

Pavilion: A Portrait of a Youth Worker – Three Sketches

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To draw a self-portrait, I wrote, interpreted and juxtaposed sketches. This helped me see and understand my experiences the way they came to me in reflection. In this article, I describe the process and how it evolved, then present the first three sketches in my self-portrait.

DRAWING PAVILION: PROCESS AND INFLUENCES

The seventh moment is characterized by a willingness to experiment with new representational forms....I have no desire to reproduce arguments concerning the importance of maintaining some distinction between fictional (literary) and nonfictional (journalism, ethnography) texts. Nor do I distinguish among literary, nonliterary, fictional and nonfictional textual forms. They are too often used to police certain transgressive writing forms, such as fictional ethnographies. There is only narrative – that is, only different genre-defined ways of representing and writing about experiences and their multiple realities. The discourses of the postmodern world constantly intermingle literary, poetic, journalistic, fictional, cinematic, documentary, factual and ethnographic writing and representation. No form is privileged over the other; all simply perform a different function for a writer and an interpretive community.

(Denzin, 2001: 7)

In the 1980s I was looking for another way to research and understand youth work with troubled youth in residential treatment centres. I had conducted quantitative and qualitative research studies, written several

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'academic' articles and three books about the practice and condition of youth work, but something was missing. I tried a novel and was immediately hooked. In a novel I could get inside youth work, whereas other forms of research and writing seemed to leave me on the outside looking in.

The novel, *Floating*, which was based on my earlier experience as a youth worker (we were called child and youth care workers then) was well received in my field and used in classrooms to teach child and youth care work. When challenged by my university colleagues about its scholarship, I made a somewhat naive but classic argument that it had relevance the way *Moby Dick* had relevance as a precursor to psychoanalytic theory. In a story, if properly told, you could see and feel the human conditions in which theory was experienced and from which new theory was about to evolve.

I got tenured and followed the first novel with another. During this period, I also became interested in the growing body of postmodern thought that argued we built and shaped ourselves into the world through unique cultural, familial and communal experiences and that our meanings and realities were constantly changing as we interacted and our narratives evolved (Bruner, 1990). This was affirming because it was consistent with the way I experienced life and my mind worked, but it also reinforced a growing concern that something in my work was still missing. No matter how hard I tried, my novels still felt a bit contrived. I was making stories out of memories that really came in a montage of images, sounds and events from different periods in time with no clear beginning, ending, middle or plot. So I began to experiment with drawing (writing) and juxtaposing sketches (short vignettes). This was more consistent both in the way the experiences came to me in short bursts and in the way my mind moved from one thought to another.

I did not want to prove anything. Like many of my colleagues, I was interested in how self informed practice and I wanted to understand and show my experiences as I remembered them. My sense was that if I could get the sketches to look, feel and move right, I would achieve these goals. As a creative writer, I thought sketching might also produce innovative pieces of literature.

I had no particular order for choosing experiences to sketch. An idea would come to me while I was running, talking with a youth worker, watching a movie, reading a book, or having a conversation with a friend. Usually, there was something about the moment that piqued my curiosity and compelled me to examine it in more detail, either alone or in combination with another sketch. Each sketch seemed to teach me something valuable about myself and youth work. And when I put two or more together, something else was revealed. A sketch from my youth, for example, would inform a sketch about my work with youth.

To draw the sketches, I used what I learned from phenomenological inquiry, literature, art, film, theatre, child and youth care work, philosophy and a number of other sources. I projected myself into an experience, reflected, wrote freehand, fine tuned and interpreted, repeating this circular process many times with each sketch and combinations of sketches, while working the material as much with my hands as my head.

Although my sketches were based on actual experiences, they were fictitious and I knew they always would be, as I could never remember an experience exactly as it occurred, because the meaning had changed with time (Bruner, 1990). I used metaphors to make situations more accessible; I decided what to put in and leave out; and the words I used to describe the experiences and in the dialogues were chosen in hindsight. I also altered the characters and changed some of the times and places to protect the privacy of people on whom the characters were based. Thus, I did not concern myself with making my sketches exact representations, or as playwright Sam Shepard said in a documentary about making his play, *The Late Henry Moss*, which was based on his relationship with his father, 'This is not a photo copy.'

In describing how she developed a method of qualitative inquiry called Portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005: 6) wrote, 'I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the subjects, but I wanted them to feel as I had felt that the portrait might not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence.' Similarly, I wanted my sketches to ring true with my experiences as I looked at them through a lens shaped by time.

To help, I used the skills I developed as a youth worker to analyse and 'see into' the experiences. I also borrowed a note card that short story writer Raymond Carver (1983: 21) kept by his desk with this quote from poet Ezra Pound, 'Fundamental accuracy of statement is the sole morality of writing', which I interpreted as meaning that I had to show an action as close to the way it appeared in my mind's eye as I could.

When Rilke, the German poet, lost his way and stopped writing poetry for a while, he confided in his friend, the sculptor Rodin, who told Rilke to go to the zoo and look at the animals with two or three weeks not being too long to look at one animal (Bly, 1981: 129). The result was Rilke's seeing poems, the most famous being 'The Panther' (Bly, 1981: 139), in which he powerfully captured the essence of a caged panther. When I got stumped, I looked again into my experiences with the dream that I might see just one moment or scene with that depth.

