

**Wild (Re)turns:**  
Tracking the Epistemological and Ecological Implications  
of Learning as an Initiatory Journey Toward True Vocation and Soul

by

Hilary Leighton  
M. Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2004

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Interdisciplinary Studies

© Hilary Leighton, 2014  
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This dissertation may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by  
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

## **Supervisory Committee**

Wild (Re)turns: Tracking the Epistemological and Ecological Implications  
of Learning as an Initiatory Journey Toward True Vocation and Soul

by

Hilary Leighton  
M. Ed., Simon Fraser University, 2004

### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Wanda Hurren, (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Duncan Taylor, (School of Environmental Studies)  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Richard Kool, (School of Environmental Studies)  
**Departmental Member**

## Abstract

### Supervisory Committee

Dr. Wanda Hurren, (Department of Curriculum and Instruction)  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Duncan Taylor, (School of Environmental Studies)  
**Co-Supervisor**

Dr. Richard Kool, (School of Environmental Studies)  
**Departmental Member**

Many people in Western culture experience systemic separation from an intimacy with the natural world and as a result, suffer a disconnection from their own natures. As an educator, my interest in the epistemological and ecological implications of nature-based, reflective learning as a form of initiation into maturity and calling led me to explore how education might create the conditions for consciously turning around the whole human with potential for turning around the whole world.

Drawing from insights and wisdom from depth psychology, ecopsychology, mythology, philosophy, the poetic traditions, literature, spiritual practices, and curriculum studies, and by adopting Jung's psychology of individuation as a theoretical backbone for this body of work, I sought to fully flesh out and discover how we might reclaim and embody our original human wholeness (our individuated natures), and how education might be a catalyst for this. I have organized this study in such a way as to align with three central themes found universally in all rites of passage and that mirror my own heuristic research journey, namely: the separation, the threshold experience, and the return.

In the separation stage, I offer an historical perspective for much of Western culture's current incongruence with nature. In addition, I provide a critique of how contemporary educational practices with their overt focus on profit-making and careerism further reinforce this dualistic thinking.

As a counterbalance, at midpoint of this study, I set forth on my own deep phenomenological threshold-crossing immersions into nature. This research became, in effect, a (re)search of self where surprisingly more of my own calling was revealed to me through the hermeneutics of powerful, wild teachings.

At the conclusion, as I (re)turn “from the woods”, my findings are shared (in part) as pedagogical examples of life-enhancing, less codified and embodied practices designed with the whole person—*body, mind, and soul*—(and *earth*), in mind that may support students (and teachers) in discovering their particular and deeply fulfilling ways of belonging to and contributing toward a living ecology. A symbolic artifact (a ‘body’ of work) accompanies and completes this work (Figure 3).

## Table of Contents

<b>Supervisory Committee .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Dedications.....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Frontispiece .....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Prologue .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Threefold Pattern of Initiation .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>On Context and Clarity .....</b>	<b>12</b>
a note of the use of the term “true” .....	12
a note on the use of poetry, prose and other evocative writing. ....	13
a note on pronoun usage.....	13
<b>Biographical Notes .....</b>	<b>14</b>
early schooling .....	14
babe in the woods.....	15
of two worlds, of two minds.....	16
patterns everywhere.....	17
early rites of passage.....	19
a formative incarnation.....	20
non-traditional learning.....	21
apprenticing to psyche.....	23
listening for “true vocation” .....	25
going outside.....	28
working for change.....	30
<b>Qualitative Methodologies: The Deep Structure.....</b>	<b>32</b>
questions of validity.....	36
<b>Phenomenological Inquiry .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Hermeneutic Inquiry: On the Wings of Hermes .....</b>	<b>40</b>
hermeneutical phenomenology: a convergence of Husserl and Heidegger. ....	42
<b>Autoethnography: The Story.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Heuristic Analysis: The Quest.....</b>	<b>56</b>
initial engagement.....	58
immersion.....	59
incubation.....	59
illumination.....	60
explication.....	61
creative synthesis.....	61
a (re)search of soul.....	61
<b>A/r/tography: The Map .....</b>	<b>66</b>
a side trip on the naissance of art.....	72

<b>Part I – The Separation</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Early Severances</b> .....	<b>77</b>
disenchantment: the loss of animism.....	79
as above, so below.....	82
becoming civilized.....	85
anima mundi.....	86
resisting the tyranny of reductionism.....	90
<b>Psychology’s Response</b> .....	<b>92</b>
archetypes and the collective unconscious.....	94
the alchemy of individuation.....	97
the human shadow.....	99
<b>Selfhood and Ecological Identity</b> .....	<b>102</b>
a crisis of perception.....	105
the seeded self.....	107
calling and true vocation.....	109
wake up calls.....	115
childhood experiences in nature.....	117
<b>‘Off’ to School</b> .....	<b>121</b>
school as real life.....	122
learning by doing.....	126
lacks and losses.....	127
small measures.....	134
good science.....	135
education as careerism.....	137
objectivism and objectives.....	139
the trouble with teaching.....	141
<b>An Interdisciplined Approach</b> .....	<b>143</b>
a typography of learning.....	145
the proposition of mythos.....	147
<b>“Fields” of Green</b> .....	<b>151</b>
fertile soils for the soul.....	156
toward arête.....	159
<b>There Be Dragons</b> .....	<b>163</b>
leaving home.....	164
ready, set—now... go!.....	167
<b>Part II - Threshold/Initiation</b> .....	<b>172</b>
<b>Walking Out to Walk On</b> .....	<b>174</b>
in my own backyard.....	176
divine wandering.....	182
<b>Indwelling</b> .....	<b>185</b>
to “lean and loafe”.....	187
<b>New Life in Dismal Places</b> .....	<b>191</b>
bog mind.....	199
<b>Practice by Going</b> .....	<b>202</b>
am path.....	204
i-thou, i-thou.....	210
bonding in place.....	213
getting lost on purpose.....	217
<b>Fernophilia</b> .....	<b>220</b>

grounds for learning .....	222
<b>The Vision Quest .....</b>	<b>226</b>
basecamp .....	229
far out .....	232
final preparations.....	232
taking leave.....	235
<b>Day One – Al/one .....</b>	<b>236</b>
ceremonial advice.....	238
a funny thing happened... ..	241
gratitude.....	243
<b>Day Two .....</b>	<b>245</b>
wild conversations .....	247
a council of elders .....	250
<b>Day Three .....</b>	<b>251</b>
body of the earth .....	253
time in death lodge .....	254
shadowlands .....	258
<b>Day Four – Solo’s End.....</b>	<b>263</b>
to know and be known.....	265
the bottom of the world.....	269
crossing (back) over .....	272
<b>Part III - The Return .....</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>Entranced .....</b>	<b>275</b>
cautionary tales: the dangers of reentry.....	276
a word about forgetting.....	280
<b>Stories for the World .....</b>	<b>282</b>
the gift of the story .....	284
<b>A Work in Progress .....</b>	<b>289</b>
note to self.....	296
<b>All in Perspective .....</b>	<b>297</b>
false dichotomies.....	298
the jewel point.....	299
<b>WANTED: Gifted Teachers .....</b>	<b>301</b>
rendering teachers down.....	304
the ecopedagogue .....	305
<b>Living Disciplines.....</b>	<b>313</b>
an ecology of learning .....	317
<b>Pedagogies and Practices.....</b>	<b>323</b>
a walking pedagogy.....	325
the learning journal .....	327
a circle pedagogy.....	334
roots and wings.....	337
<b>Education to Evolution.....</b>	<b>339</b>
outcomes/non-outcomes .....	342
active hope .....	349
pitfalls within the possible.....	354
<b>Wild (Re)turns: Lessons from (becoming) the Field .....</b>	<b>357</b>
what followed me home .....	363
on destiny.....	365

love, love, love.....	367
soul-furthering .....	375
<b>Circling Back Round.....</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>Epilogue.....</b>	<b>388</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>390</b>
<b>Permissions.....</b>	<b>421</b>



**List of Figures**

Figure 1. Schema of Ritual Components.....	7
Figure 2. Four Quadrant Model .....	34
Figure 3. Body of Work.....	74
Figure 4. Jung's Typologies.....	146
Figure 5. The Yin-Yang Symbol.....	146
Figure 6. The Hermit Archetype.....	259

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the natural world, my most significant teacher about relationship and love. To me, the animate earth is as near as my own body, is my home and safety, is as inspiring as breath itself offering an endlessly wild intelligence, a portal to enchantment, mystery and deep learning. The great mossy parental forest in particular is where I seem to have originated. It is a place I habitually wander, meet my Muse, and in that embrace, continue a discourse of (re)membership with the world.

To my co-supervisor Dr. Duncan Taylor, a natural teacher and wonder-filled learner, an endless source of knowledge and inspired conversation, and the embodiment of encouragement of all who seek to learn and are willing to be changed by what they find. His generosity of spirit and his wildly creative teaching heart are what I consider to be the kind of medicines required in healing our world, to becoming more authentically ourselves.

To my co-supervisor, Dr. Wanda Hurren and committee member, Dr. Richard Kool for their individual ideas, insightful views, and personal particularities in helping shed more light through all of the cracks in this work. Wanda's passion for map-making and arts-based inquiry (in addition to her artful community connections) were foundational in granting me the permission and skills required to create a 'body' of work to complement and further this dissertation...beyond words. Her proclivities to blur the edges in education were valuable in terms of my field work. In good faith, this entire committee came willingly alongside me for the duration of this strange and wild ride in which none of us really knew the endpoint. My work is much stronger because of all of their involvement.

To the University of Victoria for having what the Buddhist tradition calls "foresight wisdom" in establishing the kinds of interdisciplinary possibilities that would grant a non-traditional scholar such as myself the ability to research the implications of re-embracing the lost, essential, imaginative dimensions of other-than-human contextualization through our human capacity for reflective awareness. It is precisely these spaces in between disciplines that have allowed so much to happen and will continue to (in)form my lifelong fascinations and scholarship. Without this opportunity and the generous financial awards that supported it, I would not have been able to make the necessary space of time to

underwrite the depth of imagination and soul necessary for such an ambitiously wide project while working full time.

To my dear friends who have endured my out loud wondering and thinking for decades, who have generously engaged in thoughtful and vulnerable conversations, shared wild dreams and sat in circle together with the big, beautiful and terrifying questions of life. I am humbled by that kind of love. It has taught me so much.

A special thanks for the soulful artistry of fellow wanderer, Doug van Houten, who created the pattern components of initiation found throughout this study and the leaf logo-motif central to my artifact. I am also grateful for the generosity of encouragement and vast talent sharing of Susan Underwood and Lorraine Douglas from Cecelia Press Studio.

To my wonderfully patient and self-actualized Continuing Studies colleagues, to the supportive Dr. Stephen Grundy, VP Academic and Provost at Royal Roads University (RRU), and to the RRU community who all value this journey as much as I do and who have helped facilitate the necessary spaces and time away from the university for my thoughts to render and for me to complete this work with a minimal loss of sanity. Their provision was superb and reminds me that we do indeed need each other as nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished in isolation. It is a privilege to work in their company.

To all of my teachers living and dead - those writers and philosophers, artists and poets, eco-philosophers, elders, venerable visionaries, mentors and masters that have gone ahead and shone their particularly brilliant lights for those of us coming up behind. Particularly, I wish to thank the groundbreakers, ground-swellers, thunder-makers, beauty dwellers, wily wanderers, fierce warriors, and wild poets that I have had the good fortune of directly studying with, namely: Linda Mazur, Celeste Snowber, Joanna Macy, Annie Bloom, Meg Wheatley, David Whyte, David Abram, David Raithby, David Richo, Glen Thielmann, Mark Nepo, Nirvan Hope, Peter Scanlan, Stephen Aizenstat, and Bill Plotkin. There would be nothing here if it were not for the sturdy shoulders of these rare and resilient ones to climb upon (and the ancestors who came before them) in order to see farther afield.

Any mistakes or inferior aspects of this work are entirely my own. I consider this a living document (a work in progress) that will—I hope—over time, shift and change shape for the better and in effect, become more *itself* as time unfolds.

## Dedications

To my bright and beneficent eighty-five year young mother for her enduring gifts of enthusiasm, curiosity, and steady loving support. And to my late father to whom I am grateful to for his quiet intellect. Early on, both parents saw clearly into my true nature and no matter the vagaries of life, they each trusted (and encouraged) my wandering, wild way just as it has been. Their enduring love has fed my unique sense of self.

To Oberon, the mythic and great white hound, blessed natural wanderer, avid field investigator, serious astronomer, sweet and faithful companion, noble teacher and olfactory navigator who helped us find our way in all seasons, all weather.

For every student who has secretly hoped school would cover something real and when that happened allowed the meaning of that to steep and stir their souls. To the ones who loved the few and far between freedoms of those saturated learning adventures —*the field trips*—and who secretly believed we were really “getting away with it”. We were.

To the numinous mystery that befriended my soul on a vision quest in the Abajo Mountains at the foot of Mt. Linnaeus where in the vivid intersections of body, soul, sky and earth, I heard something meant only for me that made all the difference in the world.

And not least of all, I write this for those called to teach, who have fallen in love with the human students themselves and the luminous power of each one’s unique journey. For it is those who have not become enemies of their own souls for the siren call of money or success, but rather who embrace their passions to teach and learn despite the solo upstream struggle in education against a torrent of tidiness and institutional efficiencies. I receive more of my own courage from the courageous teachers who understand they must continue to take learning to new places (imagined or real), and pour huge reserves of love and energy into that emergent work. For those who know the secret kinesis of things and therefore grant logos and mythos equal footing. For those teachers who bravely invite some deep part of their own wildness to be taken up by this (often solitary) work in service to something larger than themselves, and to carry this lineage as their own, I dedicate this effort. You are my heroes.

Frontispiece



## Prologue

...And something ignited in my soul,  
 fever or unremembered wings,  
 and I made my own way,  
 deciphering  
 that burning fire  
 and I wrote the first faint line,  
 faint, without substance, pure  
 nonsense,  
 pure wisdom  
 of one who knows nothing,  
 and suddenly I saw  
 the heavens  
 unfastened  
 and open...(Neruda, 1970, pp. 457-459)

I am an educator gone wild. An ecopedagogue. It is only fair to tell you this upfront. Please keep this in mind while you read these pages as you may disagree with a great many things I have found that are necessary as to *how* we educate, and to the art of teaching. This essay is offered as my own clearly passionate journey and is not necessarily meant as *the* right or the *one right* way to follow. It is however, written with students in mind, and with nothing less at stake I believe, than the human soul.

I admit I resist much of what passes for education today with its performativity agendas and overt objectivism. Instead, I subscribe to what I consider vital, the kind of curricular practices that linger in an interdisciplinary bog in between human habitat and the wildness of the world, between feeling and thinking, where the domesticated and the wild intermingle and exchange themselves freely and radically. This type of informal, 'lived' learning doesn't come from textbooks and it does not live on the Internet (although instructions on how to experience this more, may). Rather, an ecological (world-knowing) approach to learning includes the whole human and the whole world (in which we are embedded) *in relationship*. It recognizes that in keeping with our earthy roots, we require fertile and rich 'soils' and sweet time enough to grow in order to flourish and blossom in our own wildly, original ways.

I take up the claim that in Western culture in last four hundred years or so (since the Industrial Revolution) the adoption of a more statistically inclined mentality, has allowed

us to forget that feelings can be a starting place for learning, rather than an afterthought. I challenge the notion that emotionality and rationality ought to (or even can possibly) be kept separate from each other (or that one is more valuable than the other), and suggest that they need each other as equals to make a more whole-human epistemology.

I reject much of the prevailing tired (tired?) and true teacher-education system with its judicious mechanisms of: reduce, measure, and repeat. I reject the current rhetoric of simply “getting a degree to get a job”. Instead, I believe we need to reimagine a less codified, more embodied, nature-based, creative, and contemplative discourse that allows human students to be openly understood as unique and as an “irregular phenomenon” (Jung, 1957, p. 8), not recurrent, and therefore “can neither be known nor compared with anything else” (p. 8). I imagine school as a (re)placement or (re)orientation toward where we truly belong if we are being true to ourselves, as a (re)imagining place for students to realize (and express) themselves in relationship to the world, in pursuit of a more authentic and natural vocation.

This fits within a central interest I hold for contemporary education to divest itself of its Cartesian hangover with epistemological preferences for the kinds of knowledge that exist within the confines of the rational and scientific alone. What prevails is a more mechanistic approach in which a non-sensual type of knowing is considered more worthwhile. Within this context, everything needs to be analyzed and classified rather than experienced. This may be worthwhile and entirely appropriate for *some* pursuits, but it does not bode well for *all* learning. These kinds of archaic traditions dictate an “either-or” capacity instead of embodying a more integral blend of a “both-and” position that would allow for some of the unpredictable, in-betweennesses of things to do its quiet work of transformation and meaning-making. These traditions are not what I would consider *soul-furthering* and may in fact be doing great damage. Rather, I am interested in the kinds of teaching and learning where outcomes evolve more like works of art and are therefore somewhat unknown at the start. Education rarely permits for that now.

I didn't set out to provide the “final word” on curriculum and instruction, rather, I hope to demonstrate how imaginative and emergent curriculum and nature-based, reflective pedagogies, that consider relationships between world and self as primary, shift our perspectives and invite a shift in the ways we might serve the whole ecology. Shaping



learning to be more like an initiatory journey, considering research as a deeper (re)search of the self, and cultivating practices that recognize the need for ongoing personal conversations with students about what has just happened, how they feel, and what is being learned, includes holding a space for the suspension of old beliefs, preconceptions and prejudgments. It means teachers must have the courage to wait patiently during a transitional (and sometimes awkward) time of threshold-crossing (metaphorical and/or physical), of a student *not-yet-knowing*. This is rare in the kind of schooling we have now—the kind that tends to urge that we all arrive at *the* same answer at the *same* time.

Of course, this brings forth other complications that require us to reimagine *how* we teach, how “*becoming pedagogical*” (Leggo & Irwin, 2013) denotes a need for an underpinning *ethics of understanding* that values and does not marginalize lived, embodied experience and reflected awareness in favor of more formal inquiry alone. Teachers themselves need to be immersed in meaning-making, and share meaning-giving ideas and illuminations with each other and their students. It recognizes that whole person learning demands *presence* rather than mere *attendance* (from both teacher and student).

I have come to view a teacher’s ecological function as that of travelling into ‘wildness’ (including the terrain of mind and soul), to bring back what they find in curricular form (including the discoveries and insights from so many other trail-blazers before them). This allows teachers to create pedagogies of possibility so that others may be encouraged to find ways to discover more for themselves. I see teaching as an integrative whole person/whole world practice that requires we use “head, hands and heart” (Sterling, 2001) and *soul*, in conversation with the world. This form of dialogic inquiry helps cultivate what we know and helps us better understand and value what we do in and *for* the whole ecology rather than for individual or egocentric gains. In effect, a search for the more natural human being, can be a (re)search for the wildness in us all.

