

I AM THE SPACE WHERE I AM: AN ARTS-INFORMED AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC
INQUIRY ON PLACE-CONSCIOUS EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how my representations of experience through arts-informed autoethnographic research are significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of place. I seek to understand how *place-conscious education* in a community setting can encourage students' relationships with the spaces they inhabit and lend to a more just learning environment. Many educative tools are provided and analyzed which are derived from *wayfinding* and *psychogeographic* methods. Data was collected over two months throughout the Summer of 2015 while participating in the Onward Israel service learning program in Israel and Palestine. My digital photographs and excerpts of stream-of-consciousness style poetry serve as the data set to illuminate the rich sensory encounters and art making processes indicative of experiential learning.

This context-driven artwork encourages questions and dialogue about sociopolitical conflict and wars, migration and occupation. It is concerned with physical as well as psychological borders, checkpoints and boundaries. I utilized poetic and photographic inquiry as well as cognitive mapping to explore how concepts of *travel* are intricately linked to practices of self-reflexivity, community building and alternative curricula development outside of the formal classroom setting. This qualitative data is not a strictly defined set of interviews or statistics. Instead, vignettes of a more totalizing experience can be extracted, analyzed, dissected and/or rearranged. It is an exploration of identity, agency and untraditional ways of knowing the self/Other. I underscore how new pathways and possibilities for teaching emerge from a greater acceptance and validation of experiential knowledge and an attuned consciousness to place.

Keywords: travel, wayfinding, psychogeography, place-conscious education

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TO LEAVE FOR LEAVING'S SAKE: AN INTRODUCTION

There is no single route through the conflicts and ambiguities attending a range of explosive futures for the relations between travel, community, identity and difference. Perhaps the ideal form would be a collection of postcards home, from which the reader would create his or her own preferred itinerary but, given the structure of books, there has to be a beginning, middle and an end.¹

How I Came to This Inquiry

It was the first time I noticed the delicate dance of barbed wire loops. The strands were arranged with just enough attention to prove effective, though assuredly the installer felt pressure to hurry along. There was no delineation between inside and out- where the lines had been drawn and where they were being reworked. I found alarm in how electrical wires were strung from pole to pole- each building narrowly connected to the grid by a cluster of knots and frayed ends. Ficus tree roots had gradually heaved the cement sidewalks of certain streets with as much force as an earthquake. My observations were simultaneously concerted and spontaneous; in feverish search of the smallest of details but without direct plans on how to find them.

This was June 2015 in Tel Aviv, Israel and the Mediterranean air was stiflingly thick. For many tourists and locals alike, these summer days were a time for frivolity and sun tanning. But I arrived in the country with a handful of straightforward goals. I was accepted into the Onward Israel “Diversity and Coexistence” service learning program, where for six weeks I would intern at a start-up in the old port city of Jaffa while engaging in cultural immersion programming. Formally, I had signed up to learn about entrepreneurship while participating in lectures, workshops and tours around Israel and Palestine meant to expose students to select aspects of Middle Eastern culture. But I had foremost committed to this program for the opportunity to explore and document the

nuances and peripheries in the region. It was a chance to photograph and craft poetry about the sights, smells and sensations observed while simultaneously navigating day-to-day life some 8,000 miles away from where I call home.

In the weeks prior to my departure, I read and reread Karen O'Rourke's (2013) *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers*. I discovered the book somewhat accidentally while on the prowl for texts pertaining to abstract cartography. A professor at Jean Monnet University (Saint-Etienne) outside of Lyon, France, O'Rourke explores the relationship between art practice and the concepts of network, archive and territory (O'Rourke, 2015, para. 1). I became instantly smitten with her ideas of mapping as an embodied experience, and how she wove thick descriptions of contemporary artworks with ways in which mapping is involved as we move through space. As layers of annotations built up thickly on most pages, I would intermittently pause to exhale an elated "yes." There was resonance in her descriptions of drifting- physically and emotionally, and how psychogeography can provide effective tools for navigating the places we encounter. As a compulsive over-planner, I felt even more prepared for my trip, armed with alternative methods for reading new cities. Though there are inherent contradictions in obsessively planning for spontaneity, these notes on wayfinding would guide me through a summer abroad.

Prior to digesting O'Rourke's book, I was not attuned to the connection between theories of drifting and my artistic practice. I always assumed my photographic meanderings and stream-of-consciousness style pieces of prose were too obscure to nestle into categorization. This inexplicable desire to wander and observe began in 2007 after graduating high school when I moved on a whim to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It was a

grandiose gesture- desiring not only to pursue a “ski bum” lifestyle, but to do so in the steepest, most craggy mountains in the United States. Off to the Tetons I went. In Spring of 2009, I used my meager savings for a plane ticket to Alaska, striving for vaster terrain and more extreme forms of adventure. With little more than a backpack and my skis, I hitchhiked from Anchorage to Valdez, then up to Fairbanks- stopping to revel in the religion-rupturing aura of Denali. This was when I first started journaling and sketching as a means to comprehend my experience and ask questions of my encounters. Though the historic landmarks and designated vista points were necessary to my circuit, I developed a keen eye for the tangents and shadowed corners. I felt like I was seeing things most people overlooked and vignettes of dilapidation quickly became a fixation. Shortly after my time in Alaska, I was off to Montana in a tireless quest for deeper snow and bigger skies.

Exploring new cities and neighborhoods became something of an addiction and as my infatuation with photography blossomed, it supplanted the desire to ski. I was soon on the road with musicians, initially connected through friends-of-friends, which flourished into many new connections. Sporadic concerts turned into entire tours and for two straight summers I crisscrossed the United States and Canada. Despite the whirlwind days and sleepless nights, the intricacies of travel were intoxicating. In 2011, I began my undergraduate career at the University of Arizona in Tucson, but maximized every long weekend, holiday and academic recess to tramp about California and other bits of the west coast. Throughout the tumult and tensions, I documented my understanding of place by employing photography, watercolor painting and poetry to experiment with concepts of beauty, anguish and fatigue. This generated a distinct type of understanding; mapping

spaces that spawned fear, anxiety, calm and confusion. Roads and cafes that led to new ways of knowing. The towns and the times when I felt most vulnerable, or sensed it in others. There was solace and intimacy in my construction of transience as I largely traveled alone, and my appetite for exploration grew insatiable.

Somewhere along the Pacific Coast Highway when my gas tank was full and I was running on fumes (likely near the county line, on a bend where Malibu turns to Oxnard and the Santa Monica mountains were shawled in morning fog), I declared myself a “chronicler of the ephemeral.” Committing to continuous travel and delving into the primacy of place as I increasingly found deep connection with miniscule moments and details. As O’Rourke (2013) writes:

The stumbling block for people who are familiar with an area is a selective gaze that ignores everything but what is necessary for the task at hand. We see only what we expect to see. It takes a certain detachment to be able to look for one thing and find another fortuitously. (p. 5)

After a brief writing residency in Big Sur, California, my voyages extended further to Mexico, Spain, France and Morocco. The speed and duration of each excursion varied, but the desire to experience anything new and different was incessant. This morphed into a need for constant motion; a synchronous existence in both the present and what is to come- in flesh, artistic endeavor and intellectual capacity. Not a quest for the exotic or foreign so much as a newfound tireless pursuit of finding a sense of belonging in the world and fostering my curiosities for what is yet to be seen. Extracted from his *Pensées*, Pascal reflects (as cited in De Botton, 2002):

When I consider...the small space I occupy and which I see swallowed up in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I know nothing and which know nothing of me [l'infinie immensité des espaces que j'ignore et qui m'ignorent], I take fright and am amazed to see myself here rather than there: there is no reason for me to be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who put me here? (p. 159)

In Spring 2015 when I applied to spend the summer in Tel Aviv, I was seeking a chance to plunge into the complexities of Israel- a country I visited the previous winter for only a handful of days. I sought to parse out my personal tangled identity and garner new ways of cultivating and conducting artistic inquiry. I was determined to unpack the overlaps and anxieties between anticipated and actual encounters of new places and utilize wayfinding exercises throughout day-to-day life in unfamiliar cities.

At the time of writing this thesis, I am a master's degree seeking student in my final semester. Throughout my academic career, I have attempted to navigate the divide between artist and art educator. This often results in self-deprecation; never believing enough in my creative capacity and artistic production to proclaim myself a true *artist*. Yet knowing that some of my most earnest expression and research stems from my visual art and creative writing. Much of my work thus far has blurred the boundaries between disciplines and integrates creative practice with scholarly research; not unlike the “research/creation” method suggested by Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (as cited in Vaughan, 2006):

[This is a research activity] that forms an essential part of a creative process of artistic discipline and that directly fosters the creation of literary/artistic works.

The research must address clear research questions, offer theoretical

contextualization within the relevant field or fields of literary/artistic inquiry, and present a well-considered methodological approach. Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic works must meet peer standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing. (p. 15)

I have utilized my travels as a launch pad for projects- coupling academic papers with prose and photographs- and carving out something of an Interzone where visual pieces, spoken and written word frequently meld.²

My arts-informed research aims to strengthen the connection between education and the places we individually and collectively inhabit. In some sense, this is an act of defiance against the dominant system of public school education in which I was raised- one based on rigorous testing and state achievement; a system that is conventionally disengaged from the connections between students and space. Despite my continual efforts to blend my encounters with academic assignments, I have witnessed an immense chasm between how I value my experiential knowledge and how it is validated in the classroom. As if empirical knowledge is held in much higher regard than students' own trials, tribulations and observations. Because of this, I am frequently drawn to alternative forms of schooling such as workshops at the University of Arizona Poetry Center and Casa Libre en la Solana where these sentiments and sensations can be studied more deeply. The summer in Tel Aviv that I recount in this thesis was no exception. My interdisciplinary documentation helped reveal how places are profoundly pedagogical in many ways. David A. Gruenewald (2003a) writes on how places, as centers of experience, teach us about small details of the world and how our lives piece into the spaces we occupy. He extends that places *make* us who we are:

As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped. Thus [Gary] Snyder's cogent assertion "The world is places" can be extended: It is also true that people make places and that places make people. The kind of teaching and shaping that places accomplish, of course, depends on what kinds of attention we give them and on how we respond to them. (p. 621)

The purpose of my study is to illustrate through an autoethnographic lens how place-conscious education leads to generative art making practices and a transformative understanding of space and identity. By examining my own artistic practices and global wanderings in this writing, I explore how place-conscious education in a community setting can encourage students' relationships with the spaces they inhabit and lead to a more just learning environment. My research questions include: **Through arts-informed autoethnographic research, how are my representations of experience significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of place? And what are the educative tools that can be derived from arts-informed psychogeography and wayfinding?** I will demonstrate how "the artist-theorist makes use of the transformative power of art as an interactive and resistant practice and as a means of individual and cultural change" (Sullivan, 2010, p. 159). I first examine my own relationship to the places I have moved through in recent travels and then provide recommendations for this work in communities with several methods of inquiry. I aim to explicate the relationship between place-conscious education and various tactics of wayfinding and psychogeography. In this thesis, I share new routes and suggest ways to experience well-trodden ones with fresh inspiration.

The Structure of the Work

I envision this thesis as an opportunity to finally be heard. I am a vocal advocate for alternative forms of education, human rights reform, new ways of forging community on social media, and I have seldom been too timid to share an idea in the classroom throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies. But I have long squelched my poetic inclinations and more obscure photographic visions in others' company. Though some of my photographs have been shared with teachers, colleagues and a small number of local exhibitions, my stream-of-consciousness prose has largely remained hidden in the depths of my desk drawers. I have wrestled with instructors' syllabi to proclaim poetry as an enclave of the visual arts. That "creative writing" and "fine art" are not isles unto themselves. The thought of incorporating my passages into this text has at times made me writhe in discomfort or embarrassment. Where does this disbelief in my soulful thoughts emanate from, that I am so convinced no one wants to read those words? In these pages, you are hearing me- and I am hearing me. It is my experiment in interdisciplinary inquiry, and in trusting my own abilities.

My photographs, poems and other selections of writing are interspersed throughout these chapters as I weave in and out of the connections. These documentations are examples of sensitively observing the world around me and they serve as data for poetic, photographic and narrative inquiry. I am acknowledging that if I hope to teach others about self-reflexive, introspective artwork and one's relation to place- I need to begin breaking down the walls around my processes and overcome my insecurities along the way. The photographs are largely context-driven; each multilayered with political and cultural implications. Some of the photographs are motivated by

questions and concerns about gentrification and disputed/occupied territory. Many pertain to notions of isolation, separation and reunification. I have intentionally ordered the poems to mirror the chronology of my summer in Tel Aviv- beginning with the moment of departure from Phoenix International Airport, zigzagging through my encounters in and around Tel Aviv and culminating with what it means to return home. “To look is to actively make meaning of the world” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 10), and this thesis is an exercise in embodied visual culture as I partake in and teach from a meaning-making process that is culturally, socially and personally contextualized (Suominen, 2003). None of it was mine alone to claim, but I kept it guarded. Now it is ours- for discussion, elaboration and to challenge the status quo.

Though I will clearly define my methodology in chapter three, it is important to note at this point that my voice in this project is that of an autoethnographer. It is an exploration of self-knowledge/awareness and a challenge to my capacity for creation. James Haywood Rolling, Jr. (2004) illuminates our understanding of autoethnography:

[It foregrounds] the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life. Autoethnographic inquiry blurs discursive definitions and expands the possibilities for a reintegrative counterdiscourse to modern identity. It is a methodology that questions the authenticity of the voice that tells of an essential self. (p. 549)

This framework will allow me to unpack my ever-shifting identity as artist/student/educator and demonstrate how the foundation of my research is built upon lived experiences. I plan to gaze inward to engage in such a transformative, reflexive practice and will then look outward by providing tools for others to wayfind and wade

through their own understandings of the spaces they have traveled through. My intent is to examine my own experiences and through this research make recommendations for others on how to heighten their awareness of place. I will situate my questions and findings in the discourse of place-conscious education (Gruenewald, 2003; Sullivan, 2010) and provide ways to expand the conversation. This is a fluid space with less-than-definitive boundaries; my work demonstrates an interplay of imagination, inquiry and art making that produces new tensions and alternative ways of knowing. I mirror Patti Pente's (2004) approach:

My perspective as artist/teacher has been enhanced from consciously thinking through the role of researcher. Specifically, this point of view has allowed me to look more carefully at processes: how I make art, how I find a new lesson, and how the processes overlap...This is what is important in my life work—a conclusion possible because of my inquiry into the roles as I have *played* them. As John Dewey once said, “The discovery is never made, it is always in the making.” (p. 101)

My project centers on a constant renegotiation of boundaries, borders and genres.

Autoethnography provides the space to share my creative vision, as well as the chance to discover with whom my unconventional ideas align. I hope that this project inspires you to defy stereotypes more routinely and embrace your most authentic voice.

Definitions

The idea of **travel** is at the very essence of this thesis, and assuredly an idea at the core of my existence. When I moved to Wyoming in 2007, I was seeking a distinct thrill I grew up without. Vacations were few and far between throughout my childhood in Chicago, as my parents worked exceptionally hard while living humbly. I remember intense jealousy when peers would return sun kissed from Cancun. They were living something new and exciting- and I was left simmering in stagnation. Later in my life, out in the Wild West, it proved to be just that- wild. It was packed with vistas, bison and constellations I had never witnessed before. Each backcountry ski tour or fishing trip exposed me to the minutia of the forests, riverbanks and mining towns. The more that I toured around the United States and began venturing overseas, the more I recognized the intense rush that emerged from the anticipation for and arrival of a new destination. I hoped to go everywhere, so long as it was somewhere. This hunger conjured Charles Baudelaire's yearnings, "It seems to me that I'll be well where I am not and this question of moving is one that I'm forever entertaining with my soul" (De Botton, 2002, p. 34).

Alain de Botton (2002) expounds:

One detail stands out in Baudelaire's biography: that he was, throughout his life, strongly drawn to harbours, docks, railway stations, trains, ships and hotel rooms; that he felt more at home in the transient places of travel than in his own dwelling. When he was oppressed by the atmosphere of Paris, when the world seemed 'monotonous and small', he would leave, 'leave for leaving's sake', and travel to a harbor or train station, where he would inwardly exclaim:

Carriage, take me with you! Ship, steal me away from here!