Sometimes I talked with people who were present at the time of a sketch (many of the sketches were based on experiences that occurred years ago and not surprisingly their recollections were slightly different than mine), but getting it right was primarily a process of crystallization

(Richardson, 2000: 895). I worked the material on paper and in my mind until it felt and looked right.

In a book about Edward Hopper paintings, poet Mark Strand (2001) wrote that in looking at a Hopper painting he was compelled by two forces, the urge to stay and the urge to leave. He also wrote about how looking at a Hopper painting reminded him of how he saw Canada from the back seat of his parents car – he gazed at the scenes but they did not gaze back at him; he was moving but the scenes were still as if captured in time. My scenes felt like this. I was compelled to stay and leave. They were both moving and still, as if viewed from the backseat of my parents' car.

I admired minimalist writers, such as Camus, Hemingway, Chekhov and Marguerite Duras. Their description, dialogue and action always seemed to move the story forward rather than bog it down. And beneath the simplicity was a considerable amount of complexity. Thus, I tried to strike out anything that was not needed to advance my sketches with the hope that I would reveal the simplicity (thickness) on the other side of complexity.

Often I broke a sketch down to almost nothing (deconstructed), then started again looking for what belonged and did not belong, while comparing my work to what others (youth workers, psychologists, philosophers, artists, etc.) had written about similar situations. This was helpful in my efforts to understand and draw the sketches, but I did not make the interpretations part of the sketches unless the characters were actually discussing or interpreting their thoughts, feelings and interactions at the time. As in good literature, I wanted to let their actions, attitudes and words do the talking.

Some of the early sketches were published as separate stories in a book (Krueger, 1991). I also used many of the sketches in my articles and teaching to exemplify a concept or practice, and in my free time juxtaposed them as if I was creating an abstract mosaic. One sketch was published in a literary magazine (Krueger, 2001). I taught a version of sketching to a group of youth workers and together we conducted a five-year ongoing qualitative inquiry into our experiences with youth (Krueger, 2004).

Then one day, after I had drawn dozens of sketches, many of which were based on my life outside youth work, I read this passage in the preface to *Philosophical investigations* (Wittgenstein, 2001):

The same or almost the same points were always being approached afresh from different directions and new sketches made. Very many of these were badly drawn or uncharacteristic, marked by all the defects of a weak draftsman. And when they were rejected a number of tolerable ones were left, which now had to be rearranged and cut down, so that if you looked at them you could get a picture of a landscape. Thus the book is really only an album.

Although said in a different context, this reinforced what I had been thinking: if I could find a way to organize and cut down the sketches, I might be able to draw a discernible, if imperfect, personal landscape or self-portrait. Like my reading of Wittgenstein (language games), Derrida (deconstruction), Foucault (care for self) and other philosophers, there was something about many of the scenes I chose to draw that I could hear, but did not quite understand, an existential hum perhaps. I thought that if I could find a way to arrange my sketches, then maybe seeing them all together would provide additional insight.

I explored many combinations of sketches. There was no particular order for doing this. Sometimes I put sketches together by feel and other times I put them together by association. I also tried to follow whenever I could the spontaneous way in which they appeared in my reflective thought.

At some point, I am not sure when, I experimented with breaking the sketches into smaller fragments, which I juxtaposed with other fragments until I had a sketch composed of several fragments. This felt even more consistent with my reflections. Rarely did I see one sketch as a whole. Parts of it in combination with parts of other sketches came at me as I was doing one thing or another.

At times it was like looking through a kaleidoscope. I would twist and turn the fragments in my mind until a pattern emerged. One of the new drawings became a play because that seemed to be the best way to frame and move the dialogue. Several fragments worked best alone and were turned into poems. Many sketches and fragments were dropped. These were either still 'badly drawn', or simply did not fit.

A film buff, I began to think more and more of my sketches as montage. In their introduction to *Handbook of qualitative research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 5) wrote, 'Montage uses brief images to create a clearly defined sense of urgency and complexity. Montage invites viewers to construct interpretations that build on one another as the scene unfolds.' German filmmaker Wim Wenders (2001: 326–27) spoke about how good montage is like a great sum of images that is only as good as the trueness of each image. He also said that this was especially true if the images were seen through the eyes of a child, reminding me of how Strand saw the world as a child from the back seat of his parent's car.

As I worked at trying to make my images look and move correctly, gradually a central narrative emerged from the moments that I returned to over and over again. This was drawn in regular type, while the fragments that wove around it were drawn in italics. Seven sketches, each made up of several fragments, and an epilogue remained. Each sketch had a central theme or themes, which also wove through the other sketches. Among the themes were identity, death, desire and repetition. I used the themes as

subtitles for the sketches, and titled the entire collection 'Pavilion', after a place I often returned to. And since many of my initial reflections appeared during my daily run, I framed the work in a run, which also seemed to provide the correct tempo.

FIRST THREE PAVILION SKETCHES

(2000) I run north along the frozen beaches of Lake Michigan. The sun-bather is out, shielded from the wind by reflectors. I wave. He waves back. For a moment, he and I alone brave winter.

One: Soft shoe (The formative years)

(1957) I can hear them talking.

'How did you feel when our father died?' my uncle asks my father.

'Like the boy in James Joyce's story about the dead priest, sad and relieved.'

'It was different when mother died, wasn't it?' my uncle asks.

'Yes, God forgive us if we ever lose the benignity she tried to instill in us.'

'Yes, God forgive them, Verona,' my mother sighs to my aunt.

