engagement with Symbolism.”

All students are encouraged to attend these presentations, especially new students, not only to support the graduates, but to witness the wide-ranging interdisciplinary possibilities the Graduate Institute nurtures and to be challenged and inspired by their colleagues’ work.

Seeing and hearing each student share their work is a privilege. I feel so proud for everyone I listen to, so proud that Goddard
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exists, that we care about the twisty-turvy topics that stray away from one text, test or “professor’s” lecture...I am moved. I witness my peers fuse their deep care, their experiences, their research and the overall journey into bodies of work that are as palpable as they a demonstration of academic practice—each in their own right. ~Rachel Aidan Holmes, Spring, 2015, Transformative Language Arts (TLA) student

Graduate presentations, the graduation ceremony and a post-graduation celebration dominate the first weekend of the residency, but foundational work for new and returning students also begins, woven in between presentations and commencement events. There are mandatory degree requirement workshops, inaugural advising sessions where students meet their semester advisor and the other students in their advising cohort, and Program or Concentration Meetings for all students based on the focus area of their studies: Health Arts and Sciences (HAS), Social Innovation and Sustainability (SIS), Consciousness Studies (CS), Transformative Language Arts (TLA), or the Individualized option (IMA). One of the opening weekend’s most vital, community-building events is the Saturday night student/ faculty/staff reading, which is open to everyone. The reading provides a supportive venue for sharing poetry, fiction, monologues, comedic riffs and essay writing with this new group of peers, and because it comes so early in the residency it plays a role in generating a sense of both camaraderie and risk-taking.

The open reading evening was a highlight of the week. I was amazed at the judgment-free zone that was created, the connections that were initiated, and the variety of writing. ~
Graduates, their families and friends leave campus after the post-commencement party Sunday afternoon. There’s a brief pause (a collective exhale), dinner, and then the Opening Keynote address by the visiting scholar—selected by faculty and students in the lead-up to the residency because the scholar’s work connects to the residency’s chosen theme. On Monday morning, the serious core work of the residency begins. The objective by week’s end? To have an approved Study Plan for the coming semester “intended to address degree criteria as well as each student’s academic goals.”

Over the next five days each student creates (in collaboration with their advisor) a “road map” for the fifteen weeks ahead, which includes a packet-by-packet breakdown (there are five packets, one due every three weeks) of what the student expects to accomplish and how; what the essential interdisciplinary research will be (with a bibliography of potential sources); and how the semester’s degree requirements will be met. Students work with their advisors on their Study Plans, but the Plan itself is student-conceived, driven and realized, which is often both a challenging and liberating experience.

I had to let go of the assumption that everything would be neat, organized, and pre-arranged. I had to let go of my assumption that I would be thrown into a regimented schedule and have an obvious A, then B format. What I really had to let go of was that someone would tell me “how” to get to those points. ~
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Crystal Hamlin, Spring, 2015

Along with a narrative description of some of what happens at a residency, it’s revealing to see what a single day might look like from the outline of the schedule itself. Here is a typical day:

**TUESDAY: Thesis Proposals Due by Noon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30am – 8:15am</td>
<td>Yoga/Morning Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45am – 9:00am</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00am – 10:30am</td>
<td>Advising Groups Meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45am – 12:15pm</td>
<td>Faculty-Facilitated Workshops:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Seeing in the Dark Part I: Why Go to Dark Places” - Lise Weil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Phenomenology, Portraiture, Critical Auto-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnography” - Karla Haas Moskowitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45am – 1:00pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm – 2:00pm</td>
<td>Faculty Lunch Meeting: Review of Thesis Proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm – 2:00pm</td>
<td>Grant-writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm – 2:30pm</td>
<td>Student-Facilitated Workshops:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Demystifying the Progress Review” - LisaMary Wichowski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“For Text to Be Like Skin: Finding the Body in Language” - Jennye Patterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm – 2:30pm</td>
<td>New Student Orientation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45pm – 4:15pm</td>
<td>Work Groups (students meet with faculty according to their phase of studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30pm – 6:00pm</td>
<td>Faculty-Facilitated Workshops:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In other words, a lot happens in each of the eight days we spend together in Vermont.

The amount of knowledge, “knowing,” pulsing through that campus was mind blowing to me. My brain actually hurt at one point. I felt saturated and could not process another byte of information … but it was invigorating! ~ L. Rogers, Fall, 2015/ TLA

The Ridiculous

Aside from the Study Plan, there is one other pressing objective for the core week of the residency: to come up with something to do (either solo or in a group) at Cabaret, which takes place on the last night of the residency in the College’s Haybarn Theatre. It’s an “anything goes” evening of per-
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formance: comedy, parody, serious vocalizing, consummate or inept acting, very-bad skits, very-good skits, spoken word poetry, impersonations, dance, instrumental music, and whatever else students, faculty and staff might come up with. Cabaret provides a necessary creative outlet/outburst for the energy, anxiety and excitement of the week. It’s a celebration of students having (almost) completed the task of finalizing their Study Plans. It’s also a venue for community sharing and it’s an excellent way for faculty to simultaneously elevate and humiliate themselves—in other words, an essential pedagogical tool!

Of course, Cabaret isn’t a degree requirement, but by the time students are in their final semester of graduate work, almost every one of them will have gone on stage, some even multiple times. An attempt is made at the residency’s first full community gathering, the Opening Session, to not only recruit a student MC (or two) to run the show, but to present Cabaret with a focus on having fun and sharing something (a talent or skill, or a lack thereof) with the residency community. It’s also made clear to the assembly of new and returning students (with tongue-in-cheek gravitas) that faculty will participate in the show in order to “significantly lower the bar.”

Now, it’s true the faculty isn’t looking to perform a theatrical masterpiece displaying top-shelf skills or to impress the students with a showcase of hidden talents, but we do take our “assignment” seriously. Our mission is to come up with something that’s entertaining (meaning funny), while not being too embarrassing or too complicated to pull off, since time and energy are extremely limited within the residency’s dawn-to-midnight schedule, as are the brain cells necessary
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for remembering lines, blocking, choreography, etc. In other words, we try to be appropriately ridiculous, but with a modicum of style.

Our attempts have included: an abstract karaoke version of Psy’s *Gangam Style*; a badly-executed parody of *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies*; a dream sequence at a therapist’s office where one of us is Frank Sinatra singing *That’s Life* and the rest are backup vocalists; a medley of show tunes with the lyrics replaced to reflect Master’s degree requirements; a take-off on River Dance with a shouted refrain of “Don’t use your arms!” as we careen across (and accidentally off) the stage; and a fraught, melo-dramatic reenactment (in German) of a key scene from Brecht’s *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

Over the years we’ve come up with some real losers, but we’ve also occasionally been almost-brilliant (within the given context). The stellar example of our almost-brilliance: the conception, creation and execution of *Dry Land Synchronized Swimming*.

It’s pointless to try to describe *Dry Land Synchronized Swimming* in accurate detail, since it relies on more than the usual measure of the suspension of disbelief. Suffice it to say, the first time we performed this act (decked out in sprays of fake coral, sequined gauzy tutus, and seashell headbands—all from the nearby Dollar Store), we used Gary Wright’s “Dream Weaver” as our sound track and the second time (we couldn’t resist a *Dry Land* redux) it was Foreigner’s “I Want to Know What Love Is”—each song containing enough hokey, swooping crescendos and punctuated agonized pleadings to facilitate our expressive, upside-down sea nymph moves. Our on-the-floor, legs-in-the-air choreography
appeared above the “water line” of turquoise-blue fabric stretched across the proscenium of the stage, held in place by two of the male faculty in their roles as surprised but delighted fisherman. The audience (students, other faculty, staff) went crazy—alternating between hilarity, astonishment, and a grudging appreciation. It was funny and silly, and very over the top, but it was also pretty good.

We can’t claim with absolute certainty that we’re the “originators” of *Dry Land Synchronized Swimming*, but when we first had the idea and checked online to see what was out there, nothing came up in response. Since our debut “Dream Weaver” performance in 2009 and the subsequent 2012 follow-up featuring “I Want to Know What Love Is,” there have been a proliferation of “imitators” comprising a vast range of competitors, from 8th grade boys in Oklahoma to office workers in the U.K. to camp counselors in Canada to an All Men’s “team” from Aruba.

Lacking the enthusiasm (and more importantly, the right song) for another iteration, we retired our greatest hit and looked for something to match its conceptual ridiculousness. Pushed against the wall, we created another almost-brilliant Cabaret “offering”—a *cinema verité*-style video of us, as a faculty, sitting around the faculty dormitory late at night drinking wine and beer and eating chips and trying to come up with an idea, all the while bemoaning the fact we can’t just do *Dry Land Synchronized Swimming* “one last time.” It’s important to note that this was the night before the Cabaret, the 11th hour, which is when we’ve come up with all our best ideas. It’s this same chronic tardiness that led to the coining of our sacred Cabaret motto: *Don’t over-rehearse!* The video is complete with subtitles both for what is actually
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being spoken and for what might be assumed is being thought. It is very, very funny.

Radical Resonance: Brigadoon

For a moment, I was who I am. ~ Wendy Jason, Fall, 2011, TLA student

One of the comparisons students and faculty make when trying to sum up the abstract, ineffable quality of a Goddard residency experience is “it’s like our own little Brigadoon.” We joke about this intangible “Brigadoon effect”—but it’s an effect I’m beginning to realize is provocatively aligned with Walter Benjamin’s radicalizing notion that “history is the subject of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [Jetztzeit]” (395).

Still, it’s not the Lerner and Lowe musical from the late 1940s we’re talking about when we invoke “Brigadoon”—a musical I’m quite sure most of us have never seen. What we’re referring to, instead, is the lingering cultural reference to a mythical village in Scotland that only appears once every 100 years, exists for a day and then vanishes back into the mist. It’s one of those bits of embedded knowledge you comprehend when you hear it, and yet you’d have difficulty fully articulating what it originally meant and where it comes from. I’ve made the Brigadoon reference on numerous occasions, but thinking about it as a possible analogical explanation of some kind for the “ephemeral resonance” of our residency, I realized I was ignorant about Brigadoon as a “primary source” for that comparison, beyond
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knowing with near-certainty “It’s the musical that song *Almost Like Being in Love* comes from, right?"

So, I watched the 1954 movie starring Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse. What I discovered was, yes, it is the musical that song comes from, and, yes, the basic notion of a whole village, a complete community, disappearing and reappearing every 100 years is accurate. Beyond that, especially in terms of progressive education and Goddard, the film has little to recommend it as any kind of reference point. It’s not just the unsurprising white, heteronormative story line (this was the 1950s after all), it’s also the origin myth itself, for why Brigadoon is Brigadoon, which is revealed by the village vicar to be the result of bad behavior by “evil women.” I might have chalked the whole thing up to wasted time and exploration if not for a short brilliant section near the end where Gene Kelly’s character, Tommy, having painfully chosen not to stay in Brigadoon with Fiona, the village woman he’s fallen madly in love with, returns to his life in New York City, leaving her to vanish back into the Scottish mist.

In the film’s stark visual transition, from the soft beauty of the Highland hills to an aerial night shot of lit-up, angular, noisy Manhattan, we immediately grasp the essence of Tommy’s impending struggle. He’s back in the world as he’s known it, at the high-end business club/bar he frequents, at a table with his beautiful, elegantly dressed fiancé…and he just can’t stay in the moment. His vapid New York City present, the freneticism, the harsh clang of “modern” life is continuously subsumed by the gentle, subconscious sound track of Fiona’s lilting voice and the smell of heather. Suddenly his life, the old way of doing things, his sense of moving forward without much effort or thought, of a kind of
“homogenous and empty time,” has been challenged by a vivid, galvanizing alternative and he wants to go back.

Escape to Goddard, it always feels like an escape…The cafeteria staff buzzes about as I sit near the old cast iron heater that is only warm from the sunlight pouring through the window. I sit alone, quietly thinking about life outside of Goddard and life inside of the Goddard community—life over the next 8 days anyway. A private ritual for one, I sip my inaugural tea and I let everything else in my life fade to the background of my mind. I consciously commit to let go of what I think I know about the week ahead, and the roles I play outside of Goddard, and I commit to being engaged, curious and willing to explore. ~ Rachel Aidan Holmes, Spring, 2015, TLA student

Something shifts for Tommy because of his experience of falling in love in Brigadoon, with Brigadoon, and because of that shift he renounces the seemingly prescribed trajectory of his own history and radically transforms himself and his future. Something similar happens at a Goddard residency, where you’re not just cut off from the world you know for eight days, you’re immersed in a radically different world that allows something radically different to emerge and begin, and where the transformative experience has the passion and power of “falling in love”—with an unrecognized potential, or a thwarted dream, or a long-buried curiosity, or a sense of possibility that’s been muffled beneath the hectic clatter of our social-media saturated lives.

It’s this “vision” of the residency as a volatile setting
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for the construction of a new individual and community history, as well as a potent locus for change, that echoes Benjamin’s idea that we need to re-orient our view and consider activating the history of the here-and-now: a here-and-now in which time is at a momentary standstill, poised, filled with energy and ripe with revolutionary possibility. Time “detached from the continuum of history.” While Benjamin’s essay “On the Concept of History” is focused on a broader, more sweeping panorama, his observation about “revolutionary classes” possessing an awareness, at the moment of their action, “that they are about to make the continuum of history explode”—is also applicable to individual makers of history, to encountered moments of ripe possibility, and to explosions of discovery, invention and creativity.

Paulo Friere’s thinking is marked by a similar insistence on history as consciously constructed. In *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* he writes:

> In truth, it would be incomprehensible if the awareness that I have of my presence in the world were not, simultaneously, a sign of the impossibility of my absence from the construction of that presence. Insofar as I am a conscious presence in the world, I cannot hope to escape my ethical responsibility for my action in the world … It means recognizing that History is time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined—that the future is *problematic* and is not already decided, fatalistically. (26)

Crucial to that recognition, of history as “time filled with possibility and not inexorably determined,” is a recognition of our own cultural conditioning and the need to
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acknowledge that conditioning in order to go beyond it and become actors in our own stories:

… my presence in the world is not so much of someone who is merely adapting to something external, but of someone who is inserted as if belonging essentially to it. It’s the position of one who struggles to become the subject and maker of history and not simply a passive, disconnected object. (55, emphasis mine)

At Goddard we encourage and support becoming the subject and maker of your own history, not in the clichéd often surface sense of reinventing yourself or starting anew—where the list of fervent resolutions and self-made promises is easily side-lined or completely abandoned—but in a way that acknowledges the deep, essential belonging Friere talks about, as well as Benjamin’s elemental demand that we be aware of the transformative potential inherent in the here-and-now. At the residency students build a foundational support system for those new possibilities, which includes not only the community of their peers and the faculty, but also the “institutional” community of the College itself.

I feel privileged to have this space and this community. I wish we could all have a Goddard. ~ Rachel Aidan Holmes, Spring, 2015, TLA student

In Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice, Activism and Performance, Jill Dolan writes about the power of embodied energy and the electricity of communal connection:

Any place where people meet, where live bodies and minds come into contact to think, to read, to analyze
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together, to perform for each other … will be charged
with the mysteries of presence and charisma, with
curiosity and longing, with private passions that
illuminate public debate. (147)
We come together at the residency as a community
wide-open to creating and constructing history, and in that
coming together is the kind of energy that allows a
heightened sense of individual potential to emerge, a potential
difficult to find in the singular, well-known worlds we each
come from. This is the radical resonance, the “mythical
reality” of the residency—which is built upon the rigor of a
transitory community that comes together for a mere eight
days to create possibilities and to set the stage for the
construction of history before vanishing again into the mist.

Each day of residency was an unfolding. A divine map, already
written somewhere but that had been lost. This is what I think
of. Common language, each person taking a different path from
their point in space and time to find and make this place. A
building of systems, spider webs overlaid with books in the
library. ~ Brighde Moffat, Fall, 2015, TLA student

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Friere, Paolo. *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic
Acknowledgements

Thanks to my former students for generously sharing their reflections on the residency experience: Crystal Hamlin, Rachel Aidan Holmes, Wendy Jason, Brighde Moffat, Lucas Oster, L. Rogers.
I think the first intensive “retreat/learning” experience or perhaps intentional community experience I ever had was the summer I entered fifth grade. It was a way to leave city life. I was blessed that my parents could send me to a summer camp, Ramah, that continued for the next six summers on Lake Como, an oversized pond in Pennsylvania, where there was an ethic of maternal care, where a value was put on thinking, social equality and racial justice, where conversations about how Jews and Palestinians could coexist, were part of our daily classes.

It was a place where the practice of the Jewish mystical tradition was embedded in everyday activity from lake swimming to canoeing down the Delaware, to harvesting blueberries to songs/prayers of gratitude before/after meals, morning prayer on the pond shores, to dancing Arabic and Israeli dances on Friday night, washing one another’s hands before meals, playing ‘Capture the Flag’ on the fire-fly field in front of the Hadar Ochel, in lightning storms at dusk, creating polyrhythmic sounds and harmonies in the music shed and Torah study. It was there that I had my first kiss

\[14\] This concept derives from the scholarship of feminist philosophers including but not limited to Sarah Ruddick, Nel Noddings, Sandra Lee Bartky, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde, Melanie Kaye Kantrowitz, Virginia Held, Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker.
and romance with a boy from Camden, NJ who told me he never saw a Jewish girl dance like me. That was code for “you dance like a Black girl, and ignited a mix of pride, confusion and anger. It was another form of "You don't act Jewish,” a regular mantra from my New York city public school friends.

Awareness of the complexity of my multiple identities emerged that summer. I was a native New Yorker, working-class, Jewish girl-child emerging first-generation college-educated kid with white skin privilege from a public school where multiracial coalition building was part of our school curriculum in 1979 and the question ‘Who am I?’ was alive. I loved the community village experience at camp and that a piece of my cultural and spiritual life was a known...that I had sisters and brothers in some ways ...that we ate together every meal, rotated jobs to prepare our meals, played, learned, discussed ideas, disagreed and created together in dance, music, and making art. As in any community, there were moments of doubt, discomfort and loneliness along with moments of deep connection, in which I felt I was seen, valued, and that I belonged.

Fast forward ten years. I’m a philosophy major and student of Tae Kwon Do longing to continue exploring my questions about love, connection, beauty, sex, body, intellect, truth, knowing, trust, faith and relationship. SUNY Binghamton provided some of that. However, it was in intensive learning environments that I thrived. Living on moshav in Israel/Palestine, learning at dance residencies, aikido seminars, body-centered trainings in Rubenfeld Synergy, Psychodrama, Playback Theatre, Feldenkrais and Contact Improvisation, all provided this experience of being connected and alive, of coming to know myself more deeply.
I used to call my intensive retreats places of “insta-intimacy” where we went deep quickly, sharing significant life moments, ideas, visions, fears, joys, concerns, vulnerabilities and a willingness to risk honest connection, let myself love and be loved. Interning at Omega Institute, the intensive residency format of my doctoral program at Union Institute and the MFA-IA residencies at Goddard College, singing intensives with Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock, teacher training at Kripalu and the Providence Zen Center, long days in community, sharing a roommate or more in a dormitory, eating three meals daily together, was deeply satisfying. It was a way of living in relationship in ways that most of us, or at least I, do not necessarily experience in day-to-day living in single or partnered life, with roommates, lovers or in the nuclear family paradigm.

“Village life”—I’m still figuring out what that means. For now, it is some kind of intentional, relatively contained, small, multigenerational, culturally, intellectually, spiritually, socially diverse community, where people have the opportunity to come to know themselves in relationship with others in significant ways, share meaning, feel seen, valued and have a sense of belonging that is life affirming, life-giving.

Ideal? Sure. Possible? Yes, as an always evolving process that is tended to like any growing thing.

The Goddard residency can potentially hold and has held this space and intention, offering this village paradigm of living and learning in engaged ways and valuing relationship in which we can potentially feel seen and valued, with our similarities and differences. Woven into the fabric of the GGI intensive low-residency format and pedagogy is that ethic of maternal care that values thinking, scholarship, activism,
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personal story, our body’s sensations and feelings as a way of knowing while holding the complex narratives of our multiple identities.

It is worth noting that the majority of faculty and advisees in the Goddard Graduate Institute is female. I raise this as something to be curious about. A value is placed on relationship, connection, personal story, risking being seen and heard, allowing for pause and receptivity and the complexity of our identities—qualities and practices that have been traditionally regarded as ‘female’. (This is not to suggest that all women are maternal, or that men or those who identify as transgender or non-gender-conforming do not exhibit these qualities or move through the world with this lens.) This ethic of care informs the way in which we construct knowledge, make meaning, engage with each other through intellectual, artistic and spiritual activism, discourse and reflective scholarship. We may or may not share a similar epistemology or theology. Prejudices and biases arise and so does the opportunity for widened thinking and enlarging our scholarly territory. There is an invitation to explore, inquire, express, notice what shows up, sit in liminal places, places of discomfort where we walk along the edge of what we do not yet know. When we leave, we are often different than we were before.

I don’t want to idealize the residency experience. There are times when one can feel alone, marginalized and alienated. But as a learning community, we as advisors and advisees are committed to making space for what has not yet been spoken. This is an evolving process where community meetings as well as one-on-one time with each other can offer places for truths to be said and heard. There is a lot of
conversation on university campuses across the nation now about safe space and brave space. I’m not sure we can ever guarantee that everyone will feel safe. But many of the students, staff and faculty are working on heightening awareness around issues of power, marginality, and inclusivity.

The support of others, from advising groups, workshops, multiple academic and emotional support services, to the daily food prepared with intention and love, all rooted in this ethics of creation, creates a space where we can be held and nourished.

This experience can potentially sweep old epistemologies out from under our feet, knocking us over, leaving us face down. It is a high risk experience. It requires stepping into unknown landscape that can be deeply challenging even with the articulated guidelines of each program. There is no desk, podium, pre-designed curriculum, or course of study in which to insert oneself. The person who comes down the road to campus is willing to not know, to be vulnerable, to honor their experience while exploring the larger social and ecological context of their lives including institutionalized sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of systemic and internalized oppressions. This place of inquiry, while not always comfortable, can inspire a reclaiming of our body’s knowing, coming to value our experience as knowledge.

An open reading evening for students, staff and faculty is happening at 7 p.m. There is a buzz in the dining room. Are you reading something this evening? Yes. No I have never done this. But I’d love to! I’ll give it a go. If not here, where? We gather, twenty or thirty of us in the Manor Oak Room, some with laptops, some with printed paper,
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some with handwritten journals and some, like myself, with ink on a napkin. We gather to read, to listen, to be present. For some it is a first time; others are seasoned readers, performers of sorts. Some are coaxed by friends while some faculty are encouraged by students. C’mon and read. I don’t have anything written. Well then write. You have fifteen minutes. I write. A moment of balancing on that edge of what we don’t yet know.

That’s what happens in live-time ritual. You have a new intention, you breathe it, embody it and offer it up. Something shifts in these moments of stepping beyond our comfort zone in an environment of being witnessed and valued. Whether it’s a conversation over lunch, performing in the cabaret, a deeply needed and uncomfortable conversation about racism and cultural appropriation, hearing one’s voice sing or speak for the first time, perhaps in years, tasting the flavors of berries and herbs in a Chinese medicine workshop or really seeing a bird for the first time on an early morning walk, each learning experience engages body as meaning-maker and trusted guide. We are not the same again after these moments.

The open reading could be seen as a microcosm of the residency. You try something you’ve never done and reveal who you are to a circle of colleagues who are emerging scholars, activists, artists, seekers, healers, advocates and change-makers. It is not that there is no critique at a GGI residency. It is more that there is space and room to explore, to lab ideas, thoughts, visions and inspired action...to not know. There are other lenses and voices that can offer insight, perspective and good questions. Together they serve to cultivate a learning environment that is fertile ground for
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growing and deepening into ourselves, our cultures, communities, questions, for enlarging the territory of what it means to be alive in this time in life- giving connection with one another.
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A Kitchen Table Discussion on Transformative Language Arts with Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Deb Hensley, Minna Dubin, Yvette Angelique Hyater-Adams, Kao Kue, Joanna Tebbs Young, and Angie River

What is Transformative Language Arts (TLA), and how does exploring it at Goddard through a progressive education pedagogy speak to our studies and lives? From many edges of America, we gathered around a kitchen table, which took the form of a google doc we could visit, read, and add our new insights to over five months. The “we” included:

- Deb Hensley, a singer-songwriter and educator from Freedom, Maine;
- Minna Dubin, a writer, public artist, and creative writing workshop facilitator for youth in San Francisco;
- Yvette Angelique Hyater-Adams, a business and personal coach pioneering Transformative Narratives in Atlantic Beach, Florida;
- Kao Kue, a spoken word artist, community-maker and writer in Philadelphia
- Joanna Tebbs Young a writer, facilitator, and columnist in Rutland, Vermont
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- Angie River, a feminist burlesque performer and writer in Vancouver, Washington; and
- Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, a poet, writer, teacher, and founder of TLA from Lawrence, Kansas.

Through our words, we found ways to further articulate what TLA is and could be to us, and how Goddard’s MA program in TLA has helped all of us give greater voice to the potential of language and listening to heal, change, create, and liberate.

What Is Transformative Language Arts?

Joanna: TLA for me is finding words and metaphors to express the sometimes inexpressible. It is using the pen or computer to peel away layers of conscious thought to access the layers of unconscious feeling, to get to the core of it all, to a place that resonates on a deep level, both personally and universally.

Angie: When I tell people about TLA, I often get a, “Huh?! What’s that?” I tell them that TLA is exactly what it sounds like—using the field of language arts in any form, be that writing or performance or music, to make change, either individually, in a community, or across society. For me, TLA always includes truth-telling, using poetry or performance or whatever other genre you choose to tell your story and your history. My definition is in continuous flux as I learn about new ways that people tell their truths, and about the various ways we can create change in ourselves and the world.

