Chapter One

Space, Time, Embodied Texts

As I begin to map the territory of knowledge and desire I call this book, I am taken by the idea of relocation and the questions it raises. The subject of this book is writing, but the subject is also the personal. What might it mean to relocate the personal when issues of writing and self are so closely entwined?

The notion of relocation implies a dissatisfaction—a desire to move elsewhere from somewhere. I am dissatisfied with the way the personal is treated in school writing as a space of confession, a telling of inner truth. I am also dissatisfied with current competency-based moves to eradicate the personal from school writing altogether and focus on the more functional genres students need to master in the 'real world'. I wish to assert the importance of working with the writer's personal experience but differently—by relocating the personal—theoretically and pedagogically—in a way that allows a more critical engagement with experience.

I begin this relocation by mapping a set of places—where I have been, where I now stand, where I wish to go. This chapter locates my understandings of a critical writing pedagogy in 'the personal'—in my life stories as these have unfolded over the past thirty years. I attempt, however, not to tell my story as a sequentially, unfolding realist tale, a modernist history of cause and effect. I want to resist constructing

my academic work, or anyone's academic work, as a seamless set of paradigmatic shifts—from process to genre to poststructuralism. I want to resist, as well, conversion narratives, where the teacher/scholar 'sees the light', disavows the past and proclaims the foolishness of her ways.

Instead, I engage in two simultaneous moves: to spatialise the conventional narrative and to locate the autobiographical in its social and cultural landscape. I turn to Edward Soja (1989), a postmodern geographer, to help me with this mapping—as 'a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together by a spatial rather than a temporal logic' (1989:1)—and to poststructuralist feminist educators Linda Brodkey and Bronwyn Davies, for their work on autoethnography and cultural biography, respectively.

Soja argues that time and history have occupied a privileged position in both social life and social theory and that it may be space more than time that now needs attention. This requires not simply a metaphorical move 'that makes geography matter as much as history', but a deconstruction and reconstitution of our thinking—the construction of 'a politicised spatial consciousness' (Soja 1989:75) where 'space cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive, abstract arena on which things happen' (Keith and Pile 1993:2).

For Soja, the spaces where we live, work and write are never neutral.

> We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (Soja 1989:6)

A discussion of writing pedagogies—the way these 'become filled with politics and ideology'—can be productively framed by spatial metaphors—highlighting connections across territories and paradigms as well as disjunctures. In this book I argue for bringing together a variety of writing pedagogies that cross boundaries—including process and genre-based

approaches, as these have been developed in Australia, with elements of poststructural theory. I see this project as more than banal eclecticism or a simple adding of one paradigm to another. There is a history, a development of these paradigms over time which must be acknowledged—but there is also a spatial dimension which interacts with my own experience in educational sites. This spatiality is socially produced, and like society itself, exists in both substantial forms (concrete spatialities) and as a set of relations between individuals and groups, 'an embodiment and medium of social life itself' (Soja 1989:120).

Because this is a book about writing and the self, I am interested in how we might construct what Brodkey, in her reading of Soja, calls 'historicised spaces inhabited by the human body'. Brodkey sees the self, the 'I', in theoretical terms as a postmodern site which

> embodies relations between actually lived and socially produced spaces: in empirical terms, the 'I' is a site whose memories of lived experiences of social and historical spaces are recounted as narratives of personal experience; in practical terms, everyone is an 'I Site' by definition and either already can or may well wish to explore in writing the historicised spaces of their personal narratives. (Brodkey 1996b:18)

To create a critical, spatial perspective in narrative presents both a linguistic and theoretical challenge. Soja argues for tampering 'with the familiar modalities of time, to shake up the normal flow of the linear text' (1989:1). 'All that we can do is re-collect and creatively juxtapose, experimenting with assertions and insertions of the spatial against the prevailing grain of time' (1989:2). Brodkey and Davies argue for relocating personal experience in a cultural frame—so that writing about the self becomes an invitation to identify, analyse and critique, to understand the discursive practices that construct the sense of self—which in turn offer possibilities for social change.