Take me far, far away. Here the mud is made of our tears! (p. 35)

But in every excursion is a pivotal moment where I long for home. When fatigue from seemingly endless queues, layovers and motion hits hard and time is instead spent fixated on Tucson, on remembering the scent of my pillowcases and sheets. There is anticipation and excitement here, too, and a yearning for something more familiar. I envision my garden and how it has grown, and the side streets throughout my Dunbar Spring neighborhood in Tucson, Arizona that I then vow to walk about more often.

Since I began my education at the University of Arizona, I have identified Tucson as home. The chile-laced food, ever-present cacti and pace of life have morphed into a comforting psychological landscape, and it is here I can regain my footing. I have realized that for me, the idea of travel is not necessarily about reaching a distant or exotic location. It is about longing for, experiencing and interpreting place with dynamic observation. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994) writes:

Thus, figuratively but also literally speaking, travelling back and forth between home and abroad becomes a mode of dwelling. Every movement between here and there bears with it a movement within a here and a movement within a there. In other words, the *return* is also a journey into the layer of *future* memory. The to-and-fro motion between the source and the activity of life is a motion within the source itself, which makes all activities of life possible. (p. 15)

When I write and speak of travel, I am concerned with the experiential learning that occurs during every part of the process- from arranging itineraries and exchanging currencies to finding a particular restaurant or packing luggage. I travel each time I visit a new grocery store, taco shop or sidestreet in Tucson- senses are fully receptive and keen

on existing in the space as it is. I cannot rely on comfort or familiarity, for that is what discourages possibility. Traveling is a process where the self loses its fixed boundaries.

Minh-ha (1994) furthers:

Every voyage is the unfolding of a poetic. The departure, the cross-over, the fall, the wandering, the discovery, the return, the transformation. If travelling perpetuates a discontinuous state of being, it also satisfies, despite the existential difficulties it often entails, one's insatiable need for detours and displacements in postmodern culture... Travellers' tales do not only bring the over-there home, and the over-here abroad. They not only bring the far away within reach, but also contribute, as discussed, to challenging the home and abroad/dwelling and travelling dichotomy within specific actualities. At best, they speak to the problem of the impossibility of packaging a culture, or of defining an authentic cultural identity. (p. 22)

Theoretically, much is at stake when traveling. When abroad, we are vulnerable- at the command of currencies, language barriers and customs that break daily routine. How sharp the sting of violation after a robbery in Barcelona, or not knowing how to exit the Grand Socco in Tangier. It is jarring. It can be discomforting. Close to home, even the slightest movement shapes the map of a *here* and a *there*. It is because of this wandering, this displacement and transformation that travel and **wayfinding** are closely linked. I first learned of wayfinding from O'Rourke's text (2013) in which she describes:

[This text] offers a context for listening that brings together mappers and travelers, writers and readers, image makers and viewers. It is an occasion to

develop a cross-cultural databank where another pedestrian's story can jog our memory, calling up places or events we had long forgotten. (p. xiii)

Many architects and designers utilize wayfinding “to describe the spatial orientation and decision-making processes [that people] make as they endeavor to reach a destination or wander for pleasure throughout a space” (Beudert & McClure, 2015, p. 64). I am less concerned here with architectural/spatial problem solving and instead focused on the importance of experiential knowledge creation and heightened sensitivity to one's environment. My takeaways from wayfinding are that one does not need to adhere to empirical borders, boundaries or maps in order to find their path. There is great value in instinct and discovering routes based on visceral drives. This is what we must encourage with our students in our art education practice. Listening to ourselves, our “guts,” if you will. Detours and alternatives are acceptable, if not highly encouraged. Hearing stirring notes of adhan recited by the muezzin; calls to prayer echoing off of limestone facades while heading one direction- then walking sinuous alleys and changing course to get closer to bask in the vibrations.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau notes how, “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (as cited in Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 19). His interest was in the forms of meaning and resistance produced while sojourning through a city. His strategies centered on the primacy of place with walking/wayfinding as its interlocutor. De Certeau explains that there is a rhetoric of walking and “the art of ‘turning’ phrases finds an equivalent in the art of composing a path. Like ordinary language, this art implies and combines styles and uses” (as cited in Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 19). I will

elaborate on including wayfinding and cognitive mapping as an inquiry approach in chapters three and four.



Figure 1. Taylor Miller, Through Rebar, Tel Aviv, 2015.

My study of wayfinding is largely rooted in the theory and practice of **psycho geography**. Though the principles span centuries, dating to Romanticist poet William Blake and dramatist John Gay, this term itself was first used in the early 1950s by members of the Lettrist International, a radical group of artists and theorists founded by Guy Debord.³ The group described psycho geography as “‘a science of relations and ambiances’ they were developing ‘to give play in the society of others’” (O’Rourke, 2013, p. 7). Debord wrote that “psycho geography should examine the ‘specific effects of the geographical environment...on the emotions and behavior of individuals’” (as cited in

O'Rourke, 2013, p. 7). Since the Lettrist and Situationists' efforts in the mid 20th century, psychogeographic methods have been applied by a slew of contemporary artists such as Wilfried Hou Je Bek, Adrian Piper and Mona Hatoum. In *Walking and Mapping* (O'Rourke, 2013), psychogeography's legacy is recounted:

In its diverse forms, it embodies the desire to renew language, social life, and oneself. For contemporary psychogeographers, the drift is purposeful; it can reveal the city's underlying structure. [Iain] Sinclair aims for Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "alert reverie," a kind of double presence that is both in the here and now and in the imagination. (p. 25)

I have noticed many parallels between psychogeography and **place-conscious education**. Both concepts contribute to an understanding of *place* "as a multidisciplinary construct for cultural analysis and [can] unearth, transplant and cross-fertilize perspectives on place that can advance theory, research and practice in education" (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 619). I opt to focus on place-conscious education instead of *place-based* education, as the latter is deeply concerned with issues of ecology. Though I am attentive to environmental policy and ecological conservation, I am foremost vested in the intertwining of culture, place and the subjectivity of space. David A. Gruenewald (2003a) defines place-conscious education as a way to become more conscious of places and extend notions of accountability and pedagogy outward. Once extended, pedagogy connects more deeply with the lived experiences of teachers and students:

Place-conscious education, therefore, aims to work against the isolation of schooling's discourses and practices from the living world outside the increasingly placeless institution of schooling. Furthermore, it aims to enlist

teachers and students in the firsthand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there. (p. 620)

I will delve further into place-conscious education throughout chapter four and I will elaborate on Gruenewald's (2003a) ideas that "a multidisciplinary analysis of place reveals the many ways that places are profoundly pedagogical. That is, as centers of experience, places teach us about how the world works and how our lives fit into the spaces we occupy" (p. 621). *Place* and *space* can be vague and even daunting terms that quite often intersect and overlap, and I seek to challenge their copious definitions. As an artist and educator, I make a concerted effort to understand space through all of my senses. It takes patience and awareness to accept and challenge the natural and unnatural rhythms of life we experience and it requires intentionality to refuse a passive existence.

Paul Rodaway (1994) asserts:

The senses are an important part of everyday experience, not just art, providing us with both information about a world around us and, through their structure and the way we use them, the senses mediate that experience. The sensuous- the experience of the senses- is the ground base on which a wider geographical understanding can be constructed. (p. 3)

It can be easy to view a painting or a scene on a neighborhood corner, digesting only what is directly before us. But to actively implore all of our senses in each moment is to learn in a more conscious manner. This harkens to my concept of travel, of being wholly receptive as we move through space, and continuously navigating through our discomforts, anxieties and preconceptions as we learn about our surroundings. We

document our perceptions to digest the present, and reflect upon and reinterpret them in the future. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994) elucidates:

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries. The traveling self is here both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following ‘public routes and beaten tracks’ within a mapped movement, and the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, *and* an elsewhere. (p. 9)

Minh-ha’s passage helps to differentiate between place and space, defining place as more of a physical environment where one can move through arrivals and departures. Space, then, can encompass the psychological, metaphorical and allegorical passages of time which may or may not be simultaneously experienced by the physical being. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey’s book *For Space* further challenges the distinction between space and place:

[Massey proposes] if space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of these stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All of this contributes to the specificity of place. (as cited in Vaughan, 2006, p. 81)

At some points in this project, space and place may be used interchangeably. This is due to an interweaving and intraweaving of concepts, as well as a denial of strict scholarly categorization as I integrate experiential knowledge with theory and praxis. This

amalgamation can be considered **métissage**. Ricardo Vieira (2014) describes this term as an umbrella of intercultural contexts that fosters a socializing dialogue. Métissage lends to the acceptance of new paradigms- breaking antiquated notions of purity and stagnation. It reflects how all cultures are métisses- dynamic, complex and composite (Vieira, 2014).

Beyond simply tolerating differences or accepting cultural norms, my examination of place and space strives to challenge how we understand, appreciate and represent the world as art educators. The concept of métissage is pertinent, as gleaned from Rita Irwin and Alex de Cosson's (2004) *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*:

From a socio-cultural perspective, métissage is a language of the borderlands, of English-French, of autobiography-ethnography, of male-female. Metaphorically, these borderlands are acts of métissage that strategically erase the borders and barriers once sustained between colonizer and the colonized... Those who live in the borderlands are re-thinking, re-living, and re-making the terms of their identities as they confront difference and similarity in apparently contradictory worlds. They are living a thirdness, a new third world in which tradition no longer constitutes true identity: instead, there are multiple identities. (p. 29)

Place and space fall into this notion of métissage- where all aspects of the self and experience are at once doubted and validated. It is no coincidence that both my ideas of home (Tucson, Arizona) and most recent trip abroad (Palestine/Israel) are situated in border lands. There is remarkable creative, sociocultural and political energy in these areas fraught with conflict and disputed ideologies. In between the clash of leaders,

policies, degrowth and gentrification, there emerges the nuances and peculiarities my artwork is based upon. Crumbling infrastructure, residues of occupation, contradictory signage, rusted components and a weary population are all pieces of the *métissage* of the border lands. Viera (2014) summarizes:

When I apply the concept of *métissage* to personal identity and personal culture, it is, as reiterated above, precisely to convey the idea of the mix, of the process of the unfinished, which is how each individual is in each moment of her or his life story. We cannot think of ourselves as static beings...we construct our path by walking—through multiple experiences in which we participate throughout our existence—and our identity is being (re)constructed in that our cultural identifications are not exclusive nor always the same. (p. 5)

My aim is to steer away from any dichotomous thinking and instead engage in dialogical thinking, perceiving and relating. Throughout this project, I will dip and dive through various understandings of space and place and as I analyze relevant contemporary art practices and theories, many intersections and divergences may occur. Examples of my arts-informed research in Israel and Palestine from Summer 2015 will further illuminate these definitions and engage questions on experiential learning as well as emphasize the importance of place-conscious education in our communities.



Figure 2. Taylor Miller, *Silwan*, East Jerusalem, 2015.

Research Questions and Significance

Throughout this interdisciplinary inquiry, I seek to answer: **Through arts-informed autoethnographic research, how are my representations of experience significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of place?** Utilizing psychogeography and wayfinding, I aim not for an exhaustive exploration of community-based learning, but instead for “creative and generative juxtapositions of ideas, images, texts, and objects, the kind of meditative exploration that resembles the organic flow of thinking that can occur while walking” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 13) and documenting place. I am also striving to better understand: **How can place-conscious education in a community setting encourage students’ relationships with the spaces they inhabit and lend to a more**

just learning environment? And what are the educative tools that can be derived from arts-informed psychogeography and wayfinding?

I am creating this project for a wide array of people. And spaces. It is also an exploration of place through the self. It is an examination of travel as framed by my own experiences and artistic inquiries with implications for how such concepts can transpose into a community arts setting. It is my attempt to recognize my voice, as well as the voices of spaces I have passed through. How I have communicated with particular places in times of loneliness, despair or ecstasy. Many of the places and spaces I recount conjure the Palestinian, Israeli, Sudanese, Eritrean (amongst many other) friends I connected with during the Summer of 2015. My work is for my colleagues, and simultaneously against stringent scholarly models and the status quo for academic research. I hope that the methods and models provided in this thesis are of great use to arts educators in community settings such as creative writing workshops in Tucson for use with a wide range of age groups. The aim of this project is to dabble in a host of fields, yet connect back to ways art educators in the community can integrate place-conscious education into their curricula.

When I embarked upon my research, I was hoping to explore the many facets of travel through wayfinding and psychogeographic methods. Much of my exploration occurred alone, but this was simply the nature of this specific journey during which I found freedom in nurturing my inclinations and instincts. There was mystery and excitement in the bit of anonymity I discovered. As an artist, I tend to thrive in a more isolated setting- even if amongst large crowds of people. I prefer not to travel in groups

or strictly adhere to the directions of guides or tours. But as an educator, I am intent on translating these transformative, self-reflexive drives into ways to bring students together.

I am focusing on place-conscious education in a community setting based upon my service learning experience in Tel Aviv this summer. Four days each week, I interned at Yefet 83, a municipal organization in Jaffa that cultivates start-ups and social entrepreneurship with Israeli and Palestinian young adults (age 18-30). Though funded by the Israeli government, part of Yefet 83's mission is to empower disenfranchised young adults from nearby predominately low-income Arab neighborhoods. I learned about the career building services and Think Tanks spearheaded by employees and volunteers. One of my roles was to expand their social media presence and document the meet-ups and workshops that occurred in the space. I also initiated an English-learning study group that met twice each week as a way for locals to practice conversational English with fluent speakers in an informal setting. These English lessons were spirited and powerful; I gained invaluable teaching experience when confronted with language barriers and miscommunication. It was an exciting environment to practice patience, compassion and intra/interpersonal communication. I learned a great deal about Palestinian culture in Jaffa and how persistent gentrification of the neighborhoods impacted locals' livelihoods.

Many of my cohorts in the Onward Israel program were college educated Americans, Israelis and Palestinians between the ages of 18-30. Lectures, workshops and tours took place in the field all across the city and neighboring towns. The brunt of my schooling and documentation occurred well outside of a traditional classroom environment, and I believe it is crucial to highlight some of the ways experiential learning occurs in a community setting- freed from a lot of the demanding policies and

standards of many public school scenarios. I learned from elders who have experienced numerous wars and Intifadas, asylum-seekers from sub-Saharan Africa and youth throughout Tel Aviv who are coming-of-age in a turbulent and increasingly polarized society. Scholar and museum educator Nina Simon (2015) works on defining the concept of community through the lenses of geography, identity and affinity:

A community by **GEOGRAPHY** is defined by place. It is made up of the people attached to a given location: a city, a district, a neighborhood, a country. The simplest version of this community is the place where you live...A community by **IDENTITY** is defined by attributes. It is made up of people who end the sentence "I am _____" in the same way...A community by **AFFINITY** is defined by what we like. It is made up of people who end the sentence "I like _____" or "I do _____" in the same way...Some affinities are lifelong passions. Others are passing fancies. (para. 3)

While these are key categories, they are not perfectly distinct. Simon (2015) explains that the definition of community is varied, and a strong community “engenders fellowship among members, advances specific social norms, and has identifiable leaders” (para. 7). I am concerned with forging a strong community- both at home in Tucson and throughout my distant travels. My communities are fluid, far-reaching and ever changing. Learning in a community setting allows for genres to merge and blur, and for leadership to be shared and diversified. One can simultaneously assume the role of student *and* educator, incubating dynamism, continual curiosity and exploration. In a community setting such as a workshop or lecture series, a student can learn from people as well as place/space in varied environments. This freer setting gives us the chance to wayfind

while demolishing physical and psychological barriers that typically cannot occur in a formal standards-driven classroom.

Limitations

Though this thesis aims to dismantle many preconceptions and inhibitions pertaining to travel, artistic practice, documentation, analysis and curriculum development- there were inherent limitations to my research that should be noted. While planning this thesis, I wanted to cover all of the places I have traveled and share the gamut of photographs and poems created while on the road- narrating my exiles and homecomings along the way. Not only was this too vast an undertaking for the parameters of this study, but the sheer number of miles journeyed is not quantifiable of experience. I restricted my documentation and analysis to my most recent overseas trip during the Summer of 2015 as the details and data are most fresh in my mind and indicative of a tremendous amount of personal growth as an artist, educator and perennial student.