Deb: After I became the coordinator of the TLA Network a
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ﻯew years ago, I did a whole lot of thinking about this question. What art, or language art, I would wonder to myself in my kitchen on a quiet winter morning, is not transformative? If it’s not transformative, is it, in fact, art? The thing about TLA, I realized as the year went by, is that it is so very intentional about the transformative part. Transformation is moved to the foreground of the artistic effort. All valuable language art sings and flies. But after connecting and interacting more closely with some truly amazing TLA practitioners, I came to recognize how TLA helps the spoken, written and sung word artist sing and fly in a whole different way, glide longer distances, and do so with less ego. When the transformative component is nudged to the foreground, the artist grows extra long wings. Activism, narrative medicine, and a love and respect for community light up the artistic process from within. That’s how I’ve come to define TLA and it’s not a wholly different definition than when I started my own TLA path, but it is a deeper one.

*Minna:* Transformative Language Arts for me is about writing done in a purposeful way to bring about healing or change. I agree with what Deb said about how the TLA practitioner can make a difference. I also think TLA brings in greater contexts of social and cultural realities to the writing. It’s not just writing for beautiful writing’s sake (though that is worthwhile on its own). I think when writing is done with the intention of TLA, a great big hole is left open so the change or healing can work its way in.

*Yvette:* My definition of TLA more closely aligns with Minna. I think I was in the second cohort and realized that the class
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before mine and our group really got into “defining” TLA. What drew me to TLA was an advertisement stating “written and spoken word for personal and social transformation.” Linguaging TLA in this way felt powerful—using writing and shaping/using one’s voice to change self and the world. I do agree that singing and musical words (lyrics) are transformative—this is how I started my own writing as a musician and composer. I teach creative and expressive writing for women, conduct transformative narrative story circles as a way to have people share experiences and to collect narrative data. We read poems and essays, write through experiential exercises, reflection, and deepen writing through re-writes. We aim for having the story tell its rawest truth so it can change our internalized feelings, increase personal awareness, and motivate personal action. Because most of my clients are executives and business leaders, I’m already stretching their linear mindsets with poetry and essays, then asking them to create their own transformative story through experiential exercises. When they “trust the process,” it’s truly transformative.

Minna: After doing this work for 15 years, TLA has broadened from focusing on race to a more general identity focus. This change occurred for two reasons. One is that I have grown since I began my TLA practice at Goddard ten years ago. Race is still an important issue for me, but other identities have come to the foreground in my life (recently, my new “mom” identity). The second reason is the youth I work with. While facilitating them to write their stories, I’ve witnessed their personal transformations, and it isn’t always about race. It’s about unsupportive baby daddies, overbearing
mothers, street violence, the loss of a loved one. Though race may play a role in some of these, practicing TLA in my workshops showed me that I need to let the group participants guide the writing topics somewhat. I often come in to the first of a workshop series with tons of plans, only to realize after a session or two, that I must recalibrate to make sure I’m meeting these youth where they are. Like Deb said, good TLA work is about the practitioner releasing her or his ego, so s/he can truly be receptive to the experiences and needs in the room. I also find that I can bring that TLA permission to open up and take risks to all kinds of writing workshops.

The sharing component has stayed with me, and I am still running workshops that end in some sort of public performance of the work: a reading, a theater show, a public art project. I can’t seem to get away from the key components of using writing for personal change, putting that writing into the world, and opening up the possibility for community dialogue and social change.

Kao: Each time I think about and investigate the meaning of transformative language arts, I gain a different perspective of it. Honestly, I had no idea what transformative language arts meant when I began my schooling at Goddard. I thought that TLA was a very modern and edgy idea, and I liked that the program would allow me to be an artist and work in the community. At the time, I largely practiced poetry and storytelling in the written form, and I still wasn’t confident enough to claim the name of the artist yet. I began to view language arts differently when I delved more into my Hmong heritage and folk arts. I studied and listened to elders who
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exclusively practiced the older, oral traditions of poetry and storytelling. Through my apprenticeship, I began to see language as a primordial spirit that I embodied. I also realized that the embodiment of the oral arts was a natural and daily phenomenon for me. For example, I remembered falling asleep to the stories that my grandparents sang to me during the many, hazy summer nights of my childhood. These stories were passed down from generation to generation, and they were old. The stories were also comprised of a language that cannot be taught and learned in the written form. The flower cloth language I learned from my grandparents consisted of poetry, songs, breath, and pauses of silence.

Caryn: I love what you say, Kao, about language being made also of silence and breath, the space between the words, and how learning about TLA also means embracing other forms of creative language than the written forms. I think this also speaks to what Yvette was describing as letting the story tell its rawest truth. In the TLA degree criteria, we talk about asking the people we're working with to define the defining terms, to say what their work means and to name it in concert with their own definitions of healing, liberation, change, discovery, spirit. I think the same is true for the stories, writing, songs and other forms of TLA we do: we lean into what the work itself wants to be and let it name itself, trusting in the mystery of artmaking to show us new ways to know and be. This process resonates with something pushing many of us toward TLA in the first place, some way of engaging with the interior landscape as well as the exterior world through making things from words.
When TLA Came Knocking At My Door

Minna: I was called to TLA before I’d ever heard of it the first time I started writing memoir stories involving race when I was a senior in high school. When I had classes in college on memoir and race, I began to realize that not only did the writing help me to understand myself and the people I surrounded myself with better, but the in-class group sharing and critique became just as essential to the process. I loved how it turned the personal transformation that was happening into social transformation, as we bore witness to each other’s stories, and challenged each other too. I knew I wanted to run those kinds of workshops with high school kids, but I didn’t know how to get a master’s degree in such a thing. The idea of a “teaching artist” was even less established 10 years ago.

Joanna: I began writing a diary at 12 which helped me through a cross-Atlantic move and the transition into adulthood in a new country. But I really began writing as a wellness practice (although I had no idea that’s what I was doing at the time) when I went through Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* and started writing Morning Pages. Instead of becoming the writer I so aspired to be, I journaled almost daily for ten years (now I realize I was doing exactly what I needed to become that Writer). My definition of TLA has changed only to the extent that I now understand how many genres beyond “straight writing” TLA encompasses: poetry and poetry slams, songwriting and singing, spoken word performance, theatre, etc. For example, it would never have crossed my mind that hip-hop could be a healing tool before I learned...
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about TLA.

Kao: TLA has always been a calling for me too and it has been a strong part of me. As a youth, I sang in church youth groups, edited and wrote youth newsletters, coordinated youth talent shows and presentations, and organized against unfair treatment in the Asian American community. I remember being a very passionate youth, who used the arts to rally for youth empowerment and community building although it was not until I entered Goddard that I could name the work I had been doing as Transformative Language Arts. Goddard taught me that regardless of the roles I play in society, I am still exercising my transformative language arts.

Angie: I have been writing since I was quite young, starting a diary at age eight, and filling my first notebook with poetry and creative writing (including such gems as “The ToeJam Song”) in fourth grade. Once I hit high school I was using writing to process my teen angst, and in college to figure out who I was becoming. When I began teaching I used writing to help kids in juvies process the trauma in their lives and express themselves to adults who often wouldn’t listen when they spoke, but did listen when they wrote. However, it wasn’t until I started looking into Goddard that I even heard about TLA. I was speaking with a faculty for the MFA program (which I was considering applying to), and in describing to her what I wanted to do for my studies, she said that maybe the TLA program would be a better fit. I did some research, and realized I’d been a TLA practitioner for years, just not knowing it!
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Deb: TLA called to me when I began singing and writing songs again after a long dry spell. I intuitively felt the deeply transformative power of words and music, especially when put together, and this deepened as I started singing, teaching and performing with others improvisationally in community.

Caryn: When I was growing up, I painted and drew like crazy in between hours pounding on a piano, but when I was 14 and my parents were in the middle of a divorce that traumatized our extended family, I suddenly needed words, not just images and sound. I sat on the stoop of my dad's girlfriend's “garden-style” apartment building and started writing. I had no idea at the time that it would be a career path as well as my calling, passion, and practice. This was coupled with two other awakenings: spirituality through my connection with the living earth, and enhanced by my temple youth group, where we wrote, told stories, shared our deepest fears, cried together, and created public programs as well as private rituals.

The other awakening was to injustice in our community and the country. My mother and all the other mothers in our suburban New Jersey housing development took us kids to rallies against the Vietnam War in New York City and later rooted for Gloria Steinem and the emerging feminist movement. In high school we struggled with issues of race and staged a walk-out over labor practices diminishing our teachers. Maybe I was hard-wired from birth to value spirit, art, earth, and justice, but the ways in which I grew up watered and tended those seeds until they grew into wild and overlapping gardens, woodlands, and even prairies—all having something to do with TLA although I didn’t have the
words for the connections at the time.

*Yvette:* I also didn’t know that what I was “doing” or longing to do was TLA. At six years old I self-taught myself how to play the organ and read music. I later played the recorder and then guitar, where I grew exponentially as a competent musician and teaching artist. I played jazz, classical, top 40, R&B. I studied opera for five years. I composed music and lyrics. My music was my savior. It gave me a language when I had no words. Being a middle-class African-American woman in the progressive culture of the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, what was expected of me was to get a college degree in business or computers (which were new at the time), grab a good-paying professional job to support myself, and appreciate the doors being opened by other women and African-Americans via Affirmative Action. They took a lot of abuse so my generation needed to show up and prove worthy. Being an “artist” dared not be an agenda.

*Caryn:* I think it takes continual cultivation of our innate courage to be an artist in this world at this time. I also hear you, Yvette, about how much was expected of you by the generations beforehand and for the generations to come. With the Holocaust having taken so many of my grandparents’ generation, I also felt I was to make something of my life. My working-class parents raised middle-class kids, and we were expected to become professionals, make money, and pass it on. Then again, girls in my generation were still largely expected to aim toward just a few careers, like a board game at the time that gave us only the options to be nurses, stewardesses, ballet dancers, teachers, and mothers. Art was
considered a hobby, not a path to livelihood, although I knew from an early age that making things could make me feel better, think more clearly, feel a little stronger, and just be so much more alive.

Joanna: After I became a stay-at-home mom for the first time, I was looking for something creative to do outside the home. I had read Marlene Schiwy's *A Voice of Her Own*, recognizing in the voices of other diarists my own experience of how writing had helped me. One day it occurred to me that I wanted to help other women learn the benefits of journaling. I had no idea if journaling workshops were even a “thing” (this was pre-Google) but in the process of designing a workshop I stumbled across the Center for Journal Therapy —there were others like me out there and it was a “thing.” I went on to get the “Journal to the Self” (JTTS) certification and began facilitating workshops. But I felt I needed more “street cred” in this emerging field. Very few people in my small town understood this “woo-woo, new-agey” thing I was doing. I had always planned to continue my education but the right MA hadn't shown up yet.

“I Followed Poetry, and She Led Me to Goddard”

Caryn: When I first started teaching at Goddard in 1996, the same time I started up community writing workshops, I noticed that students in workshops and at Goddard all needed to tell their own stories first. Not so unoincidentally, my dissertation focused on a mouthful of words called “feminist revisionary mythopoesis”—how American women poets in the last 100 years tinkered with, questioned, ripped
apart, or wrote new versions of major myths of our culture. Everywhere I looked, my work was edged with questioning and rewriting the stories we tell ourselves and that our families, communities and culture tell us about who we're to be and how we are to live.

Opportunities tumbled toward me to work with women of color in a housing authority, intergenerational rural Kansans, urban Latinas in Kansas City's immigrant community. Everyone needed to tell their own story in their own native words, whether writing a master's thesis at Goddard or sitting in a church basement in Ottawa, Kansas. I also witnessed the miracles possible in writing and storytelling in community. A workshop I did paired “at-risk” teenage girls in a small Kansas town with well-heeled widows in a retirement community to write together. Within a few weeks, 15-year-old girls were sitting in the laps of 80-year-old women, showing each other poems, everyone crying together at each session about how this was the first time they could tell the the truth and be really heard.

So I worked with colleagues and prospective students in the late 1990s to come up with a program of study that embraced writing, storytelling, drama, spoken word, and other forms of language arts in service of helping people, communities, our culture find greater clarity, meaning, courage greater action. This program would encourage students to use spoken, written and sung words for social change, community-building, health and healing, spiritual practice, ecological restoration, and basically to cultivate sanity. One of the biggest challenges was what to call this, and after 18 months of trying to find a name without success, I held a contest to name it. Two faculty members won:
Danielle Boutet came up with “Transformative Practices,” and Eduardo Aquino said to call it “Language Arts,” and their names added up to Transformative Language Arts. I know it's a lot of syllables, and also hard to define, but what most of us truly do and who we are can’t be caught in a sound byte.

Like any true calling, TLA coalesced so much of what my life was building toward without me necessarily knowing it. So that's how I found TLA at Goddard. What about you?

Yvette: Along my professional career in retail, government, and banking, I took a core competency that lives in my DNA, and it highlighted these words: Expressive, Creativity, Artistry. These terms may have some crossover meanings, but I do see them as separate skills as I’ve traveled along my career and creative life. Expressive as in telling my truth in non-conventional or expected ways. Creative as in starting with a blank page and accessing my imagination to come up with something that wasn’t there before. Artistry as in style, color, shapes—you name it. All of it added up to a lyrical way to share important stories. My storytelling came as music, lyrics, poetry, essays, photography, mixed-media arts, quilting, knitting, crafting, jewelry-making, teddy-bear and doll-making, sewing, book arts. The list grows as I grow, and I experiment with unexpected combinations.

As my creative and artistic life emerged, I built a career in adult education in academia and in the business world in training and employee development. Human Resources and Organizational Development followed, and work in change management topped off my corporate career. I was best known for the work I did in diversity, leadership
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development, and process improvement. I was all about cultural change and social justice.

While running my consulting business, at 40 years old, I got out of a PhD program at the Union Institute, and was amazed to find Goddard’s TLA program featured in Poet and Writers. “Social and Personal Transformation through the Written and Spoken Word” spoke to my soul. I could see how to blend my writing and photography with my organizational development and change-management knowledge. Infusing art into that knowledge became the path I created for my studies.

Joanna: Another Journal to the Self Trainer asked if I had heard of Goddard's TLA program. When I looked it up, I jumped up and down. It was exactly what I was looking for: channels for my own creative writing and for the facilitating piece. What I did, what I had been doing, actually had a name: Transformative Language Arts! It was incredibly validating, not to mention, exciting. The craziest part of this is that the woman who recommended the program to me didn't know I lived in Vermont, just a 90-minute drive from Goddard.

Minna: I wanted to run creative writing workshops with teens about identity. That’s a made-up career. I knew I needed a master’s degree, but there is no master's for that. Not a teacher credential program—I did not want to be a full-time school teacher—not an education degree, not an English degree, not an MFA, not a Cultural Studies degree. I needed a sort of mix of all of these. When I found TLA at Goddard, I could not believe it. It was a perfect fit. The low-residency
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aspect helped as I didn’t want to move.

Angie: At the time I was looking into graduate programs, I was considering Goddard’s Port Townsend, Washington's MFA because I lived about 30 minutes from that campus. I was working full-time, and I was a single mom to two very active children, so Goddard’s low-residency model appealed to me. I really wanted to go back to school and do something that I knew I would love. When the MFA advisor told me about the MA in TLA and I did some more research about it, I knew it was the perfect fit for me.

Kao: I followed Poetry, and she led me to Goddard. I was disillusioned from my work in the nonprofit world. Although I believe that organizing is very crucial and important, I had been burnt out by the politics of organizing. I left the nonprofit world to search for a path to continue my community work and to heal from the past. Then, I began to write poetry and stories fervently and started researching master’s degree programs. I had been thinking about creative writing programs, when I came across TLA at Goddard. I wrote many stories and poems for my application to Goddard. I figured if I didn’t get accepted to the program, the process of writing down my pain was already transformative. I was happy to be accepted and to delve more deeply in poetry and storytelling as tools for empowerment at Goddard.
“O Glory. Such a Ride”: The Wild Road Trip of Creating Your Own Curriculum

Caryn: Developing TLA is a wild road with a lot of dead ends, then getting speeding tickets or flat tires. We launched in 2000 with five students—Yvette started soon after—and although there were many bumps along the way, it's uncanny how every time I started thinking I was crazy to be growing this program, the phone would ring or an email would land from someone telling me TLA was what their life was also about.

For our students and alumni, the road trip takes its own turns. I think that simply creating your own curriculum is both thrilling and terrifying in this culture because we're told what we need to learn and how we're going to learn it without much input. I mean, I admire math, and one of my closest friends is a mathematician, but do I use algebra in my daily life? Yet I had to take classes in it in high school and college instead of learning more about embodiment and healing writing, something I was starving for as a teenager and young woman.

Traditional academic writing, as I learned painfully when earning my PhD, is full of authorities arguing against or holding up other authorities instead of helping us find our own authority. It's exactly what Angie says about how faculty believed her when she said she knew something was true because of her lived and also embodied experience. At the same time, we need to know more the context of whatever we study, create, organize or do to better understand the ecosystem of our life's work. So it's a continual balance and interplay between what we know from our bodies,
experiences, books and other media, the living earth, and the
dying corners of our culture.

Deb: O glory. Such a ride. Honestly, I totally came in the back
door at Goddard. My employer at the time paid for me to
attend. We both thought the residency program would be
good fit, and the TLA focus resonated with me. After the
first semester, however, I shifted my work focus, and had to
make the decision about whether or not to finish at Goddard
and pay for it myself. By the second semester I was hooked. I
stayed and completed the program. I am very grateful I did.

I went from focusing on nature education for children
to both “The Bird Song Project” and a website and work-
shops based on “When did we stop singing?” to help people
return to their voices. The Bird Song Project is the cul-
mination of my modest experiment in responding to birdsong
as a unique portal to more fully inhabiting my singing voice. I
gave deep attention to sound and song in the natural world as
a way to promote access to our ancestral, spontaneous, innate
and original singing voice, imbued with deeper
understandings of place and identity. The way it evolved?
Through my grad work at Goddard, what I was already doing
finally had a name. I embraced TLA because it promised to
vault me forward artistically and with purpose. My project
afforded me the opportunity to have a truly primary expe-
rience with nothing between me and the art I was after.

Minna: I have no idea where I started out except that I knew
the end-game—to be equipped to teach creative writing
workshops with teens about identity. I think each of my
advisors and their interests and specialties took me in really
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different directions, but ended up helping me have a really well-balanced education.

My first semester, I had Ellie Epp as my faculty mentor, and I did a lot of work on embodiment, sex, and sexuality. I also did a ton of drawing of my body, which I’d had no intention of doing when I started Goddard, but I use a lot of visual art now in my workshops and own work. Then I did this huge research project on my family history and the history of the region they came from, including lots of phone calls with my 90-year-old grandmother, who died a few years later. Looking back, body and sexuality (and the drawing, owning, accepting, seeing of my body) and my cultural family history have had a huge impact on my identity and my writing. I studied education and pedagogy with Jim Sparrell. I did the memoir writing that would be the MFA-ish part of my thesis with Caryn for the whole last year, which made sense. Working with different advisors and allowing them to open me up to different avenues within my work was one of the “trust the process” experiences I had at Goddard.

Kao: My initial study plans at Goddard were very different from my thesis and final presentation. Initially, there were fragmented images of goddesses in dreams and inspirational life events that I tried to piece together. Once I formulated clearer images of the stories and poetry, I decided to create something revolving around women and our ideals about beauty. However, later when I had connected my writings, I discovered that the center of the stories fell apart. I knew the piece was missing something and was not fully realized, but I didn’t know what to do. I lived miserably through days of writer’s block until I retraced my steps. When I reflected on
my writings, I finally accepted that the stories were missing my story (of course my advisors challenged me to add more of myself, but I didn't listen).

This was a very vulnerable time during my studies at Goddard and I was doubtful about accomplishing my study plan. Fortunately, I had supportive advisors and peers who reminded me to remain true to myself. I learned to be more flexible, and followed where the poems and stories wanted to go.

I was always intrigued by my grandparents’ storytelling powers so I began to experiment more with this oral tradition. Later, I created a performance piece that included not only spoken word, but singing for my final presentation at Goddard. I appreciate how the oral traditions do not categorize and compartmentalize expression, but the oral arts use the entire being to create a story. Embracing my cultural traditions has transformed me into a stronger artist and person, and I realize that my art form is intuitive and visceral. Language and expression for me has become something very spiritual, transient, and fluid. I believe that everyone has a language they belong to, and when these beings begin to interact with each other to create a space to mutually and respectfully share, transformation occurs.

Joanna: When I decided without a doubt I'd would apply to Goddard, I wasn't sure specifically what I'd study, but after a run-in with an evangelical Christian who informed me that journaling channels the devil, it hit me hard that I needed to face my own fundamentalist Christian upbringing, which I thought I had put far behind me. I decided I wanted to study how “The Word” of Christianity can hurt people, and how
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writing can help heal people from those ingrained messages. I started my studies angry and determined to show, as Karen Armstrong in her book, *Spiral Staircase* wrote, that religion was “bonkers.” After some early reading and some gentle prodding from my advisor, I started to consider looking at things in a more positive light to see if I might use writing as a way to open myself—and others—to a more life-affirming spirituality. My research, and ultimately my thesis project, which included a memoir, looked at how expressive writing can help us access our innate feminine wisdom and connect to a body-earth-focused spirituality. I was no longer angry.

*Angie:* I entered Goddard’s MA program thinking I was going to be studying poetry, specifically spoken word poetry, and the ways that this genre can make the arts accessible to a wider range of people. However, I ended up with a thesis that delved into the ways we can use performance to tell the stories of our bodies, breaking shame and silence, and building community. My thesis project culminated with a full-length multi-genre (poetry, video, performance art, and burlesque) show called “Under Our Skin,” which gave space for multiple women to tell their stories and their truths. One of the catch phrases at Goddard is “trust the process,” and honestly, this is how I got from where I started to where I ended. I allowed myself to trust my inner intuition and follow where it led. I allowed myself to follow strange paths that I didn’t quite understand, such as a tangent on mental health and adverse childhood experiences, which then led to me looking at shame, an integral part of my research and thesis. I also listened to my advisors, and when they kept asking me to tell them about my experience with burlesque, I finally did,
realizing that actually burlesque is a form of transformative language arts in which one tells their story via dance, albeit generally without very many clothes on.

_Yvette:_ As usual, my roadmap was very ambitious. Because I had so many creative interests (music, poetry, photography, mixed media arts) I wanted to include everything. But of course, I had to scrunch it all down. I was working to learn some psychology theories and in the most boring books ever while discovering the lack of women’s psychology—with the exception of Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan. I wanted to understand theories of identity development for Black women, then I discovered the influence of class experience and identity development. I learned quite a bit from Patricia Hill Collins, Beverly Daniel Tatum, and Audre Lorde. Later I discovered the poet Lucille Clifton, who seemed to best convey the experience of Black women’s emotions. The peers I wanted to help were Black women from middle-class to affluent—they were hiding out in big ways, hiding their brokenness in alcohol, drugs, and other self-destructive behaviors because, after all, they had made it, so they had no right to be hurting. It was eye-opening how large this population of women was, and since this time, there has been more pop psychology written about this phenomenon, but not enough research or even awareness that the struggle exists.

Long story short: I studied poetry therapy, journal therapy, and narrative therapy as writing/storytelling emotional wellness modalities, examining creative writing models that extract story from suffering and convert transformative experiences into well-crafted writing, creative arts therapy in the Black experience, as well as second- and
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third-wave psychotherapy (mostly Rogers and positive psychology). My thesis and creative process paper, *Breaking Silences, Healing Lives: Creative and Expressive Writing for Middle Class African American Women*, came from realizing in my 40s that the essential part of my emotional well-being came through writing poetry, journaling, and letter-writing. Well, the confluence of these bodies of work emerged into what I now use as a framework for my transformative narratives model. Goddard gave me a platform to meander along a path to unearth the threads that had a name—creative and expressive writing—and to understand the nuances and therapeutic theories that made it work for me and other women who were like me.

What I did get from Goddard’s structure was community and flexibility—I was CEO of a consulting firm so my at-home study/research/writing time could be scheduled easily. I wrote poetry and took photographs. I felt seen, heard and made whole through the experience. I walked away personally transformed unlike any other college experience I’ve ever had. Because of the focus on writing—the research, annotations, deep personal writing—I saw a writing voice emerge. The research and writing in my thesis are still something I refer to today. I truly embodied the research and feel grounded in the areas of writing for emotional wellness and creative expression. I have a long history as a self-directed learner and can create structures for myself to do this well. Goddard gave me a “place” to go back and forth with, and build small and valuable intimate relationships for learning, to be vulnerable, and to stretch.

*Caryn:* In many ways, I see Goddard's set-up as TLA in action
and methodology. Residencies and packets, self-directed learning, encouragement to think critically and write expansively in many forms to find truth, all work to create a kind of container where we can do progressive education—discovering what we need to learn and how we need to teach it to ourselves. That grappling often happens in writing, talking, storytelling, art-making, both with others at the residencies and solo back home. Just in putting together a packet, students are drawing on the art of language to make meanings, seek understandings, land on connections, expand what they know, draw from what they feel in their bodies or glimpse in their dreams or have already lived in their experience, find questions, and to paraphrase Rainer Maria Rilke, live their way into the answers. I guess there's an assumption I operate on that most of our students are far more intelligent, compassionate, capable and courageous than they might know, and that by reading and researching, you can bring others' words into your being, and you can use writing as a way of knowing, a way of unearthing your innate knowledge. Some of this is the journey from what the writers of the great book *Women's Ways of Knowing* called “received knowledge,” what we're taught to know, to “constructed knowledge,” what we find out is true.

**Joanna:** Goddard's process was amazing and life-changing. I was challenged intellectually, emotionally, academically, and in terms of personal discipline and time-management. Some of my world-views were turned on their head, biases and blinders I didn't know I had, and new perspectives were presented to me of which the long-reaching effects of my upbringing had caused me to be ignorant. The residencies
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were like soaking in a hot bath of intellectual stimuli and new perspectives, not to mention a welcome “vacation” from real life. The one-on-one with the advisors was invaluable—they came to know you and could advise you on a personal level, gently pushing your boundaries by asking tough questions and listening through the inevitable moments of confusion and existential crisis. This system showed me I could achieve academically more than I ever thought possible but moreover, that I could begin to heal myself, to change the way I live and love and see the world within and without.