Brodkey uses the term *autoethnography*, coined by Françoise Lionnet to describe a genre which 'opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto–) and the collective (–ethno–) where the writing (–graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed' (1990:391). While autoethnographies resemble personal narratives in that they concern the writer's life, they differ to the extent that personal histories are grounded in cultural analysis and criticism. Autoethnographies, according to Brodkey, 'are produced by people who acknowledge their multiple affiliations and realise that they are strategically poised to interrupt the negative effects of what passes for common sense' (1996b:28).

In *Writing on the Bias* (1994), Brodkey's elegant autoethnographic narrative of childhood encounters with literacy, she disrupts commonsense notions that equate successful writing with learning sets of rules and conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation). Brodkey represents herself as a working-class child, triumphantly marching down the steps of the public library or interviewing her neighbourhood informants in exchange for conversation and food. Through the pleasurable detail of her narrative, she argues that her own success as a writer owes more to the intellectual practices she learned in her working-class home and neighbourhood than to her middle-class schooling's attention to correctness.

Like Brodkey, Davies' attraction to autobiographical writing lies in the potential for social change as well as the pleasure and insights that may accrue to the writer. While Brodkey's metaphor for autobiographical writing is research—autoethnographies are grounded in data collected from 'interviews with the self', memories are treated as 'data' which are discussed, analysed—Davies' metaphor is story, where the individual story (autobiography) is located/shaped by the cultural storylines that frame it.

Davies (1994) uses the term 'collective biography' to refer to stories which move beyond a statement about the particular individual who wrote the story to a revelation of the social and discursive processes through which we become individuals. Basing her work on Frigga Haug's (1987) memory work, Davies' focus is more on textual strategy than text—

on developing a deconstructive process of reading and analysing autobiographical stories in order to make visible that which is usually taken for granted. Through this process, she argues, writers can 'examine the construction of their own biography as something at the same time experienced as personal and their own—woven out of their body/minds—and yet visibly made out of, even determined by, materials and practices not originating from them' (Davies 1992:83–4).

This kind of cultural analysis alerts writers to the narrative possibilities of their experience—reminding the reader that what 'we call personal experience is a narrative production' (Brodkey 1994:210). When we make space as crucial a component of that production as time, what results are embodied texts, where the body (sexed, gendered, racialised, classed) cannot be written out or ignored, where the body insists on occupying some space and will not be silenced. What results is an understanding of text as processual—as a process of making which is profoundly embodied and disciplined, subject to all kinds of policy, institutional, private and power relationships—'always narrative, dialogic and rhetorical' (Threadgold 1997:22). There is pleasure in writing oneself as an embodied self—in moving across a terrain of landscapes, geographical relocations and scholarly terrains. There are also dangers of getting lost in the pleasure of the journey, losing sight of what we're telling or why we're trying to map these locations.

LIFE AS RELOCATION

The power of spatial metaphors to reshape writing and self is profound. Once I understand relocation as an embodied social and political act, the stories I've told of my life and work are suddenly transfigured by metaphors of movement and place—as dislocations and relocations across the northern and southern hemispheres. Such is the power of a new metaphor to reframe old stories. Critical discourses such as poststructuralism, Pam Gilbert (1993a) argues, allow us to

make spaces outside dominant paradigms where different stories can be made and read. By constructing 'layers of stories, one upon the other and one beside the other . . . the stories construct a new discursive field upon which we can draw as we search for different ways to talk and write' (1993a:4).

The stories my family tell construct me as a timid child who never wanted to leave the space called home, who cried inconsolably on her first day at school and the weeks following, who every Sunday night crept into her mother's bed for comfort and the hope she might be allowed to stay home on Monday. The same child, they say, sobbed when her parents sent her to summer camp, terrified of being sent away from home to have fun with strangers. While other middle-class children seemed gleeful to escape their parents, small Barbara was devastated to leave her mother. So she cried. She cried on the bus and she cried in her bunk each night. Until she found girlfriends, water skiing, hikes, boys, slow dancing, Johnny Matthis and a less stressful set of social class relations in this new location. This was a world less regulated by country club affiliations and the cruel exclusions of the middle-class community where she grew up wondering what she had to do to be popular. It was a space that allowed her to construct new subjectivities outside the discourses of exclusion that dominated the home place.