They, my aunt, uncle, father and mother, are in the kitchen of our second storey flat on Milwaukee's Northwest Side, drinking cocktails. It's about 11:00 p.m. I'm in my bedroom — fourteen going on fifteen. I can't sleep. After the company is gone and the house is dark, I get dressed and go in the kitchen. Something moves. My father is doing a soft shoe in the living room. Hidden from view, I watch as he dances in the shadows of the elm trees that cathedral the narrow street in front of the house. He's wearing the shirt and tie he wore to the life insurance company where he's worked all his adult life. His hands are in his pockets and his pants' legs are raised. The moon shines on his face. He's smiling, but his eyes seem far away.

(1996) An old woman puts out her cigarette and enters the church with The Glory of God and His Most Blessed Mother carved in stone above the doorway. After mass, she comes across the street to the coffee shop where I'm writing at a table next to the window in the sunlight. Her face is pasty and her eyes accented to look like a small girl.

'Hello,' says the owner, a conversationalist, who is behind the counter.

'Hi.' She sits down on a stool and puts her cigarette on the lip of the glass ashtray.

'My girlfriend is coming this weekend.'

'How nice.'

*'We were in the same club in high school. We're going to the beach.'
The owner nods and fills another customer's cup.
She reaches for the cigarette, talks to her self, 'I got a new swim suit.
Maybe we'll take my beach umbrella too.'
'That's good,' a young woman seated a couple stools away says.
'Oh, you probably got a two piece,' she laughs.*

(1957) I grab the car keys off the kitchen table, tiptoe down the back stairs, take a deep breath of late August air, back the Dodge out of the garage, and creep between the rows of clapboard duplexes – the houses and people in them familiar by the steps I take to the grocery store and in games of kick-the-can.

At the end of the alley, I turn east. Burleigh Street is bathed in the warm glow of lights. A sole pigeon disappears beneath the hood and reappears eyeball to eyeball with me before flying off. The playground where I shoot buckets and the cemetery where my brother taught me to drive pass on the left.

Once I reach Lake Michigan, I park next to the pavilion, which sits on the bluffs like a balcony above nature's great symphony, and get out.

(1919) From the step of a passenger car, my grandfather watches the last of the passengers leave the platform, their silhouettes intermittently reappearing between the passing girders as they walk to the station. He rides the train to the other end of the station and cleans up in the wash-room, then takes the trolley to his bungalow on the South Side of Milwaukee on the corner of Bow and Arrow streets. My grandmother greets him at the door. He looks handsome in his conductor's uniform.

Dinner is ready. Their sons, Will (my father) and Charles, ate earlier. She sits across from him at the table.

'The roof is leaking,' she says at one point.

'I'll take a look at it tomorrow.'

After dinner he goes to the bar to drink with his friends, German free thinkers and pacifists, like him, who have been trying to hide their German-ness since the war. When he gets home, he reads Nietzsche... 'all philosophers have the failing of thinking man is now', and falls asleep with the book in his lap.

In the morning, he eats breakfast with his wife and sons, and climbs on the roof to fix the leak. It's a nice spring day. The sun feels good on his back. In the distance, he can see the ships in the harbour. He works at a steady pace. When the sun sinks beneath the elms, he feels a slight chill.

(1957) As a path from the moon runs to the shore beneath me and black, white-capped waves pound the rocks, I repeat the word 'pavilion'.

(1995) *'... a site of linguistic self-consciousness and a point on the map of the modern world that may only be a projection of our desire to give our knowledge a shape that is foreign to or other than it. Above all it is a place that is named.'* I read Seamus Dean's explanation of Joyce's use of language to name place in the introduction to Penguin Books' 1993 edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

(1957) I repeat the word over and over until it loses meaning. Later in life I will learn that writer Paul Bowles did this with the word 'cup' only to be awakened by the chime of a clock, but now it is just a word like any word that loses meaning with repetition. Chilled, I get in the car, drive down to the shore, and park next to the rocks, where one by one the waves can crash on top and wash down the sides, cocooning me in water.

(1952) *Arms stretched up the shaft of an oar, ribs protruding, I wait for my mother to shoot the photo so I can row around the raft of our two-week vacation up north. It starts to rain. I run to my fort, the branches piled overhead like tentacles of holiday's end twisting through me.*

(1957) A few days after I drove to the shore, Russo and I take the North Shore electric train to the jazz festival in Chicago. He has a brush haircut; I have a duck's tail. We're both wearing leather jackets. The landscape is a blur, an endless stream of farms and telephone poles.

(1990) *'I'm thinking of getting my ear pierced like you,' I say to my son, Devon, on the Charles Bridge in Prague shortly after the Velvet Revolution. 'You'll just look like a middle-aged guy trying to be cool,' he smiles and hands an earring back to a young woman sitting on a blanket.*

We leave the bridge and walk past Kafka's father's store to a pub in Old Town where we are seated with two young Hungarian men. Devon speaks to them in French. One's a carpenter, the other a tailor.

'They know where I can get a Soviet Army coat,' Devon says.

'Go ahead, I'll meet you later on the bridge.'

After he leaves. I stay and have a sandwich then return to the bridge. The night sky is clear, the water calm. I look at the castle where Vaclav Havel the reluctant president, a playwright who wrote for the Theatre of the Absurd and later as part of a liberation movement from a prison cell, lives, and wonder if he can find time to write. Behind me an old man is playing the accordion, his arms opening and closing the billows.