My line of thinking is both passionate and unpredictable. I imagine schooling that involves the inner life as well as the outer world, therefore, it is impossibly inefficient. I view the world as John Keats (1895/2005) did, to be “the vale of soul-making” with its “necessary world of pains and troubles enough to school an intelligence and make it a soul” (p. 366). From this perspective, any kind of “making” in education will fail if expected to fit within a standardized marking rubric that measures against predetermined outcomes in



the cognitive sense. By its nature, “making” can never be imposed or fully interpreted, is never truly finished and presents different forms of evidence that cannot be pinned or made static. I have come to appreciate through this study that it is inappropriate to impose the rules of one domain (e.g. science) onto that of another (e.g. art) but we have been doing just that for a long, long time. As an additional set of criteria for what constitutes knowledge, I offer ways we can participate in the immediacy of the act of knowing rather than merely trying to explain or theorize. This means being more receptive to ways of witnessing and receiving what has just happened between the knower and her knowing. It means moving from theory into practice.

Nature, I have found, with its mirror-like qualities and atmosphere of non-judgment situates us in the best phenomenological classroom for this type of organic immediacy and participation in learning. And of course, the living world, with its treasure of universal patterns and connections is the ultimate context for this research. Nothing less than the voice of the phenomenal earth itself (as it is perceived and experienced *through* me on these pages) would be hermeneutically appropriate for a paper that aims to further the discourse between the primal self and the wild<sup>1</sup> world. However, that does not mean that nature as I refer to here is confined to something “out there”, rather nature is *everywhere*. I take the position throughout this essay, that nature includes all environments from city streets to wild woods and is not defined by geography alone. We are ourselves nature in its human form, *so* wherever we go, nature is there too.

There are three significant aspects to this (re)search. One, a deep concern with the ethical dimensions of our loss of relationship with the other-than-human world and within that, our loss of other-than-human contextualization and reflective awareness, especially as we lament and redress the current alienation of children from nature. Two, the quest for human wholeness as viewed through Carl Jung’s (1965) psychology of individuation as expressed through the rekindling of soul-rooted and earthy creativity in contribution for a greater good. And three, what role education can play in integrating these two and in

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of the term ‘wild’ throughout this study refers to my own definition of behaviors or qualities that are self-organizing, self-willed and spontaneous, not controlling. In terms of humans then, *wild* pertains, in my mind, to the idea of a greater sense of self moving to the foreground of the psyche while the (more controlling) ego makes a healthy move to

effect, offer provision for human maturation and true vocation (calling) while engendering ecological responsibility.

Throughout this work, I have let the experience of the process of self-reflection help elucidate meaning as I was willing to be led where I had not gone before and to be surprised by the potency of what came up. In other words, before I began, I resisted knowing where this journey might take me and what would be brought to bear in the end. By making my way, *feelingly*, through a true and fluid experience, I was risking dark tensions and dichotomies, humiliations and ridicule, astonishments and ignorance, loneliness and vulnerability, beauty and terror. I couldn't wait!

Despite decades of gathering significant knowledge within a culture of learning that rewards *knowing*, and in preparation for this final work, I was asked by virtue of these methods to surrender much of my own rational thinking and any shreds of cleverness. I had to be willing to part with something of my constructed character in order to become something else in the process. I had to make room enough within myself to *become* the conditions of my experiences.

This work is meant to literally interrupt "reality" (my own to begin with) and critically question what we are doing as educators at this time. Through my own engagement with and experiences of nature-based and reflective practices, I let the dross of what was no longer needed effectively *burn away*, leaving only what was necessary—a pure intentionality to learn—to give shape to this process by *letting the world have its way with me*.

Instead of simply writing about things in the past, I wanted to be surprised and fed by what important learning surfaced and accrued through an unedited, immediate and sensuous narrative of a lived, non-ordinary experience. Of course, the conundrum of the phenomenologist is that once experience has 'been lived' and phenomena have 'been recorded', it too becomes the interpreted past, making it nigh impossible to *write in the present* in any pure sense of the word! However, I consciously committed myself to a practice of wandering out every day to take in what I called the *news of the universe* (in a nod to Robert Bly's 1980 book with this as its title). The same way poets and mythologists write about their experiences, the same way many indigenous peoples understand themselves to be a part of nature in communion, I took up the world in my own indigenous

body, in identification with Other—noticing, connecting, ecologically perceiving, and thinking—and then, after a kind of hermeneutics of metabolization, I wrote.

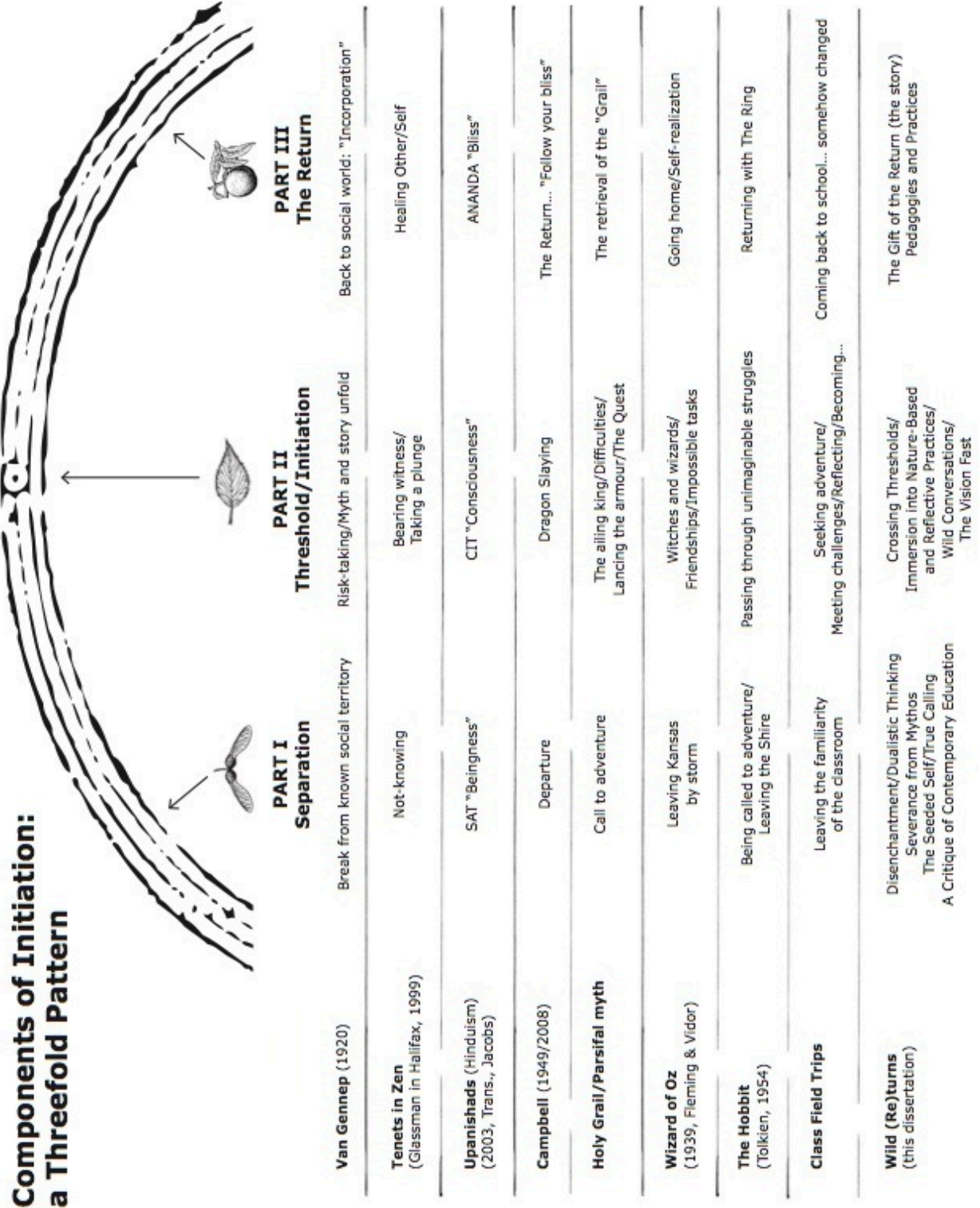
I “wrote” while I walked. I metaphorically “walked” this paper into existence each morning as I stepped out into the world to drink deep draughts of a “freshness that no one can destroy, that animals and trees share”, something that “...is already in the soul” (Bly, 1986, p. 3). Part of this work is the account of that experience in addition to other deep immersions I set forth upon over this same period of time. I have attempted to write precisely from the perspective of allowing myself, “like the heavens”, to become “unfastened and opened” (Neruda, 1970, p. 459) through a process unfolding...as researcher, as research *instrument*, and as research *site* simultaneously engaged in a deeply creative and wild way of being.

Not-knowing where this would go (or if it would “go” at all) was a good place to begin a heuristically inclined, hermeneutical work. It made room for unimagined possibilities and vital new sources to arise through a pure unmediated connection. And while I was often cautioned by colleagues against allowing this to become “my life’s work” in order to rush to the finish line, it instead surprisingly became a *living work of my life*.

I stumbled into this journey outfitted with a central curiosity; a conscious awareness of my examined assumptions, values and the forces that have guided me so far; a deep humility for the pathfinders before me; and the kind of blind courage that one acquires in answering the call of the soul. To not take the well-worn way of others requires a cosmic-sized passion (what lives out beyond the narrows of fear), perhaps even a healthy dose of naiveté; and most certainly a sense of adventure. And so I begin here, by offering the first bare lines, like the humble poet himself, of “one who knows nothing” (Neruda, 1970, p. 459) but nevertheless, simply *must* press on, loosely guided by the following questions while staying open to others that may arise.

*How can a more ensouled approach to education help to turn around the whole human being with potential for turning around the whole world? What would that require in terms of delivery (system) and deliverer? Where have we gone wrong and what can we do as educators (what do we need in education) to promote the individuated (mature), ecological self and guide students to seek their own transformation and true vocation? In essence, how do we invite soul to school?*

Figure 1  
 Schema of Ritual Components



## Introduction

This introduction is designed to provide an outline of the tripartite framework used to organize this study and an overview of research methods. Anecdotes of my early life are included as biographical notes to help situate an autoethnographic context of the self that is called to teach and perhaps shed more light on why I was compelled to write this thesis at this time.

### The Threefold Pattern of Initiation

...With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time...  
 (Eliot, 1944/1972, p. 59)

By tracking the gestalt<sup>2</sup> of the journey in which going, becoming, and arriving back again to the beginning we started, I have adopted the oldest universal myth-story with its threefold pattern of *separation* (or severance), *threshold* (or initiation), and *return* (or reincorporation) as the architecture for this work.

Rites of passage were first described by Arnold van Gennep in 1920 (trans. 1960) after his thorough examination of many different indigenous cultural traditions. He found that all initiatory journeys moved through and shared three distinct and primary stages, and each marked a particular crossing over from one stage of life to another. The mythologist Joseph Campbell (1972) later discovered that this three stage structure was prevalent in nearly all nature-based coming of age ceremonies throughout the world.

In researching initiatory journeys, I found that many people report unexpected effects such as the newfound capacity to feel more and empathize more deeply with others in caring for the world and what happens next to it. Some find clarity of purpose in their

---

<sup>2</sup> *Gestalt* from the German means “organic form” (Capra, 1996, p. 31) and recognizes that irreducible wholes made up of integrated parts comprise the pattern of all living organisms. Gestalt theory formed in the 1920s characterized by the assertion that the self was greater than its parts. As a therapy, it contributed to the study of associations, and with its holistic approach to human maturation through repeatedly coming full circle to our experiences, integrating personal experiences into meaningful wholes. Gestalt by its nature opposes fragmentation and reductionism and is part of the “holistic zeitgeist” (p. 32) from which general systems theory sprang.

lives and a deeper sense of belonging to the world. Many people report being changed forever (Campbell, 1972; Gibbons, 1974; Grimes, 2000; Halifax, 1999; Plotkin, 2003).

Rites of passages are sometimes referred to as “coming of age ceremonies” and are seen as a conscious movement toward adulthood. It is understood that this type of journey from adolescence to adulthood fosters an ability to take on more mature values and responsibilities, and to participate and contribute more to the community upon return. Initiations of this nature are intended to deepen our awareness of the wellbeing of all others (including all living beings) by recognizing our entangled and vital relationship with the whole cosmos. Campbell (1949/2008) recognized that this journey pattern held life-shifting (even status-shifting) experiences for people; this he called the “the hero’s journey”. He found that this central story of coming into human maturation through metaphoric experiences of—*departure, dragon slaying, and returning*—was archetypal in its essence because it existed not only laterally across cultures, but was one of the oldest human stories on record.

Within contemporary Western society, we have for the most part, forgotten to take up and live out this age-old pattern. According to the findings of Grimes (2000), Meade (2010), and Plotkin (2003) and many others writing about culture and ceremony, there is a profound lack of formal, initiatory opportunities for young people therefore, more and more are becoming adolescent-adults who remain psycho-spiritually and socially immature. Without the ritual of threshold crossing at significant times in life, they retain an adolescent mindset, ignorant of boundaries and responsibilities beyond themselves and/or their families. Concepts of community, environmental stewardship and a contributory life may be lost in the psyche of the uninitiated, unguided adult who refuses to see the consequences of his actions on all Others.

In *Sustainable Education: Revisioning Learning and Change*, educator Stephen Sterling (2001) maintains that there are the four main functions of education:

- 1) To replicate society and culture and promote citizenship—the *socialization* function;
- 2) To train people for employment—the *vocational* function;
- 3) To develop the individual and his/her potential—the *liberal* function; and
- 4) To encourage change towards a fairer society and better world—the *transformative* function. (p. 25)

For the purposes of this study, I will be looking into the function of education primarily in terms of number 3, the development of the individual and her potential (which I might also call the *self-realization* function) because it has been, for the most part, too long ignored. However, within a more formative and emancipatory educational context—by taking up learning as an initiatory journey—I can clearly see how self-knowing leads to *self-actualization* which I refer to throughout this paper as coming to one’s “true vocation” (e.g. following one’s true nature or in Campbellian terms finding your “bliss” in contribution to society), that reaches out beyond mere training to take into consideration, the human soul. My understanding of self-actualization is that it more often than not leads a person to change (for the better) and is in and of itself *transformative* (point number 4).

Just as it is impossible to separate out any one part of a living system, I could not easily tease apart the four functions that Sterling articulated, but they helped me to look toward what is intrinsic overall in terms of a well-rounded education (and consider what might be missing). Just as a rite of passage cannot be valued as a mere means to an end, perhaps education (another form of life’s journey) also ought to be viewed as an end in and of itself with processes and outcomes that are highly personal and particular to the student.

Cultural scholar Ronald Grimes (2000) explains, “To enact any kind of rite is to *perform*, but to enact a rite of passage is also to *transform*” (p. 7). Such serious ceremonies take us out of our comfort zone and plunge us down to look into the abyss of something greater and more ancient than ourselves, something outside of time or place. Rites of passage are considered by some, namely mythologist Meade (2010), and ecopsychologist Plotkin, (2003, 2008a,) to be no less than evolutionary in their provision for remembering our true calling and through reclamation of that wholeness of self, come to maturation. This is can also be said of divergent educational practices as well where potent and lasting change can occur.

Following along with the rites of passage motif, are three main chapters to this work: The Separation, The Threshold/Initiation, and The Return. A distinct symbol marks the end of every subchapter within these three sections and will, I hope, help the reader way-find on a journey that at times detours, doubles-back, and takes necessary side-trips. These are:



The seedpod depicts The Separation,



A leaf represents The Threshold/Initiation, and



Hanging fruit symbolizes The Return.

Throughout my research, as is common on a journey as deep as heurism can take us; I began to notice on a nearly daily basis diverse examples that held to the triadic theme of transformation. The sacred text of the Upanishads from the Hindu tradition, for example, reveals a way to enlightenment through three stages of development, namely: Sat (beingness), Cit (consciousness), and Ananda (bliss) (2007, A. Jacobs, trans). In the tenets of Zen, “not-knowing” and “bearing witness and taking the plunge”, precedes the final “healing other and self” (Glassman, 1999).

Another stunning example is found within the cyclic front and back loops of Panarchy Theory<sup>3</sup> (Holling & Gunderson, 2001) where stages of stability, collapse, and reorganization take place in repeated fractal patterns, symbolizing what is known in psychological terms as the essence of the initiatory journey. Within an educational context, the triad: ontology (the nature of reality); epistemology (how we know what we know and how we make meaning from that); and pedagogy (how we teach, act and live it through curriculum) became a meta-pattern that led me toward a more contextual understanding of the threefold nature of education.

Not least of all, popular culture has provided us with a plethora of examples of the human quest. Brave souls seeking true home, or setting out to destroy a dark and powerful ring, or who search tirelessly for the Holy Grail, etc. found respectively in *The Wizard of Oz* (Taurog, et al, 1939), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1937), and the 13<sup>th</sup> century Parzifal myth (von Eschenbach, trans. 1980). This archetypal pattern snagged my attention, entered my thoughts and dreams, showed up in what I read, and in the films I watched. I have included

---

<sup>3</sup> Panarchy, named for the Greek God of Nature, Pan for his unpredictable ever- changing ways, was created in antithesis to hierarchy to denote a sacred set of rules. In whole systems thinking, panarchy is a form of non-hierarchical organizing that follows a kind of sideways figure 8. In terms of the personal journey, it would follow that by first going out to an edge or decision point to gather data, we then come back up to a topmost or breakthrough point —the bifurcation point (middle of the 8) —only to collapse (if we’re lucky) into the chaotic backloop (also known as the dark night of the soul or dark-sea journey) that allows for required changes to take place by the resiliency for transformation as a new loop/story unfolds in the next front circle of the 8. The pattern does not go back along the same route to the same midpoints but ribbons off into a new set of front and back loops in a fractal mode. (Holling & Gunderson, 2001).



a schema on page 7 to depict some of these exemplars from ancient as well as modern contexts ranging from the spiritual traditions through to educational field trips.

### **On Context and Clarity**

Although I work and teach within a post-secondary context, it was necessary that I return at times to the K-12 system in my critique of education in the Separation section because our learning patterns harken back to our earliest experiences. Also, a great many of the curriculum theorists I have relied upon have focused their examinations on the early years, the outset of our learning trajectory. *Nevertheless, most of what I write refers to and is intended for the university student.* The practices and pedagogies I offer are designed for adults although with some revision, they may be useful for younger students as well.

The three chapters that follow this introduction are, inevitably, not completely clear-cut. As any interdisciplinarian will understand of their own adventures, it is precisely in the *inbetweenesses* in the non-linear, liminal spaces of *neither here nor there* (Aoki, 1993) that many things happen and where energetic patterns are revealed. This overlap is often necessary in the collage-like process of the journey itself in order for new life to occur and new meaning to be made. For instance, to leave home speaks to moving out toward the threshold experience and while the threshold is still “out there” another one has also been crossed the instant our brave adventure begins.