Angie: Goddard’s pedagogy and process were perfect for me. The low-residency and packet system worked great for me practically as someone with a full-time job and two children I was raising on my own. However, it also worked great for me as a learner. Goddard was the first educational establishment I’d ever attended where I as the learner was truly allowed to explore, and where my life experiences were seen as truths that I should trust. When I said to faculty that I knew something to be true because of lived experiences, they believed me, and helped me find other resources that could back me up (or that would challenge my assumptions and show me other perspectives). I am an independent learner who loves a challenge, and Goddard provided me with that, pushing me to excel and to follow what I truly was passionate about.

“Transformative Language Arts Is My Life”:
How TLA Lives in Me Now

Kao: I am an artist and a teacher, and I feel these names are
interchangeable. At first, I struggled with this question of right livelihood as an artist because I teach elementary literacy for a living. I didn’t think I was earning a living as an artist until I had several conversations with Ruth Farmer. As a teacher, I am cognizant of the power of storytelling. I use this skill to engage my students in learning every day. I have also used my storytelling during professional development and school-wide events to bring staff, students, and family members closer together in my school community. I embody my art form more and more each day and through my storytelling I can offer a space for my community members to share stories and challenge injustices.

When life becomes chaotic and busy, I don’t think about TLA work at all. I am just working tirelessly; however, poetry has a way of interjecting perception into my life. For example, at the beginning of this year I was already overwhelmed with implementing new literacy units in my classroom and other new responsibilities in the community. I had decided not to coordinate the middle school poetry project at my school again. Then, I had several requests from my students and even my colleagues to keep the project going. When my middle school students are creating poetry, my mind and spirit are at peace. My students and I are reenergized by being our most authentic selves in creating poetry. This example showcases how my artistry resurfaces time and time again to remind me of the power of storytelling and teaching.

Joanna: It’s hard for me to name how TLA lives in me because I am still very much battling with those messages from the past that taught me my body is of no consequence.
In this area, my graduate work is still on-going. But what it has taught me is how to slow down, push through, and allow the feelings to rise to the surface and onto the paper even when they feel uncomfortable. I am also learning to not allow my journaling to become the opposite of a healing tool, that is, a crutch (an addiction?) which could actually prevent me from accessing my feelings. On another level entirely, my TLA facilitation, which has taken so long to amount to a career, has taught me that if you truly believe in your work, you can make it happen. With patience and perseverance you can “do what you love.” It has connected me to community, my own and the TLA community, and I live a life of creativity (not just writing, but art and music as well) and this without a doubt has changed me. I hope it is/has also helped others around me make changes in their lives.

If you were to ask me what my ideal day would be, it would look very similar to my regular work day. I would journal and/or write something creative, such as an essay or blog post. TLA is my life and when I am processing something difficult in my life I turn to the place that I know will help me: writing. The vice-versa part of this is that I learn from my students and clients all the time, and I consider what they have written or said in a workshop in relation to my own life. My personal life has also provided great fodder for writing projects.

I am beyond proud and happy that I am (finally) making a living as a TLA practitioner. I am a freelance writer, primarily as a columnist for two local papers. One of these columns is on writing, so as well as interviewing authors and other word-related people, I am able to write about TLA subjects. The other side of my work is facilitating. Other than
running my own workshops, I've run and will likely continue to offer writing workshops at a hospital, a recovery center, an art center, yoga studios, summer camps, and writing conferences, among others. My focus is on personal development in the areas of well-being, spirituality, and creativity. Going forward, I would like to turn more attention to workshops and writing related to my graduate research, which looks at how the myths of the Mother archetype contribute to the practice of expressive writing in the development of a strong internal authority. I believe that, much as a mother builds up her children, we can write and create to vanquish fear and to foster self-confidence—to empower ourselves and to be heard.

Angie: My TLA work in the world appears in several different ways. In the most obvious way, it appears in my facilitating online classes through the Transformative Language Arts Network. However, it also appears when I take the stage to do performance art or burlesque, and it appears when I produce zines on my experiences with chronic illness. Finally, it appears when I teach my ten-year-old to journal when she’s struggling with anger, or when I hand my nine-year-old a poem I wrote about them and the things I want to support them with in life.

This may sound totally cheesy, but honestly, transformative language arts is my life. By this I mean that I try to embody in my daily life ways to create change in myself, my community, and my world. Because I am a creative person, this comes out creatively. Currently, as I struggle to come to terms with what it means to be fairly newly disabled in this world, TLA gives me an outlet for exploring identity as
well as for sharing my experiences with others.

**Yvette:** My right livelihood is building upon what I already do. When attending Goddard, I was already a consultant, executive coach, trainer, and facilitator. What changed is the “how” I do the work. My designs embody poetry, creative writing, journaling, storytelling, collage as I use coaching models, team-building models, and group-development models. Today, I am Chief Storytelling Officer at Narratives for Change LLC, a project-based business using narrative and engaged storytelling methods. As a writer, facilitator, and coach, I work with women and girls to midwife transformative change through powerful written, visual, and spoken narratives; to strengthen their voices and promote well-being. This work entails drawing out stories where we can find compassion with each other and enter a depth of connection, particularly women networking with women, girls with women, girls with girls. When this happens, women and girls can enter their rightful leadership spaces, embrace their creative minds and demonstrate their artistic prowess to make powerful contributions in the world.

My TLA work also shows up in my personal life. I have a day dedicated to writing—Mondays—and other writing projects are scheduled different days. My personal writing is a spiritual practice. I’ve had this Monday practice since I graduated Goddard in 2003. I’ve never been on a diet or exercise program this long!

**Caryn:** Just the other day, I was witnessing a tiny miracle when Ardys, a friend of mine, belted out “Moon River,” while accompanying herself on a ukulele, for my mother-in-law, who
suffers from severe dementia. My mother-in-law was so happy, she couldn't stop smiling or crying, and for days afterwards, she talks about the singer, who now comes once a week to sing more for her.

A few weeks earlier, I found that one of the few ways I could get beyond simply checking on my mother-in-law or doing minor caregiving tasks to really connect with her was to tell her stories of her life. I began the first story with telling her how she and her twin were born on this beautiful land where she still lives, and she called out, “That was me,” and was happier than I had seen her in months.

In a personal way, through songs and stories, this is how I'm living TLA. When I was a teen, writing in my journal to remember who I was in the middle of trauma and chaos, I was experiencing some of what my mother-in-law lives when she interacts with songs and stories that give her back to herself. If there are a million ways this life can silence us, there are a million and one ways TLA can wake up our voices again, that innate part of us that is both individualized and able to connect to our collective voice. W.S. Merwin has this marvelous poem, “The Gift,” in which he writes that we have to trust what was given to us, and let ourselves be led by it just as birds, trees, skies are led by what's given to them. This line in the middle of the poem speaks to me about my TLA work, which keeps unfolding and being given in its own ways: “I have to hold it up in my hands as my ribs hold up my heart.”
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Embodiment Studies: “Academia as a School of Life” by Lise Weil, Juliana Borrero, Emilee Baum Trucks, Katie Soule, Sonja Swift, Kate Lidfors Miller, and Britta Love

Lise Weil, 2017

I have taught in some version of Goddard’s individualized master’s program for over twenty years. In those years I have seen students make leaps of creativity, understanding—and healing—that I would not have thought possible or even conceivable in an institution of higher learning. Certainly they would not have been possible in the Ivy League universities where I did my graduate (and undergraduate) schooling.

I have seen students dissolve lifelong patterns of self-doubt and self-flagellation; I’ve seen them kick addictions to alcohol, drugs, and abusive relationships. I’ve seen consummate, masterful graduate presentations by students who were confused and inarticulate in their first semesters. I’ve seen brilliant, persuasive research papers by students who had had crippling doubts about themselves as critical thinkers.

And I’ve seen students who entered with intellectual strength and confidence discover creative gifts they never suspected they had—as well as realms of knowing and seeing that had been invisible or inaccessible to them before. I have seen writers rigidly schooled in academic ways of knowing
and self-expression learn to write beautifully from their own experience and from their hearts. I think it’s fair to say that no student emerges from this program without having awakened to the power of their own mind, especially when put in service to their own questions. Or without a greater capacity for appreciation of the natural world and of the other beings they share this world with.

As true as all of this has been for students in the GGI, it has seemed to be even more true for students of embodiment studies, an emerging field that took up residence in this program shortly after filmmaker and philosopher Ellie Epp\textsuperscript{15} joined our faculty in 2002. Since the first students began to align themselves with this field around 2003, I have seen them turn out some of the most remarkable final products to have emerged from this institution: theses marked by creative boldness, intellectual rigor, and wide-ranging interdisciplinarity. At the same time, I have seen them undergo profound and in some cases astonishing personal transformations. My own encounter with embodiment studies was a huge event, on a par with my embrace of feminism and later Buddhist practice.

And, like those two previous engagements, it provided an explanatory framework that helped me make sense of key experiences in my life for the first time. Among the things it helped to explain was why GGI pedagogy produces the powerful changes it does.

“Restructuring” is a word that comes up often in Ellie

\textsuperscript{15}Ellie Epp’s workshops and website have been central to embodiment studies as it’s practiced in the GGI. Ellie retired in 2013, but we have a unique legacy in her website which constitutes a significant body of original scholarly work at the cutting edge of this emerging field.
Epp’s work to refer to the often subtle but nonetheless significant physical changes our bodies undergo in response to the most basic experiences. GGI students, I came to understand, are profoundly restructured in this program, first of all by the residencies, by being on a relatively isolated campus in the woods of northern Vermont with other students whom they get to know intimately during the week. They are restructured by the deep bonds formed in advising groups and of course by one-on-one work with advisors, both at the residency and over the course of the semester. They are restructured by being encouraged to pay attention to the nature of their own minds—and perhaps especially to the dark, hidden places. Finally, they are restructured by virtue of being in a program where “integration” and “reconnection”—two other important words in the embodiment studies lexicon—are recognized as fundamental to a student’s success, and are embedded in our degree criteria of knowing, doing and being.

All of this leads me to contend that embodiment studies is a pre-eminent instance of GGI pedagogy.

At its most basic, embodiment studies is a locus for any inquiry that takes as its starting point the human body understood as the seat of cognition and perception. It draws on theory—e.g. in philosophy, psychology, literature, ecofeminism, anthropology, neuroscience, evolutionary biology—that supports this understanding. Because the human body in embodiment studies is understood to have evolved from and to exist interdependently with earth and cosmos, the field has significant overlap with ecophilosophy and indigenous knowledge systems. Students in embodiment studies are encouraged to honor nonconscious forms of
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awareness and perception that tend not to be recognized as valid ways of knowing in academic institutions. Final products are often structured by dreams, meditations, and other forms of embodied knowing.

What follows are the voices of six students who followed an embodiment studies\textsuperscript{16} trail in the GGI. They will tell you what that path looked like, what products emerged/stand to emerge from it, and how they were changed by it.

Before I hand you over to them, I want to mention one student who is no longer around to speak for herself. When Rhonda Patzia entered our program as a TLA student some twelve years ago, multiple sclerosis had cut short her career as a professional photographer. She was only thirty-four and the disease was progressing. Immersing herself in embodiment studies helped Rhonda find language for and come to terms with the changes her body was going through. In her thesis, which opens with a dream she had her first semester, Rhonda wrote with fearless candor about finding sexual pleasure in a disabled body, about falling, about incontinence. She documented her attempts to stay present to the changes in her body and in her world and to difficult feelings she had in response to these changes. *Mindfully Unraveling: Body Awareness as I Slip Away*, a revised and expanded version of her thesis, was published as a book shortly after Rhonda died in 2014.

Other bodies entered Rhonda’s story when she began taking photos of women on the Goddard campus, both students and faculty—many of them nude, outside, in the

\textsuperscript{16}Having operated as an unofficial area of focus all these years, embodiment studies is now at last moving in the direction of an official concentration.
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snow. The project, which as she said allowed her to “do nature photography again,” arose in response to a dream, and also “out of anger at body privilege, anger that most of the cultural images I see of women feature the same general kind of body. . . . Believing that not seeing is not valuing, I worked passionately to photograph—to see—just a few real women” (119). Some twenty of these remarkable portraits, together with equally remarkable comments from her subjects about the experience of being photographed by Rhonda, make up a chapter at the center of the book called “Bodies in Focus.”

“Let me make myself perfectly clear,” Rhonda writes in the introduction to her book Mindfully Unraveling. “Pain sucks. Lameness sucks. Visual impairment sucks. It sucks that my legs cramp into knots…” Rhonda continues:

In light of this pain, why, then, is awareness of my body (‘body’ understood here as my whole self) important to my well-being at all? In my waking life, is the pain of groundedness, of feeling my diseased body, preferable to my prior dissociated existence? Yes. Simply put, I live more freely and fully when I am aware. By feeling, really feeling, my body in time and space I am more genuinely compassionate and peace-seeking, assertive and intentional, passionate, and visionary….Even though my health is out of control, as I look closely at my complex and fleeting body, I am stronger. With a smile and a shrug I tenderly recognize all experience as my life. (xiv-xvii)

Juliana Borrero, IMA 2005

Ten years have passed since I graduated from
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Goddard. There are places that turn your life around so radically you can barely remember what you used to be like before you went there. It turned my life around to discover the body as knowledge; to discover, to explore my own body as a source of knowledge.

Learning to work from a place of not-knowing. Looking for my urgent, unanswered questions. Not fearing. Opening a place for desire in academia. Trusting an intuition long lost.

Learning to listen to the snow during my first winter. Buzzing like an insect my second summer. Swimming to the other side of the lake for the first time in my life. Recognizing the multiplicity of desire and laughing out loud.

In order to build a web you must jump, like a spider… into the open. When you don’t know what to think: touch yourself. When I am out of words: touch myself. The map is the body.

That knowledge is a form of touching, myself and others. That dreaming is necessary. That writing can be like dreaming. That theory is meant to be continued, not repeated. At Goddard I became an epistemologist: transforming knowledge, enjoying knowledge, embodying knowledge.

With Lise Weil I learned that it is intriguing and powerful and important to be a woman, and to create knowledge as women. That the world I live in is full of translucent webs of women knowing that can be seen only under certain angles of sunlight. That I am one of these women.

That after going deep into the body, after learning to breathe under water, there is another shore….There is
another side to knowledge. That the place where knowing and loving meet is powerful.

With Ellie Epp I understood that not all is language. Before language there are bodies. That bodies are not the outside; the body is not a shell that holds the mind inside. That minds are embodied. That we do not have bodies, we are bodies, and understanding this makes a great great difference. When we understand what it means to be bodies, thinking, feeling, perceiving and making contact are no longer separate things.

That bodies change; they unfold, again and again, limitlessly.

That bodies are never finished. To be a body is to be always incomplete, always in process, and this is the greatest place of possibility.

And language, which was my passion, my lifelong research topic, is a function of the body. I learned with Ellie that “language alters and restructures the bodies that we are, as well as the bodies we come into contact with” (Epp, “Speaking Bodies”). That when work is done from the body, there is something that can be sensed— something like honesty, coherence, power. That translating is precisely following blindly but sensitively this trace of the body in language, an exchange that happens bellybutton to bellybutton (Borrero and Epp, “De ombligo a ombligo”).

That the world we live in does not understand what it means to be a body. The world we live in has stunted our bodies as active places of knowing, feeling, creating and relating. That this dissociation and all of its implications are the great contemporary illness.

That academia inhabits comfortably a place that fears
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and shuts its ears to the information coming from bodies. That bodies have much to do in the rusty system of contemporary academia. That it is revolutionary to create embodied knowledge, and to be a teacher who understands knowledge as the production of questions and experiences that will touch her students' bodies in ways that allow them to re-member and re-structure who they are and what they do with language.

The work I did at Goddard was called *Autobiography of My Tongue*. My thesis was a theoretical-poetical attempt to understand why language seemed dead in the world around me, in academia, in my urge to write creatively— and what was necessary to bring it to life again. The work began to get more and more interesting when I realized that to trace the story of my tied tongue, I needed to trace the story of my body, and what it meant to be a woman, and to write as a woman, to write from the body. These questions tapped open a well that changed my relationship with language and literature forever.

After Goddard I could never teach literature in the same way. Becoming aware of my body modified my understanding of the limits and the power of language. I understood that literature is created by bodies. It transforms and unfolds bodies. After Goddard, literature is a practice of the body, an exploration of what it means to be a body, and what this can mean (Borrero, “*La literatura como practica del cuerpo*”). And teaching literature is teaching embodiment, through language; teaching students to become aware of their own bodies through reading and writing and translating and performance art; teaching students that language creates and expands and reconstructs the bodies that we are. By means of
literature, I set the conditions for the activation of renewed sensitive intelligent compassionate bodies, aware of the challenges the world is placing before them, “more capable of coming into contact with what is real” (Epp, “Land and Mind”).

After Goddard I became a rock in the shoe of academia, insisting time and again on embodiment in a context where it is continually invisibilized, but where, of course, it is most greatly needed.

In one of her workshops, Ellie proposed the need to activate an intelligence grounded in contact with the natural world, but the very opposite of primitive. The task of embodiment, she said, was “making paradise… making oneself capable of being paradise” (Epp, “Land and Mind”). These words still resonate in me like the sweetest of missions, at the same time as they pinpoint one of the most demanding and beautiful characteristics of embodiment studies. That embodiment work can only start with each body, with the bodies that we are. It is not about the discourse, it is always also investigation and work on ourselves. In this way, embodiment is always work that is partially in future tense; we work with what we are, as well as with what we are not but are wanting and needing to become, from the most intimate and personal to a larger connection with the bodies around us and the world we live in.

In my years teaching at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia, in a small mountain city called Tunja, I have built a space where this kind of work is possible. I have ever so slowly dreamed into being a constellation of colleagues and allies who understand, or at least intuit, the meaning of embodiment. With this company
and against the beliefs of many others, I have participated in creating an MA in Literature program—the only one in Colombia—where thinking about bodies is possible, and where creative work is understood as a research methodology. My students have done breathtaking experimental work involving the exploration of their bodies in language.

Adela Avila, a young woman who grew up in the physical and psychological violence of the Colombian countryside, is one of those students. She started writing with me in her undergraduate years as part of the Language and Peace group I formed while at Goddard, and has now finished her Masters in Literature degree, obtaining the highest grade on her creative writing thesis. One of the discoveries in Adela’s writing is that writing from the body is also a return to the land: in Adela’s case, not to a romantic and idealized land, but to a place where beauty clashes violently with rawness and cruelty. In her thesis defense, she received the following commentary from one of her evaluators: “…. it is necessary that you take the painful act of writing even further. Because the cruelty we were born from is not Austrian or Japanese or Spanish. And you are so close to naming it, to bringing to light those buried streams, densely covered by the makeup of identity discourses and patriotism. You still have a body where the sagas of cruelty and its genital tragedy are narrated. That is why I urge you to keep writing…. ” (Buenaventura, “Thesis Commentary”).

As much as I have been moved by my now many students’ discoveries and explorations, I am still often disillusioned by the deep misunderstanding that surrounds this kind of work on the part of my colleagues and co-
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It is hard to be far away from Goddard and the enthusiasm of others who are inquiring and experimenting and constructing embodiment as a legitimate and valued way of knowing; but perhaps for this reason, I have very slowly begun to meet and constitute a very select, dispersed but growing interdisciplinary web of vital and experimental interlocutors in dance, performance art, feminist art, live arts, anthropology, contemporary theory, biodance and other practices in Colombia and Latin America, all of whom are working towards embodiment, both theoretically and in their ways of knowing.

But my thesis advisor Lise would probably say I am withholding the most exciting information. When I came to Goddard I was a blocked writer, hiding behind the mask of an eloquent academic. As I started to ask questions and explore the body, my language burst open like a wild well. Writing from the body was a tap for the most beautiful and passionate and bold writing I have done. It opened a question that has not ended: a constant and thrilling project. At Goddard I was able to recognize myself as an artist. First as a writer, and now as an artist, because as questions of the body have deepened more and more, my language has continued to change and expand into the language of other arts. Confronting my creative impulse, allowing the strangeness and the truth that I am to follow its path, to jump across disciplines and invite in all that is necessary, has been the biggest challenge for this body so far.

From Ellie, I learned that embodiment is work that is done on many levels: epistemological (reconstructing our ways of knowing); psychological (understanding dissociation and its effects in each one of us and our life stories); aesthetic
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(studying art as forms of embodied thinking and doing); therapeutic (examining one’s own processes and learning methods for activating connections for an embodied mind); political (embodiment is always also a form of being with others, of creating community, as well as relating with the natural world, which is also a living body). (Epp, “Theoretical Framework”) One of the most beautiful things about the embodiment framework is precisely this integration of levels, this invitation to think on many planes at the same time. Working on all of these at once is very difficult or impossible, but any one of them leads to another, and working on two or three of them at the same time begins to create a resonance between the different dimensions and levels of engagement that clearly and palpably begins to transform the bodies we are and our relation with the world. The possibility of working on all of these levels simultaneously goes beyond the curriculum of any literature or creative writing or social science Master’s program I can think of. It redefines academia as a school of life; it commits all of those who have passed through it to create an open, floating, loving, vital, and also rigorous locus for knowing that is still in-process.

Embodiment studies has given me the structure and inspiration to be a teacher, the knowledge and responsibility to be an epistemologist, and now the courage and the edge to be an artist… to follow my truth with desire, and not be scared of the consequences.

Postscript

I am in a very different state of body at this moment than I was when I first wrote this text ten months ago. The political crumbling of freedom and peace, as well as the
generalized phobia about all forms of diversity, have left an inevitable scar on the bodies of the citizens of Colombia, Brazil, Mexico and other American and world countries. It has blurred our personal landscapes and cruelly reminded us of the ways in which our bodies are political. We have awakened in the darkest place. It is absolutely scandalous that the majority of Colombian society voted NO to the peace process in October of this year. As a teacher who had worked for ten years on a project called Language and Peace where my hypothesis was that attitudes of peace and respect for diversity could only be possible starting from the body, reconnecting language with the body, and the specific bodies that we are, it was shocking to discover that the greater part of the population has constructed a body that has normalized war, is terrified of change, and rejects all forms of diversity. Just one month after, the success of Donald Trump in the US elections was shocking in many of the same ways. My best conclusion is that I, we, have not done enough. That what we are doing, we need to do more of, and more boldly, more beautifully, more radically. The world we are living in, each one of its citizens, is screaming for embodiment, and I will not quiet down any more. With the failure of the peace plebiscite, my body suffered a painful yet vigorous rebirth. Right now, as we live what seems like a death of the world as we know it, I am more alive (and dangerous) than ever. Every word in this text is both memory and promise: to myself and others. There is much work to be done.

Emilee Baum Trucks, IMA 2010

When waking up, the pillow is hugged and nuzzled, a
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grown-up teddybear surrogate. Sleep slides away, a thick viscous slippery thing imprinted with images, and now I'm pressing my face in the pillow to make it stay, but it won't. My devices (an insulin pump, a continuous glucose monitor, my telephone, my ambition) are all buzzing at me now. Even on this what should be a sleep-late-because-there's-time Sunday, I'm awake now.

The cats know. They feel it somehow, the difference between me asleep and me awake. Sleep becomes a lost cause, because cats love breakfast, and it is important to write when I can.

Dreams hang in the middle distance, stumbling to get them down before they depart. Naked in my bathrobe now, I'm writing in the dark. Somebody asks me what embodiment studies is, and I tell them where I landed while doing embodiment studies at Goddard College: embodiment studies is the study of how a body does consciousness. From the most artificial, cold, rational decision-making to the most sultry, delicious, salivating mouthful, embodiment studies is about how bodies are in the world.

Studying embodiment means working in the most perfect laboratory ever created for a specific science: the body you are. It is terrifying and rewarding and utterly unpredictable. My work at Goddard flew in the face of subject-object dualism, upended all of my assumptions about authority, and enabled the discovery and claiming of a creative voice that had lived in my body all along. A voice hidden in the crooks of my elbows, the backs of my knees, cradled in the curves concealed by my uniforms.

Birds are waking up now, the grey light of dawn. The cats really want breakfast, and somewhere past the pine trees
a train is sounding a lonely horn that echoes through sleeping suburban houses. I always listen for the train.

The body is wisdom. It is the wisdom of the interconnectedness of all things. The body tells the story of being, and is all the pieces and parts of being in the world. Embodiment studies takes many shapes, as many shapes as there are bodies.

Another way to describe embodiment studies is this: every being is a body that is a product of another body. A fundamental interconnectedness influences how we are in the world. Buddhists call it interdependent origination. Embodiment studies offers a framework for approaching any question of being in the world by looking at the dynamic relationships that shape the circumstances, that provide the tides or gravity that influence the waxing and waning of formation and action.

Cats have breakfast now, I have some caffeine, a blanket, a space heater. Autumn is making itself known, the cold and damp of the past few days, the moisture in the air carrying the mournful train horn with me into the dawn.

I spent many long hours with textbooks, conducting interviews, consuming music and film and guidance from my teachers. Writing and dreams were just as important to my course of study, and supplied the framework for my thesis and subsequent book. Feeling into being present, both waking and dreaming, helped me show the shape of my learning. Maybe most importantly, I learned to trust the line of my love; the research that comes from doing work in embodiment studies is driven by intuition, critical thinking, and the felt sense of a story that needs to be told. This methodology leads to the very edge of transdisciplinary
research, an approach to education that embraces making connections as much as cutting a name or a unique idea. As frustrated as I felt by the dualism and bifurcation of mind-body separation in consciousness studies, David Chalmer’s “hard problem” inspired me. The question he asked was basic: once we've mapped all of our neural networks, how do we explain why we feel?

The only way I found to explain the felt sense is to describe how it feels. For me, that description came in words, but there are many other modalities that are equally valid. I've discovered myself a champion, a fool who has pitched my tent, staked my ground in uncertain territory between art and science. Some days I argue vigorously that they are the same thing, and others days they are different, and embodiment studies reminds me that dualism is both convenient structure and a trap. I still struggle with mind-body dualism, as it lives in our metaphors, our language, and so very much structures how we describe being in the world. Technology makes for an odd intersection in my diabetic system, strange bedfellows of sensation and information and external insulin delivery devices.

The sun is coloring the trees now, and it won't be long before the house is warm. Birds are at the feeder, and the cats are chirping at them through the window.