'What are you thinking?' The light is at Devon's back. He's wearing the long Soviet coat, his tall silhouette, faceless, and his voice smooth, like the water that flows under the bridge.

'Nothing, really.'

(1957) Slowly the farmland fades into brown-brick buildings then taller and taller buildings. From the train station, we walk inland. The city is like another planet: canyons of skyscrapers that block the sun, drunks, students and businessmen all mixed together. We arrive at the Chicago Stadium early and toss coins with two other boys. Soon men in cardigan sweaters and women in evening gowns begin to arrive. Between us, Russo and I win a buck. By the time we finish, the stadium is almost full. We mill around, find our seats. Eventually, the buzz of the crowd gives way to the mellow sound of Coleman Hawkin's saxophone followed by J.J. Johnson, Dave Brubeck, Ella Fitzgerald and Miles Davis with his back to the crowd.

Afterwards, still high on the music, we walk toward the Lake. On Michigan Avenue, Russo proclaims the Prudential Building the tallest in the world. I've been to the Empire State Building, but don't protest. We cross the street into Grant Park. A bum hits us for a quarter. At the marina, a man is fishing. He has a torn army jacket.

'Catch anything?' Russo asks.

'No, not yet,' the man says. You can see his broken teeth when he talks.

'What you using?' I ask.

'Bacon.'

'Bull,' Russo says.

The man reaches in his jacket, pulls out a package wrapped in wax paper, unfolds the paper, and shows us the bacon.

'Never heard of that before,' I say as the man puts the bacon back in his jacket.

The man looks at me. 'Probably a lot of things you never heard of.'

I turn my back to the lake like Miles Davis.

'Where you boys been?' the man breaks the silence

'At the jazz festival,' I say proudly.

'No kidding. I used to play jazz.'

'What instrument?' Russo asks.

'Piano.'

'Where did you play?' I ask.

'All over.'

'Why'd you stop?'

'Lost my timing.'

(1997) A light is on upstairs in my writing teachers house. Boxes can be seen in the window. The rest of the house is dark, the basement where she stored old clothes and phonograph records and the first floor, where, sometimes when I sat across from her at the dining room table and read my work to her I could anticipate her response.

(1957) A few days after the jazz festival I take Nicole to Hell, a coffee shop for beats. She moved here this summer and wears a beret and vest, like the older girls. We sit on huge pillows and listen to Charlie Parker on large Koss headphones. She takes off her headphones and puts her head on my shoulder.

‘Do you like jazz?’ she asks.

I tell her about the jazz festival and the man.

Later, we walk to the lake. I put my T-shirt on the ground in the shadows of the pavilion. She gets down on her back and raises her arms to me. I enter her and move back and forth the way Russo showed me. Suddenly, my body stretches and explodes.

‘Let’s go for a swim,’ she says after we rest a few minutes.

Clothes in hand we walk naked down the steps in front of the pavilion and climb over the rocks to the water. She puts her arms around my neck. When she lets go, I swim as far out as I can, head turned up at the stars, then down into the water.

(1976) ‘He climbed up the ladder and wondered if he had the strength to get home. He had done what he wanted. He had swum the country, but was so stupefied with exhaustion that his triumph seemed vague.’ I read John Cheever’s The Swimmer, see the movie starring Burt Lancaster, become fascinated with stories about men with something at the edge of their consciousness, like in a Sam Shepard play.

(1963) Near the end of my youth, a trucker takes me across the flood planes to New Orleans where I get a room in the French Quarter and a job in a hamburger parlor. In the evening after work, I listen to some of the finest jazz in the world. One night I meet an older woman with dark curls in Preservation Hall. We pass her flask back and forth.

‘Don’t pass out on me,’ she says on Bourbon Street.

We mount the stairs and fuck under her ceiling fan, booze and sweat seeping from a black hole deep inside me. In the morning, she stands alone on the balcony while I run through the garbage-scented Quarter to St. Charles Boulevard. Among the mansions word and image come together.

(2000) Lost in the rhythm of my gait, I continue north along the beaches.

Two: Rungs (Identity)

(1967) One by one they empty their pockets. Zip guns, switchblades and brass knuckles fall into the metal garbage can the sergeant drags along the middle of the floor in the barracks at Fort Ord, California. Nothing to

offer, I remain at attention, my special student status having run out, a reservist in basic training with regulars who are about to go off to fight the war in Vietnam while I go home and serve out my time on weekends.

(1976) Looking at myself in a mirror, I rehearsed my first speech about youth work several hundred times. Now, scared shitless, with a sea of faces looking at me, it's as if I'm speaking back to myself, catching the words, a robot regurgitating what has been stored on my tape, exposed for all, yet none to see, drifting over audience, my words like a beat to a song, the movement more important than the meaning.

(1967) One night out of the darkness, in the middle of a training march, a small missile hits me in the face, falls to the ground, and explodes, throwing me off my feet. Blood drips down my chin as I stagger to my feet.

'Gas!' Someone shouts. Rifles fire.

'Medic!' A soldier who shot his buddy in the back with a blank, shouts.

Choking on my own blood, I throw off my mask. Fluids pour out of every crevice in my body. Emptied, eyes burning, I stand in a black fog on a dusty road.

(1972) Daniel gets up from his chair and approaches, his T-shirt tattered and his face wind-burned from several days on the streets. Fourteen, he's just arrived at the residential treatment centre where I've been working.

'Mark.' I hold out my hand.