This same child—this Barbara—had a late adolescence. When mothers bemoaned the insolence of their white teenage middle–class daughters, her mother smiled Madonna–like and boasted that she and Barbara talked about everything. So it came as somewhat of a shock when at age 23 this Barbara left home in a big way. She met *that man* at New York University—in the days of radical street politics and Vietnam moratoriums—and she moved in with him. Later, she married and moved to Australia for two years. That was in 1972, the Nixon years, when U.S. troops invaded Cambodia and killed students on the campus of Kent Sate University. Twenty-eight years later she still lives in Australia, although she never decided to stay.

Her relocation to Australia has been a site of controversy and despair for her family. She was raised in a culture that places a premium on home—on the cultural affiliation and parental devotion of its children. Jewish girls rarely go so far away from home and when they do, they rarely stay away so long. Her grandmother Sophie, of course, did just that at age 16. The eldest of nine children, Sophie begged her father's mother for passage to the United States and with her brother, Myer, travelled by boat in what she called 'stowage class'—with the cargo. She left behind Poland, her five sisters and brothers and her mother, pregnant with twins, to make her way to the land of opportunity—where she bluffed her way into a job and learned to make boas from wild, pink ostrich feathers.

The stories Sophie told of relocation in that wave of migration during the 1890s were Horatio Alger tales of courage and triumph. She worked, married, brought her mother and seven brothers and sisters to America, raised her own family, built a solid family business with her husband. But when her granddaughter Barbara migrated to Australia, left the civilised and modern land of opportunity to go to that place down under, she despaired. There was no persecution, no deprivation, no need. Discourses of survival and opportunity were not available for her to produce a reading of her granddaughter's journey as other than self-indulgent and unnecessary. And to be alone. On each return visit her grandmother cried, 'I think of you there so alone—without your family. Come back Barbara. No one should be so alone'.

So this Barbara is a traveller—a relocated scholar—situated somewhere between the United States and Australia—maintaining citizenship in one and residence in the other. She reads and writes and publishes and does research in communities that cross continents. The traces of these locations are everywhere evident in the stories that follow—in the theoretical borrowings—in the desire to locate herself within an intersecting set of theories, practices, continents that constitute her understanding of writing and writing pedagogy.

This kind of geographical work is timely given the current and growing interest in 'the personal', 'the self' and 'the

autobiographical', not only in the teaching of writing but across many disciplinary and subject fields. Twenty years of writing research have brought great advances in our understanding of writing process, contexts for writing, and classroom strategies for fostering the individual writer's voice. But the role of the personal remains a dominant but poorly theorised and inadequately conceptualised notion. While an explosion of knowledges from critical discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralism provides new tools for analysis, writing pedagogies, for the most part, have not called upon critical understandings of language, text, discourse and subjectivity now available in the formulation of classroom practice.

In this book I bring together these diverse bodies of knowledge in order to relocate the personal within the social, cultural and political domains. My aim is to experiment with alternate, more theorised ways of reading and writing the personal. Working against the notion that meaning is ever simply personal, individual or private, I develop four teaching case studies in different educational sites (secondary, undergraduate, graduate, adult/community) to explore a montage of ways of working critically, rather than promote a single prescriptive answer. My approach is eclectic but not atheoretical, theorised but not abstract, demonstrating embodied ways of working critically with personal experience and text production.

