

**Finding My Voice through the Arts:
Becoming Wide-awake to the Rhythms of
My Own Drum**

**by
Nuri Yang**

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Declaration of Committee

Name: Nuri Yang

Degree: Master of Arts

Thesis title: Finding My Voice through the Arts:
Becoming Wide-awake to the Rhythms of
My Own Drum

Committee: **Chair: Heesoon Bai**
Professor, Education

Celeste Snowber
Supervisor
Professor, Education

Michael Ling
Committee Member
Senior Lecturer, Education

Lynn Fels
Examiner
Professor, Education

Abstract

My thesis is an arts-based inquiry into discovering my voice through poetry, narrative, and Korean drum. My fundamental purpose is to examine what it means to reflect on my lived experiences and to bring my poetic voice onto the page, and into the world.

I employ multiple methodologies, including poetic inquiry and embodied ways of inquiry in my exploration of identity. My thesis integrates theoretical and artistic elements which include poems, personal narratives, and a reflection on my solo performance with a Korean drum. My Korean drum becomes a pathway and form for an exploration into discovering my authentic inner voice.

In addition, I attempt to cultivate a state of wide-awakeness, following Maxine Greene's concept, by exploring my inner landscapes through these artistic mediums and thereby recreating my authentic self.

Finally, I discuss the implications of my work, offering suggestions for educational and creative practice, situating the place of 'voice' in each domain.

Keywords: Arts-based inquiry; Reflection; Poetic inquiry, Narrative writing; Embodied inquiry; Solo-Performance; Korean Drum; Wide-awakeness

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my mother and older brother in South Korea. They have always supported and encouraged me to keep working on my academic career with love, faith, and patience. My father, who became a star in the sky, is the one who had given me beautiful memories to construct the foundation of my thesis. I sincerely appreciate all of them with my heart and soul.

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Invitation

I approach my various lived experiences as a source of data by placing them at the center of the table. I consciously ponder and capture what emerges from my mind and body as I engage in my arts-based research. I am immersed in the ongoing process of discovering transitions of my identity through aesthetic experiences with art.

*I invite
readers on my aesthetic journey*

*Hopefully,
they will sense my voice through
evocative layers*

Prelude

I AM...

A puppet

*no soul
no voice*

*dressed
in fancy clothes*

*Moving my arms
as adults control
the invisible strings
on my back*

*I was taught to
listen to them*

*I was told to
mimic them*

*voicelessly
silently*

*Now
people say*

*I am
an adult*

*I have to be able to
move
by myself*

*I must have
my philosophy, plan, purpose of life,
blah blah blah*

*They ask
what I have
inside*

*You know
what*

*I do
NOT
Know*

*I can't tell
who I am*

what I feel

how I sound

*No matter
how old I am*

I am fully

v a c a n t

*Not knowing
what to do*

Oh

Hold on

My heart beats

constantly

*pumping
running
flowing*

*Should
I
let my heart*

speak

HOW

The Step towards Finding My Voice

The catalyst for my research was a special moment when I experienced a sense of freedom with my drumming performance. The arts-based projects assigned in my graduate program invited me to design and present my own aesthetic identity through the use of creative forms of expression. The goal was to explore aesthetic awareness and attempt to discover the root of my identity based on personal memories. I decided to use my Korean drum known as 'Janggu'.

Ever since I was a little girl, I had many opportunities to watch my father's performances with *Janggu* at concerts and events. Every time I heard the drumbeats, my heart would pump along, trembling and reverberating. I wanted to become a percussion artist like my father. However, when I entered music school, he strictly demanded me to major in a stringed instrument, commonly played by female artists.

One day

*in my bright room
coloured by the sunset*

*I quietly think
what to do
for my inquiry through arts*

*blankly
touching my drum*

round...soft... dry...

*As if I am breaking
an unspoken taboo,*

I feel uncomfortable

But.

*while sensing
my drum*

*my whole body is infused
by unexplained vitality*

*I slowly move my sticks
trying to recall certain rhythms
my father used to play*

let my instincts lead me

Deong

ta

Goong

Tta---

tta Goong

Goong

tta

goong

Goong

tta goong

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong,

Goong tta goong

This happened to be on the same day I was to present my arts-based research in front of classmates. At the time of presenting, a hospitable place was cultivated in the room. The classroom was unlike the cold and strict climate for presentations I had come to expect from previous experiences. The form of hospitality in class was an invisible pedagogy of transition, inviting us to embrace various possibilities. Wardrop & Fels (2015) describe hospitality as:

the ability to welcome those who we have not been expecting nor invited, requires transition from habits of language, actions, assumptions, and expectations into an action space of inquiry, curiosity, fluidity, adaptation, improvisation, in order to create a language and practice of shared resonance, embodied awareness, and reciprocal listening. (p. 64)

The supportive pedagogical environment encouraged me to take a leap of faith and share performance with my drum.

My two hands got cold and restless, and I became out of breath when I noticed that everyone in class was looking at me in silence. Based on traditional rhythms, I just began to play my drum without thinking too much and improvised.

*Deong
Ta
Goong*

*Tta
tta
Goong*

*Deong ta Goong
Tta tta Goong
Goong tta goong, Goong tta goong
Goong tta goong, Goong tta goong*

*I freely articulated
my language
had been buried inside*

for so long

Performing the *Janggu* felt like I had opened my Pandora's box that had been untouched for years. As if my whole soul took the acoustic form of my drum, the sound of it became an alternative form of my authentic inner voice. I aesthetically and somatically experienced what it meant to be expressing my voice with my drum.

After my ineffable experience, I came to realize that there must be a pathway for seeking my aesthetic freedom in experiential ways. In order to discover a way to become a free bird, I decided to dive into the journey of understanding my identity and exploring my inner landscape.

*The drum beats I create
become my language*

*a special place is built where
my music and voice become
a unitary whisper*

In my inquiry, I integrate performance and arts-based research methodologies including poetic inquiry, personal narrative writing, and embodied ways inquiry. Each of these methodologies exists within recognized and integrated scholarly communities of practice (Faulkner, 2016; Leggo, 2005, 2008; Prendergast, 2016; Snowber, 2016, 2018), widening the scope of possibilities of engagement in educational inquiry.

Chapter 1. *Bok Sik Ho Heup* (Abdomen Breathing)

Breathing through the abdomen is a basic practice, used as a warm-up for Korean traditional musicians regardless of their instrument. Through calm and consistent breathing, spiritual energy deeply circulates in and out of the body. The breathing facilitates focused attentiveness, helping musicians to create clear tunes and sounds with their instruments. Before stepping into my long journey, I take a cleansing breath to let my energy flow. Each breath generates a moment that allows me to be attentive and attuned to my body, mind, and voice.

*Inhale
slowly
through your nose*

*exhale
through the mouth*

*as l o n g
as possible*

*Consider your stomach
as a balloon*

*Your stomach
gets bigger and bigger
as you put air in your body*

*abdomen will shrink
as you are breathing out
slowly*

One ...two....three....four....

HOLD

Four...three....two....one....

Dasrum

Dasrum is a tuning activity or a short piece of music that is spontaneously performed before the main show. Musicians tune their instruments playfully and effortlessly, and release their sounds for preparation. Here, I write my textual *dasrum* as a beginning of wandering and walking into my research.

*I sit
turn on my laptop
pick up a book
straighten up my back
take a sip of coffee
type randomly
mumble weakly
move my mouse
back and forth
click
clear my throat
find a quotation
ponder
check my watch
yawn
look around
stretch my neck
grab a dictionary
take notes
read out loud
sigh
doodle
put down my pen
pause*

Inhale...

HOLD

Exhale...

In preparation, I look into a number of concepts and methodologies that are associated with the direction of my arts-based research as well as Greene's concept of 'wide-awakeness' as a means of finding my artistic voice.

Wide-Awakeness

Maxine Greene is a philosopher and educator who has been credited with a significant achievement of acknowledging wide-awakeness as an essential function of the aesthetic curriculum in the field of education. Greene (1977) claims that “social structures and explanatory systems pressing down on human beings and rendering them passive: gazers, not seers; hearers, not listeners” (p. 284). With regards to the capacity to reflect on experiences, Greene (1978) writes that “we are all aware that how few people ask themselves what they have done with their own lives, whether or not they have their freedom or simply acceded to the imposition of patterned behavior and the assignment of roles” (p. 42). Her insight opens up my own relationship to my unawareness of what I have experienced in previous phases of my life before entering graduate studies. One of my realizations is that I have been accepting all the roles placed on me without questioning them throughout my life. Once I become aware of this acceptance, I am invited into examining how I can shift my own perceptions. Greene (1988) also makes the point that a lack of consciousness results from “unreflectiveness, to the incapacity to interpret lived situations” (p. 22). She implies that a deliberate attitude of having questions on lived experiences would more likely raise my consciousness to enter into a state of being awakened. By acknowledging helplessness that contemporary people feel, Greene (1978) states that a conscious practice of looking back on certain moments, memories, and times supports individuals in becoming authentic and autonomous.

I am suggesting that, for too many individuals in modern society, there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable. I am also suggesting that such feelings can to a large degree be overcome through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep them awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret experiences they are having day by day. Only as they learn to make sense of what is happening, they can feel themselves to be autonomous. (p. 43)

As I particularly resonate with the word ‘powerlessness’, I have become intrigued by Greene’s suggestion to explore my lived experiences in order to gain a sense of my authentic self. With regards to the importance of reflection, Schon (2000) similarly claims its function for practitioners.

A practitioner's reflection can serve as a corrective to over learning. Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience. (p. 61)

As Schon succinctly describes here, reflection allows practitioners to see existing works in a different way and to become critical about them. Instead of unconsciously accepting the way the predetermined works exist, deliberate reflection can cause a new insight on the circumstance to emerge. Likewise, posing questions and reflecting on lived experiences open up an opportunity to encounter new perspectives and unseen meanings. As I looked into what Greene and Schon articulate, I realized that reflecting and questioning increase one's consciousness and offer opportunities to seek new perspectives on one's life and experiences.

Art

Art fundamentally allows people to pay attention to their surroundings in a state of alertness. According to Greene's view, involvement with the arts inspires people to ask questions about their artworks. Greene (1977) suggests that aesthetic engagements perform a meaningful role in provoking consciousness in people and may result in waking them up from their habituated ways of living.

Aesthetic, after all, involves an exploration of the questions arising when people become self-reflective about their engagements with art forms. They may wonder about the pleasure and pain certain engagements arouse, about their perceptions of beauty, horror, harmony, about the peculiar queries that rise up in them because of things read or seen. (p. 288)

In the process of artistic engagement, one perceives the specific quality of an art form and senses certain emotions evoked by materiality and expressivity. For me, this entire process induces numerous questions. *Why do I feel pain here? Why am I drawn to the lower pitch? What if I play my drum in a different way? What will happen next?* Greene (1977) emphasizes that the work of art should be created by the person's attentive purpose "so the work itself is intended by the consciousness of a living being in search of his or her own expression, his or her own being" (p. 291). Similarly, Eisner (2002) speaks about the special role of artistic works associated with cognitive concentration, noting that "in a sense, work in the arts enables us to stop looking over our shoulder and to direct our attention inward to what we believe or feel" (p. 10). Beyond a superficial attitude, the activities associated with art making create an opportunity for participants to examine their inner feelings, thoughts, memories, and emotions. Engaging in aesthetic activities such as writing a poem, drawing images or composing a piece of music, provides participants with an artistic freedom to imagine, feel, question, reflect, and explore experiences in the past or present. Snowber (2011) states that "the meaning of the word aesthetic is the opposite of anaesthetic; it is our invitation to deepen our connection to our senses and the artfulness of our selves and the world. It is the ongoing practice of awakening to the world, living with attentive hearts, bodies, and minds" (p. 68). The value of aesthetic is connected to being attentive through the senses as the aesthetic experience implies acquisition of consciousness in both physical and emotional modes.

A doll

A puppet

*NO
soul
NO
voice*

*simply existing
not living*

*just breathing through
an empty shell*

My pure desire is

*to step out of
my unconscious way of living*

*to become
an independent woman
singing
with her voice*

Meanings of Finding My Voice

What I aim to accomplish through my arts-based inquiry is to make my voice accessible and visible. The expression of my voice reveals itself as metaphorical words in poetic and narrative writing, becoming more than merely a sound. For Vanič & Camps (2001), “the term ‘voice’ is often used to refer to expressions of the writer’s own views, authoritativeness, and authorial presence” (p. 7). Indeed, when I decided on the title of my thesis, *Finding My Voice*, I intended for my voice to be heard and understood as a creative expression and an artistic utterance, thus indicating my individuality. Pieces of my autobiographical stories are birthed from within myself, opening up my inquiry of aliveness and authenticity. Elbow (1998) stresses the significance of one’s voice in writing by describing that “writing without voice is wooden or dead because it lacks sound, rhythm, energy, and individuality” (p. 299). From Elbow’s view, my uniqueness is a significant element of creating vibrant writing. Elbow (1998) also interprets that “voice, in writing, implies words that capture the sound of an individual on the page” (p. 287). Artistic articulations are my linguistic, figurative, and rhetorical voice.

As a scholar and artist who sees art as an effective medium for delivering one’s voice and life, Leggo (2016) evocatively describes his interrelated relationship with art and his life:

I am always engaging with my art. I live my art, and my art lives me. I wear my art and my art wears me. I am my art. I engage with my art always everywhere. Perhaps I only live as art, as poem. (p. 53)

Leggo’s writing ensures me that I can live my life through art and allow art to illuminate my identity and voice. In other words, my life becomes a meaningful ingredient for creating a work of art, and art depicts my life in a way that I can reflect, interpret, and rethink. An opportunity emerges for me to see who I truly am, as my expressive artworks reveal new aspects and angles of my life that were unseen before.

We, human beings, are always shifting, and art has a strong impact on us. Artistic forms are inextricably associated with revelations and the construction of an individual’s identity through the variance of artistic forms. The various contexts and layers that will accumulate from reflective engagement become an integral part of who I am. Therein, I open up a space to reveal my authenticity and build my identity. Poems

“reveal identities sometimes painfully, sometimes joyfully, always with an openness to human experience” (Guiney Yallop et al., 2010, p. 27)

Leggo’s (2016) poem captivates my mind and heart to consider the potential that a word has. A word opens up a world, and the world also creates a word. There are infinite possibilities of creating a world with a word, and through words I am inspired to build my own world where I can hear my voice.

Wor(l)d

in the beginning is
the word
without beginning

the spoken word written
the written word spoken

the word born in the world
the world born in the word

the word is worldly
the world is wordy

the word is in the world
the world is in the word

the word is the world
the world is the word

in the end is
the word
without end

(p. 54)

Methodologies

I locate my inquiry in various methodologies, each of which has offered me a particular kind of theoretical perspective and a platform of methods with which to investigate myself.

I use poetic inquiry within my artistic practice as a resonant space to engage in a creative reflection on my memories and new experiences. Poetic inquiry invites researchers into an internal dialogue that explores a self-understanding through contemplating, questioning, expressing, and creatively capturing new perspectives. Owton (2017) says:

poetic representation can be employed as a way of seeking to reveal something of the essence of people's key experiences and as a window to view the complexities of understanding in a holistic way of knowing. (p. 10)

In practicing poetic inquiry, researchers are encouraged to attentively examine their own experiences and to discover unseen aspects of their experiences in the past. Poetic inquiry leads me to a profound space where I deepen my understanding of my identity as a musician, researcher, and a human being. Through a better understanding of myself, I can find a direction towards a better life. I can attest to the fact that "poetic inquiry continues to thrive through such ongoing provocations of vitality in life" (Wiebe, 2015, p. 160).

In particular, I am drawn to Leggo's (2008) perspective when he articulates that "poetry creates textual spaces that invite and create ways of knowing and becoming in the world" (p. 167). Leggo's words suggest that poetry enables me to wonder, question, create, and learn by myself via creative articulations and aesthetic engagements. Leggo (2016) goes on to explain that "everything is constructed in language; our experiences of lived time and lived space and lived body and lived human relation are all epistemologically and ontologically worded, lined, known, revealed, disclosed, understood, lived in words" (p. 63). I deeply resonate with Leggo's wisdom that experiences are embedded in words. His insights inspire me to reflect on my lived experiences and to find my voice through poetic inquiry.

In my poem

*I ask, wonder, imagine, question
attentively listen to myself
explore as much as I want
go back to my past and meet my father
gain confidence to speak up
write about my heart, soul, body
stay present in the moment*

*Buried pieces of my life
become an interesting theme*

*As a main writer in my poetic world
I create new synopsis
different possibilities*

I employ embodied inquiry as a new way of discovering, exploring, and learning within my arts-based inquiry. Embodied inquiry, as articulated by Snowber (2018), is a practice that “opens up the possibility to celebrate the body as a place of knowing” (p. 251). I concentrate on my somatic feelings to uncover new insights from my various experiences with art. By paying attention to how my body, my drum, and writing are intimately connected, I am invited into gaining fresh, visceral knowledge. In hosting my solo-performance and creating a video of it, I investigate what it means to understand my performance through embodied ways of knowing.

*My body become an aesthetic site
of recognizing
reasoning
representing my identity*

*let my sensations lead me
to hidden treasures under my bare feet
to new beauties nearby where I stand*

*I am alert to
my embodied awareness
through my drumbeat
My drum brings me a sense of freedom
joy through my creative movements
with my hands, arms, back, torso,
deep breaths*

Lastly, I use narrative writing (Polkinghorne, 1988; Richardson, 1990, 1994) to expand my inquiry in a way that immerses myself into an evocative reflection on my lived experiences. Through personal narratives, a few pieces of memories can become visible through resonant images. Richardson (1990) notes, “narrative is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation” (p. 118). By narrating my own stories from the past, I begin to examine specific moments that may have shaped the voiceless aspects of my life. Narrative writing is both a way to examine meaning constructed in the past and into better understanding myself.