He glares at me, continues walking. I walk alongside and motion for him to enter an office.

'Hi Daniel, I'm Marjorie, your therapist.' Marjorie, a new, young therapist, holds out her hand.

Another glare.

'Before Mark takes you upstairs I wanted to tell you a little about our programme,' Marjorie says.

'I don't give a fuck about the programme!' he grabs a paperweight from her desk, throws it at her, and takes a swing at me. I duck and grab him around the waist and quick-step behind him remembering my supervisor, Ernie's, instructions: 'Grab both arms by the wrist and cross them in front of him, then put your knee behind his knee and dip like a basketball player taking the leap out of a re-bouncer in front of him, and collapse together to the floor. If he's small enough (Daniel just barely is) sit him in front of you with your legs hooked over his so he can't kick, his body cradled in your arms and your head tight to his so he can't butt you. Then prepare for a long wait. It helps to have something to support your back.'

(1967) 'Why did you get in the way of that artillery simulator?' A young sergeant, the one who evidently threw it from the cliff above, gets in my face. I walk off. 'Get back here and give me twenty,' he says. I continue walking. A medic stops me and stitches me up in the field.

While the others are sent for more combat training, I'm sent to the Mojave desert to work with linemen. High on a pole the desert seems like a vast sea. At midday the heat hums in the wire like a poisonous insect and the smog drifts in from Los Angeles. When I can't sleep I walk into the desert. It's still and quiet. All I want to do is put in my time and get it over, but in my dreams I can see the blood from their hands on the rungs of the overhead ladder we swung through before dinner.

(1972) 'Marjorie, would you move that couch over here.' My voice shakes. She gets on one end of the couch and pushes until it's between my back and the wall. He twists like a dog trying to avoid a bath. 'Your mother sucks cock! Your ol' lady sleeps with horses, cops, pigs!' The veins in his neck cord and his body strains like a stretched bow.

My arms ache. Daniel, 14, rests, then jerks like a fish out of water, rests and jerks again until gradually he gives up and the tension subsides and we sit quietly, soaked in sweat, limbs intertwined, breaths as if coming from the same set of lungs.

'I'm going to let go of your left arm then your right one.' Step by step I release my hold until Daniel is standing across from me, showing no remorse. Certain that he has won whatever there is to win, I wipe my nose and we walk together upstairs. At the top of the stairs, I part the fire doors. The other boys are in school.

'Your room is down the hall,' I say. He walks to my side, runs his shoulder along the wall. A grocery bag with his things is on the bed. He digs through it. 'Bastards,' he says. Ernie searches all the new boys things for drugs and weapons. Daniel takes out a T-shirt and pair of jeans, starts to change, then looks at me, 'Mind.'

I give him a moment to change and unpack, wait outside the door with my back to the wall, question why I'm here.

(1968) 'A Tuesday,' the old man, an idiot savant, says as we walk across the county institutions grounds where I serve out my time in the army reserves in Milwaukee one weekend a month.

I just gave him a date sometime in the last one hundred years and he's given me that day of the week without flinching.

'How do you do that?'

'Give me another number.'

(1972) When I re-enter Daniel is sitting at the desk with a photo.

'Who's that?'
 'None of your fuckin' business.'
 I don't respond.
 'My sister.'
 'She's nice looking.... What's this one?'
 'None of your business.' He puts the photos in the drawer, asks, 'Why do you work here?'
 'I'm not sure.'
 'So you can get your jollies, probably.'
 'Want a coke?'
 He nods and we walk to the day room.
 I keep an eye on him as I buy cokes from the vending machine then sit across from one another at a small table. He sips his coke, looks down, then up.
 'Your shoes untied.' He stares at me.
 I stare back.

(1968) I see a young woman standing at a bus stop. She has long brown hair and beautiful eyes.

'Hello,' I say.
 She smiles, turns away.
 'Where are you going?'
 'Home.'
 'What's in there?'
 'Drawings, I'm an artist.'
 'Do you go to the University?'
 'Yes.'
 'Where do you live?'
 'Up north, I'm going to the Greyhound station.'
 'I'll give you a ride.'
 She looks at me suspiciously, picks up her portfolio. 'Okay.'
 'Mark,' I say.
 'Suzanne.'

The portfolio barely fits into the back seat of my Volkswagen Beetle. On the way downtown she draws something in the fog on the window.

'When did you know you wanted to be an artist?' I ask.
 'It's all I ever wanted to be.'
 'See the cardinal?' she asks a few days later as we walk along the bluffs in the park.
 'Where?'
 'In the tree. It's bright red.'
 'I'm partially colour blind.'

She smiles, puts her hands on my head, and gently turns it toward a branch in a tree. 'See there?'

'Yes,' I pretend.

We sit under a tree. 'Do you ever think there are no words for feelings?' I ask.

'Yes, that's why I paint.'

'But images, like words, are symbols. Do you ever think images aren't enough?'

'I don't think much when I paint.'

That evening she gives me a drawing of a naked man crouched in a beam of light. He's bald with long, lean muscles and sunken eyes, and does not cast a shadow in the light at his feet. I hang it at the head of my bed. In the morning, her gentle breaths fall in steady beats on my chest.

(1973) Daniel gets up, pulls on his shorts, and leaves the tent we are sleeping in with six other boys from the treatment centre. It's a warm August evening in the Door Peninsula, a finger that sticks out into Lake Michigan in Wisconsin.