Kate Soule, IMA 2012

The IMA program at Goddard College trained me to use my direct sensory experience of life as information towards my thesis question. My thesis was a trans-disciplinary study of how social oppression within a patriarchal, andro-
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cratic society can alter women's neurophysiology by becoming holding patterns in the body-mind, and how these holding patterns can cause women to not know and feel what on a visceral level they might know and feel. To construct my thesis work, I tracked my sensations during applicable lived experiences and then found language for these sensation-phenomena in other fields. By merging knowledge of my self and knowledge of experts from various fields, I became aware of ways women may hold ourselves back from authenticity and power (involving musculature, neuropeptides, breath and more).

In embodiment studies I learned to ground intersectional study in the phenomenology of my personal experience as an embodied woman. This phenomenology-focused methodology taught me a love for integrating scientific studies into my research. It also taught me how to maintain an authoritative filter when picking through the scientific literature; I measured all scientific research against my own experience of the question at hand. Where the science illuminated my direct experience I engaged with it. Where the science mystified and silenced my experience through its language or framing of the subject, I left that source and moved on to others. Anchored in the authority of my own experience, I had a compass by which to navigate the historically patriarchal, mystified fields of the sciences.

This approach empowered me to look at the pattern of female dissociation through the lenses of traditional psychology, neurophysiology, somatics, feminism, wave theory, the expressive arts, cymatics, sentics and more. Goddard taught me a new way of investigating my experience and my world that electrified my (powers of) curiosity and my
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confidence in all the research I’ve done since graduation.

The confident curiosity grown through embodiment studies has followed me in all of my experiences since graduating from Goddard: in my partner dancing; in my training as a somatic psychotherapist; in my research as a doctoral student in Intermodal Expressive Arts; in the poverty-wage jobs worked to stay afloat; and in the aftermath of Trump’s election. I have learned to take seriously and to revere my direct sensory experiences of the world around me, and this intense being in the self has propelled me, sustained me, and most joyfully—held me accountable to my authentic self in my life and in my studies.

Sonja Swift, IMA 2014

There maybe is a place where loving the greatness of life and loving yourself are the same thing. If you love the greatness of life enough to be willing to do anything you have to, to be able to do it honor, then you will treat yourself with the same honor and willingness to know, since honoring your own reality will make you more capable of honoring all else. ~ Ellie Epp, Speaking Bodies Workshop

In my first semester at Goddard I knew I wanted to validate sensory-somatic intelligence in the context of ecological crises and land-based relationship. Why? Because of a gnawing frustration at the ways in which felt-intelligence has been belittled and written off, and because I sensed that at that interdisciplinary crossroads I would find some answers. I didn’t even have the language of ‘sensory-somatic’ at the time, that came later, but this goal held fast to the end
of my studies. Throughout the course of semester two, when I studied with Ellie Epp, I garnered a far more nuanced understanding and analysis of how humans are formed in context of place, how this informs body knowledge, and how destroying intact ecosystems also destroys our capacities for intelligence as humans. This framework became central to my thesis, titled “Bravery, Body, Land and Knowing,” which I view as a contribution to the evolving field of embodiment studies. Ellie’s teaching of embodiment studies revolutionized my thinking, my perception, and my very way of being in the world.

Embodiment studies is a study of knowing: of how we know what we know, of ways we talk about knowing, of the physiology of knowing - with radical implications as an interdisciplinary field of study, a worldview and a practice of exquisite awareness. Embodiment studies attracted me because it encouraged me to know myself thoroughly and provided a platform for one of the most bulletproof explanations I have yet come across as to why it is essential people value and protect the integrity of the living earth.

Embodiment studies in the GGI begins with acknowledging that human life is life as lived through a body. And from the bodies we are, we know and we love; we rationalize, philosophize, muse and write poetry; we dance samba and track wildebeest; we exist. All knowledge and knowing is embodied, there can be no other way. Our bodies are made of the same stuff the earth is made of: stardust, formed in highly volatile, exceedingly hot, exploding stars. We are the same stuff the cosmos is made of. The same laws that form planets form us. Fractals offer another way of illustrating how we are patterned like the universe. Our blood
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vessels branch in fractals, as do the digestive tract, lungs, urinary collecting system, biliary duct in the liver, the network of fibers in the heart that carry electric currents to contracting muscles (Gleik 109). Our bodies mirror the universe.

To remember that everything we are was made in the core of a star during a very hot explosion is to reckon that we share something quite intrinsic in common with every winged, hoofed, leafed, spiraled, webbed, finned, gnarled, creature and being on this living earth. Why this acknowledgement is especially important today, and why it matters that we investigate this pattern language and complex interconnectedness, can be summed up quite well in a statement by Epp: “It’s a worry about minds that don’t have enough world in them. Minds that don’t have enough world in them are wrecking the world, but they are also wrecking themselves.” An essential reframing that embodiment studies provides is that people are integral to environmental discourse, there is no ‘other’ in naming why ecological wreckage is a disaster; the environmental ethic is not just for the tokenized salmon or sequoia or polar bear. Our own intelligence is at stake. Indigenous people worldwide have long had narratives that do not silo people from land/place. Embodiment studies mirrors many of those narratives and backs worldviews of interconnection.

Another important point embodiment studies makes is that the way we talk, the language we use, matters. Language has a physical effect; we can’t understand a sentence without being in some way restructured by the meaning. We are affecting each other continuously through our conversations and murmurings, shouts and exclamations, songs and sailors-curses. Hence the power of music, age-old
traditions of prayer, lullabies to children while tucking them in at night, or the subliminal messages in fairytales we pick up as kids when the world doesn’t make sense. Imagine how many untold times people around the world have in their own languages prayed to the sun, said good morning to the dawn, welcomed the moonrise, chanted for peace and the well-being of all that moves. And then think of how the violent rhetoric of politicians mobilizes people towards war. Bad language produces fragmentation, a shutting down of some aspect of self. Good language maintains and even improves wholeness. *Starebe* is a Swahili word that translates as *to be at ease* or *being at home in the world* (Sewall 120). *Yinta* is a Wet’suwet’en word that refers to the interconnectedness of life and the fact that we—humans, bald eagles, river otters, salmon, moss and aspen—are all related. These words evoke a worldview of cohesion and belonging, a worldview quite different from that which guides, say, modern economic theory. In many ways embodiment studies works together with a de-colonization framework. Practically, it asks that we be precise with our use of language so as to not reinforce imposed notions of dualism and outdated reductionist thinking. Including our use of metaphor.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write extensively about metaphor, and in so doing articulate embodiment philosophy: “Metaphor is not merely a matter of language. It is a matter of conceptual structure. And conceptual structure is not merely a matter of the intellect—it involves all the natural dimensions of our experience, including aspects of our sense experiences: color, shape, texture, sound, etc” (235). Becoming sensitized to the metaphorical underpinnings of commonplace language helps expose dogmatic thinking that
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has become normalized through unexamined use of metaphor. The reductive and awkwardly compartmentalized tradition we are still living with as a culture consciously and unconsciously adheres to, for example, the body-as-machine metaphor: “I’m a little rusty today. My mind just isn’t operating today. I’m running out of steam” (Lakoff and Johnson 27). Another metaphorical concept, which has its roots in this outdated tradition, is RATIONAL IS UP, EMOTIONAL IS DOWN. For example: “He had a high-level intellectual discussion. He couldn’t rise above his emotions.” (17). People continue to use this metaphorical language in commonplace conversations often without realizing that it reinforces certain attitudes. Metaphors that re-instate dualism, mentalities of war, and obsession with growth affect people on a structural level whether they realize it or not. This was a radical realization for me. The metaphors we live by depend on how we are structured as bodies; how we use metaphor reinforces or changes the structure we are, and so also the ways in which we think about and perceive the world.

One of the results of dualism, of understanding nature and body as machine and mind and body as separate is that somehow a detached mind is considered more prestigious. But mind-body dualism makes no sense when one investigates how we are structured as bodies, as systems. We don’t see with our eyes, we see with our entire visual system, just as we don’t hear with our ears but rather our entire auditory system. To understand knowledge in this way, to quote Epp, makes knowledge uncommodified (Mind and Land). Re-training our language goes hand-in-hand with de-colonizing our perception. Embodiment studies’ affirmation
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that we are bodies of this earth leads to an understanding, at least on a basic level, as to why indigenous people have such tenacious resolve to stay on their territories, why colonial ransacking of lands and cultures has been so devastating, and how pervasive compartmentalized thinking is in our metaphors, social structures, laws, and commonplace assumptions.

Perception is the basis for any kind of knowing. It is a subjective, reciprocal, participatory act. It is creative power. Our capabilities for perception can vary as much as landscapes differ: from desert mesas to mossy coastal forests, arctic tundra to Times Square. This is to say that our capabilities for perception, the sensitivity and attentiveness and/or filtered blindness of how we perceive, are a result of how our experiences of lands “...have constructed us capable of being in contact with it” (Leaving the Land). As people we are all molded by the places we live; we are part of these landscapes, whether intact or altered. This is why when people lived in more land-based ways the world had that many more languages, nuanced and diverse cultural traditions, land-specific ceremonies, and hand-selected, propagated and expertly tended grasses, trees, seeds and food crops. Dissociation happens when the places we live become contaminated, silenced. Epp writes: “When we destroy the beauty, the complexity, the manifold coherence of the natural world, we are destroying potentials of perception and comprehension. The forming of intelligent human beings through contact with the natural world is the specifically human part of environmental value, and the core of value in the things humans make” (Mind and Land). Pave the land, demolish the land, desecrate and poison and plunder the land,
and perception is plundered as well.

To destroy the places we inhabit is to destroy our multi-faceted means and very potential for full embodied intelligence. Epp writes of “...defending a description of perception that supports peoples' ability to be and stay in contact with the here and now which is their land” (Mind and Land). I appreciate this statement very much because it speaks to me of my original relation to the landscape in which I was raised: California rangeland—cow trails through sagebrush and live oaks, amber chanterelles and cobalt lupines, red-tailed hawks and coyotes howling. This primal association with landscape gave me something worthy of defending as an idea, as a vision, and as a guide. Embodiment studies then helped me find language to more resolutely honor and defend my own place-based worldview by arguing not just that all children deserve the opportunity to experience a feral childhood outdoors (which may be true or may just be my opinion) but more specifically that it is a limited kind of intelligence which allows for destruction of land in the first place.

As human beings our primary source of strength and personal power is rooted firmly in our sensory-somatic intelligence. In our body knowledge. When feeling is segregated from knowing people are easier to control, and plundering the land is easier when people don’t feel themselves born of the land either. There may be nothing more damaging than the overriding of somatic knowing by cutthroat pseudo-rationality—not actual rationality, which is reasonable, and works in concert with feeling—but pseudo-rationality, which lays the groundwork for blind acceptance of injustice. When people know what they know they are
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untamable. Construed facts, false narratives, political jargon, all feel wrong. To strengthen one’s perception, to know what direction is north, to pay attention to intuition—there are ways to practice and hone this untamable knowing. And that is what embodiment studies teaches. And that is why embodiment studies as a field of study, a worldview and a practice of exquisite awareness is revolutionary in its very approach.

Kate Lidfors Miller, IMA 2015

I came to the Goddard Graduate Institute after retiring from a professional career. I had waited nearly a lifetime to focus on writing as my way of loving the world and seeing the world I love. Through the Individualized M. A. program I hoped to take my writing to a new level—deeper, more authentic. And I wanted to learn to use writing with others as a means of profound connection with self and world. I had clear goals and an extensive bibliography. I was ready to go.

When I met with Lise Weil, my first semester advisor, she asked me a lot of questions—penetrating, insightful questions. Then she suggested that I read David Abram's Spell of the Sensuous and Linda Hogan's Dwellings for my first packet. And she asked me to write about...how I know what I know. For me, at sixty-seven, this became an inquiry into a lifetime.

Bibliography set aside, I went back to fundamentals. How do I know what I know? How are mind and flesh connected? What does it mean to be a physical body in a physical world—for love, wholeness, for our self-care and for other
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living things? The earth itself? What does it mean for my writing and the work I have yet to do?

I went back to my first sense of the world and started to write from that knowing. I wrote the power of the first thunderstorm I can remember; the feel inside the mouth of a dying calf that had sucked my hand for comfort in my grandfather's barn; and the time I stood in a roaring storm at the end of a rickety catwalk projecting out into the Bering Sea, the water thick with fur seals lolling, rolling, bounding, surfing. Over the course of that semester I returned again and again to my unveiled self in communion with the living world. I began to write with new transparency and a freer, truer voice.

I had long ago shed the answers that didn't answer from an upbringing that taught that my body is sinful and this world is not my home. Until Goddard I was only marginally aware of recent findings in physics, cognitive research, and neuroscience that challenge the Western dualistic view. Ellie Epp, a founding mother in the field of embodiment studies and my second semester advisor, pointed me toward the science that demonstrates the inseparability of mind and body and the essential imbeddedness of human life and consciousness in the fabric of our physical world.

Ellie posed a central issue for my examination of how I know: “Should we think of ourselves as part of nature,” she asked, “or as set against it in some essential way?” And: “what sort of knowing should be considered valid and important?” My reading lists filled up with cognitive neuroscience, anthropology, eco-psychology, philosophy, cultural history and women's studies as well as sources in the fields of transformative language arts, poetics, and memoir.
By way of these inquiries I began a conversation through which I ultimately constructed a new, consciously chosen paradigm that affirmed and gave language to what I had known since I was a child: that we “feel and perceive and imagine and think by means of our physical bodies” (Epp) and that we are fully human, whole “only in contact and conviviality with what is not human,” our one and only living world (Abram).

At the same time I began to write about things I had locked deep inside. I felt the yeastiness of my studies, the bread rising. I let go of my self-protective impulse to write as a third-party observer in the conventional academic forms and language that were expected in my previous degree programs.

I experimented with writing directly as I perceived with minimal interpretation, eyes touching earth, as in this description of a prairie pothole:

...A basin, rounding to oval; a post-glacial sink. Rising from its center, a hill of fertile mud pushing cattails, reeds and rushes upward through the water. Above the surface, mingled with their dark reflections, they shimmer, refracting sunlight, flashing back their own green light, in motion, yet still, caught in ripple, shadow and glimmer....The encircling water, contained by grassy banks, holds the sky. Now mirror, now mosaic—tesserae of passing shadows (cloud, hawk, deer drinking—head up, down, up again, cows passing single file) and shards of lapis blue. The wind holds its breath—a mirror again. Until a mallard draws a vee across the surface....

At the same time I began to write with more
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awareness of my body, inviting more physicality and sensuousness into my work:

...I begin with simple things. Things horses usually like. Brush her shoulders, neck and withers. Work down her back to the broad plane above her tail, then down her flanks and sides, long strokes under her belly. Finally, her legs. The insides of her thighs....Slowly, with firm but gentle touch, I slide my hand up between her back legs until I find her small, shy, un-nursed teats. I slip my fingers into the deep fold between them and find that she needs my care. I dip a cloth into warm water and hold it there. She opens her legs to my hand. I sponge her until all the caked dirt, perspiration and dried fluids of her estrus wash away....I rest my forehead on hers. It is enough.

My studies fed back into my creative work in ways that stretched and opened me, and my writing fueled a desire to dig deeper, learn more. When finally I was able to integrate the many avenues I had explored, I took another step into the unknown. Is "embodied writing" possible to define? Are its characteristics and effects different from less personal and more abstract writing? If so, why? And what is the value of such writing for the recovery of lost voices and renewing our connections with the more-than-human world? This launched an exploration that would take me beyond my Goddard program and into my future work as a transformative language artist.

To own our knowledge and write our truths requires faith and courage. Audre Lorde reminds that it is "never without fear" that we proceed one word at a time into the dark—fear of visibility, judgment, breaking long-held silences
My journey through embodiment studies at Goddard broke silences and enabled me to face old fears. I gathered up what I’ve always known and wrapped it in new knowledge—knowledge that I own and from which I can live and write with new faith and courage.

Britta Love, IMA 2016

I entered Goddard College to write a traditional academic thesis in the Consciousness Studies concentration within the Individualized MA program. I wanted to study the role that altered states of consciousness (specifically those facilitated by psychoactive plant medicines and conscious sexual practice) could play in catalyzing healing and spiritual growth. I had good reason to pursue this line of inquiry—I had already lived through it. I’d spent years battling drug addiction and had, for a long time, a very dysfunctional relationship to sex. In the end I found that the poison I was suffering from and the medicine I needed were one and the same, and it was the intentional use of psychedelics and a more holistic approach to sexuality that healed the anxiety at the root of my addiction as well as my relationship to my body, men and sex.

I came to Goddard to validate my story through a master’s degree, looking for evidence and research “out there” from other—presumably more respectable—sources. I spent my first two semesters looking at the topics at hand with a deep analytical and critical lens, encouraged to pursue questions that hadn’t occurred to me, unpack my assumptions and to do intellectual battle against thinkers with whom I strongly disagreed. Important work. But all the while
in my consciousness research, I was struggling to find what I was looking for—an understanding of consciousness that truly reflected my personal experience. Most theories of consciousness either reduce spirit and consciousness to the mechanics of brain function, or focus on the mind as the seat of consciousness and the body as the container that holds it, perpetuating the dualisms of mind/body, body/spirit and spiritual/sexual.

The experiences that had led me to Goddard told a very different story—but it wasn’t until I started pursuing an embodiment studies focus that I found a language and framework for them, as well as the confidence to use embodied experience as valid data for my research.

I began to write down some of my story for the first time—at first only in hope of discovering more to pursue in my “real” research. I observed that the most profound and moving shifts in my experience of consciousness had been incredibly embodied experiences. The most important things I had learned and experienced in this journey of exploring and shifting consciousness had come through bodily sensation and bodily knowing: touch, orgasm, currents of energy running through my body at significant times. There were inaudible conversations with different parts of my body, my stomach communicating to me the abuse it suffered at the hands of my disordered eating, the pulsing tingling energy pumping up through my legs, introducing me to my deep self, indicating that I had finally gotten myself off of the endless anxious thought loops that were limiting the very possibilities of consciousness (and therefore, existence). In peak experiences, I felt a full-bodied connection to all that is—some would say, to the divine. In other words, my most
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spiritual experiences did not involve transcending the body—they were completely immanent to it.

Eventually, with encouragement from my advisor, I came to see my own embodied knowledge as deserving weight in my actual thesis, alongside all the traditional research I had already done. This was something I could never have anticipated upon entering Goddard.

I am still as interested in consciousness studies as I have ever been, but I now have a language with which to express consciousness as I experience it—embodied consciousness. The deep inner knowing that came to me in psychedelic states, the feelings of interconnectedness to others throughout space and time I’d had during intimate sexual moments—these were physical, bodily experiences. It is when the truth hurt—physically, in my chest—during psychedelic healing rituals that I knew the information coming to me must be trusted. I realized that it is information sourced bodily that tells me the things I most need to know. I now have a deeper understanding of the frequent energetic shudders that run through my body during times of divination or ritual, feelings I always paid attention to but never had an explanatory framework for.

These experiences have informed my working definition of consciousness as well. Due to my explorations of embodiment studies at Goddard, I now feel all our bodily systems work together to create what we call “consciousness.” Focusing a study of consciousness exclusively on the neuroscience of the brain neglects the innate intelligence of the entire body. My current thought is that human consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, arising from the intricate interworkings of countless (also conscious) sub-
systems of the body—as well as other (as yet unexplored by science) subtle energy bodies. I believe that individual consciousness, through these energy fields, connects to a greater interweb of human consciousness, the consciousness of other living and possibly non-living things, and the consciousness of our greater ecosystem and universe.

This embodied monism sees no split between mind and body, body and spirit. Instead of looking to prove how mind manifests a holographic universe (doing away with the physical world), or how all consciousness can be explained as purely physical phenomena (a materialism that does away with the psychological and spiritual worlds), this understanding of consciousness provides a deeper breakdown of the dualism at play in those ideas. Perhaps in the future, science will expand to comprehend and theorize all the subtle energies that exist, and therefore stop seeing the interplay of these different energy fields as an unbridgeable gap between spirit and matter. Instead we will have a spectrum of energy, from less to more dense. Then the idea of making spirit (less visible energy fields) primary over matter (denser energy fields), or vice versa, will seem preposterous. As many of the great religious traditions have told us: isn’t it all one thing?

This perspective is not only personally but politically necessary. As long as society as a whole lacks “spirit,” a sense of the interconnectedness of all living things, business can carry on as usual as we walk blindly into a mass extinction event. But equally, a society determined to raise or evolve consciousness in order to spiritually ascend—to transcend the physical plane—runs the risk of repeating the age-old valuing of “spirit” over “matter,” when it is right here in this very physical world that so much is at stake. As one often finds at
Goddard, my personal experiences and research are intimately tied up with hopes and visions for a better world—and I believe embodiment studies has a crucial role to play there.

My engagement with the field of embodiment studies has transformed everything from my thesis to my spiritual practice. It is almost impossible to articulate the subtle changes in awareness in my day-to-day existence, in how I perceive the world. But through the lens of embodiment I have validated and deepened my connection to ways of knowing that have always been invaluable to me: dreams, intuition, and divination. The natural world speaks to me through my body, and my body responds. My spirituality is now consciously one of immanence, rather than transcendence. It is early days for the field of embodiment, but if my personal journey tells me anything, it is that these new explorations may hold a crucial missing key to making the consciousness and paradigm shifts necessary to face the days ahead.

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Homecoming and Prayer: “Not To Be Cut Off” by Susan Pearson, Linda Schneck, and Bernadette Miller

I. Setting Sail on the Winds by Susan Pearson

_Ah, not to be cut off,_
_not through the slightest partition_
_shut out from the law of the stars._

_The inner—what is it?_
_if not intensified sky,_
_burled through with birds and deep_
_with the winds of homecoming._

~ Rainer Maria Rilke

_Milkweed by Susan Pearson_
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The winds of homecoming….Finding our way back home after a long, and often necessary, period of separation and estrangement. This theme underlies the studies of many of our students: coming home to self, one another, community, and the living planet that is our home, our neighborhood, and our source. Students are weaving the world’s stories together in new ways, revealing ever more palpably the dynamic exuberance of interrelatedness and interdependence in which we are immersed, constituted, and participant.

In the current period of global transition and transformation, as dominant paradigms for understanding and organizing the world are breaking down and the next have not fully taken form (Berry, Eisenstein, Macy, and Tarnas) students are meeting the complex perils and promise of this shift with supple, richly informed response. They are discovering new connections that alter our collective vision and guide action forward.

In the contributions that follow, Goddard graduates Bernadette Miller and Linda Schneck demonstrate such innovative syntheses of areas of inquiry. They explore them through a range of contemplative, embodied, expressive, and experiential research methodologies and modes of expression, integrating and building upon more traditional ways of knowing that have characterized our cultural and pedagogical history. And they are reconsidering and recreating social structures capable of housing the forms that arise. In the end, the power and beauty Bernadette and Linda bring to their articulation carries the reader into such experience, inviting us to slip into the terrain of these concepts, allowing new dimensions of knowing to arise.
Characteristics of a Transformative Education

...in a moment that which is behind naming makes itself known. Hand and breast know each one to the other. Wood in the table knows clay in the bowl. Air knows the grass knows water knows mud knows beetle knows frost knows sunlight knows the shape of the earth knows death knows not dying. And all this knowledge is in the souls of everything, behind naming, before speaking, beneath words. ~ Susan Griffin

An understanding of life as richly dynamic, responsive, co-evolving, and, of necessity, diverse, is increasingly taking hold in the collective understanding and imagination. Researchers and scholars from all academic disciplines are lending luminous insight into a conceptualization of the world from the microcosm to the macrocosm as a whole made up of ever-changing parts and wholes, forming and re-forming in response to one another, each an integral part of the others. Cracks are appearing in the more flat and static constructions of scholarly tradition that privileged dissection, objectivity, and analysis, allowing space for perspectives to expand.

Priorities and practices in education that have been gaining wide acceptance, and which the Goddard model has long supported, include greater emphasis upon:

- **Attention to complex, contextual interrelationships** in understanding and responding to any phenomenon under consideration, in recognition of the intricate, multidimensional nature of life and of hazards that have arisen from compartmentalized, reductionistic approaches
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- **Interdisciplinary studies**, bringing varied questions and knowledges in conversation with one another, enhancing the view of each and all
- **(W)holism and multiple modes of intelligence**, making evident the necessity of more fully respecting and incorporating the diverse ways of knowing, learning, and communication that learners bring to their questions
- **Experiential learning**, providing greater depth and breadth of learning informed by a more integrated and embodied knowledge, and cultivating awareness of the complex networks of contextual factors that influence and are influenced by a question or concern and its inquiry
- **Personal experience and values** applied and reflected upon in areas of inquiry, offering more vibrant and relevant understanding of a subject and making more apparent the mutually formative effect that a researcher and a subject have upon one another
- **Critical thinking as self-reflective and co-constructive**, extending the dimensionality and vitality of insight that keen analysis has traditionally lent to our discernment
- **Collaboration** over competition in research and learning in recognition that understanding a whole is enhanced by the enhancement of each of its parts
- **Ethical grounding** beneath what we know, do, and are, built upon an awareness that the presence one brings to a subject affects the process and outcome, with both life-affirming and/or destructive potential
That said, what we come to know on a conceptual level and incorporate into practice takes more time to internalize as we live out these emerging ideas in our moment-by-moment decisions. It takes longer still for consciousness to open to insights that our cognitive constructions may have been incapable of embracing and for institutional structures to take forms capable of holding and supporting such initiatives.

**Making the Transition from this Liminal Zone, As One Cultural Paradigm Gives Way and Another Stumbles its Way to Fruition**

> Whoever pours himself out like a spring, he’s known by Knowing; and she guides him enthralled through the serene Creation that often ends with beginning and begins with ending. Every happy space they wander through, astounded, is a child or a grandchild of Departure. And the transformed Daphne, feeling herself laurel, wills that you change into the wind.