I tell my stories

*Then, finally see
learn
move forward
escape from
my long sleep*

In an attempt to convey my research process more vividly, I place my words onto a page by spacing and scattering them in a way that invites readers to step into my memories in a more embodied fashion. An arts-based research approach is well supported as, according to Richardson (1994), “settling words together in new configurations lets us hear, see, and feel the world in new dimensions” (p. 522). Through a performative writing, my words are intended to be evocative since this style of writing “can be a way of expressing our perceptions, as well as our feelings, thoughts, reflections, and emotions” (Owton, 2017, p. 89).

In the following chapters, I will further convey how these methodologies support the process of finding my voice.

*Echoing
my buried voice is
a celebration of art*

*Art is a special invitation
for me to follow my gut,
heart,
soul*

Chapter 2. Personal Stories from the Past in Korea

Jin Yang Jo (Andante)

Deong - ki Duk

Koong Deoreoreoreo

Koong - Ki Duk

Koong Deoreoreoreo

I begin my research with the underlying assumption that my cultural experiences and memories shaped who I am today. Describing these aspects of myself through poetic inquiry and narrative writing offers an opportunity to strengthen my sense of self and find my voice. I start with the following questions. *What does it mean to gain an understanding of myself through narrative and poetry? What do I newly perceive about myself, and how do my reflections affect me?*

My attention is particularly focused on the moments when I felt that I had existed like a puppet in silence, neither asking questions nor carefully examining my inner feelings. By concentrating on the creative description of my memories, I aim to be in a state of ongoing wide-awakeness.

One day, I turned my laptop on and got ready to work on my writing at a cafe. The aroma of coffee drifted pleasantly in the air, softly touching my nose. I was going to write about my memories from Korea, however, my hands barely twitched as I blankly looked at the screen of my laptop. For a long time, I stayed still. I had no idea where to start and how to weave everything together into a coherent story. The adventure of narrating my own voice seemed much more complicated than I had naively assumed.

Can

I

write about ...

my own stories? ...

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock,

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

Where should I...

start from ...

(static)

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

How should it be

formed.....

(blank)

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

(slurp my coffee)

scared.....

tick-tock, tick-tock....

tick-tock, tick-tock....

tick-tock, tick-tock....

I reflect upon the wisdom that Vanier (1998) offers, stating that fear can be a motivation that may result in a better consequence:

The first step to freedom is to learn that fear can be a good counsellor. Strange as it may seem, an experience of fear can lead us to yearn for freedom. It can turn us around and make us reflect and change course. Fear is provoked by a crisis and calls us together to talk, reflect, ask questions, and seek solutions. (p. 125)

Vanier's insight reminds me that my voiceless life has become an entry point for me to become an attentive individual who can find her own voice. Recognizing the severe anxiety inside my mind and body, I start my own journey of traveling through my childhood via my questions, narrative and poetic descriptions. Despite the uncertainty of what is going to emerge, my heart should be open to new possibilities and embrace them. While taking a big breath to alleviate the burden of turning my lived experiences into readable papers, researching my voice, and becoming creatively reflective, I resonate with Walsh (2018) when she describes:

Writing. Not knowing what will evolve. Where the text will take me. Where we will go. Trusting the practice. Surrendering to it. Listening to its edges, its flow, its rhythms. How it changes. (p. 143)

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

(take another sip of my coffee)

tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.....

tick-tock, tick-tock....

tick-tock,.....

tick.....

Before I reflect on my early memories in Korea using poetic inquiry (Leggo, 2005; Walsh, 2012) and narrative writing, I will briefly describe the cultural characteristics of my home country. My intent is to emphasize how the “self is considered as a carrier of culture, intimately connected to others in society, the self’s behaviors should be interpreted in their cultural context” (Chang, 2008, p. 125). A general understanding of Korea’s culture and society will help me understand habitual behaviors I have developed and perpetuated in response to my memories of childhood and schooling.

Cultural Background

Now, I briefly look into the cultural characteristics of South Korea where I grew up. Holland (1998) notes that “culture profoundly shapes selves” (p. 21). Identities or perspectives of people of a particular culture should be constructed similarly since they commonly share cultural values, beliefs, and social agreements. In other words, my behaviors, beliefs, perspectives, and way of living have been built and formed through my experiences and interactions from within the Korean culture. Thus, a proper understanding about the Korean culture needs to take place to support my understanding of how I developed my passive attitudes and feelings of being voiceless.

South Korea, my homeland, is categorized as “a collectivist country” (Seo, Leather, & Coyne, 2012, p. 420). Collectivistic societies value groups first before individuals (Kim, 1995, p. 4). Hofstede (1991) stipulates that countries under collectivism emphasize the value of “we” with a collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, sharing, duties and obligations, need for stable and predetermined friendship, group decision, and particularism” (as cited in Kim, 1995, p. 4). Through their research, Kim and Markus (1999) explain that “following norms validates as a good person. Therefore, people follow the norm to follow norms” (p. 786). As the distinctive aspects of collectivistic culture are illustrated in these studies, it is clear that the set of norms a society focuses on, such as the emphasis on groups, are further enacted as important values to which the society’s members are expected to adhere to. In order to maintain the culture’s prosperity, an individual’s unique personality is not emphasized. Subsequently, submissive attitudes to rules or seniors are very common values upheld by the people in collectivistic culture. Not surprisingly, I can recall my early memories of following adults’ directions, knowing even as a young child that absolute obedience was the right thing to do. Much the same at school, I was conditioned to listen to teachers rather than encouraged to ask my own questions.

Confucianism is another influential ideology that has impacted Korea since it originated from China. It had been pervasively accepted during the Joseon Dynasty in the Korean Peninsula in 1392. As “the major philosophy of governing the country and moral system in Korea” (Seo et al., 2012, p. 419), Confucianism exerted an expansive influence in Korea on the country’s politics, history, and on the implicit perspectives of its people. While various virtues are stressed by this ideology, the aspect of “obedience and

respect for the seniors were expected from childhood” (Seo et al., 2012, p. 421) is particularly similar to collectivism. A rigid social hierarchy was grounded in most parts of Korea, affecting various aspects of society from social status to the way people interacted with one another. This principle highlights the privilege of senior or authoritative people by informing the rest of society to respect and treat them with honour. Honouring elderly people is an ethical behavior expected within the Korean culture.

Thus far, I have offered a brief cultural background of Korea with a focus on the social ideologies that became deeply embedded within the culture for a long period of time. Examining these cultural qualities has provided me with an explanation as to why I was more likely to be silent and obedient to my father’s words and the conforming aspects of my schooling without attempting to challenge or question. I remember listening obediently to adults in order to prove to my parents and teachers that I was a good daughter. It turns out that I was merely a product of my society, culture, and country.

Deong - ki Duk

Koong Deoreoreoreo

Koong - Ki Duk

Koong Deoreoreoreo

While playing these rhythms

I visit

my old memories

Wondering

how I rebuild them

with my new breath

Home

Memories with My Father

When I think about my father, various emotions simultaneously come through my mind and heart. He greatly affected my life and my way of living; recounting my memories of him is an unavoidable task. I resemble him a lot in my physique and personality. My feet, hands, legs, and eyes look exactly like him. I am undoubtedly his daughter. The severe pain in my lower back, though undesirable, is a characteristic passed down from my father. My father is, undeniably, a part of who I am.

My father's whole family has been making a living from Korean traditional music since the 1960s. As with his brothers and other family members, my father was a Korean traditional percussion player. Due to poverty in his own childhood, my father strived for my life to become successful through his specific plan which was centered on intensive education and training at a famous music school. He believed that I must become a famous musician or professor in the arts field with a high level of education. From my school to the specific instrument I would play as my major, he made most decisions for my life without any negotiations with me. He probably thought that his strategies would bring about the bright life he dreamed of for me. He never even made simple inquiries about my dreams, willingness, feelings, or interests. As a normal girl who merely liked singing and playing piano for fun, I obeyed his decisions without any doubts. Rather than looking inside my mind and heart to follow my own desires, I behaved according to his wishes.

My stories that follow highlight how I was shaped by the principles of Collectivism and Confucianism in Korean culture. These principles incline people towards two ways of being; that the individual is subordinate to their family, community, and society and that obedience to parents is paramount. Thus, instead of having my own thoughts or asking questions, it was natural for me to listen to and follow my father's suggestions.

WHY 1

*I listened
to him*

*never listened
to myself*

WHY

*Not sure about WHY
Not used to WHY*

*That was just
the right thing
to do*

*I had a mouth
to say Yes*

*not have a mouth
to ask why*

WHY

I hate WHY

*WHY makes me
Uncomfortable*

.....

What I know is

since then

*I lost
my voice*

*My soul was
buried
with my voice*

The words that come to my mind thinking about my father are *fear* and *love*. Growing up, as much as I loved my father, I was scared of him due to his high temper. Specifically, I was frightened when he yelled at me with aggression. He was never tolerant of the small mistakes I made. He always wanted me to become a capable and competent daughter whether it was in terms of studying, playing an instrument, or doing simple daily activities. He wanted me to get good grades at the music school and win at the contests I performed in. He must have believed, taking after him, I too would be talented in Korean music.

The higher his expectation became, however, the more often I encountered his disappointment. Every time I saw dissatisfaction on his face when I made random mistakes during school performances, I believed I would let him down due to my supposed lack of patience, intelligence, and my slow paced learning. I felt like a clumsy girl who never stopped making mistakes at everything. Although he never criticized or spoke negative words to me directly, his eyes, facial expressions, and short, loud yelling clearly indicated how mad he was. His silent and fierce look steered me into a state of anxiety and helpless restlessness ever since I was a little kid.

A few painful scenes still reside inside the deepest parts of my memories like invisible wounds.

A Mistake - 1

The day of my father's performance had arrived. I was very excited to attend his drum performance and felt proud of him. At the age of nine, I was holding his costume and trying to help him despite my short height. Accidentally, I dropped his long clothes on the floor. I froze. As soon as he noticed, he yelled at me. It was his voice of anger.

YA !!!

He terrified me with his angry eyes and scream. Helplessly, tears came out and I quietly mumbled to myself: *I am a very stupid and useless person.*

A Mistake - 2

My father's favourite hobby was to go fishing. Whenever he took me fishing on one of his days off, we would spend a peaceful time alongside the river. In a couple of hours, our basket was fully filled with the fish he had caught. My task was to carry the basket and make sure the fishes were kept inside safely. However, the weight of the basket increased as I walked, and my small body shook with its heaviness. I struggled so hard to hold the basket. At that moment, my foot slipped on the slippery stones at the bottom of the river while I was walking, causing the basket in my hand to flip over. All the fish disappeared. I froze feeling the lightness of the basket. I lost my breath and everything around me seemed to pause.

As usual, the silence was followed by my father's loud yelling.

YA !!!

I
looked
down

at the empty basket and I cried helplessly. He did not seem to know that I, myself, was already feeling guilty. The joy of spending time with him d i s a p p e a r e d.

A Mistake - 3

The worst was when he used to yell at me in public, making me feel even more ashamed and embarrassed. On New Year's Day in 1998, the whole family from different cities gathered at my grandparents' house to celebrate the holiday together. While my father was talking with my uncle in the living room, at the age of just ten, I was doing my best to complete my mission: deliver a cup filled with water to my father. I desired to see my father's smile at me, showing our relatives that I was the best daughter. His smile of approval and smile would imply that I am a useful person who deserves to be complimented and loved. Little by little, I carefully took small steps towards him.

Little more...little more...little more....

In my final steps towards him I spilled the water. My body froze. I knew what would happen next.

YA !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! !!!

As my father's yelling echoed in my ears, I instinctively looked up to see my uncle's reaction. As expected, he was staring at me with a pitying look. Shame overwhelmed me. I wanted to hide and pretend that I did not exist on this earth. I was officially convinced that I was clumsy and useless.

Sadly, there are too many memories from the past that made me feel inferior. These experiences eventually reaffirmed I was not good enough at all. I felt that I did not deserve to be loved by others or myself. Even when I performed well at school, a voice inside would firmly tell me that it was just luck. By the time I turned twenty, I hated everything about myself. I threw myself into endless cycles of self-blame and depression.

While recounting these moments of being scolded by my father due to my mistakes, I situate myself into the places that I am describing. As if the scene is taking place right in front of me, my heart rapidly begins to beat while my eyes are filled with

tears. I become the little girl who was terrified by her father's loud yelling and shamed by his disapproval. Then, I attentively look inside my mind and see what expressions flow after the memories of his yelling. This step induces my real voice to come out of my heart with a range of words that convey my emotions.

Inside

*filled with
barren tears*

*loud
deeply
silent*

bruised soul

YA!!!!!!!!!!!!

His eyes

*helplessly
fall down*

*sad
horrible
terrified
devastated
frustrated
scared
afraid*

*a need to hide
because
useless*

All these words indicate my inner feelings that have been deeply accumulating in my chest during all these years. I had not had the opportunity or reason, and most importantly, the boldness to face, clarify and express them with words. I was silent.

I am captivated by Shatzky's (2012) expression that "so much of our individual and collective suffering comes from the bruised silences we carry like stones in our mouths" (p. 157). Interestingly, while I stare at and read out loud each word above that describes my buried emotions, I notice stiffness in my neck, and my body grew tense. It is as if I were in the moment of having those feelings again. *Does my body just react to*

those words? Do emotions of the past still affect my body at this moment? Are they held in my body? Where do they come from? The embodied writing in Kilpatrick's (2018) thesis captures my attention and deepens my curiosity about the somatic reactions I have experienced, triggered by the words that describe my emotional response to my father's outbursts.

There are emotions stored in my tissues. I carry them like wet clothes. I can ignore them and imagine they aren't there, but when do they come out? What do they do to me when I don't notice them? When I am unawares and with my guard down, what are the triggers that set them off? When the stores of grief, pain, sorrow and anger seep unconsciously into my conscious life, how do they affect my mood, or how I behave?. (Kilpatrick, 2018, p. 49)

Emotions are located inside the body. The emotional words stimulate my somatic reactions. In accordance with Kilpatrick's interpretation and my experience, invisible sentiments were unconsciously embedded within my body, and they come out through my bodily reactions. Similarly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) offers a captivating perspective about an intimate relationship between body and word.

It is my body which gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects like words. If a word is shown to a subject for too short a time for him to be able to read it, the word 'warm' for example, induces a kind of experience of warmth which surrounds him with something in the nature of a meaningful halo. (p. 422)

Merleau-Ponty (2002) continues on to elucidate that when a person perceives a word, they somatically react and recall a personal experience related to that word.

One subject states that one presentation of the word 'damp' (*feucht*), he experiences, in addition to a feeling of dampness and coldness, a whole rearrangement of the bodily schema, as if the inside of the body came to the periphery, and as if the reality of the body, until then concentrated into his arms and legs, were in search of a new balance of its parts. The word is then indistinguishable from the attitude which it induces, and it is only when its presence is prolonged that it appears in the guise of an external image, and its meaning as a thought. (p. 423)

According to Merleau-Ponty, words contain certain nuances and images in them. In fact, when I uttered 'his eyes' out loud, I felt like my throat was being choked by an unexplainable pressure. This feeling was hidden somewhere, and it appeared itself as soon as I expressed it via the word. Speaking the word brought back memories of the feeling and caused my somatic reaction.

Milloy's insight also (2005) deepens my curiosity concerning the intimate relationship between a word and its visceral manifestation within a person.

A word, pronounced or written, can involve different parts of the body (even dry linguistic science uses words like labial, fricative and glide that cannot the body) – tongue, lips, throat, lungs, you can feel the body's gestures as it expels the air in uttering the sounds, breath flowing in and out, warm going out, cool coming in, over the tongue, teeth, the quivering glottis; or as the hand moves the thin line of ink across a page, the face flushed in the rush, the reciprocal engagement of body and mind. (p. 549)

My writing process is viscerally connected to my whole being. Buried emotions, deeply rooted within my body, have been provoked by my free expressions. Each of my poetic articulations woke my body, mind, and heart. Richardson (1994) talks about poetry's role in evoking bodily reactions:

Poetry's rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliterations, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme, and off-rhyme engage the listener's body, even when the mind resists and denies it. (p. 522)

As Richardson states, when I read a poem that is layered with emotional lines, my experience is as if the poet has grabbed my hands and led me to the place where the story was told. As each word captivates my soul, mind, and body, as I spontaneously respond. The somatic responses I notice are my rapid heartbeat, frequent eye blinking, and tears in my eyes. I reflect on my experiences and understand them more fully through my bodily sensations. After repeatedly reading out my poem, I could finally take a deep breath of relief, rooted at my core. Looking at my identified feelings made me feel delighted, light and free from invisible chains.

My reflective moments have led me to question my father. *Why did he have to be so harsh on my mistakes?* As my perspective shifts, I see these moments now as very trivial. Even if I never dared to ask him a question about his behaviors in the past, the reflective writing now offers me previously unexplored confidence and helps to break my silence. Writing becomes my voice. In this sense, Khan's (2019) poem about the significance of the art speaks to me:

ARTS...renovates
the illusion of memory
both past and present
overlapping the gap

tension & restoration
the
absolute difficult
befalls
the
absolute possible
(p. 75)

WHY 2

Why.

Why did you yell at me

*I was trying to be
a good daughter*

*Your eyes were telling me
I am a USELESS*

Why.