Of course, the process of developing this pedagogy has itself been a journey of relocation, which I now map more specifically in the remainder of this chapter. My aim is to construct an autoethnography with the self-consciousness of a writing teacher. I need to decide which stories to include, how to sequence them, which to leave out. I wish to move in and out of the present to the future and past in order to represent my pedagogy of relocation as an amalgam—an intertextual borrowing of theories. Thus I locate myself as a situated subject in a mesh of discourses about language and text, including process pedagogies of the early 1980s, genre pedagogies of the mid 1980s, and critical discourse analysis and feminist poststructuralist work in the 1990s. I interweave my history as a teacher, student and researcher of writing

with more general movements in the field in order to establish a critical perspective on writing and establish the ground for later chapters.

However, locations are never neutral, and Kirsch and Ritchie (1995) are right to remind us that it is not enough to locate ourselves in our scholarship and research—'to make the facile statements that often appear at the beginning of research articles' (1995:9), without also investigating what has shaped the writer's knowledge, including what is contradictory, unpleasant, unknowable. While it is important to claim the legitimacy of our experience, a 'politics of location' also demands a rigorously reflexive examination of ourselves as researchers and writers—and of our locations as 'fluid, multiple and illusive' (1995:8).

BEHIND THE CAMERA/OUT FROM UNDER THE TABLE: NEW HAMPSHIRE 1980

My academic career began in 1976 at a rural university in Australia—but it was my first sabbatical in 1980 at the University of New Hampshire that marks my obsession with writing research. Donald Graves hands me a video camera and suggests I use it to frame my observations in the New Hampshire elementary writing classrooms where he has invited me to observe. These are the last six months of his two-year National Institute of Education-funded study, where Graves and colleagues Susan Sowers and Lucy Calkins are documenting the writing behaviours of children in grades 1–4.

Graves' offer is generous. I am to locate myself in any classroom I like and focus on my own research questions during my four-month sabbatical in New Hampshire. I've read a number of Graves' research reports in *Language Arts* but have done no writing research myself and don't know what to expect. Giddy with freedom and terrified by stereotyped notions of research as disembodied, scientific work, I wonder what to look for and how I will know when I've found it. Such preoccupations may be peculiar to my middle–class good–girl desire–to–please. There are signs, however,

that even in these early days of research, I understand 'looking' as a partial and political act; that the rooms where we locate ourselves and the directions in which we point our camera are never neutral decisions.

I notice, for example, that many of the research articles written by Graves and Calkins focus on the work of a particular grade 1 teacher—who herself has begun to research her own classroom and run workshops for other teachers. I spend time in this teacher's room and am impressed with her facility in writing conferences. I am trying to see the pattern of her questions and how these scaffold children's subsequent drafts. But I am also uneasy. I am not attracted by stars. It may be that they have enough attention already, or it may be an act of rebellion. Coming from Australia, I am viewing with an outsider's obsession to understand how process writing practices are put in place. This is 1980 and no one in Australia is interested yet. I relocate myself in a grade 2 classroom where I will subsequently document the cycle of publication of one child as she interacts with her skilful teacher in writing conferences (Kamler 1980).

Years later I come to understand that when we take cameras into classrooms we construct a set of positionings and relations of power for the 'human objects' we are viewing (see, for example, Reid *et al* 1996). A five-year-old writer named Zoe provides one lesson in 1983 when after being viewed by my camera for over a year, she asks if her friend Kate can join her during a writing interview scheduled at lunchtime. I agree but am surprised to hear her whisper on video, 'Kate, now you can be another famous writer in our class—just like me'. While Zoe's 'promise of Hollywood' is chastening, it is not until a decade later, when I research the construction of gendered subjectivities in the first month of school (Kamler *et al* 1994), that I more fully understand the partiality of the camera and its role in producing data.

> In his discussion of ethnographic film, Nichols (1981) makes problematic the idea that a film transparently discloses the real rather than producing through a set of discourses a particular reality. Facts

> are not simply out there in the visible world; they are themselves constituted. . . . The camera is one of a range of sources of information about the event, and it permits an extension of the number of readings that can be made. Its view and its record are just as partial and as interested as those of the other observers. (Reid *et al* 1996:100)

Of course, in 1980 my view of data was not framed, as it is now, by feminist and poststructuralist theorising, and I necessarily took a less critical view of data collection. It was only gradually that I came to understand I was not simply filming data which preexisted my entry to the research site—that the data was not simply there waiting to be scooped up by my camera. The camera itself is not a neutral tool of research. Looking, like writing, is a kind of composing—a selecting and ignoring—a looking and not-looking.