The six-week duration of the Onward Israel program- while helpful in condensing many intense experiences and points of interest into a fast-paced and exciting curriculum- did not provide enough time to delve into many enclaves and stratified societies of Palestine and Israel. Because of this, my schedule was jam-packed every single day, and this often induced fatigue and sensory-overload. Had the trip lasted three, six, even nine months or one year- I could have crisscrossed the terrain and revisited many sites that time did not initially afford. The truth is, any duration is inadequate to unpack and thoroughly understand the minutia of such a politically and culturally charged region

entirely. I wanted my documentation to not only include major cities such as Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Haifa and Eilat- but smaller towns and Bedouin villages on the fringes or facing demolition by the Israeli government. It could take several years of ethnographic study just to wayfind through and document the refugee camps, settlements and restricted zones in the West Bank that I was not able to reach throughout this trip. But I am determined to return to this land and continue my exploration.

There is no denying the privilege of my American passport and the ease with which I moved through many border crossings and checkpoints. In this thesis, it must be understood that I am not attempting to co-opt the plight or restrictions inflicted on many in the region for the sake of my artistic production. Although I moved throughout the region on an exceptionally limited budget, minding every shekel that went to various train tickets and entrance fees, it cannot be denied that the idea of travel is a luxury.

Whether for research, pleasure or both- the act of leaving home as we know it to explore new places requires expendable money, time and energy. As aforementioned, the depth of some of my research was limited by the time I was able to spend in Israel and Palestine. Undoubtedly, similar hindrances may occur when one tries to delve into wayfinding and psychogeography through their own travels. Arts-informed inquiry for place-conscious education need not be a grandiose gesture requiring caravans and credit cards; I intend to illuminate some of these alternative ways of knowing for their holistic and humble essences. We can discover, interpret and teach in a more attuned manner simply by experiencing our own houses and neighborhoods in previously overlooked or undervalued ways.

Another limitation of this thesis relates to my truncated contextual analysis of my poetic and photographic inquiry. In the last few years, I have fostered great interest in political science and international relations, as well as the immense field of Gender and Women's Studies. If I had my druthers, I would elaborate on the many layers of religious/political/socioeconomic and gender conflicts stacked within my images and creative writing excerpts. But to do so would involve a thorough unpacking of scholarly theory from Edward Said, Judith Butler, Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappé, Eyal Weizman- and scores more. The historical roots of colonialism/occupation and a host of wars and national movements lend a crucial understanding of the region as it was, how it is today and how it is unfolding for future generations. To shy away from these discussions is not to suppress their importance nor diminish the many dimensions to my arts-informed inquiry, but I did not want to become caught in a web of tangents and theories that lose sight of this thesis's foundations in art education.



Figure 3. Taylor Miller, Hoodna (Ceasefire), Tel Aviv, 2015.

Lastly, an inherent limitation of my data and analysis pertains to the subjectivity of arts-informed autoethnographic research. An objective of this thesis is to provide educative tools with wayfinding, psychogeographic and cognitive mapping methods for heightening our consciousness of place. Though I try my best to be attuned to others' sensitivities and inclinations, as an artist I can ultimately only create from what I personally understand and experience. I cannot inhabit another's physical position, psychological space or worldview. I cannot assure that the sights, smells and sounds that stirred, infuriated or brought me to my knees during the Summer of 2015 would do the same for you. And I cannot insist that my meanderings should be replicated verbatim. This thesis is meant to provide examples and inspirations for how to incorporate

psychogeography and wayfinding into everyday experiences so as to see the places we move through with a renewed sense of attention to minutia and instinct.

My research is predicated on better understanding my identity as an artist/student/educator as well as my agency in the classroom and beyond. I am deeply concerned with regional conflict in Israel and Palestine and human rights abuses throughout the region, specifically pertaining to occupation and migration. My curiosities and desires guide my meanderings, and I encourage you to allow yours to do the same. Above all, this thesis intends to act as a catalyst for exploring and reflecting upon new pedagogical strategies for place-conscious education and possibilities for meaningful connections and ways to engage with space as we travel. I am examining the tools of psychogeographic, wayfinding and cognitive mapping exercises and methods, but my suggestions for integration with curricular design are merely theoretical and do not postulate student assessment.

My arts-informed research was created with critical community engagement in mind. Through my photographic and poetic inquiry, I want to communicate the nuances of travel I experienced to my audience and demonstrate how my methods could be applied in a place-conscious curriculum in a community. This thesis is an example of integrated education. As Kathleen Vaughan (2006) explains:

A primary goal of integrated education is, indeed, promoting greater understanding of the lifeworld: “integration occurs when students make sense for themselves of their varied learning and experiences, when they pull these together to make one view of their world and of their place in it” –that is, perhaps, when

they develop a greater feeling of ‘at home’ in their worlds. They, we, I do so from a particular situated vantage point, from a place. (p. 26)

While one goal of this thesis is to present and deconstruct my artwork, the primary purpose of my research is to demonstrate how place-conscious education in its variety of forms is a vital pedagogy for students to understand their agency in the classroom and beyond. It is an argument for the value of educators’ and students’ lived experiences and provides impetus for including applicable theories into the community space’s curricula. In the next chapter, I will explain in detail the texts that informed my research and shaped my travels abroad. While the brunt of my work is grounded in art education, this process took me on exquisite tangents that wove through existential philosophy, contemporary art theory and foreign policy- to only name a few. Crafting a literature review not only fortified my research, but concretized the inherent interdisciplinary nature of place-conscious education and its applicability to a host of discourses on politics, culture and identity.

ON WAYFINDING THROUGH TEXTS: LITERATURE REVIEW

Je suis l'espace où je suis
(I am the space where I am)⁴

I can trace my interest in place-conscious education and wayfinding to my earliest artistic inquiries centered on abstract cartography and alternative mapping. It was a fairly simple formula in my early twenties while car camping up and down the coast of California: I walked, took photos, drank coffee, wrote and walked some more. I would see a bit of graffiti or hear a busker's tune and simply follow. These intuitive meanderings transcended to other trips. But I chose to not review or edit any of my work as I was making it, opting instead to reflect on these collections of moments upon returning home. At first, it was simply because I never made time to upload files from my camera's memory card- or assumed my poetry was tedious babble deserving of the bottom of a storage bin. But as this routine of document-forget-revisit became a recurrent pattern, I began to notice a form of alternative mapping. An entire excursion could be retraced based solely on a sequence of frames or stanzas. These micro-meditations of memory depict both time and a litany of sensory encounters. I could keep my documentations in chronological order, or rearrange them as I pleased to frame an entirely different tale.

The more I immersed myself in academic and artistic curiosities, the more connections I drew to mapping. This sort of cartography is addictive, as the potential is seemingly limitless. Maps of emotions, cuisines, parking garages... even the most banal subset of everyday life can be viewed with fresh eyes while contemplating how to navigate its space. The deeper entrenched I am while finding and creating new routes, the less concerning or relevant the destination becomes. The detours, dead ends, catcalls and

peculiarities along the way lead to a more complete and enthralling story. I find this indicative of my teaching philosophy- valuing process over product.

This sort of serpentine path of discovery I experience in travel is not unlike my investigation of applicable literature for this thesis. In the Spring of 2015, everything began with a keyword search of “abstract cartography.” I was prowling for theoretical grounding and terminology for a process I already intimately knew. Abstract cartography, alternative route/meaning making and experiential learning were related terms that sparked the hunt. There is a sort of intrinsic validation that stems from finding preexisting verbiage or scholarly work on a topic that, at many points, was previously challenging to articulate. As one source led to another, I soon recognized that these bridged connections were becoming their own form of a map. In Karen O’Rourke’s (2013) *Walking and mapping: Artists as cartographers*, it is emphasized that many of us find our way through life by walking. As humans, this ambulation is familiar if not entirely taken for granted. But beyond the assumed biomechanics of the motion, O’Rourke reminds us that our gait is personal and integral to understanding our world, and mapping is a means to synthesize and share where we have been. She writes:

Like walking, mapping is an embodied experience carried out from a particular point of view that “makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception.” Here it is considered as a way to locate ourselves in the world, allowing us to make sense of our situation and act on it. (O’Rourke, 2013, p. xviii)

In the introduction, O’Rourke explains how mapping is a process; that it is a practice for everyday activities and not solely reserved for professional cartographers or

geographers. She underscores that mapping is not only the object of research but also serves as its method (O'Rourke, 2013). The text transitions into psychogeography and the politics of applied pedestrianism. As I roamed the sidewalks and alleys of Tel Aviv in the Summer of 2015, I carried these principles with me. O'Rourke notes that, "Psychogeographic writing is an alternative way of reading the city. Wilfried Hou Je Bek calls it "the city-space cut up...psychogeographers decode urban space by moving through it in unexpected ways"" (O'Rourke, 2013, p. 7). How could I look beyond the gleam of a placard or constructed panorama from vista points to see something different? And what to make of the "differences" I identify? How can one be simultaneously present in the moment, yet detached from our assumptions and judgments? I was en route to New York- a necessary connection before heading to Tel Aviv. It was when I first opened my new notebook to write about my observations and understandings of place:

*the cross country flight only good for a view
of what's been maimed
butchered too much for the feast
now the highways overlap where the back road would do
and harsh angles opposing their slope
I am not a bird and here I do not soar
deceived by bright billowing clouds, unnaturally pressing back
in spite of the wind
or seduction of western frontier- could scarcely recall the acres and diction
when propellers do all the hard work
there's more freedom unconfined from young screams, captivity concentrated
save window
middle seats as the reigns of a savage
and contradictions before we're even past Texas
so the signage starts a different story
can't quite come off the numb of goodbye
to let it wear off, I'm a monster
for leaving, for stalling (again)*

Psychogeography provides a plethora of tactics for interpreting and teaching an understanding of place. In this text, O'Rourke provides examples of contemporary artists

who interpret and utilize psychogeographic methods to explore ideas of travel, protest and politics. Psychogeography is further defined as practices that “take on the production of space in a self-reflexive way...that recognize that cultural production and the production of space cannot be separated from each other” (Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 31). Utilizing this sort of experimental geography means actively engaging with the production of space as an integral part of one’s own artistic practice.

Lebanese-born Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum is cited for her 1985 performance *Roadworks*. In this piece, Hatoum walked barefoot through the riot-ridden Afro-Caribbean district of Brixton in South London. Her feet pulled military-style boots tied to each ankle by the shoelaces. The act is intensely contextual- referencing the severe economic problems and high crime rate met by police brutality in the area. O’Rourke describes this laborious demonstration as an interplay between vulnerability and power. This is a toggle I will address in chapter four. Psychogeography defies any arbitrary lines drawn upon territories. It is a process of strategic rerouting and reconfiguring of barriers. The psychogeographer must “[expose] the absurd rules that organize living spaces while at the same time proposing deviating paths as a contribution towards rearrangement” (Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 191).

The integral ties between psychogeographic methods, wayfinding and mapping are examined throughout O’Rourke’s (2013) discussion of cognitive mapping. It is noted:

[Urban planner] Kevin Lynch was one of the first to apply the notion of mental map to urban wayfinding. Wayfinding implies “a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment.” Lynch stressed the importance of wayfinding skills in everyday experience. (p. 103)

This definition serves as a comprehensible template for learning of and teaching about an attuned consciousness while traveling and moving through everyday life. O'Rourke grounds wayfinding in John Dewey's philosophies as outlined in his 1934 book *Art as Experience*. In this text, he argues that the task of aesthetics is "to restore the continuity between the refined experiences that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience" (O'Rourke, 2013, p. 33). Here, Dewey establishes links between art and the everyday. This is further reinforced (as cited in O'Rourke, 2013):

"[R]eceptivity is not passivity," says Dewey. Nor is it mere recognition, which is perception arrested before it has time to develop so that it can serve some other purpose. In recognition, we fall back on a previously formed scheme. When we recognize a voice on the phone as a friend or telemarketer, we greet one and hang up on the other. Recognition goes no further. Conversely, complete perception consists of "a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfillment." It involves a series of reconstructive doing, in which consciousness becomes alive. (p. 34)

Without a too-obscure journey into the literary or romantic channels of wayfinding as it relates to learning and remembering, I will note that O'Rourke (2013) explains:

Cognitive mapping refers to the process of structuring and storing spatial information. We visualize our physical environment in terms of shapes and relationships, thus reducing cognitive load and enhancing learning...Cognitive maps are embodied maps. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty asked, "Is it not to see to see from somewhere?" We map our environment as we move through it, aiming

to reach our goal while avoiding, as Georges Perec noted facetiously, bumping into things. (p. 112)

These ideas of cognitive mapping informed my art making process while in Israel and Palestine and are necessary to developing curricula for place-conscious education in a community setting.



Figure 4. Taylor Miller, Partitioned Barta'a (The Cutting), Palestine, 2015.

After thoroughly digesting *Walking and Mapping*, I was curious if other art educators were utilizing psychogeography and wayfinding in their research and lesson plans. My professor Dr. Natasha Reid suggested York University's Kathleen Vaughan, whose dissertation addresses what it means to find, experience and understand notions of

“home.” Her project, *Finding Home: Knowledge, Collage and the Local Environments*, has encouraged me to push the parameters of experimentation in contemporary academic writing. The premise of Vaughan’s dissertation is an interdisciplinary documentation of her observations and connectedness to place as she walked her poodle, Auggie, throughout her Toronto neighborhood. In this project, Vaughan’s voice is sensitive, approachable and keenly aware of her physical and psychological surroundings. The dissertation references artistic and aesthetic theories and practices as well as history, geography, philosophy and critical pedagogy of place. As both an artist and a scholar, she uses her own experiences as a template for critical engagement and place-conscious education. In the introduction, Vaughan (2006) explains her overarching process:

My approach to interdisciplinarity thus echoes that of Canadian artist Vera Frenkel, who describes the process this way: “Thread by thread, gesture by gesture, in a special kind of intermediality, such work weaves frail and precarious connections across the spaces between locked-in meanings on either side.” In addition, I am interested in, as Doreen Massey phrases the aims of her own writing, “pull[ing] out the positive threads” of others’ work to see what they may contribute to my project, rather than in offering a critical analysis of theirs. (p. 14)

I find great inspiration in how she treats this project reflexively and how it is part of what she understands “to be the role of the artist within academia and within society: to demystify the creative process by being accountable for creative and scholarly choices, and for the way that they are directed towards the world” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 14). In the past, I have been confused as to where my inclinations as an artist and those as an educator constructively overlap. Within the pages of Vaughan’s project, I read many of

my own questions about experiential learning and making. I also excavated many methods for teaching students ways to comprehend the places and spaces we move through.

Vaughan (2006) incorporates collage into her dissertation as a window into her art making and analytical style. She explains:

Collage reflects the way I engage with knowledge throughout this inquiry: I collect, experience, and understand it in bits, in juxtaposed musings on related themes, in strange coincidences and overlapping ideas from a whole range of sources, in images and textures, rather than via a sequential textual argument. (p. 17)

She adds that the text of the dissertation itself is a form of collage- piecing together and overlaying observational, personal, theoretical and historical content. This is not unlike my own processes of wayfinding and documenting travel experiences- seeking out the subtleties and fixating on the metaphoric resonances street by street, city by city.

Photographs, poetry, watercolor paintings and fragmented notes create a patchwork travelogue and bedrock for analysis. I view these spaces I move through not as separate instances, but as small passages from a larger story continuously unfolding.

Finding Home lends an indispensable validation of autoethnographic writing to the field of art education. Vaughan (2006) declares:

Indeed, the voice I choose here can be understood as connected to certain contemporary approaches to autoethnography, the anthropological practice of bringing self to social inquiry...emerging genres such as autoethnography [are] efforts “to map an intermediate space we can’t quite define yet, a borderland

between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life. (p. 22)

Furthermore, *Finding Home* employs geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's "narrative-descriptive approach" for the exploration of place and self-in-place (Vaughan, 2006, p. 23). This approach necessitates an identification and understanding of subjectivities and storytelling as opposed to a more objective, historiographical one. If an aim is to extract, explore and expand upon educators' and students' personal experiences and find deeper connections across academic fields, there must exist a framework and scholarly acceptance for the unpacking of these journeys. We can connect to one another and our world more deeply- if we are receptive to a range of voices.