*Why did you yell at me
You could have hugged me*

Why.

Why did you yell at me

When I was young, I thought that my father's opinion was never wrong because he was a dignified adult in my eyes. Instead of attempting to think of the situation objectively, I helplessly accepted his reactions to my mistakes and hardly took the time to reflect on the painful moments again. Looking back, I realize that my father was an imperfect adult who had a temper. I dropped his clothes; he yelled at me fiercely. I accidentally spilled water at the age of nine; he responded with yelling in front of my relatives. I lost the fish because of the heavy basket that my small hands could not handle, and I cried after his loud yelling. As the one who caused the trouble, I intuitively sensed that something was wrong. Every time I stood with a frozen heart and blamed myself. As an adult now, I see my mistakes were very normal for a young girl.

Before engaging in my poetic inquiry and sensing my voice through somatic responses to my memories, my self-esteem only sunk lower and dictated my way of living and being. I have always wondered about why I am useless by comparing myself to others who seemed to be living a better life. I have been so hard on myself about the small mistakes I made throughout my life. My father's cruel responses became the primary way of how I treated myself.

Suddenly, I want to reach out to the little girl with tears.

My Younger self with Tears

Do not cry

Everything is fine

Do not blame yourself

*Everyone makes mistakes
You learn from your own mistakes*

Do not criticize yourself

*Do not let
the tiny mistake take you down*

You are a precious person

Writing this poem invited me to create a bridge between the past and present. Feeling an acute pain in my chest, I beckoned my younger self and gave her a warm consolation. In the process of reading my poem, I automatically inhaled and exhaled along with my emotional changes. I definitely concur with Leggo's (2008) wisdom, "in poetry, I am learning to breathe" (p. 167). Metaphorically, I reached out to my younger self and hugged her warmly while saying *everything is fine*. As if the frozen parts of my heart caused by the past sorrowful moments were melted by my own words, I came to take a big breath, deeply again.

WHOO.....
HA.....

Breath in
Breath out

Innnnnnnnn.....

outtttttttttttttttttt.....

to the deepest ground of the earth

Innnnnnnnn.....

outtttttttttttttttttt.....

Feeling
each
cell of
my body

I breath here
there
in my writing

I am
awake
to my mind
body

Through writing poems, I embrace my brokenness and weaknesses, and it becomes the healing process itself. I have protected myself and healed my wounds by identifying my feelings, expressing them, and creating a message to my younger self. The protection was possible because poetry enabled me to “experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience” (Leggo, 2008, p. 166). My childhood experiences became a source to focus on, and I was able to actively engage with my past. These poems have brought me physical comfort, as well as emotional stability. When I described the memories of being scolded by my father, my body was responding to my sorrow and anger, causing stiffness in my neck and shortness of breath. As I transformed my long concealed, unsolved emotions into words, my body gradually came to take a deep breath and relaxed. I found peace within myself.

Owton (2017) talks about the cathartic effect of poetry by saying that “feelings of anger could be alleviated, particularly when writing with rage because writing could act as a catharsis, providing relief or therapy” (p. 89). Even if I burst into tears with unexplained anger at first, I felt that my invisible wounds were healed. Each expression had an enchanted power to hug my broken spirit. As Snowber (2016) articulates, “the textures of vulnerability are encouraged to have room in all creative processes” (p. 51). My vulnerability became the source of my poem.

Yet, He Loved Me

Although I hated and feared my father's angry look and voice, he was the protector, caretaker, and leader of our family forever. Ironically, I was aware that my father loved me deeply. On the way home from his workplace, he always brought me a snack or treat, making my older brother jealous. At that time, this was all I needed to feel his love and affection. But the truth was, his love was too much demonstrated for his own thoughts. Most of the gestures he made only supported his perspective and did not consider my real happiness and satisfaction.

On weekends, my father cooked for our family and made his homemade noodles for lunch. He would pour a bag of anchovies—known for their high source of calcium—into a big pot to prepare broth. I relished in digging into the noodles because they tasted unforgettably fabulous.

Despite the amazing flavors, I frequently struggled with one issue. The portion of the food he gave me in my bowl was too much for me to digest in one sitting. As he repeatedly stressed, I knew that he wanted me to finish my bowl because of the food's high nutritional content. Although I felt extremely uncomfortable stuffing that much food into my small belly, I had to finish it up helplessly. I was scared of disappointing him. It may sound a bit cruel, but I know the huge portion of anchovy noodles indicated how much he cared for me as a loving father who takes care of his daughter. Not daring to say no or express my discomfort honestly, I would quietly walk to my room with an upset stomach.

It's just

*I was not happy
with the excessiveness*

*I wanted to say no,
but I could not*

*I was scared of
being honest with you*

*I never wanted to
let you down*

When I told my father about something I lacked, he was never hesitant to prepare or buy whatever it was for me. One day during winter, I told my father that the inside of my dormitory was quite cold. The next day, he took me to a shop and bought me the latest electric heater, and a warm coat to keep my body warm. I knew it. I knew he loved me.

*He held my hands
when we went to a mountain*

*He looked like a mountain,
H UGE Mountain*

*It is true
I hated his yelling, fierce eyes, disappointed look
I really hated them*

*But
I knew he loved me*

*I too loved him
except for the yelling
hurt my feelings, soul, everything*

Apparently, my father wished that I would live a better life than he did. From his perspective, becoming a female drummer was far from being successful in life because drumming was a male-dominated field. For this reason, my father wanted me to major in one of the stringed instruments, since they are mostly played by women, and become a Korean music professor at a university. That was my father's plan and the ultimate goal was for me to live a successful life. His dream for my promising future automatically became my own goal to achieve. Perhaps I believed that the plans my father had chosen for my future had potential, even if I was often unhappy with his choices.

Because I knew that he loved me, I never doubted his guidance.

My Father's Shoes

When I think of my father, another image that springs up is a wide array of his shoes on the shoe rack back at our apartment. One side of it was filled with his latest, colourful shoes. His fancy shoes occupied more than half of the rack. My father frequently went shopping to purchase brand new shoes at the department store regardless of the season. Being young, I could not understand why he was so obsessed with collecting that many pairs of shoes. I simply assumed that he enjoyed adorning himself with nice shoes and outfits.

However, it was not until my mother told me a story about his impoverished childhood that I could better understand his shoe addiction. When he was a little boy, his family lived in a rural area called Pil-bong village located in the southern part of Korea. At the age of five, his father suddenly passed away. My grandfather had apparently lost consciousness with a bad cramp in his stomach. Unfortunately, no one could afford the medical treatment at the hospital. Without being able to see a doctor, he passed away, just like that.

My grandmother was left alone with the enormous responsibility of raising four children on her own. She was not allowed to go to school because she was a woman, so she did not have an opportunity to acquire any specialized skill or common knowledge. She became a single mom who had to make a living by working a low-wage job. She worked very hard carrying the youngest baby on her back while the rest of her kids suffered from endless hunger, eagerly waiting for her to return and feed them. The severe poverty put them in jeopardy on a daily basis.

As the second child, my father had to climb the Pil-bong Mountain in order to go to primary school. During winter seasons, walking up the mountain path, covered in heavy snow and ice, was a terrible struggle for a young boy. Even worse, regardless of the weather, he had to wear his cheap rubber shoes. The rubber became hard and frozen when it was exposed to low temperatures.

I could only imagine how the little boy would have pulled through the cold helplessly throughout the years. He hated those shabby and broken rubber shoes because they were not able to protect his small bare feet at all. As a result, he aspired to get strong and resilient shoes like the rich kids had. Feeling the numbness in his frozen

feet, he would dream of buying a lot of quality shoes. Then it became a reality when the boy grew up.

When I heard this story and learned about my own ancestral background, my heart broke and tears streamed down my face. I could finally understand why he collected numerous shoes. Rather than a tall and strong man, I envisioned the poor and small boy wearing cheap rubber shoes in my head. After surviving harsh poverty, he yearned to live a decent life more than anything else. To own high quality shoes was one of his dreams.

My Drum, My Pleasure

When I was twelve years old, I had a favourite time of the week. I could not wait to join the drum class hosted by my father. I loved everything about the *Janggu*: the sounds, beats, and rhythms. Without knowing how, I was able to quickly memorize the rhythmic patterns of the drum. I took great pleasure in creating a consonance of rhythms with people in the class through the drum. Frequently, I lost track of time while I played the drum enthusiastically. My father must have recognized that I enjoyed the drum and that I was talented in it as well. I remember his slight smile while watching me practice the *Janggu*.

One day, I was not allowed to participate in the class anymore. Nothing was explained to me, and as a little girl, I could not understand why he banned me from playing it. I grew to realize later that he did not want me to play the *Janggu* because he feared that I would love the drum more than the stringed instrument *Geomun-go*, which seemed more suitable in his eyes.

*Deong- dda goong-tta goong
Deong- dda goong-tta goong*

*Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong
Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong*

*my arms with the drumsticks
are dancing*

Da-goong-tta goong-tta goong

Up

down

left

right

drawing curves

*the sounds of drum were
firm, strong, deep*

*Da-goo goong-tta
goong-tta goong*

*a free whale
swimming in the rhythms*

*Closing my eyes
I join another world
where I could be who I am*

Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong

*My drum leads me to
another ocean*

*Why did I not tell him
the drum was my ocean*

Why did I not listen to my heart

*Why did I not
say
a word*

My heart races again. Even though my memory is traced back to fifteen years ago, the composition remains alive in my head, heart, and whole body. I still feel the same excitement through all my limbs whenever I hear these drumbeats in my head. I lean into the memory and ask. *What if I told my father that I loved playing my drum? What if I was more honest with myself and braver to convince him?*

In the practice of writing poems, I ask questions continually, rendering new wisdom and insight. I am invited to listen to what my inner voice speaks and be honest with myself.

Pil-bong Mountain, Good Memory, Persimmon

On Thanksgiving, all of my family members would unite at my grandmother's house to celebrate. Along with this tradition came a special moment between me and my father. After breakfast, everybody would go up to our ancestors' tomb on Pil-bong Mountain to hold a traditional ceremony. During our hike up, my father would always hold my hands to help me walk on the unpaved paths. When the ceremony was over, he always found a persimmon tree nearby. I would look up into the sky and saw the ripe, shiny, orange persimmons hanging sparsely on the tree's branches. After taking one off with his bare hands, he would pass half of it to me with a big smile on his face. The taste of the fruit was delicious and sweet, it was a fresh reward for hiking up the mountain. Every time, he and I would stand together and enjoy the sweetness. Eating persimmon with my father on Pil-bong Mountain, I knew how much he loved me. The moment was the connection, love, and joy I shared with my father. When I close my eyes and recall that moment with him, I can still taste the sweetness on my tongue.

Recently, I climbed up the mountain again and took some of the persimmons from the trees myself, exactly how my father used to do. But I realized that the taste of the persimmons I enjoyed with my father only existed in my memory.

Sweet, juicy, cold, fresh

*Appa! Father!
Thanks!*

*Still
Sweet, juicy, cold, fresh*

*I want to share it
with you
like we did*

Where are you?

*You gave me
this sweet memory*

*still
Sweet, juicy, cold, fresh
in my memory*

Leggo (2008) notes that “the poetic process is an experience of lingering with memory and emotion and heart and story, a process of leaning on language in order to seek understanding and wisdom, a process of attending sensually and sensitively to life” (p. 171). As Leggo explains, poetic reflection enables me to stay in my memory with attentiveness and emotions. By situating myself into an evocative place, I am drawn to express my inner feelings; the expressive process infuses meaning to my original memory. Creating poetic reflection serves as an aesthetic way of remembering and keeping my memory within my heart today. As mentioned earlier, my father’s mad face and voice in response to my mistakes vividly stayed somewhere in my mind, but this is also true of the memory of his warm hands holding mine. He bought me anything I needed, explored nature with me and cooked for me. Now I can conclude that he loved me so much, but his temper hurt me. In his presence, I felt safe but became voiceless.

Narrative and poetic reflection give me a chance to reach out to my younger self so I can build a new relationship with myself. Through my narratives, I have merely observed a good girl who simply tried to help her father at a young age. Richardson (1994) notes that “writing is also a way of knowing a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 516). I have come to learn that I was a good girl who did not deserve the punishment I received. I no longer have any reasons to undermine my life and my potential. I had

been judging myself as an inferior individual, and now, I have finally grown to realize that I had been wrong.

The entire process of reflecting with narratives and poems creates a textual place to make sense of the experiences that had been buried in my unconsciousness.

*My breath becomes a note
The note guides imaginations
The imaginations touch my heart*

Poetic inquiry became a multidimensional mirror that invites me to view my past from a different angle. Here I am, aware and reflective, and through the creative process, I heal my wounds as I recall, feel, write, and express freely. The process takes me to essential questions such as: *Why are you doing this reflection? What does it mean?* I keep asking, wondering, and moving forward with attentive awareness about my location in this world and in my relationships to others. I cry and take a break. My inquiry with poems and narrative is a complete parallel to the overarching experience of life. Leggo (2008) states:

In my experience, the poetic process is an experience of lingering with memory and emotion and heart and story, a process of a leaning on language in order to seek understanding and wisdom, a process of attending sensually and sensitively to life. The poetic process is a verb, a journey, a flow. Like life; like living. Poetry fosters curiosity, questioning, imagination (p. 171)

*I go back to the past
stay close to my father*

*traveling back to the present
tears fill my eyes*

But I am fine

*Poem is a special transit
to visit him
again*

*Through writing poems
I can be his little daughter
again*

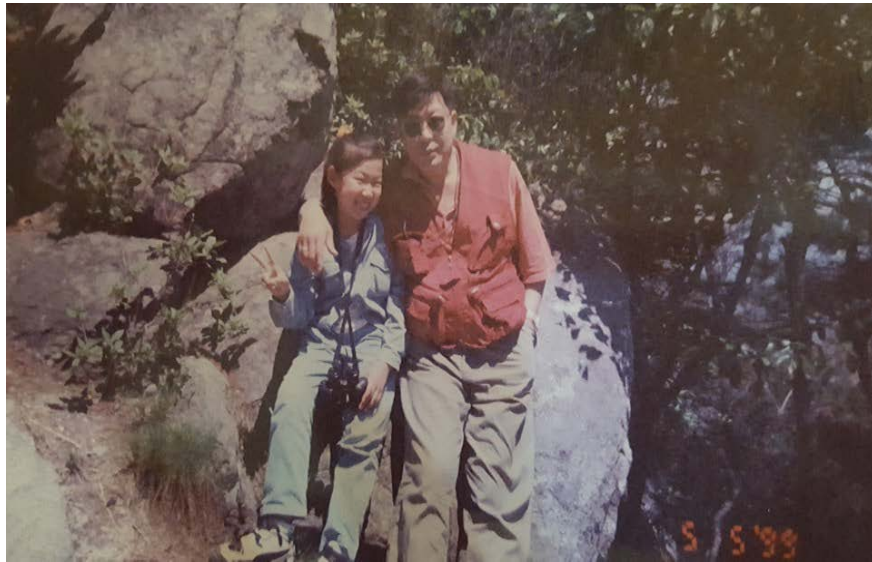


Image 1. Father and I by Yang Family Collection

Music School

A Fake Map 1

*A map in my little hands
informs me to follow*

*I hear a voice saying
“the special map is guiding us
to the right place”*

I naively believe it

*never wonder
what ‘the right place’ means*

*Merely,
the voice
sounds credible*

*I recognize
some friends of mine
in the same uniforms*

*At
some
point,*

*I
s t o p.*

look around

*no one
but myself*

*No more direction
in the map*

*I don’t even know
where I am standing*

*Confused
devastated*

*I stand on my toes
look back at the pathway*

.....

*This was
a fake
map*

...

From now on

*I need to walk
to make
my own map*

At the age of twelve, I started taking private sight-singing lessons, which is a musical ability to sing and read sheet music at first sight, in order to get admitted into the Korean traditional music school in Seoul according to my father's plan. Although I failed to be admitted to the music school the first time I tried, I attempted one last time the next year and finally got accepted. I was thirteen years old and did not fully realize what the acceptance meant; I did not expect to have to live in the dormitory away from my family. I distinctly remember the day when my parents helped me pack up my necessary belongings.

Dormitory

The day before the first day of school, my father drove me to the school's residential area with my luggage. Even as I walked into the gray-coloured school dormitory, I was not aware of what was happening. After moving all my belongings into my assigned room, my father bought me five boxes of cookies. Perhaps he tried to soothe my anxiety with the snacks. Afterwards, he walked out and I was left alone in the place filled with an unfamiliar odour. That was the moment when I woke up from my dormancy of unawareness and started seeing my life objectively with waves of fear.

Cookies

*I stand still
looking at his back*

*All around are strange faces
busy footsteps*

Shhhh....

*The teacher says
I can go back home
this Saturday*

*Today
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Six days left*

*Quietly counting
I eat the cookie
tasting nothing*

Poetic reflection enables me to apprehend what had occurred in the past in an empathetic mode. As Owton (2017) mentions, poetic writing is “a window into their everyday experiences” (p. 32). With just a few words, the days of my past become explicit and visible. My experiences exist in the descriptive texts, and I come to make sense of what happened to me by having compassion toward the young teenager appearing in my poem. My attention is paid to other questions in my head.

Why did I not know I had to live there? Why did my father not tell me about what was going on? Why did I not tell him that I was scared? Why did I not have a choice?

Breathe in....

Breathe o u t...

