

Mentor's Introduction

Marilyn Zurmuehlen

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Mentor's Introduction

MARILYN ZURMUEHLEN
The University of Iowa

Graduate study, like all education, happens in places . . . rooms, buildings, offices, studios, campuses. Some are appealing, others are only tolerable—all are sedimented, along with events and people for which they provide contexts, into other places . . . memories in the lives of individuals.

Steve McGuire reflects on such places of memory, exploring the meanings attached to them that support his present understandings. His life as a sculptor is intimately related to a consciousness of space and by phenomenological description and reflection he particularizes this for himself, and for us as well, into a sense of place. Memories of childhood places are sources for his imagery and are a grounding for his interpretive research.

In her search for the meanings of those places we call art rooms, Joan Yochim begins, as Bachelard (1964) did, with images from her house. Bachelard asked how it is that rooms which have disappeared from our daily lives "become abodes for an unforgettable past" (p. xxxii). Later, he responded, "By remembering 'houses' and 'rooms,' we learn to 'abide' within ourselves" (p. xxxiii).

Graduate school also is a place to be: to be an artist, to be a learner, to be a teacher, to be a searcher. Mr. McGuire and Ms. Yochim have found it a place for being all of these. They brought to The University of Iowa memories of other places where they had made sculpture, drawings, and prints; other schools where they had studied; other rooms where they had taught children, adolescents and adults; and those personal landmarks that distinguish each individual's search for a place to be.

Margaret Atwood (1982) wrote: "In the last analysis, the poetic eye sees its own world, a world which both reflects and transcends the formlessness of the finite world outside and reality becomes internal" (p. 23). In such a sense both of these doctoral students are engaged in poetic research; as they establish form in their worlds for readers, or listeners, they also constitute those internal realities in which they can abide. I take this to be Bachelard's (1964) meaning when he wrote of "the non-I that protects the I" (p. 5). Perhaps, even nurtures adds the I who is a teacher and a mentor.

Of course, a mentor is a non-I for others, but also an I who takes responsibility for graduate students to acknowledge themselves as authors in their writing, to admit themselves as artists in their research, and to recognize themselves as individuals in their teaching. When students do these things they situate themselves in the subjectivity of personal histories and in the shared subjectivity of our mutual histories. And, what could history be without storytelling? Both Steve and Joan are storytellers. Steve's story stands as an entity, yet contains other stories within it. Joan tells the stories of high school students about what their art rooms mean to them, and, in doing so, she tells her own story about being an art teacher.

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Thus, their contexts; now, their stories.

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