I was inspired by the structure of Vaughan's dissertation and how forthright she is about defying convention. She organized this project much like the walks with her dog, Auggie, incorporating text and visual components that span the varied terrain of the city and highlight the ebb and flow of everyday life. She retraces steps to evoke memories and ignite curiosity. Vaughan (2006) writes:

What I experience and understand through our walks, the questions our encounters raise, encourage me to move from observation to research—to a more formal inquiry into the history and the physical and cultural geography of this place I call home. I both discover and represent what I know through the integrated forms of this dissertation, through the collages of this text and the visual art installation. (p. 52)

Part travelogue, part handbook, part research paper- her voice is conversational and approachable. She recounts and analyzes qualitative data, but in a poignant and

artistically driven way. The structure and style of this dissertation encouraged me to hold steadfast to my creative inclinations rather than following the blueprint of traditional papers and I am able to develop a thesis that allows my true voice to be heard.



Figure 5. Taylor Miller, The Mixture, of Sorts, Lod, 2015.

Vaughan’s project inspires research on how place-conscious education in a community setting can encourage students’ relationships with the spaces they inhabit and can lead to a more just learning environment. She details how observations and experiential learning can be translated into community-minded action. She quotes author and activist Terry Tempest Williams who asserts, “Democracy depends on engagement, a firsthand accounting of what one sees, what one feels, and what one thinks, followed by the artful practice of expressing the truth of our times through our own talents, gifts, and

vocations. *Question. Stand. Speak. Act*" (Vaughan, 2006, p. 237). I will elaborate on this type of democratic engagement in chapter four.

Throughout Kathleen Vaughan's dissertation, I kept notes of keywords and phrases most pertinent to my inquiry. Assuredly, these lists and diagrams can be interpreted as maps in of themselves- helping me find my way through a mountain of new ideas. I was eager to investigate other art education scholars who utilize arts-informed research and autoethnography in their work, specifically those who incorporate poetry and/or photography into their narratives. Persistence throughout this process of academic wayfinding led me to Anniina Suominen's (2003) dissertation, *Writing With Photographs, Re-Constructing Self: An Arts-Based Autoethnographic Inquiry*. In this project, Suominen details her odyssey from Helsinki, Finland to Columbus, Ohio by melding photography and creative writing with theory. In the introduction of this project she illuminates:

I believe that people create an understanding of who they are through reflecting on the stories they tell and the images and other documents created about their lives. I believe that all the research we do, and all the academic texts we publish, also change our understanding of who we are. (p. 2)

Examining the roles and uses of visuals in qualitative research is central to her process and she elaborates on how visual understandings are themselves a form of knowledge that does not need to be translated or coded into another form. She examined her images as a set of data and sources of information for further investigation. This is an alternative form of research and representation in qualitative inquiry. It aligns with my fervent belief in unconventional forms of knowing; and that visual art forms in

conjunction with poetry and/or prose can provide data for a precise moment in time, regardless of how it is delineated. Poetic and photographic inquiry will be elaborated upon in chapter three. Says Suominen (2003) of her work:

[It is] theoretically influenced by critical visual sociology; critical visual ethnography; embedded in critical ethnography that recognizes the partial nature of all ethnographic knowledge; cultural studies; and interdisciplinary visual culture studies and studies of visual methodologies that have greatly advanced the social, cultural, and political nature of visual knowledge. (p. 7)

She also notes that she draws upon contemporary art theory, feminist theory and various memoirs to inform her academic methods. This is not unlike how I have drawn upon literary works from Jack Kerouac, Henry Miller and Henry David Thoreau to ground my travels in the continuum of artistic exploration and philosophical meanderings. Or how the wide range of galleries and museums I have visited have helped inform my understanding of art movements throughout the world. It is a constant gleaning of inspiration from the places I move through. Suominen's project reinforces my stance that theory and curriculum development in art education must continuously blur boundaries and incorporate many forms of critical thinking in order to generate a more holistic and culturally relevant learning environment.

Much like Vaughan, Suominen constructs her dissertation in a non-traditional way. She outlines how her project does not follow the dominant structure of academic research- opting instead for varied writing styles and the combination of text and visual arts pieces. Her photographs are intertwined with creative writing in sequences according to theme.

She identifies the three large aspects of identity that her project is built around: cultural, gendered and academic. Throughout this process of finding resources and excavating pertinent concepts, it was important to seek out scholars who work against conventional organization and guidelines to forge paths for new types of workflow. While none of my ideas here are revolutionary, in my experience as a student and educator they have felt uncommon. It is essential to acknowledge my alternatively minded predecessors who have laid the foundation for my project, allowing me to further push the boundaries. An autoethnographic thesis is an intimidating undertaking for a host of reasons, but it boils down to how and why I want to convey and grow from my ideas and experiences. There is pivotal reinforcement when Suominen (2003) writes how, “Pausing and recognizing the uniqueness, strangeness, and sameness of each learner, we can create new grounds for acceptance” (p. 11).

I rely heavily on Suominen’s dissertation for her use of several key terms and their applicability to my process. In a section on photography, she highlights *document*, *documenting*, and *representation of reality* and their recurrence in her project. Here, she utilizes Sturken and Cartwright’s definition for representation: “Representation refers to the use of language and images to create meaning about the world around us” (as cited in Suominen, 2003, p. 21). She draws on the work of Italo Calvino and Roland Barthes to discuss the relationship between image and text as well as how storytelling can be buttressed by the visual. Suominen (2003) adds, “Arts-based research and autoethnography are based on the artistic methods of representing partial, contextual and multi-layered reality in political and social contexts of representation” (p. 21).

Throughout my thesis, the concepts of documentation and documentary photography recur, especially in relation to travel. While these terms could generate a lengthy conversation on the question of reality, Otherness and mechanical reproduction- I am most focused on Suominen's discussion of photographer and critic Allan Sekula's opinion, "who is more interested in photography's modesty as a medium and the radical wisdom that follows from close and sustained attention to reality than its fine arts status" (Suominen, 2003, p. 22). This segues into Suominen's questions about visual culture and visuality. She deems that visuality is about the epistemologies and politics that guide the representation and she adds that, "it is about understanding seeing not merely as a physical activity, but as a socially, historically and aesthetically embedded process of knowledge construction" (Suominen, 2003, p. 24). She emphasizes that the representational decisions she made during her research process "aim to convey how visuality, creativity, and [her] evolving understanding of epistemology have interactively formed [her] understanding of experience and identity" (Suominen, 2003, p. 25). In this discussion, we are reminded of the active participation required in the process of knowledge construction. She underscores:

I actively re-shape and negate my identity as I "write myself" into cultural and academic rhetoric. All the texts, others' narratives, social interactions, and visuals that I am exposed to have potential to inform and change my self-narrative. Reading, re-reading and analyzing—making use of visual culture—allow us to constantly re-occupy and situate ourselves within the culture. Critically studying visuals, texts, and research practices changes our perception of our surroundings and ourselves. (p. 26)

In chapter four, I will discuss several factors that have informed and altered my self-narrative and how constant re-reading of my poetic and photographic inquiry from Summer 2015 allows me to develop as a more dynamic and socially conscious art educator.



Figure 6. Taylor Miller, Meah Shearim, Jerusalem 2015.

A final note on Suominen’s dissertation (though glimmers of her theories and methods will resurface) pertains to her elaboration on autoethnography. She borrows Deborah Reed-Danahay’s definition, explaining it “as a form of self-narrative that places the self within the social context. It is both a method and a text, as in the case of ethnography” (Suominen, 2003, p. 38). She adds that across disciplines, the inclusion and questioning of self in scholarly work has increased over the last 20 years. Many excellent

sources are cited in this discussion, including Ellis and Bochner's (2000), *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher As Subject*. Suominen distills this chapter into a discussion of how autoethnography is used to write oneself into culture as well as transpose personal experience onto larger issues in society. Personal narratives, written as critical reflections, can productively expose the author's vulnerability and emotions to colleagues and the community as well as provide a form of information or set of data to the field.

Here we see scholarly validation of the subjectivities and sensitivities entangled with experiential learning. It necessitates the space for and significance of personal narrative in scholarship. The evolving field of new ethnographies as narrative strategies provides a means to engage with self-reflexivity and develop new conversations with colleagues and students about the worlds we travel through. Suominen asserts the significance of alternative approaches to qualitative research, adding how this best conveys personal meaning and enriches others' lives. She highlights:

These narratives are “existential, reflecting a desire to grasp or seize the possibilities of meaning, which is what gives life its imaginative and poetic qualities. The call of narrative is the inspiration to find language that is adequate to the obscurity and darkness of experience. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time.” (Suominen, 2003, p. 43)

Frequently, qualitative research is critiqued and/or dismissed because of its lack of validity and generalizability. Butler-Kisber (2010) notes that to combat these assumptions, it is necessary to be constantly “cognizant of the fact that the socially situated nature of research brings the assumptions of others into play as well” (p. 13).

While my research is inherently subjective and fluid, I am reinforcing it with critical questions and theories that promote relevance, reflexivity and a multitude of access points. By adding to the growing field of autoethnographic research, I am taking a stand against any such academic dismissal of alternative ways of knowing. I similarly assert that autoethnography is an interdisciplinary method of expression that can blend not only academic rigor with narrative encounters- but also poetics, photography and a litany of other art forms to tell a story of learning. I sincerely believe that by exploring and beginning to unpack our vulnerabilities and structurally complex narratives through self-reflexive arts-informed methods, we become stronger, more attuned educators and students of life.

While seeking to intensify my understanding of current contexts for art practice as research, I encountered Graeme Sullivan's (2010), *Art Practice As Research: Inquiry In Visual Arts*. This quickly became my go-to textbook for grasping the preexisting framework and theories of visual knowing and arts research practices. Sullivan's text not only affirms why art practice as research is needed, but it explicates many practical applications and benefits. He presents a theory of art practice as research as a way to position visual art as a more highly regarded site of scholarly understanding.

In the beginning of this book, Sullivan establishes the historical and cultural basis of art practice as research. He provides an overview of the changing educational and social patterns of visual arts traditions historically and contemporarily as well as the more problematic practices of inquiry that emerged "as a consequence of the institutionalization of knowledge in the 19th and 20th century" (Sullivan, 2010, p. xxii). It is in this discussion of paradigms lost where I gleaned questions of possibility; I see

artistic inquiry not merely as an enclosed process or linear procedure- but as critical practice that can challenge assumptions and confirm alternative understandings. The door is open for rigorous creative work that challenges ways of knowing inside/outside the classroom and pushes strongly on the boundaries of scholastic research models.

Of the three main themes described in this chapter, I am most interested in Sullivan's (2010) notion of "The Visual Turn," where he explores "opportunities for researchers in the arts to conceive of inquiry as a practice that opens up new pathways and possibilities" (p. 32). His arguments prelude a presentation of forms of art practice as research throughout the remainder of the book.

Sullivan's discussion of arts-based research helps to clarify my terminology and choice of the term *arts-informed* in reference to my methods. He clarifies that arts-based educational research is a form of practitioner-centric inquiry that aims to bridge perceived disconnects between quantitative and qualitative models of research. My study is not particularly grounded in the framework of arts-based inquiry, which takes methodological cues from the social sciences, yet it similarly uses creative methods to deal critically and socially with problems facing education. Sullivan (2010) adds fuel to my categorization-defying fire:

There are limits to what can be achieved if the conditions that frame how arts-based inquiry [are] conceptualized and carried out if it remains locked within the constraints of the social sciences rather than within the practices of arts. (p. 56)

If the essence of my photographic and poetic inquiry is to frustrate convention and blur boundaries, it is necessary to liberate my work from the restrictions of *arts-based* research. Sullivan turns to therapeutic artist and scholar Shaun McNiff who insists:

[That] learning directly from artists and through one's own art practice imbues the research process with a creative tension that is no less rigorous or relevant than more traditional inquiry processes. This trust in making methods of inquiry that are responsive to particular issues not only deals with personal concerns but also has the potential to reveal new insights that can have community appeal. (as cited in Sullivan, 2010, p. 57)

I opt for *arts-informed* research to make room for fluidity in my personal practice, as well as my study of theory, politics and contemporary art. This follows in the footsteps of art education researchers from Canada who “see lived experience, subjectivity, and community as significant elements in knowledge construction and sociocultural change when explored and portrayed within the framework of arts research” (as cited in Sullivan, 2010, p. 58). Also in this text, Ardra Cole and J. Gary Knowles explain how arts-informed research can provide the context for “promoting innovative research that infuses processes and forms of the arts into scholarly work for the purposes of advancing knowledge and bridging the connection between academy and community” (p. 58). This methodology merges theory with many forms of literary, visual and performing arts; it is an embodied practice that challenges more traditional academic models while pushing the researcher/practitioner's capacity for reception and reflection. Sullivan also notes the *A/r/tography* approach, as spearheaded by Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay, which involves innovative art making practices at the heart of inquiry along with rich theoretical and community contexts. This label of *A/r/tography* “in essence makes use of the multiple roles and contiguous relationships of artists, researchers, and teachers as frames

of reference through which art practice is explored as a site for inquiry” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 58).

A final point I choose to highlight from *Art Practice As Research* (2010) is Sullivan’s exploration of visualizing practices and critical engagement. This can be understood as artwork, curriculum development and activism that embody the images, ideas and questions created and presented while offering new interpretive possibilities for understanding and participating in constructive community change. He begins this section by noting that, “Individuals who see structures that define traditional discipline areas not as boundaries or barriers but as bridges and bypasses are shaping these practices in new ways” (p. 190). Sullivan provides a framework of visual arts practices and acknowledges the “theoretical depth and breadth that artists take on through their art making as they assume a multiplicity of roles as meaning makers, cultural commentators, social critics, teachers and the like” (p. 191). I am interested in how travel and the interpretation of place can form and fuse or generate fission amongst these roles that artists/educators assume. Visual arts research is instinctually multidimensional, and Sullivan (2010) adds:

A challenge for the visual arts researcher is to be able to frame and claim these processes as critically important kinds of human exchange that have the capacity to change the way to think about how we come to know what we do and the forms in which information, experience, and understanding can be created and communicated. (p. 194)

By employing such visual strategies, particularly in conjunction with creative writing, we can reveal new understandings in ways that more traditional qualitative research cannot

wholly address. Sullivan writes in great detail on ways to promote art practice in institutional settings and provides many examples for visual arts projects. I will expound upon several of these tactics for visualizing ideas, visualizing data, reflecting on personal narratives and critiquing social structures in chapter four.



Figure 7. Taylor Miller, *Letters from Jaffa*, Tel Aviv, 2015.

What resonated most from Sullivan's (2010) text is his mention that, "The hope, as Ardra Cole explained it, is that "research, like art, [can] be accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic, provocative" (p. 58). As I read and reread this line, many new questions and incitements brewed. How is my artwork evocative? Is it my tendency to cause a stir? And for what purpose? How can my artistic drives translate into an educator's role- to encourage both (if not simultaneous) sociocultural responsibility and

risk-taking? These existential inclinations steered me back to David A. Gruenewald's (2003a) "Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education," where I initially turned when I began this research process, as a means to help reveal how places are profoundly pedagogical in many ways. This ties back to the idea of mapping my investigation of applicable literature for this thesis as I pressed on through texts regarding place-based education, pedagogical pathways and sociocultural awareness in the arts. Where one keyword served as a side door or covert passage and at times led to an alley, which sometimes led to a thoroughfare of insight, inspiration and critical reflection. "Foundations of Place" is precisely that- a critical source of motivation for delving into the perceptual, sociological, ecological and political significance of space.

Gruenewald is acutely concerned with the dimensions of place and the subjectivities of learning. This article uses insight from phenomenology, critical geography, bioregionalism and other place-conscious traditions to gather diverse perspectives on place. Gruenewald (2003a) begins this piece by commenting on the lack of attention paid to place in contemporary schooling, honing in on how the pressure of school achievement and the publication of standardized test scores reinforces the demand for quantifiable results in the classroom. He views this lack of attention to place as problematic because these conventional notions of accountability "fail to recognize the mediating role that schools place in the production of space (or social context) through the education of place makers (or citizens)" (p. 620). There are many impassioned points about how our relationships with places have been obscured by a neglectful educational system. He adds how "place-based educators often question reforms based on standards

and testing because of [these reforms'] tendency to cut off the process of teaching and learning from community life, where students and teachers are "learning all the time" (p. 620). I am less concerned with the particulars of school standards and testing than Gruenewald's crucial scholarly acknowledgement of experiential learning and the concretizing of place-conscious education within the discourse of art education.