*I let my memories
stay on this page*

As I walked into the school the next morning after my father dropped me off, I saw a group of kids who were wearing the same school uniform as me. All the students in first grade were walking along the big hallway as led by the teachers. Each of us had a confused look, not knowing what exactly was happening. It turned out that on this day, we were to pick and decide on our specific instrument, our major. Around seven to eight different types of Korean traditional instruments were given to us to choose from as our major. Without a doubt, I longed to pick the Korean drum, *Janggu*, already knowing with certainty that I liked it. Regardless, I reluctantly sat in the line of 'Geomun-go' for the stringed instrument following my father's will. I could not help but keep turning my head towards the group of students in line for the percussion major. My heart was strongly telling me to jump into their line, but I could not. I knew that my father would not approve and that I would not be able to face that dreadful situation. Pushing my voice and desire deep down, I sat still in the line for the stringed instrument major.

Now I know that this was the exact moment of losing my own voice and of becoming somebody else. I hid who I truly was and became someone I was not.

one. two. three. four....

HOLD

four. three. two. one....

*I observe acutely
what is appearing
in my mind
body*

*I just write them down
and realize*

While travelling to my memories through the narrative, I become alert to the moment of losing my voice. By creating a verbal container for this scene, the moment is reconstructed with layers of sentences I intentionally chose. The story reveals that I ignored my inner voice by not choosing the *Junggu*.

Ah.

I lost my voice.

Beattie (2018) talks about the importance of storytelling in its ability “to stimulate participants’ imaginations and memories, and to encourage them to inhabit events imaginatively before they categorized and named them” (p. 253). While I engage in narrating my stories, I cognitively resituate myself in these past events. Once the moment begins to unfold like a movie, I feel myself in the scene. After experiencing these resonant moments in an embodied way, I begin to conceptualize them. They are transformed to manifest new meanings that help me to see past subjective experiences now objectively, revealing how I lost my voice. Without the practice of narrating, the moment of losing my voice might still remain ambiguous and abstract. My personal narrative sheds a new aesthetic light onto fragments of memory. Now I see them with my heart. I take a short moment and wait until my memory becomes clear.

*Why did I not tell my father
what I really wanted*

Why

I was afraid of his anger

Why

*I did not know how to say
what my mind says*

...

Maybe

*nobody had asked
what I wanted*

My attention shifts to the present. What about now? How am I living today? Do I live my life by considering my real desire and making choices accordingly? Do I have a voice that speaks what I want? As an adult, do I still face the same problem?

Beattie (2018) goes on to say that a story encourages participants “to draw insights into what has nurtured them in the past, and to identify that which could be valuable in the future” (p. 253). Once I learn the meaning of my memories in the narrative form, I begin to wonder if I am still in the same position in relation to making my own choices and decisions. My exploration of the past builds a roadmap that connects the present moment and my future. Gazing at the past awakens me to become aware of how I am living today. While taking off on a journey of my creative storytelling, the hidden aspects of my life constantly emerge; they inspire me to have a conversation with myself.

*Still
difficult to say no*

*Even if my real answer is
no*

*I put others' feelings first
before mine
I don't know
why*

My internal dialogue indicates well that I still have the capacity to be characterized by my voiceless behavior, even after a long period of time. I grew up to be an adult who has trouble saying *no*. The instances of not being honest with myself keep repeating themselves day by day.

I must be honest with my own feelings

Like

*NO, thanks
I want a drum*

*NO, thanks
I wanna go home*

You know what

*nobody said
I can't say NO*

*But
Nobody said
I can say NO*

From now

*I will say
NO*

*Saying NO
makes
me*

*f
l
y*

I seek an alteration in myself through the writing and it happens when I literally write *no* in poetic form. The letters N and O render my voice reverberant. Poetic reflection creates a hospitable space that allows me to speak *no* as frequently as I want. I am able to become a new person who is honest with my real opinions. This moment reminds me of Mary Oliver's (2009) poem *To Begin With, the Sweet Grass*:

*We do one thing or another;
we stay the same, or we
changed.
Congratulations, if
you have changed (p. 5)*

In the process of exploring and expressing my own words, I keep changing at various levels. Muncey (2010) notes that “self is a process not a structure. The process of becoming is always in motion. Any evocation of an experience is always incomplete and in transition, and at best can only be described as a snapshot” (p. 24). My poetic reflection opens up an opportunity for figuratively drawing transitions and changes in myself. I discover a particular aspect of myself that I want to change, and in doing so, I form new attitudes. I expect to continue to be transformed as I desire, picture, and breathe in the various artistic forms.

An Artistic Parrot

In music school, performance class had a set structure. First, all the students were required to watch attentively as the teachers demonstrated how they played a specific section of a piece of music. Right after the demonstration, students tried to copy what they had just heard. The better I mimicked the teacher, the more I was praised for my performance. The only goal for me was to master certain techniques and to play my instrument in line with the specific performance styles demonstrated by my teachers.

*A follower
A technician*

*Not necessary
to question*

*When it comes to
performing together*

*we looked like one being
a uniform army*

I was becoming voiceless and characterless in my musical practice. I stayed in the practice room on a regular basis because I hoped to get an excellent grade to please my father. The best way to make that happen was to practice my stringed instrument repeatedly until I could perform in perfect similarity to my teachers' demonstrations. By remembering and applying their techniques, I was actively moving my fingers and pulling the strings according to their orders. There was not necessarily a need to attend to my own emotions, mind, imagination, and even questions while engaging in the practice. I became a doll again, having lost my heart, voice, and soul.

Breathe

One Two Three Four.....

Four Three Two One.....

*Fill my abdomen with breath of air
exhale them to the bottom of my soul*

*After a moment
I write again*

My focused awareness of these stories guides me to an authentic place of perceiving, accepting, and encouraging myself to express what I feel from my own lived experiences. Interestingly, while writing down my memories, I experience hearing the visceral sound of my strings. I even feel the vibration of my instrument through my fingertips and into my chest. As the echoes of my memories resonate, I recall a student who was desperately struggling to hone her skills with the *Geomun-go*.

One two three four
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,

One two three four
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,

Let's start all over!

Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang

(I don't want it...)

Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang

(I want a drum...)

Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang

(I want to go home)'

I should be good at it!
I should be an outstanding,
lovely daughter

Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang ...

While recounting my own memories, I find myself longing to put my buried languages onto the pages. Without worrying too much about logical flow, I merely speak, tell, and etch my voice onto the pages with poetic and performative spelling. Narrative and poetic form invite my words onto blank pages; they become like breaths. I concur with Snowber and Bickel (2015) when they note that “expressivity can be transgressive; just to articulate one’s authentic voice can be a radical act” (p. 73). The aesthetic

revelation of my voice serves as a meaningful practice that represents my authentic self. My poems render the freedom of articulating and proclaiming aloud with my voice from out of my chest as well as breaking my habitual silence. As I see each word is unveiled from the deepest part of my soul, I can take a deep breath, cleansing breath.

In terms of music education, Harris (2018) states that “as well as the prior knowledge gained from teachers, music books, fellow musicians, and our experience of a specific genre, we must also consider the random” (p. 261). The random includes “our upbringing, attitudes, ethnicity, beliefs, our imagining or dreaming” (Harris, 2018, p. 261). In retrospect, during the performance class back at school, the random and improvisational practices were not invited. Rather, a huge gap existed between my individual subjective nature and musical activities. I had spent most of my time in the practice room, constantly concentrating on finger positioning, skills, expressions, and certain tunes until I mastered them. Through applying Harris’s lens, I now understand why my musical capacity has been limited as they lacked composition, radical experimentation, and creative practice. And also, very importantly, the authentic complex aspects of who I am.

I hear again

*Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,
Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang, Da-ahang,*

I am fully being present in the reflective moment. The moment, in turn, builds up courage to challenge my habitual patterns and ways. In the past, I would have unconsciously let all my life events pass without considering how they affect me. Now, I break my habit by catching the moments, reflecting on them and questioning.

*I know how to perform
Geomungo*

*I just do not know
how to play it playfully*

What if...

I play it in reverse

or play it spontaneously

*a new way,
path, possibility*

Da-ang, ang -Da Da-ang, ang-Da,

*DaDa Dang,
ang- Dang*

Dang

*Doong
Doong Da Da*

Da Da Doong Da Da Da

*Probably
Some people may say
I am doing it wrong*

*But it sounds right
to me*

So I am doing it

*DaDa Dang,
ang-Dang*

Dang

*Doong
Doong Da Da
Da Da Doong Da Da Da*

*What if I learned how to be creative, reflective, or playful beyond just techniques?
What if I knew how to express my feelings through my own instrument? How can I teach
my younger self in the future?*

Fels (2015) notes that “reflection offers opportunities to revisit, critique, reconsider, reimagine choices of action, responses, and decisions taken during a particular pedagogical activity as well as in our every day lives” (p. 6). The reflection offers another assignment to think about a better future with regard to nurturing learners’ creativity and capacity to apply their daily experiences to art.

Vanier (1998) notes as well that “freedom lies in discovering that the truth is not a set of fixed certitudes but a mystery we enter into, one step at a time. It is a process of going deeper and deeper into an unfathomable reality” (p. 117). Even if I cannot expect all the answers to my spontaneous questions right away, the state of being absorbed into my questions, imaginations, and assumptions enables me to experience a sense of freedom. I realize that freedom is accessible and achievable once I have the willingness to look back on my past experiences and freely express them.

My reflective writing is a textual oasis. It allows me to explore, express, play, and wander as much as I want. Leggo (2008) claims that “poetry creates or makes the words in words” (p. 166). I create my own worlds using words.

*I stay still
take a deep breath*

*I am present
in these words*

Right

This is my word world

*My world exists
for the sake of myself*

Authentic Noise

I still vividly remember my dormitory. Four old wooden desks and four dusty cabinets. My first impression of my room was that it was cold and dark. At that time, keeping a personal diary was the only way to be honest with myself. I wrote about how much I missed my hometown and documented the learning difficulties I had with my instrument. I mostly felt depressed because everything was unfamiliar at school. During this unstable time, I had one habit that I found to be fun and engaging. With my hands, I played drum rhythms I had learned from my father on my thighs or anything I placed my hands on. While I played these rhythms with my bare hands, my feelings of darkness vanished. The simple activity enabled me to disappear into myself.

*Deong -Tata Goong Tta Goong
Deong -Tata Goong Ta Goong
Tta Goo Goong Tta Goong Tta Goong
Tta Goo Goong Tta Goong Tta Goong.....*

One day, one of my roommates complained to me about my habit. In front of the other students, she told me that perhaps I am having an emotional disturbance. I was embarrassed, and I did not know how to react to her aggressive words. Helplessly, I thought she might be right. I understood that it probably sounded like noise to others. After that incident, I had to put a stop to my fun habit.

Looking back now, I realize that I was expressing my real voice and the authentic beats of my own heart. My body could not help but just play these rhythms unconsciously. The sounds that embodied my authentic presence were revealed through the noises that my roommate hated.

Pushing down my real voice into the deepest part of my mind, I decided to be an obedient daughter, and my voice disappeared just like that.

A Winter of Harshness

It was the night before the membership training hosted by my university that I got admitted into. I was not excited about the upcoming training, and I was choosing my clothes helplessly. Standing in front of a huge mirror in the living room, because I was not in the mood to pack, none of the outfits looked appealing to me. A few minutes later, I noticed that my father was glancing at me quietly from the couch. Still not saying anything, I began to fold some of the clothes that I had finally picked. Suddenly, my father broke the silence.

You know ... I love you Right?

I froze where I was and could not think of any words to respond to him. When I turned around and looked at him, I noticed that his eyes were watery. Thinking that I would not be able to handle this moment well, I replied as if his words were nothing.

Me too. Why are you saying that? So weird

I should have said *I love you* back to him. Yet, I had no idea what was going to happen soon. Then that night became the most regretful moment of my life.

It was Friday in March of 2009. As usual, I took the bus from Seoul and got off at the bus terminal in my hometown, Jeonju.

Ring...Ring...Ring...

Mom! I just got off the bus! Where are you?

Nuri...just come here, the university hospital. Come by cab.

This was the strangest moment of my life. Normally, Mom or Dad would be waiting for me at the terminal when I arrived, but I was told to go to the hospital by taxi. Without knowing what was occurring, I caught an empty taxi coming toward me.

Once I walked into the building, I recognized some people that were standing there. Seeing their serious looks, I intuitively felt that things were much worse than I had expected. Slowly, I approached them, feeling my sweaty hands. As they moved, I could see who was there. My dad was lying on the bed.

.....

When I saw him at the bus terminal the week before, he was putting several dollars into the pocket of my coat as usual. But now, he was lying on the bed quietly with lots of medical equipment on his face and chest. I called out to him, shaking his arms.

Dad, It's me, Nuri! I just got here! Wake up!

He said nothing with closed eyes. I could not recognize if it was real or not. Unable to believe what I was seeing, I spoke to him again more loudly. Since the doctor told me that my father could still hear sounds, I kept calling to him, sincerely hoping to see him get up and say something to me.

Dad!!! Wake up!!! What are you doing here?! Let's go home!!

.....

I heard people crying around me. At that moment, as if a huge hammer had just hit the back of my head, I realized that this was really happening. Tears were running down my face and I started shaking his body even harder. I had to wake him up so we could go home together. I grabbed his warm hands tightly. They were limp. All I could hear were steady beeping sounds from the machines nearby and people crying around me. Even though his hands were still warm, he never answered my cries. The strange old lady next to my father's bed was quietly looking at me with her crying face.

A few days later, he left our family and became a star in the sky. I was left to grasp the reality of this unexpected incident, and parts of my memory from that time were erased due to the shock.

I deeply regretted not telling him that I loved him on the night he told me he loved me. Despite him having controlled my life according to his ways, I realized that I would count on him mentally and emotionally. For the first month, I tried to pretend that he went on a business trip to other countries so that I could deal with the unmanageable sadness. But eventually I had to admit the fact that he was gone forever. Feeling intense pain in my chest, I lost my direction in life. I had no idea what to do and where to go from then on. Without certainty of who I was and what I was supposed to do, I turned twenty years old.

To my father

Hello

How are you there

Wherever I go

*My head is filled
with memories of you*

*I still wish
you are somewhere
on this earth*

*probably
you became
the cloud, wind, soil, and ocean
traveling all around the world
like a bird*

Appa, you know what?

Now

*I am an independent,
a strong woman
not a little girl anymore*

*now
I know what I am feeling,
sensing, thinking*

*being on my journey of finding
who I am*

*I speak through these words
Build my special world*

*This is how I
meet you again*

*remember you
again*

I LOVE YOU

Forever

My heart has been broken since I could not tell my father that I loved him. However, my poem provides me with a chance to express my love towards my father by expressing the silenced words out of my heart. I deeply resonate with Coffey (1999) when he writes that “the confessional voice and the biographical devices of personal revelation serve to reveal and restore the self” (p. 117). The entire process of recalling, expressing, and reading my poem out loud healed my heart and soul. By allowing my emotions to live I was finally able to make peace with my sorrow. Snowber and Bickel (2015) mention that “art gives us the ability to go into the threshold of our own sorrow; it is the entrance point to our sorrow, and the entrance point to our own joy” (p. 76). My poem embraces my tears, and I feel a lightness.

Taking a Step towards My Voice

Through reflection in the form of narrative writing and poetry, I have realized that it was impossible to nurture my individuality while I lived in Korea. The music school system that I was a part of for the six years did not encourage me to explore my inner world, creativity, or personal sensibility through musical performance.

Now, my realization has allowed me to find my authenticity and subjectivity, enabling me to choose, create, sense, and experience the world from my own perspective. I feel liberated in releasing the internalized social pressure that caused me to conform for so many years and, as a result, I have become invested in examining how my own will, thoughts, feelings, and consciousness can support me in expressing my distinctive voice.

Fake Map 2

*I
finally
throw the fake map away*

*look at the stars
in the night sky
to find my own map*

*I walk
looking for
my own treasure*

*Keep reminding myself
my steps become
my map*

From time to time

*I turn around with anxiety
to see how many steps
were made*

*Sometimes
get caught up in the fear
weakly sit where I am
hope to stay in the darkness
as long as possible*

But,

The sun rises again,

*I walk
following the smell of flower
hearing the sound of a blue bird
feeling the silky sands with my bare feet*

*Keep believing
all those traces become
my own way*

*I care
I cherish
I remember
all the steps
I took by myself*

Chapter 3. Transitional Moments in Canada

Jungmori (Moderato)

*Deong Goong Tta Goong Ttat-tta Ttat tta
Goong goong Tta Goong Ttat-tta Ttat tta*

*Deong Goong Tta Goong Ttat-tta Ttat tta
Goong goong Tta Goong Ttat-tta Ttat tta*

As I look at what I have experienced in Canada through my graduate studies in arts education, and the various artistic mediums I have explored, new meaning emerges along with an opportunity to encounter my evolving identity. According to Sumara and Upitis (2004), “knowing anything (including one’s identity) depends on one’s ability to continually interpret and re-interpret one’s relations to others and to one’s contexts” (p. x). They suggest that constant devotion to the capacity to reflect on one’s lived experiences invites opportunities for learning. Beattie (1995) states that the value of an experience is dependent on how it is approached and transformed into meaning.

Our experiences, be they musical or life experiences, exist in time and can be temporal or permanent according to the effect they have on us. They have a past, a present, and an imagined future, and they are dependent for their perception and comprehension upon our abilities to make meaning of what is being experienced in the present, in light of what is remembered from the past and what is predicted for the future. (p. 99)

The poems, reflections, and passages that follow describe such artistic and life experiences here in Canada that have had a meaningful effect on me.