Writing about what I saw behind the camera in 1980, however, was transforming. This writing was scaffolded by Don Murray's graduate writing seminar at the University of New Hampshire where I used my observations in the New Hampshire primary classrooms as the focus of my major research paper. I now see that seminar and my sabbatical more broadly as a series of simultaneous, multiple relocations—a return to the United States after eight years in Australia—a return with a three-year-old son, a collapsed marriage behind me and tense negotiations with a family ambivalent about my return because it was temporary.

Sabbaticals are times for reflection and writing—times for intellectual work outside the teaching, administration, committee work and political negotiations we call our daily work. They are also times for renewal, and we are fortunate to have them. Australian academics, however, are expected to produce measurable outcomes from these times away—to write books, papers, journal articles, research grant applications. While traces of the personal can be gleaned from book acknowledgments which insiders read as voraciously as gossip columns, academics rarely write *about* these times as a space where we live our lives differently.

I am 33 years old. I am on sabbatical for six months living in a one-bedroom apartment with my three-year-old son. I am a single mother displaced—occupying a strange city without my usual child care networks—in order to work with Graves and Murray. The two Dons. It's a joke Australians understand differently because we have been shaped by the commercial jingle of the Don Smallgoods Manufacturer (Is Don, Is Good).

My task for Murray's seminar is to write a five-page paper each week for the next ten weeks. Fifty pages dredged up on ten topics of my choosing—as long as they pertain to the topic of writing. But I have a problem. I cannot write without cigarettes and I have just quit. After fifteen years as an addict, I threw my cigarettes away at my brother's home only three weeks earlier—trying to emulate him and my sister. In two years time, when our mother dies of lung cancer at age 58, I will be happy I too have quit, but I'm not happy now.

Now I'm unbalanced, deranged. I eat truckloads of food. I go to sleep at 8:00 P.M. with my son to make sure I don't smoke in the evening. I take hot baths at 3:00 A.M. when I'm awakened by nicotine desire. And when I am rock–bottom–ashtray–sucking–desperate, I inhale bits of marijuana to quell the tormenting red panic that rises in my chest and threatens to strangle me. The panic is not unfamiliar. I have quit before—three times in five years—and failed.

My failure each time is due to writing. It is writing which always brings me back. I vow to stop killing myself each summer and quit. I learn to talk on the phone, drink at parties, even finish a meal in a restaurant without nicotine. But then the new semester begins, the lectures, memos, journal articles, book chapters, faculty submissions pile up. I scavenge old ashtrays and sneak down the hall to 'borrow' a few from my colleague 'the smoker'. I light cigarettes so I won't flee the writing table. The cigarette in my hand makes the writing more tolerable, the staring into space less lonely. When I

suck deeply the panic about having nothing to say eases. It's a physical sensation—the sweet–sucking–smoke calms me, gives me control—of the writing—my life. After one week I am back—a pack a day and the writing gets done.

But this time I am resolute. So I choose the topic of writing and smoking for my first seminar paper. It seems a banal topic but I can think of nothing else. My life is so constricted by my desire for cigarettes, there is nothing else.

As the seminar due date approaches I grow more out–of–control. I rehearse phrases before falling asleep, run fragments of ideas during the day. Anything but sit at the table and write. When finally I get there, it's worse than I expect. I pace, make gallons of tea and coffee, watch Sesame Street and Mr Rogers with my son, fantasise about meeting a tall, dark stranger who smokes. My head is pounding. I take aspirins and more hot baths. I sigh continuously but nothing eases my anxiety.