The nature of a heuristic journey itself is by no means straightforward. It loops in and out of things and like the circling hawk, its winged thoughts spiral down, down in repeating circles, diving and surfacing and then diving again to resurface later on... “over there”. Repetition was necessary on the way to catch an understanding I was hunting for. And not least of all, the “return” itself, a synthesis of this lived experience, requires some re-visitation of the other parts of the story. The *raptorous* nature of this writing as research, with its avian command of the horizon, rose and fell, encircled for pages, spotting and descending down to snag an idea. It sat perched in my consciousness, motionless and listening sometimes too. However, for me in the end, it became *rapturous!*

#### **a note of the use of the term “true”.**

Throughout this study and included in the title I use the word “true”. To be clear, by “true” vocation I am not suggesting there is any one or pre-determined universal truth or

only one way in which a person's life ought to go, rather I *am* suggesting that it is possible to follow the particular uniqueness of each person with their corresponding sets of unique proclivities and attributes (along with natural abilities, gifts and context) that help form deep identity toward meaningful work choices. Hence, when this unique sense of self—what I would call the 'soul' and what Quakers refer to as "that of God" (Palmer, 2000, p. 11), or some might call the inner light of a person—is discovered, cultivated and then self-actualized in relationship to the world, this can lead a person toward a more authentic expression of themselves through their work choices as opposed to trading their time for money and believing they simply must get a (or any) job. Determining one's more authentic vocation, to my mind, does not rely on external influences alone, rather it is more often received as a 'voice' calling from within that asks one to become the greater of oneself for the betterment of the whole, and is a person's own choice in the end. This yearning or longing to become something more and contribute more is referred to as the original selfhood (p. 10) and can reveal clues to the treasure of what we each already possess (what Campbell [1949/2008] referred to as "bliss") and are 'called' in this way to express as part of becoming more fully human and in this way, may help reveal more of a sense of how we may *be-long* in the great scheme of things. The word "true" might as easily be exchanged for the word "authentic" as I have used it here to describe vocation.

**a note on the use of poetry, prose and other evocative writing.**

I have included whole or partial poems of a great many poets (in addition to original poetry which is right justified throughout) in an effort to enhance this text and inform a deeper understanding of the human experience through poetry's ability to often name what seems indefinable. In all cases, I have reproduced poetry and select prose true to its published format, adhering to original spacing, punctuation, capitalization and spelling. In following the express wishes of each poet (as granted through their permission for usage), at times it was necessary to include a poem in its entirety rather than just a section of it. I erred on the side of offering the complete poem rather than forego its contribution. I have also included personal e-mails and journal entries in their original form. These aspects of presentation lie outside standard APA format and spacing.

**a note on pronoun usage.**

While shared language is a reflection of a culture's attitudes and values and can

serve to create mutual understandings and meaning, I have purposefully chosen to interchange the pronouns “he” and “she”, “his” and “hers” in a conscious effort to dispense with archaic conventions that represent all individuals as masculine. My approach addresses a more inclusive world where both the masculine and feminine co-exist equally.

### **Biographical Notes**

I came to teaching with the notion to teach to the possible. Like Wendell Berry (1970), I aim “to always be responsive to what might be” (p.19) within my students, to see and hear what glimmers in each of their potential. My first tendency is to see the good, and the particular beauty, in each one.

Although I entered post-secondary education later in my career, I have, right from the start, just known that this was my home place. I possess an open enthusiasm and love for learning and I readily share with others what I have found out. I have often been called “a natural teacher”, despite only officially arriving onto the classroom scene to help facilitate learning about sixteen years ago.

#### **early schooling.**

My home and education (to the end of high school) were in the city of Toronto. I happily attended public school until the great shock of being exposed to a heady social scene with a cast of thousands in a large high school completely put me off learning. That, and likely a combination of teenage hormones and my proclivity to experiment with non-ordinary states through the casual use of psychedelics (in an ill-conceived effort to initiate myself more in the ways of the world), sent me for a bit of tailspin. In an opportune moment during a school strike in the early months of grade 10, I left home for Alberta with my then eighteen-year-old boyfriend and some other friends in the hope of finding a more meaningful existence than that of sitting in suburbia waiting for a school I despised to reconvene. Of course, getting meaningful employment without much to go on education-wise was tough. However, I stayed out the year and then returned home in the fall to attend a private school called The Annex Village Campus situated in an old house on Madison Avenue near the U of T campus.

We fondly referred to The Annex as the ‘School for Misfits’. It was run by an educational visionary and self-confessed rebel, a former priest and educator named Dr.

Paul Speck who was completely hands-on by approach and whose larger than life enthusiasm for learning completely permeated every square inch of the place. Class sizes were small—usually 6:1 ratio students to teachers. We met for class in what were formerly living rooms, bedrooms, sunrooms, the basement and even the old kitchen of this once grand structure. Our teachers for the most part, were excellent and entirely committed to creating something different, something more intimate. Learning was alive and unpredictable as many of our subject areas crisscrossed and bumped into each other in the hallways. For example, our history teacher might, on a whim, invite the art class in to discuss 16<sup>th</sup> century artistic contributions to the world. Curriculum at times, seemed like art itself as if it emerged through opportunities that presented themselves, current events, and ideas we were all sharing. Everyone knew everyone else. When we all decided in English class to play hooky, this meant the entire class of six leaving our teacher in our rear view mirror. We seemed more like participants in our learning, although somehow, ministry guidelines were met and required curriculum delivered.

When I graduated from grade thirteen with scholarship money in hand, I was desperately seeking exposure to the kinds of harrowing life adventures and vital experiences I believed would be the better investment of my time and might bring me closer to my particular talents. Part of my impetus to move clear across the country was that I felt I could not tolerate one more restless minute of sitting in a classroom to scrape out the shape of my future life, no matter how great the school. And anyways, barring one or two extraordinary learning experiences in all of my schooling thus far, I had found that writers I admired were often my better teachers and so I could always read to learn more. Again, I headed west with guitar in hand and bags on my back, but this time I made it all the way to the coast. But I am getting ahead of myself and must go back further still to set the context of how and why I came to teaching.

### **babe in the woods.**

Far from the streetcars and asphalt of Toronto, my ecological perspective was shaped by childhood summers spent in and around the deep dark waters and mossy boreal forests of the great Northern Shield, particularly in the regions of the Haliburton Highlands, Algonquin Park, and Lake Huron. These wild places were alive with black bears, wolves, lynx, moose, great owls, pine martens, foxes, porcupines and the tiny winter wren.

Thankfully, my parents had the good wisdom to send me out of the city every July for a month to an all girl's camp on Lake Kashagawigamog where my boundless over-sized energy had enough room to run, hike, swim, sail, canoe, paint, pot with clay, and act in camp dramas. It was while tripping in cedar strip canoes out on big northern waterways with my brave young fellow adventurers, that I felt most alive. Never knowing exactly where we'd sleep each night, always vigilant for signs of animals and changes in weather—maybe even a little bit scared too but in a good way—this was what I loved to do and where I loved to do it.

Picture a circle of fire-lit sun-kissed faces singing, laughing, and quietly sharing stories of the day. This was an early and lovely predilection of the future life of one who both teaches and practices the way of council (circle). I remain convinced that this form of open and real communication, with its ability to hear all voices and witness the stories of others in a deepening spiral, is one way we will make *and become* positive change for the world.

Camping out on the land with other young ones, my heart felt as vast and endless as the starry night sky I looked up into until the exhaustion of the day engulfed me in a deep, safe sleep. I saw myself in perspective under the moon and stars, as no more and no less than anything else, as belonging to the entire world...with everything in its right proportion. It is no wonder that at camp I was moved to name the magic of this world through the language of poetry. It was there that I began to write a poem a day.

**of two worlds, of two minds.**

As the last of three children, I was often left to play alone and found that for the most part, I lived in two worlds. One was the boisterous, happy, chatterbox world of a curious child-learner and the other the silent imaginative one of self-examination, dark brooding and deep creative longing. Dark, due to the isolation of a secret inner world of dialogue (between self and world in all its forms) that I could not abate and somehow I believed this to be a peculiar personal failing. I often saw patterns in things that illuminated something deeper in my thinking that felt at first like I was really onto something, yet whatever it was often eluded me if I tried too hard to figure it all out or bring it to the surface (bring it into common language) too soon. I was sure if I shared what I was onto others would shun me, forever fixing my status as a social outcast. I kept these fascinations mostly to myself, only

sharing them later through poetry and as lyrics.

Before I knew the language to express this, my research began to be shaped by my observations of these two worlds, of my two minds. Sometime later, I happily found out that Jung (1965) had experienced exactly this in his young life as well. I could have nonchalantly chalked it up to the nature of one born under the seemingly dichotomous twins of the sun sign, Gemini, and stopped there. However, I have instead turned toward this aspect of myself in choosing to consciously walk between worlds, to cultivate both the social mind and the contemplative more soulful aspects of myself despite imagining that at times, (particularly in adolescence) that I was certainly going crazy. In fact, I was often anxious of a time when I might be forced to choose between the two.

Reconciling my mind and heart in order to give way to my soul has become my lifelong work and guides my understanding of the human need to hold (this and other critical) tensions of opposites. It reaffirmed for me, that just as “eaches” are needed to make up wholes, there is a true aesthetic and enlargement to “both-and” rather than “either-or” thinking. The reflective praxis of journaling became a godsend that offered a way to bear witness to my own process in terms of meaning making.

**patterns everywhere.**

I have always been a keen observer, someone aesthetically known for her “good eye” in seeing beauty and form. Early on living processes and the intricate nature of patterns found in needled duff and green places fascinated and intrigued me. I devised my own intimate and secret languages - a kind of perennial discourse with birds and willow trees, with the wind and blossoms, with trees that spoke to me in ancient and forgotten tongues. This seemed to help me form enduring friendships and always kept me happily occupied for hours in such good company. These childhood elucidations and nature experiences grounded my belief in a reverence for all of life in a kind of green consciousness that allowed me to see myself as belonging to (and in conversation with) the world.

Every Sunday morning at camp from the tender age of 6 until my teens, the whole place would silently and ceremoniously assemble in an outdoor chapel, perching ourselves on a mossy hillside under the canopy of trees by the shores of the lake. My senses were opened by hot July lake-winds that lifted up the big old cedar’s generous skirts. I was

mesmerized by both the rhythmic lapping of the lake and the drone of distant motorboats.

Our camp director would address us all from a hand-hewn cedar pulpit. Instead of sermons, she delivered stories of magical faeries and wild adventures—stories that never failed to bring a happy ending with a solid life lesson. Sitting and listening under the forest canopy, immersed in nature, among my camp mates, I could tap into a constant narration from the forest under-story—a mix of sweet birdsong and insect industry. I swear I could hear the hum and thrum of the very earth with so much aliveness all around me. The message I received was clear. This is where I belonged, where I ought to be.

I often found my mind drifted in fascination or my eye would catch a busy ant struggling to carry a seed so much bigger than her own self on her back. Inexplicable to me at the time, I felt so much for this tiny insect, for her refusal to let anything divert her tenacity to bring nourishment to the wider colony. And while I can't really remember much of the details of any one particular story from those Sundays, I know that by the end of chapel my heart felt full; something meaningful had transpired for me. I left that hillside place feeling nearer to the source of all life and all its creatures. It was the closest I came to experiencing something that felt "holy".

Back home, the forest was always a great allurement, full of rich life that fed my imagination, gave order to my darker world, and ultimately reassured me. I would slip away to visit Lady Slippers, Jack-In-The-Pulpits, trilliums, tadpoles, mosses, berries, lichens and snakes all living beneath tall hopeful pines and poplar. Forest-world helped me to make sense of things especially as the adult world with its worries and tensions began to encroach on the freedoms of childhood.

In *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, (1965), Jung found trees in particular to be mysterious as they "seemed (to be) direct embodiments of the incomprehensible meaning of life" (pp. 67-8). He felt closest to the meaning of life in the woods, as do I to this day. He offered that we ought to literally go into the woods for a while because "sometimes, a tree tells you more than can be read in books" (2002, p. 6).

I am still most at home in the forest. It is where I am more able to be the "me of me". As a child, I sought advice from (listened) in the cool shade of trees. I felt I belonged in and maybe even *came from* the woods and still some days wonder perhaps if my closest ancestors aren't a copper beech, or Garry oak, or Douglas fir! In the woods, I could see

everything as alive and animated with a life of its own. I still see every possibility—and possibly everything—in a seed, in the life of the ant, in us all. For my young uncontaminated ears and open, untainted heart, forays to the forest seemed to attune me to hearing a deep clear inner voice that spoke fluent owl, knew dog logic, sensed ant intuition, and could easily converse in pink with the flowering wild rose. These foundational experiences fed what has become a lifelong penchant to wander the forest as if it were home. It takes intentional and conscious practice as an adult to keep up these kinds of wild conversations and to really listen, because often as we get older and “shades of the prison-house begin to close” (Wordsworth, 1807, p.148), we tend to forget.

Not least of all, these early nature-based experiences taught me that while I subscribe to no formal congregations (other than say a quorum of birch, a cluster of Oregon grape, a field of chocolate lilies, or a flock of geese), wherever human and other-than-human nature gather to converse and share their stories and songs, that is where I believe the sacred lies. This is my community, this is as close as I get to being in church.

### **early rites of passage.**

There were so *many points of contact* for a child at unstructured play in nature, every inch of me seemed to be in touch with the world. Back in the city at summer’s end, I would often be the last one to want to come in at night, repeatedly breaking the unspoken suburban streetlight curfew for kids in my neighbourhood. I feel at home roaming around in the dark even today.

My mother wisely knew the benefits of keeping an energetic force such as myself busy (and off the streets) within a social mix of other like-minded children during the other eleven months of the year, so she volunteered to become ‘Snowy Owl’, the head of a very full Brownie troupe in order to guarantee me a spot. The counterpart to the long-running Scout movement (founded at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Lord and Lady Baden-Powell), Brownies were designed for younger girls to develop healthy friendships, gain skills, and experience community service before going on to become Girl Guides. Weekly meetings were for the most part a place to learn basic things such as sewing, gardening, or how to build and light a fire, etc. as well as learning how to get along with and serve others. Merit badges with embroidered crests could be attained through learning. Each girl would hand sew her badges onto a sash that crossed in front of her brown cotton uniform (skirt, blouse,



scarf and beret). The uniform, for me, was the most hateful part of it all, however, it was little hardship compared to the wonderful group activities I experienced including the very serious ceremonies of graduation that took place after school in the church basement. After reciting the Brownie Motto (“Lend a hand”) and The Promise (“I promise to do my best....”) one at a time, we slowly crossed over a small wooden bridge in answer to Snowy Owl’s summoning secret call (“too-wit, too-woow, too-wit, too-woow”). Once safely over the gap, each Brownie had to leapfrog over a magic red and white-spotted<sup>4</sup> papier maché toadstool to finally be initiated and to take her rightful place in her smaller group with names like ‘sprites’ or ‘faeries’. At this point, we earned our golden pins as a symbol of forever belonging.

While scouting organizations have come under fire for their para-militaristic roots, the ability for me to join in with others and have very magical experiences such as this profoundly affected my worldview. I can see now that this became another thread I followed throughout my adult life (consciously or not) of gathering together with others in nature to enact ceremonies and threshold crossings in order to belong more fully to the world! It was all there—rich metaphors and rites of passage elements that came into my life at ages 6-8—aided and abetted by my dear mother!

**a formative incarnation.**

When I look back, finding my way to education as a career was not linear by any stretch and so many things I have done and learned have contributed to my becoming a teacher. For instance, during the late 1980s I was the sole proprietor of an emporium-style boutique in Toronto’s gentrified west end. As both buyer and seller, to me every item had a story about its origins or particular beauty, function, practicality, or uniqueness. I took a keen interest in working with my staff to share the knowledge I had gleaned about our merchandise including the story of how an item found its way into the store. I would often hear customers say that they felt they had literally gained “an education” with their purchase. In the store, we all took pride in being able serve people far beyond a straight commercial exchange within an atmosphere of genuine care and enthusiasm for people and their needs. I credit this time of my life with teaching me a great deal about business, trends

---

<sup>4</sup> I later realized that this toadstool was fashioned after none other than the hallucinogenic magic mushroom, the *amanita muscaria*. Perhaps a precursor to a lifelong penchant for experiencing non-ordinary states?

and culture, managing, marketing and story-telling and it was here, I believe, that I began to cultivate a deeper attunement for verbal and non-verbal clues. My proprietary retail experience showed me that I held a penchant for (and was creatively good at) making something from scratch that people wanted to be a part of.

**non-traditional learning.**

“We all have to find a world in which we can really live” writes Thomas Moore (1996) in *Re-enchantment of the Everyday*, and make “the descent out of a misty place of origins into actual life—a process that engages each of us to find a way, through our ideas, influences, hopes, fears, memories, and especially our wishes for perfection to enter wholeheartedly into actual life” (p. 27). My original impetus in going back in my late thirties as a non-traditional graduate student to the education faculty at Simon Fraser University to study curriculum and instruction, was at first practical. I needed to obtain the necessary teaching credentials to sustain my instructional work with marginalized and unemployed adults in my job at that time. I never imagined in my wildest dreams that what began as a means to an end would become a means to an opening toward more of my true nature. My return to school came on the heels of an intense experience of being stepmother to pre-teen and teenage children, and living in a log house in the country outside of a northern pulp mill town. Graduate school was simply saturated in the kind of possibilities of mind, heart, and soul that I had never even conceived. I was whole-heartedly encouraged by the most excellent Celeste Snowber, with her deeply phenomenological and artful leanings, to fully express my uniqueness. Under her wing, despite many of my own “authentic failures”, the more embodied, poetic and ecologically-minded teacher began to hatch in me and dared me to leave the nest of convention to fly into the adventure of the exceptional work of education.

Celeste was the first teacher I had who really took time to see who each of us really were at our core. Her rigorous yet exquisite coaxing helped steer us toward our particular destinies of who we were meant to be as teachers. She introduced a more sensuous and embodied inquiry to our learning that stretched us all. Encouraged to learn to become more myself and glean a sense of what was calling me to become a teacher (rather than telling myself what I ought to do and how I ought to behave), Celeste’s arts-informed curriculum and experiential pedagogy led to encounters with my deeper interests and

longings. I was taken in by her love of teaching and her love for each of her students. The pattern was there to be taken up; this became my own permission to bring a pedagogy of love and care.

During the two years of the M.Ed. (Curriculum & Instruction) program, I had what at first seemed like the complete misfortune of breaking both my arms simultaneously (compounding an already broken heart due to a recent divorce) and cracking my skull in a skating accident. This setback severely limited my ability to be engaged in class, let alone work. I feared my broken body would jeopardize my ability to finish my coursework, yet paradoxically, because I could not be out in the world too much, it allowed my focus to be directed more toward an inward descent to the depths of my own soul and to make meaning from this wreckage that was my life. During my slow healing process, many extraordinary insights arose and in the end, my thesis (and what became the quintessential guide for my pedagogical vision and teaching practice) explored epistemological intersections of a more *embodied and sensual inquiry* in nature through the lens of contemplation and self-reflexivity. I was supported by a teacher who saw in me the potential to bring something authentic, something of the wild nature of myself to teaching.

The ‘accident’ later felt like something strangely engineered by my soul for a greater learning opportunity than could have ever existed in the classroom or in textbooks. Landscapes and mindscapes, the present and our presence, embedded and embodied—all confluences of (in)formation that permeated my life and curriculum, deepened my sense of interconnectedness with the world, whispered to me that nothing less than the sacred was at stake in the privilege of teaching human souls. This was the precursor for this more extended work.