Who are you

What are you

If you are not sure

*you should
ask yourself
right away*

Otherwise

*you might
remain deep
in a long slumber*

*You might waste
brilliant days
could be
filled
with your own
voice
beauty*

Dailyness

My Own Personal Sandwich

It was a dark, rainy, Vancouver day in the fall of 2016. The perfect time to try Subway restaurants I had yearned to experience for such a long time.

*A sandwich place
want to give it a try
The store was frequently in the background
of many scenes
in American movies*

I naively thought it could not possibly be difficult to order one of their sandwiches. Yet, it did not take too long to learn how wrong my assumption was. As soon as it came my turn, so many unexpected questions poured forth from the worker.

Blah

Would you like...

BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH

BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH

How about,

BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH

*I am here
for just
a sandwich*

*Please
Stop asking
me questions*

*Did
I do something
wrong*

*Your busy mouth
makes me
nervous*

I panicked over her repetitive questions. She wanted me to select the kind of bread, cheese, vegetables, and dressings I would like. The problem was that the whole idea of choosing my own ingredients was new to me. Among multiple options, the only things I recognized were ketchup and mayonnaise. Seeing the irritated look on the worker's face, I helplessly chose the first of each option without exactly knowing what they were. If I went to any restaurant in Korea, I would simply choose something on the menu without needing to pick its specific ingredients. However, here I needed to make every single choice myself. They made more than a sandwich, but a special customized meal according to each customer's liking and taste. To be able to choose all the ingredients in my sandwich became a symbol to me of how individual choice is such a central aspect of North American culture.

What I like

*Overwhelmed by
so many choices*

Oh,

*They need to know
what I like*

Hold on,

let me think

Everything is all about me

*What do I like
What do I like*

*Oh,
They are in hurry*

*What do I like
What do I like*

Feeling pressure

*I am out of
breath*

Surprisingly and fortunately, I found my sandwich very tasty. Eating my own sandwich alone in my room, I thought about my preferences, whether that be for a sandwich or something beyond food. Everything was up to me. I kept asking questions to know myself, and the process allowed me to learn more about myself. As questioning to myself became a process of self-dialogue, I came to recognize “poetry as a conversation with myself” (Oughton, 2012, p. 75).

What does it mean to have my own special recipe? What does it mean to find what I like? Is there any meaning I can derive from this moment?

My favourites

*What do I like?
What do I do for fun?*

Oh, yes

a decaf with soy and vanilla

*vacuuming,
taking out garbage
doing the dishes on Sundays*

*What does it mean to know
what I like
and articulate it?*

Like witnessing who I am

*the one
with her own special recipe*

*decides, enjoys,
makes a special life only for herself*

*creates
her own map*

*I am not
just one of them
wearing the same uniform*

I became curious about my choices, preferences, and even how I choose to live. In fact, pondering over what I would do for my own happiness had been unfamiliar to me before. Interestingly, in the process of investigating myself, I sensed a surprising excitement as though I woke up from a long sleep, opening my eyes wide and seeing clearly who I am.

Richardson (1990) states that narrative “allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions, and to alter the directions of our lives” (p. 117). My narrative reflections invite a pause for me to realize how indifferent and unconscious I have been about my lived experiences. They reveal countless opportunities I have missed to look at the past, gain new meaning from it, and experience the joy and freedom to be found in the process. Instead of my experiences lying unexamined in my unconscious, I bring one piece of the past to the present in the written form, where it creatively becomes alive in

the present. In doing so, I extract meaning from ordinary experience and am captivated by the wonder of who I am becoming in the present. My reflections and questions on how what I learn impacts my way of being implore me to live in the moment with raised self-awareness. Greene (1987) notes that “consciousness, it so happens, involves the capacity to pose questions to the words, to reflect on what is presented in experience” (p. 454).

Reflective narrative and poetry function as resonant sites of choosing, remembering, and connecting the past and present, guiding me into a state of being wide-awake. My trivial episodes expand my consciousness and allow me to dive deep into questions and realizations that reveal aspects of who I truly am. The integration of this process improves the quality of my life immensely.

Raw Stories

Breathe in...

Breathe out....

*My experience becomes
raw stories*

*I shape them
into the intriguing, appealing,
captivating texts*

*so I can finally sense
who I am*

Embodied Ways of Learning

*I
focus on
what I see
feel, smell, touch,
hear*

*so
live
authentically*

*no longer exist
as a puppet*

*I am filled with
raw beauties
my body captures*

Embodied Inquiry

The body is the medium in which one must experience life. Snowber (2012) evocatively reminds me that “we do not have bodies; we are bodies” (p. 55). Russon (2003) contends that “our bodies are the determinateness, the specificity, of our existence” (p. 21). Considering this emphasis on the importance and meaning of the body, I investigate how attention to my senses enables me to viscerally explore the world and uncover embodied knowledge. Embodied inquiry employs somatic sensations that invite a place to explore experiential knowledge as a way of learning; it allows me to inquire through my body. Snowber (2011) says, “the body has an enormous capacity to open up places of deep and embodied wisdom” (p. 2). By paying attention to the visceral and sensual moments elicited by somatic awareness, I discover memories and aspects of experiences that were previously unexamined. According to Blades and Meehan (2018), somatic practices imply principles that “include reflection on movement habit, opening up movement capacity, the development of subjective styles and attention to multi-sensory rather than primary visual attention to the body” (p. 122). By focusing on my body in a certain place and time, I attempt to be alert and responsive to what my sensations capture.

As a part of such an exploration, I took a walk to a nearby park. Engaging in poetic reflection, I began to investigate how my embodied ways of learning impacted the ways I was thinking and existing in that moment.

I paid close attention to my body and endeavored to be alert to the nuances of my experience. In other words, I actively interpreted how my body existed and interacted with my environment in the aesthetic practice of opening myself to and connecting with the outer world through a focused awareness of my body. During my embodied exploration on this walk, I intuitively documented all my emotions, realizations, and memories poetically.

Embodied inquiry can occur anywhere and anytime, at a desk, in the kitchen, or on a bus. Anywhere. As long as I am aware of my somatic sensations.

Walk on the Grass

*touching the ground
with my feet*

*I quietly commune with
the energy of nature*

*The grass's
softness
warmly accepts
my existence
the way it is*

What a gesture of hospitality

*chat with the grass
become a living part
of the green world*

*As I take one step
broken branches*

*a pile of dried leaves
make crunching sounds*

*I let the memories of the grass
linger on my page*

*by recounting its
raw colours
right here*



Image 2. Wandering, Wondering by Nuri Yang

Increased focus on sensations is produced by welcoming the opportunity to stop and concentrate on my connection to my environment in silence. By removing myself from the pressures and tribulations of urban life and engaging in embodied interactions, I recognize myself as an integral part of a natural environment. The new perspective I have gained through my feet, nose, and ears transforms the unfamiliar into an intimate and welcoming place. I have become receptive and alert to my surroundings. My inquiry is an aesthetic invitation to fill a place with reflections of my poetic creation.

Poetic reflection gives me the freedom to immerse myself in embodied exploration and produce expressive words that resonate on the page, conveying my authentic voice. My poems let me release the feelings that arouse thoughts, pose questions and intrigue me; they reveal what I have sensed and discovered. Leggo (2015) supports my experience when he acknowledges how “poetry connects us with wonder and mystery. Poetry is a way of knowing and being and becoming” (p. 145). Also, Larabee (2012) describes that “the mystics of this process create more questions and discovery—constantly deepening my Self inquiry and what I can say I’ve come to know” (p. 463).

Poetic writing is a delightful entrance to delve into the discovery of unseen possibilities and new interpretations of myself and my experiences. Poetry is an aesthetic tool that invites me to speak my words. Kelly (2016) contends that “art is actually the learning of profound languages, and these languages help us to be liberated in the created world” (p. 49). I deeply resonate with Kelly’s scholarship in how alive and emboldened I become to speak freely and authentically when I involve myself in the qualities of a particular space with embodied sensitivity. I enjoy the poetic freedom of redefining the world I experience and I am delighted to speak my own language and authentic voice.

I say nothing

*but focus on
my eyes,
ears,
nose,
hands,
feet,
back,
legs,
and cheeks*

*let them
see, hear, feel,
explore*

I still keep quiet

*wait to see
what will be unveiled
through my body
my poetic voice*

Embodied Exploration

A pause for solitude is the possibility to be attentive to the aesthetic pleasures in our daily lives. Snowber (2011) notes that it is necessary to have “a time out of time” (p.183). One day, I felt an oppressive weight from living in my small, old apartment filled with too many roommates. The weight rose in my chest as my limbs drooped at my sides and I had felt like a pathetic betta fish trapped in her small cup at the pet store. I began to desire a change, something huge, open, and free. I longed for the expanse of the ocean, its salty smell, and to be amongst people relaxing on the beach. I packed my bag and headed to English Bay in Vancouver.

As soon as the ocean came to view, I automatically breathed out.

Ha--h-----

*Being here is
listening to
what
my body sings*

*Creating with my own words
is my freedom
choice
voice*

I noticed my chest lighten as my lungs opened to welcome in a rush of ocean air. My head and body felt refreshed as soon as I took in the deep colour of the water. I stood on the beach in silence and sensed my surroundings in a state of wide-awakeness. As my body reacted to the magnificent sights and sounds around me, I was inspired to write a poem to capture the moment. I wanted to hold on to its beauty and find meaning from the moment by describing what I was sensing.

Beauty

*The waves constantly
come
go
by hitting the sand
My shadow keeps
appearing
disappearing
as clouds in the sky move
back
forth*

While enjoying the warm sunshine and fresh breeze all over my body, my inner voice appeared and kept asking me questions.

*What does it mean to be here
What do you like about this place
What are you observing, hearing and thinking
What kind of thinking are you doing*

Hart (2018) describes that “beauty activates desire and desire reaches for satisfaction, and in so doing provides intrinsic motivation.” (p. 28). The beauty that I sensed on the beach through my whole body kept me in the present and allowed me to create my poetic reflection. Hart (2018) goes on to state that “through beauty we recognize qualities that make one thing more inviting and sometimes more valuable than another[...]But somehow beauty sends a ‘ping’ into our depths and we find ourselves drawn toward it” (p. 25). Recognizing beauty with my somatic senses and willingly following where they lead me has become a hospitable way of inhabiting my body. I experience the unspoiled beauty of the setting, whatever it may be, by opening myself to the natural world.

I concur with Oughton’s (2012) depiction of poetry as “an artistically shaped auto-phenomenology: the poet observes everything flowing through consciousness in a few moments” (p. 75). The poetic form provides me with a representation of myself in the

present moment and the freedom to reflect, document and speak on it. Embodied exploration and reflective practice allow me to engage with “writing texture. playing with words, image, rhythms, sound” (Walsh, 2012, p. 372).

Self-Dialogue on the Beach

*I visited-English Bay last year
with
A SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT*

However

today

*I come here only
for the sake of myself*

*I become aware of
where my eyes, nose,
feet want to go*

*wondering
be curious,
becoming ‘absorbed’
in endless questions*

*just
listen to my voice*

*What do I want? Where do I want to go?
What do I want to smell, see, hear, and touch?*

Begin to ponder in

*walking
along the b
e
a
c
h*

What does it mean to be here?

Well,

*Being here is
exchanging eye contact with
strange people*

*embracing the natural beauty
being a part of here*

*One guy over there is
touching his guitar
sitting on the rock
looking beyond the ocean*

*Another older, half-naked guy is
reading his book with a coffee
letting his feet touch
the fine and warm sand*

What made you come here again?

*Rawness.
I like rawness here*

*I am talking about
the brown-coloured fallen leaf nearby trees
the rotten log floating in the ocean*

*I feel vitality, energy, authenticity
from rawness of nature*

In writing this poem, I thoroughly concentrated on my own reflections to know how I was responding to the distinctive qualities of my surroundings. This was a moment of “a new awareness of possibility, a recognition of oneself in relation to others and one’s location, as if for the first time” (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 36). With my open heart and body, I was captured by the older half-naked guy enjoying his book in the sun and sand. I recognized his relaxed demeanor and momentarily hoped to be like him. The intriguing scene turned into the aesthetic line in my poem and became a moment for me to be wide awake. As I immerse myself in questions about the relationship between my existence and the aesthetic of the place, I feel a closeness to the site. Guiney Yallop et al. (2010) explain that “poetic inquiry creates a space for evocative knowing” (p. 27). The conversations I have with myself in poetic writing illuminate how I inhabit my body and mind in a particular moment and help me refine my sense of who I am.



Image 3. English Bay by Nuri Yang

As a musician, I was naturally drawn to the sounds of waves, flocks of birds, and trees shaken by wind from all directions. As I freely and playfully walked, I constantly longed to document everything that came into my being with pen and paper. The entire engagement was a special privilege to feel nature through my physicality. The visceral way of sensing nature drew me into a state of wide-awakeness, heightening my consciousness and intuition. Abram (1997) evocatively illuminates that “the experience of awareness itself is related to mysteries of the breath and the air, to the tangible but invisible atmosphere in which we find ourselves immersed” (p. 262).

Walk on the Sand

*The coldness on my cheeks
the softness of the sand
under my feet*

*the blue sky
over my head*

*Silently but enormously
sky greets me with
its transparent
deep blueness*

*The clouds in that sky
move gracefully
hugging me with shadow*

*Where did they come from?
The Desert? The Alps?
Where are they heading now?*

When I had previously visited the same place, the sky, sand, and ocean had existed without leaving any impact or meaning on me. However, when I returned with an embodied understanding, I found myself looking for my father in the sky. My full attention to nature triggered buried memories of my father to revisit. Russon (2003) articulates that “while having brain cells may be a precondition for having memory, memory itself is to be found in the things that we experience, not in our heads. Memory is what locates us” (p. 39).

*The salty smell reminds me of
a memory with my father*

*He was always walking next to me
along the beach*

*his big and warm hands were always
holding my hands tightly*

*Now,
I find him in the sky*

*Where did he go?
Where would he be now?*

*Did he become the mountains over there?
Did he become the clouds?
Would he not miss me?*

*I cannot hear
from him
but
I can see him in
my mind*

*Closing my eyes
I see him flying with
the clouds, birds, and stars*

*Sensing his shadow,
I feel secure
like I always did
in the old days*

I focused on my bodily sensations and realized that they hold memories of my father. My understanding is supported by Snowber's (2011) note:

Our bodies have a memory. It is not uncommon for us to recall a memory through smell, a return to our childhood geography, or to be reminded of someone we loved through a familiar gesture. We are awakened to memory through our bodies, the reminder of the smell of the sea. (p. 93)

Our bodies retain certain physical memories that can be brought back by specific sensual stimulations. Encountering English Bay's great blue sky, shiny sand and wild sounds woke my body into consciousness and revealed a memory of my father that was hidden somewhere within. The body has the capacity to hold one's memories, and once they are elicited by embodied experience, they are transformed into a new memory,

taking on the qualities of the present. Snowber's (2016) examples illuminate this idea in a resonant way: "the scent of a crab apple or cedar tree may uncover your entire childhood; the scent of rhubarb pie baking has multiple stories to tell" (p. 8).

Focused awareness of my bodily senses opens up my capacity to be embodied. My personal interpretations become meaningful and distinctive actions that fundamentally represent my inward connection with nature. Eisner (2008) explains how "art helps us connect with personal, subjective emotions, and through such a process, it enables us to discover our own interior landscape" (p. 11). My poems reveal what has caught my eyes and what textures I have paid attention to. Embodied ways of exploring and reflecting strengthen my connection with where I am from, how I came to be and who I am becoming.

Understanding Oneself through the Body

Transform pain to a poem

*I
lie down
on my bed
with a pillow under my knee
with a grumpy face
breathing roughly*

I regularly have severe pain along my back and legs. The pain can become so agonizing that I end up lying in bed all day. I recall a time when I chose to deal with my pain from a different point of view. I decide to see my painful body as a sensual place for reflection, discovery, beauty, and creation. By generating an intuitive poem that emerges from the spontaneous ideas emerging in a moment, I seek to transform this agonizing moment into a hopeful and alternative one. In other words, instead of letting the pain overpower me, I create a new site in my poetic work for a sense of delight.

Nachmanovitch (1990) supports my attempt to deal with my pain through artistic approach:

I have never ceased to be astounded at the power of writing, music making, drawing, or dance to pull me out of sadness, disappointment, depression, bafflement. I am not talking about entertainment or distraction, but of playing, dancing, drawing, writing my way through and out. This process resembles the best in psychotherapy. We don't go away and avoid the troubling thing, but rather confront it in a new framework. (p. 185)

Pain calls my father

*Breathing
in heavy silence*

*my lower back is
screaming*

*I take a moment to change
this unspeakable suffering
to something new*

*I let my body
become a special medium to see
where the painful signal
arises*

*O...ne.. t...wo..thre...e..
four.....*

Fou...r.. three.. two....one----

*Inhale....
Exhale.....*

*Pain is a clear trace of my father
who suffered from
the same symptoms*

*My pain calls
my father*

*Closing my eyes
I clearly see him
in my suffering*

.....

*my back has stopped
yelling*

Snowber (2016) articulates that “the memory of knowledge lies in your senses” (p. 7). I sensed my father’s trace in my lower back pain. When I was young, I hardly empathized with him whenever he lay down on the living room floor in pain after work. Now, as I share the same pain, I understand how hard it must have been for him though there is no way to tell him. Attending to the intensity of my body's signals altered a

painful moment into a meaningful one that gifted me with compassion for my father. This transformational experience enabled me to hold my father in my heart with compassion.