In his analysis of dimensions of place, Gruenewald (2003a) explores "place" as a productive educational construct. He also elaborates on the delicate subjectivity of places and their inherent pedagogical nature:

My experience of a site might be very different from yours and thus produce a significantly different place...Just as place cannot be reduced to a point on a grid, neither can space, which has taken on metaphorical and cultural meanings that describe geographical relationships of power, contested theories of identity and difference, and aesthetic or even cybernetic experience...my intent is not to minimize the usefulness of refining geographical and philosophical terms for inquiry in specific disciplines, but rather to demonstrate the appropriateness of geographical thinking generally to a philosophy of education. (p. 623)

The correlation between geographical thinking and a philosophy of education is not unlike the methods and principles of psychogeography and wayfinding, as I am determined to incorporate more of these processes within art education curricula.

Gruenewald further stresses that "a theory of place that is concerned with the quality of human-world relationships must first acknowledge that places themselves have something to say" (p. 624). As an educator, I am interested in teaching how to listen to these calls- whether blatant or typically brushed aside. My understanding of travel- be it

thousands of miles away or through a pocket of one's own neighborhood- affirms how places are all active sites of knowledge creation. It is a matter of how we participate with as well as document and digest where we have been. How can I best foster a more sensitive, heightened consciousness for the places and spaces that students move through, and encourage them to partake in meaningful dialogue with what is around us? These conversations must occur with both the artificial and natural environments we perceive. Passive existence is not an option, and I seek to uphold this in the classroom and community setting. Gruenewald (2003a) adds:

The problem is that human institutions, such as schools, governments, and corporations, have not demonstrated an orientation of care and consciousness toward the places that they manipulate, neglect, and destroy. Part of the reason for our collective carelessness can, according to Abram and others, be traced to ways of perceiving and ways of using language that deny our connection to earthly phenomena, that construct places as objects or sites on a map to be economically exploited. (p. 624)

To end the detrimental cycle of exploitation. To nurture symbiosis between individual, community and place. Where we are not only taking (taking for granted, taking for selfish profit) but giving back with compassion, keen understanding and critical dialogue that strives for a more concerned world. Like Gruenewald, I am calling for renewed attentiveness in teachers (and subsequently students) of carnal empathy with place. By putting more emphasis on direct, experiential learning, we can foster our ability to better understand and interpret place. We must continually hone our ability to perceive with all of our senses to formulate a more profound connection with the spaces we move through.

Acknowledgment of the primacy of place/space and valuation of experiential learning is expounded on in great detail by Rita Irwin and Alex de Cosson (2004) in their text, *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*. An entire section of Sullivan's (2010) *Art Practice As Research* is dedicated to an exploration of their inquiry and methods- noting how the research is located within and between the needs, values and actions of communities- so it felt natural to dive deeper into their work while wayfinding through this research process. Sullivan (2010) also highlights how a/r/tography "draws its conceptual metaphors from a range of sources such as Deleuzian rhizomes and folds, Derrida's interstitial space, and the relational aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud" (p. 58). *A/r/tography* is divided into three parts: exploration of self, self process and history + self. The notion of the self here might seem redundant, if not narcissistic. This could not be further from the authors' intent. To better ourselves as students, researchers and educators, we must first unpack and investigate our essences. Many of us inhabit hyphenated, marginalized spaces while trying to balance our passions and drives with what is attainable and/or pays the bills. Irwin, de Cosson and other contributors to this book implore us to embrace our sensitivities and shortcomings as well as our inclinations to nurture which will in turn make us more courageous and conscious teachers and leaders of our communities.

All throughout this text, the necessity of experiential learning is reinforced. In the chapter "Of Mango Trees and Woven Tales," Anami Nath's (2004) recounts her travels through Oaxaca, Mexico. I know this city quite well from a visit in 2014 and documented my encounters with the smells, sights and sensations of the mercados and Zocalo through visual journaling much like Nath's. No matter how seemingly trivial or ordinary the

experience, digesting the encounter by creating, reflecting and revisiting is imperative to telling a tale of learning. She writes on how the ownership of life and self is critical to transformation: she must first experience what she intends to teach. Naths bridges a connection from her self-reflexive practice to John Dewey's seminal 1938 essay *Experience and Education*. In this piece, Dewey offers pragmatic ideas for learning as a personalized constructivist phenomenon in addition to the importance of observing and tracking the consequences of action in order to expand ideas (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). Nothing is definitive. Nothing is static. Life and learning will continue to press on and it is up to us to heighten our consciousness and recognize more glimmers along the way. That is why this thesis is but a blip on my odyssey of researching and art making. My summer in Tel Aviv is not a finite tale, rather, it is a collection of moments that I frame as a more holistic experience of travel and place-conscious education.

Here resides a space where community, mapping and travel overlap and intersect. My finger is on it, but far from pinning it down. By utilizing visual journaling- more precisely defined in chapter three as poetic and photographic inquiry, I embody forms of aesthetic representation that are ephemeral yet lasting. The experience itself- the scent of roasting sesame seeds or the subtle brush of sweat soaked sleeves on the city bus- might be only momentary. But the cognitive maps- documentation and self-reflexivity stemming from the encounter linger long after departing the Middle East. The concept of *métissage* resurfaces in Irwin and de Cosson's explanation of *a/r/tography* and hyphenated identities. Irwin (2004) notes:

It is an act of interdisciplinarity. *A/r/t* is a "metaphor" for artist-researcher-teachers who integrate those roles in their personal/professional lives; it creates,

[she suggests], a “third space between theory and métissage, while opening up the spaces between artist-researcher-teacher. (p. 9)

This opening of space- a deconstruction of walls/strict categorization and a blurring of genres is precisely what I am attempting to develop throughout this project. Integrating poetry, photography, theory and community building with an understanding of place demonstrates the porous, yet prolific, nature of art education. We can observe and build upon the idea that place-conscious education is inherently complex, fluid and eludes definitive boundaries.

Michel de Certeau insists that “boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are also *metaphorai*” (as cited in Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 203). The Greek *metaphora* means both ‘metaphor’ and transport.’ This is much like a constant unfolding of transformations that mark movement. As Jacques Rancière wrote, “The slight move which shapes the mapping of a *there* to a *here*’ is at the same time ‘the narrow and vertiginous gap which separates the inside...from the outside’” (Robertson, 1994, p. 2). Here we can understand the traveling narrative as one of space and difference. In this discussion of place/space and boundaries, I think not only of how my artwork is intensely riddled with metaphor- but how my identity as an artist/researcher/teacher is as well. Where a role I assume or task I undertake is nominally “like” or “similar” to a category but never *exactly* defined in such a way. If perennially hyphenated, I reside in and teach from a margin; potentially subjugated by a lack of classification. But here- there is enormous potential. The margin not as the sideline but as the frontier. Alison Pryer helps to define this as *the limen*. It is a “fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, a striving after new forms and structure” (as

cited in Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 204). She expands upon the intellectual liminar, how this translates into a form of nomadism and how nomadic cartographies need to be redrafted constantly: the notion of constantly traveling. Of an acute awareness of the impermanence of boundaries. Stephanie Springgay (2004) clarifies:

Understanding the complexity of art and its relationship with fragments [of travel and experience] is a pedagogic process that serves to deepen our understanding of how identities are formed, artwork produced, and responsibilities engaged so as to enable the possibilities of generativity and transformation. (p. 61)

Arts-informed research allows us to delve into the aspects of self that more traditional forms of qualitative research cannot adequately unearth. From poetic/photographic inquiry and cognitive mapping, I amass data that is not at all conclusive- and here is the magic. This arts-informed research constantly generates new forms of knowing and contributes to the transformative power of place-conscious education. This type of profound inquiry is essential for facilitating meaningful dialogues as we strive to connect more deeply with our community, colleagues, students, and *ourselves*.

Moving forward, I will elaborate on the methods I used while collecting data throughout the Summer of 2015. Poetic/photographic inquiry and cognitive mapping not only produced a *product* (tangible documentation of experience) but taught me about the minutia of my *process* as I explored the side streets and markets of Tel Aviv and beyond. This acute awareness of my surroundings leant to increased self-reflexivity and generated new ways of knowing about the places I have traveled.



Figure 8. Taylor Miller, When We Heard of Milk and Honey, Tel Aviv, 2015.

DOCUMENTING INTIMATE IMMENSITY: METHODOLOGY

For years I have carried cameras with me all over the world, trying to capture what I saw. Beyond the mechanics of photography, I find it quite difficult to tell stories as big as life itself with a camera and words. The examples of beauty and madness I try to retrieve are perhaps done a disservice by such an amateur. But no offense is meant. Hopefully the awe I have for what I see comes through now and then.⁵

The spine on the small black journal is broken now- from being forced flat time and time again- pressed into café tables, bar counters, the back of the bus seat in front of me. The corners are all frayed as if someone ground the cover against pavement; makeshift flint to set words on fire. Before I departed for Tel Aviv, this journal was immaculate and empty...but after weeks of wear where it was essentially an extension of my left arm, the binding and pages now require a more gentle handling. As I write this thesis, I thumb through the its pages and even lean in to smell if the fibers retained any trace of falafel fryer oil or olive tree leaves pressed flat to dry. Though the odors have dissipated, the nuances of place come alive off the pages. At times I fought to write about what I experienced daily throughout the Summer of 2015. There was a perfect storm of mental and physical fatigue- a pressing schedule and scarce time alone that tried to prevent me from writing constantly. My poems attempted to mirror the ceaseless motion of this service learning experience. Passages frequently scrawled with barely a breath between the encounter and the reflection:

*if you hold up at the roundabout near the acrid waste
piles heaped by the market
where filth and function are the same
a rat, more tenacious than its brothers in Spain
smaller for the sake of tight corners, dodging upturned sofas
and bottles chucked near—it's nothing, thrown away like anything else
if ~~you~~ I smile enough I'm wiped clean
of the problem
climbing back up the hill, as far can be seen*

a wide angle watchtower, shouldn't linger in the belly too long

My group and I spent an afternoon in Barta'a- a village situated both in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. I wrote furiously on the steps of a designated overlook, recalling the stench in the streets below; where families and business owners were living without proper waste management services or health regulations. The village's name translates as "the cutting" from Arabic, indicating how Eastern and Western Barta'a are separated by the 1949 Armistice Agreement "Green Line." Eastern Barta'a is located in a highly militarized zone- a completely enclosed enclave with two restricted entry/exit gates to the West Bank. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA, 2013) detailed:

In 2007, UNRWA suspended its mobile health and distribution services to the Barta'a enclave...due to persistent demands to search its vehicles prior to crossing the checkpoint. The search of UN property, including vehicles, contravenes the 1946 UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, to which Israel is a signatory without reservation. (Communities in the Closed Area section, para. 3)



Figure 9. Taylor Miller, *Disambiguation, North to South*, East Jerusalem, 2015.

I chose to begin with this scenario because it was the first of many gutting encounters with physical and psychological barriers throughout the Summer of 2015. This chapter illuminates the methodological approach of my arts-informed autoethnographic research and how I have come to understand a slew of boundaries and roadblocks in a litany of towns throughout the region. Psychogeography and wayfinding are critical tools in my praxis of place-conscious education in a community setting and helped to inform alternative ways of knowing. Anina Suominen (2003) quotes Helen K. Ball:

To be committed to the development of different ways of knowing through the development of different methodologies, and on alternative writing strategies, will necessitate the development with different research/scholarly practices...I am suggesting making space for different kinds of knowing and for different methodologies for knowing will mean reexamining how we teach and practice research...We need to begin to move beyond what we know. This is facilitated by challenging how we know and how we represent what we know. (p. 37)

Stanza by stanza, I challenged what I knew and how I was interpreting and communicating new and different sensations. I scrawled on these pages barring internal censorship or copious editing- it was a gesture of translating experiential knowledge into transferrable, more tangible cogitation. The very act of committing these sensations to my journal concretized the necessity of self-reflexivity in travel. It is too easy, too rote, to move from place to place without creating an opportunity to thoughtfully process the sights, smells, sounds and movements around us. This can require patience and tact to tap into that which we take for granted.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994) writes that “adventure can only survive in the small empty spaces of intervals and interstices” (p. 22) and through arts-informed research we scrounge, salvage and share these sensations and evocations of adventure and travel. I am reminded by University of Alberta Professor Harold Pearce that in praxis, there must always be an element of action- of a type of application to the lived world, in order to foster a dynamic dialectical relationship between practice and theory (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). My data collection is twofold: experiencing and documenting relentlessly throughout my travels. This is frequently a mutually inclusive process. Lynn Butler-

Kisber (2010) expounds on poetic inquiry's ability to convey poignancy, rhythm and exploration in qualitative research:

Generated poetry...is when researchers use their own worlds to describe an interpretation discovered in research with others, or write autobiographically about personal experiences that may be 'metaphorically generalizable' because the work 'may speak *about* one' but also 'speaks *to* many.' (p. 91)

Poetic inquiry concretized its validity in qualitative circles in the early 1990s with sociologist Laurel Richardson's use of sociological interviews melded into freer forms. This form of inquiry is a way to elicit a more evocative, emotional response with readers and students. It is a chance to affirm experience as a form of data. My free writing serves as a heuristic device, which is a deliberate technique that can help shape thought processes and aid with excavating "new material that can be obtained through reading and/or observation, and to help order whatever is being generated by the writer" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 92).

The highway towards Be'er Sheva cut a flat line through the drifting sand- there were expanses of scorched earth in every direction outside the bus windows. I was leaving the town of Yeruham after a long weekend in the northern Negev desert:

*wistfully trekking dunes across expanses of imagination
shrouded in sheer linens, minimal obstruction most enticing
could push well into Arabia with soft wind as sweet as so
not enough to stir the sand
or dance between sparse shrub
--we've escaped the penitentiary
but suspension jostles as higher speeds and vacuumed windows
heading in the (almost) wrong direction
horizon smeared
and skirting thoughts of this millennium
now cigarettes can only soothe these constructed contradictions
giving skin a chance to mend*

*and recognizing the immediate severance across an ocean
led a bleeding tear
a frantic few spent realizing all that's needed is a little air
delineating distance*

It was not enough to simply see the sunset, in its clementine and salmon-colored gradients. This experience of place was best defined by the sunburn around my nose and cheeks; how this driest air carried wafts of petroleum and unfiltered tobacco in a landscape largely too desolate for humans. The data of this arts-informed autoethnographic inquiry is the set of documentation and reflection of lived experiences while traveling throughout Israel and Palestine, whereby meaning is extracted and connected to theories of place-conscious education. Irwin and de Cosson (2004) explain, citing Rhonda Watrin:

“Descriptive writing, like artwork, cuts through surface appearances and penetrates into the meaning of events, places, people, or processes.” Art-making, like qualitative research, is a combination of intuition, subjectivity, and objectivity that leads to insight and understanding. (p. 46)

My arts-informed inquiry is not only a method for research and data collection, but a tool to intervene in the world and in knowing- allowing space for self-reflexivity and transformative critical engagement. We are asked, “What is an experience unless it is reflected upon and connected to the world? Too often the popular pedagogy moves along on a linear path that offers no place to sit and pause” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 124). My contemplative creation was a reaction to and provocation of that which my senses encountered.