> ~ Rainer Maria Rilke

To know with fullness a living, transforming world, both conceptually and experientially, requires—as philosopher/empirical scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe has suggested—the development of new organs of perception, … or the ability to see with new eyes (Macy, and Colquhoun), …or, as mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme has framed it, the ability “to transform (our) perceptual habits” (26). It is one thing to construe the world as interrelated, interdependent, and constituted in interbeing (Nhat Hanh) and another to
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experience it in its multidimensionality, to “penetrate the surface,” and shift our perception from that of “fixed forms to formative process” (Miller 111). “If we want to behold nature in a living way,” Goethe has written, “we must follow her example and become as mobile and malleable as nature herself” (Holdrege 21).

Cultivating new organs of perception, enabling us to feel our intimate relatedness and identification with a subject and our participation in it with the direct perception of the senses, imagination, and intuition takes time, attention, and finely attuned receptivity. It asks us to allow for permeability of our boundaries of self, for taking in the subjects of our inquiries, being changed by them, and knowing and identifying with them in their complexity and dynamic wholeness. On one hand, this is a seemingly daunting task from within contemporary consciousness—akin to trying to capture the infinite, or God, or ultimacy. And, on the other hand, such capacities have been retained by some individuals and cultures across human history. And practices inviting and fostering this are increasingly available.

Arthur Zajonc has described the process of such transformation in this way:

By expanding our ontology to embrace the interconnectedness of reality and its multiple dimensions, by extending our epistemology to include contemplative, aesthetic, and moral knowing, by recognizing the ethical dimensions of our way of knowing, we can grow the exploration of purpose beyond the humanities to all aspects of curricular and co-curricular life. (Palmer & Zajonc 122-3)

He suggests we “live the questions, experiences,
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corcepts, and ideas” beyond (but not precluding) presentation of “relevant observations, scholarly gloss, and critical analysis” (113). “Living our way into the answers,” he proposes, “means to so change ourselves that we are capable of beholding and inhabiting” (105) the subjects of our attention (Zajonc notes that “…theory derives from the Greek word meaning ‘to behold’” 113).

Just as an evolving inquiry is enhanced by exposure to multiple perspectives, an evolving educational system benefits from collaboration among the vast range of people participating in and affected by those institutions, seeding the emerging shape and content of those systems. Cross-fertilization with diverse theories, experiences, stories, and imaginations fosters the flexibility in a system to adjust in resonance with changing perspectives and needs of the times. Among potentially fruitful themes for consideration in such collaboration may be:

• **Dynamism and Wholeness:** If life, in each moment, represents a dynamic, evolving, and evolutionary process of interdependent parts, ever-changing in response to the landscapes within and around us, how do we “break through the surface” of our gaze into an experience of the subject’s dynamic nature? And how do we represent what we have come to know without reducing or freezing it in the process? How do we foster understanding of the whole, in its complex and seemingly paradoxical nature, to come ever closer to an apprehension and embodiment of it?

• **Identification:** How do we move, in our inquiries, beyond the conceptual knowledge that life is interrelated and interdependent into a lived
Teaching experience of our subjects and of our ongoing, inherent relationship and dialogue with them, … moving ever further into the deeply felt experience of our interbeing (Nhat Hanh), our intrinsic identification with them …perh

aps to cultivate what Seed and Fleming have referred to as “evolutionary remembering” (Seed, Macy, Fleming, & Naess) and what psychiatrist Darold Treffert, writing of savants, calls the ability “to know things one never learned” (3). Of our collective evolutionary history and the potential for recalling it to our awareness, Swimme has said, “Over the course of fourteen billion years hydrogen gas transformed itself into mountains, butterflies, the music of Bach and you and me and these energies coursing through us may indeed renew the face of Earth” (Warren 106).

• **Presence:** How do we develop the capacities of awareness, receptivity, deep listening, and response for entering further into the experience of “other?” How might we build our awareness of the internalized biases that obstruct our listening? And—given that transformation occurs through participation in spiraling cycles of germination, birth, growth, decay, death, and renewal—how do we make room for each of the moments of this process within our cultural and educational contexts? Most applicable to contemporary culture, how do we make room for those periods of fertile dormancy, stillness, quietude, and waiting from which ideas infused with new life can emerge? What factors inhibit opening to life in this way, and how do we retain resilience in our
capacity for closing up, for a time, when faced with overload?

• **Ethics:** How do we support a shift in cultural priorities to place ethical concerns at the center of each area of inquiry and at the center of our cultural values? What revised institutional forms would hold promise for promoting more life-sustaining values? How do we address the culture of fear that shuts down complex thinking and open hearts? How do we draw together the impassioned, raw, and divergent beliefs about values in our time to enlarge our collective vision and common purpose?

• **Economics:** And how do we reconfigure the relationship of our educational institutions to the economic systems in which they are embedded (and the economic systems themselves) to provide the universal access—financial and beyond—that will allow diversity, justice, and understanding to thrive?

• **Diversity of Vision:** It is now acknowledged that there are multiple modes of intelligence and that the more diverse voices brought to an issue, the richer will be the individual and collective understanding. How, then, do we honor the diverse voices of students in each aspect of their studies? As an example, how do we truly respect and integrate multiple ways of learning and of giving expression to that learning, from within a tradition that privileges linear, conceptual, objective, critical thinking expressed in words, while retaining the essence of what education is meant to represent?
• **Living Language:** David Abram has written, “Our task... is that of taking up the written word, with all of its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land... releasing the budded, earthly intelligence of our words, freeing them to respond to the speech of the things themselves—to the green uttering-forth of leaves from the spring branches” (273). Can we bring the integrity and buoyancy of more living language to our institutional communications, our articulation of policy, our assessment procedures, guidelines, vision statements, etc. and in what ways is that desirable and not? In our assessment of what constitutes viable research methodologies, rigorous scholarship, and the precise and specialized use of language in our disciplines, how far are we willing to stretch to foster language and multiple modes of communication that “respond to the speech of things,” that reflect life in its dynamic, co-creative vitality?

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### Sustaining an Environment for Students’ Inquiries

*Awakening, Susan Pearson*

*Awakening... waiting... held firmly upon the foundation that has given it birth... barely perceptible stirrings... swelling... expanding into the limits of its protective shell... its vital edges pulse with awakening...*
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*Tentative Emergence*, Susan Pearson

breaking open... emerging into light... new vulnerability... and new possibility... tender unfolding into the touch of sun and breeze, rainfall and dew... ready to receive, to respond and give forth into ever widening circles of life becoming

*Peony Unfolding*, Susan Pearson

In parallel processes, students and the subjects of their inquiries unfold, revealing latent forms and giving new expression to them. One meets the other in the dance. And learning communities, along with the many communities of home, shape and are shaped by this event, each an author and a character in
the ongoing stories of transformation.

As a faculty member in our Goddard community, I have been grateful for the opportunity to join students in their unfolding stories, to question, explore, and learn with them and to be witness to the blossoming that occurs. In cultivating the ground from which their studies arise, I hoped to support the curiosity and concern that brought them to Goddard.

There is great joy in making discoveries in areas of inquiry inspired by one’s passions. And there is also vulnerability in awakening to the unfamiliar and stepping into the unknown. Just as plants build strength on encountering the elements, assuming those elements do not overwhelm them, students’ passions, clarity, and resilience grow in the face of vulnerability when they are supported by sufficient and uniquely textured response.

*Into the Mystery*, Susan Pearson

Individually designed and guided studies at Goddard enable students to follow, in each moment, the questions and explorations that shine brightest for them. And access to a diverse range of faculty expertise and style enhances the options they have for
shaping that design. The low-residency model and low faculty-to-student ratio encourage engagement in rich conversations, collaboration, attention to detail, and ongoing interaction with one’s communities. As faculty we are able to attend to the discrete and changing needs of students over time.

Goddard’s model provides the structural and temporal spaciousness to attend to the how of students’ studies as much as the what, to seek in each moment a fruitful balance of appreciation, invitation, and challenge while seeding the landscape of their learning with new ideas and resources, to attend to the luminous growing edge, where burgeoning vitality and the courage to extend oneself into the unknown reside.

Boundaries that breathe in this way enable us to both hold and respond. And they open space, both challenging and safe, for something new to arrive. David Abram has written:

The activity we commonly call “prayer” springs from… the practice of directly addressing the animate surroundings. Prayer, in its most ancient and elemental sense, consists simply in speaking to things— to a maple grove, to a flock of crows, to the rising wind—rather than merely about things…. [Prayer springs from] the quality of respectful attention that such address entails—the steady suspension of discursive thought and the imaginative participation that keeps one from straying too far from oneself in one’s open honesty and integrity, a way of holding oneself in right relation to the other. (170)

In this sense, our students are received in prayer. They step into a spaciousness that invites their knowing the
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world and being in it prayerfully. Their gaze and entry into life becoming is prayer. The questions and explorations we share are prayer. And they themselves are prayer.

II. Finding My Methodology: Knowledge as Evolving Dialogue with Life
by Bernadette Miller

The Buddha had a special way to help us understand the object of our perception. He said that in order to understand, you have to be one with what you want to understand.
-- Thich Nhat Hanh

My undergraduate degree prepared me to analyze the damage that we have unwittingly inflicted upon our ecosystems and societies. It also gave me profound respect for intellectual inquiry rooted in alleged productivity. It did not introduce me to embodied, contemplative inquiry, a form of knowing that invites us to enter ever more deeply into the systems we would strengthen and study.

My journey through the Goddard Graduate Institute (GGI) Health Arts and Sciences (HAS) Master’s degree program convinced me that the renewal of self and world might require not only knowledge of specific practices but also, and perhaps more importantly, the cultivation of alternate ways of learning, perceiving, knowing, communicating, celebrating, and belonging. The authors whose work I engaged concur in the supposition that the capacity to heal human and natural communities arises through the cultivation of participatory and relational forms
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of knowing. The HAS program provides participants with the materials, structure and support to engage these forms of knowing. It proceeds from the premise that knowledge is an evolving dialogue that always impacts the world. When we understand this, we can choose to co-create knowledge that broadens our perspective, awakens our passion and enriches our world.

Children Know how to Know

The currant bushes twitched and giggled. Now and then a high-pitched exclamation of delight escaped from deep inside their branches. A passerby eyed them curiously, evidently surprised by their loquacity. I did not divulge their secret. Some moments previously, a flock of small students had descended upon this currant hedge. At first they had gathered berries from the edge. Then someone had spied irresistible fruits inside. Soon the whole class was crammed into the wide, tolerant shrubs. I witnessed incredible contortions that day. But I was most amazed by the way the berry bushes invited my students into the interior spaces of their own hungry hearts and simultaneously out into the intricate beauty of the surrounding ecology. Calculated barriers of boredom and indifference crumbled. Those barriers had been built for good reasons. Even at their age, many of these students were no strangers to trauma. Some resided in a homeless shelter encircled by concrete and steel. Expecting sweetness from the world would only have hurt them. But their innate desire to seek juicy berries and joy was evidently intact. So too was their eagerness to dissolve into discovery and communion.
Although we frequently feed disembodied facts to young students behind desks, some still seek the source of knowledge in ecstatic participation. Children who can climb trees, catch crayfish and build forts know something that we have forgotten: knowledge is embodied and interactive. It evolves as we encounter the world with curiosity, openness and delight. Bodies and hearts are essential tools. Novel perspectives are found not by severing and dissecting, but by stepping inside the hide of other beings and letting the world into our skin. Experiencing the surprise of seeing the world through other eyes is its own reward. We fall in love. We come back for more, entering, through the door of self, into other selves and into ever-deepening relationships with the living world. All that children know (which is much more than we might imagine) is an accidental byproduct of their endless appetite to participate playfully in the beauty and fecundity of our living world. It is the motion, impetus and outcome of living systems seeking to evolve through their offspring’s longing for belonging.

Ways of Knowing Nurtured by Goddard’s Health Arts and Sciences Program

The currant hedge children above were my students and teachers. The wild, urban garden we stewarded together was one of many classrooms gifted to me by my Goddard degree. During the course of my studies I taught and learned from students at a community garden in Utah and a home for abandoned children in Mexico. I also lived and worked with a nonprofit organization and intentional community in Mexico, tended five gardens, painted and wrote poetry and academic
papers. And I devoured books about permaculture, environmental restoration, indigenous science and ecosystem management, theoretical physics, ecopsychology, environmental philosophy, education, Nonviolent Communication, community building, writing, spirituality, and other subjects.

The Goddard Graduate Institute empowers students to participate in the renewal of resilient ecological systems and just social systems through scholarship, service and personal transformation. The HAS program proceeds from the premise that the understanding and healing of ecosystems, communities and individuals must become one act. This hypothesis results in a program that is specific and holistic, scientific and contemplative, personal and social. It equips students to participate effectively in the healing of so-called 'individuals' and the intertwined social and ecological systems that sustain them.

HAS students are required to select, study and practice a healing modality (or several of them). The HAS notion of a healing modality embraces all ancient and modern healing systems that bring balance and resilience to individual people and the human and natural communities that sustain them. HAS degree requirements enable students to obtain detailed understanding of the scientific aspects of their chosen modalities. This may involve locating and evaluating professional research and/or conducting original research. Because the program involves distance learning, each person is able to learn and practice within the context of a specific community. Studies must include deep exploration of the social, cultural, political and ecological aspects of the student's chosen community. Students are asked to explore their own biases, values and ethics and to develop a functional healing
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philosophy. They are also invited to heal themselves by engaging in continuing self-care practices. This requirement rises from the recognition that seeing the world in its wholeness, contributing to its healing and becoming whole oneself are inextricably entwined.

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of the HAS program (and of the GGI) is a commitment to creating students and courses of study embedded in and responsive to the needs of the wider world. HAS students learn while addressing pressing issues related to the health, equity and beauty of their communities. You may wonder whether active engagement in the world might be premature or even distracting given that students are still studying. In actuality, the acknowledgment that all knowledge transforms world and self, for better or worse, impels students to seek sensitive methodologies that can enrich other beings and the world. Goddard Faculty members provide timely and thorough introductions to ethics and research methodologies. They then set students free to analyze and design their own inquiries.

In addition to studying various research methodologies (some of which I had employed as an undergraduate student), I read Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, a book recommended by Goddard faculty members. The author, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, presents a powerful critique of western academic research. Although I am not indigenous, I had pursued environmental studies and cultural anthropology as an undergraduate student. So I mistakenly assumed that I understood something of the devastating impacts of academic research on indigenous communities. I had also lived on the White Earth Reservation and worked
closely with an elder who had been exiled to government boarding school as a child. When I knew her, she was in her eighties and was working tirelessly to supply traditional foods and medicines to diabetic people on the reservation. My relationship with that woman moved my theoretical understanding into embodied knowledge that included heartache, respect and love. Working on the White Earth Reservation and Reading *Decolonizing Methodologies* led me to seek alternatives to knowledge that is extracted (often violently) from 'research subjects' and then interpreted through the lens of western science—an allegedly neutral tool that is in fact influenced by the cultural alienation that fuels racism, patriarchy and the subjugation of nature.

But my mind was still colonized by narrow definitions of knowledge and research. I planned to interview many people during the course of my studies, as social scientists do. Fortunately my attempts to satisfy HAS degree requirements—HAS students must explore multiple cultural views—and my memories of White Earth redirected me. I read books and articles by Gregory Cajete, Alison Deming & Lauret Savoy, Melissa Nelson, Vandana Shiva, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Malidoma Somé and others. And I lived and worked in Mexico. My readings and surroundings led me to suspect that our obsession with interviewing individuals can become a tool for perpetuating cultural appropriation as we harvest and consume intellectual crops we did not steward. I found myself longing for a deeper, slower, more organic method of learning rooted in reciprocity with people and place. I wanted my friends (not research subjects) to offer stories and information only when our relationship could bear that weight. And I wanted to transform myself into fertile terrain
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capable of receiving and sheltering whatever might be offered.

Surprisingly, my readings revealed a methodology that satisfied these longings. I discovered that natural and social scientists at the cutting-edge of their fields are starting to articulate insights that some children instinctively embody in play. And ancient wisdom traditions from around the world have always agreed with children in their assessment of knowing. Knowledge, these disparate sources say, is a living, evolving exchange that arises at the interface between an animate world and our ways of experiencing. Like all exchanges, it irrevocably alters the knower, the known and the surrounding environment (something I found in the work of many writers listed in the works I consulted). Knowledge, in other words, is a continuing conversation, not a destination. It can become a hostile exchange or a creative, evolutionary force that facilitates the emergence and development of complex, responsive and resilient living-systems. It is not an inert instrument of abstract understanding. It is an active agent of change, capable of enriching our planet and all her inhabitants.

Knowledge that nourishes and creates comes through people who have taken time to remember themselves as essential aspects of a fecund, beautiful and intelligent world. Such people remain responsive to their surrounding social and ecological environments as well as their inner yearnings. Living systems theory tells us that we are evolving conduits of interacting matter, energy and information, not bounded entities. Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown explain that all living systems, from atoms to animals to planets to galaxies, are constantly changing. They can become increasingly
intricate and resilient by meticulously monitoring and responding to currents of matter-energy and information that flow through them. Sometimes systems must disintegrate and reorganize in order to adapt and evolve. If we want to partner with the exquisite living-systems on earth (human communities and the larger ecological communities in which they are embedded) we too can become increasingly responsive by carefully observing and interacting with currents of matter-energy and information around and within us. During this process, we, like all evolving systems, must sometimes dissolve and reorganize aspects of our selves so that we can skillfully serve our purpose. This journey into knowledge is rooted in participation and reciprocity.

Faculty advisors in the GGI are critical components on this journey of dissolution, reorganization and creative contribution. They have extensive experience healing themselves and participating in the healing of other people and systems. So they are well equipped to support the development and growth of students. They provide resources and suggestions to help students craft comprehensive and integrated study plans. They are available for fine-tuning and problem solving. And they carefully read and respond to all student work. Each student is ideally paired with an advisor with experience in the student’s area or process of study. Of course this is not always a possibility since many students (and faculty members) are involved in initiating novel areas of inquiry. However students can work with multiple advisors during the course of their degree program in order to obtain many perspectives.

The advisor with whom I chose to study was also interested in nature, children, art, contemplative inquiry and
other subjects too numerous to mention. After completing an undergraduate education that was mostly mapped by required texts, I felt like a child in a currant hedge when I was told to choose copious quantities of relevant and exciting materials. My advisor would usually say: “Great plan! Have you heard of this book or considered this modality?” Each semester I compiled a list of books and activities long enough to insure significant mental and spiritual digestion.

The best aspect of working with my advisor was watching her in action. In addition to acting as a library, she was able to embody the holistic method of inquiry she investigated. The depth, quality and care of her listening let me and many other students to hear longings lurking in self and world. The following reflections were inspired by her.

Enfolded in your quiet curiosity and love, I see possibilities. Because you notice, name and nurture that which is whole and vital within me, I am beginning to develop that kernel of integrity. And I am observing the small beings in my care with more tenderness and trust...You proffer questions that challenge beliefs and invite new perspectives...During advising group meetings, I watch you fishing for the miracles you see in every being. After departing our circle, I catch myself listening also for the miraculous.

**Conclusion**

As a student in the Goddard Graduate Institute Health Arts and Sciences Program, I found my methodology: the way I want to learn, contribute and be for the rest of eternity. It involves sinking deeply into stillness, curiosity,
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celebration, sensory perception, living community, scientific study and artistic inquiry. It asks me to dismantle ideas and ways of being that have become too narrow in order to make room for the unknown. This is a challenge that I grow toward by beginning constantly and failing frequently. The support that I received at Goddard enabled me to enter this methodology (as well as the rich store of scientific study and artistic inquiry on which it rests) in order to participate more effectively in the healing of world and self. For that gift I am eternally and profoundly grateful.

Post Script

I now live and work with a nonprofit organization and intentional community that is rooted in many of the principles and practices I studied at Goddard College including: Urban Permaculture, the Work that Reconnects, Nonviolent Communication, Bill Plotkin’s model of ecological, soul-centered human development and poetry. The community is also fed by streams that I did not encounter during my graduate work: Dominic Barter's Restorative Circles, Gandhian nonviolence, Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement, Gift Ecology and Franciscan spirituality. I cook, garden, work and play with children, write and share poetry, perform harp music for workshops and assist with whatever needs to be done. This experience, like my Goddard journey and all worthwhile endeavors, is incredibly arduous but ultimately extremely satisfying. It forces me to celebrate, propagate, play and question everything that I think I know about myself, other people and the world.
III. Dimensions of Learning in Time: A Contemplative Approach to Learning by Linda Schneck

Do we learn in time, or beyond time, or throughout time? Does what we have learned continue to unfold within us, offering larger vistas as our mind and heart can bear more of an expanding universe both within and without? As a contemplative learner and teacher, I would answer all of these questions with a joyful yes.

I came to the (GGI) Health Arts and Sciences (HAS) Master’s degree program from a life already immersed in contemplative ways of being. For years I had struggled with the commonly held belief that such a life must be lived separately from the world. I lived in remote areas and meditated alone for long periods of time until my three passions—music-making, being with the dying, and beekeeping—thrust me out into the world.

Was it possible for such seemingly disparate fields of exploration to be woven into a unified field of study, let alone into satisfying work in the world? I was tired of what David Abrams has called the “cult of expertise.” I didn’t want to know something once and for all. I sought, and continue to seek, a life full of continuing revelation. How might I continue to grow in knowledge over time, I asked myself? As a Goddard graduate student, I saw the potential for establishing a lifetime way of learning that would begin with my own plan of study developed with the help of my mentor.

I have always been fascinated by time. As human beings, we have instinctively understood that we experience
the movement of time in relation to the sun, moon, and stars. With this understanding as a seedbed, the experiences of a multitude of human beings have been translated into image and word through individual moments of revelation. Eventually these thoughts and images began to travel through time to be codified into disciplines of thought and action. I do not study alone. I study throughout time as the universe reveals its secrets before my loving and attentive gaze.

As a student at Goddard, I learned the art of intensifying my gaze in a way that did not grasp but which invited revelation. Was there really a difference between study and meditation? Could I explore through an interweaving of thought and feeling, intuition and analysis? I was finally realizing that I was not studying and learning alone, but within a community of humans and animals, earth, wind, fire. Within the vibrant buzz of the Goddard community, we all stretched beyond what was comfortable, beyond what was known. Ancient peoples believed that their prayers and songs encouraged the sun to rise each day. On this small campus in Plainfield, Vermont, we too were helping the sun to rise each day. As we returned to our communities after week-long residencies each semester, we carried and shared enlarged visions of the world.

We were studying and meditating and exploring within circles of community that included our next-door neighbors and the kids down the street. We were not separated into cults of expertise. We were consciously studying and creating within the world.

What does this mean today, five years after graduation from the Goddard HAS program? My intention is not to define and corral meaning. Instead, I desire that the reader
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experience with me how the unfolding of learning can happen in a living way that does not repudiate the element of mystery. That is what happened for me as a Goddard contemplative student in “time.”

Learning this way is not easy and is sometimes uncomfortable because answers are not already known—they form, layer upon layer, dimension within dimension, as we seek that which we are meant to come to know. Each person forms their own understanding of what it means to be a contemplative learner, and then they get to live this out, not in some distant future when they have received their degree, but now, within the fecundity of this very moment.

In my own studies and research, I explored three interweaving and progressively expanding circles of community and relationship within the fields of acoustic ecology, contemplative phenomenology of the harp, and palliative care within the life-world of dementia. Inspired by the Goethean understanding of metamorphosis as foundational to life, I used revelation as a research methodology to allow for the ongoing transformation of my phenomenological experiences into embodied intellect. With honeybees, birds, and bells as alchemical emblems, my research explored the transformative nature of our sound relationships within body and world.

A life-long musician, I developed a series of Harpistic Archetypes to serve as activating and integrating influences in the formation of the contemplative harpist. I researched the healing relationships that can develop between the contemplative musician-clinician and the person living and dying within dementia. I found that a mutual metamorphosis of limits evolved as, through sound, my gaze upon the
chronobiology of the body expanded into insight into the *kairobiology of the soul*, a phrase that I coined. My time at Goddard solidified and clarified my intellectual and creative leanings. Today, in my work as a music-thanatologist in varied health-care settings, new dimensions of understanding and creativity continue to emerge.

Life is based on rhythm, from the pulsing of our heartbeat, to the inching of the sun across the sky, to the pulsing light of sudden inspiration. The Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), gives us insight into our rhythmic life through what has come to be called the Linnaean flower clock. He noticed that the hours of the day could be depicted through flower openings that are sequential but which also co-mingle to create a unique daily expression of the rhythmic uprisings of life. These rhythmic uprisings nurture the fullness and beauty of our world, as well as the expansiveness of our thought. When the flower clock is considered as a whole, it can be likened to the moment of inspiration when all the many details, dissections, and side-roads of thought coalesce into one pure knowing. *Chronos* and *kairos* have come into conjunction.

Chronos is the layer of time that affects our lives most deeply in the 21st century. This linear god speaks loudly in terms of vision and endpoints. It says look forward, watch the flow, dissect, be ready to predict the direction, purpose, and completion of what is happening. Find the boundaries, establish the container. Within the light of cognitive reasoning, it commands that we use consistency as a determination of truth.

Yet within the light of embodied reasoning, there is another layer of knowing experienced through the ancient
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Greek god Kairos. This god speaks in a whispering tone barely heard on the edge of consciousness. It communicates with sideways glances and raised eyebrows and intimates something wholly unknown. It also values vision, but an inner vision that calls for fully embodied thinking that integrates all of our senses as well as the chronos-laden intellect. Kairos tells us that knowing arises from a conjunction of the whole sensorium with what longs to be known.

We can learn through experiencing chronological time as reflected in the hourly movement of the blossoming of the earth discussed above. But this is only the beginning. Knowledge deepens into wisdom when we make the leap to the kairos of sudden inspiration and revelation. This knowledge turned wisdom not only feeds our souls but brings inspiration that can nurture the whole world.

The word abstract arises from the Latin abstractus which means to draw away. As contemplative thinkers consciously integrating chronos and kairos, we are choosing to enter into and bring to completion rather than to draw away information. As a beekeeper, I think of the alchemical act of transforming pollen into the sweetness of honey for our healing and nourishment. The honeybees experience and complete the pollen path of the flowers pictured in the Linnaean clock. All of this happens within spiraling layers of time, a continuous dissolving and arising anew with mystery and serendipity at the core, in conjunction with the linear movement of cognitive reasoning.