Toot

Pain begins again

*Looking at the white of the ceiling
on my bed*

*I wish for sacred rain
to fall from the highest sky
drown away
this sorrow and frustration*

I am taken by this pain

I AM PAIN

However

*when the right time comes
my pain will go away*

*I just wish
pleasant breeze would greet me
like the one
from Pil-bong Mountain*

*to heal the aching wounds
in my body and soul*

*Breaking the deep silence,
the irregular sounds of raindrops
beating on the window
capture my ears*

*toot.....
toot.....
toot.....*

toot....

*toot....
toot....toot..toot....toot.....*

*These raindrops are
the medicine
the sky has prescribed for me*

I embraced my pain as a source for reflection; the verse and images that resulted from my poetic inquiry manifested how frustrated I was. I attentively listened to my back screaming in anguish. With reference to Buddhist practice, Thanas (1997) emphasizes a healing effect of listening to the voice of the body:

Paying attention to the body creates space around and inside the knots of tension. What has become compacted through being pushed down begins to expand, to claim its own space. As this part of us finds room to grow, it begins to draw energy from what is around. (p. 44)

Drawing on Thanas' idea, awareness of my back pain and my poetic reflection on it produced an artistic space to confront my suffering and gain a level of tolerance for it; my attentive understanding of my body became a powerful gesture that enabled me to endure its difficulty and hope for a better condition. Higgs (2008) illustrates this transformational effect in noting how poetry can make the writer cope with difficulties and see brightness:

I have found that writing poetry, drawing, painting, and creating sculptures has enabled me to transcend difficulties, solve problems. (p. 545)

Higgs' words deeply resonate in me, as I have vividly experienced how the positive and vital power of poetic reflection helped me endure my suffering. Butler-Kisber (2010) articulates how poetry "appeals to our senses and opens up our hearts and ears to different ways of seeing and knowing" (p. 82). Being aware of how my body exists in the moment has opened up possibilities of hope. Even if the poem could not medically alleviate my physical pain, it did strengthen my will to seek a better condition. By rephrasing the abstract moment of struggling, I came to see what state my body was in and manifest where I wished it to be. Wiebe and Snowber (2012) note that "in poetry, we explore our vulnerabilities, and the resulting imagination brings integral wholes into being in the midst of difficulty" (p. 460).

Pain

Empty my body exhaling.....

*fill it with air
to the fullest.....by inhaling....*

*Pain is an embedded part of
my flesh
will torture me
as long as I exist*

*Pain is an ingredient
to discover a hope depending on
how I treat, mold, see it*

From process to outcome, embodied ways of research and reflection integrate my body and my mind. I alertly attend to my senses and immerse myself in memories and creations. The reflective poems are aesthetic and creative evidence of how I have existed in a certain moment based on somatic awareness. Powell (2007) states that “in art, the body is, and always has been, the place and space of reasoning, knowing, performing, and learning” (p. 1083). My body has discovered a creative place to inhabit within poetry. Berleant (2004) points out that “in embodiment, meanings are experienced rather than cognized. That is to say, we grasp them with our bodies, literally incorporating them so they become part of our flesh” (p. 86).

Once I began to experience embodiment through acknowledging my somatic feelings, my reflective works became integral to the development of my awakened research practice.

Listening to my body

What does it mean to listen to my body

*It is about breathing
hearing
smelling
seeing
recalling
expressing*

*perceiving how I am
resurfacing the stories
asking who I am*

*My body is an instrument
to sing my voice*

*I learn how to learn
through, in, and within myself*

Chapter 4. Solo-Performance

Jungjungmori (Allegro)

Deong- Tta
Goong- Tta
Goo goong Tta
Goong goong

Deong - Tta
Goong- Tta
Goo goong Tta
Goong goong

On January 19, 2020 I produced and performed a solo show that told the story of my inquiry into myself, and how I have transformed. The performance was a way for me to express my new-found authentic voice in a public setting, the voice that I uncovered and brought forth through my art-based inquiries. My performance included playing two traditional Korean instruments, the *Janggu* and the *Geomun-go*, along with telling personal stories, and reading excerpts of my poetic writing to the audience. My solo performance took place at a café in Surrey, British Columbia, and was attended by friends, colleagues, SFU faculty members, among others. My performance was a special opportunity to represent my journey and my self-discoveries in multiple ways.

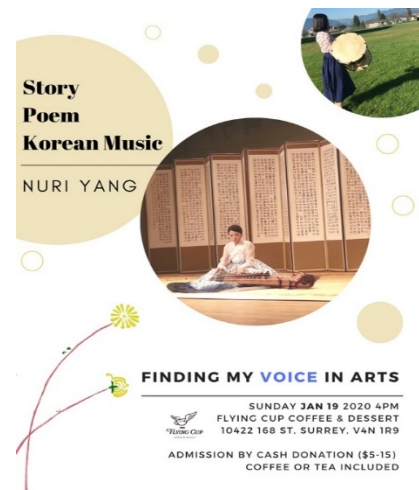


Image 4. Poster for the Performance

I would now like to explore the process of preparing my solo concert in the months preceding the performance. Poetic and narrative writing invite me to reflect on my performance along with insights from various scholars who advocate for artistic renderings as legitimate, evocative and scholarly representations of an individual's and a researcher's experiences. I investigate the experience of my solo-concert from the perspective of embodied inquiry by emphasizing my sensual knowledge as a way of recognizing and understanding my new relationship with Korean music.

Preparation and Practice

The Day Before

*I find my costume
with the red skirt*

*my eyes p a u s e
over the numerous wrinkles*

*making it look shabby
a withered, fallen rose*

*moving slowly
the hot iron
over the textiles,*

*I imagine
my creases of sorrow
become flat*

LEFT

*RIGHT
LEFT*

RIGHT

Holland (1998) states that “we are always engaged in the activity of making sense of what is happening as one who will respond” (p. 279). I sat still and found myself asking a number of questions. *Why am I ironing my costume? What does it mean? Do I see or feel something new?* As I strove to discover the meaning of my actions, the red skirt of my costume became the engine spark through which I thought, saw, and perceived my relationship to the skirt. I quietly paused and pondered on what it meant. Afterwards, I wrote a poem to document my thoughts.

Change

*As far as I remember
I simply ironed in school*

*because
I had to do it*

*Now
preparing my costume
infuses my body
with vitality*

*These are
my silk wings
will give me
flight tomorrow*

*As the wrinkles are
gone,*

*I feel so ready
to drop my stories
onto this red silk road*

The poem above reveals a change in attitude towards my costume. In the past, the shabby costume meant nothing to me. It was another form of suppression, a puppet mask to put on. However, now, my heart was filled with delight while preparing the costume. The sense of obligation or indifference to ironing I experienced in the past was replaced with how passionately I now prepared my costume. Something that seemed insignificant, like a daily chore, became important and meaningful to me as an integral part of the performance. My positive attitude about ironing shows how I came to embrace the value of my musical identity instead of ignoring it. More than that, I imagined myself on stage in my costume on my own terms, alive and present.

My act of reflection formed an emergent relationship between my growing self-awareness and my identity as a musician. Indeed, I was learning to recognize who I am.

Mysterious Paths with Improvisation

Improviser

*I slowly lift my arms in the air
searching for
the right moment
to fill the emptiness
to compose my own song*

*My wandering becomes
a visceral dance of freedom
to create new breath in the rhythms*

*As I finally hit my drum
deeply but lightly
make gentle reverberations with it
in return, its sounds become my language
wakes up me from a long sleep*

*My rhythms are my body language
shows who I can be
how I can sound*

Since “we are all improvisers” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 17), I constantly make impromptu decisions through the mundane tasks of my day to day. When it comes to the arts, the act of improvisation enables artists to encounter unknown qualities of the world as surprises. Instead of following the usual rules, modes or customs by habit, artists step into their imaginary worlds and explore instinctively. Snowber (2011) writes about “the act of instantaneously finding fresh movements” (p. 95). I too look for fresh movements by improvising with my drum. These were my first steps to discovering artistic freedom in music.

Freedom of Improvising

Deong goong tta
Deong goong tta
tta goong tta
Deong Deong tta
tta goo goong tta
Deong Deong tta

In order to create a new form
I throw away the map
willingly get lost

I see a pattern emerging from
the suspicious chaos

A new surprise, pathway

Deong goong tta
tta goong tta
Deong goong tta
tta goong tta
Deong Deong tta
tta goong tta

I am surfing the ocean
of unnamed possibility

After anxious moments
a new strand of beauty
begins to emerge

My attempt to create new orders to the sounds symbolized a reimagining of traditional Korean music forms. Through improvisation, I infuse the rhythms with my authentic voice, free movements, and new energy. The musical rules and performance styles of traditional music became fixed over time and preserved as the conventional form. Given this context, playing my drum spontaneously or creating a new collection of rhythms led me to discover another form. The unpredictable results of my creative experimentation were significant in the unveiling of my authentic inner voice, taking me one step further in my pursuit to freedom. Okri (1997) reminds me that “creativity is the art of the impossible” (p. 126). Breaking the conventional rules by playing my drum spontaneously was a meaningful initiative to encourage my creativity. More than simply experimenting with sound, the process of creation was a step toward finding my artistic

identity. Greene (1987) extends the meaning of freedom by associating it with the state of independence:

If freedom comes to mind, it is ordinarily associated with an individualist stance: It signifies a self-dependence rather than relationship; self-regarding and self-regulated behaviour rather than involvement with others. (p. 446)

My experience of improvisation inspired me to seize my independence and musical autonomy. Just like Ames (1951) claims, “authentic existence begins with the rejection of convention, with the will to rely on one’s own choice and to renew it at each step” (p. 252). My artistic decisions on rhythm using my technique were small steps to becoming who I truly am and discovering my authentic voice.

In my preparation for my performance, and in this performance itself, I attempted to step away from prescribed rules and conditions that resulted in a disconnect between my soul, my body, and my music. I played my drum for the sake of my inner excitement, instinct, aesthetic expression, and the possibility of a new identity.

My Own Drum Rhythms

*Deong- Tta
Goo-goong Tta
tta tta tta tta tta tta..*

Goong tta-tta goo goong

*I am
b l o w n
A W A Y*

*I silently look at myself
in the mirror*

*My shoulder stiffness
disappeared*

*I recount
so many negative comments
on my shoulders
from my teachers*

Those were what had made my body

***s t i f f**
s h r i n k with anxiety*

*Now
I dance with my drumbeats
instinctively created
by my hands
breath*

I

f

I

y

*I am the one
touching my drum
releasing my spirit*

*I am alive, being,
communicating with
my wooden friend*

*My rhythms are
my visceral language*

It is important to note here that improvisation does not happen automatically. The skill of improvisation requires effort and a greater amount of time for practice, and patience is also necessary for constant devotion. Nachmanovitch (1990) highlights that “to create, we need both technique and freedom from technique” (p. 73). A fluent skill for artistic practice is the basic element to bring freedom to play out of the score.

I realize the importance of my skills as a foundation, but not as the only way to truly connect with the vital quality of my authentic self. Instead of rejecting what I had learned with my drum, improvisational practice allowed me to reinterpret and reimagine rules and structure with new breath, free movements, and passion.

I need both.

the old rules

a place to jump from

&

freedom to leave

Challenge and Opening without Knowing

The hardest part of my improvisational practice was that I did not know what I was supposed to play, and how I should perform without a music score. The improvisational approach led me into the unknown. Noticing the strong resistance in both of my hands, my impulse was to stop and pull out any music score I had. I strongly felt it would be easier to stick with what I already knew.

Resistance

Deong

.....

Tta

.....

Deong deong goong tta

.....

(S i l e n c e)

*Like a girl
who is lost*

*neither
the entrance
or exit*

*I just sit down
losing my focus*

(Help!)

Nothing is certain

*I helplessly keep making
these weird rhythms*

taking unstable breath

*until
less awkward*

Snowber (2011) articulates that “a sense of unknowing is central to the art of improvisation” (p. 98). Considering her words and my own experience with my drum, the condition of not knowing can be considered an indispensable element to the promotion of creation. If I knew what was going to happen in advance, the newly made sounds could never have been made. What is new is what I could not have known, and what was not known invites the chance for something new to emerge. In order to discover new possibilities, I need to lean into my resistance. Nachmanovitch (1990) explains:

We know what might happen in the next day or minute, but we cannot know what will happen, we lock in the future and insulate ourselves against those essential surprises. Surrender means cultivating a comfortable attitude toward not-knowing, being nurtured by the mystery moments that are dependably surprising, ever fresh. (p. 21)

Instead of having a negative connotation of uncertainty, Nachmanovitch calls it the chance for surprise.

Deong- Tta
Tta goo goong

G o o n g-----

Tta

Tta-----
Tta goong

Goo-goong Tta
tta tta tta tta tta tta..

Goong tta-tta goo goong

In practicing my drum spontaneously, at some point, my fear of uncertainty disappeared. I found myself comfortably building new music styles based on traditional rhythms. Eisner (2002) states that “work in the arts also invites the development of a disposition to tolerate, to explore what is uncertain, to exercise judgment free from prescriptive rules and procedures” (p. 10). I settled into the unfamiliar process of improvisation after the uneasiness of my initial attempts. I even became curious about what would emerge with questions forming in my mind. *How about playing in reverse? What if I hit now?* This process was a new way of knowing, creating, and growing. Like I mentioned before, I needed both the old rules as a sturdy platform to stand on and the

freedom to jump off. I just let my drum create its own pathway by playing it freely and attentively listening to its sound. Snowber (2009) articulates that improvisation is a place of new inspiration for art:

Improvisation is the artistic practice which both reveals and masks at the same time. One does not know what will happen where he/she will go next in movement, or what word will come up as the body explores the turns and twists of gravity. It is a fertile place where inspiration cannot only be born but be nourished. (p. 95)

Whether my new approach to practice would be legitimate or not in traditional Korean musical context, the attempt itself provided me with a sense of freedom to explore the relationship between my instrument and my true self. New possibilities constantly flowed from my body, and my awareness of self continually increased. My drumbeats constructed a small and evocative space in the world, as “places and spaces exist in and through the medium of sound” (Powell, 2012, p. 103). My music aesthetically represented my existence by occupying time and space.

I gained a new realization. Improvisation allowed me to experience what had not been seen, heard, and played yet. The ability to improvise in my practicing created familiarity with the unknown, making it easy to access and explore during live performance. Without predictable destinations to arrive at, I kept exploring the mysterious possibilities and fresh sounds that emerged. Even if I sometimes felt a strong resistance to this exercise in spontaneity, the joy of creating new rhythms motivated me to continue. I was wandering into new terrain with my drum. Vanier (1998) writes that “freedom lies in discovering that the truth is not a set of fixed certitudes but a mystery we enter into, one step at a time. It is a process of going deeper and deeper into an unfathomable reality” (p. 117). The ambiguity of improvisation was the key to guide me to a place of new possibilities.

In the past, having designated or fixed conditions on my playing brought me a sense of comfort and ease as they left no room for fear of uncertainty. However, my false sense of safety kept me from throwing open the windows of exciting musical surprises. Improvisation opened up an aesthetic form of freedom found in the moments where unlimited possibility existed. Nachmanovitch (1990) says that “we can lead an active life in the world without being entangled in scripts or rigid expectations: doing without being too attached to the outcome, because the doing is its own outcome”

(p.19). My body and soul were liberated from the old rules I had to adhere to, and my life became aesthetically invigorated with new creation. As Snowber (2011) notes, “the artwork often has a life of its own, and the artist’s task is to listen to where it is going” (p. 2).

*Each side of the drum is
freely trembling*

*My hands with Janggu turn into
a special instrument to sing
my buried stories*

Finding My Voice through Art

*I use my drum
for my embodied inquiry
to find my voice*

*I explore
new possibilities*

*Without knowing
What will come out*

*Deong Deong tta
tta goong tta*

*Goong goong tta,
tta, goong tta*

Deong- Goong---

Deong- deo

Goong



Image 5. On the Stage by Nuri Yang

This video of the performance is uploaded to Summit, SFU's Research Repository

Link: <https://dx.doi.org/10.25314/4c838002-7beb-49bf-a9fb-ae0363776223>

Performance as a Way of Knowing

*What would it mean for me to present my reflective findings in performance?
What would take place when my findings are unveiled in performance? What role does solo-performance play in the representation of self-apprehension and understanding when uncovered by poetic inquiry?*

With these questions in mind, I investigate the impact of my sensory experience on performance.

In general, performance involves a wide range of bodily movements and multiple actions. As Cho and Trent (2009) state, “performance in use, associated with artistic representation, involves transacting the lived experiences of others to audiences by means of voices and bodies of the performer(s)” (p. 11). As defined by Cho and Trent, performance of a work of art is considered a fluid analogy of ‘the lived experience’, which is what I have experienced as a researcher and a human being. Also, performance is a way for the observer to learn about themselves through their emotional reactions. Bagley (2008) describes that performance has “created multi-vocal and dialogical texts, which imbued the data with a moving emotional dimension, facilitating in the audience a sensuous feeling and knowing” (p. 68). Cho and Trent (2009) add, “performance in/as qualitative inquiry has the power to generate these emotional, aesthetic connections” (p. 3).

A performance can provoke a profound emotional reaction through which the audience understands, feels and relates to its message. The sensuous representation of my reflections through performance invites my audience to grasp my experiences by the emotions that arise in them. Jones (2018) defines this point well in writing:

Performance is at once a method of discovery that is grounded in embodied participation in an event or context, an event to be analyzed, and a way to understand and generate knowledge about the workings of cultures and positionings. (p. 7)

Performance is a way of sensing and knowing. Berleant (2004) relates the nature of performance of literary works, including poetry, to the embodied experience with the metaphor of the wind.