I read Murray's *Listening to Writing* (1982). 'Most craftsmen' [*sic*], Murray writes, 'are compulsive about their tools, and writers write with pen, pencil, typewriter and paper which is familiar to hand and eye'. It occurs to me that cigarettes have been my one and only tool for writing. And it may be that cigarettes have made it harder for me to write, not easier. It is true cigarettes increase my sense of control. They squash down the rising panic, which is why I love them. But lighting up keeps things from wandering into a mess and Murray argues that writing demands letting go, being surprised, writing junk. I am worried by this thought; it may be an addict's delusion or a sign I am on the road to reform.

In the end time runs out and I'm desperate to get something down. It may be that the critic in my head is also withdrawing from lack of nicotine. Of course, the irony is that this most unscholarly topic allows me to WRITE WITHOUT CIGARETTES for the first time. Ever. Five pages are filled and I do not die, although it is still a possibility. And when the paper

> is finished all traces of my agony are removed—except as I choose to tell it.
>
> In the weeks ahead I will continue to hate writing but will find healthier writing obsessions. I will spend hours in stationery shops searching for black pilot razor point pens and green faintly-lined spiral-bound notebooks. I will sing the praises of my green velour beanbag lap-top desk and I will write everywhere—on my bed, outside while my son plays, on trains and planes. I will pretend for the moment that cigarettes don't write my papers. And that I will never have to quit again.

Murray's valuable contribution to the field of composition is embodied in my experience of that seminar. We met in the basement of Murray's house to read our papers out loud for response and critique. The group liked my paper on writing and smoking and I remember the moist orange pound cake and sweet cinnamon buns baked by Minnie Mae Murray, a woman who welcomed me to New Hampshire and gave me her daughter's boots so I could tromp through New Hampshire snow with dry Australian feet.

I came to believe, as others before me, that Murray taught me to write, even though his own pedagogy disavowed such a claim. His notion of the writing conference created a theorised space for gaining distance on writing and taught me how to sit at the table with writers—hesitantly at first—and ask questions about their writing. It created space for me to move out from under my mother's kitchen table and find a position from which to write with greater ease and confidence.

Conference questions—the form they take, when and why and how to ask them—will become the focus of my evolving writing pedagogy over the next twenty years. When conferencing is demeaned by advocates of genre-based pedagogy as a laissez-faire, do-gooder progressive practice, I will resist—but later struggle with what it means to make conference questions more critical, so that they position writers to read texts for traces of discourses. What is certain is that the conference relocates the writer in relation to her writing—it

creates a seeing, hearing, embodied space or, in Soja's terms, a 'postmodern landscape . . . for revealing "other spaces" and hidden geographical texts' (1989:2).

DEEP IN THE PROCESS: AUSTRALIA 1980–84

There is some synergy in my timing. I am a young academic without a PhD, as is the tradition in Australian universities until the late 1980s. I return from New Hampshire ten pounds heavier, full of energy for classroom-based writing research and obsessed with my new electric typewriter. I am filled with the zeal of the newly converted. I am writing every day. I rise at 5:00 A.M. to make sure I write for at least two hours before my son rises.

Six months after my return to Australia, Graves comes to Sydney as an invited keynote speaker at the Third International English Teaching Conference in September 1980. It is difficult to recapture the excitement Graves generates in Australia (especially in the years since the critique of his work has been so well rehearsed), but his address is an historic moment which has a profound effect on writing pedagogy at all levels: elementary, secondary, university and adult education sectors.

The Primary English Teachers Association sponsors a book with Graves' address and papers by colleagues from the University of New Hampshire. The title, *Donald Graves in Australia: Children Want to Write* (Walsh 1981), highlights the Australian focus on the man (his talents for humour, metaphor, conversation) as much as his work. The inclusion of my chapter in the book (Kamler 1981) and Graves' reference to my New Hampshire research in his keynote address ensure that I begin to receive phone calls from all over Australia to do Graves workshops. I say I do Kamler—if they want that I'll come.