I could hardly wait to share what I had found in the classroom with the others. However my confidence had a ways to go to catch up with my enthusiasm. Often I felt out of my league when teaching as if I was somehow failing my students despite their mostly positive feedback. I was tentative to further a wild discourse with the other-than-human world or introduce the nature-based practices that had propelled me along because I lacked the humility (and fierceness) that comes from trusting my own intuition fully. Ironically, my ego was still foreground, holding me back, as I considered that I didn’t know enough (while in a position of being paid “to know”).

### **apprenticing to psyche.**

In order to better understand the vast terrain of the human soul and human behaviours, I knew it was necessary to augment my degree by studying psychology (depth, positive, narrative, and transpersonal). I completed an Integrated Body Psychotherapy Practitioner Certification that entailed three years of academic work and examination, one hundred direct supervision hours working with clients, and one hundred personal therapy hours. This concentration offered a model for firsthand investigation into human nature by tracing early experiences (both negative and positive) and inborn proclivities through to present-day patterns of behaviour using the breath, the body, the mind, and the soul. This allowed for the development of a more embodied and compassionate approach of self-awareness, personal responsibility, self-actualization and maturity. Particularly my own!

My continued love of learning and curiosity took me further afield to Naropa University in Colorado where I enrolled in the only Ecopsychology (EP) course I could find at the graduate level. EP holds that we are part of this biospheric, self-organizing, living system, a mysterious and animate world, that summons us to let its imagination mingle with our own in leafed or winged or watery intelligence. It laments the eradication of human wildness and relatedness beyond our own species, and posits that this stunts us in our ability to become fully realized humans. EP also holds that this makes possible our blatant disregard for the reverence of all life in favour of the kinds of behaviours that cause the ongoing ecocide of creatures and lands. In essence, EP shows us that what we do to the one, we do to the other in the most planetary of ways as the losses we have influenced have put our own lives at peril.

The underlying philosophy of this entangled field of study of *world-soul-knowing* (my own loose translation of *eco-psych-ology*) approaches the world, as many indigenous cultures have, as if everything is alive, interconnected and purposeful (i.e. everything has soul) and because we are also a part of the world, we are just one expression of world soul in human form. This premise became my ethical centre of gravity, my “horizon of significance” (Taylor 1991, p. 39), a “background of intelligibility” (p. 37) against which I measure and defend what holds importance as I uphold curriculum that steps outside of the margins of civilized culture to keep the earth in mind and always give soul (human and other-than-human) first place. Because the foundation of EP relies on invisible strands that

connect us all, the field itself has not (until recently when quantum science has begun to *prove* webby entanglement), been widely received.

For the last six years, to extend my knowledge of EP, I have attended and participated in a dozen or more nature-based, soul-centred, multi-day experiential explorations in wild landscapes and in the wilds of soul with the Animas Valley Institute in Colorado under the tutelage of depth psychologist and wilderness guide, Bill Plotkin and his most excellent guides. Their aim is to create the conditions that evoke the experience of non-ordinary perception through extended periods of time in nature with the express hope that in that context one will meet their own soul. And, if you are lucky, you may have a kind of wordless heart-to-heart conversation with your deepest self and the world. Their particular work provided the catalyst to venture out to wild spaces over extended time to develop a greater sense of my own identity, (an identity that transcended the everyday persona I had so carefully constructed for most of my adult life). Expressions of my experiences—both beautiful and terrifying—arrived to me through symbol and metaphor, poetry and journal writing, imagery and dreams, archetype and myth, and encounters with Others. The sometimes unbearable tensions of being in the wilds, in the dark, alone without anywhere to hide from myself, helped me to let go of what I no longer needed. The husk of my more egocentric self was shed in darkness, allowing for a deep structural shift in me that helped mature and lessen my ego, letting my greater self emerge with her gifts in soul-rooted response for the world. So many of my own old and limited beliefs about myself and others fell away like old dead skin. My breakthrough culminated with a nine-day vision quest that included a four-day fasting period, spent completely away from human contact, intended to bring on non-ordinary states. It was an enactment of the initiatory descent into the deep mysteries of nature and psyche that many indigenous cultures insist is a necessary rite of passage into adulthood. This pointed me toward what I now consider is a more complete and authentic Hilary. This journey (and the forty-seven pages of journal notes and drawings from the field) was foundational to this study.

In addition, I undertook an intensive 15-day residency program with Earth elder, eco-philosopher, teacher, author and activist, Joanna Macy based on her masterwork *The Work That Reconnects* (1998). It was here with Joanna that I began to develop a more profound understanding of the necessity of identification with Other, and found a way to do

the required work of healthy grieving over the losses in our world. This allowed me to expand my compassion to hear the stories of all people, even if their motivations ran counter to my own. Her highly creative and experiential teachings unify through deep listening practices. I regained my ability to hear the voices of my ancestors, my peers, my “enemies”, the living earth (as well as imagine those of future beings) in order to shape and influence my own behaviours and begin to embody active hope with the eyes to see beyond our time.

I have also been drawn to study the unconscious mind through ‘dream tending’ programs at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, CA., led by Stephen Aizenstat (who co-founded the institute with Joseph Campbell among others). The university is inspired by contributors such as Jungian analyst and author, Marion Woodman, Jungian depth psychologist, James Hillman, Jungian psychoanalyst, depth psychologist and dream worker, Robert Bosnak and many other scholars of the unconscious. It is a mecca for the last hundred years of inner work and depth psychology.

Prior to my taking the M.Ed., I spent nearly a decade participating in human development programs designed to better understand the self in relationship through elegant models of communicating at The Haven Institute on Gabriola Island, BC. Being willing to speak out loud (with witnesses) what was true underneath one’s outward persona (especially in relationship to others) was a liberating, yet difficult re-patterning process. It took me years of practice, but helped to lay a strong foundation to anchor other learning.

#### **listening for “true vocation”.**

But oh, “...what a long time it can take to become the person one has always been!” (Palmer, 2000, p. 9). My own call may have been heard long ago yet as an eight year old in the forest. However, I was unable to put my childish finger on, or really understand, what that early transmission was about and so I relegated my deep intuition about the interconnectedness of things into a shadowy silence for over four decades, chalking it up to a simple love of nature and desire to camp out more.

Today, I lead, supervise and teach in university settings. My central role is as Director of Continuing Studies at Royal Roads University (RRU) helping to set the context for the design, development, and delivery of over three hundred innovative, short courses,

events, lectures, conferences and certificates in both face-to-face and online formats for the career-minded and the curious public. I work on a significant amount of customized and contract training for business, governments, industry and communities where learning about the self is critical to the success of others. I have found that if we don't begin with this first step, then we cannot reach the level of trust required for people to feel they can speak their truth, fully express themselves, and think together in safety. Without this, it is likely workers will not commit to working together in organizations that are riddled with contemporary workplace challenges such as the real pressures of doing more with less, endless competition, organizational silos and separations, and ambitious growth (often at any cost), etc. Our academic, non-credit unit is responsive to such requests for learning in its mission to round out a more full and dynamic complement of learning at the university reaching well beyond the capabilities of more slow moving traditional teaching and learning options. Continuing Studies purposefully sits at what I like to refer to as the *edge* of learning at Royal Roads. And just like the edge of an ecosystem where most of the new life and activity occurs (i.e. the ability to try new things as well as being flexible enough to die to what no longer serves), we can respond quickly to the needs of the community and the trends we see, culling what no longer serves. I often refer to our team as *edge*-ucators.

And while I teach and co-teach at both the undergraduate (University of Victoria and RRU) and graduate levels (RRU), I don't really believe that I can actually "teach" anything per se, rather my real work is to co-create the conditions for students to learn more about themselves and the world (no matter the subject area) through the powers of poetry, reflective writing (journaling), and self-awareness practices as viewed through the fields and frameworks of ecopsychology, depth psychology and integral ecology. I view my work (and life) through the lens of Jung's profound work on personality types, archetypes, dreams, myths and maturation. My main role is to encourage the students' perceptiveness and truth-telling using their multiple intelligences, deep imaginations, and their senses, aided in large part by seeking the wisdom of the wild Earth itself. I support students to be conscious and present, curious, critical, and compassionate. I allow them time and freedoms to "be enlivened and enlarged by their pondering" (Berry, 1970, p. 25), in order to expand their awareness and aliveness, which in effect acknowledges that there is real genius in their experiences, which are original, and unlike anyone else's on Earth. And

perhaps even more importantly, I encourage students to deep listening for their call to true vocation which once embodied and made visible, might uniquely contribute the necessary vision and leadership for a much needed cultural renaissance.

No matter the teaching topic, my aim is to “educate” or draw out the powers that lie within each student. I often do this unobtrusively so as not to disturb the sleeping dogs that lay guarding old school standards and orthodoxies of ‘right and wrong’. For instance, what especially differentiates a federal-provincial government funded employment training program we offer through Continuing Studies, is a whole-person design that not only provides the necessary skills for re-employment to individuals, but allows a robust context for knowing who they are, how they got here, and how they may make conscious, compassionate and confident choices for the future. As well as teaching the students about the benefits of listening through coaching skills, in a true experiential style, a personal executive coach accompanies each of them as they make progress. We encourage the students to follow the timeless wisdom of country singer Dolly Parton to “find out who you are and then do it on purpose”(Cope, 2012, p. 79). These aren’t just overly positive parting words as a record-breaking sixty percent of these students find meaningful employment.

As a thesis supervisor, I often find myself in meetings with overwhelmed graduate students who find themselves at a complete loss about their thesis topic despite nearing the end of their studies. There still seems to be a wholesale confusion about the overall validity (and credibility) of qualitative research, fed by fearful notions of an omnipotent faceless degree-granting body within the institute that will effectively rule out writing about things that a student could feel passion for or value in a real-world way.

As I sit with students to listen to what is ‘cooking’ (for) them, I begin to notice what I would say ‘*shimmers*’ through as an impassioned tone, a flushed complexion, a word caught in the throat, a heartfelt plea. Especially when I see frustrated tears, I gently go *there* (regardless of how uncomfortable or undesirable and dark a place ‘there’ may be at first) and tease out more information despite how “crazy” they may think it seems. I am careful to offer exactly what I hear back to the student *in their own words*. Most students suddenly perk up as if hearing a kind of ‘wisdom from the gods’. I remind them that these are *their own words reflected back to them*, that this is their own genius come to call. I trust turning toward this most of all, although following the threads of the student’s proclivities does not



answer to any ordered progression that can be laid out in advance and means, that if all goes well, we should not know what will happen next. Not yet, anyways.

To me, the student is never more marvelous than in their simple wish to find a way toward their much larger journey. It is a privilege to be able to think, imagine, and speak in the atmosphere of possibility, to bear witness to the threshold between experience and possibility on this leg of their trip. My work then is clearly *not* to transform or turn out a finished product, rather I am concerned with potential and the creation of those conditions that invite the student to keep going toward that potential, toward the unexpected (which is often at odds with institutional efficiencies and timelines) even if it is sometimes dark, often mysterious, and mostly unknown.

**going outside.**

I remember the highlight of my high school education were the field trips that took us outside, somewhere far away from the deskbound confines of the airless classroom, to place where “anything might happen”. On those rare occasions, when we left the building, there was a palpable excitement, a rowdy exuberance in the air (and in my body) pertaining to our ‘release’ from the institute (of course), but there was also the anticipation of something mysterious and wild – something yet unknown. Those experiences indelibly infused my practice to include teaching in the field *in every class I teach*. It was for me, the beginning of coming to understand and trust that learning can happen in many places and that somehow, when we went outside, my own capacity for learning and my attention to what we were doing (my relationship to it) seemed more real, more amplified, and like the field itself, more fertile. My inklings are confirmed now in my practices and in the feedback I receive from students who say they have been forever changed by our outdoor learning experiences together. But those early field trip experiences were always relegated to the mirky waters outside of mainstream and viewed as separate from the rest of our important learning. We quite honestly felt that we were “getting away with something”. To my recollection, the results of our experiences were never captured in any consistent way, leading me to suspect that these brief untethered interludes were not considered terribly valuable in the overall curriculum.

I have always had a sense of adventure. I love field trips, road trips, canoe trips, hikes and when there isn’t much time, a shorter walk in nearby nature. When I was

growing up I could not get enough of favourite films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (Taurog, et al, 1939) or *It's A Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946) that portrayed unexpected adventures of leaving home in search of something precious. Of course, they shared common elements such as: harrowing experiences that one narrowly escapes from (but for the grace of friends, allies—even angels—and sometimes sheer luck), steep challenges and riddles that lead to seemingly impossible tasks or magical thinking, and even darkness or dark enemies with great powers. In the end, despite detours and missteps, the hero/ine always comes home with deeply personal lessons learned (a treasure more profound than any possession). It is obvious to me now that either the pattern was impressed upon me through those celluloid depictions of brave journey stories or was I born with some innate proclivity toward this type of adventure? I identified so strongly with these movies that by watching them over and over again I was in some way temporarily satisfying my own itch. But apparently, that itch was not completely scratched. I was always game for further adventures of my own and I leapt at every chance I got—still do.

Now, my work as an educator, ecopsychologist, and psychotherapist is both longitudinal and land based. In an effort to bring soul to the foreground, I am concerned with the plight and particularity of humans and the other-than-human world in relationship. I believe this work takes time and space. Much of it takes place outside of bricks and mortar using both original and borrowed exercises that may entail storytelling, deep listening and mirroring, silence and bearing witness, creative writing and poetry, wandering, play, contemplation and reflection, and not least of all, ceremony and ritual, where one never knows what mysteriousness might unfold. (Many exercises and suggestions of this kind can be found in Part III of this paper, *The Return*).

Through on-going, lifelong academic learning and teaching, I have gained extensive knowledge and understanding of adult, community and continuous education within a post-secondary organization and culture. However, I have also come to understand that it is not enough to learn only models and theories, read literature and obtain degrees. I must also deeply know (and continue to know) myself and be on the road toward my own wholeness and maturation if I am to help others find and carry forward their soul-rooted gifts. We need more gifted teachers who can even out the lop-sidedness of our patho-

adolescent society by setting the context for maturation to unfold in others *as well as themselves*. This is conscious and courageous work.

**working for change.**

Conversely, it is also not enough to only hold an arts-informed education—practical skills and applications are required in order to take that knowledge out into the world in a significant and sustaining way. The world needs both halves in order to make itself whole. Education needs the arts and humanities as much as it needs science, engineering, math, and business as well as all the technical trades.

Teacher, writer, farmer and self-proclaimed mad-poet, Wendell Berry (1970) came to look upon the university as a machine and that he knew he must “work against to work within” (p.18). However, I find that as a tireless infiltrator seeking change at the school level, I can best serve by working from within as a positive deviator in order to help transgress the mechanisms that stunt. I have found that a genuine yet respectful premise of first seeking to understand is a most creative remedy in the face of such adversity and grows compassion all round. My mantra in furthering the argument every chance I get comes from systems thinker and leadership guru, Margaret Wheatley, who advises we must “proceed until apprehended” (personal communication, September, 2010), but she is always careful to add, we must do so in a peaceful way like a Shambhala warrior<sup>5</sup> armed with both insight and compassion.

This paper is not meant as another cleverly disguised form of dogma. I am not interested in a new way to add more facts and data or of furthering yet another solipsistic way of coming to knowing. The phenomenological, embodied, and related practices I am passionate about are designed to allow students a kind of spaciousness in order to know something from the inside out and are meant to offer time for things to render, transform and appear. I mean the kind of reflective curriculum that invites something to surface from within rather than tries to fill an empty student vessel. “Teaching,” writes John Gatto (1992,

---

<sup>5</sup> The Shambhala warrior is the metaphor of the heroine who understands the inter-existence of all beings, infiltrates the corridors of ‘barbarian’ power that are filled with weapons of annihilation and technologies of devastation as the world hangs by a thread. She does so with great courage and fearlessness in order to get to the heart of the powers to dismantle those weapons made by the human mind with the powers of her human mind using just two implements. One - the fires of compassion that fuel and motivate the warrior to do what she is meant to do and, second - the cool insight of radical interdependency of all phenomena that knows that even the smallest act of intention holds ripples of wide implication. (Macy, 2012; Wheatley, 2012).

p. xii), is metaphorically “more like the art of sculpture, where by the *subtraction* of material, an image already locked in the stone is enabled to emerge.”

My earnestness to teach (and learn) is borne of a deep and long-running desire to serve students and to foster a wider discourse in the academy that more readily appreciates, values and embraces the “heart”, “emotionality”, “maturation”, and “soul” of the students in its teaching models. I continue to look for (and encourage in other teachers) more opportunities in education to take learning outside of the confines of the classroom.

It has been only in the past few years that a palpable yet invisible shift has occurred in me to not settle for less than bringing my fearlessness, authenticity and philosophical convictions to teaching. From that place, (and I believe from the amount of practice I have had), teaching seems to come together in me with more ease and joy somehow, for which I am truly grateful.

But that is not enough for me. I have come to understand that while I could simply live a noble life-creating curriculum and teaching programs, my soul was telling me that I had to go further. I believe my own call to teach has propelled me on to write this, to look into the implications of such an approach to education as I have suggested here and what that might mean for a world that is in crises and disconnection at so many levels. Looking back at my history and context, I see that I might be made for this time, for precisely these challenges and troubles. Strangely, I welcome the chance to address the darkness all around, to sit fearlessly in the fires of the unknown and continue to carve space (especially where there are naysayers) for students to be witnessed (and encouraged) as they hear and answer their own calls. For a start, I hope that through this humble contribution that the possibility to create a different world by bringing soul to school is more easily taken up. It is never too late for a better world, but it is already late enough in my life and it is time I embarked on a deeper journey still.

I have never been a conventional scholar by any stretch of the imagination. I have come to understand (autobiographically) that I was probably always going to be a teacher despite how twisted the path was that got me here. Philosophically, I hold education as meant to educe each student’s own unique genius and that teachers are in part responsible for creating the conditions where these young ones’ particularities will be seen and heard. I

know we must help lead them forth to maturity through an exploration of their true gifts in myriad and creative ways that address divergent ways of knowing and multiple intelligences. By providing an arts-based (*hearts-based*), whole person approach to education that takes risks, appreciates beauty, builds friendships, and allows for those creative tensions and necessary difficulties that generate new life I believe that we will all become better equipped and more resilient to deal with the consequences of our world situation (Daloz, et al, 1996; Nussbaum, 2010,; O’Sullivan, 2008; Sterling 2001). There is nothing more powerful than the human spirit in its courage to make things happen, to make real change, but it starts from within. I believe that I was being summoned by a part of my life that wanted to, and must, live through me—the part that is charged with furthering a world-shifting approach to education, yet I needed the credentials to go with me all the way. To me, learning as an initiatory journey toward maturation and true vocation holds far-reaching implications that quite possibly form part of our ability to participate in our own evolutionary processes. If that is true, then it is not only my obligation to examine this philosophy here but this also becomes a way for me to offer my own deep service to what is humanly possible.

### **Qualitative Methodologies: The Deep Structure**

Using a hermeneutical, phenomenological lens of inquiry and blending analysis using multiple modes of inquiry (Allport, 1942) to more deeply look into what dwells in the in-between spaces of world and self, pedagogy and practice, this research honours the ambiguity of the inner journey that is never finished or fixed but rather suggests more of an ongoing complicated conversation with the mysteries of world, soul, calling, and teaching.