Literary form is not a numerical pattern but temporal movement, and poetic substance not a material but an activity to breathe our way through. In place of seeing the work of literature in the spatial metaphor of a structured container, let me offer instead the image of wind. In performance, moving breath becomes wind, blowing as caressing breeze or as raging storm. Like the sailor, the performer must be totally sensitive, responding to the wind's direction, its force, its vagaries or regularities, and to the wave-shapes of the sounds it produces. (p. 164)

I strongly agree with Berleant's point, as a sailor of my own stories. The sounds I make to illustrate my stories are like the wind blowing from my soul, and I sail my own boat by trusting the direction of those winds. Performance creates a fluid and broad ocean for me to explore, without needing to designate a destination. The process of exploration is a fundamental purpose in itself.

The empty stage

The empty stage looks like

*it exists
only for myself*

Shabby, dusty

*But
in my head*

*this small stage is
huge enough*

*to echo my voice
at today's my performance*

*For the last few months,
I made various detailed decisions*

*It has been like
weaving a special dress
embrace my stories
kindly*

*Everything is set up for me
to unveil my identity*

*as a drummer
a free human being*

who talks through music

*Staring at the empty stage
in silence*

*my soul
already
v i b r a t e s*

*with the enjoyable expectation of
how my voice will decorate*

this small, but luminous space

Embodied Awareness and Learning

My solo concert brought stories of my past to the present through narrative, poetry and musical performance. The stories described in poems and music came alive in my voice, breath, and body movements to become integral parts of my experience. I was able to share memories of my father, my struggles and the realization of having lost my voice.

During the performance, I paid close attention to my bodily engagements, from my breathing to the movements of my fingers. I tried to sense how my bodily expressions and drum became an extension of myself. My uneven breathing became an embodied piece of performance that constructed my existence in the absorbed moment. In other words, my tension served as a raw ingredient for me to create new breath points and additional body movements. Raising my arms and following my hands with my eyes became an embodied language that visibly expressed who I truly am. My body was an active, ongoing, and embodied form that revealed what needed to be expressed. I realized that a shape serves as the story, itself. Totton (2010) emphasizes that “the body itself writes its own representation” (p. 27).

*The ongoing movements
of my body*

*become the stories
I long to share*

What does my embodied awareness represent? What function does it serve?

Eisner (2002) speaks about the role our senses play with regards to recognition:

The senses are our first avenues to consciousness. Without an intact sensory system we would be unaware of the qualities in the environment to which we now respond. (p. 2)

Somatic sensations were my means of seeing, feeling, knowing, learning, and responding to what I encountered. In performance, my embodied awareness served as evidence of what I perceived and felt in a certain moment. Snowber (2016) notes that embodied awareness is a way of being:

Embodied ways of inquiry are an invitation to dwell more richly in the territory of the sensual life, where all of life is both sensual and sacred.

Sensuality is a way of being; how one engages with themselves, and the way one lives and perceives and responds in the world. (p. 27)

Embodied awareness and sensual recognition brought me a feeling of freedom to live in the moment as an independent individual. More importantly, I entered a state of wide-awakeness by concentrating on myself. I was certainly aware of who I was and how I existed in the present. Berleant (2004) connects the body with meaning to describe a complete human being.

The aesthetic body, as a receiver and generator of sense experience, is not static or passive but possesses its own dynamic force, even when inactive. Aesthetic embodiment is being fully present through the distinctive presence of the body with the sensory focus and intensity we associate with the experience of art. It is being most completely human. (p. 88)

I

grab my sticks

slowly take a deep breath

raise my hands with sticks

let the drum speak

*feel the trembling of
the drum skin*

*sense vitality from my back,
shoulder, neck*

I start

Deong -

Tta

Goong-Tta

Goo Goong Tta

Goong goong

Goo Goong Tta

*dance in the rhythms
alive in my hands*

make my own rules

take my own lead

*make an invisible space
between Goong and Tta,
where I breathe*

Deong -

Tta

Goong-Tta

Goo Goong Tta

Goong goong

Goo Goong Tta

All these sensuous reflections resulting from bodily awareness were essential for me to live in the moment. My attentiveness to the interrelated connection between my body and my drum invited me to awaken, explore, live, and move forward. My focus on my physicality was “a visceral call to be awake” (Snowber, 2018, p. 250).

Performance was an embodied transition that allowed me to fly, dance, breathe, and playfully engage with music. I became a swimming whale in a huge ocean. Sharing my poetic writing empowered me to become the authentic storyteller of my life. The dynamic rhythms of my drum roused my memories and emotions. The constant vibrations of my drum pulled my buried voice out from somewhere inside and transformed them into clear sounds that could be heard, watched, shared, and experienced. This was possible because “a work of art presents feeling (in the broad sense I mentioned before, as everything that can be felt) for our contemplation, making it visible or audible or in some way perceivable through a symbol, not inferable from a symptom” (Langer, 1957, p. 25).

*Deong, tta goo goong tta goong
Deong, tta goo goong tta goong*

*The drum beats
from my hands
torso
arms
breath
become my voice*

*Deong, tta goo goong tta goong
Deong, tta goo goong tta goong*

The resonating rhythms affected my whole body. My heart beat faster, sweat ran down my cheeks, and my breathing raced to keep up with my exhilaration. Responding to the living, rhythmic stories were evidence that I had awoken from a long sleep. I became alert, acute, and aware of being who I am in my sensations. My moving arms, shoulders, hands, sticks, and breathing became the embodied expression of my exploration of my inner world. My stories turned into poems, which then became spontaneously improvised rhythms on my drum. The entire process was a transformative transition as my music gave life and sound to stories buried deep within me.

I speak through Janggu

*Deong, tta goo goong tta goong
Deong, tta goo goong tta goong*

*These constant beats sound like
gentle conversation of
my two hands
to sweep away
the darkness in my mind*

Meaning of Sharing My Stories with the Audience

My poignant story was personal but also universal. With regards to vulnerability, every human being has their own weaknesses. Okri (1997) describes:

we are all wounded inside in some way or other. We all carry unhappiness within us for some reason or other. Which is why we need a little gentleness and healing from one another. Healing in words, and healing beyond words. Like gestures. Warm gestures. Like friendship, which will always be a mystery. Like a smile, which someone described as the shortest distance between two people. (p. 89)

I opened my box of stories and acoustic pieces with their multiple layers of transition, integration, pleasure, despair, and exhilaration that echoed in every corner of the performance space. I exposed my vulnerability plainly for the audience to see. At first, I was fearful to share my weaknesses in public, however, it turned out that my fragility and brokenness made my stories deeper and more powerful. Hart (2018) notes that “light and shadow join with one another to produce a mood and image; various tones merge together and are contrasted with silence or gaps to form rhythm and melody; tension is built and released in a powerful story or a song” (p. 29). In order to create an image, both light and darkness are needed. If it was not for my brokenness, it would have been difficult to create a certain story that can touch people’s hearts. Also, “vulnerability is a rich source for the imagination. It is that risk which allows us to think creatively” (Wiebe & Snowber, 2012, p. 448). My desperate story of being a puppet became a crucial ingredient to express, create, explore, and transform with. My experiences as a suppressed puppet transformed into a new song in my body and drum. Then, my narrative, poetic, and performative reflections shone a light into the darkness of my stories.

Snowber (2009) raises a question which deepens my reflection: “What would it mean to live from inside out” (p. xiii). While I shared my stories in poetry, narrative, and drum performance, I literally felt like I was living from the inside out. What was already within me was the key for me to live as I truly am. My inner emotions, newly interpreted memories, and unspoken sentiments of past experiences were revealed and silently acknowledged. Also, my emotional past served as the stimulus to induce the audience’s empathy and to connect me to anyone who related to my stories. Living from the inside out was an opportunity to experience what it is like to be truly me.

What does it mean to express my emotions with the drum? What is it like to reveal words that have been buried for so long with my drum?

My answers come from a conversation with myself.

Telling

*Deong tta goo
goong tta goong*

*Tta goo goong tta
goong tta goong*

*Deong tta goo
goong tta goong*

*Tta goo goong tta
goong tta goong*

*Playing my drum is like
telling my father
I miss him*

*telling everyone
this is my authentic voice*

When I close my eyes,

*I move to where
I can be close to my father
smiling at me*

In three rhythms,

*Tta
Goong
Tta*

*I build my own kingdom
where I am the owner
of this precious moment*

Playing my drum felt like singing, screaming, and crying. I existed. Authentic and free. The sound of my drum swept the dust from my soul and allowed me to fly through my acoustic space. I finally woke up from a long sleep, alive and full of vitality. I felt something new and rich within me.

When I am feeling abandoned and isolated, if I will turn to my drum, I will hold in my hands my lineage. I have discovered an entirely new place within my rhythm...the simple heartbeat, the place of moving soundly from left foot to right, the place I must breathe in before flying to more complex rhythms. So empowering! So sacred! I find drumming helps me to keep me balanced. The trust and appreciation of my drum's rhythm and that of mine and the patients I work with carries me to places of wonder. I came for what was mine. (Redmond, 1998, p. 167)

I resonated with Redmond's words. I, too, encounter a new place which enables me to be connected with my father in an embodied way. When I attentively touch, play, and listen to my drum, I vividly remember him. He is alive in the sounds of 'Deong, Tta, Goong'.

*Taking a risk is the key
to finding my voice*

*I finally see the value
of braveness
breaks the habitual ways
steps forward with
curiosity and delight*

I stood on my feet and continued creating my own rhythms with the drum. I finally experienced what it is like to have the freedom to express my inner emotions through the creative rhythms of my own special skills. This was me, a free woman.

Tta goong-goo goong

Goong-tta goo goong

Goong Tta Goong

No Evaluations

The absence of evaluation and grades on my performance set me free and gave me comfort. Without worrying about what others will think of my performance, I was able to enjoy the texture of my instruments and the expression of my music. My music existed only for my sake. Polkinghorne (1998) claims that “the body supports the psychological states of the person and expresses itself in emotional responses” (p. 152). I agree with Polkinghorne’s view since my relaxed shoulders allowed my arms to move higher and play the drum more confidently. The chronic stiffness I suffer in my neck disappeared as my body relaxed into the drum. From my arms to my hip, my posture comfortably embraced my drum. My hands became light and freely performed from the absence of judgement, and my arms, shoulders, and breath handled the faster rhythms with ease. My relieved mind relaxed my body and I felt at ease to explore my own musical language and movements.

*I am alert to
my embodied awareness*

*I am filled with energy
passion
confidence
hope*

*Not a puppet
anymore*

*Can you
hear
my
voice*

I drew a big circle with my arms in the air to hit the drum. My raised arms represented my confidence, passion, heart, and freedom. My creative and improvisational body movements manifested my authenticity and my voice that had been buried somewhere inside myself. Sometimes, I comfortably played the same rhythms I had learned more than ten years ago, and my body still remembered where and when my fingers should be placed. My body knew how to play them as my somatic memory. A difference was that I felt the liberation from the connection with my drum and played it with a boundless energy, passion, and confidence that supported my true being.

Chapter 5. Where My Drum Brought Me

Jajinmori (Presto)

*Deong Deong Deong-tta goong tta
Goo-goong goong goo goong tta goong tta*

*Deong Deong Deong-tta goong tta
Goo-goong goong goo goong tta goong tta*

In this concluding chapter, I highlight several personal transitions that took place as a consequence of my creative reflections. These changes pertain to my identity and viewpoint on the relationship between the arts and the reflective process. In illustrating these shifts, lastly, I offer pedagogical insights that integrate the discoveries I have made as an artist and researcher. These insights outline key principles of learning that I hope to share with students I will meet in the future.

*Deong Deong,
Deong-tta goong tta*

*Goo-goong goong goo
goong tta goong tta*



Image 6. Sky, Ground, I, by Nuri Yang

New Places Constantly Emerge

Polkinghorne (1988) offers that narratives create a realm of meaning where human beings can exist:

Human beings exist in three realms – the material realm, the organic realm, and the realm of meaning. The realm of meaning is structured according to linguistic forms, and one of the most important forms for creating meaning in human existence is the narrative. The narrative attends to the temporal dimension of human existence and configures events into a unity. The events become meaningful in relation to the theme or point of the narrative. Narratives organize events into wholes that have beginnings, middles, and ends. (p. 183)

I too dwell in a place of meaning, which is continually made through my creating and recreating. As long as I keep exploring new aspects of my lived experiences, invariably places are created for me to stay. This is like discovering a home where I am alive to my experiences. Okri (1997) states that “when we started telling stories we gave our lives a new dimension: the dimension of meaning-apprehension-comprehension” (p. 113).

*I make a place
where
I hug my younger self
hear my voice
embrace my brokenness*

I am deeply drawn to Walsh’s (2012) description regarding the meaning and function of reflective writing for her.

I write too my own reflections. I want to be awake to a practice of writing that might open new things, new ideas, insights, emotions, feelings—new ways of being and knowing. Of researching. (p. 26)

I propose that art can be an effective method to engage students in examining their experiences, asking questions, then drawing meaning from them. Hanauer and Rivers (2004) acknowledge that “through poetry reading and writing, one can find personal meaning and explore and come to understand the complexities of an individual’s life” (p. 88). Instead of letting experiences vanish, an opportunity and guidance can be opened up for students to pay attention to their own stories, to stop, to pause, and to become and to be wide awake to themselves. With respect to the positive

effects of poetry, Hanauer and Rivers (2004) note that “by using an aesthetic cognitivist approach to poetry in the language arts classroom, we can increase students’ understanding of the complexity of being an individual in society and help them find their own meaning in life” (p. 88). Given this pedagogical perspective, it is critical to develop the capacity within students to discover what matters to them via arts in public school, which suggests we need a more holistic approach to education. What are the deeper purposes of a holistic education? Among many of them, one is possibly “to take seriously both the quest for life’s meaning and the meaning of individual lives” (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 3). Hanauer and Rives (2004) contend that “what is needed in the twenty-first century is an approach to literacy that encourages self-expression and the construction of implicit meaning” (p. 79).

In carrying out my arts-based inquiry, I have come to learn that vital resources for learning are embedded in one’s lived experiences, and they are attainable through awareness, openness, and willingness to creatively express. A reflective study through art is a place where all of these elements can be invited and inspired. My own reflective research created a new pathway to connect with myself from the past, and that encounter created unexpected meaning for me. In other words, the arts gave my abstract experiences a beautiful shape to be displayed in a resonant and meaningful way. I continued to question, wonder, and imagine alternative pathways that I had not taken in the past. Sometimes, I was frightened with the uncertainty of what I was discovering and where I was heading with my research. Fels (2018) explains that “learning through the arts is a pedagogical adventure of reciprocity, insight and possibility, yet also risks ambiguity, inter-relational tensions, not-knowing” (p. 124).

My current perspective is more fully in agreement with Snowber (2011) when she says, “the arts give us a chance to be messy, to find our way, to navigate ourselves through the journey of fresh words or new paint and to bring form to our experiences.” (p. 70). Providing unlimited possibilities for expressing and pondering, poetry, narratives and performance opened up a place where I can wander, sensuously perceive new things, freely make artistic choices, and creatively make my own steps. The unconstrained questioning and fresh exploration of my artistic practices led to an acquisition of a sense of freedom as a living being. My liberated exploration itself was the outcome of my journey.

I carried out my research

I was being researched

A Mirror to My Identity

My artistic reflections served as a mirror to my existence as I viewed the meaning of identity as a collection of images that represent who I am. As my identity became accessible and reachable, I came to witness who I truly am and who I can be. Johnson (2013) makes the point that individuals can perceive their identity through a work of art:

You learn who you are by seeing the patterns and content of what you have experienced—what matters to you, what you find appealing, what you find repulsive, and what you have undergone and done. Therefore, although a work of art doesn't directly tell you who you are, what it can do is open a world of possible experience—an encounter with ways of being in the world. (p. 35)

The choices of vocabulary in my poetry and narratives, as well as my improvised drum rhythms revealed my focus, fascinations, perceptions and somatic awareness. They were sensory and distinctive clues to my identity. Cupchik (2013) links the influence of art to one's identity by saying that "art or literary works which are closely tied to a person's core sense of either personal or collective self clearly have an impact on identity" (p. 82).

Regarding the use of a second language, exploring my inquiry with English has been a huge challenge and mysterious adventure for me. Creating my poems and narratives in English was both a strength and weakness. Ironically, the limitation of vocabulary enabled me to choose words that convey my instinctive feelings directly, without a second thought. Once I sensed the new qualities of my experiences, I instinctively picked the specific words that popped in my head in order to capture my insights immediately. Even though I could not use various expressions during my reflective practice, each word vividly revealed and represented my soul and my inner voice. At the same time, the limitation of not having access to vast vocabulary provided some difficulty in describing my emotions and realizations as fully as I experienced them. Fortunately, writing my rhythms down as my alternative voice encouraged me to utilize blank pages more creatively. Newly created drumbeats in poetic forms became my new language and provided me with a sense of freedom and comfort to expose my inner experiences regardless of limitations.

*I write
to see
who I truly am*

*I play with my words
to observe
what my voice sings*

*I build my special place
with words
to stay close to my father*

Writing.

*a special invitation
to stop the hectic moments*

to give me a voice

*to know better
what I want to remember*

*When my words
let my inside out*

*my wounds
healed*

*I exist
comfortably
breathe
in my special world*

*as who I was
meant to be*

Keep Discovering and Becoming

In the process of artistic reflection, I learned to widen my lens for perceiving the world around me, and to embrace unexpected beauty and opportunities for learning. Fels' (2010) description is a reminder that I have seamlessly been in the ongoing process of change.