The people of the Navajo tribe might call this a meeting on the pollen path. Pollen is the fertile essence of flowers and budding trees. Gathered by honeybees, it is taken
back to the hive to be ingested and transformed into the liquid light of honey. In turn, as we study and research in our area of interest, we ingest this flowery light of earth and sky, rain and sun. We might wonder—how does this activity of transformation that we are embedded within continue in time to be revealed through us? Could our studies as contemplative learners be likened to a journey on the pollen path?

Pollen is the emblem of peace, of happiness, of prosperity, and it is supposed to bring blessings. When, in the Origen Legend, one of the war gods bids his enemy to put his foot down in pollen, he constrains him to peace. When in prayer the devotee says, may the trail be in pollen, he pleads for happy, peaceful life. (Schevill 155)

What if intellectual articulation is recognized as not the endpoint or ultimate accomplishment but the aftermath, a sign that something has transpired, something has shared its breath with us? What if learning is also a dying—a dying to our small, self-conscious, knowing selves? In olden times, during the traditional Irish funeral wake for one who had passed from this earthly realm, the material form of the person’s presence would often be tenderly positioned on the kitchen table where it would transmute before the hearts and spirits of its loved ones. Knowing and learning may hold this same re-emerging emptiness as we sit with what was known, already dead and in the past, and recognize it as that bit which was left behind when something transpired.

An image arises: that of a large iron bell. Massive and not easily moveable by human beings, still it rings. Harmonies converge, coalescing into a blossoming tone that expands
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until its energy fades and we think that the end has come, but
two minutes later a new tone emerges, one unheard of and
unimagined. Then five minutes later a low, low bass tone
emerges, so low it seems to emerge from the earth, and it is
as if the sounding metal is returning to its original state,
waiting to begin again through the next intersection of earth
and sound with human yearning. Just so, tones beyond our
human hearing have continued to meet to create a new
uprising of sound.

Here in the Goddard Graduate Institute, we know
that the scientific method, the taking apart and reflecting
upon each part, is essential to learning and teaching the
whole. But we also know that this is only a step in the process
of preparing a place for the mystery of knowing to sound
uniquely through each person. We are brought into
conjunction with what I call our own kairobiology. As we
learn, the fullness of time settles within us, deep as a ringing
bell, and this time does not move in a linear, mathematical
fashion. It moves in a more circular fashion through uprisings
of intensity.

Is that what knowledge is, an uprising of intense
moments of revelation that we can prepare for but cannot
force to happen? Could this be why learning and teaching are
at their heart contemplative practices, each a practice of
kairos, a listening and waiting for the moment of knowing to
appear? That moment of knowing requires that mystery
remain at its core. We must not be deceived into thinking that
knowing has an endpoint. We are always entering, through
grace and will, into knowing.

As a phenomenologist, I strive to experience the
world without assumptions from the past that can blind me
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to what is wanting to engage with me in this moment. This is an impossible task, which is partly why I love it. Already, I have failed, and in this failing the possibilities of the whole world are opened to me.

Our human tendencies and education encourage us to look to our past experiences in order to interpret the present moment. Yet, when life is experienced through kairotic expectation, this moment breathes through me like a cleansing wind and I am left with a sensing wonder and full-hearted emptiness. Learning becomes true awakening.

Once I asked a friend, how do you learn? She looked at me, surprised, and said,

“Why, I learn with my heart.”

Can learning touch our hearts? Perhaps a beauty that touches the heart keeps all in balance. Pollen in all its beauty perches on a flower— waiting to give, to receive, ready to be blown by the winds of the earth onto something new. It balances on its unique edge in readiness, moving yet still, formed yet unformed, becoming yet manifest . . . just as we all are.

This is why knowledge and learning ultimately bring beauty and peace to the world. Yes, the actions that arise out of our knowledge are essential, but just as essential is the inner kairotic moment of emptiness and wonder, that dimension of time that opens within us feelings of wholeness, feelings of love, as the beauty and mystery of the universe overflow into our once-small heart, and we are enheartened for all time.
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Worked Consulted


---. *World as Lover, World as Self: A Guide to Living Fully in*
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---. *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're In Without Going Crazy.* New World Library, 2012.


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"Goddard is a Place for People Willing To Bet On Themselves": Graduates Steve Wright, Kris Hege, Mike Alvarez, Karl Stenske, David White, Justin Kagan, Nicolette Stosur-Bassett, and Larry Greer

When Steve Wright, a recent graduate from the Social Innovation and Sustainability program, said, “Goddard is a place for people willing to bet on themselves,” he was naming what draws so many students to study at this college. People who are deeply engaged with their work in the world and ready to take the next step, or more aptly, leap to deepen that work find their study here gives them support and structure to further develop their vision as well as the nuts and bolts of putting that vision into action. Here are eight short pieces by or about GGI alumni (third-person profiles written by Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg) on their Goddard experience, most featured in the GGI blog, Worlds of Change.

Steve Wright: Using Trash to Build Community

Steve Wright, student in Social Innovation and Sustainability, knows a lot about being willing to bet on himself. He founded his own international organization, 4 Walls International, on the premise that “Trash creates jobs, sustainable housing, economic productivity and a healthier environment.” 4 Walls International helps local communities create projects and dwellings of art and utility out of trash to enhance communities, create jobs, and bring people together. The dwellings—serving as community centers, schools, creative gathering places, affordable housing, and more—are
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also instrumental to the communities that help create them. The organization also works toward infrastructure improvements and other infill development projects.

“Our projects promote a higher quality of life, environmental stewardship, and improved access to water, food, shelter, and sanitation,” Steve wrote for the organizational website (which is available in English and Spanish). This entails a four-part process he and others in his organization facilitate:

Step 1. Community engagement ensures a locally relevant and locally powered project.
Step 2. Unite government, philanthropy, NGOs and local leaders around community vision.
Step 3. Collect trash within the community.
Step 4. Use trash to build community vision through educational workshops.

As he explains, “We use a lot of community engagement to try and shift power dynamics in historically ignored communities. I wanted to create a bi-national policy for environmental social justice work....and that've evolved into how can we serve communities anywhere, how can we go to any community and work on behalf of their interests.”

Projects include partnering with Los Tecnico in Choachi, Columbia to build homes using the two largest tire domes on the planet; working with local women in Racho Las Flores in Tijuana, Mexico to repurpose over 500 tired and 2,000 plastic bottles into office space for the preeminent native plant nursery in the area; and working with residents, land owners, agencies, and organizations in San Diego, CA to create a state park using trash from the Tijuana River. The San Diego-based organization also works with the Deportee
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Conservation Core, an organization in nearby Tijuana, Mexico that helps recent deportees from the United States develop vocational skills, serve the community, and enhance conservation efforts.

In reflecting back on what led him to Goddard, he adds, “I think that this is a place where you can be successful if you have a vision, if you're committed to it, if you take it to a certain point, and you know you need thought partners to boost you and help give you some more perspective.”

Justin Kagan on Enlightenment, Aesthetics, and Education as a Spiritual Experience

Have you ever tripped into an experience that altered the trajectory of your life forever? After finishing my undergraduate at a small private college in Florida, I was seeking quality graduate education that was accessible without moving or quitting my job. It seemed like an unreasonable ask and I anticipated having to choose between grad school and living near my family. Naturally, I began my search with Google. I learned of something called a limited residency model. It provided a space for students to visit campus every term for an intensive time of scholarship and community before heading back home to do the work of the semester. This appealed to me over an online model, which in my mind had question marks in the areas of rigor, respectability, and community. After more thorough research, I learned that Goddard College had a great reputation for delivering graduate education through this limited residency model. (Perhaps delivering is not the right word, but I will dig into this in a bit.) The Goddard Graduate Institute was a good fit for
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me with its history of progressive pedagogy, its esteemed faculty, and its concentration in Consciousness Studies.

I came to Goddard with three primary questions: What is enlightenment? How do we achieve it? And, how do we teach it? My first semester was spent exploring various world traditions to try and answer my first question – one that could certainly be a thesis in itself. My advisor for that first semester viewed the world in a way that I had never considered before. She challenged me to look at my graduate studies in a completely different way. I was subconsciously trying to arrange my studies to fit a more traditional Buddhist Studies concentration, but she helped me put together my true interests: art and beauty, personal development, culture and consciousness.

The following three semesters, I worked with the Consciousness Studies Coordinator directly. His experience in psychology and Indian culture/religion served to expose me to new ways of thinking about enlightenment and consciousness, practice and aesthetics. My experiences with both advisors were magnificent. They challenged me to go beyond my comfort zone and produce scholarship that contributed to the overall conversation on consciousness. In my thesis, titled “The Aesthetics of Developing Consciousness through Practice,” I first identify an aesthetic element of consciousness – a specific look and feel influenced largely by one’s social location and cultural context. I also discuss how the elements that build this aesthetic contribute to the resulting developed consciousness through a tradition’s engaged practices. For example, the consciousness developed by a Chinese Taoist through meditation will have a different aesthetic than that of an American Christian who practices
prayer. Opening the door to the realm of aesthetics in the discussion of consciousness provided a language to explain and identify the otherwise ineffable.

The one-on-one experience I had with my advisors is something I will always cherish about this experience. They were both supportive when life got in the way of school, yet challenged me to be my best in spite of those life circumstances. They offered me keen insight into my area of study in their responses to my semester packets and engaged me numerous times in one-off discussions about tangents of interest (one of which led to my focus in aesthetics!). In speaking with undergrad classmates who went on to schools like Yale, Harvard, and Columbia, I know that I would not have had anywhere near the same personal experience had I pursued a similar path. Knowledge is not delivered at Goddard. Advisors are not sages on stages professing about their subject of expertise. Instead, they are guides challenging students to dive deeper, question the dominant paradigm, and seek the uncommon truth. I love this about the Goddard community; there is a respect and sense of obligation towards the truth in scholarship, especially when that truth is a complex tapestry. It is not about recitation of quotes from important theorists, but instead developing an intimate relationship with the work they did and bringing them into the conversation about one’s topic of study. It is not about regurgitating delivered information. It is about understanding that knowledge is constructed and also how knowledge is constructed. It is about recognizing that the way we know what we know plays a deep role in our studies—and discovering new, sometimes uncommon, ways of knowing.

One of the mantras at Goddard is to challenge the
dominant paradigm—and the community embodies this idea that we do not need to accept the status quo as normal and unchangeable. My classmates and I all wrote into existence through our work new ways of thinking and provided original commentary on the human experience. Had I gone to a school with a more traditional model, I would not be able to say that I graduated alongside poets and historians, comedienes and nonprofit leaders, activists and game changers. I look at the classes who came before me and those who have come after and it is easy to see that the pedagogy of Goddard attracts people who are not only changing the game, but rewriting what it means to play it.

Since graduation I have been working with a large company that provides support services for online programs of accredited educational institutions. Because of my Goddard education, I am able to easily find solutions to problems that others find complex. I have developed a creativity of thought, a deep understanding of complexity, a greater respect for communities outside of my own, and a language with which I can communicate with them. I have Goddard to thank for these developments. My supervisors have also recognized this improvement as evidenced by my two promotions since achieving my degree. I now work to support a team of great people who support students in their progress through academia. I serve to develop new and exciting ways of engaging students and have been charged with innovating old internal and partner-facing processes to help the programs run smoother. My future goals include teaching at the college level to help others challenge their own views and manifest a deep sense of understanding around the complexities of our universe.
I hope others will seek out and find this magical place filled with amazing people doing world-changing work. When Goddardites say “trust the process,” it is not only about navigating the experience of semester work; it is also about the process of self-discovery and development. In this light, I can say that my graduate education was also a spiritual experience.

**Kris Hege on Survivor-Centric Resiliency Support for Sexual Assault Survivors**

Goddard is more than a school or an institution, it is more than a campus and faculty and staff. It is a garden where seeds of passion and inspiration are planted, nourished, and grow, sometimes wildly, into extraordinary forces of healing, empowerment, and justice for ourselves, our communities, and the world.

I came to Goddard (for Individualized MA study) with a deep sensitivity to the ubiquity of rape culture in the United States and the resulting pervasive message that sexual violence is encouraged, normalized, and ultimately the survivor’s fault. Knowing that technology has played a significant role in the dissemination of these violent and oppressive messages in our society, I hoped that I might find a way to use my experience from nearly 20 years as a computer programmer and data analyst to employ technology to do something in opposition to rape culture; perhaps through discussion groups, online activism networks, or some educational platform.

At the same time that I started at Goddard I also started doing some alternative (restorative) justice volunteer
work on a Circle of Support and Accountability (CoSA) through a local community justice center. In that capacity I became very interested in questions surrounding justice. What is justice? How is justice created? What are the strengths and limitations on traditional justice criminal justice models? How are punishment and justice related? What are some alternative justice models? Do any of these models serve sexual assault survivors? What kind of model might better serve sexual assault survivors? To answer these questions I surveyed several theories of justice and examined a wide range of criminal justice practices both traditional State-run systems and alternative community-based options. I also continued my engagement and critically examined the CoSA work I was doing.

I began to question the victim-centric philosophy of the restorative justice model in cases like murder or sexual violence where what has been taken or destroyed can never truly be restored. I began to envision what justice might look like from a truly survivor-centered community-based perspective. This raised a new question: Can a new victim support service for battered women be developed that engenders the political, philosophical, and grassroots spirit of feminist-run rape crisis centers; provides individualized long-term support and care like restorative justice Circles of Support and Accountability; and maintains itself in a volunteer run, non-professionalized, and self-sustaining model like Alcoholics Anonymous and other peer-support networks?

Since graduation I have consulted with a local battered women's organization to begin the process of actualizing the vision of a self-sustaining, volunteer-run,
community-based, survivor-centric resiliency support network for sexual assault survivors that I developed in my time at Goddard. This network will work closely with and extend the services of local crisis intervention organizations to add long-term peer-support to their catalog of survivor resource options. The network will work with survivors in direct opposition to the inherent injustice of rape culture to provide a more just and compassionate community response to sexual and domestic violence. Additionally it will draw on the tremendous emotional, spiritual, and psychological healing power that comes from women supporting women.

As excited and hopeful as I am about this project, I am equally excited and passionate about the Goddard model of adult education. Each semester I was inspired by students and faculty who are true visionaries doing amazing work in the world. As a representative on student and academic councils I also had a unique opportunity to get more deeply involved in this institution founded on the idea that self-directed education can help build a more civil and just society. On several occasions I experienced the Goddard community that sometimes seems so dispersed live up to its social justice philosophy by pulling together with tremendous compassion and courage in the face of injustice.

My entire experience of transformative progressive education led me to start working toward an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Educational Studies with a concentration on Education for Social Justice. From that foundation I hope join the ranks of social justice educators and spend my future career nourishing, supporting, and learning with tomorrow's activists and visionaries in the tradition I came to appreciate through my time at Goddard.
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David White on Collecting and Preserving
Boston’s LGBTQ History

Having completed my BA at Goddard, I was familiar with the format and model. When I decided to pursue a graduate degree, I did look at other schools but found that none offered the same level of flexibility and freedom that I found at Goddard, so it just made sense to enroll in a program that I knew would support my interests and not require my studies to fit into any one particular category.

Since graduating in August of 2015, I’ve been working with The History Project on collecting and preserving Boston’s LGBTQ history. This work has given me the opportunity to explore the various aspects of queer history that have been asymmetrically represented or left out of the historical narratives. Additionally, I’ve done some public speaking on various aspects of queer history and am currently working on two articles; one on early AIDS treatments in Boston and another on the political power of gay pornography.

It is difficult to adequately describe how my Goddard experience changed my life and worldview. As someone that had mostly negative experiences in education, Goddard was the first time anyone encouraged me to explore my areas of interest and gave me the scholarly tools to do so as a critical thinker. It’s broadened my understanding of what is and isn’t “academic” work and ignited a passion that I never knew I would find.

It should also be said that the diversity of the staff, faculty, and students at Goddard has dramatically changed the ways in which I understand and interpret others. Because everyone is studying different subjects from different
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perspectives, I frequently came up against opinions, interests, and ideas that were antithetical to what I believed to be “true” or “right.” Initially, this was jarring and frustrating, but over time I learned to accept the variety of perspectives and began to see how different ideas and opinions can be an asset in developing a better understanding of any subject.

Karl Stenske: The Hidden Life of an Adopted Child

Karl Stenske would be the first to tell you he loves his adoptive parents; they've provided him with a good upbringing and a good life. But for years he sensed something was amiss. It wasn't until he began the Individualized MA program, at first intending to study TLA and motivation speaking, that he started to study adoptive laws and particularly to look at the issue of birthright: an adoptee's right to know about his/her history. His study led to a MA thesis on “The Hidden Life of an Adopted Child,” which makes the case for how all adoptees, simply by virtue of being separated from their birth parents, suffer trauma that needs to be recognized and addressed. His description of the work for his graduating study presentation captures the essence of what he developed:

Relinquishment from one’s birth mother is a traumatic experience that has a lasting and expansive impact on an adoptee’s life. Looking through the lens of my own adoption I confront the commonly held beliefs that an infant is not impacted or aware of being given up. Attempting to counter the undermining effects of the adoption experience I look at trauma, how it functions and the need for adoptees
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to know, understand and have access to their birth records and cultural identity. In addressing the loss and its far reaching influence I identify how grieving is necessary and often overlooked. Finally, I will share about my development of Rationalization Therapy and how I believe it can help adoptees in their healing process.

Karl's work altogether speaks to how claiming and naming the trauma of adoption and seeking appropriate help can help adoptees lead healthier lives. Faculty member Karen Campbell says of Karl's work, “What [Karl] is sharing is so compelling it could well do more than provide support to those who share similar histories, but also those of us who rarely think of what adoption actually means.”

Having already worked as a motivational speaker before he came to Goddard, after graduation, Karl developed a business as a post-adoption specialist for adoptees, families, and professionals; his services include public speaking, consulting, a mentorship program, and workshops, all of which grew out of his MA study. He's also in the process of having his thesis material adapted into and published as a book, *The Hidden Life of an Adopted Child: Understanding the Impact of Adoption*. He also works as Director of Foster, Adoption and Kinship for Olive Crest, a foster family agency.

Mike Alvarez on Creativity, Suicide, and the Necessity of Seeing New Connections to Address Social Ills

I came to Goddard with a clear purpose: to study the paradoxical relationship between phenomenal creativity and suicide. I say ‘paradoxical’ because if creativity is the ultimate
transformation of existence, why is it that so many creative people end their lives? On the surface, it seems like I could have pursued my research in any MA or PhD program in psychology, but in truth, Goddard’s Individualized Studies MA program was the only place. The only place where I could study human lives, in all their complexity, without reducing them to mere statistics or the machinations of the brain. The only place where I could step outside the comfort zone of a single discipline. The only place where ‘self’ is a valid source of knowledge and its examination an equally valid method.

My reasons for studying creativity and suicide are personal. During my undergraduate years, I suffered from anxiety, depression, and paranoia so severe that at some point, I thought the only remedy was death. After a failed suicide attempt, I was admitted to the psychiatric ward of a hospital, and upon release, I sought refuge in psychology. I learned much about the biochemical basis of so-called mental illness, its sociodemographic correlates, and its statistical distribution nationally and globally. But as fascinating and as important as these were, they did not speak to me personally. Or touch me. Or move me. I share Susanna Kaysen’s sentiment when she writes of her diagnosis with borderline personality disorder in her memoir, Girl, Interrupted: “It’s accurate, but it’s not profound.”

At Goddard, I immersed myself in the literature on suicide, human creativity, and eventually, trauma. I was timid at first when it came to venturing outside psychology, but soon I found myself reading historical, sociological, philosophical, and literary texts, which my advisors encouraged. I also immersed myself in the works and words
of those individuals whose lives I studied. For example, while researching Iris Chang, the historian who documented Japan’s gruesome atrocities in the Pacific during World War II, I traveled to the Hoover Archives to comb through boxes of personal artifacts she had left behind. And when writing a case study of Kurt Cobain, I listened to every song he had ever written, sung, and performed. The purpose of my work was not to diagnose these individuals, or to quantify their experiences, but to arrive at a humanistic understanding of what drove them to create and what led them to end their lives—in their own subjective terms.

Over the course of my study, I came to see myself reflected in these persons. In each I saw a fragment of me. Like Iris Chang, I, too, am the child of Asian parents who endured the hardships of immigration. Like Kurt Cobain, I too lived through a broken and impoverished childhood. And like the digital artist Jeremy Blake and his soulmate, filmmaker Theresa Duncan, I too suffered from paranoid delusions that evil forces were conspiring against me. But in each of these persons, I also saw the creativity I had long denied, forgotten to nourish. My advisors urged me to nurture this creativity, and so I wrote short memoir pieces recounting my struggle with mental illness and admission to a hospital. I also began writing my own history of trauma. Soon, I found myself taking photographs of moments I found arresting, and weaving tales around them—some fantastical or otherworldly, others grounded in so-called reality. These stories and images became ‘data’ to analyze for yet another case study: my self.

My learning experience at Goddard is comparable to what one sees when two mirrors are placed face to face. The
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image on the surface stretches inward infinitely, beckoning the viewer to look deeper while teaching the viewer humility, for one cannot grasp all that one sees. I entered the IMA program to study suicide and creativity and write psychological case studies, but in the process, I learned quite a bit about myself. This self-knowledge, in turn, afforded new insights into the phenomena that brought me to Goddard in the first place. The culmination of my studies is a book-length thesis that juxtaposes memoir with psychobiography, theoretical musings with self-analysis. Such a thesis could not have been produced elsewhere, and such a thesis was a modest starting point rather than an endpoint.

After graduating from the IMA program, I returned to Goddard to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing and continue my memoir (now represented by an agent). Currently, I’m pursuing a PhD in Communication, and a Graduate Certificate in Film Studies, at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where I am studying suicidal individuals’ use of technology to create meaning in their lives, and the representation of the ‘cybersuicide’ phenomenon in moving image media. Simultaneously, I am also in the midst of fulfilling a contract for a book titled *The Paradox of Suicide and Creativity*.

On the surface, it would appear as if I am someone who ‘collects’ degrees with no apparent relation to one another. One might ask: communication, film, psychology, creative writing … what’s the connection? But the greatest gift of a Goddard education is that it enables one to see such connections—to look at a problem or issue from multiple vantage points, and to communicate one’s discoveries in a language accessible to all. I’m a firm believer that no
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discipline should remain entrenched in its own silo, for interdisciplinarity cultivates a sense of shared responsibility. For instance, turning the raw materials of databases, which are fragmented and decontextualized, into stories that possess unity and coherence draws attention to the lives behind numbers, making researchers accountable for their actions. Likewise, placing textual and visual media within their respective contexts invites sociological questions that go beyond a mere discussion of aesthetics.

By adopting an interdisciplinary stance toward the study of suicide and creativity, I am able to ask (and seek answers to) such questions as: How has the medicalization of suicide turned works of art into symptoms of pathological minds? What techniques do filmmakers use to naturalize, or subvert, prevailing attitudes toward suicide, and to evoke sympathy (or disgust) for individuals with diagnosable mental disorders? How have suicide attempt survivors used social networking sites to create affective communities? And what are the benefits and harms of narrativizing one’s traumas online, as opposed to writing them in one’s diary? The list of questions one can ask is almost endless.

Psychology and psychiatry currently have a monopoly on suicide, which is not surprising, for they have advanced our understanding of the suicidal mind to an extent no other discipline has. However, there are dangers to placing all our bets on the ‘psy’ disciplines, especially when they turn reductionistic—and in many ways they have, or perhaps have always been. I do not deny that many suicidal persons can attest to being helped by current treatment regimens and by the medical model writ large. Nevertheless, there is something troubling about treating symptoms as primary and
stories as secondary, and about viewing the mentally ill as hapless victims of a defective genetic makeup—instead of agents who have survived terrible circumstances and possess the capacity for change. When suicide is studied in a vacuum, the result is a view of humankind as an assemblage of raw parts that can be tinkered with by anyone with power vested in them.

Of course, this applies not only to suicide, but to any human or social ill. Now more than ever, it is important to cultivate the ability to see, and realize, connections: between knowledge and the context of its production; between form and content; between art and science, culture and technology; between self, world, and other. And this Goddard teaches, and teaches well.

Nicolette Stosur-Bassett on Art and Sustainability in Action

I’m fortunate to have been raised in a family environment that valued education highly and I was privileged growing up to attend a variety of learning institutions. On my educational journey, I was exposed to varied and diverse pedagogies, many of which valued independent study and self-learning as their core. That being said, four years of public high school left me jaded and disappointed by years of pointless test-taking and unclear educational expectations; I didn’t know what I was learning or why, and was left with questioning the application of my learning in the real world (and its even more real job market).

I was living in Vermont when I found out about Goddard. Attempting to explain Goddard’s IBA program,
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someone told me, “You can study whatever you want!” “Whatever you want, really?” I asked with suspicion and disbelief. That spring, I attended the graduating presentation of a student whose work explored the female orgasm as informed by historical medical research, the politics of women’s bodies, the cultural context of female sexual liberation, and even the students’ own own sexual history. Her presentation was interesting, well-researched, strikingly original and I was proud to see her graduate at Commencement. I was struck by the rigor and personal, very human element of her studies, a quality that resonates through all Goddard student work. Whatever you want, really.

I was drawn to Goddard for its sense of opportunity to study and explore topics of personal interest, to engage your learning in the real world, and the opportunity for self-development that independent.

As an undergrad in Goddard’s Individualized Studies program, I was first interested in exploring alternative business structures; I sought to develop a cooperative business that championed a convergence of the arts, performance, community space, skills-based learning, tool-sharing, and a shared commitment to sustainability. I integrated my creative interests into my studies, something I had found challenging at the other institutions I’d attended. At Goddard, academic research on design, color theory, place-making, set design, and the built environment coalesced into a unified examination of small businesses’ role as the backbone of American economic development. Applying principles from the corporate world, social enterprise, and the nonprofit sector, I explored and wrote case studies of divergent business models that championed social, economic, and
ecological justice. I attended conferences and lectures, organized internships, took a job in the industry, and was able to incorporate all of this rich, lived experience into my Goddard curriculum.