Throughout the Summer of 2015, my poetic inquiry was a continuum of instances and ideas- I would write based on experiencing place, and experience place based on my

surges of writing. Some of my passages included observations of daily life for locals in Tel Aviv as I noted during my two-month stay. I sensed much disconnect between my preoccupation with foreign policy and conflict and how people in the city largely dismissed the news surrounding neighboring countries and territories. Instead, fashion, parties and beach lounging seemed to dilute many conversations I shared with locals close in age. I wanted to constantly pick others' brains about the war in nearby Syria, or how the massive refugee crisis was impacting Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt and others. On July 16, 2015, sirens sounded around Hof Ashkelon- less than an hour away from where I was living. A rocket was fired from Gaza, though no casualties were reported by the Israeli government. The Israeli military retaliated with airstrikes against infrastructure belonging to the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist organization known as Hamas. That morning as I sipped espresso in a café near my apartment, I anxiously observed passerbys in the Florentin neighborhood. I was on edge, anticipating escalation between the IDF and Hamas, and second-guessing my upcoming plans to head south past the Gaza Strip towards the border of Egypt. Early the next morning, I took a bus with several human rights activists to the Holot Detention Center deep in the Negev desert:

*as clockwork each summer, the rockets
not one slice of this city seemed to fuss
I, only
concerned of the mortar and gashes from a decade ago
tourist of tragedy
like wars' sites worth a frame
or applause for coming to care
no. peroxide and ill fitting clothes cloaking heaps of apathy
a better way to fit in, now, as a repeat offender with big hunger
even if fingers and blackened arms make me the sore thumb
and the smallest extension of attention their end
still, difference
my confusion how little they mind*

*intensified almost instantly
 doesn't take long for the landscape to shift, dropping out of Tel Aviv's bubble
 onto highways crossing countries- until they don't
 distinctly directed some way
 from what's supposed to be seen
 and in some minutes the city becomes a humbling East
 occasional signs flagging soldiers and camels
 should come migrant, route flanked by firing range
 seeing Egypt just fine from here*

The time spent in the open-air detention center of Holot was jarring- with an ever-present odor of feces and hot flesh. There was an overwhelming sense of panoptic techniques of discipline and control of visitors and inmates alike. Some security cameras were perched atop tall poles, pointed in seemingly every direction. But I also sensed there were many invisible cameras assuring that foreigners and aid workers were kept in line. I was careful that our conversations remained quiet; an intimate secret until these new friends were released and reunited with loved ones:

*as though one day's fasting makes a difference
 more hurt to, or not, eat in their company
 uncontrollable crying and the scratched window pane
 same bus as what bussed them in, yet I leave
 bearing witness to immeasurable resentment, forgiveness
 to sumptuous Nubian vista
 hills perfect height for sun's blaze
 yes, the sunsets remind us of home
 Darfur now a face
 sweat, sand and cologne as proper gentleman would
 comfort enough before bodies disappear to black night
 some two thousand miles to freedom*

Poetic inquiry is a unique process of arts-informed research. What remains elusive is “the ability to really demonstrate how the poet moves from thoughts, images and sensations to the actual shaping of the words on the page” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 95). My intricate collections of thoughts generate a distinct form of knowing and reflecting

upon experiential learning from Summer 2015. My poetry is crafted as stream-of-consciousness style writing, which thus serves as a set of data, recalling an exact moment and sensation in time. These are selections of some of the most poignant moments during my time in the region- as tangible notes from ephemeral impressions. I seldom employ capitalization or proper punctuation, except for commas and hyphens to exaggerate pauses and contemplation. The overarching idea is to catch the interaction and/or sensory encounter onto paper as quickly as it is perceived.

There is often a subliminal rhythm as I think through each line, translating the cadence to paper as I hear it within. The patterns and thought processes that go into creating this poetry can at times be challenging to express, and “to some extent, will always remain impervious to an articulation that is largely intuitive, and individualistic” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 95). But this does not imply it is a distancing or aloof method. I find that the immersion in such intense observation and introspection generates a deep sensitivity to place and many of the people I encounter. Writing poetry about the nuances of place allows me to connect deeply and empathize with the vulnerabilities and burdens of those around me. Thus, the data can be intricately coded based on sensory perception and location. In this project, I attempt to demonstrate experiential knowledge acquired by employing sight, sound, touch, taste and smell as well as highlight the pedagogical nature of places passed through during Summer 2015. More on utilizing these methods will follow in chapter four.

I frequently couple poetic inquiry with photographic inquiry in my arts-informed research methods. I use my Canon D100 DSLR digital camera much like an appendage when traveling- with the carrier strap bound tightly around my wrist and my index finger

affixed to the shutter. I have never been trained in professional photography, and admittedly do not know how to use all of the settings on this device. One day. For now I am solely intent on focusing the frame. Except when the moment is rushed or on the brink of eruption, and then even something out-of-focus suits my sentiment. I seldom adjust any images in Photoshop or iPhoto- opting instead to uphold the integrity of the moment as I observed and lean toward a more raw and approachable aesthetic.

Photographic inquiry is a means for reflection, elicitation and representation. We are reminded that visual imagery is never an innocent gesture, rather, “it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 126) and that critical approaches to imagery are needed so that people “[think] about the agency of the image, [consider] the social practices and effects of its viewing, and [reflect] on the specificity of that viewing by various audiences” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 126). The photographs that I took during Summer 2015 are interspersed throughout this thesis and serve as a complex and intimate set of data for my arts-informed research which advocates place-conscious education in a community setting. Learning becomes increasingly democratic when it is inclusive of alternative practices and ways of knowing. More images from my time in Palestine and Israel are included in Appendix A, highlighting my observations of aesthetic and sociopolitical juxtapositions as well as vignettes of conflict/peacemaking.

What can something like trees teach us about community? In addition to the rust, rot and dilapidation I gravitated towards photographing during the Summer of 2015, I also centered on the triumph of nature in Tel Aviv, despite decades of poured concrete and an onslaught of pollution in every form. When I looked deeper than the shiny facades

of new high rises or a hip new restaurant's signage, I noticed miniscule blades of grass and budding branches relentlessly inching toward the sunshine. Observing and documenting the parks and public spaces through photographic inquiry became an entry point for self-guided place-conscious education. The more that I sought out green spaces, the more I researched the historical implications of architecture and city planning throughout Tel Aviv. Municipal plaques on corners, fences and buildings helped construct ever-changing interpretations of place as I walked the city relentlessly each day.

Not far from my flat in the Florentin neighborhood was Rothschild Boulevard. It is a massive route through the heart of Tel Aviv lined thickly with trees that developed around the time of the Ahusat Bayit neighborhood in 1909. Barbara Mann (2006) quotes Alter Druyanov:

The residents of Ahusat Bayit apparently saw no need for a public garden in their neighborhood, and if not for an unusual circumstance of necessity, Rothschild Boulevard would not have been created. The highest sand dunes were dumped into the deepest valley. And since this valley, filled with loose earth, could not serve as a place for the building of houses, it was allocated...as an avenue of trees, and this was the beginning of Rothschild Boulevard. (p. 97)

It was in the late 1920s when Scottish town planner Sir Patrick Geddes first sketched the master plan for Tel Aviv with an east-west orientation that created meeting points with the perpendicular commercial streets. Construction and changes to the Boulevard and nearby pockets have long been contested and cited for perpetuating a colonial agenda.

Barbara Mann notes:

As the “first Hebrew city,” Tel Aviv was endowed by writers, painters, photographers, and city planners with an image as new, clean, and modern—everything the crowded neighborhoods of Jaffa [to the south] were not—a city sprung from the sands. (p. 74)

The city was built upon highly contested land where modes of historical consciousness exist in contrasting relation to each other. She details how, “At the very moment of its founding, then, Tel Aviv began to construct for itself a coherent narrative describing and explaining the meaning of its origins to its citizens” (Mann, 2006, p. 78).

This street is integral to the flow of the city and a fixture on itineraries for tourists looking to shop, dine and visit historical landmarks along the way. Rothschild Boulevard is chocked with all sorts of traffic, clubs and development projects. It was initially called the “Street of the People-” and was created to be the city’s first public space. I was floored when I first encountered the ficus, sycamore and jacaranda trees that line the median of the road. The foliage was verdant and lush, providing a vital reprieve from the July sun’s rays. Cyclists, joggers, saunterers and street vendors all sought refuge in their shade. We all needed to pause from the oppressive humidity (sweating, always). Many passerbys were on their cellphones or tablets- catching up on the gossip or news and perpetuating their flurry even if their bodies were stationary beneath the trees. Despite the enormity of the canopy and trunks, I hardly noticed anyone just *looking* at nature; our preoccupation with technology obstructing our sight. It was on this boulevard amidst all of the bustle that I observed and documented the exquisite theatricality of the trees’ roots. A tango of beauty and torment more real than any painting or performance I had seen before.



Figure 10. Taylor Miller, Rothschild Boulevard, Tel Aviv, 2015.

The nodes and gnarls of these roots tell stories of land disputes, sociocultural conflict and gentrification in Tel Aviv. The bark and leaves exhale woes of land (mis)appropriation, displacement and greed pervasive throughout the city. All is shellacked in cement, limestone and glass except for the immediate ground upon which

these trees stand. This heightened awareness of the flora throughout Tel Aviv provided impetus for my photographic inquiry. The more that I engaged with the trees in this arts-informed research, the more I engaged with the history, burdens and triumphs of the community where they are planted.

While my poetic and photographic inquiry addressed nature's resilience as well as infrastructure and architecture in various stages of growth and collapse, I also rooted much of my sensory exploration in other wayfinding and psychogeographic methods. I embodied alternative mapmaking techniques as I made my way through the labyrinths of Shuk Ha'Carmel and Levinsky Market in Tel Aviv. This is where I noticed the delineations or overlaps in cuisines and goods on display- demarcations that resisted cut-and-dry categorization. I traced routes and collected data on the visual allegories, aromas and tastes while weaving through the market stalls. Karen O'Rourke (2013) writes on this sort of cognitive mapping:

Kevin Lynch saw boundaries and edges as important components of people's mental maps. "Edges," he wrote, "...are usually, but not quite always, the boundaries between two kinds of areas. They act as lateral references." Lynch was concerned with the built environment. Mental maps can also register ephemeral boundaries traced by people who occupy a certain space momentarily. (p. 113)

O'Rourke (2013) elaborates on this utilizing the term *territoriality*- which designates the ways that humans communicate ownership of particular spaces. Perhaps there is no greater way to comprehend and embody territoriality than through spices and food. In the Shuk Ha'Carmel, vendors are crammed together tightly into what is essentially an open-air market. Some corridors have tin roofing as an arbitrary measure to curtail the hot sun

or curious pigeons. Very tight walkways are filled with international tourists gaping in awe, chefs scouring for new ingredients and grandmothers rolling grocery totes over stray wilted leaves of lettuce. Each stall is numbered for organization's sake- though this does not mean the number is legible or visible at all. In just a few steps down the line of purveyors, you can pass through the incredibly varied and complex aromas and melodies of Morocco, Tunisia, Iran, Yemen and Lebanon (just to name a few). This space was demonstrative of how "even the most intensely territorialized landscapes have some lines of flight [as a decentering force], testifying to the potentials within them for deterritorializing and reterritorializing activity" (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 671).

Though I visited the market many times over the course of the summer, each trip leant to an entirely unique experience. Plumes of kebab smoke would pull me one way, and the flash of dried magenta rose buds would draw me another. In and out of throughways- until my stomach was full or my tired feet could no longer bear to stand. Sit. Write. Drink an espresso whilst recharging. Carry on through the market. Hours and hours spent in such a way. Karen O'Rourke reminds us that, "The labyrinth is a figure of initiation: unlike the straight line, it is never the shortest path" (O'Rourke, 2013, p. 111). While bumbling our way through such a space, we adapt to hardships and confusion we are faced with to make sense of our surroundings. The "way out" might simply be exiting the market satiated by new culinary delights- or it could be a metaphorical point of departure from previous assumptions into new experiential forms of knowledge. Martin and Kamberelis (2013) elaborate upon Kathryn Strom's ideas that mapping brings the act of *negotiation* to the surface. By approaching interactions and experiential learning

rhizomatically, we are able to more thoroughly document and understand the non-linearity and flux in place-conscious education. They further:

Strom's methodological approach to data was one of "immanence," reflecting the post-structural consideration that there is nothing in a data-set to be "found"; instead, findings are produced through mapping activity- drawing lines that connect the multiple acts, actions, activities, events, and artifacts that constitute the data-set. (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 676)

Mapping the multitude of lines and paths throughout the labyrinth of the Shuk was a complex and deeply contextual process yet it affords the opportunities to read my arts-informed research as an intricately connected network rather than a set of discrete relations between and among variables (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013). There are no overarching conclusions or assumptions that surface from this collected data; instead, the data represents how experiential learning and modes of travel are significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of place and how boundaries and preconceptions are constantly shifting.



Figure 11. Taylor Miller, Petals for Persian Advieh, Tel Aviv, 2015.

Prior to my arrival in Tel Aviv, I honed in on several contemporary artists and movements demonstrating psychogeographic methods, as explained by Karen O'Rourke (2013). Many of these projects all had something in common: protocol. These guidelines, documents and/or rules specify how the activity should be performed and often help the artist(s) negotiate through their inquiry. I was strongly influenced by O'Rourke's elaboration on Yoko Ono's 1964 artist book *Grapefruit* and the seemingly simplistic protocol: draw a map to get lost. The concept is paradoxical and playful; frustrating the assumption that maps help us find our way. No map does not assume no direction. With this much "wiggle room," this much freedom to seek out alternative routes and results-

the potential for learning and exploration of primacy of place is endless. Ono's "Map Pieces" (as cited in O'Rourke, 2013, p. 77) instructs us to:

Draw an imaginary map.
 Put a goal mark on the map where you want to go.
 Go walking on an actual street according to your map.
 If there is no street where it should be according to the map, make one by putting the
 obstacles aside.
 When you reach your goal, ask the name of the city and give flowers to the first person
 you meet.
 The map must be followed exactly, or the event has to be dropped altogether.
 Ask your friends to write maps.
 Give your friends maps.

Ono not only outlines the protocol for this mapping exercise, but she also injects the artwork with subversive philosophy for everyday living. The traveler is asked to visualize their journey prior to departure and then attempt to actualize what brewed in their imagination. Obstacles, whether physical or psychological, are not dead ends. They are moveable, permeable- they are part of the very act of wayfinding. We acknowledge them, interact with them, and then move on. Ono wants us to share our knowledge with our friends, and for our friends to share knowledge with us. Reciprocity and interpersonal communication are necessary for this project- which is a form of community building. While venturing through the markets of Tel Aviv, I frequently referred to "Map Pieces" to comprehend place and best document my drifting:

*positive delirium before eleven, well into ninety
 like soup's a good pick for this
 meteorological oppression
 mission, less precise. find where thought I'm looking for
 the wandering needs be intention
 and with a street's side of shade
 the time, it takes to regulate
 it was calm, for sweat streamed down
 wasn't tired until the satisfaction of stew, helping this fever break
 sounds of Tehran in the shadowed nook*

*vibrant cloth swaths draped without mind—holsted back up
into the exhilaration, exoticism (spare Benadryl and wine)*

When the bowl of ash reshteh soup was placed on the table before me, I all but melted into it. This was easily one of the muggiest days of the summer, and in that first steaming bite- fragrant with dill, coriander and parsley- I tasted bits of salty sweat from my upper lip melding with the kashk and spinach. This day's particular route was dictated by the sun's shadow. If a street was fully lit by the high noon blaze, I would pass by, opting instead for an alley or sidewalk with awnings or any sort of shade. Full conversations with strangers of other native tongues; a roll of our eyes or synchronous brow-wiping saying exactly how we felt. I was learning the city's alleys, stalls and people while pushing my physical capacities and connecting with others I might not have otherwise seen. It was a way to better understand my own inclinations and sensations while immersing myself in a myriad of local encounters and communities.

My cognitive mapping exercises, much like Ono's "Map Pieces," allowed me to forge my own path through the markets and side streets. Increasingly, aspects of these routes felt familiar. There is much written on the differentiation (psychologically, physically...) of a tourist from a traveler- and their respective contestable lenses, but perhaps this is best saved for another project. I was frequently preoccupied with "Otherness" while weaving through these markets, but largely as an effort to understand ways in which community is formed. It was a way to extract knowledge from both individual and collective experiences and disclose "those forces that have been elided, marginalized or ignored altogether [that] have the power to transform or reconfigure reality in various ways" (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013, p. 671). I traced where one olive bin- brined as generations of Palestinians have, spilled over into one from Greece. How a

faded poster of Palestinian poet Ghassan Kanafani shared an alley wall with a sticker from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's campaign. In the midst of this sort of meandering through the markets, I heard dialects of Arabic and Tigrinya finding their way out from window panes ajar. Different blends of baharat, ras el hanout and zataar filled my nose and helped me better understand the flavor profiles of Turkey, Tunisia and Morocco- as generations of immigrants have carried these spices and traditions with them to Tel Aviv. These are maps are all at once deeply personal, locally resonant and globally relevant.