I set out to discover — through lived experience using several methods of inquiry — more about calling and true vocation in an effort to imagine what earth-sized implications there might be when students are invited to embody their life’s purpose and through action contribute their best and full selves to the whole ecology at this critical point in earth’s history.

Rather than seek traditional paradigms of research that looked for cause-effect relationships, I took up the position of a “...qualitative oriented, heuristic scientist (who) seeks to discover the nature and meaning of the phenomenon itself” and “from (a) direct first-person account” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 38) invited this research *to (re)search me* from

the inside out rather than from the outside in (as is often the case with more traditional methods).

As I embarked on this study, I didn't really have to search for methodologies as I found myself *being chosen by* them through a felt sense of what was right, necessary and loyal to my experiences. I engaged in a dynamic process aligned with Donald Polkinghorne's (1983) inclusionary belief that human science requires multiple systems of inquiry, multiple ways of coming to know the world through multiple perspectives, and a willingness to let "the questions inform which methods are appropriate" (p. 289).

The main method (hermeneutical phenomenology as captured through the lens of a heuristic journey) and the content (discovery and self-actualization toward true self and purpose) became concordant with critical human science research known as "radical naturalism" (de Quincey, 2002), which seeks out "a *science of mind* to match our science of matter" (p. 13). It recognizes that "matter is intrinsically sentient ...is both subjective and objective" (p. 48) at once and that essentially, "we exist as embodied subjects—as subjective objects or feeling matter" (p. 45).

It follows then, that as we cannot have object without subject, that we can never be completely objective or separate from the subjects we are studying and instead, the more valid research will include both the storyteller herself and "...non-rational and non-sensory ways of knowing" (ibid, p. 150) where truth can exist beyond material evidence and includes a worldview that welcomes diverse perspectives involving "complementary and interrelated, interweaving realities" (Kazlev, 2009, n.p.).

An integral approach to research, with its return to interiority that seeks multiple perspectives and viewpoints from all levels, drew me to the integral four-quadrant model (see Figure 2) with its ability to combine approaches. For example: the "I- intentional" (subjective - interior), the "It-behaviourial" (objective - exterior), the "We-cultural" (collective, intersubjective - interior) and the "Its- social collective" (interobjective - exterior) (Esbjorn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 26) helps us to examine and know all of life from all angles.

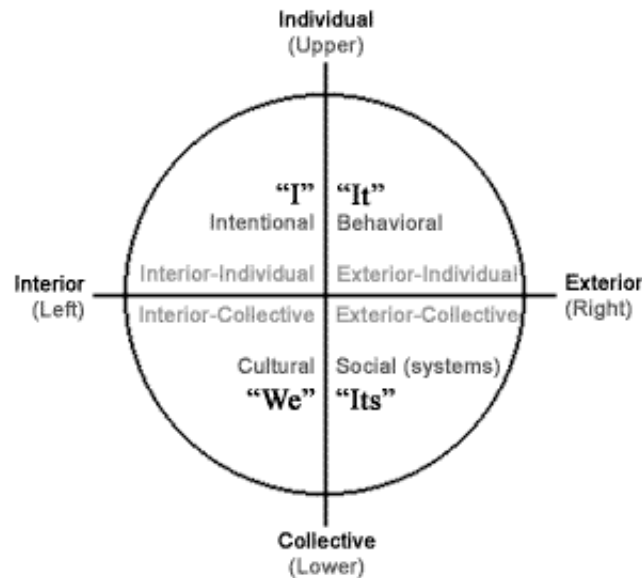


Figure 2 Four Quadrant Model

(Retrieved from [http://207.58.143.117/~natureof/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/four\\_quadrants.gif](http://207.58.143.117/~natureof/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/four_quadrants.gif), November 2013)

The modernist view, however, has “tended to eliminate the interior dimensions of reality in favour of exterior dimensions or material systems” (p. 27) and placed an emphasis on an exteriorization of knowledge, thus reducing nature to an objective science. While this concept may be valuable in some domains of inquiry, this is not the entire picture and fails to accurately provide for the interiority of natural phenomena, including that of the human being.

Therefore, right from the start, in view of my proclivities toward a more blurred edge between the inside/out, the rationale and the imaginary in teaching and learning, I was compelled toward textual and rich descriptive, qualitative approaches using human science methods that entail “(re)discovery of the subjective nature and storied quality of science” (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 47) versus a privileged and pure science approach that does not see a universe with inherent awareness of feeling and life in all things.

Given this time of my life and career as an educator in her fifth decade deeply engaged in processes of self-discovery with a modicum of self-awareness, writing from an autoethnographical/autobiographical perspective, as well as engaging in an inquiry of my own heuristic path as it further unfolds toward vocation and maturation, felt most authentic. This approach lent a cultural context as to how my practices, pedagogies,

theories and philosophy have evolved which naturally segues into the main heuristic exploration of the journey of *the self that is called to teach*, (the one that continues to *become* more teacher, more self).

Through an evocative life writing process I explored the three initiatory facets (separation, threshold/initiation and return) of learning as a journey continually pulling out meta-cognitive connective threads to weave together a dynamic mix of: mythologies, theories, rich metaphors, etymologies, poetry, e-mail fragments, maps, journal entries, archetypes and universal themes, and stories that help provide glimpses, insights and meaning along the way. I have attempted to not just *de*-scribe the process, but rather *sub*-scribe to the experience itself at “the intersection of observation and imagination” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963), as made evident by the result.

In Part I, *The Separation*, I critique current educational practices and curriculum theory and then through the lens of hermeneutical phenomenology explore the conditions required in post-secondary curriculum for a more ecological, ensouled approach. One that teaches us to listen for what truly calls each student and encourage them toward a more authentic and contributory vocation once they graduate.

I have examined the groundbreaking work of those educators and theorists who pioneered more humanistic approaches to education (for both students *and* teachers). This included but was not limited to; Maxine Greene (1995, 2001, 2007, 2009) on curriculum and consciousness, aesthetic education and the ontology of becoming more ourselves, Parker Palmer (1983, 1998, 1999, 2000) on vocation and true calling and having courage enough to teach from the grounded place of soul, John Dewey (1929/2009, 1956) with his early inspiring philosophies on education as learning by doing, and tuning into the children’s own proclivities in order for learning to be real, and David Orr (2000, 2004) with his brilliant notions of the value of an ecological literacy that educates with the earth in mind.

Critical to the theoretical framing of this research are the collected works of Carl Jung (Collected Works, 1917-1979) whose early thinking in the domain of the psyche and human individuation is perhaps my greatest ongoing influence. Not least of all, as I have mentioned in the introduction, Joseph Campbell’s (1949/2008) revolutionary and



extensive study of mythologies and the universal tripartite human journey inspire and entirely advance the heuristic mythos of the qualitative methods I have chosen.

A significant aspect of this heuristic exploration is the metanarrative recounted here from a vision quest journey I enacted in the high desert in 2010. I felt bound to bring the deepest, most vulnerable work of myself forward in order to weave into existence a rich and nuanced enough accounting worthy of academic contribution yet remaining accessible (and invitational) to the same students for whom I was inspired to write this in the first place. Despite the risks, I wanted to keep it real.

To provide an analytic framework for this highly situational, partial, and non-conventional research and make more valid this representation of my experience, I followed the evaluation criteria as laid out in Richardson's (2000) and Richardson & St. Pierre's (2005) "creative analytic practice (CAP) ethnographies" (p. 929), a helpful framework for avoiding the kind of flat lifelessness that can be so much associated with non-fiction and academic writing overall.

And finally, to complement this inquiry, I felt it was necessary to step outside the traditional writing process to visually (re)present and depict relationships and connections through art making. Using an a/r/tographic approach where self as artist, researcher and teacher blended together, (just as theory blends with application), I handcrafted a complement to this body of work that in some wordless way may help to bring alive the text by informing new meanings and embody connections.

In the making, I avoided any singular concentration and rather than aiming to produce any kind of definitive outcome, I let myself be drawn in by the process. I spent considerable time in studio learning new techniques, lingering in places of possibility and not knowing which allowed for a more "collage-like" effect to take shape. The final result is meant to be un/usual, perhaps even strange, as it (in)tends to interrupt familiar ways of making sense by provoking an engagement (an experience really) where (hopefully) other meanings, not made explicit here, can be found.

### **questions of validity.**

What can persist (especially for arts-informed qualitative researchers), however, are questions of validity such as, "*How do you know what you know?*" "*How is data from yourself as source reliable and true?*"

Eisner (1991) in the *Enlightened Eye, Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* writes, “There are some who believe that what is personal, the literary, and at times poetic cannot be a valid source of knowledge” (p. 107) leaving a restricted view of knowledge of that which is ‘true’. But what does ‘true’ mean exactly? He goes on to say that, perhaps, “Words of poetry and literature are not true in the literal sense, but they can be true in the metaphorical sense” (Eisner, 1991, p. 108) and have a critical epistemic function in that they can enlarge our understanding. “The recognition of plurality of ways to know the world is an invitation to open not a Pandora’s box, but one’s mind” (p. 108) and to that I would add the invitation to open one’s *heart and soul* as well.

Qualitative and human sciences researcher, van Manen (1990) wrote that his own understanding in terms of human science findings of “mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions and purposes which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts and institutions” (p. 3) was that they in fact allow for further validity of the study of one’s own person. As we are endowed with consciousness, act deliberately in and on the world, and *create* meaning (which is the expression of how human beings exist in the world), then it follows that personal narrative ought to be considered as valid as other forms of writing as research.

Validity in phenomenological research isn’t made evident by precision or following rules or models, rather it is achieved by “being true to the basic aims and tenets of phenomenological interpretation, the most important being the...suspension of pre-conceptions” (Oberg 1988, p. 5). I recognized early on that while it is important to “not relinquish one’s point of view” (Eisner, 1991, p. 111) one must be wary of the seduction of becoming arbitrary or overly self-indulgent while letting the text speak of the highly personal and the unique. That can be made evident by how closely the data captures the true nature of the experience of the researcher and the phenomenon itself.

It was also imperative for me to be aware that it was not only what an individual brings to her research that counts but also what she leaves out of it as well. “Both omission and commission affect what we convey” (Eisner, 1991, p. 111), and can reveal what we value and are willing to face up to.

To support any interpretations, I have purposely used multiple data types and attempted to relate them to each other through the identification of recursive themes.

Much like the process of triangulation, “structural corroboration” in this way brings “ a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows (the researcher) to feel a confidence about (their) observations, interpretations and conclusions” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). Within this study are data from interviews and surveys (mine and others), observations from teaching and learning, a wide-ranging review of literature (from nature-based learning, education, ecopsychology, deep ecology, depth psychology, mythology, the poetic traditions, etc.), as well as personal reflections and insights from lived experience.

Overall, I could only imagine the process from the start rather than offer any prediction of its final specific shape or outcome. This research is meant to push the more conventional scholarly traditions in pursuit of stretching out the current academic debate over what constitutes important knowledge and knowing at school. It is meant to include uncommon kinds of practices worthy of a place in the curriculum — especially when the ineffable and wild human soul is at the table.

My hope is that this research will become even more valid if it can help others resist what is disconnecting and diminishing (as well as filled with contradiction) in our current teacher-education system by allowing us ways to look into long-held assumptions and practices of *how* we learn and *how* we teach. In anticipation of a more respectful and constructive future that shifts from over-evaluation toward a more thoughtful consideration of what human learning truly looks like, I hope this work can serve as a kind of “guide map” (Eisner, 1991, p. 59) to help lead us out(side) together so we may traverse landscapes of hope and possibility.

### **Phenomenological Inquiry**

Phenomenology asks that we live deeply in the present moment in order to examine this moment, this place. Being fully engaged, yet able to suspend our ideas of what is (or what ought to be) and embrace more of a stance of un-knowing, is akin to “facing the world with soul” (Sardello, 1992) and helps us to deepen our understanding of the meaning of things through a less mediated experience of them. Strangely, and often unexpectedly this can help us to mature ourselves as we realize that *this is life*— this is the experience of living itself —and not something outside of our ‘real lives’ we have to wait or hope or plan for.

van Manen (1990) outlines the four primary concerns of phenomenological research: to give attention to the world as one immediately experiences it, avoid conceptualization, categorization, taxonomies or theories about things; to search for what it means to be fully human; to be thoughtful in wondering about “the project of life” (p. 9) and what it means to be alive (often represented in autobiographical or autoethnographical form); and finally, that it remains a “poetizing activity” (p. 13), interested in an evocative or poetic retelling of the world. “We must engage language in a primal incantation or poetizing which hearkens back to the silence from which the words emanate” (p. 39) to ensure authenticity.

He goes on to argue that, “There is a difference between comprehending the project of phenomenology intellectually and understanding it ‘from the inside out’” (van Manen, 1990, p. 8) accomplished by the *doing of it*, by taking the plunge, so to speak, inwardly. Through listening and solitude, complicated conversations with the world offer a striking identification with the universal that pierces the psyche, yielding transformative insights where researcher becomes research instrument. The whole body becomes in effect, a “body of knowledge”, “giving rise to a poetic rendering of the world” (Snowber, 1997, n.p.) where researcher, filled with wonder, becomes both participant and instrument through which research is discovered and new meaning is made.

Heidegger (1949, 1967/1998) radicalized and transformed phenomenology when he used the German word *dasein* as his watchword to capture the notion of *being embedded in the world* as an open ontological critique of being and consciousness as two separate things (Gadamer, 1976). His translation, *being-in-the-world*, challenged the reconceptualization of human subjects (and the meaning of their very existence) by the fact that we all exist and dwell in the world in a kind of ‘being-there’ with place and self as one being. In essence, “consciousness and its object are not two separated worlds” (p. 119), because self *is* its world. “One of the most important Heideggerian assumptions stresses the indissoluble unity between the person and the world” (Koch, 1995, p. 831) where his perspective encompassed people and world as inextricably and wholly interconnected (Lavery, 2003), marking the beginning of a hermeneutical approach to research that has held vast social and historical implications ever since.

### **Hermeneutic Inquiry: On the Wings of Hermes**

...hermeneutics is a lesson in humility...it has wrested with the angels of darkness and has not gotten the better of them. It understands the power of the flux to wash away the best-laid schemes of metaphysics. It takes the constructs of metaphysics to be temporary cloud formations which, from a distance, create the appearance of shape and substance but which pass through our fingers upon contact...and no matter how wantonly they are skewed across the skies there are always hermeneuts who claim to detect a shape....a bear here, a man with a long nose there. There are always those who claim they can read the clouds and find a pattern and a meaning. (Caputo, 1987, p. 258)

Hermeneutic inquiry is the interpretation of lived experience and aims within its rich legacy of theory, practice and philosophy to provide a vivid and animating expression of the “lived-through quality of lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 25). It draws on what Buytendijk (1988) described as a “phenomenological nod” to infer that a good (and trustworthy) phenomenological description is one we can acknowledge and “recognize(e) as an experience that we have had or could have had” (p. 27) by virtue of its humanity.

Hermeneutics guides our actions by concerning itself with understanding the essence of things in its “attempt to describe a more direct and penetrating disclosure of subjectivity” (Hart, 2001, p. 81). This method, with its various versions, understandings and practices, comes closest to being reliable in its verisimilitude, its ability to grasp more directly at the phenomenon (Lavery, 2003) where intimacy between experience and life is encouraged by abandoning any dualism between subject and object. The language of hermeneutic inquiry with its wresting and whispers, its summoning and disappearances, its shadows and illuminations mirrors my own search for what it means to be vividly human in the fullest sense of living in direct contact with the world.

I found it helpful to look into the etymology of hermeneutics from the Greek verb *hermeneuein* meaning to say or interpret, and the noun *hermeneia*, which is the utterance or explication of thought (Caputo, 1987, Grondin 1994). Plus, the word “*hermeios*” (root of hermeneutics) can be traced back to the priest of the Oracle at Delphi, who resided in “the temple of Apollo, the god of oracles, dreams and prophecies” (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 219). Apollo’s temple at the foot of Mount Parnassus was said to have been inherited from Gaia

herself, the mythological Mother Goddess of the World. It would follow then that this sacred place and its inhabitants derived profound significance from a link to the divine and original source, nature herself. Might this provide contextual clues of the legacy that is hermeneutics?

The more common derivation draws mythic significance from the name *hermeneus*, to link hermeneutics as belonging to Hermes, the winged messenger and mischievous trickster god of the Underworld who is “associated with the function of transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp” (Palmer, 1969, p. 13), and whose main work is to bring the work of the soul “into intelligibility” (p. 13). A playful and irreverent message-bringer who necessarily invites interpretation!

Perhaps he is the most infamous and first interdisciplinarian, standing solidly in the gap, and well known for his mediation of understanding between this world and that, bringing the “art of translation or movement between worlds” (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 220). A master of creativity and invention with his complications and multiplicity, he holds sheer disdain for rules with a profound capacity to see things anew. Also known as Mercury to the Romans (Hauck, 1999) for his lively, quick and changeable ways, he never truly fully stabilizes or he perishes. Through the alchemy of interpretation with his hermetic tricks, sleights of hand, detours and deceptions, this mercurial god can not easily (or ever?) be pinned as he asks us to look more deeply and then look again and again as the light and shadow changes and plays in patterns that shift to reveal and conceal. We can easily betray hermeneutics when we attempt to believe that our definitions are “true”, rather this method teaches us that when we venture into “contingent understandings that are situated in lives, relationships, contexts and histories” (Moules, 2002, p. 4) it is in recognition of what *rings* “true” that we may begin to see (and feel) something of ourselves, but also of the world, something both old and new in the moment.

Hermeneutics practices *aletheia*, the Greek for opening what was closed and in so doing, allows us to peer beneath the surface of things (Buhner, 2010). Heidegger referred to *aletheia* as an unhiddenness in relation to that which is hidden (Coltman, 1998). *Aletheia* comes from *Lethe* the river of Hades called the “river of forgetting” (Hoad, 1996; Plato, trans. 2000) which, when drunk, produces amnesia that sends us back to sleep. It is also etymologically tied to the word lethal as it works against what is dead to help us to

remember too by dredging up the mystery from the depths where “things emerge from concealment into unconcealment” (Caputo, 1987, p. 177), working in contrarian ways.

Part of the trickery of hermeneutics is that it looks not only to what the researcher wants from this work but also *what the work wants from the researcher* as well. This is a methodical process concerned with how the world is perceived rather than how it “is” (Creswell, 1998). In being faithful to my own intuitions, I trained myself to look *into* the nature of things in terms of “attention to the instance and the particular” (Moules, 2002, p. 6) rather than merely looking *at* them, making meaning from context, patterns and relationships, and personal insights that arose, all at once. Like the mythic god it is named after, this practice acts as a liminal bridge between things —between what is and isn’t said, what can be seen, or remains unseen (Grondin, 1995), what is made conscious or left to the unconscious realms—through the highly subjective interpretation of relationship. It brings us back to what Husserl (cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1962) describes as the “things themselves” (p. viii), in that we are moved toward a deeper understanding of ourselves within those more authentically inclined relationships.