Once he reaches the bluffs, he stands a moment and looks across the water. The moon is out. I duck behind a tall clump of grass and watch as he races up and down the dunes until he collapses at the waters edge.

Caught up in the mood, I race down the dune hollering at the top of my lungs. Daniel stands and faces me. At the last moment I veer off and dive face first into the water. We splash each other several times and sit on the beach with our chins on our knees.

'Do you think I'll be fucked up like my ol' man?' Daniel asks, his voice shivering.

I hesitate and with my voice also shivering, say, 'No.'

(1972) Beads separate the bedroom from the living room in our small attic apartment. She works on the floor, crouched over a canvas like a butterfly perched on a daisy, paint on her hands and face, the mandalas and serpents an extension of the movement of her arm. Late at night, I sit with my back to the bookcase, her work just beyond his reach, Fire and Rain, Sweet Baby Jane on the reel-to-reel tape player.

A few months later, Devon pretzels out between her legs with double joints and a slight case of jaundice, looking just like the painting she did beforehand: the moonchild with cream eyelids and lashes of fine sable hair. While she breastfeeds him, I walk on the breakwater that separates the lake from the inner harbour. In the distance I can see the lights of the city, and behind me, the black, white-capped waves.

(2000) *Near the water purification plant, I run up the hill, using my arms as pistons, then through the park along a path on top of the bluffs.*

Three: The basses are calling (Death and writing)

(1987) The call comes at work. I race home. His car is parked on the front lawn. I enter through the enclosed porch. He's sitting glassy-eyed on the couch with his hat to the side of his head.

'I'm doing badly, son.' He used to say that when he was drunk, but he's not drunk now.

(1954) *I sit in my father's chair in the living room and stare at my feet, imagining my foot bones the way they appeared in an x-ray machine at the shore store. My mother is in the kitchen checking the items in the grocery bags against the receipt. My older brother is out with his friends. My father is in the bathroom, the smell of his aftershave wafting over the classical music he plays on Saturday afternoons.*

While I wait for him, I look at the pictures on the mantel: the one of mother taken before she met my father smiling coquettishly from beneath the brim of her flapper hat, and the one of my father standing in a bar with his hair slicked back and a dart cocked in front of his right eye, a George Gershwin look-a-like.

(1997) *I used to make the writing teacher laugh. It was easy. The slightest innuendo or hint of humour would set her off, in those days, when she laughed. She saw things where there wasn't anything. Always lurking, beneath the surface, there was something, for her, in a word or scene or image. Where I saw the word or scene or image, she saw something more.*

But there was nothing, like now, other than the sorrow, so I walk from the street across for her house to the bookstore on the corner where I used to come after a lesson and page through books she recommended. The back cover of Camus' first book, A Happy Death, reads: 'For here is the young Camus himself, in love with the sea and sun, enraptured by women, yet disdainful of romantic love, and already formulating the philosophy of action and moral responsibility that would make him central to the thought of our time...'

She wouldn't have liked Camus, too brief. The innuendo would have driven her nuts.

(1987) 'I don't know how he got here in that condition,' Suzanne says. 'Me either, son, I'm confused.'

She puts his car on the street while I drive him to the hospital where they say he's had a stroke. They also discover cancer. There isn't much they can do. It's spreading. We celebrate his eightieth birthday in the

hospital. My brother, an airline executive, comes with his wife and a silver heart-shaped balloon.

Reluctantly, I take him home. His short-term memory is shot.

‘Which pills should I take now, son?’

‘The ones with the red tape on the bottle, I just told you that a minute ago.’

‘Be patient, son.’

‘Put your slippers on,’ I say one night, looking at his crusty toenails. We’re watching the *Gray Fox*, a story about an old-time train robber who got out of prison and went on one more spree.

‘Leave him alone,’ Devon says.

Later when I tuck him in like a little boy, he asks, ‘Where’s mother, son?’

‘She’s dead.’

‘Yes, of course, it just slipped my mind.’

I turn out the light and close the door.

(1954) ‘I’ve got to get a haircut. I’ll be right back, son. Then we can go and get those ice skates.’

‘I thought we were going now?’

‘I’ll only be about an hour.’

He won’t be back so I go outside and shoot hoops. One after another I chase down jump shots in the alley until the melted snow freezes and makes it too slippery to play. My mother makes bologna, beans and fried potatoes for dinner. Afterwards she knits while I read about horses and my older brother makes a model airplane. He cuts and glues pieces of balsa wood to a tissue paper pattern. Later he will bake the paper skin tight around the frame in the oven. And in spring he will go into the attic, start them on fire and throw them out the window for me to douse on the ground with the garden hose. Before I go to bed, I do a flying bird’s nest on the gymnastic rings my brother and I made in the attic. Back and forth I swing inverted with my hands and legs behind me in the rings like a bird over old photographs, appliances and clothes in boxes.

‘You want to see how to make a fast buck, I’ll show you how to make a fast buck,’ my father says loudly in a sing/song voice to my mother after he gets home in the middle of the night.

‘Be quiet Bill, what will the neighbours think,’ mother replies.

He comes to our door and tells us his stories, the stories of a little boy who had a hard life. A little boy, whose mother turned him into a little man; a little boy whose childhood was stolen by poverty and war, a little boy who picked coal from alongside the railroad tracks to warm the house, and a little boy who lit street lights with a pole and fought back to back with his older brother to ward off the Polish boys who wanted to steal the collections from two German boys’ paper routes. How he sang on the radio to make a few extra bucks while my mother typed Braille, and

worked most of his adult life at the same life insurance company because he was afraid to give up his job, and besides they had hot lunches – stories I heard so many times that I do not hear them at all.

