F. Michael Connelly & D. Jean Clandinin (Eds.). (1999). *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Education Practice.* London, ON: The Althouse Press. (Softcover). 184 pp.

Over the past three decades it is fair to say that educational research has been swept up in the knowledge debates and epistemological ruptures that have confronted almost every discipline. These profound and widespread interrogations of the socially constituted – and suspicious – nature of knowledge have threatened knowledge claims grounded in methods imported from the natural sciences. These methods, designed to ensure the neutral representation (re-presentation) of pristine objects of analysis through the efforts of the detached researcher, have been chastised because they have smoothed over the messiness of experience with distant, theory-driven concepts. Researchers in education, aware of the vast chasm between theory and practice, have made a conscious effort to reclaim the experiences and knowledges found in practice.

Connelly and Clandinin are well known for their important contribution to these debates. Through their work, they have established that teachers – as epistemic agents – know themselves, their classroom, students, curriculum, and subject matter. They have established that teachers are capable of re-presenting their own educational practices through the stories (narratives) they share with others. There is little doubt that these authors have helped us escape from the positivist prison-house of language and inquiry, permitting us to return to the places where teachers dwell.

For some critics however, Connelly and Clandinin have been far too fair to teachers – overplaying their roles as epistemic agents, thereby ignoring the social, political, and economic contexts that have shaped the formation of teacher practical knowledge. Their latest work, *Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice*, certainly soothed some of my own reservations about their accent on the personal nature of teacher practical knowledge. Clearly in this work Connelly and Clandinin have attended to the often constraining and conflicting contexts of knowledge production by grappling with at least some of the issues raised by a politics of location. The book asks how both

knowledge and identity are shaped by the sometime conflicting contexts of the classroom and the school/community, as different places on the landscape. This concern for the shaping effects of context on knowledge was raised earlier, in *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes* (1995). Their more recent work highlights the effects of context on the personal element of teacher knowledge-formation. They introduce a new term – "stories to live by" – to refer to teacher identity, and through their meta-level theorizing and the stories of their co-authors, describe the ways in which these "stories to live by" change, and are made to change because of the demands of colleagues, or school policy, or working conditions. The outside presses in upon teachers in their classes who must contend with the various "implementation strategies ... research strategies, policy statements, plans, [and] improvement schemes" that come down the "conduit" (p. 2).

Throughout the book, there is a feeling that Connelly and Clandinin are coping with their own personal crises surrounding identity-formation. It seems that they would like hold onto their belief that the teacher is the origin of knowledge and action (an essential voice), but they seem caught too, by the current wave of theories – which they do not really identify – that de-center the "humanist subject or author" as the reference point of knowledge in favour of the (con)text. Identities, they say, need no longer be built "on solid rock foundations" but "built to float, like ocean liners" (p. 126).

The world, and their place in it, is not quite what it used to be. Throughout the work, there are brief moments of self-reflection and inquiry, and even a certain romantic longing perhaps for the way things were. Caught in the looking glass, they ask:

> What does this changing world mean for the stories we live by as teachers and teacher educators? Our feeling is that what we know how to do well may no longer make sense for what we were doing it for. What good is what we know about teachers' knowledge if this is expressed in completely and dramatically different environments from those we have studied? What good is our way of thinking about teacher's lives, and the preparation of teachers for professional lives of teaching, if those lives are changing? (p. 114)

If there is order (knowledge/identity/agency) in the world, it is the order of the "squall or a street market, nothing metrical" (p. 116).

As we read the other stories by teachers, administrators, and

colleagues, we realize how the theoretic concepts developed collaboratively with Connelly and Clandinin have infused the stories of their co-authors. Ironically perhaps, it is this play of theory and practice that confuses the reader's distinctions between data and evidence, so that we are unsure if theory prefigured practice – or if and when practice gave rise to the theory (perhaps that is the point). Again, there is the postmodern sense that a search for the origins of (teacher) knowledge, or identity, is an elusive one.

The stories told by their co-authors offer glimpses into the world of the classroom teacher and their struggles to create dwellings – places for students and teachers and parents to gather – despite the threatening outside world that is increasingly shaped by the imperatives of bureaucracies and administration. Janice Huber's story is about creating "safe places" where students can uncover "essential truths" about the human condition. Karen Whelan's story is also about shaping classroom spaces into places that are "cozy," and "mutually constituted," and where a "diversity of style" can be celebrated.

Chuck Rose describes how Sara's personal life and professional life appeared to be extensions of the other until there is a change in the story of the institution with the arrival of a new principal. Sara's story is about the creation of a ethical-discursive place on the landscape where everyone is free to "agree, disagree, argue, debate, question, dream and wonder" (p. 52). The realities of teaching though, are evident in the stories of Nancy, whose everyday life is formed by the social, and economic changes in society and the institution in which she works.

As a former contract ESL teacher (among other things) teaching in Montreal and traveling between three institutions (separated by 100 miles) to make a living, I heard my own story being told in "An ESL's Instructor's Teaching Stories in a Shifting Landscape" by He, Phillion, and Beach." This is a story about ESL teachers whose work (and students) are constantly being threatened by student enrolment figures, and/or demands on their classroom space.

As I work through my own concerns about the influence of outside places on the classroom (in a study of teacher practical knowledge in prisons), I find myself returning to this work for the many valuable insights it provides. Much like the co-authors in

this book, I have taken up their geography of knowledge – to understand the "borders," "landscapes," and "crossings" behind prison walls. I believe, though, that the authors should seriously explore the critical possibilities that these new forms of representation imply for the interrogations of place, knowledge and identity, and authority. Reading the politics of location and identity formation across theories (critical theory, post-colonialist theory, cultural studies, feminist theory) would extend their valuable work by deciphering the locations of both the personal and social formation of knowledge and identity. I find for example, that I am anxious to treat Sara's story of her classroom as an example of how critical public spheres might appear in practice: as a place where everyone is free to "agree, disagree, argue, debate, question, dream and wonder" (p. 52). Questions arise then, around how administrative practices destroy the possibly critical, dialogic, pedagogic space that she has managed to create. Giroux's book *Border Crossings* (1992), is an example of how we can use the spatial metaphors offered by post-colonial and postmodern theory to interrogate the cultural, epistemological, racial, and gendered "borders" which are constituted, consigned, and contested by individuals and groups. Truly, there are different places on the landscape. Some places however, offer a better view.

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Egan, Kieran. (1999). [With Foreword by Elliot Eisner]. *Children's Minds, Talking Rabbits and Clockwork Oranges: Essays on Education.* London, ON: The Althouse Press. (Softcover), 200 pp.

Those who are familiar with Kieran Egan's writing will find nothing new in this volume but its great value lies in the bringing together of eleven major papers previously published in a range of different journals and conference collections over the past 20 years. The earliest (chapter 5) was originally published in 1978 and the most recent (chapter 6) first appeared in 1997. However,