Figure 12. Taylor Miller, Kerem HaTeimanim (Amongst Others in the Yemenite Quarter), Tel Aviv, 2015.



Figure 13. Taylor Miller, To Coexist (And of Displaced Challah, Injera), Tel Aviv, 2015.

This cognitive mapping demonstrates the rhizomatic potential of experiential learning and place-conscious education. Whether the maps are inscribed poetically, photographically or just reflected upon intrinsically- they are indicative of data that inscribes tensions and conflicts, folds, crossings and distractions through sensory perception. These were opportunities to better identify barriers between and within communities as well as chances to observe the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the ever-changing landscapes in the region. Graeme Sullivan (2010) argues that artistic thinking and making are cognitive processes central to human understanding and educational experience. The permeable barriers of this type of conceptual and alternative art practice allow ideas and critical reflection to flow back and forth. I do not position myself strictly as a poet, photographer, abstract cartographer or community educator.

Rather, this arts-informed research is a continual renegotiation of my identity through self-reflexive practices. We are reminded by Sullivan (2010):

An important feature of the framework of visual arts research is that it is not only a set of relational approaches to research, but it is also a transformative research *practice*. This means that knowledge creation in visual arts is recursive and constantly undergoes change as new experiences “talk back” through the process and progress of making art in research settings. (p. 110)

This type of arts-informed research and data requires an open dialogue with the information as gleaned and presented. A constant questioning of its content and contexts, even once collected, is imperative as the reflexive interpretation is dynamic and constantly changing. I am not only generating the poetic/photographic inquiries and cognitive maps- I am part of them. In the following chapter, I will expand upon how places are profoundly pedagogical and how place-conscious education in a community setting can lead to a more just learning environment. By looking at educators who currently incorporate these practices into their curricula and contemporary artists who utilize wayfinding and psychogeography in their projects, I will provide tools for colleagues and students to bolster their relationships with the spaces they inhabit.



Figure 14. Taylor Miller, *Reclamation (City Map En Route to Lunch)*, Lod, 2015.



Figure 15. Taylor Miller, *Her Worthiness of Life (To Kanafani)*, Tel Aviv, 2015.



Figure 16. Taylor Miller, *Postmodern Pashkvil*, Tel Aviv, 2015.



Figure 17. Taylor Miller, *As Close As You Can Come (Syria and Such)*, Tel Aviv, 2015.

SPACE, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OURSELVES: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

If circumstances and temperament allow, we then build on these questions during adulthood, our curiosity encompassing more and more of the world until, at some point, we may reach that elusive stage where we are bored by nothing.⁶

It was monumental. The type of epiphany within the four walls of an art gallery that some curators may fantasize about. I was deeply moved and overjoyed by what was on display at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art- but concurrently felt angry and resentful that I had not visited the space sooner and more frequently during my stay. “This Place” was a traveling exhibition on display from May 14, 2015 through September 6, 2015 that I was fortunate enough to catch just before it moved onto The Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida. It was a showcase of twelve contemporary, internationally acclaimed photographers who explore the complexity of Israel and the West Bank. In the varied artworks, place is examined as both a physical site and as metaphor. The initiator of the project, Frédéric Brenner, asks the viewer to look beyond the region’s ongoing conflicts and contemplate how there is no single vantage point “to begin to comprehend the radical dissonance of this place” (as cited in Scott & Sheikh, 2014, p. 5).



Figure 18. Taylor Miller, *Gallery Hours (And of the Hierarchy)*, Tel Aviv, 2015.

The exhibition is exceptionally unique because it has been supported by over eighty individuals and foundations, including an in-kind sponsorship from Kodak, as opposed to receiving financial assistance from a national governing body or agency. Thusly, the project is freed from implied or actual pressures to adhere to dominant political ideologies and the artists' visions are truly allowed to shine through. Another unique note about this project is that no Palestinian or Israeli photographers participated. Instead, outsiders were enlisted to address their preconceptions and explore their naiveté. Project curator Charlotte Cotton explains (as cited in Scott & Sheikh, 2014):

There has been a deep awareness that the role of the photographers is not to speak on behalf of their Israeli and Palestinian peers or to undermine in any way the

valuable photographic work they create. The challenge that these photographers have taken on is to utilise their status as outsiders- their otherness- as a vantage point that can provide its own distinct and direct ways of looking. (p. 6)

No matter how familiar with the side streets, hummus vendors and Mediterranean piers I became throughout the Summer of 2015, I was definitively an outsider. I was in constant internal dialogue with my gaze- why was I drawn to *this*? Or *that*? What is it about this storefront or merchant that feels dangerous or *exotic*, versus familiar and safe? And how do I seek to document these experiences and sensations? Trinh T. Minh-ha (1994) expounds:

To travel can consist in operating a profoundly unsettling inversion of one's identity: I become me via an other. Depending on who is looking, the exotic is the other, or it is me...I am the one making a detour with myself, having left upon my departure from over here not only a place but also one of my selves. (p. 23)

Throughout these travels in Israel and Palestine, my discoveries displaced my preconceptions, which formed new ways of knowing. I was alive to the paradoxes and rifts of this highly contested land and my poetic/photographic inquiry and cognitive mapping exercises benefitted greatly from studying multiple methods of acute observation.

In the "This Place" exhibition, I saw traces of my current practices right alongside my artistic aspirations in many of the twelve photographers' pieces. The work of Martin Kollar demonstrates an attuned inclination for personified contradictions and visual subtleties. In an interview on the exhibition's website, he describes how his subject matter is found and not staged adding, "I was really just describing the tension [of the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict] on a very personal level. This allowed me to think about photographing in a very individuated way” (This Place, 2016). Many of his photographs happened in serendipitous circumstances, despite the Orwellian nature of the various project sites. His *Field Trip* series is “just simple storytelling” (Scott & Sheikh, 2014, p. 72) and indicative of his exploration and reflection throughout his artist residency in Israel. I also identified with Stephen Shore’s artistic process and the ways in which his photographs communicate the diversity of the region’s landscapes and how he conveys perceptible energy in and around historical sites. He is keenly aware of the physical experience of walking on the land, and by observing these rhythms, he finds himself more physically present in each moment he photographs.

This exhibition offered a series of invitations for the viewer to situate themselves within a myriad of politically charged, deeply personal journeys. The narratives of the artists and subjects highlight a reflexive temporality; place and space to be considered as both physical and metaphorical sites of contestation as well as separation/unification. Viewing “This Place” and learning about the contemporary photographers involved in the exhibition helped to substantiate my drive to utilize wayfinding and psychogeography in this autoethnographic arts-informed research.

My qualitative data from Summer 2015 is not a strictly defined set of statistics or interviews. Rather, as demonstrated in chapter three, vignettes of the more totalizing experience can be extracted, analyzed, dissected and/or rearranged- indicating the generative nature of this type of arts-informed research. I am researching my very acts of doing. As an art educator, the intent of this research process was to create a body of work representative of experience that is significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of

place. Graeme Sullivan (2010) encourages these types of arts-informed research methods as they provide a unique ways of representing what we know about the world. He writes:

If a primary purpose of research is to increase awareness of ourselves and the world we live in, then it seems plausible to argue that understanding is a viable outcome of inquiry...If a goal of any inquiry is to be able to act on the knowledge gained, then it is reasonable to expect that understanding is as significant as explanation as an outcome of research. (p. 97)

He reminds us that if we continue to borrow research methods from other models and molds, we are denying the capacity of transformative art practice as a plausible basis for new educative opportunities and a viable site for bridging sociopolitical concepts. My quest for understanding of place/space through arts-informed research has the potential to expand “the various descriptive, explanatory, and immersive systems of knowledge that frame individual and community awareness” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 97). My experiential knowledge is unique, but it is not my own to sequester or meditate on as isolated or closed moments.

Some of my methods of poetic and photographic inquiry can be translated into educative tools for place-conscious curriculum development in community settings. We can always better attune ourselves to place, regardless of location. These tools can be utilized in Tucson, Arizona much like how they were in Tel Aviv, Israel. Lynn Butler-Kisber (2010) explains how particular poetry exercises can use photographs as an elicitation/heuristic device. In a community setting such as a poetry workshop, participants can bring in photographs from their own wayfinding experiences. The

timeframe and duration of the jaunt could be up to the facilitator or students' discretion.

The writers can “narrate the photograph” by using these overarching themes:

- Write the poem as the photographer in the moment of taking the photo.
- Write the poem as someone/something in the photograph addressing the photographer.
- Address the poem to someone you know who has not yet viewed the photograph.
- Address the poem to the photographer. (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 93)

Such an exercise demonstrates how poetic and photographic inquiry are not mutually exclusive processes but in fact flourish from the interplay of experiential knowledge and sensory perception. While wayfinding through the Levinsky market in Tel Aviv, a pocket between Ha'aliyah and Herzl Street with an abundance of Balkan and Persian delicacies for sale, I photographed a shadowed moment of prayer between two shop owners:



Figure 19. Taylor Miller, *Spices and Scripture*, Tel Aviv, 2015.

I sipped Turkish coffee next door at Café Kaymak and reflected on this moment in a manner similar to Butler-Kisber's (2010) exercises:

*it's a constant confrontation of luxury's definition
vacillating between feeling the short end of statistical poverty
and the blessing (truly holy enough a phrase, holy land)
of roof and familiar warmth for which to return
was a jungle, all connotations
just a few cross streets later, past cinnamon and turmeric plumes
few sheds full of junk
shop owners obstinate (rightly so) and I peruse the deal
Orientalist interests piqued, but held fast they did
as did I
uneasy as they were privy to this quest for spectacle-
the kind of despair that leaves you laying in the midday sun
walked away.
will I remember?*

I was collected, though assuredly still sweating from the unbearably thick August air. Fatigue goes hand-in-hand with those damp, shallow breaths. As I continued to write, I thought about what was to be learned from another's reverence to their God(s). I attempted to account for each scent as it filled my nose- the warmed cardamom steeped in espresso, the roasted pine nuts pushed through on a nearby merchant's table, the residual drain water from the restaurants' morning mopping. I was reeling from a failed bargaining attempt for a silver bracelet for my mother. Assuredly more caffeine was the solution.

This exercise of writing the vignette, which was repeated over and over again throughout the summer, leant to a generative art making practice. I was at once artist/researcher/student/teacher and traveler hungry for more. Loosely formulaic, this exercise centers on the idea of developing a more intuitive and sentient relationship with the places we travel through. Such a practice can be honed by thinking of key words, phrases or signage observed while on the move and extracting them from the day's

routine. The cadence of an overheard conversation, the aroma of unfamiliar spices...these are all entry points for poetic and photographic inquiry, elicitation and reflection. This precarious, complex and at times contradictory sort of experiential knowledge “should be welcomed...as [it necessitates] a creative approach towards dealing with all forms of teaching, artistic practice, and academic inquiry” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 210).

I believe that place-conscious education is imperative to contemporary society and should be increasingly developed in classrooms and community settings. Patti Pente notes:

Within educational circles there has been an ideological shift over the years from the concept of a teacher as one who acquires specialized skills and performs in the classroom to a more holistic view of a teacher whose multiple dimensions, background, values, beliefs, and subject knowledge are all important aspects of her/his teaching. (as cited in Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 92)

The latter description affirms that it takes many forms and ways of knowing in order to teach in a meaningful way. New pathways and possibilities for curriculum development and constructive community building emerge from a greater acceptance and validation of experiential knowledge. The production of place/space can be addressed in a self-reflexive and increasingly critical way if there is room to experiment with and engage in the growing discourse on alternative ways of knowing. Though the research world continues to wrestle with the legitimacy of nontraditional methods of inquiry, like Julie Lymburner in *A/r/tography*, I “uphold the inclusion of teachers’ authentic, first-person voices in the discourse as central, if not essential, to furthering our understanding of education” (as cited in Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p. 76).

Place-conscious education is fundamentally interdisciplinary and it strongly encourages dialogical thinking. Nato Thompson and members of Independent Curators International (2008) uphold that we are living in the “moment of the map” (p. 107). In this discussion, Lize Mogel elaborates on the enormous amount of current cultural production involving maps and how it is shifting the way we think of new forms of representation and space. She notes how much of this mapping work is responsive to a gamut of political moments and how “the practices are often cross-disciplinary and collaborative- moving between art/design/media/architecture, geography and cartography, organizing and activism, education, journalism, and so on” (Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 107). Cognitive mapping, psychogeography and wayfinding are essential tools for understanding place while pushing the aesthetic and conceptual boundaries of all of these disciplines to foster the rhizomatic potential of experiential learning.

Much like Anniina Suominen (2003), it is one of my primary goals as an educator to “help students form a deeper understanding of who they are and what affects the ways they view the surrounding world” (p. 152). Students are active architects of their culture and it is crucial to foster a dynamic environment for critical, self-reflexive learning. It is unreasonable to expect radical and revolutionary thought to emerge and flourish if a progressive and inclusive environment is not nurtured. Cognitive mapping and nontraditional methods of arts-informed inquiry can be used and understood as forms of resistance that contribute to a more just learning environment. These are embodied practices of being receptive to a range of voices, and more deeply valuing one’s own. We are reminded how “all maps, whether institutional or counter-cartographic, embody and

produce power relations...counter-cartographies do not try to remake the map but instead appropriate it in order to analyze, understand and create a balance of power” (Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2008, p. 107).



Figure 20. Taylor Miller, Atop Mount of Olives, East Jerusalem, 2015.

Psychogeographic and wayfinding exercises necessitate an exploration of the artist/student/educator/researcher’s agency in the classroom and beyond.

These practices focus on “the sociocultural borders we build and live by and within, [as well as] the moments of contradiction at the borders and their eventual or possible rupture” (Suominen, 2003, p. 11). Throughout this thesis, I have addressed how physical and psychological border lands are spaces of immense vulnerability, contestation and

conflict. By attending to and reordering academic and artistic barriers, we develop an intimate understanding of sociocultural and political points of friction and sites for increased democratic engagement. In *Experimental Geography* (2008), we are reminded:

Pedagogy...seeks to transmit agency, the ability to make things happen. Intimate with the material culture of everyday life [we, as educators] can publicly unpack the mechanisms by which the built environment comes to be seen as normal, in order to liberate the power of form from other ends. (Thompson, Kastner, & Paglen, 2014, p. 80)

By studying the primacy of place, we learn to better question the metanarratives we have been engrained to follow without question and we can increasingly defy the status quo. The overarching themes and perils of capitalism, consumerism and racism (amongst others) can be increasingly deconstructed and questioned by rereading the spaces we move through with all of our senses and honing a more socially conscious understanding of our communities. When artists/students/educators/researchers study and create beyond assumed discipline boundaries, they are able to pursue ideas and issues that resonate locally and globally.

The sheer volume of inspiration for poetic and photographic exercises in a community-based learning environment was worth the fatigue and anguish frequently felt while based in Tel Aviv during the Summer of 2015. We cannot fully know the sweetness of solace and order without enduring the bedlam and unease. These exercises and inquiry methods offer copious means of representation, expression and action. “As we consider designing an art curriculum, we are, in many respects, wayfinders” (Beudert & McClure, 2015, p. 67), and we must encourage learners’ procession along unfamiliar

paths in order to renegotiate boundaries and encourage risk-taking. Place-conscious education commands multiple (if not limitless) pathways for learning. The pedagogical approach is “dynamic, temporal (but not necessarily chronological or linear), embodied and affective and flexible” (Beudert & McClure, 2015, p. 90). Wayfinding initiates a cycle of self-reflexivity and research that “encourages greater levels of understanding and can be revisited with continual variation in a [circuitous] or pattern-like structure” (Beudert & McClure, 2015, p. 107). Recounting my methods for wayfinding through Israel and Palestine has shown me how within narrative structures, flexibility is essential and how by bringing personal accounts into the public domain, new paths are revealed and rich connections are made (Sullivan, 2010). My artistic inquiry connected my travels to my readings in art education and my studies of pedagogical strategies.