I believe I *became* the story I was telling in a co-creation and co-evolution with this research through disruptive questioning of the way I experienced the world and by permitting myself to become acutely attuned to and entangled with that which I was passionately curious about (van Manen, 1990). In essence, hermeneutics helped me to understand that my experiences were generative, ancient and ongoing. It brought my experience alive through attention, imagination, and language and allowed me to find myself while curiously losing myself at the same time. In a certain way, I found that hermeneutics and phenomenology need one another. As I attempted to describe what happened as richly as possible, it was in the sensuous immediacy of the context of phenomenology that I could most powerfully situate my experiences and the deep identification with other living beings to begin to “make the invisible, visible” (Laverty, 2003, p. 15).

### **hermeneutical phenomenology: a convergence of Husserl and Heidegger.**

Flood (2010) explained Heidegger’s view that as humans are embedded in their world, nothing can be encountered and perceived without reference to the person’s “background understanding” (p. 9), asserting that interpretation (hermeneutics) is a

central characteristic of all human experience and we cannot escape it. How could phenomenology be any other way, really? How could we ever hope for (and why would we ever want to hope for?) a pure phenomenal experience without telling it slant? We are always interpreters after all, by the very nature of something metabolizing through our senses onto the page. We self-define with this insight or that illumination, make one word choice over another, and bring our background of experience and pre-knowledge to determine what to include or leave off regardless of our immediacy to the situation or our skill in grasping language arts. Meaning making therefore becomes an inter-subjective “embedded” process not simply within the context of world, but also within the context of *self in the world* in which an individual’s subjective experiences (which are invariably influenced by social, historical, cultural and environmental contexts) (e.g. Flood, 2010; Geallanos, 2000; van Manen, 1990) are significant.

We are fundamentally self-interpreting, self-defining, living always in a cultural environment, inside a web of signification we ourselves have spun. Thus there is no outside, detached standpoint from which we gather and present brute data. When we try to understand the cultural world, we are dealing with interpretations and interpretations of interpretations. (Taylor, 1987, p. 35).

Prior to hermeneutics, mathematician Husserl (b.1859-1938), the founder and central elaborator of the method of phenomenology (1962) and Heidegger’s teacher, *seemed* to divert from the mechanistic approaches of his day (Koch, 1995; Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1990) with his directive for human science to “return things to themselves’ and to the essences that constitute the consciousness and perception of the human world“ (Koch, 1995, p. 828) using a first-person lens.

Husserl recognized that experience was the ground for constructing knowledge and introduced ‘life-world’ or lived experience (Koch, 1995) but required that instead of a taken for granted approach, a re-examination of the nature or essences of things was needed in order “to evaluate critically the role these structures play in determining the sense of it all” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1987). He sought the meaning *behind* life experience. Through a “direct grasping of the phenomena” (Laverty, 2003, p. 23) as they appeared through consciousness (Gadamer et al, 2004; Koch, 1995; van Manen, 1990), Husserl used



“intentionality” (Koch, 1995, p. 828) that began with awareness and built knowledge from there through a form of conscious ‘directness’ (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1987).

Husserl’s argument though, found conflict between a phenomenology that described experience and a quest for certainty that pushed him to argue that his philosophy was a valid, rigorous science (Lavery, 2003). He reasoned for the ability of the researcher to intuit and reveal the essences of things, which he argued would in effect be to grasp a ‘pure’ understanding of a particular phenomenon (Flood, 2010; Lavery, 2003; Lester, 1999). In order to study pure essences, Husserl engaged in a method of “bracketing” off, effecting a process of phenomenological reduction that requires the elimination of all preconceived notions (Koch, 1995; Schutz, 1970), not only from the outer world, but from the inner consciousness itself. It was an attempt to defend the validity of the interpretation against the contamination of the self-interest of the researcher by refraining from the insistences of ‘reality’ or any preconceived notions of what something is in the sense of confirming or denying its existence. Of course, this is not possible and served to further disconnect Husserl from the existence of things because essences studied in isolation counter-intuitively create a subtle form of objective and positivistic research themselves (Thompson, et al, 1989). Husserl may have unwittingly contributed, through his notions of a ‘pure’ phenomenology, to furthering the Cartesian mind-body split rather than divesting us from it.

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Heidegger (1949, 1967/1998) pressed previously held boundaries — especially the ego boundary—so that the limitations of rationality and objective science no longer held fast. His work had a powerful effect on scholarly research overall, summoning “existence to itself” and research to “the choice of authenticity” (Gadamer, 1976, p.138) lending researchers a permission to evoke moment-to-moment openness rather than arrive at a definitive answer per se. This approach allowed important learning to accrue within the senses through the studying of phenomena over time, noticing what it was like to be ‘here and now’ and questioning who we are and what comprises an authentic existence. Within Heidegger’s contribution there is the advanced recognition that hermeneutical inquiry means that understanding cannot be arrived at solely through bracketing off bias and personal experiences. In fact, to Heidegger (1967), the knowledge and experience held by the researcher was considered an integral and

valuable aspect of the inquiry process. In this way, hermeneutic phenomenological research represents a major departure from positivist forms of research which hold that reality (knowledge) exists primarily outside of human consciousness and can only be acquired through a passive, objectified perception of the analysis of things and their actions (Gadamer, 1976, 2004; Koch, 1995).

Husserlian phenomenology and Heidegger's hermeneutics have subtle but important differences (Gadamer, 1976). Husserl's epistemological questions of knowing are more concerned with concentrating on experience and asking, "*How do we know what we know?*" His claims about the ability to bracket off as a technique guaranteeing validity of interpretation and ensuring that the participants' meanings can be reconstituted in interpretive work by that data speaking for itself, allow for a more mechanistic and objective view of the person.

Heidegger on the other hand, wanted to know how we came to understand something and the experience of *that* knowing. His view of the person arose in existential-ontological questions that asked, "*What does it mean to be a person existing as a being in and of the world?*" Heidegger's hermeneutics refutes two of Husserl's central notions, namely that meaning can be represented of an independent reality, and is generated from an observer standpoint outside from the situation without prejudice and biases. Instead, he believed that the researcher brings her pre-understandings and that the transaction between the situation and the person *is* the crucible where data is made by direct participation in what Gadamer (1976) in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, later called a "fusion of horizons" (p. 48).

Gadamer (2004) further reminds us to "recall the hermeneutical rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole. It is a circular relationship" (p. 291). This aligns with systems thinking in that the holon is both the whole and its parts, and each is essential for completeness. This distinctly breaks from the objectivism of Husserl that called for a distinguishing of the self from the knower.

Hermeneutical phenomenology is both immediate in its descriptions and *inter-*immediate in the representation of what happens in the twixt of things. Significance is found "in the cracks of life, the places we might have deemed unimportant. It is in this place of in-between' where one often has a physical encounter with the world, the senses are given breath" (Snowber, 1997, n.p.) and where brackets are in direct contradiction of the

fullness of experience.

Heidegger believed that only within the “hermeneutic circle of: background, co-constitution, and pre-understanding” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 9) could interpretation be made explicit and understood (Koch, 1995; Ricoeur, 1981; van Manen, 1990). Gadamer (1976) goes on to suggest that the prejudices and biases that come with the researcher in their pre-understanding state are in need of “hermeneutical rehabilitation” and are perhaps not simply narrow ways of seeing things, are “not necessarily unjustified and erroneous” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 9). Instead he offers that:

the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us (p. 9).

And while bracketing off and describing without interpretation is not literally possible, a kind of a suspension of belief is important, a suspending of the kinds of everyday judgments of the way things *may* appear as we open to world as it *is*, involves the deep imagination chaperoning the over-anxious rational mind. I identified some of my own predispositions and assumptions before I began this discovery, and as I moved through this study reminded myself continually of my own tendencies and leanings. Thus I have attempted to find and create more validity. I hope through the disclosure of my biases for a new kind of openness to what might be and to the surprise of what I might find (and what finds me). That is what I meant when I said that it will be most helpful to me to follow the poet’s lead and begin as the one “who knows nothing” (Neruda, 1970, p. 458).

**a communion of intimacy and imagination.**

Within phenomenological research, in order to ensure rigor, while protecting the integrity of the experience, the researcher must remain faithful to the object of her inquiry. Gadamer (1976, 1983) built on Heidegger’s work by considering the nature of dialectical interaction between the researcher and participant —and in my case, an inter/view with the world in the poetic sense—as a critical aspect of producing knowledge and making new insights (and horizons) possible. He argued that,

[To] reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were.  
(cited in Lavery, 2003, p. 375)

This relativist view of reality implies that understanding and interpretation are in fact one process because interpretation is always contextual, temporal, and in flux, therefore achieving one definitive or "correct" interpretation is not possible (Koch, 1995; Lavery, 2003; van Manen, 1990), hence, the authentic hermeneutical understanding is also original, unrepeatable and not least of all, it will always be fallible as it is "evidentiary based" where judgments cannot be made certain, only reasonably made (Eisner, 1991, p. 109).

Hermeneutical phenomenology aligns beautifully with early animism (which I will contextualize further in Part I) with its "participating consciousness" (Berman, 1984, p. 84) where nothing of the living world was considered inert or without life (although it may have appeared otherwise) and nothing could possibly exist "out there" independent from "in here". The animistic worldview saw absolutely every (living) thing imbued with consciousness. It presupposed the "disenchantment of the world" (p. 57) prior to the 'advances' of a more 'modern', Cartesian epistemology with its overt objectivism and dualistic thinking (particularly the split of the mind-body).

Before interpreting these realms of experience, it was necessary for me to revisit the loss of "our sense of ancestral reciprocity with the animate earth" (Abram, 1996, p. 10), and our loss of intimacy with original nature. By allowing enough space and time for my own senses and psyche to re-orient their awareness toward a re/collection of who I am and where I belong using non-verbal interplay and relating techniques, I re-entered into an intimacy with the world, where my ego boundary became permeable, and where "myself" extended into the larger body of the world in a world centric "I-Thou" type relationship (Buber, 1970, Kaufmann, trans.) rather than a more objective "I-It" mentality that would only reinforce further dualisms. As I saw myself in relationship with everything, I was in effect seeing myself *in* Other.

Real or imagined, empirical or emotional, the realm of consciousness *is* the realm of phenomenology where the essence of things and their particular natures, are explored in order to *know* the world (and what it is like to be in it) as interpreted through a

hermeneutics of sense-making (van Manen, 1990). With its proclivity to dwell in the context of imaginative realms, hermeneutics is in many ways, “a poetics of research” (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 220) that interprets symbols and evokes significance toward understanding without attempting definition. My quandary, of course, is how I “show it, describe it, interpret it while remaining faithful to it” (van Manen, 1990, p. 20) within the domain of felt experience and the uncharted territories of consciousness. I have attempted to articulate and share the experience of lived time, space, body and relations, despite that so much was experienced in a preverbal sense. It can be agonizingly difficult to adequately and justly unlock experience toward common understanding.

Bringing intimacy and imagination (mythos) into articulation, to my mind, is best done through poeticizing as it lends fidelity to the experience because the poem does not rush to finish or conclude and just as phenomenological research is its own end, “the poem *is* the result” (van Manen, 1990, p. 13). Poetry lends its own kind of rigor to experience therefore, I have included original poems as well as poems from the greats who bring language large enough for these unmapped territories between self and world. To me, poetry is like quiet nourishment for what is really essential on the human journey. It has no defense because it does not resist life, rather it tends to (re)present it in its barest most vulnerable essence.

In essence, I suppose this is also a research of mythopoetics, from the Greek *mythos* meaning “imagination” and *poesis* meaning “making” because mythopoetics call us to remember our oldest stories, and to make meaning from myths as a source of knowledge (Hillman, 1972). With its expressive source of sense-making, and its densely elusive and exploratory nature of never fully resolving itself and leaving us wanting more (which coheres beautifully with these methods), mythopoetics is a vernacular in which the soul is fluent. It is a dialect that offers a kind of elemental footing that summons us to tread in our own way toward fully inhabiting *and feeling into* all of the arrivals and departures of our lives, and by virtue of this asks that we change ourselves in the process. Direct experiences in the world through imagination and evocative language, where identity becomes a critical part of the study, asks that we leave our more rational thinking and go *into* the mythos of experience and *down* into reflexivity, only to return to recognize, reflect and synthesize using thick, poetic descriptions (van Manen, 1990) that attempt to bring added legitimacy

to the portrayal of the kind of experience someone else might relate to and could possibly have undergone themselves.

### **Blessed Writing**

I.

*holy invitation*  
 to play,  
 to pander  
 to wander  
 and get lost.  
 to be called to  
 embrace uneven  
 natural Beauty

*silently*  
 lie down  
 to be taken up  
 by rising and  
 falling land-  
 scapes  
 and mind-  
 scapes,  
 a wild braid

*en/raptured*  
 a banner of birds  
 are dark notes  
 i hum,  
 an exclamation of rock,  
 in granular discourse  
 conspires to tell  
 time

*spaciousness*  
 to listen  
 down, picking up  
 shards  
 of broken truth  
 (re)  
 member  
 soil to soul

*outpouring*  
 alphabet  
 of the bones

grammar  
of the gut  
root vernacular

ancient  
embedded  
prayers unearthed  
in  
sweet celebration  
in  
secret commemoration

II.  
i am  
instrument  
being played like  
a holy wind  
blowing through  
hollow bones,  
hymn to the wild

i write  
the world  
to know  
and  
write  
myself!

III.  
enchantment  
longs for  
those who sing  
magic, who  
go feelingly  
home, like  
the bee  
to the succulent  
or  
the salmon  
returning  
to the scent  
of the river.

no thing is  
any less  
alive than

any thing else  
...write?

### **Autoethnography: The Story**

In *Black Elk Speaks* (Neihardt, 1932/1976), the Ogalala Sioux holy man begins his autobiography (in the form of play) with this important caveat about stories,

I am going to tell you the story of my life, as you wish; if it were only the story of my life, I would not tell it. [I]t is a story of all life that is holy and is good to tell and of us two-leggeds sharing it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one spirit. (pp.15-16)

Autoethnographers examine and focus on telling their own personal stories to unearth their truth and in so doing, illuminate what is true for others in the storied lives of all humanity. My own journey parallels the universal schema found in all rites of passage that every human journey to maturation entails: leaving home and severing from the familiar, crossing over from one realm to another through struggles of unfathomable proportion, and finally, returning with gifts to bear. That is why I have included an autoethnographic/autobiographic “river” of insights and understandings—a sub-textual mythopoetic inquiry of “field-notes” that run through this work (beginning at the end of Part I as I embark to “leave” and then streaming throughout Part II and III as essential components to meaning-making within those sections). For the most part it appears in the form of my *journal voice* (in italics) and sometimes as poetry. In this way, I am always “situational”, “partial”, and “local” (Richardson, & St. Pierre 2005, p. 962), always present to the research, blurring the lines of traditional academic research by deeply excavating what is private.

Critically, the work of the keen autoethnographer is to step back in order to gain a broader perspective of life’s larger stories being played out (such as myth-stories and archetypes) as it relates to the collective she identifies herself as a member of (i.e. in my case it is that of the teaching community). Her work is to weave in those precise patterns and connection points of the human universal toward a more pluralistic richness through the telling of the one.



Reflexive autoethnographers act as both researcher and participant and, “ideally use all of their senses, bodies, moments, feelings, and whole being” (Ellis, 2008, p. 50) to provide “an evocative telling of one's world so that the writer's experience comes alive” (Snowber, 1997, n.p.). “In a way that there is a singing of the world, or a dancing of the world...writing with the textures of the poetic, engages the mind and body, senses and perception” (n.p.) allowing the experience of the writer to be deeply felt by others and avoid the mundane.

Flood (2010) emphasized that by focusing on interiority, by describing phenomenology's primary position as one that posits that the most basic human truths are accessible only through subjectivity, that knowledge is both relational and contextual. The “writing process and writing product are deeply intertwined” (Richardson, 2000, p. 930) as each art form weaves in and through the other, and contributes equally to enlarging meaning-making possibilities.

Due to significant emphasis on the *self as research*, and the feelings of the researcher as important data, there are academic questions that often arise as to validity. Sometimes this type of research is referred to as a glorified form of “biased, navel-gazing” (Maréchal, 2010, p. 45) that lacks objectivity, however I believe that what is called for instead is a broader perspective on self-participation, one that accepts both researcher and research subjects as legitimate data sources of lived experience. Maslow (1968) and Polanyi (1962) both contended that all knowledge is fundamentally personal knowledge therefore, subjective knowing can be translated into valid public knowledge if it is truly resonant and helps deepen our collective understanding. Rather than always looking for expertise in a published text or peer-reviewed journal article only, notions of what constitute academic contribution must be expanded to include writing that is both meaningful and evocative in its portrayal of the human condition that allows readers to become more invested in the research. Autoethnographic researcher, Maréchal (2010) writes,

Evocative and emotional autoethnography promotes the ethnographic project as a relational commitment to studying the ordinary practices of human life, which involves engaged self-participation, makes sense in the context of lived experience, and contributes to social criticism. (p. 45)

In order to satisfy some of the challenges posed by adopting a more evocative method, I have used Richardson's (2000) Creative Analytic Practice (CAP) as an evaluation criteria. CAP recognizes there are infinite and divergent ways of approaching and viewing lived experience. Due to the very personal and free nature of the writing, Richardson asks if the work: *contributes to understanding* social life in a substantive way; *holds "aesthetic merit"* (p. 937); *invites the reader*; demonstrates *"reflexive" self-awareness* (p. 937); has *"impact"* (p. 937) both *intellectually and emotionally*; and finally, she asks if it has an *"expression of reality"* (p. 937) that embodies an *authenticity of lived experience*?

I tried to imagine what aesthetic educational theorist, Maxine Greene (1995, 2001, 2009), (one of my heroines) might have asked to ensure an aesthetic and meaningful process. *Is my work artful in relationship to culture? Is it meant more for others to discover meaning or to know what was happening for me, the researcher? Or both? Is it an aesthetic experience for the reader as it is presented? Does it evoke a reflective, aesthetic response? Is my world and my consciousness described as sensed, felt, and imagined as opposed to objectified? Is there passion present? Is there the possibility of a reader becoming changing or illumined by my work? Is there flow?*

The CAP criteria (Richardson, 2000) recognizes that good and valid research can include diverse voices (including other-than-human voices) yet remain significantly impactful and critically useful. Rather than marginalize a story that would not likely ever be heard, namely my own, I use the CAP framework to contest epistemological doubts about autobiography and storytelling as reliable data. I have included other sources and authentic elements to complement the writing process so that it more resembles the collage-like effects of art making (and taking the actual journey). Journal entries, packing lists, poetry, e-mails, photographs, lists, maps, and even prayers provide a bird's eye glimpse of the journey so that the reader can travel with me. These elements extend the reader's viewfinder and broaden the context overall.