I had envisioned my undergraduate thesis as a month-long, community-based, pop-up art immersion in New York City, where I was living at the time. Unable to accommodate my ambitions in the city’s competitive rental market, I instead focused my efforts on writing a comprehensive exploration of sustainable business in the United States. I conducted interviews with business owners and thought leaders across the country, wrote critically on the capitalist economic paradigm, researched government subsidies to big business, challenged dominant forms of economic measurement (GDP), and offered my perspective on sustainable economic alternatives that benefited people, planet and profit.

Not only did I graduate from Goddard informed by a wealth of practical, relevant, and timely knowledge (that I sought out and thought through myself), but because of Goddard’s Being, Knowing, Doing values, I also graduated with professional experience in my field, something very few Bachelor’s graduates can claim. Goddard prepared me for the professional world by providing invaluable opportunities to see how my ideas translated to potential career paths. The college’s independent study approach has prompted me to question—with academic integrity—the very foundations of my personal and professional ambitions. Through the accountability, determination, clarity of thought and perseverance necessary to conduct an independent study, I have become much more thoughtful in my considerations of new ideas, confident in my ability to integrate insights across
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diverse disciplines, and proud of my time/project management skills. I know how I think, how I learn, the time it takes for me to process ideas, to complete projects, how to draft an independent course of study—these skills that have translated seamlessly into my professional career and provided me with the skills necessary to run and manage my own consultancy post-graduation.

Left with questions unanswered by my undergraduate studies, I enrolled in the MA in Social Innovation and Sustainability (SIS) at Goddard to explore and develop these ideas further. After careful consideration in selecting a Master’s program, I chose Goddard because it was the only institution that would let me explore my passions, honor myself, and provide a healthy work/life balance. My SIS coursework has involved academic research on the materials economy, creating/curating a waste-based photo series, public event organizing and production, professional outreach and development, personal branding, media studies, and external course work and certificates completed in design thinking. My graduate thesis work culminated in a trans-disciplinary study that explores the possibilities of human-centered design in addressing complex social problems.

After having now completed both my B.A. and M.A. degrees, I know with absolute certainty that without Goddard, I probably would have never even graduated from an undergraduate program. Goddard has given me opportunities to rigorously explore my own learning and provided me with a community that’s worth its weight in gold. At Goddard, I have learned to be a better person: to be more patient, more understanding, consider unknown positions, be respectful and think systemically.
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experience has been one of the best of my entire life and I hope to remain a part of the Goddard community and continue to serve its mission for many years to come.

Larry Greer: Interfaith Ministry, Death and Dying

When Larry Greer, a building contractor in Maine, first received a Goddard postcard in the mail, he ignored it, thinking there was no reason for him to finish his bachelor's degree. But then a little magic and his wife, Peggy, intervened, and the next thing he knew, he and Peggy were driving to the college to learn about the programs offered. When he saw the sign that said, "Goddard College," he started crying without having any idea why. "If you told me then what would happen, I would have laughed in your face. No way would this lead to me holding the hand of someone who's dying," Greer said.

Fast forward almost a decade, and you can find Greer, now an ordained Interfaith minister, who specializes in death and dying, educating groups of ministers all over Maine on how to help parishioners come to terms with death. He completed his BA and his MA at Goddard, both degrees bringing him deeper into end-of-life studies. During his MA degree, he also developed a curriculum to help pastors as well as the general public cultivate greater awareness about death and dying in their lives and communities. He give talks to the community at large which includes community members, physicians, nurses, clergy and faith community members on the spirituality of death. Recently, he started leading workshops, based on Stephen Levine's ground-breaking book, *A Year to Live*, to three groups that include people as
young as 20 and as old as 70 to explore issues such as unfinished business, forgiveness, and what people want in terms of disposal of the body.

His main job as an interfaith minister contracted with a local hospital in Scarborough, ME, to provide spiritual care for their patients brings him to nursing and assisted living facilities, homes, and hospitals. His work doesn't just inspire people; it brings them to his door. He tells the recent story of sitting down to dinner with his kids and grandkids when someone knocked at the door, and said, "My friend is dying." He looked at his family, who completely support his work, and they told him he had to go.

His work and calling are one and the same. “There is that piece, the call, if not answered life becomes a monologue not a dialogue.” He's answered the call that came to him through a postcard in the mail, and it turned out to an extensive dialogue that provides others ways to engage with the biggest questions of their lives.

Works Consulted


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Teaching
Undiagnosed Visionaries
by Sarah Van Hoy

When I was a young woman in the 1980s, I found myself at the beginning of a long journey of unraveling and understanding trauma. For support, I sought health practitioners who could bring together socially just, meaning-centered, body-centered work. I found some of what I was looking for in certain places, but it was mostly diminished, disconnected or soaked in some perspective that I could not abide. When I realized that I would need to invent and become the kind of practitioner that I wanted to find, it took me not one but three graduate programs to even begin to put it all together. (I could have probably done similar work at Goddard with fewer degrees.)

Throughout the process, I came to understand how knowledge—in particular medical knowledge—is constructed and reproduced—and how, in turn, it constructs and reproduces people. I learned to take ideas apart (or understand how they were put together in the first place) in order to create new ideas, and I learned to trust and support myself along the way. I also learned what did not work for me—as a learner, as a visionary and as a feminist.

In 1984, when I first applied to the University of Michigan, I told the admissions representative that I wanted to study integrative mental health and the health effects of yoga. (I had been practicing and teaching yoga since the mid-70s.) This man was a physician from the next town over who
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had graduated from U of M. His curtains, wallpaper and couch were unflattering shades of blue and gold and his personality reflected a similar allegiance to institutions. He told me, in the paternalistic way that people who know better will tell you, that I was naïve; that there are no health effects of yoga; no one is interested, and whatever I meant by integrative mental health, that didn’t exist either. He was right — ‘integrative mental health’ did not exist at that time, now almost 40 years ago. It didn’t exist for many decades. But it exists now in some form. Many of us are questioning its assumptions and wanting to move the conversation about ‘integrative medicine’ forward. Oh, and the health effects of yoga are also well documented, thank you very much.

It takes tremendous resiliency to pursue your truth without support from the people around you. Can we imagine what is possible, though, when you do have support, and when this support is exquisitely attuned to your needs as a visionary? A few semesters back at a summer residency, I sat with my colleagues in a Goddard Graduate Institute faculty meeting. We were asking the question: what really happens at Goddard and how can we possibly describe it? What makes a Goddard education so transformative? And what kinds of people are attracted to this sort of thing? This book was born from that conversation.

As a faculty we discussed how challenging a Goddard education is. We don’t offer a packaged curriculum where someone else has decided what constitutes knowledge, has organized that knowledge, has weeded out what they deem unimportant, and has emphasized what makes most sense to them. Our students don’t sit in classes and receive ideas. They don’t reproduce what already exists. Instead, Goddard
students participate in shaping knowledge; they enter the collective conversation and move it in new directions. They are not satisfied with given meanings and comfortable practices. They are co-creating something that doesn’t always fit those givens. They are deciding what is important to them. Like the thawing of springtime, Goddard students take what has been frozen in place and they melt it and rework it, and in so doing they rebirth the world in their vision - their vision of justice, their vision of love, their vision of wellbeing and wholeness. How do our students do this? And how do they know that they want to do this?

As we were discussing the mysteries of the Goddard experience, we came to understand that students (and faculty) who come to our program tend to be undiagnosed visionaries. We are people who might see beyond or outside what is called ‘the dominant narrative.’ We are attracted to the edges and margins—which are often wilder places—for activism, scholarship, and exploration.

Because we don’t know we are visionaries, our process is often uncomfortable. We may feel like something is wrong with us for not neatly fitting in. We might feel like we’re not able to shine or be visible (or lead or teach or write) because we are not like the people who seem to be fitting in quite nicely. We don’t recognize ourselves as visionaries, most importantly, because others do not recognize us. This is a complex reality—one that cannot be reduced to inner life, one that is anchored by social realities like race, class, gender, sexuality and ability—in which people who see beyond the status quo are also often those who have been marginalized in some way. So diagnosis, in this sense, is not about reinforcing or reproducing the mechanisms of pathologization; it is about
taking them back. If we reframe diagnosis as a kind of gnosis, a kind of recognition, we see that an undiagnosed visionary is someone on the verge of being recognized. This recognition—by our peers, in community and by ourselves—is at the core of our work at Goddard.

“Visionary” is a big word—maybe a little oversized. When we think of visionary, we think of someone who is able to see something that no one else sees, who brings things into being that don’t exist yet, who moves us all in a new direction, who helps us to reinvent reality. John Lobell (2015) defines a visionary as someone who “responds to the culture of their day and at the same time advances it into an emerging world” (3).

Biologically, our vision allows us to navigate the world in front of us—where we are going, not where we are. We don’t ‘see’ where we are. We ‘see’ where we are going. Our eyes, two of them, are in the front. We have eyes in the front because we are predators; prey have their eyes on the sides of their head. Two eyes allow us to perceive depth—to understand what is closer and what is farther away. The evolutionary need to navigate uncertainty in order to leave where we are and move forward is embedded in our biology. Whereas other senses may tend to bring us into our bodies, biologically and aesthetically vision can take us out of our bodies, out of the present moment and into the future, even if ever so slightly. This small, almost imperceptible movement off of center that vision provides creates an equally small internal divide, just a hint of separation of here from there, now from the next thing. A greater pitch into the future can create even more disconnection. In this way, the biology of vision ironically embeds a bit of disorientation.
From an aesthetic perspective as well we understand that the visual sense can take us away from the materiality of form, such as when three-dimensional reality is imposed upon a two-dimensional surface. What we call one-point perspective is constructed geometrically, by forcing orthogonal lines to converge at a vanishing point. Visually and energetically, the vanishing point pulls us out of ourselves and toward the imaginary horizon.

In some ways, this understanding of vision helps us to understand the person of the visionary. The felt experience of living as visionary is one of excitement with unease, moving out and leaning forward in a way that can feel enticing but off balance. If someone tells you “this does not exist” you can start to question your own reality. If vision is tethered to vigilance, our depth perception (what is close and what is farther away) can have us looking behind and underneath things—a hermeneutics of suspicion. Is there anything that is not what it seems? Do we need to be wary?

Not all visionaries are ‘vision’ visionaries. If we are imagining the future, we are imagining it in and from our bodies. Especially at Goddard, (what is otherwise called) vision comes to us in embodied ways. It comes as a visceral, gut response. It comes as discomfort, as longing. It comes as grief and the need to dance. It comes as tears, swollen throats, needing to sing.

“You might be an undiagnosed visionary if ...” I recently asked this question of a number of Goddard students and alum. Here is some of what they had to say.

You might be an undiagnosed visionary if ...
Anytime you express your ideas, people say, "well that's wild, or crazy," or “would take a miracle,” or “hmmm not sure how that would work,” or blank stare. But then you get to Goddard, express the same idea, and everyone says "YEAH TOTALLY, and then what..?!?!” You get confirmation that your ideas and dreams were visionary, and you are a pioneer, and Goddard peeps are your peeps. - Jessie Lucas

....if subverting the establishment, and discovering your own true wisdom has been a lifelong quest; if you've outgrown the patriotic first-world embrace of capitalism, and its inherent structural dysfunctions; if you've outgrown your own edges of growth, and are seeking a push to fly and go your own way…for the betterment of something or other. - Diana Delaney

....if your passion for your work overcomes cynicism and pragmatism… if your ideas subvert a discourse or undermine a system… if your story feels too provocative to be told… - Britta Love

....when you come to Goddard and realize you are not the only one like you in the world. I came having an approximate idea of who I was and left knowing myself internally and with more self-assurance than I had ever had. - Anne Rutherford

.....when you are “too idealistic”; when the risk is terrifying, but the thought of letting it go is even more so. - Michelle Robbins
....when you willfully dismantle your own status quo by taking intellectual risks, when you want to change the world, when you want to help others see what you see and feel what you feel. - Jennifer Arlia

....if you plan and build innovative operational models for modern society, or something equally and personally grand in vision and heart, and are in the process of birthing a new world with your peers and soul family, breaking ALL glass ceilings and false barriers to potentials, and finding among us all a common thread, theme, and sense of fierce awareness and undying and outstanding collaboration of LOVE IN ACTION. - Lonna Anderson

....when your ideas can't be contained by any disciplinary box; when your body knows what the world needs to know. - Kris Hege

....if your uber deep questioning and inquiry knows no bounds and finds no relief in the existing conversations or accepted paths….if your passion for moving beyond “knowing about” morphs into true knowledge and this is all that satisfies. - Jayne Kraman

....if the only word that has never been used to describe you by others in your environment is “visionary,” if you have thought of yourself as ‘other’ more than you've experienced belonging, if you'd NEVER use the word "visionary" to describe yourself
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because you just feel so lost out there in your
difference from others, if the going along with the
crowd feels very like a wearing a straitjacket, if truth is
ever more important than popularity, if you know
intimately the silence and averted glances when you
enter a room at a party. - Jenny Martineau

....if your question is also a call to action to see the
world differently. - Justin Kagan

....when you stop looking for solutions because the
answers already exist all around us, within us, and
between us, and you begin to reshape your questions
into statements. - Genevieve

Behind each of these short Facebook replies is a
longer story. Many are alchemical stories of working with
trauma in a way that highlights the intersection of personal
and social needs. Many are parrhesiastical stories of speaking
truth to power. Others are stories of trust and recovery,
returning to a truth that we all need to remember. In all cases,
people are digesting and transforming their experience,
building blood and resilience. In each story, too, there is
some common ground: a sense that the way things are
framed is too small. A need to subvert the ‘truths’ that are
given and to assert new truths that are emerging. A desire to
trust oneself at the same time as pushing one’s own edges.

Most of us in this Goddard community have been
engaged in personal experiments with our own visionary-
ness, discovering what we need for our own development and
understanding ever more deeply how to support the same
process in others. Advising visionaries is a unique skill. Goddard faculty are able to advise as deeply and as broadly as they do (inside and outside of their particular fields) because their role is not to produce scholars. This is not a factory. The role of faculty at Goddard is to connect human beings with their purpose as scholars, and then guide them in cultivating a new kind of scholarship from that place.

So how do we support visionary scholarship? What are some elements, some phases, some aspects of this work? While much of the work of nourishing scholarship looks very scholarly, some of it looks very personal. At Goddard we acknowledge an integration of our ‘knowing, doing and being’ and so we come to see how scholarship and personal growth and reflection support each other; our being feeds our knowing and our knowing feeds our being.

Consider the seed underground in wintertime. There it is, snug in the darkness, full of potential and in a state of stillness. We can imagine that for us, at a certain point in our life, there is a kernel of potential that, under the right conditions, might germinate and develop. However, at this stage, it is also not fully known. In this stage, we need to be supported to dwell in the place of unknown, to reflect and to trust. Many people come to graduate school in this seed phase. They have a sense of what might come—what sort of weed or flower or tree might evolve. But they also sense that, in the most immediate moment, they need to be underground with their knowing and with their not knowing. It can be a time to retreat and hide. Graduate school is a great place to hide until you feel you are ready. (It is a great place to be forever not ready—but we’ll get to that later.) However,
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sometimes it is appropriate to trust yourself and say, “I need to take some time out of doing and reflect on myself as seed.”

In terms of advising, being able to be present with the vulnerability of not knowing is important. It can feel counter-intuitive, when study plans are being written, to devise ways of being present to a process that is bigger than what we can anticipate. There is an idea that we have as scholars that we need to make claims, and stake out our territory. But what kinds of writing, what kinds of practices or sensibilities can help us cultivate our knowing from this underground place of seed-hood? Often this is a time for lots of reflective writing, pushing past what you think you know into a deeper layer of what you haven’t considered, feeling your roots move into new soil and watching to see what sprouts. It is a time of attentiveness and of fine-tuning our senses. How do we express the subtleties of what we are encountering?

As seeds do begin to sprout, they need to use force to push against soil, rocks or maybe through the spaces in sidewalks. In terms of authentic scholarship, we sometimes find ourselves pushing against and saying ‘no’ to established ways of knowing and doing that are not serving us or the world. There can be anger, rage against injustice, and the emphatic desire not to be censored or ‘tone-policing’ as parts of our voice are coming on-line. In our lives, especially in many of our educational experiences, we are taught to police our own language, to not be too ‘extreme’ and to accept a narrative about social life that feels natural to those with various forms of comfort and privilege in that system. We have been taught that if we see through the veil of social injustice and inequity too much, we will be unpleasant, lose our credibility and risk pathologization. “To criticize one’s
society openly requires a strong heart, especially when criticism is interpreted as pathology” (Kozol 119).

When we break through our underground reality and start to sprout, we begin to see our vision and the world around us more clearly. We see where we are going and we see where we have been. We give ourselves permission to make choices. What do we want and what do we not want? This is the stage at which we need to own and refine a vision, as it will actually guide the development of our work. It is not enough, at this point, to have an “interest” in something or an “idea about” something. A vision is beautiful to us. It is something we are not neutral about, something that would give us pleasure to achieve. It is some thing we long for. Investing in this vision can give us the tools to work backward and come up with a plan to get there.

Just as in our seed phase, we cultivated the scholarly skill of deep reflection and dwelling in the unknown, in this sprout phase, we are cultivating the skills of observation and discernment. We are seeing, with greater nuance, how the world is put together, how it can be taken apart, and how it might be built anew. We understand, ever more deeply, the subtleties of what some folks refer to as the constructed nature of knowledge and truth claims. The more obvious and given something appears, the more we might need to understand how and under what circumstances that obviousness came about.

The next phase of our botanical journey through Goddard learning is the blossom phase. This is where our plant selves put on their modest or extravagant reproductive show. The energetic signature of this part of learning has to do with making connections - between your work and the
work of other scholars, activists and/or practitioners. It is about expression and also about relationship. How do you express in a way that is true to yourself and also in a way that allows people to understand and participate in your vision?

We rarely think about scholarly work as erotic, but in fact quite a few scholars (notably Audre Lorde and bell hooks) have described the importance of the erotic in scholarship and activism. In her 1978 essay, Lorde describes the uses of the erotic:

The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire... The erotic functions for me in several ways, and the first is in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers. (53)

In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks applies this notion of the erotic to the learning environment:

Understanding that eros is a force that enhances our overall effort to be self-actualizing, that it can provide an epistemological grounding informing how we know what we know, enables both professors and students to use such energy ... in ways that invigorate discussion and excite the critical imagination. (hooks 191)

When we bring the body into our scholarship, we bring everything, including pleasure, passion, and the primal mechanisms of attraction whereby we become connected to our people and reproduce our love in the world. We have
permission to bring all these things—to bring pleasure and love—to our work. Goddard student Kris Hege reminded me the other day of the words of Paolo Friere:

> It is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up. In short, it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love. … We must dare, in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not anti-scientific. (Friere 2005, 5-6)

It is essential to be willing to blossom, to really unfurl oneself, and to work to connect with others as part of the process of visionary scholarship. If we, as scholar-practitioners, want to get our ideas, our seeds, our fruits, our juiciness, out into the world, we first need to express our excitement and display our gorgeousness. Not everyone is a passionflower, bearded iris or hibiscus flower. Some of us are more like blackberry blossoms or forget-me-nots. Yet flowers we all are. This is deeply challenging to many of us who have issues around visibility. Remember, some of us came to graduate school to hide. Visibility requires vulnerability as well as a homeopathic drop of extroversion, which is also not something talked about much in traditional academia.

In more practical terms, this season of blossom and connection involves cultivating our expression and our skills in translation. For our communication to be effective we need to cultivate our understanding of the languages (discourses, if you will) that inform our inquiry and we need to be able to move in and out of those conversations with ease and efficacy. We need to be able to translate what is
inside us into words or other expressions that can be read, comprehended and appreciated by others. We also need to be able to translate across discourses and disciplines, as typically the real problems of the world need to be addressed through multiple perspectives. Often the way we learn to write and express ourselves in academia is completely devoid of our blossom self.

There is one thing missing so far from this plant-centered learning model. Plants need earth. We do too. We literally need a planet and we also need fertile, nourishing soil. Similarly, we need to develop nourishing pedagogies, pedagogies that feed us, learning that build bloods and muscle. We need pedagogies that acknowledge our relationship to the earth, pedagogies of re-connection. At Goddard, learning is about nourishing that place from which our truth and our passions arise. It is about nourishing the soil of our being. In addition, we, as scholar-activist-visionaries, have bodies that require our attention and participation. We actually do need to feed ourselves and take care of ourselves in order to have something to offer. Nourishment and self-care come in many forms: nourishing our body with food, our senses with beauty, spending time in community, getting rest.

Finally, I cannot leave the plant world without mentioning pruning. I’m sure my fellow faculty members will attest to their many hours spent helping to tame wild, rambling thickets into elegant, healthy rose bushes. Pruning is essential to bringing more energy to the flowers and to ensuring diseased canes don’t trouble the rest of the plant. Yes, it is a form of domestication. However, at the end of the day, scholarly work is too. We need to be able to understand
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what is essential in our work, and to prioritize this. We need
to recognize and follow the organic structure of the plant,
whatever that is. Letting go of certain pieces allows us to
value and invest in what remains. Whatever we don’t use can
become compost for those seeds that are still underground.
Learning also requires a kind of de-familiarization—a letting
go or pruning of what is comfortable and obvious. This
aspect of learning asks us to continually and radically question
what we think we know, to seek out the ways we are
complicit in the systems of oppression, the ways we might be
enabling a ‘benevolent violence.’

What we are doing in terms of progressive education
is akin to organic gardening, or better yet, permaculture.
There is very little room for the pedagogical equivalent of
pesticides or GMOs. In my experience, one of the most toxic
experiences we can have as growing visionaries is paternalism
—that voice that calls you naïve (and then writes his own
version of your words). The person who is made
uncomfortable by your suggestions, or who simply doesn’t
understand and so invents a reason to diminish your truth.
Goddard advisors need to be comfortable with a student’s
difference, their spaciousness and whatever edges they
choose to push. There is no room for resting in one’s
comfort or privilege, including one’s intellectual privilege.
Rebecca Solnit has captured an understanding of this deep-
seated paternalism in her essay “Men Explain Things to Me”.
There she reminds us that this sort of thing is one piece of
“an archipelago of arrogance.”

Every woman knows what I am talking about. It’s the
presumption that makes it hard, at times, for any
woman in any field; that keeps women from speaking
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up and from being heard when they dare; that crushes young women into silence by indicating, the way harassment on the street does, that this is not their world. It trains us in self-doubt and self-limitation just as it exercises men’s unsupported overconfidence.”

This is the intellectual version of glyphosate and no, it is not safe to drink.

***

I am writing to you on a warm afternoon in April here in Vermont. The snow has melted and the frogs have returned by the hundreds to sit in my pond and sing. The world has committed, finally, to thaw, to flow, and to the gush of spring. It is irresistible. May the seeds of your visionary potential feel the pull of the sun, the warming of the earth. May you not fear your own unknown. May you trust your anger as part of your growth. May you send out the most flamboyant blossom into the world, seeking pollinators. And may you find a community that recognizes you.

Works Consulted


Lorde, Audre. The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power in Sister
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Editors and Contributors

Editor and Contributor: Lise Weil, PhD recently completed a memoir, *In Search of Pure Lust*, which seeks to reconcile the grand experiment of lesbian-feminism of the ‘70s and ‘80s, in which she was a fervent participant, with her later immersion in Buddhist practice. She was founding editor of both *Trivia: A Journal of Ideas* and its online offshoot *Trivia: Voices of Feminism* [www.triviavoices.com](http://www.triviavoices.com). Currently she is editor of *Dark Matter: Women Witnessing*, whose mission is cultural restoration in a time of massive species loss and ecological collapse at [www.darkmatterwomenwitnessing.com](http://www.darkmatterwomenwitnessing.com). Her essays, translations and short fiction have been published widely in Canada and the U.S. She lives in Montreal. As editor, she worked closely with all contributors on developing and editing their essays.

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Mike Alvarez, MA-IMA and MFA is a two-time Goddard graduate, and a Communication PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where he teaches courses in film and media studies and TV production. His dissertation explores suicidal individuals' use of information and communication technologies to create meaning in their lives. Mike is the recipient of a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship, and his writings have appeared in Cross-Cultural Studies, The Awakenings Review, Mason's Road, Connotation Press, and New Writing, among others. He is also writing a book titled, The Paradox of Suicide and Creativity. You can follow him on Twitter @mfalvarez121 or visit his website: www.mfalvarez.net.

Emilee Baum Trucks, MA-IMA is an author, artist, and market researcher based in Atlanta, GA. Her book, The Agency of Bliss (find at amazon.com), emerged from her MA in Embodiment Studies at Goddard College. She is currently working toward her PhD in Expressive Arts at The European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. She is also chair of the Transformative Language Arts Network, a non-profit organization.

Sarah Bobrow-Williams, MA helped found Goddard’s Social Innovation and Sustainability degree. She brings to this task her work, centered around working with marginalized citizens and organizations to plan and develop cooperative, culturally affirming and just economies and supporting local management and protection of environmental and cultural resources and knowledge. Sarah has been the Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative for Economic and Social Justice’s Asset and Finance Development Director for 12 years,
working with women in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia to organize cooperatives, develop production, processing and marketing networks and infrastructure and address issues of equity, access, poverty and food insecurity.

Juliana Borrero, MA-IMA is a Colombian experimental writer, translator, and teacher of literature. She was one of the founders of the Masters in Literature Program at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnologica de Colombia. Interested in tracking, exploring and practicing the variety of relations between language and the body, she has expanded her literary explorations into performance art, singing, and dance. She has offered writing from the body workshops in different countries and has received literary and translation awards for her work.

Karen Campbell, MA is a graduate of Goddard's Individualized MA program, and a member of the Goddard College faculty. She teaches in a low residency graduate program at Nagoya Gakuin University Graduate School in Japan, where she is also involved in social justice theater.