Apart from the deep intrinsic value of experiential knowledge gained from my arts-informed research during Summer 2015, this process is overall very beneficial to the field of art education. Place-conscious education is relatively new and ever evolving; constantly faced with the hurdles of institutionalized schooling and its heavily standardized curricula. I have gleaned from this experience that place-conscious education is at once rigorous and flexible. It involves methods of inquiry that can be difficult to pin down or formally define. It requires us to unearth our drives and observations that are frequently repressed or overlooked. And it takes immense patience and trust to encourage these sensations and emotions in students. But the blurring of genres and disciplines into a more holistic framework for reflecting on personal narratives and critiquing social structure is exciting and begs to be encouraged. Graeme Sullivan (2010) explains:

Defining the artist as cultural worker is a role that has little institutional history with little effort spent on introducing art students to the potential of public projects as a viable form of art practice. Dealing with local histories, communities, bureaucracies, and the demands of collaboration and conflict resolution are not normally part of the [curriculum]. (p. 170)

Continual experimentation is what best defines the praxis of place-conscious education. Knowledge grows exponentially along the myriad paths we take, and wayfinding and psychogeography help us discover these paths. As aforementioned, Martin and Kamberelis (2013) help me explain that there is nothing in this data set to be “found” and that instead, I am presenting experiential knowledge from recent travels that connects artistic inquiry with alternative ways of knowing- demonstrating the profoundly pedagogical nature of place. In the final chapter, I will provide further examples of poetic and photographic inquiry to illuminate my methods of wayfinding and psychogeography as they relate to place-conscious education. I will reflect upon my growth from my experiences in Israel and Palestine and analyze the alternative ways of knowing gleaned from my travels throughout the region. This discussion centers on the inherent interdisciplinarity of my research and the opportunities for upcoming projects and academic endeavors. It will be an opportunity to parse new ideas gained after examining my research and share personal goals for the future.

NOWHERE TO GO BUT EVERYWHERE: CONCLUSION

There is one other thing to know...when you have expressed yourself to the fullest, then and only then will it dawn upon you that everything has already been expressed, not in words alone but in deed, and that all you need really do is say *Amen!*⁷

I could have stayed in Tel Aviv for a few more weeks. Classes at the University of Arizona were not beginning until the end of August and I had yet to check everything off of my bucket list for this visit to the region. “Can Americans with an Israeli visa enter Lebanon?” “How long is the bus ride to Amman, Jordan?” “Which hostels do journalists stay at in Ramallah?” These were just a handful of the questions I toiled over online in the final scheduled days of my trip. I was tired. An intense weariness that even made my bones ache. Countless miles of Tel Aviv explored on foot, often 8-10 hours of walking on any given day, camera in hand and backpack shellacked to me by sweat. There were more layers to uncover, more cardamom coffee to drink. In those final days, I battled overwhelming anxiety while trying to photograph and write about everything I possibly could- sensing it would be some months, maybe even years until I returned to the Middle East. Seeking to restore balance in the late afternoon near the Old City of Jerusalem, I digested the flurry of the morning and meditated on what it means to return home:

*anxiously squatted pending the first bus from the city
sewage soaked sandals and salt caked shirt
knees not yet recovered from when certain they'd cave
was the peril so sought, staring down a few brats
in a match of bravado. me, nothing new*

*“you get some photos?” flirted the policeman
assuredly wants their poison disseminated, we all demonize
each other
the cop car skid it's dramatic circle
graceful until the plastic jug caught the muffler
as deft as wrestling children to the ground
post-apocalyptic scene*

*staring nascent aggression in the face
after the authorities pulled out
must look away from the car wreck, or you'll land in one too*

*made it to market and maybe the last
if the switch never flips, the mind constantly scurries
chores and directions for day
easier to clam up, ride the calm into Sunday*

*it's okay to be kind, to yourself
every so often or so
when it's too damn exhausting to be too masochistic
finding no one but me versus me
and bid adieu to the lace, linens and ferns*

There were a slew of protests occurring that weekend in Jerusalem (though this happens frequently in this hotbed of zealots and activists). Unable to speak Hebrew or Arabic, I wove my way through many neighborhoods nervously hoping to photograph clues of unrest. Equipped with a mind full of wayfinding and psychogeographic methods, I walked through markets, confronted law enforcement (who sometimes spoke broken English) and attempted to interpret banners and signs in order to determine my routes. Up until the final hours in Tel Aviv, my poetic and photographic inquiry served as documentation of experience. The images and passages I created guided me through questions about religious and sociopolitical conflicts and new understandings from sensory perceptions. They will help generate new ways of teaching about one's physical and psychological relation to place. I believe that poetic inquiry and self-reflexive strategies can be more accessible to many members of a community. By writing and rewriting ourselves and our experiences in ways that mimic our most honest voices, we are able to forge more meaningful connections amongst our students, colleagues and broader audiences. Walls, borders and checkpoints become more permeable. To reiterate,

these methods are most effective when your expectations are flexible: process over product. For we are reminded, “as in any inquiry, the analysis is ongoing, iterative, and fluid in an inward and outward motion from the first day in the field” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 69).

With the summer’s array of experiences brought a renewed sense of self-care and reflexivity. The more that I was confronted with checkpoints, barricades and language barriers- the more time I spent contemplating my own psychological roadblocks and I worked on confronting insecurities and shortcomings in my art making practice. While exploring relevant literature for this thesis, I uncovered:

The journey is a symbol of narrative. Narrative- as a structure of development, growth and change- the acquisition of knowledge and solution of problems- is conceived as a physical process of movement, of disruption, negotiation and return. (Robertson, 1994, p. 199)

I moved through moments of unease- often requiring tact, impulse and instinct. Summer of 2015 required constant renegotiation of my understanding of my surroundings. Using an autoethnographic voice in this thesis has allowed me the space to more closely analyze and understand my agency as an artist/student/educator/researcher. I have been able to recognize and confront my privilege as well as identify the margins where I reside.



Figure 21. Taylor Miller, Before Florentin is Flattened, Tel Aviv, 2015.

Throughout this thesis, I have labored over my choice of words in order to maximize inclusivity yet remain steadfast to my beliefs. This begins with concepts as broad as “knowledges” and “understandings.” These are used to emphasize that there is no singular Truth, especially pertaining to transformative art making processes. This upholds why place-conscious education in a community setting can encourage students’ relationships with the spaces they inhabit and lend to a more just learning environment. If we nurture sensitivities and subjectivities, a wider range of voices are heard.

In past travels, I assuredly saw God at the top of the tram on a powder day in Jackson Hole. Or maybe it was that time when I gazed upward into the misty redwood trees on the porch at the Henry Miller Memorial Library in Big Sur. Perhaps it was that first bite of hummus masabacha at Abu Hassan restaurant in Jaffa. All of this is beside

the point. I am affirming alternative routes and understandings. These are knowledges that supercede a “right” or “wrong” outcome. My arts-informed inquiry demonstrates how fostering our curiosities leads to a stronger awareness of the intricacies of our world and hones our sensitivities to others. These representations of experience are significant in establishing the pedagogical nature of place. Through these methods, we can study conflict and peacemaking and a range of self/Other dynamics. I am drawn to place-conscious education because it fosters a socializing dialogue, is a catalyst for community building and it strengthens the connection between alternative ways of learning and the places we individually and collectively inhabit.

I have demonstrated how travel is intricately linked to wayfinding and psychogeography; the journey is not necessarily about the expanse of miles covered but the concerted movement and awareness of place. By studying and reflecting upon how we navigate our surroundings, we become inherently more receptive to what our senses perceive and how we communicate with others. This is the essence of place-conscious education and necessary to community building. I have also depicted how *métissage* is a language of the border lands- pertinent to my home in Tucson, Arizona as well as recent travels in Israel and Palestine. Place-conscious education is sensitive to the idea that our identities is constantly (re)constructed and the physical and psychological barriers we encounter can always be challenged and reconfigured.

Though we might encounter checkpoints and borders, they must be confronted and questioned. In this thesis, I very careful about describing the cities and territories through which I traveled during Summer 2015. At points in this thesis, it may have felt redundant to constantly read “Israel and Palestine” or its substitute: “the Summer of

2015.” A great amount of intention went into the titles of my photographs and the labeling of the land in these pages. It would be an oversimplification to refer to each area as “Israel,” despite what most contemporary maps may depict. It is impossible to shy away from religion and politics when thoughtfully documenting these spaces- as so much of the land is so highly contested. In reference to my limitations of this research, unpacking the incredibly intense and nuanced history of colonialism in Palestine is beyond the scope of this project. I am against Zionism and against the settlements in the modern State of Israel. One person’s “Israel Defense Force” is another’s “Israel Occupation Force.” This is evident in many of the photographs I took while wayfinding and confronting the border lands. As I continue to sort out what it means to be an American Jew and what my role is in the occupation of Palestinian territory, I will expand upon my arts-informed inquiry and this conflict’s contribution to my identity formation. My persistent grappling with these histories and policies make me a stronger, more attuned art educator- specifically in Tucson, Arizona where Hispanic and First Nations peoples continue to fight for environmental protection and human rights justice.

My arts-informed research was able to come alive off of these pages and onto the walls of the University of Arizona’s Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Three of my photographs from Summer 2015 were selected for the 2016 photography exhibit, “The Middle East in Photographs: A 25-Year Retrospective.” Additionally, I was selected to present at the 16th Annual Southwest Graduate Conference in Middle Eastern and North African Studies hosted by the University of Arizona. The 2016 Conference, “Re-envisioning Boundaries: Navigating Society, Culture and Sovereignities,” included graduate students and renowned scholars from within and outside the United States. At

this conference, I presented a paper on “The Hell of Holot,” based off of my visit to the Holot Detention Center in July 2015. Not only were these opportunities to share my experiential knowledge, but they were a means to forge connections between the field of art education and The Center for Middle Eastern Studies. My presentation carved out space for alternative ways of knowing; first-person accounts of human rights violations coupled with photographic and poetic inquiry in a setting traditionally reserved for rigid academic research papers.

Many new questions have arisen from this research. I am increasingly curious about art education in conflict-ridden regions throughout the Maghreb and Middle East, specifically as it pertains to children in refugee camps and the Occupied Territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. I am also interested in how migrants synthesize their understanding of place and how different forms of displacement can incite constructive creation and growth. This will help me better understand the notions of exile, safety and rootedness. I want to delve into place-conscious education coupled with the philosophical musings of intellectual and physical nomadism to generate more art on what it means to travel and return home. Such studies can translate into an examination in my own “backyard” of the border lands of the Sonoran desert and where more overlaps exist between human rights advocacy and place-conscious art education. I foresee great potential in digging even further than I have before into the varied landscapes of Tucson, Arizona and unearthing new place-conscious understandings of Indigenous peoples, flora and the city’s gentrification. I will continue to wayfind through the barrios and document my encounters with poetry and photography.

I plan to distill some aspects of this thesis into one or two-page worksheets that provide examples and salient steps for utilizing psychogeography and wayfinding in a community arts setting. These will be geared towards creative writing or visual arts workshops for various age groups and demographics throughout Tucson to bolster place-conscious education and continue to help validate alternative knowledges gleaned beyond the classroom.

There is such tremendous potential to extend this research into future projects and career paths both near and far. I am foremost interested in pursuing a Ph.D. and engaging in more scholastic interdisciplinarity to further expand upon my studies of place-conscious education. This will contribute to the cultivation of new discourses and help embolden my cognitive strengths as well as help refine my strategies for curriculum design. I still have copious lingering questions about self/Other and home/abroad dynamics that I anticipate weaving into future research. I want to delve into deeper explorations of borders, checkpoints and physical/metaphorical lines of demarcation with even more nuanced photographic and poetic inquiry.

I also plan to elaborate on my preliminary research on education in post-conflict settings. Organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF play active roles in the promotion of education as an integral part of emergency response in conflict and disaster-affected communities. Operations in these situations include literacy empowerment, peacebuilding, reconciliation- as well as cognitive and psychosocial protection for those in need. I believe that my arts-informed inquiry in Israel and Palestine from Summer 2015 will serve as a foundation for more comprehensive studies of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and war torn neighboring countries and the necessity of art education for

communities affected by conflict. Soon after graduation, I intend on studying Arabic and learning more about participating in English as a Second Language Programs. I seek ways to open more channels for communication between myself and those in this region of research interest.



Figure 22. Taylor Miller, The Hell of Holot, Holot Detention Center, 2015.

Though my passion for traveling the world is relentless, I find myself increasingly rooted in Tucson, Arizona and am more insistent than ever before that this is my home. While my research will hopefully permit a return to the Middle East, I am certain each excursion will lead me back to my little adobe house surrounded by the cacti of the Sonoran desert. After interning and working at various community arts organizations

throughout the city as a student, I have established a growing network of scholars, artists and activists with whom to collaborate. I am eager to brainstorm with museums and groups across Tucson to develop place-conscious workshops that integrate creative writing, photography and activism. This is work that heightens our sensitivity and understanding for both ourselves and those around us. It is an affirmation of our vulnerabilities, strengths and an expression of our perceptions. I will continue to wayfind through routes old and new, and create from the obstacles before me- for as William Wordsworth (1888) wrote, “Should the chosen guide be nothing better than a wandering cloud, I cannot miss my way” (The Prelude 16-18).

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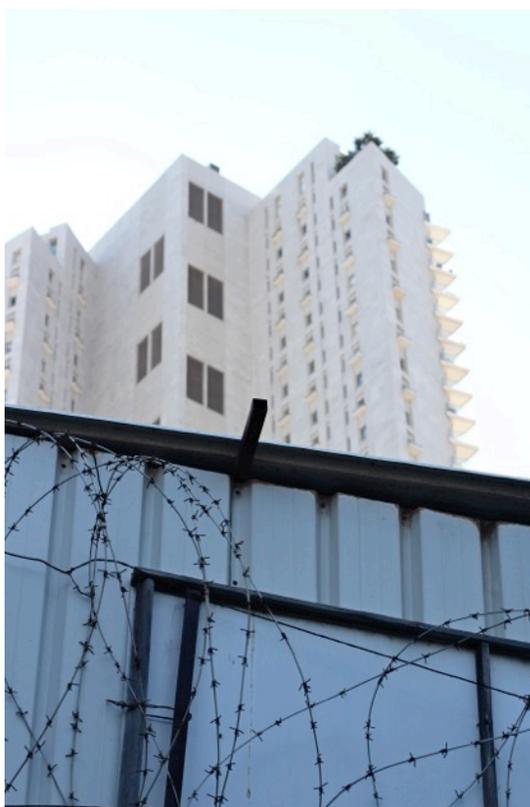
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APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL IMAGES

In this section, I wanted to create a space to share more images from Summer 2015 in Israel and Palestine. Even after deleting duplicates and redundancies, I returned to Tucson with over 2,000 photographs of my observations and encounters. It is hard to distill this number down to a select few that best illuminate my sentiment on gentrification, occupation, migration and growth. Most of the photographs are of inanimate objects- buildings, fences, piles of rubble- yet they are teeming with questions, contestations and a great range of emotions. These images reflect my wayfinding through pockets of dilapidation, disputed territories and sensory encounters in markets and holy sites. I used psychogeography to explore the peripheries of places both foreign and familiar. I am forever drawn to ethereal light. Even the most unsightly mound of litter looks beautiful to me in the early morning or late afternoon sun.











¹ Robertson, G. (1994). *Travellers' tales: Narratives of home and displacement*. London: Routledge. (p. 1).

² I allude here to one of my favorite writers, William Burroughs, who retreated to Tangier, Morocco in 1953. In *Interzone*, a collection of short sketches and tales, he gave a personal account of his habits and cures (of addictions in life), table talk and routines and the chaos he observed during Arab nationalist riots in the region. It was during this period of his life that he made his literary breakthrough, experimented with new artistic mediums/collaborations and explored the Maghreb.

³ The Letterist International was a Paris-based collective of radical theorists and artists between 1952 and 1957, created by Guy Debord. The spelling 'Lettrist' is also common in English, but 'Letterist' was the form the French group (*Internationale Lettriste*) themselves preferred, and used in their 1955 sticker: 'If you believe you have genius, or if you think you have only a brilliant intelligence, write the letterist internationale.'

⁴ Bachelard, G., & Jolas, M. (1964). *The poetics of space*. New York, NY: The Orion Press. (p. 137).

⁵ Rollins, H. (2011). *Occupants: Photographs and writings*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press. (p. xii).

⁶ De Botton, A. (2002). *The art of travel*. New York, NY: Pantheon. (p. 117).

⁷ Miller, H. (1957). *Big Sur and the oranges of Hieronymus Bosch*. New York, NY: New Directions. (p. 32).