Richardson (2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) is passionate in her claim that academic writing does not have to be boring, dense and unreadable for most people in order to be contributive in a wholesale way. In order to emotionally listen for rhythms, textures and patterns, light and colour, silence and awe, and add breathing space to my writing, I did often use a verbatim style to avoid the kind of lifelessness that can be

associated with traditional academic writing styles. CAP acted as litmus that something worthy of the consideration of others was occurring and provided reminders to resist the common pitfalls of much of academic writing that renders itself mediocre in its effort to be like (and liked by) others. van Manen (1990) writes,

A strong and rigorous human science text distinguishes itself by its courage and resolve to stand *up* for the uniqueness and significance of the notion to which it has dedicated itself...to stand *out* and be prepared to be “soft”, “soulful”, “subtle” and “sensitive” in its effort to bring the range of meanings of life’s phenomena to our reflective awareness. (p. 18)

The personal, self-reflexive writing style was a good fit here, as it brought to life one kind of less codified, more informal, embodied learning—precisely the kind of open inquiry that I am interested in bringing to school. I often wrote to know. I often didn’t even know what I would write until I did. I knew that I would have to let go of “getting it right” and rather focus only on “getting it down” on the page in all of its “differently contoured and nuanced” ways (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962). The narrative approach stresses journey over destination and resists easy explanations or outcomes. Boundaries dissolve between inside/outside and subject/object crisscrossing lines of old assumptions and even possibly (hopefully) evoking action (certainly emotional re-action) in response. My hope was that it would pique further interest and make a deep connection with readers. With any luck this writing-as-research might come alive and take on a life of its very own!

***Write A Way***  
 “Word the world”!  
 No telling  
 what will happen

*Write yourself!*  
 in co-creation  
 with the world  
 as coextensive  
 of the world  
 in a struggle  
 to explain  
 (once again)  
 the evocative  
*is* academic

...Shhh!  
 Don't tip them off  
 over/un-finished work  
*Write on...*

*Writes of passage*  
 synchronize  
 with the erotic  
 pulse of life and loss  
 that won't let you  
 easily explain  
 away  
 this immensity  
 to those who reify  
 small measures  
*WRIT LARGE*

Don't be tempted  
 to turn down the heat  
 on what's cooking  
*Damn write!*

Give it time  
 or  
 it's a recipe  
 for dis-aster. Rise  
 to the occasion  
 in the dark ovens  
 of imagination  
*Write this down...*  
 Do it now.

*Write away!*  
 enter  
 the poetic terrain  
 as it enters you  
 (in as much  
 as you can let that  
 happen)  
 coaxing and conjuring  
 original medicine  
 from the primordial well  
 and  
 right before you know  
 (we write *before* we know),  
 evoke your

*Write to know*

*All write  
 Know your  
 self  
 within  
 these pages  
 word-wrapping,  
 world-rapping,  
 opening and  
 closing  
 like the dark rises  
 and falls  
 like the moon  
 (and my moods)  
 (in)form  
 and  
 Write  
 the world*

### **Heuristic Analysis: The Quest**

The journey myth surrounding the quest of Parzifal as he seeks the Holy Grail (Johnson, 1993; von Eschenbach, trans. 1980), speaks to heuristic and archetypal tendencies we humans have always had to go out into the dark world to seek deeper experiences and meaning in an effort to find treasure (as symbolized by the elusive golden chalice, a vessel for the elixirs of life). It is only in the final synthesis of “the return” that the necessary strength and resources are accessed in order for the “inner gold” (Johnson, 2008) to be uncovered and retrieved (Plotkin, 2003, 2008). Similarly, in Campbell’s (1949/2008) archetypal hero’s journey of departure, monster slaying and return, the ego persona must ‘die’ in order for the soul to be born, acting as both hero and midwife in the same respect.

Heuristic research embraces the same kind of passionate midwifery as a mythic journey of reclamation because the researcher is lured into the dark deep of self (and in my own case, also forest/world) in hope of returning with some form of “golden treasure”—or rather a creative synthesis of meaning-made. (However, in between these two events there are many deaths to be had if anything original is to find its life).

I was ecstatic to find that the mythic threefold pattern of rites of passage (toward human maturation) as first described by van Gennep, (trans.1960), aligns beautifully with the journey of the heuristic phenomenologist who sets out to explore the uncharted terrain of life. Both entail slowing, listening, tending, noticing, examining, and quest/ing through deep immersion, incubation, interaction, recovery and integration. My experience, however was that the stages repeated many times over, often over extended periods of time. The sequence was far from linear.

The six 'official' phases that guide the conceptual framework of heuristic research to describe the inquiry process of lived-experience according to researcher Moustakas (1990), with its primary concern resting with the consciousness of the investigator are: 1) initial engagement, 2) immersion, 3) incubation, 4) illumination, 5) explication, and 6) creative synthesis. In comparison, it was easy to imagine that the initial engagement was akin to a kind of separation from what one knows. This required me to go out and enter the immersion and incubation stages as if entering a threshold experience. In the next stage, what illuminates in terms of coming to understand something new was akin to the middle stage of *becoming more myself through initiation* and finally, what was explicated and synthesized would in fact become the "gift" (or gold) meant for me to reincorporate into this research upon my return. It was obvious that the heuristic journey, the hero's journey and rites of passage all shared common ground. I knew I was on the right track.

As is the intention of heurism, I began to see patterns everywhere. I couldn't help but also notice a correlation with the life cycle of the butterfly that has come to represent the real and infinite possibility of transformation. The pupa begins its journey by moving out into the world, eating the relevant part of the world, and attaching itself to a leaf or branch so that it may spin a cocoon for its incubation period. Once in its silken tent (or perhaps tomb), the larvae very nearly dissolves itself in an alchemical process that ends just when it seems all is lost by eliciting communities of cells (aptly named the imaginal cells) to congregate and become the shape of the adult butterfly. Some speculate that in this process of transformation, in the dark, through dismemberment and rebirth, that until the moment the butterfly comes into the light, it may not realize it even has wings! In that remembered moment, the winged creature takes flight in a final act of creative synthesis that seems nothing short of miraculous. It is also noteworthy that the butterfly is also the

symbol for psyche or soul in Greek mythology (Neumann, 1956).

**initial engagement.**

In the initial engagement stage, the researcher is 'courted' by a call to research through self-inquiry. The passion for the pursuit becomes more intensified through inner-questioning, self-dialogue, intense and sometimes circuitous study, crucial conversations, diverse forms of ideation, with a free reign given to intuitions, inklings and hunches in order to discover the true topic and its overarching critical question (Moustakas 1990). As she attends to what intrigues and compels her to delve inwardly and trawls for significance, the researcher and the question enter into a *relationship* to determine authenticity and longevity.

This question (or questions) must hold personal powerful implications that would render life untenable if not pursued, as the process requires a depth of authenticity, disciplined commitment, and an enduring receptiveness and patience to uncover subtle and underlying meanings. There is something quite satisfying to the shaping and ordering of an open-ended question or two that can stand as a solid and articulate evocation of the elements of the search.

Moustakas offers that some characteristics for the lived research question ought to be that it: 1) seeks to disclose more fully the essence of a dimension of human experience, 2) seeks to discover the qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of experience, 3) engages the total self, passion and sustained participation in the process, and 4) does not seek to predict or determine causal relationships (Moustakas, 1990, p. 42). He adds that the researcher must be intimately and autobiographically related to, and learn to love and serve the question unrelentingly as "genuine openness to the question necessitates being in a position to learn more" (p. 42).

To sit with restlessness and recursive emotional stirrings, one must be able to linger without knowing definite answers for a (long) time. It can be a most uncomfortable time. There must be a "willingness to enter fully into the theme, and to discover from within, the spectrum of life experiences that will clarify and expand knowledge of the topic and illuminate the terms of the question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). Autobiographical and autoethnographical contexts provide further insight into how one arrived at this place and are taken into consideration in helping to frame and shape the question.

### **immersion.**

Once the question is decided upon and refined, the researcher must live, eat, breathe, sleep, and dream it, immersing and entering into the subject intimately in a form of imaginative indwelling. Most conversations (including with self and nature) tended to steer toward this topic, and, life must become centred around it. Priorities and focus constantly shifted. Within nearly every encounter with people, places, literature, and media there were possibilities for meaning to be gleaned and implications toward better understanding, although there were long stretches of muddled confusions and overwhelm as literally *everything* conspired to shape the research (and me) at this stage. While it is impossible to bracket the research off from the everyday (and nor would I have wanted to), with the intensity and creative focus of indwelling, room had to be made within my psychic capacity. This necessitated clearing inward clutter and letting go of potential overload in order to maintain and sustain contact with the directness of the experience and what was essential to it. Extended stretches of time were required here.

I explored the phenomenon further by allowing it to “speak directly” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 6) to me and to be questioned *by it*. A dynamic back and forth rhythm ensued as long as was necessary to open, yield and attune to “all facets of one’s experience of a phenomenon, allowing comprehension and compassion to mingle and recognize a place and unity of intellect, emotion and spirit” (p. 16). The world showed me more as I opened and found connections to the questions I was asking, and as I delved even deeper and was taken up by this ‘conversation’ again and again.

### **incubation.**

This is a place of disappearance. Privacy is mandatory to avoid jeopardizing what is being born. Like the butterfly within the cocoon, the researcher has to intentionally withdraw from the glare of the question, detaching from it (even superficially) to rest and allow another tacit level of unconscious knowing to expand where something else can occur. The gathering time is over and now, “by a process of spontaneous mental reorganization uncontrolled by conscious effort” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29), some things dissolve away while other discoveries are made that would not naturally occur if forced deliberately (Polanyi, 1962, 1964).

This was a fertile time where the seeds of thought germinated sending down deep



roots to support the gravitas of what was to come. I respected this as integral to the heuristic process although to an onlooker this could have looked like a time where nothing much was happening. While investigating the tacit dimension of knowing and being, Polanyi (1967/1983) writes, “we can know more than we can tell” (as cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 4) at this point as this stage nurtures the subliminal and subterranean dimensions of ineffable tacit knowing which “underlies and precedes intuition and guides the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning” (p. 22).

In this phase, I often allowed myself necessary intervals of deep rest before returning to the data that allowed a kind of dark invisible workmanship to take place, an internal coherence of ‘more’ to unfold. My disappearance from the world was required. I needed to allow myself to unravel and ask for a different kind of conversation to take place. I became impatient with easy answers and sometimes simply let myself lie fallow. Giving myself time for walking and reflecting, helped me to reorder everything into this extraordinary pattern. Here my mind could sift and stir material, cook up images, coax fresh hunches, and awaken to patterns that revealed themselves, made visible later on in the harvest of the writing, as if by magic.

### **illumination.**

This is the site of breakdown and breakthrough, where themes form, new pathways emerge, original thought occurs, and fresh knowledge is made. This is the time of reclamation and revision, of integrating previously fragmented aspects (of self and search) into something more whole, although some key things can still lie outside of immediate awareness, only to be glimpsed at.

Without much logic or reasoning, I followed the trail of intuition as it made more immediate the inherent knowledge that had been gestating while the mysteries of tacit knowing did its work. By pulling on the threads, clues, and patterns that kept presenting themselves to me, I wove together something essential and by inference, more authentic. The researcher “makes necessary shifts in method, procedure, direction and understanding which will add depth, substance and essential meanings to the discovery process” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Awakening to past distortions of understanding through a kind of clarity where opaque veils are lifted to reveal insights and subtle particularities to the work (especially after being in the dark stages of the mysterious and hidden realms), this

can be a truly brilliant time of outpouring where I could add something essential to the truth of the lived experience and give originality to the work.

**explication.**

Thoughts, feelings, awareness, judgments, and beliefs form the key components of the research through the depiction of core themes. This is the stage that teases out meanings, particularities, and underlying descriptive themes that inhabit the experience and make explicit what has awakened from consciousness through amplification, clarification, refinement, and further exploration, as necessary. Through focus, indwelling, sometimes further searching and self-disclosure, meanings that are unique and depend on and honour perceptions give credibility to the researcher through her internal frames of reference that explicate her experience. This is a place of *muchness* as well as a place to be mindful of what may be missing.

**creative synthesis.**

This culmination stage of “creative synthesis is achieved through tacit and intuitive powers” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31) in a gathering of themes and other components to illustrate and illuminate. It was essential that I did not rush to finish but allowed time for further contemplation (despite deadlines or finish line anxieties) until the final combining took place so that the essence of the phenomenon unfolded its wings and could take flight.

However, it bears repeating here that heurism is NOT as straightforward as Moustakas (1990) six stages imply nor do they follow any linearity, and instead they are more like a phenomenological dance of deepening and surfacing, deepening and surfacing with long periods of gestation for something to be born that aspires toward a final, rich synthesis of feeling and language.

This writing unfolded as a final synthesis of many multiple day experiences (both current and past) of walking, wandering, thinking, feeling, perceiving, listening, understanding, and sleeping on the land. Here great personal psychological healing took place that has transformed my way of belonging to and being in the world.

**a (re)search of soul.**

Heurism’s etymological root comes from the Greek “*heuriskein*”, meaning “to discover or find” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). It shares its birthright with the word *eureka* that made its unexpected debut when Archimedes discovered the principle of displacement

while he sat in his bathtub. His ‘eureka’ experience illustrates perfectly the striking realization and self-actualization process that heuristic research aims to instigate through processes of self-awareness and self-discovery, in those meandering instances of “wondering about and searching, delving into a phenomenon, awakening to it and letting oneself be inspired” (Tesch, 1990, p. 70), although of course, nothing is ever guaranteed to happen.

With unwavering attention, through a cultivation of deep listening practice, inward gazing, resting and reflection, the heuristic researcher fully *enters* the research becoming *researcher as instrument* where congruence is deep and validity hinges on skill, competence, patience, and rigor (Patton, 1990) as well as tenacity! While heurism is a quest of mythic proportion, it promises nothing but the experience itself and relies on the the willingness of the researcher to go ‘all the way’ to descend into and fully inhabit the experience.

Educator and author, William Carlos Williams (in Pipher, 2006) offers this advice to shunning abstractions and looking for particulars when writing up the phenomenon with, “Catch an eyeful, catch an earful, then don’t drop what you’ve caught!” (p. 107). I often used a digital recorder on my walks which allowed me the opportunity to “catch an eyeful” and pin it with words as best I could without risk of it evaporating from an over-full or wandering mind. Despite my futile attempts to remember such astonishments as I encountered them (including my own insights), I had to rely on other kinds of ‘records’ to assist me throughout this process (sticky notes, field notes, voice mail messages to myself, etc.). These greatly aided the capture of the flash of the instantaneous.

The heuristic mode affords the possibility of living deeply in the moment by being immersed fully with the mysteries while still being involved in poignant research experiences (Patton, 1990). However, “intuitive visions, feelings and sensings that go beyond anything one could record or think about or know in the factual sense” (Moustakas, 1988, p. 212) challenged the ways I had come to understand research. It led me toward the most imaginative reaches.

Gleaned through the intensity of long stretches of solitary engagement and observation with the phenomenon, through empathetic listening, deep inquiry, and dialogue with self and Other, and during breakthrough engagements with diverse art

forms, the heuristic researcher must rely on her own resources — “observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and intuition and to accept as authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic, question, problem or puzzlement” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13) — in order to make sense of this data scramble in a way that will allow others to relate.

Bringing a soulful approach like this one to academic writing demands a high level of vulnerability and a radical form of trust in such an organic process. However, in order to authentically relate what I had found, I could do no less than simply delve deeply into the phenomenon and experience it, rather than write about it or stake any claims of my own about the direct benefits or value of it, at least at first.

In other words, the lived experience of my own transformative journey in nature constituted coming naturally into a heuristic method, the kind “that quickens the researcher at a depth not ever imagined before and engages exploration and elucidation of a phenomenon *from the inside out*” (Persaud, 2000, p. 154) as intuitions were followed, and fascinations were tracked. This has fed a tacit understanding and helped me make new meaning by making room for an epistemology that allows the freshness of the sensory experience and trusts in the mystery that has significantly guided this process.

This is what poets and artists say is how the soul works its way with us, from the depths of ourselves. We must be careful not to interfere with too much rationality or composure and remain as faithful as humanly possible to the pure essence of living the experience. By living intimately with the phenomenon, I was in effect, allowing it to *write itself through me* as it came slowly into view.

I did worry — as to be expected — about being tarred with the brush of self-indulgence only until I realized that the heuristic process is hermeneutically designed to honour the passion and presence, knowledge and aesthetic understanding that the researcher brings<sup>6</sup>. Within this portrayal of personal significance, rather than look for cause and effect relationships, I was able to remain true to the pure essence of *living the experience* as realized in relationship with the phenomenon itself (Moustakas, 1990).

As heurism is person rather than thing-centred, it retains more of the essence of the person in the experience rather than just the experience itself, but as acclaimed French

---

<sup>6</sup> I want to express deep gratitude to the profound creativity and human insights of heurism’s originator, Clark Moustakas (1990)

writer and theorist Hélène Cixous (1991) posits, the journey is not just *personal*. She writes, “the source is given to me. It is not me. One cannot be one’s own source. Source: always there” (p.43) intimating that something greater than oneself ultimately inspires. This fits with Jung’s (2002) notion that we all draw our inspiration and energy through the primordial well of what he called the collective consciousness or what he also referred to later in his life as “the natural mind” (p. 14).

Therefore, the researcher is anything but self-indulgent in this respect (it would be impossible really). If she can set aside her rational ego and move it into the background to allow the research to come *through* her of its own accord, then something golden and greater than herself may indeed come to her upon the return. And anyways, as an ecopsychologist, I have come to understand myself to be an integral part of the larger living biosphere and its consciousness, therefore in effect I am no longer just Hilary looking into the nature of things as much as I am an aspect of the *world personified looking into itself* within these pages. This notion obligates me to more fully *enter* the field in a kind of “timeless immersion until it is understood” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 51) where method and content become so congruently one and the same that “the topic becomes the method through which the topic is pursued” (Ober, 2003, p.126).

The engaged and authentic heuristic researcher cannot *help* but become *more themselves* in the evocative process that reminds us to slow time, and listen in a full, sensuous, active way. It was necessary for me to stop the dialogue I was having with myself and engage more deeply in the largest possible conversation I could have with the world.

Heurism can only be described as akin to Alice falling into the rabbit hole (Carroll, 1930) where she was stretched out beyond her wildest imagination and made to seem so small at other times, and more often than not left completely befuddled in a strange land of characters. In this research, not only are the living phenomena being taken into account, but the influence of one’s own realizations relevant to their own experiences (including self-dialogue) and life — even dreams and visions — are proportional and significant. In the deep wellspring of the mind in response to the animated world, we imaginatively mirror the universe as it widens our experience where researcher within “becomes the lens in which one sees the crucible of relationships of being and knowing” (Snowber,1997, n.p.)

as she takes in and questions the very nature of everything on her path of inquiry. And perhaps, not least of all, is *taken in* at the same time as she questions her own nature.

Listening and solitude are necessary to this methodology. "Language that *speaks the world* rather than abstractly speaks *of it* is a language that reverberates the world" (van Manen, 1990, p.13) and can adequately access real depth of experience over time spent in it. In loyalty to a nature-based practice that includes a world-soul to human-soul conversation, the "voice of the earth" is also accounted for and synthesized within these pages.

And in terms of time spent listening, the great theologian and mystic, Thomas Merton (1961) compares the necessity of solitude to a state of openness. He wrote, "The truest solitude is not something outside you, not an absence of men [sic] or of sound around you; it is an abyss opening up in the center of your own soul" (pp. 80-81), an invitation to gaze into the mysterious depths and was required here in longitudinal proportion.