After he goes to sleep, I get up. ‘Conundrum, conundrum, conundrum,’ I repeat as, I sit on the toilet and stare at the black and white tiles on the floor until the white ones levitate. ‘Let’s fuck some women,’ he shouts in the drunken stupor of his sleep.

(1997) *The writing teacher offered herself to me once, in a letter. I refused. There would be no more anticipation, and for sure no more laughter in the writing if I accepted, I was sure of it, as tempting as her offer might or might not have been.*

Once, she pissed in a sink. We were at my cabin in the woods, and she was afraid to go out in the dark by her self. She told Suzanne and me the next day. We laughed. On another occasion she tapped drumsticks at the feet of a previous lover who was dancing with another woman. He got the point. I did something similar once, a José Greco routine. Not with a previous lover but with two lovers I did not like. I tap danced around their bed, feet stomping like a Spanish dancer. I wanted to write like her too before I found my own voice, which came to me in anticipation of her response as I sat across from her at the dining room table and read my work out loud to her. Will I lose my voice, I wonder? Tap, tap, tap.

We met long before we got to know each other as teacher and student. I passed her, many times, as I ran on the bluffs where she walked. First no gesture was made. Then we nodded, and then, ‘Hello,’ which is what she also said the first time I came to the door with my manuscript in hand.

‘Hello, runner.’

‘Hi, walker,’ I replied and looked at her. She had smooth baby skin and premature gray hair. The handsome woman with the premature gray hair and baby skin, that’s how I saw her, simple as that.

Her house, like her writing, was meticulous, everything just so: the paintings and colour photocopies on the walls, the doily on the table between us, the ashtray beside the bed she tried to get me in, or I’d like to think she’d have liked to get me in.

She had a photo of me on the bulletin board in the kitchen. I saw it the night she drummed at the feet of her former lover, her new lover there in a Halloween costume before it was consummated, I found out afterwards.

(1987) He wants to go home. We hire an aide. Twice a week I take him to radiation treatment.

‘Careful, I’m a real sissy,’ he says to the nurses. His body is covered with liver spots, and warts. I’m getting some myself.

‘No you’re not,’ the nurses say to my father.

'If I can just get in one more summer of golf, son, then I'll be ready to join mother,' he says on the way home one day.

He stops in front of the mirror in the foyer and smiles at himself, then, hunched over with pain, he puts his hands in his pockets and does a jig.

The second call comes at work also. The aide can't get in the house. The students in my adolescent development class at the university sense something is wrong but don't know what.

I race across town. The aide is at the door. There is an indentation in his chair.

'You check down here, I'll check upstairs,' I say to the aide and run up the stairs past the picture of my mother in the flapper hat. His bed is made.

'Here he his,' the aide shouts.

I run down the stairs. He is on his back next to the sink where he must have been shaving, razor by his side, the water still running.

'Oh, blessed Jesus,' she cries.

'Do you know CPR?' I ask.

She's shaking. I lean over him, seal my lips to his and blow a mouthful of the life he gave me into his limp body. There is some eerie gurgling. 'No, don't come back,' I say to myself, and blow again to no avail.

(1954) 'The basses are calling,' he says early the next morning and gently shakes my shoulder.

Half asleep, I get dressed and ride with him to the station house to collect the Sunday morning newspapers. Heavy with inserts, we load them in the Plymouth and ride to my route. Trunk open with papers inside, he drives slowly ahead with the tires crunching on the frozen snow as I go with an armful from house to house. The sun rises and falls on my face like a warm wash cloth. After all the papers are pedalled we drive to my grandmother's asphalt-sided bungalow that is heated with a small coal stove in the kitchen. She's a heavy-set woman whose ankle-less legs seem to go straight into her shoes. With her eyes hidden behind her puffy cheeks and spectacles I never know if she is glad to see me, but the coffee cake is ready. Every Sunday she makes coffee cake, and sometimes pigs in blankets (sausages cooked in bread), but no pigs today, just the coffee cake.

While my father talks to her, I go into the unheated parlour where she keeps the Christmas tree until Easter. A small sliver of light shines through the bottom of the door.

(2002) 'These two imperatives – the one that urges us to continue and that one that compels us to stay – create a tension in Hopper's work.' I read poet Mark Strand's description of Edward Hopper's paintings.

(1954) 'It's time to go, son,' my father says.

On the way home I sit next to him with the coffee cake in my lap. He reaches over and pinches my leg. 'Everything copasetic, son?'

I don't know how to respond. I just pick at the crumbs, the crusty edges of my own life not yet formed.

Years later I will remember the time he puked in the gutter then went inside to get the coffee cake as if nothing happened. I will know by then that he was really asking himself, not me, if everything was copasetic, but I still won't forgive him for asking, because even then I will not know the answer; and prefer not to be asked. I will understand his stories too, by then, and, as a writer; I will thank for the repetition, but I will not forgive him for not getting it. He will have given me a character, but not character.

(1997) I step outside the bookstore. I saw the writing teacher here, on the streets, last winter, not too long before she killed herself. She was doing better. The therapy and St John's Wort were working. That was the last time I saw her. I learned about her death when I was out of town. Someone at work told me when I called in for messages. She had hanged herself in the basement: same way, same age, as her mother. 'The cats are at my feet. I'm facing the big if,' the last words she wrote in her diary.