We are human beings in constant fluidity, revealing even as we conceal who we are, our desires, our longings, our betrayals, our vulnerabilities. We speak longingly of roads not yet travelled, seeking destinations that we imagine we already know, moving somewhere away from who we were, in search of who we might become. (p. 6)

I continue to move forward from where I used to be and become open and curious about where I will arrive next. This openness has enabled me to capture richness and beauty in my daily life as “the opening of awareness and perception can reveal the beauty in all things” (Hart, 2018, p. 31). More than that, attentiveness and new ways of approaching my experiences have led to tremendous changes in my perspective on various junctions of my life, affecting the past, present, and future. One significant shift I have noted is the establishment of a new relationship with myself that has alleviated invisible discomfort related to several issues I had accumulated over time. Bolton (1999) elucidates the impact of poetry with regards to this alteration.

The writing of poetry profoundly alters the writer because the process faces one with oneself. Poetry is an exploration of the deepest and most intimate experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas. (p. 118)

I confirm Bolton's statement with my experience, as I faced the deepest part of myself in poetic reflections, which contributed to unexpected alterations in my perception of my relationship with my father. While reflecting on my memories with him, my reflections became a letter for him, which helped to shorten the psychological distance I felt between us. I gained a better understanding of my father's controlling behaviors over my life's plans. As I envisioned a poor boy in his bare feet via the narratives, I empathized with him. Once I was able to imagine his longing for a successful life for his daughter, I understood him better. Subsequently, my faint memories of being loved and cared for by him emerged, and I spent more time recalling them.

In spite of my lingering resentment, I became infused with feelings of empathy, love, and gratitude for my father. This optimistic and hopeful interpretation of the past significantly impacts my present and future.

As I derive new clarity through my artistic reflections, I am internally altered and changed. I am convinced that the arts help us make room for such transitions. Snowber (2011) states that “aesthetic experience widens our heart. In a place of expanse, we open ourselves to be transformed in mind, body, and spirit. Art transforms us and releases the imagination within us” (p. 75). I became opened to alternative interpretations of my lived experiences, and this enabled me to pursue reconciliation and hope. *What if I did tell my father what I liked? What would have happened if I chose Janggu and listened to my voice and heart?* The answers to these questions became clear through my reflections, presenting new possibilities for different behaviors or choices in the future. Cupchik (2013) articulates that aesthetic expressiveness and interpretation enable participants to be changed.

There is always the potential for transcendence, a reawakening to the meaning of life through expression and interpretation. In this sense, artistic creation and appreciation provide an opportunity for ‘being’ to turn into ‘becoming’ so that, through encounters with art, we are changed. (p. 69)

My authentic inner voice was unveiled in the articulation of artistic reflections, and the reflection clarified my desires that I had to connect with my drum as a channel to my authentic voice. Dancer (2009) acknowledges that “poetry is as much an oral as written form of expression” (p. 31). The unearthing of my buried desires inspired me to reach for my drum, which I had been longing for. I started playing my drum whenever I wanted, however I wanted. The reflections on my experiences became a map, a mirror, and a compass for my next movement, the renewed relationship between my authentic voice and *Janggu*.

My Voice through My Drum

*I touch my drum
embracing
its softness, flatness,
roundness*

By being a good friend

*I take a step
into the beautiful mystery*

*Deong Goong, Goong-tta
Deong Goong, Goong-tta*

*Starting is constantly
newly emerging
without lingering in
where I used to be*

*Deong Goong,
Goong-tta
Deong Goong
Goong-tta*

*I am the oncoming wave
in these beats*



Image 7. My Drum Brought Me here, Leads Me Onward by Nuri Yang

Embracing New Possibilities

The state of being wide awake through reflective practice facilitates a discovery of new aspects of ordinary moments. I am invited to explore delight, inner satisfaction, and given the momentum to keep exploring fresh qualities of experience. Throughout my research, I became a reflective thinker: *What do I feel? What if I choose different words? Do I notice something new?* Fels (2010) offers that “to be awake is to think, to be mindful to those moments that call us to attention, to engage in meaningful action” (p. 6).

Through openness, increased self-awareness, and questioning, every moment became ignition for me to consciously notice new intriguing aspects of the world. For instance, the nameless grass, unidentified sounds or even puddles on the ground were perceived as ingredients in recalling my related memories. Mackenzie (2009) notes that knowing takes place when one has open arms to new opportunities that have yet to come, and when one maintains a flexibility about what has already happened in the past.

There is no possibility for prediction, there are no connections that might remain concrete; instead the nature of knowing is one that demands a sense of openness to the possibilities of the present and the fluid existence of the past. (p. 245)

I pause here and ponder. *How can my insights be connected to pedagogical value?* Another aim of education can be to encourage the practice of questioning existing answers in order for students to see the world differently and encounter alternative possibilities. Greene (1995) states that “teaching and learning are matters of breaking through barriers of expectation, of boredom, of predefinition” (p. 14). Instead of passively following what teachers say, students have to question the predetermined and find their own meanings and interpretations. That is where learning takes place when students develop the capability to lead their lives to pursue their own meaning. Greene (1995) continues to emphasize this questioning process:

Only when the given or the taken-for-granted is subject to questioning, only when we take various, sometimes unfamiliar perspectives on it, does it show itself as what it is—contingent on many interpretations, many vantage points, unified (if at all) by conformity or by unexamined common sense. Once we can see our givens as contingencies, then we may have an opportunity to posit alternative ways of living and valuing and to make choices. (p. 23)

As “learning begins only when certainty ends” (Downey & Clandinin, 2010, p. 385), instructors can provide space that allows their students to wander and explore their own pathways with unpredictability. Instead of educating students to become merely a knowledgeable person, they should be guided to become independent individuals who wonder, express, and learn from their own experiences.

Vulnerability and Healing

My artistic reflections have required a great amount of patience and devotion, and there have been many struggles along the way. As I recalled my poignant and painful memories and described them, my vulnerability was exposed and nearly faded emotional wounds vividly resurfaced. Faulkner and Squillante (2016) state that “what makes information personal is that it touches core areas of our identities, it makes us feel vulnerable, it has the potential to benefit and harm our relationships” (p. 2). The distress from reflecting on my lived experiences was unavoidable, and deeply affected even my current emotions. As a result, although uncomfortably, I have come to understand that the exposure of my vulnerability can serve positive purposes depending upon how my struggles are articulated and approached with artistic mediums. For instance, the clarification of the ambiguous and unexpressed emotions linked to painful memories of moments with my father allowed me to feel a sense of comfort and relaxation; I developed an empathy for my younger self. Beattie (1995) speaks about both the discomfort and the positive impacts in manifesting one’s personal experiences:

Through the telling and retelling of our stories of experience, we come to know ourselves and our changing environments and to transform both self and environment. The process can be a difficult and painful one requiring introspection and self-exposure, yet those of us who engage in it do so in order to gain increased understandings of ourselves within the context of self and of relationship, of community and of society. We do so, they can begin to find voices to tell their down stories and to gain new understandings and control of their own lives. (p. 145)

To my surprise, my poetic voice eventually comforted and energized my soul. The artistic articulations of my painful experiences opened up a place where I could face my vulnerability. Wiebe and Snowber (2012) say that “a vulnerability which is whole exceeds our grasp. We cannot control it, hold it, shape it, or mold it. We simply stay open to it, the tension between the possible and impossible” (p. 448). I deeply resonate with their scholarship since poetry and narrative indeed inspired me to stay with my own fragility. By telling my painful stories and even admitting my brokenness, I became the real owner of my life.

In addition, my poetic reflections contributed to an emotional catharsis with a therapeutic effect. Bolton (1999) mentions that “the creation of poetry can be an intensely healing process, as therapeutic as the other arts and talking therapies.” (p.

118). Poetic reflection allowed me to let my buried words echo, and they gently touched my wounds. Instead of literally describing feelings of pain, the implicative words and various punctuations created an opportunity for me to feel empathy, relief, and freedom in an embodied way. Cohen (1997) notes that “my healing comes from my bitterness itself, my despair, my terror. It comes from shadow. I dip down into that muck again and again and am flooded with its healing energy” (p. 17). Instead of veiling what happened to me, the embracement of vulnerability helped me to alter it into new meaning, hope, and courage.

Vulnerability is a rich source for creative reflections. Although I felt that my voice had been buried for years, this burial became a seed for my writing to be created. Sumara and Upitis (2004) explain that “most of all, the work of creative production depends upon the creator’s ability to understand and tolerate fragility” (p. x). While I willingly let my painful memories become art, my voice became reachable and accessible to my readers.

Empty Body and Full Mind

While revisiting my past experiences and striving to describe the reflective process, I frequently had difficulties with a lack of ideas to deepen my understanding. Although I spent all day long in the library, creative ideas did not easily come to my head. The more I tried to squeeze, the less ideas I came up with.

In the meantime, one of the solutions I found to escape from that state was to let my body take a break. I stopped all my work and rested until my mind was empty. Once I let my body rest, my mind became clear enough to perceive and embrace new sources to reflect on. This experience informed me that my mind and body are closely connected. Zaporah's (1997) insight supports me:

When I refer to the body, I am also referring to the mind, for the two are known through one another and inseparable. The body knows itself through the mind as the mind know itself through the body. (p. 129)

*While looking out the window
in silence*

*smelling the scent
from the unknown flower*

*The precious seed
for writing*

*reach out to me
magically*

*I move my hands
draw the seed
with my own colors*

My Own Pathways from Now On

What can I do with my drum as an artist and researcher from now on? What are the implications of my inquiry for my further artistic practice?

As I experience the power of reflecting on my lived experiences and discovering my voice through the arts, I plan to keep engaging in self-reflection and embodied research through poetry, personal narratives, and drumming. I can further explore who I can become and create various meanings from the interrelated connections between my ongoing life and reflective practice. In doing so, there are infinite possibilities of creating new rhythms, music, or artworks.

Each day of my life has a variety of sensuous moments to reflect on and explore for new insights and meanings. I build my own space for my voice to be echoed, and the space will be enlarged as long as I engage in my arts-based research with embodied perspective. Nachmanovitch (1990) highlights, “in any art we can take the most basic and simple technique, shift it around and personalize it until it becomes something that engages us” (p. 68).

*Janggu brings me
a sense of who have
freedom*

*each breathing
makes
rest points*

*constant poses
let my inside
out*

Beyond just students, I plan to share my insights with people in Korea who might not feel free to speak up with their own voices due to various circumstances. Men and boys who are always expected to hide their emotions just because of social expectations. Seniors who have spent most of their lives becoming exemplary adults by repressing their feelings in Korean culture. Children whose parents arbitrarily make their life-decisions regardless of their true interests or dreams.

A journey of finding one's voice through the arts can be valuable for all people. They can be guided to reflect, question, create, express, and wake up from unawareness through arts-based practice. I want to invite people to discover who they are and to build their own lives with openness, revelations, and creations.

Key Principles to Guide Students in Korea

While pondering the various transitions I experienced through my artistic journey, I paused to think about the gifts I could share with my students in the future. I offer the following key pedagogical principles for guiding students in the arts field in Korea.

Regardless of genre in art, acquiring basic technique is absolutely a necessary step. Students in the artistic field are supposed to hone and develop a set of skills as a requirement to become an artist. This idea applies to the traditional music field more than any area. Therein lies a huge emphasis on maintaining the conventional styles of traditional Korean music.

Self-reflective practice through artistic mediums can be arranged as a necessary course for students to develop their own philosophy, discover meanings from their lives, and more fundamentally to find their authentic voices. For learners who already acquired the elemental skills, like university students, they need to be provided with an opportunity to creatively think, question, reflect, and explore the relationships with their own artistic works. Beyond the repetitive acquisition of skills, they deserve to learn to listen to their voices and cultivate new relationships with their own arts practices. Nachmanovitch (1990) mentions a significance “to rediscover, reveal oneself in context, in nature, in balance, to liberate the creative voice” (p. 187). By letting students reflect on their daily experiences, pay attention to their inner landscapes, and express them through artistic mediums, they will have supported access to their own uniqueness, individuality, and authenticity. With encouragement, it is my hope that students will bring their own visions into being, and experience the wide awakening found within reflective practices.

Nachmanovitch (1990) says, “education must tap into the close relationship between play and exploration; there must be permission to explore and express” (p. 118). I see great value in supporting students to follow impulses, spontaneous insights and emotional responses and express them in their own ways. I would employ artistic reflection and creative writing as primary methods for engaging students in their own explorations of meaning and identity.

The following letter offers friendly advice to students, drawn from my self-discoveries and the transition I have experienced from voicelessness to complete

freedom of expression. I hope to inspire students to learn that they can hear and sing their own voices, that they can trust their own potential and flourish like I have.

A Letter to My Future Students

Listen to Your Body

The body is a place of learning, perceiving, expressing, and becoming. I am aware that it is not comfortable for you to focus on your somatic feelings and attend to your inner world. However, in order to understand who you really are and experience a new lens to see the world through, listen to your body and express what you feel, perceive, and realize. It is about paying attention to your body and letting your sensations lead you. It is about looking inside of you and becoming the owner of your life. Snowber (2011) reminds that the recognition of bodily senses informs what is happening inside of us:

The body has a pulse all of its own and continues to articulate much of what is going on within us. Our task is to find ways to be attentive to its voice, learning to its bold proclamation as well as its more subtle notes of distress. (p. 31)

Focus on your bodily sensations to observe, hear, and interact with all the qualities of the world you belong to. As you pay attention to your physicality and let them lead your focus, there will come opportunities to be amused by unexpected beauty from where you are and to become connected to it. Since “when consciousness attunes to beauty, beauty has the potential to tune us up, opening to possibilities of discovery, awe, and nourishment” (Hart, 2018, p. 31).



Image 8. My Traces on the Sand by Nuri Yang

Listening to your body is how you can focus on yourself and become a creative artist and scholar. By perceiving and embracing new aspects of the world that surround you, your everyday moments will be filled with newly discovered meaning. Your somatic alertness is key to the embodied ways of learning and recognition of how you are living in the present moment. I understand that it is not always possible to capture your somatic awareness and describe them in creative writing or via musical language. However, you should believe in your feelings.

Write, Express, Play with Your Instrument!

Play your instrument freely and write what you feel in your body. The creative writing is a mystical and wondrous door that leads you to new understandings of who you are and who you can be. You become the owner of your life, and the created art becomes a silky part of your wonderful existence. It is crucial to attempt to express your inner world through the techniques you have. That should be a starting point for new creation to emerge that could become another tradition for the future. We need a form to create a new form.

In Form, out of form

*Start with the familiar beats
Break them at the same time*

*As you let go of the old roads,
New strands of beauty begin to be born*

*Jump off from the pathway
willingly get lost*

*You see a pattern from
the chaos
That is a new form*

Listen to me

I start with Hwimori

Deong- tta goong-tta goong

Deong- tta goong-tta goong

Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong

Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong

*I jump off the Hwimori
see what newly unfolds*

Deong- tta,

*tta, Goong
Goong-tta, tta goong*

*Deong- tta
Deong- tta*

*goong-tta goong- tta
Goong-tta tta, Goong*

*Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong
Da-goo goong-tta goong-tta goong*

*You can discover
new possibilities*

Being wide-awake does not require any special techniques. You can simply recount stories and contemplate them. Try to hear, see, and feel what comes through in your mind and write them down freely. Keep asking questions, imagining, and thinking. Then you will begin to see something hidden. They will become visible and shiny, blinking with insights, knowledge, and understanding about yourself and your relationships with the world. I am aware that it can be uncomfortable for you to examine your thoughts, focus on your body, and express what you notice. You are primarily educated to memorize existing answers and repeat what teachers demonstrated in school. However, resistance and discomfort to the new way of perceiving are necessary for learning; they are unavoidable steps to new discoveries. Okri (1997) says:

Without transgression, without the real boundary, there is no danger, no risk, no frisson, no experiment, no discovery, and no creativity. Without extending some hidden or visible frontier of the possible, without disturbing something of the incomplete order of things, there is no challenge, and no pleasure, and certainly no joy. (p. 63)

Reflect, Write, Connect your Life and Yourself to Your Art!

Let me share my experience

*Reflection enables me to taste
of being who I truly am
living consciously*

*These new realizations
turn my eyes to new things
alter my relationship with my music*

*The possibility of discovering my authentic voice
became clear and doable*

*Without irritations
uneasiness
nothing is possible*

Learning begins when you willingly take steps toward your struggles and difficulties. Stephen (1990) describes that “if the oyster had hands, there would be no pearl. Because the oyster is forced to live with the irritation for an extended period of time, the pearl comes to be” (p. 88). Irritation induces the synthesis of pearls. In order to

see the pearls be made, endless patience and tolerance are necessary and required. You embrace discomfort and wait until new things to emerge. Fels, Linds & Purru (2008) describe that “through encountering resistance, release, doubt, anticipated failure, and recognition of the impossible, new possibilities of engagement and learning open” (p. 40). Facing unease and struggles allows you to experience new learning opportunities.

At the end of each session in the future, I would suggest that you express your insights, experiences, and emotions through poems, narrative, or even free drawing in order to reinterpret and to reimagine the way you play your instrument. That way, you can become open to experimental ways of creating music by finding a connection between yourself and these writing activities, and the creation of new approaches to music.

The End; New Beginning

*My journey started
a long time ago*

*since my father had first taught me
Junggu*

*Without recognizing
the meaning of
his teaching*

*seeds finally bloom
after times of hardship*

*The drum waited to be
touched by me*

*Deong goong tta
tta goong tta*

*Deong goong tta
tta goong tta*

*I exist in these beats
I speak through them*

My voice was not buried

*Merely,
I did not know
how to pay attention to it*

*My voice was always waiting
to be listened to
unveiled*

From now on

*I will continue to wake up
Speak up*

Will you?

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