Minna Dubin, MA-TLA is a writer, performer, and educator in Berkeley, CA. She writes essays, monologues, and lists about motherhood and identity. Minna is the founder of #MomLists, a Bay Area literary public art project. Her work has been featured in The Forward, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and MUTHA Magazine. She was a 2016 Artist in Residence at Lacawac Sanctuary and Field Station, and she is currently doing a 2016-2017 Artist Residency in Motherhood.
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Ruth Farmer, MFA is Director of the Goddard Graduate Institute. Ruth is sole owner of Farmer Writing and Editing, and a faculty member at the Community College of Vermont. Ruth’s essays and poetry appear in various journals and anthologies and on her blog at www.ruthfarmer.com. Most recently, she contributed chapters to and co-edited (with Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg) Transformative Language Arts in Action (Rowman & Littlefield). She also assisted with editing this book.

Larry Greer, MA-IMA, also completed his BA at Goddard, where he studied end-of-life care and interfaith approaches to ministry. He is an interfaith minister who contracts with local hospitals in Scarborough, ME to provide spiritual care for their patients brings him to nursing and assisted living facilities, homes, and hospitals. He also provides training for others in the field.

Kris Hege, MA-IMA completed her master's degree at Goddard and began her doctoral studies at Fielding Graduate University, where she was enrolled for one year before transferring to Union Institute & University. She is now pursuing an interdisciplinary PhD in Educational Studies with an emphasis in Social Justice Education and a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies. She has served on the Student Council and the Academic Council at Goddard College and currently serves as a cohort representative on the Student Governance Committee for the Union Institute and University PhD programs.

Deb Hensley, MA -TLA is an artist, singer/ song-writer and
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educator offering workshops in best practices for early childhood education, music and singing. Deb is the Director of Early Childhood Education with Broadreach Family and Community Services in Belfast, Maine. She holds a degree in Transformative Language Arts and is an active force in the TLA Network (www.tlanetwork.org). Also a member of the Improvox Improvisational Music Collective (improvox.com), Deb offers vocal concerts and workshops. Projects include women's music with Katey Branch, Briol with Martin Swinger and Matt Loosigian and solo work. Besides singing she loves playing with paint, hiking, reading, birding, sailing, flying and playing outside along the Maine coast where she lives with her husband Jonathan.

Yvette Angelique Hyater-Adams, MA-TLA is Principal and Chief Storytelling Officer at Narratives for Change. Embracing “all things narrative” as her work in the world, Yvette is a poet and essayist, teaching artist, and narrative practitioner in applied behavioral science. Projects range from autoethnography, story circles, narrative fiber arts, writing workshops, transformative narrative coaching, narrative inquiry, and facilitating community change. Yvette graduated from Goddard College and the University of Denver studying Transformative Language Arts and Creative Writing. She publishes on the topics of intersectionality, diversity and inclusion, transformative narratives, and "women as leaders of their lives.”

Justin Kagan, MA-CS: As a practicing artist, philosopher, and independent scholar, Justin engages questions of consciousness, beauty, and tradition. As his primary practice,
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Justin works with clay to express ideas about beauty, consciousness, and meaning through traditional practices of mixing his own glazes and using various traditional and contemporary firing processes. He draws inspiration for his art and writing from the natural world and human experience. Justin's background of over 25 years in martial arts and meditation training coupled with his life-long love affair with world religious traditions give a nuanced perspective to his engagement with the larger questions of the relationship between consciousness and practice.

Kao Kue, MA-TLA is an educator, songstress & storyteller. As a Hmong American who works daily to empower children and youth through storytelling and singing, Kao performs poetry and provides workshops that covers topics of militarization/warfare, police brutality/hate crimes, domestic violence and sexism, and immigrant and refugee experiences. Kao believes that poetry and song provide testimony of injustice as well as proclaim peoples' resiliency in seeking freedom.

current Lesotho project, *Memory of a Drowning Landscape*, is an experiment in performance, resistance and environmental justice.

**Britta Love, MA-CS** is a writer, activist and multi-dimensional healing advisor based in Brooklyn, NY. She graduated from Goddard in 2016 with an MA in Consciousness Studies, where her thesis focused on the healing and spiritual potential of conscious sexuality and psychoactive plant medicines. She writes for *Alternet* and *Reality Sandwich*, gives monthly talks at the Tarot Society Gallery and Reading Room, and blogs on sex, drugs and consciousness at *The Daily Transmission*.

**Bernadette Miller, MA-HAS** lives and works with Canticle Farm, a nonprofit organization and intentional community in East Oakland, CA. She practices urban permaculture, cooks, cleans, plays harp music, and works with school children. You can view some of her poetry at: [https://aseriousfrivolity.wordpress.com](https://aseriousfrivolity.wordpress.com) You can subscribe to her poetry e-newsletter by e-mailing her: bernadette.miller@goddard.edu. Please write “Subscribe to Poetry” in the subject line.

**Kate Lidfors Miller, MA-TLA** has been a writer since she could form letters. It's her way of seeing and loving the world. She is currently writing a novel and reshaping her Goddard thesis, a creative project focused on embodied writing, for publication. She has published poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction and scholarly essays. Kate leads a writing circle for survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, as well as other expressive writing workshops. She lives on Rainy Lake.
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near International Falls, Minnesota.

**Elizabeth Minnich, PhD** is an educator, scholar and professor of philosophy, public speaker, award-winning author, administrator, consultant, thinker. She is Senior Scholar at the Association of American Colleges & Universities' Office of Integrative Liberal Learning and The Global Commons. A change agent who has dedicated her career to transformational development in education and democratic practices, her latest book is *The Evil of Banality: On The Life and Death Importance of Thinking*. She co-authored *The Fox in the Henhouse: How Privatization Threatens Democracy* with Si Kahn, and she wrote the award-winning *Transforming Knowledge*. She has served higher education in different roles at a variety of liberal arts institutions and has presented keynote and plenary talks at conferences and colleges around the world.

**Susan Pearson, PhD** is a psychotherapist, ecopsychologist, community organizer, and teacher, living in Maine and California. She recently retired from the faculty at Goddard College and has taught in prisons, community-based centers, Lesley University, and University of Maine at Farmington. She is exploring alternative forms of community and dialogue toward addressing the complex issues of our times. And, with photography and storytelling, she seeks to cultivate an ever-deepening experience of our life-giving earth and our collective desire to care for it.

**Angie River, MA-TLA** is a writer, educator, activist, and performance artist who has taught writing workshops and done performances in various states across the United States.
Angie is published in the *Queering Sexual Violence* anthology, *Tidepools Literary Magazine*, *Reading for Hunger Relief*, *The Body is Not an Apology* website. Angie also writes her own zine, and blogs at [http://nittygrittynakedness.Wordpress.com](http://nittygrittynakedness.Wordpress.com). She fully believes in the power of the arts to help us gain a better understanding of ourselves, build connections and community, and make personal and social change.

**Linda Schneck, MA, CMTH**, is a music-thanatologist, harpist and composer, teacher, and beekeeper, living in Vermont. Her work in music-thanatology compassionately serves those living and dying with chronic and acute disease, as well as within Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia (see *The Temple Vision in Palliative Care*, *Explore: Journal of Science and Healing*). She has taught a variety of college level courses and intensive residencies in music and healing, harp, contemplative musicianship, clinical studies, creative arts therapies, eco-thanatology, as well as in the area of death and dying. [www.ecothanatology.com](http://www.ecothanatology.com)

**Katie Soule, MA-IMA** trained post-Goddard to be a somatic psychotherapist in San Francisco while honing her abilities as a dancer of swing, blues, and fusion partnered dance and facilitating workshops within the dance community that somatically and verbally address issues of power and privilege. She is currently a doctoral student in the Intermodal Expressive Arts Program at the European Graduate School, where her thesis work is focused on developing an embodied curriculum for humanities classes in undergraduate institutions.
Karl Stenske, MA-IMA continues his work to identify the impact adoption has on all members of the triad and beyond. The diversity of Karl's experience in private practice, his current tenure as Director of Foster, Adoption and Kinship for Olive Crest, a foster family agency, and his education give him a deep and thorough insight and knowledge of adoption, attachment and trauma. In his soon to be released book, *The Hidden Life of an Adopted Child: Understanding the Impact of Adoption*, Karl explores the traumatic experience suffered by that separation and its influence on self-esteem, value, worth and identity.

Nicolette Stosur-Bassett, MA-SIS is a mover and a shaker who is interested in problem-solving, public communication and how design thinking catalyzes social change. Her diverse life experience and bold ideas lend insight to a human-centered design praxis. She believes in the power of transmedia storytelling and sustainability as the byproduct of good design. She received her BA in *Individualized Studies* from Goddard College, and for her MA, studied the role of design thinking and human-centered design as a wicked-problem-solving approach. More than anything, Nicolette is excited by complex business and social challenges, seeking innovative interdisciplinary solutions that span the branding, design, media production, technology, and public communications fields. A big-picture thinker who excels in execution, she uses creative problem solving to actualize relevant and actionable solutions to systemic challenges facing the world today.

Sonja Swift, MA-IMA writes toward a place of understanding both herself and our world. She received her MA
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from Goddard College with a thesis titled “Bravery, Body, Land and Knowing.” She has publications in *Dark Matter: Women Witnessing*, *Chrysalis: A Journal of Transformative Language Arts*, *Landscape* magazine, and forthcoming in *Rock & Sling* journal and *Broad St.* literary magazine. Also forthcoming is a series of prose poems called *Alphabet Atlas* coming out soon from Deconstructed Artichoke Press. She divides time between San Francisco, California and the Black Hills, South Dakota.

**Joanna Tebbs Young, MA-TLA** graduated with an Individualized Masters degree from Goddard College in 2013 with a focus in Transformative Language Arts. Joanna facilitates expressive writing workshops in Rutland, Vermont where she is also a columnist for the local paper. Joanna has authored a book on a Vermont historian due to be released early 2017. She blogs at [wisdomwithinink.com](http://wisdomwithinink.com).

**Sarah Van Hoy, PhD** is one of a small handful of anthropologist/clinicians of East Asian medicine in the world. She is also a trained psychotherapist. She came to this intersection of scholarship and practice in the late 1980s, seeking to both invent “integrative medicine” (long before it was named as such), and also to re-invent it, beyond the so-called holistic triumvirate of body, mind and spirit. In her current work, Sarah seeks to articulate a medicine of the social body and to revive and re-enchant medicine through an appreciation for the poetics of the body.

**David White, MA-IMA**, completed his on master's thesis on
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what it means to be an American and how our various understandings of American history shaped racial and gender constructions that emerged during the 19th century. He has been working with The History Project to collect and preserve Boston's LGBTQ history.

**Steve Wright, MA-SIS** is founder of 4 Walls International, an organization that transforms trash into jobs, sustainable housing, economic productivity and a healthier environment in the United States, Mexico, and Central America.

**Lori Wynters, MFA, PhD** is faculty for Goddard Graduate Institute, SUNY New Paltz and was visiting faculty at Vassar College. A psychologist, educator, theologian and theatre artist, Lori's areas of focus include inclusive and engaged pedagogies, social/cultural medicines, creative arts as vehicle for knowing, culturally responsive curriculum, interfaith social action and our bodies as locations of epistemologies and theologies.
Appendix: A Sampling of Graduating Student Presentations

At the end of their studies, all GGI students present a talk, workshop, and/or performance of their thesis project during graduation weekend, which occurs at the residency following their final semester. Here is a sampling of presentation descriptions published in both the residency schedule and on Worlds of Change (www.WorldsofChange.com).

The World Is Littered With Opportunity, with SIS graduating student Steven Wright. Community engagement and sustainable construction combine to shift power dynamics in historically ignored communities. Journey through seven years of sustainable construction with trash and tires and community organizing throughout the Americas with a focus on the ever-complex US-Mexico Border Region. Lessons learned the hard way, and things learned through the Goddard lens, learn how 4Walls International is poised to use community consultative methods to relocate climate refugees using native materials.

Suicide, Creativity, and the Self, with IMA graduating student Mike Alvarez. Experience the songs of Phyllis Hyman and Kurt Cobain, the photographs of Kevin Carter, screen shots from Jeremy Blake’s “time-based paintings” and much more as we examine the paradoxical relationship between suicide and creativity. What do self-destructive behaviors and creative activities have in common? Is creative work intrinsically healing? And how does the disease model...
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of mental disorders diminish our understanding of the human meaning behind suicide and creativity? These are some of the pressing questions my presentation will address—questions that have far-reaching implications in a time and place where the self, and its manifold human dimensions, are radically medicalized. I will also read excerpts from my memoir, in which I recount my past struggle with suicidal depression.

Rosie’s Second Shift: The Domestic Lives of Women Workers During World War II, with IMA graduating student LisaMary Wichowski. Rosie the Riveter is the quintessential icon of the World War II home front. Her image has been used countless times as an expression of feminist agency. The image we associate with the name is ubiquitous, paraded for Halloween, or trotted out whenever a female celebrity such as Madonna or Beyoncé wants to affirm their feminist credibility. Though she is most known as an industrial worker, Rosie, like working mothers of all generations, had a double shift every day, first on the munitions assembly line and then at home caring for her family. The war disrupted family ties, removing hands able to help out around the house, but there were few options for childcare when even the education system worked in shifts. Rationing and shortages hit hard and shopping was made all the more difficult by long work hours and short store hours. Finally, housing was in short of supply, just as everything else was. How did women cope with these challenges then? What institutional supports did they have? Finally, how can we apply the lessons of that era to help working women today?
Unleashing Power in Yiddishland and Faerieland: Spectacular Theatrical Strategies for Resistance and Resilience, with IMA-TLA graduating student Ezra Berkley Nepon. Come learn about transformative theatrical strategies in the work of two contemporary radical theater artists: a troupe of queer satirists from Tennessee called The Eggplant Faerie Players, and a New Yiddish Theater–maker from Manhattan named Jenny Romaine. Through oral history interviews, archival research, observer–participation, and in the context of their shared era, this study identifies and explores strategies that are common to both artists, referred to as Rehearsing Resistance, Re–Mixing History, and Dazzle Camouflage. Using Anzaldúa’s notion of “borderlands,” this work uses Yiddishland and Faerieland as frameworks that acknowledge the material and metaphorical spaces that are conjured through folk arts and culture. Some of the characters that will make appearances in this presentation include: Queer and Yiddish archives, AIDS activism, fermentation, Israel/Palestine, gentrification, revolutionary chickens, and drag queens juggling matzoballs.

Walk with Me: Healing Our Neonatal Intensive Care Units, with HAS graduating student Suzanne Milkiewicz-Bryjak. A blend of literature review and powerful personal essay that invites the audience to experience the Neonatal Intensive Care Journey through the eyes of both a parent and a neonatal intensive care nurse. Current research-reality disparities will be explored along with the clinical, psychosocial and economic cascades that are the result of gaps in care for our nation's smallest and most fragile hospital population.
Decolonizing Indigenous Education, with IMA graduating student Clay River. A demonstration of using cultural arts and performance art as a teaching tool to decolonize education. Demonstrating the use of traditional art forms alongside modern performance styles to dismantle and redefine urban Native identity. We'll engage in a dialogue of the historical trauma education has had on people of color and re-examine indigenous pedagogy to reclaim, redefine and reintroduce traditional ways of learning.

“For Text to be Like Skin”: Dwelling In & Translating the Wound(s) of Trauma, with IMA graduating student Jennifer Patterson. This thesis and presentation is a non-linear attempt to give language and shape to the failed body of a queer survivor of sexual violence, to give language and shape to the time and place between ‘before’ and ‘after,’ to honor how bodies heal and are rebuilt outside the dominant narratives of healing. It challenges the dominant survivor narratives around survivorhood and healing from sexual violence including the ones from a medical and psychological perspective that pathologize the lived experience of a survivor as one of disconnection, disembodiment and disassociation. In the thesis, the first section lays out the terrain, guides you through the research and frameworks that shape my work with trauma, bodies and translation. The second section is a creative non-fiction manuscript that aspires to map, in words and threads, the trauma(tized) body of a queer person who has lived through emotional, sexual and physical trauma— how it actually feels in my body to be living with and moving through complex trauma. The manuscript will imagine survivorhood as an altered state and
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will move between conscious states, dream states and other altered states. The manuscript attempts to map only one body, or, one person’s body(ies) where the first section works to draw in larger political, social and cultural shapings. In the presentation I will offer a bit of my research, creative non-fiction writing and if time allows, we will do a 5 minute somatic writing prompt together.

Mystical Moves: Awakening to an Embodied Self through Expressive Arts and Yoga, with IMA graduating student Katherine Carbone. My presentation will feature experiential components drawn from my studies and process. Participants will be guided in brief practices of meditation, embodiment and expressive arts to gain first hand experience of how these modalities enhance self-awareness. I will also be displaying a series of expressive arts pieces created as an outgrowth of my arts-based research into the underlying connections between expressive arts, yoga and embodied self-discovery. My final product is a series of collages that have been assembled into a set of Chakra Insight Cards, each with an image insight, embodied practice and suggested affirmation. A crocheted installation of the Chakra Insight Cards unites art with craft and will invite the viewers to interact with the cards.

Social Life of Natural Foods: Context and Consequence of Consumption, with HAS graduating student Diasie Sammy-Christopher. This presentation examines aspects of social context that the thesis weaves together through critical analysis and personal experience. Certain themes travel through the essays, manifesting in different ways at different
times. Prominent among these are themes of commodification and globalization as well as the tensions between tradition and modernity in food cultures. A personal narrative is also used as a lens through which the impact commodification, globalization and food traditions is both experienced and understood. The findings of the study reflect my personal journey as I moved outward exploring the dietary environment and returned to reflect upon my inner world. The findings suggest that there is a balance between individual wisdom and larger social forces, and both shape our food choices, which in turn have their own social and ecological effects.

The Aesthetics of Consciousness, with IMA-CS graduating student Justin Kagan. My thesis examines the relationship between consciousness, practice, and aesthetics. Drawing upon the world traditions of Zen Buddhism, Yoga, and the Mindfulness Movement, it explores the idea that consciousness has an aesthetic. Further, it identifies the importance of social location and cultural context in relation to the individual's consciousness, their practice, the resulting developed consciousness, and the role of absolute consciousness within this framework. This presentation will explore the key concepts of the Theory of Aesthetics of Consciousness. We will discuss the issue of defining these terms in exclusively scientific language while exploring new language with which to open a dialogue around the subject of consciousness. Come explore the felt-sense experience of consciousness in an open dialogue around consciousness, tradition, practice, and aesthetics.
Cloud 9 Rooftop Farm: Community, Food, and the Urban Landscape, with SIS graduating student Rania Campbell-Cobb. Dig into the urban landscape, food, community, and sustainability with Cloud 9! Cloud 9 is a social innovation using rooftop agriculture to address issues of urban sustainability. Urban communities are facing a host of interconnected environmental, social, and economic challenges. These challenges are exacerbated by the lack of opportunities for residents to connect with the environment and one another. Cloud 9 works to support sustainability in Philadelphia by using food and rooftop space to foster diverse social cohesion, and community-driven projects that strengthen local resilience.

Irregular Therapy: Self-Discovery and Collective Integration Through a Creative Engagement With Symbolism, with IMA-CS graduating student Ronny Lemos. The human mind seems to be constructed around an irresistible desire to create meaning. As “makers of context”, we interact with symbols to forge our sense of self and the world around us out of a tangible, but ultimately unfathomable reality. Irregular Therapy: Self-Discovery and Collective Integration Through a Creative Engagement With Symbolism provides a first-hand sensory glimpse into an imaginative venture that illustrates the meaning-making process through personal experience and creativity. By directly exploring the living dynamics between the fundamental archetypal forces operating in every organism—here represented by the four classical elements and the twelve signs of the zodiac—we are able to shed some light on the original significance of symbolism as an invaluable
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self-discovery tool that links individual integration to a common collective framework and through which both symbols and individual are transformed.

**Anarchism is a Many-Splendored Thing, with IMA graduating student David Pizzuti.** Anarchism has had a profound impact on my life. It has reshaped my view of the world, and my place in it. I will present a brief overview of anarchist theory and its relationship to me, personally. Anarchism is a largely misunderstood and misused concept, especially in the mainstream. I will attempt to dispel the negativity that often goes along with it by discussing some of its positive attributes. I will also discuss some practical applications of anarchism, some historical examples and some of its limitations. I use anarchist theory as a guide to help understand and improve almost all of my relationships, including those with individuals, groups of individuals, organizations, nonhuman animals, and the world at large. If we ever contact aliens, I will probably use it there, too! How? Why? Come find out. I will also discuss anarchism's relationship to other movements and ideas, such as animal liberation, and some possibilities for the future. Hopefully, I will be able to squeeze in a little silliness, too.

**I Shall Go Singing: Birdsong as Portal to Voice Recovery, Composition, and Community Building, with IMA-TLA graduating student Deborah Hensley.** This presentation will showcase one woman's modest experiment in responding to birdsong as a uniquely precious portal to re-inhabiting the natural, primal singing voice and promoting voice recovery in the larger community. Selections from ten
original musical compositions inspired by and derived from deep listening to birdsong will be shared to provide insight into how attending to sound and song in the natural world promotes access to an ancestral, spontaneous, innate and original singing voice, imbued with deeper understandings of place and identity. Participants will be invited to join a variety of improvisational circle-song forms, using vocal techniques aligned with the music of birds.

**Black Women’s Lives Matter: A Narrative, Womanist Approach to Self-Care, with HAS graduating student Robin D. Stone.** Part consciousness-raising, part confessional, my study uses narrative techniques to help Black women embrace self-care through engaging with the stories of their bodies. It is anchored by and expands womanist and Black feminist theories by elevating Black women’s experiences and perspectives and by linking their health with the ability to effect social change. My study’s centerpiece is a video series of deeply reflective interviews with 17 Black women (including myself) revealing evocative experiences tied to family, identity, sexuality, and belonging that influence body consciousness, eating, exercise and response to stressors. I will screen the video and briefly discuss producing the work and some of the disciplines from which it draws. I intend to use the video and a companion writing workshop to create a space for Black women—story-tellers and story witnesses alike—to consider their health in the context of the curves they love, the foods and traditions at the heart of their families, the stressors they face, and changes they can make toward individual and collective healing.
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Casualties of Civilization: Indian Removal and the Construction of Modern American Identity, with IMA graduating student David White. Why do we believe the things about ourselves and Others to be true? What does it mean to be an American and how do our various understandings of American history shape the ways that we perceive ourselves in relation to Others? This presentation analyzes a number of the racial and gender constructions that emerged during the 19th century as white Americans navigated unprecedented social and cultural upheaval. By exploring the ways in which white Americans portrayed Native peoples and appropriated “Indianans” throughout the century, this work aims to provide insight into one of the ways that the American identity was established and has been upheld well into the present day.

The Solidarity Economy as Social Innovation, with SBC graduating student Susan Sakash. This presentation will unpack heady concepts like "the solidarity economy framework" and "economic democracy" by grounding them in our individual/collective vision of what a more just and ethical economy looks and feels like. With research based largely in New Orleans, I locate examples of the solidarity economy occurring within the city's local food system, and how these reflect what I call community-envisioned and enacted social innovation in action. I hope to start a conversation about how to strengthen, and what stands in the way of, the efforts of activists, social innovators, and community economic developers who are working to build true community wealth.
Feeding My Gut - Rediscovering life in the body, the earth and on the plate, with HAS graduating student Jayne Kraman. This work explores my experiences and study in defining and living a nourished life. The focus is on life in the gut and its role in the health of all systems of the body. It also relates life in the gut with life in the earth and how that relationship determines not only personal and environmental health but also the fact that one does not exist without the other. The presentation will focus on how expanding concepts of integrative and ecological health includes their influences on each other and how they become each other. Overall the piece addresses how recognition of dynamic systems internally and externally creates the nourishment essential to sustainable living.

Healing the Heart: An Autoethnographic Study of How Capoeira Catalyzes Emotional Healing, with HAS graduating student Pamela McGrath. Healing the Heart depicts a journey of self renewal and recovery from trauma due to loss of a parent, and explains how others can reshape their own lives and recover from loss through healing movement. Through part of her research, Pamela interviewed teachers and students of the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira, and along with video footage, and created and produced a short documentary film to be shown during the presentation.

Love and Rage: Creating Survivor-Centric Justice in Opposition to Rape Culture, with IMA graduating student Kris Hege. Although it is true that there are some things that can never be fully restored after sexual violence, we as a society can do a lot more for victims than we do. This
lack of responsiveness to the needs of victims is the product of a rape culture that tells us that sexual violence is normal and usually the fault of the victim. An array of long-term survivor support services that allow women the space to heal together and learn from each other at their own pace and on their own terms may be the next step in creating true restorative justice that is more concerned with the needs of victims than punishment of offenders, built on empathy and compassion for survivors, and committed to reversing the pervasive societal messages of rape culture.

The Holo Tree: Ecological Design Principles For Sustainable Design via Social Networking, with IMA graduating student Josh Pollock. Can we solve the ecological crisis without ever agreeing what the cause of the crisis is, what to do about it, or if it is even a crisis? IMA graduating student Josh Pollock thinks the answer is, for the most part, yes. Josh explains why, and how a modern perspective on evolutionary theory inspired his proposal for a social networking tool for sustainable design. If you’re nice he may also share his proposal with you.

ADHD: What is it? How Can Coaching Help? With IMA graduating student Michael Nachman. ADHD is much more than not being able to pay attention. I've spent my whole life struggling with the disorder, but I've also spent the last two years figuring out ways to help myself and others that have it. I will discuss my ADHD issues, my clients ADHD issues, how I have helped them. Even if you don't have the disorder the workshop will be eye opening, educational, and interactive.
Resources

For more information about the Goddard Graduate Institute (GGI), please see www.Goddard.edu, where you can find the Goddard Graduate Institute, and all its programs, which each offer concentrations in Consciousness Studies and Transformative Language Arts:

- Health Arts and Sciences MA
- Individualized MA
- Social Innovation and Sustainability MA

You can also find GGI directly at: www.goddard.edu/academics/goddard-graduate-institute/

Goddard offers undergraduate and graduate programs with faculty members and students from across the United States and around the globe who come to our Plainfield, VT campus or our sites in Port Townsend, WA and Seattle, WA for eight-day residencies. To learn more about Goddard's programs, call 1-800-906-8312.

The Goddard Graduate Institute's blog, where you can also view a variety of videos featuring students, faculty and alumni, can be found at http://WorldsofChange.com.