This is the time of the post–Whitlam funding boom when infrastructure and financial resources are available to induct teachers into progressive pedagogies. As I begin to develop writing workshops for teachers, I am committed to a teacher–

as–writer model but have to work around the limited time available to Australian teachers during their summer break. There can be no summer school like the Bay Area Writing Projects in California. Australian teachers get only six weeks vacation, not ten like their American colleagues, and they cannot spend half that time writing. They need recovery and family time. I remember. I have left the secondary classroom only four years earlier.

So a colleague and I develop a five-day intensive workshop structure. We establish a process writing paradigm using Murray's (1982) well-known 'index card' exercise to get started—Macrorie's (1980) 'telling facts' to develop detail in the writing and a 'tightening' exercise to teach editing skills. We structure group and individual conferences to ask questions of the writing, and on the final day we ask teachers to read their writing in the public arena as spoken publication. As each person reads the writing they have developed during the week, the tension is high, the atmosphere animated. No one knows how this will go. The first time it is exhilarating—and the time after that—and the time after that. The writing is tight and sharp, it is focused and works on different levels; the weaknesses are glossed and carried by the energy of the spoken voice that reads the text into being.

While the writing is powerful and seems to make a difference to people's lives, I have no way to theorise the effect. The process paradigm in which I'm located does not help me. There are, however, some scenes which disturb me and which I write off to the unpredictable power of writing.

> It is 4:00 P.M. We are at a five-day residential workshop in a country town called Bendigo (160 km) outside of Melbourne—with wide leafy streets and a stunning cathedral. We are working/living in a motel complex. We have just completed the second day, and participants have been in their rooms writing during the afternoon. There's a knock at my door. A woman enters. She is in her early 40s, her hair slightly dishevelled and backlit as she stands in the doorway. She will not sit down. 'You've ru-

> ined my life, you know, you've ruined it. I had no intention of leaving my husband until the children got older. But now I can't stay. You've ruined it'.

It is a chilling moment I cannot erase. Earlier that morning the woman detailed in writing a scene at her dinner table. She had been directed by me to identify a generalised statement in her draft ('they didn't communicate') and create a 'once' in Macrorie's (1980) sense—to locate a specific scene that would exemplify the lack of communication she was referring to. I asked her a number of questions about the dinner party—the preparation, the menu, the guests, the conversation. There was nothing in her answers that signalled danger to me, and she continued writing most of the afternoon. As her teacher I found the act of transforming her life scene into text, identifying the details and recreating the scene, energising.

However, the act of visualising tipped this woman over and she blamed me. Although empathetic, I numbed myself to her accusation and psychologised her. She was in pain, transferring her hostility onto me. The part of me that felt devastated and responsible, pushed these feelings away. I was amazed at the force of her feelings, but I couldn't see my complicity in building these meanings as I had no discourses available to me other than psychology.

In building this critique of my practice, I do not wish to disavow the value of this exercise retrospectively, or negate the importance of working with the embodied specificity of place and persons to create a spatialised text. What I do wish to highlight is my own innocence and naïveté with regard to the strategy. There were students other than Nadia who became upset over the years, who cried or became aggressive when the writing revealed discomforting insights. I understood that detailing their experience in writing made 'real' the pain they lived with and that their aggression towards me was misplaced or transferred, much as occurs in therapy. I was not frightened by their emotion but certainly did not see myself as implicated. I will need other

discourses, such as Lee's (1997b) notion of coproduction to help me read such pedagogical moments from a different position.

THE GENRE YEARS, OR A STUDENT ONCE AGAIN: AUSTRALIA 1984–90

I am sitting in my PhD supervisor's office. We are bound in ways that may or may not happen in the United States where students are mentored by committees rather than single individuals. The dependency and intensity of the one-to-one relationship most Australian PhD students experience is complex but will not come under critical public scrutiny until postgraduate pedagogy begins to emerge as a significant area of scholarship and research in the mid-1990s (see, for example, Lee and Green 1996; Kamler and Threadgold 1996; Lee and Williams 1998).