It wasn't an ending she'd have approved of. 'How amateurish to end by killing off your hero,' she said that day when I brought over a draft of my last chapter, 'It was going so well until then.'

I didn't go to the funeral. Funerals are bad literature. There is no sense of anticipation in testimonials written for the occasion, especially when death is the topic. So I stayed home and thought about her as I am now as I walk in the fog towards the bluffs where I used to see her, sentiment washing through me like the moist air. 'I must fight this off, the sentiment,' I tell myself. It does no good, to be, sentimental, not even now when the writing teacher is dead. A foghorn sounds in the distance. I continue walking toward the pavilion where she held workshops in summer. For a moment, I think I see her coming through the fog, but it's someone else, another woman.

'Hello,' I say.

She smiles unfettered by the sound of the word spoken out loud.

(1987) The paramedics arrive and drag his body like a sack of waste across the linoleum to the kitchen where there is more room to work. When they pull down his pants to check for a pulse, and jolt his body, I go into the living room and sit in his chair.

'You can stop the procedure,' a voice says over the walkie-talkie.

They wheel him out. 'Let's pray together,' the aide says.

'No thanks,' I say and sign the paper.

'You want me to stay?' she asks.

'No, I'll be fine.'

They all leave. It feels good to be in the house alone. The warmth from his chair rises around me. Everything is still.

SUMMARY: INTERPRETING AND LEARNING FROM PAVILION

Writing (drawing) in this manner was a way of knowing (Richardson, 2000; Van Manen, 1990). Or as creative writer Ducornet (2002: 14) stated, 'Writing is reading and reading is a way back to the initial impulse. Both are acts of revelation.'

Drawing Pavilion affirmed my belief that youth work was in part a process of knowing my youth and how it spiralled back and forth through my life. I knew this before I started, but sketching taught me that it was an even more important part of the work than I had thought.

I made discoveries and identified new questions with each sketch. For example, in interpreting the beach scene at the end of the second sketch, I wrote the following notes:

Daniel and I had been through hell together. More than once he had run away. He had tried to hit me several times. He had spit at me and said some things I would not repeat. Yet we had endured and our relationship had grown stronger. At this point I trusted him and myself in this moment. I let him go that night whereas in the past I would have made an effort to stop him. I was curious about where he was going. I watched in admiration of how he unleashed his raw energy. It was almost as if he had created a stage to temporarily exorcise the demons that haunted him. An act of great beauty and sadness, the lead actor collapsed at the water's edge.

I wanted to be part of the drama, to place myself in it with the same intensity, to scream at the top of my lungs. I did it. We played and splashed together revealing something more in both of us, a desire to express, to be what we did together. He was there and I was there in the moment.

Then as we sat together in one of those unforgettable moments with the moon running across the water to our feet, he shared for the first time his fear that he would end up like the father that had so terribly abused his sister and he. And I hesitated before I said no.

Why did I hesitate? Did I know on some level that I did not need to make things better yet tried anyway? Did the mood of the moment make it impossible to resist even though I knew deep down that it might not be? Was I assuring myself once again that I would not end up like my father, a company man? Was I anxious and uncertain, like him, not just shivering from the cold?

I have long since learned that I cannot fix things in child and youth care, or life. That the best I can often do is to be there and listen. I also know that

it is my experience of a moment, not someone else's and that I bring my own story and feelings to the moment, which, if am aware of how they influence me, should make me curious about and open me to the experiences of others.

Yet there is still something from this moment that haunts me, something more to be learned. Even though my response was not the response I would give today, it was a moment of human connection, I'm sure of that, but I'm not sure exactly why. The conditions were perfect. It was just he and I alone on the beach, vulnerable, open to discovering something about us. He must have known like I did that there were no guarantees about the future and that my hesitation reflected my true feelings. He probably wanted the assurance anyway. But I'm not sure if that's the whole story.

I made hundreds of these behind-the-scene interpretations, but, as I said before, I did not make them part of the sketches. Instead I used them to inform my teaching and practice. Some moments defied interpretation. I looked and looked again at these scenes, searching for something, a feeling, state or insight to interpret, and then just settled for knowing there was something that called me to the moment, which I knew instinctively made it belong.

Many of the themes I had identified in my previous work (Krueger, 2004), such as presence, rhythmic interaction and transitions, were reaffirmed as a major part of child and youth care. I also learned more about how identity was shaped, the mixed feelings associated with the death or loss of loved ones, and so forth. Seeing all the sketches together in a finished portrait, a work in progress really, also gave me a different overall understanding of my life. These were the major events that had made me to this point in time, and determined how I saw and experienced the world.

I had tried as best as I could to follow Rilke's (1984) advice to listen to my inner voice, and as a published work, I hoped that *Pavilion* would ring true with something in the readers' experiences that evoked their own interpretations. This I felt would lead to deeper understanding of youth work, and perhaps their lives. And lastly, I wanted the portrait to be good literature. I hoped readers and critics would pick it up and say it's a good read because it is internally and externally consistent with the lived experience, or as one of the blind reviewers of this article wrote: '...his account accords perfectly with how I know the world to be'. If it did this I thought it would be both good research and literature and provide another way to look at autobiography.

There is only narrative – that is, only different genre-defined ways of representing and writing about experiences and their multiple realities.

(Denzin, 2001: 7)

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