I have travelled an hour and a half to meet with my supervisor. We are to focus on my transitivity analysis of five-year-old Zoe's texts. In Halliday's (1985) systemic functional grammar, six different types of transitivity processes are recognised in the language: material and behavioural (processes of doing), mental (processes of feeling and thinking), verbal (processes of saying), relational and existential (processes of being).

These differentiations of meaning are a great advance on traditional grammar descriptions of a verb as a 'doing' word. But the challenge of categorising more precisely the kind of meaning being made by the verb is not straightforward. Meaning is slippery and no matter how hard I try, I cannot pin down some of the processes in Zoe's text. I do not yet understand this as a problem of semantic grammars more generally. I am unaware, in fact, that it is this indeterminacy of meaning that makes the systemic functional grammar open to criticism in international linguistic circles. All I know, lowly PhD student that I am, is that my head aches from the effort of making such fine gradations of meaning. I feel stupid.

The process I have been struggling with is *had* as in *I had my party* and *I had my cake.* According to the bible (our affectionate term for Halliday's 387-page tome modestly titled *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985) *had* is a relational process. There are three broad types of relational processes—intensive, circumstantial and possessive—which express different ways of being and are found in two modes—attributive and identifying. Halliday's example *Peter has a piano* is analysed as a relational/possessive process because the relationship between the two terms *Peter* and the *piano* is one of ownership, as in Peter *owns* the piano.

But this does not help me. Halliday does not analyse young children's writing, and I have the sense that *had* is being used in Zoe's text as a material process of doing, rather than one of owning. I have struggled with these two clauses and others like them for weeks, and depending on the time of day, my mood, the weather, I sometimes decide they are relational and sometimes material. Back and forth. I need an answer. I need to quantify the transitivity choices in Zoe's ten texts and look for patterns. I need to pin these processes down so I can move on.

I come to PhD work relatively late in my academic career, after working for eight years as a university teacher/writer/researcher. This is not unusual in Australian universities, particularly education faculties, where mid-career development has been the norm rather than the exception. Australian postgraduate work is a hybrid, which until recent years has owed more to British than American models. In the British tradition, great value is placed on completing an undergraduate degree and obtaining first-class honours. The British Master's is a no-coursework research-only degree, making it highly regarded as an entry qualification for researchers. As a consequence, many older eminent scholars in Britain and Australia do not have PhDs.

However, while it was once common for non-PhDs to obtain positions in Australian universities, this is no longer the case as credentialling requirements are shaped by global marketisation forces to more closely approximate those of

the United States. Most of my colleagues in faculties of education around Australia do not enrol in PhD programs until at least 35 years of age, *after* they are employed in universities. This repositioning of oneself as student after years of being authorised as an 'expert' in one's field, constructs a different set of power relations than those faced by younger students without years of professional practice.

In order to make dissertation work possible, Australian academics engage in a variety of relocations. Some are granted extended leave to study in the United States where they remain until they complete their degrees; others return to Australia after completing coursework only and struggle to write their dissertations while recommencing full-time work. Some opt to study in Australian universities part-time—often where they are not employed—and rely on squeezing their writing time into evenings, weekends and occasional intense periods of three- to six-month leaves scattered over five to six years. A few of the privileged (to the extent that one can call quitting a full-time job and living on $12,000 a year a privilege) study full-time, often supported by Australian Commonwealth scholarships for up to a maximum of three years.

In 1984, I enrol as a part-time student while I continue full-time employment as a lecturer in language and literacy at a university 450 km away—a strange encounter of a third kind. The data I have been collecting for the past four years has come from process writing classrooms where I have been observing the youngest writers at school. Given the intense demand for professional development in the early 1980s, I have resisted the elision of Graves/process/'America knows best' by collecting early writing data from Australian classrooms and writing about it for conferences and publication.

When it comes to analysing children's writing, however, I have come up against a number of limitations of the process paradigm. In a chapter entitled "Observations of One Child Learning to Write in Two Classroom Contexts" (Kamler 1987), I focus on the relationship between five-year-old Peter's drawing and writing, the length of his texts, his control of