One can begin to understand with all this talk of 'time' and 'time spent' that a most critical issue for the heuristic researcher can be the great tension of time. With such a focus on inner experiential time with respect to the immersion, incubation and illumination phases and because the journey itself *is the data source* (aside from theoretical framing and literature reviews), this work could not be hurried (Moustakas, 1990), scheduled or predicted. Taking time off to write from work at the university didn't always produce results, which frustrated me and added additional stress and costs as I strove to juggle full time employment with full time study within an already complex life that seemed to be growing more and more complex by the research minute.

To compound the time dilemma, it was difficult for me to know when to stop because there were periods of great flow and other necessary spans of dormancy and disappearance before another flow began. I had the sense that this study could actually go on forever if there wasn't more life waiting on the other side of it!

The heuristic method demanded a great deal of trust and sustained commitment in order to become an honest, richly-layered and complex depiction of true lived experience. It necessitated a penetrating exploration that suffused life and was for a time, all-consuming. Due to the highly personal and interpretive nature of this method, researchers

can often feel lonely (Moustakas,1990), however the solitude I experienced invited an entirely soulful experience, and permitted a never-before-experienced depth of intimacy with the other-than-human world. Illuminations and creative expressions gave way to more authentic work than I had ever before imagined possible. This methodology coheres beautifully with my own nature and I believe has forever altered the way I view research scholarship.

### **A/r/tography: The Map**

By taking in life energy as primordial, a priori from which human life-world emerges, I began to recognize that my experiences and interpretations in many ways were preverbal and somatic and belonged not only to language but to art as well. I longed to involve all facets of myself in this project and realized early on that this would entail creating an artful complement to my written body of work, something more fluently *embodied* than words alone could ever achieve.

Jung wrote, "The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purpose within him" (robertgenn.com). I knew that this art-making process would in effect reveal *through me* more about this research. It was never intended as an afterthought, rather it was deeply enmeshed in my study and soon I began to explore art-making in studio.

Depth psychology recognizes the mystique and power of the creative both as an early predilection of imminent shifts in consciousness and as a vital element in the individuation process that gives voice to what wants to occur or emerge in the individual. In effect, the artistic process can illustrate being taken up by what calls us to our life's purpose. Often artists are referred to as being "consumed" by their passions, literally "possessed" by the creative forces that flow directly from the unconscious and shape the artist as a symbolic vessel of psychic life out of which pours the expression of the universal, providing a soulful expression for us all. Perhaps art could be viewed then as the psychic canary in the coalmine of societal shifts or culture change?

With art so deeply connected to soul, I felt a need engage with the kind of art-making that intertwines metaphor and ambiguity, texts and images in a collage-like way where "knowing, doing and making merge" (Pinar, 2004, p. 9). Just as the "essential research stance" of phenomenology is to "re-establish the 'primal oneness' of our

relationship as human beings with our environment” (p. 20), I carried through on that continuum, allowing an a/r/tographic<sup>7</sup> inquiry to help me visually express my experience as viewed through the many faceted lenses of myself as artist/researcher/teacher.

A/r/tography is an aesthetic research praxis that intentionally “blurs the lines of genres, texts and identities” (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Hurren, Leggo and Oberg, 2008, p. 142) with its wandering and rhizomic tendencies that often create surprising interreferentiality and through the integration of meandering associations, illuminate and generate new meaning. Metonymic and metaphoric properties abound in a/r/tography where things become “other” things by virtue of their relationships and complex forms of conversation that flow between intellect, feeling, and practice (Irwin, 2004) in a perpetual, mythic creation by the co-operative.

A/r/tographers are often rebels who seek to push up against the normative ways we may have thought about “aesthetics” or “art” or “art-making”. They have a “desire to explore new territory, a borderland of reformation and transformation, a geographical, spiritual, social, pedagogical, psychological and physical site intersubjectively and intrasubjectively situated in and through dialogue” (Irwin, 2004, p. 30). They can act as “liminars” (Norton, 1988, p. 53), those “who live with(in) this fecund limen” embracing what some may at first refer to as weird or unsettling, unusual but interesting, experiential stuff that speaks through artist/ researcher/teacher by giving voice to the invisible threads of perception and experience. Art-making in this way is not merely an aesthetic representation of something, it also *is* the thing.

Fresh and curious, this non-linear process can engage in a range of lived research such as: life writing, literary métissage, photography, painting, performance, maps, recipe books, e-mails, letters, and postcards, illustrations, costuming, etc. (Hurren, 2009) but a/r/tography is created only when these individual art forms leave any kind of singular concentration and cross boundaries, mix and interconnect through and with each other in order for additional and or enhanced significance to be created (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004).

---

<sup>7</sup> The two-slash prefix is an acronym accentuating the hyphenated, marginal spaces and transformational relationships between artist, researcher and teacher in a form of complicated conversation of aesthetic experience that takes on many animated forms of expression. The graphemes (punctuation marks) are meant to mix and merge rather than separate (Irwin, 2004).



Examples of this inquiry may include quilt-making, dance and performance, self-portraiture, serial drawings, paintings or photographs, paintings overlaid with text and other collaged ephemera, collages, themed, illustrated, or collaged journaling pages, public art installations, clothing sewn through with embellishments, sculpture, etc. By disrupting notions of standard academic discourse where theory and practice, art and text, self and other, artist and teacher blend and combine, can lend an original physicality, and a vital presence to research by creating a reorganized space for it to come alive in and take on a life of its own.

*A/r/tographers* must *live their practice* and stay true to the conveyance of experience through authentic aesthetic representations. They bring post-structural perspectives that boundary blur and create an emotional response. This practice is not something that can be taught or learned from a textbook or known beforehand, rather it must *felt* and *lived through* in a dance of discovery and re-discovery in the moment as it is in the making as much as the finished product that meaning and message are created.

By staying true to my own nature and to a whole-person lived practice/process, I went into this open-ended aspect of my study without knowing what I would create in the end, although I knew that I wanted to create a kind of archetypal motif, a post-structural semiotics of identity and possibility that I hoped would suggest more than explain.

The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our own way back to the deepest springs of life. (Jung as cited in Woodman, 1992, p. 23)

I began by taking a fine arts course on image transfer so that I could piece together shapes and images that more literally symbolized my initiatory journey. I made and pressed many images using a variety of methods to make the transference from photographs, printed letters and words, leaves, drawings of animals, and other symbols and signifiers that were meaningful to my experience onto paper, plastic and even wood. Something alchemical seemed to happen in the transfer process where lines began to blur, edges became fuzzy and the grainy images could tell something more than the original

crisp photocopies I began with. Hermeneutically speaking, these images came through revealing *and* concealing truths. I sensed this project, just like my research, was taking shape of its own mysterious accord. I was taken up and shaped by the doing itself, as if something was actually guiding me along (or perhaps someone such as the Muse?). I suddenly simply “knew” that I would make a strange kind of map of this journey, a metaphoric cartography of the mythic inward adventure to soul. This prospect thrilled me.

I learned so much in studio. Practical skills, yes, but in a broader sense the studio and the work we did there was metaphoric to the writing process. I am touched for instance to learn what I instinctively already intuited and that is that fine Japanese papers like the ones we are image transferring onto should never be cut with scissors because they are made through an interweaving process and therefore must be torn gently; pulled apart in order to leave their rough edges strong with fiber ends intact. What is called for is more of a teasing apart rather than any type of definite, precision-cut action. I find the same goes for this research as it can also achieve these kinds of hirsute yet dynamic edges by virtue of its own unraveling and tearing away processes! Everything I do, think of, or experience harkens back to my heuristic analysis.

I really didn't know what I was doing when I began, although I had some idea of what I was attempting. I was constantly wondering how far should I go? Not wanting to ruin something by “working it” too long, but not yet knowing when enough was enough, I was in continual dialogue with myself as I picked something up again and again to do a little more, go a little farther until I saw that it was perhaps finished. And I chuckled to myself marveling at how like writing this was!

With much patience, effort, some skill and presence, miraculously beautiful and mysterious things took shape over time. While not “perfect” by artistic measure, it was precise what *wanted* to be revealed. I began to trust that transfers are more like *transmissions*. What will be “received” depends on the paper's own characteristics such as its porousness, its weave, colour, imperfections as well as the pressure and time applied by the artist just as the researcher takes in data and interprets it through her own particularity of contexts and imperfections, threads of reasoning, and the “weave” of her understanding only to deliver the transferences of her imagination.

But the original idea I had held for a “map” somehow still felt like a work of art I was doing for others, to impress or try to make up for anything lacking in these pages (or in my own self as scholar), so quite near to the end, I set fire to my map (which felt both freeing and right to me). I began again by drawing out my “body” of work using a traced outline of my own image on craft paper. I had been teaching this form of arts-based inquiry for four years to undergraduate and graduate level environmental students, so I thought it was high time to practice what I was teaching!

“Images bring us closer to learning through soul, giving voice to underlying myths that, when recognized, can illuminate aspects of our world not visible through the language of logos” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 81) and they are after all, “the great instrument of instruction” (Dewey, 1929/2009, p. 39) as the power of imagery brings us closest to real life experience where meaning is made through lasting impressions. I painted *through this body of work*, a representation of my journey to soul turning my self upside down on the page in an effort to try to depict what I had experienced that had turned me completely around.

My upside down legs became birch trees (or maybe aspen?) with my upper torso plunging through ripped up maps (at ground-level) to depict what a dark place I was heading for (that was clearly not down on any map as true places rarely are). I used a black and white leaf motif throughout to help organize the journey starting with pasting all sizes of black leaves on the right side coming down the tree trunk (leg) into the darkness below the earth toward the centre at the bottom where the dark meets the light, where the dark and light leaves form perfect circle in my hands (the yin-yang symbol of ‘eaches’ creating a whole). At centre, the leaves then turn to white as they ascend up the left hand side of the paper representing the notion of bringing the dark into the light of consciousness as the journeyer returns. Around each leaf, I stamped key words from my thesis and in so doing found by virtue of the placement of words, I was creating new meaning for myself even this late in the game. From a distance, the black and white leaves began to look to me like footprints, cursive patterns that move in and out, back and forth, and sometimes overlapping in an often circular, exploratory and mythic dance, steps of the journey I had just experienced. (See photo on page vi).

“Collage work requires a deliberate overlapping arrangement of bits and pieces. Within collage there are no clean edges or borderlines between the bits and pieces”

(Hurren, 2003, p. 113) implying that “teaching and living and learning and self and place and theory and research” (p. 113) all mingle and dance together too. Painting, cutting, ripping and pasting, stamping, and situating in a kind of patchwork allowed strange and surprising derivatives because in the intertwinements new connections of imaginative academics, a post-structural dialogue that mused more than argued occurred.

In many ways this art project did mirror the beauty and evocativeness of the life-writing process in its: exploring, gathering, transferring and translating, teasing and ripping apart, theming and threading, piecing together, adjusting and readjusting, editing and culling, and finally drawing out and gluing together to create some new order from chaos. A kind of enraptured realization in action took place when I saw that the “connective tissue” that holds the borderland between images is as meaningful as the placement of the images themselves within this piece! Educator Ted Aoki (1993) called these the “third spaces”, those odd, liminal places of nothing (and everything) that “stimulate reflection, creativity, and self-knowledge” (Pinar, 2004, p. 23). “Thirdness” can bring interpretations that question, see into, and wake us up all at the same time and act as “a means to enhance (our) own understanding of ideas and practices” (Irwin, 2004, p. 27). It is “the frontier, the margin, the border between one thing and another between this and that, known and unknown, knowable and unknowable may be called the limen...a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, a striving after new forms and structure” (Aoki, Low, & Paulis, 2001, p. 1). This is the space of interdisciplinarity in action!

This simple craft paper (not canvas) became a secondary *graphic* canvas, another place and space (and way) to *write* this work into existence and because paper is woven from fibers of celluloid, is made from the forest, it was the perfect medium for me (the one who walks in the woods) to work with. Crafting has indeed made visible the invisible! My sense of inner understanding now has an outer (re)presentation to symbolize and mythologize my story piecing together an expository essay of my inner (feeling) and the outer (seeing) world in a/r/tographical space. This anatomical map illustrates the territory of my own dialogic inquiry, has taken the shape of a three dimensional embodied atlas of my soul’s journey that shows where I have been. It is also a navigational chart with branches of significance to what was harrowing and vital and like any artful authenticity, may even help plot a course to where I am going if I allow it to lead me (to continue to work

on me) long after this study is over. I am going to hang it in my office to remind me and to let more meaning unfold over time. And perhaps, in some strange way, I hope it might also help others way-find.

One can only imagine this vulnerable piece of research coming under fire for its quirkiness. A/r/tography is often scrutinized in academic debates over what constitutes knowledge and knowing, what makes for valuable and contributive research methods. But it is not the aim of the a/r/tographer, that something “makes sense” or be perceived as beautiful to others. Its odd nature is often part of its purpose to startle and to interrupt the familiar through interplay and movement as it inspires us to question what is happening, to help us wrestle with meanings as *we* make them, as we try to understand more of what this mysterious life is about and what lies beneath the surface of things.

With its intersections of wandering and wondering, layering and stacking, mixing and mingling, interrupting and attending, unearthing and omitting, amplifying and reducing, listening and outpouring, a/r/tography is both play and spectacle. I have found this experience to have been a creative intersection of self and world. Richly layered vocabularic and visual morsels of rhythms, colours and textures, voice and silences, constellate and conspire to tell more. It is an intimate invitation toward a praxis of lived practice and theory, a fluid dance of deepening that (re)minded me of the importance of including all aspects of myself in the search for knowledge and by so doing keep an ancient appointment with the body, mind and soul.

#### **a side trip on the naissance of art.**

In the story of the birth of The Muses<sup>8</sup>, “who tell of what is and what will be as well as what was” (Chawla, 1994, p. 14), the mythic roots of all art-making are illuminated. These nine beautiful goddess-daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (the personification of *memory*) were the inspirations for and keepers of all The Arts. It is said that these mythological offspring continue to archetypally invite our deepest creative expression and through our relationship to them as we sing, sketch, paint, write, recite, dance, make and create at their coaxing, we tap into more of our true nature. It would follow then that when

---

<sup>8</sup> The Muses are Calliope (heroic or epic poetry/song), Clio (history), Erato (erotic or love poetry/song), Euterpe (lyric poetry/song), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (sacred poetry/song, hymns and mime), Terpsichore (choral dancing), Thalia (comedy) and Urania (astronomy) (Retrieved from <http://www.eudesign.com/mnems/greekmus.htm> July 2013)

we are deeply engaged in the flow of our artistry, in our creative flux of art-making, and open to what Nachmanovitch (1990) calls “*lila*” from Sanskrit meaning “divine play” (p. 12), we move closer to an aesthetic act of (re)membering ourselves *to* ourselves.

By the “rendering (of) self through arts-based, living inquiry” (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004), we may become more of who we are meant to be. I heartily concur with educator Madelaine Grumet (1993) who posited that the arts are essential for human maturation and meaning-making in one form or another. It has been this way since the beginning of our history and it is only in recent times that many people have fallen away from the imaginative in favour of more linear, mechanistic pursuits.

The Muses don’t tell us what to write or paint or create, they show. Poet Michael Goldman (1969) put it this way, “When the Muse comes, She doesn’t tell you to write; She says, get up for a minute, I’ve got something to show you, stand here” (p.8). Of course, the caution to those who engage in the imaginative realms is that when the Muse appears it is untenable (and a virtual blasphemy against one or another of the gods) to ignore her (or what she is pointing you toward) as she may never call again.

I definitely had the feeling while in the flow of the a/r/tographical inquiry of being subsumed by something awe-inspiring, being courted by something greater than myself as if in a dream state. This helped to (without me having to think about it) release my ego-based anxieties of being a “good enough” artist. I let go of my tendencies to have to be appropriately artistic and instead allowed a deep and conscious attendance to what was unfolding right before me. This gave me full permission to explore the art-making process.

Like the itinerant wanderer, walking a borderland of interdisciplinarity and praxis, I gave myself over to *getting lost on purpose* in the hope of revealing shards of my own truth, to catch glimpses of a more full understanding of what it is to be human. I pushed past what I knew or was comfortable doing as my research became “neither this or that, but this *and* that” (Pinar, 2004, p. 9). I embraced rather than refused tensionality which allowed complex interactions and interplay, and what felt like a great “unraveling”.

My “body” of work helped me to illustrate (in collage/map and text) what I found at the confluence between both the emotional-imaginative (feminine) body and the logical-rational (masculine) mind where yields of a more primal experience of being in and intimately knowing the world through artful expression, were granted.

**'Body' of Work**

A/r/tographic  
Representation





## Part I – The Separation



Photograph #2. Retrieved from open source <http://www.dreamstime.com/photos-images/p11/tree.html>. November, 2013)

The Separation stage metaphorically represents removing ourselves from the life we know and understand in a movement away from familiar landscapes of hearth and home to unfamiliar and untamed places to seek out and retrieve something of value necessary for a better life. In my case, it meant venturing out to both the nearby wood and faraway desert as well as mountainous terrains.

This chapter sets the context of how Western culture's departure from a more primal and participating way of being in connection with the living world has divorced us from our earthy roots and a more complete identity of what it means to be human. Here, I look into how we have effectively separated ourselves out from all Others by allowing a dualistic form of thinking to prevail, first found in Greek philosophy then later fortified in conjunction with modernity and the development of the nation state system, capitalism and a post-Reformation interpretation of Christianity. I posit it is this divided thinking between a presumably "exterior" world of material nature and the presumably "interior" world of



emotions, mind and spirit makes possible our extravagant behaviours and insatiable appetites and has taken a tremendous toll through world-wide destructions and losses.

Two important theories are the framework central to my thesis. Both share commonly held ideas about human nature and will help underpin my ideas for education in later chapters. First, my research led me to delve into many ancient philosophies and myth stories that posit we each come into this world— just like all other species on the planet— with a kind of blueprint, a seed of what we are to become if we activate and fulfill our particular set of gifts or purposes. And secondly, I found within the context of depth psychology<sup>9</sup> and particularly the psychology of Jung (Collected Works, 1917-1979), with his framework of individuation, notions of what is required in our human development from birth through to death to necessitate and encourage our maturation and wholeness if we track natural proclivities, inborn tendencies and interests from early childhood (especially through nature experiences). However, between the two, I found there was much to tell.

A critique of contemporary dominant educational practices in Western society will help shed light on how, for the most part, our school systems still adheres to hierarchies and practices invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to meet the needs of industrialization. This means that those subjects at the top of the class were the ones that ensured employment instead of considering what someone was good at or drawn to. What is still most prevalent is that we tend to measure intelligence through academic ability – through our abilities to adjust to (and excel within) an archaic system ruled by the insistency of bells, with segregation by age, where through constant surveillance and confinement to small indoor spaces educator John Gatto (1999) realized we have created intellectual hierarchies and dependencies. Thus we effectively diminish “the powers” (Dewey, 1902/2009), the inner knowings and intuitions of students rather than enlarge them. I have looked at how, within this imbalance, many students have also been severed from their own natures and a sense of their connection with the rest of the world. Our culture appears to be floating adrift unmoored from the imaginative footing of our creative intelligences. In essence, I have

---

<sup>9</sup> Depth psychology is the systematic explorations of the unconscious as articulated by Freud, Jung, and other scholars of the inner life as explored through the importance of symbol and metaphor in personal and cultural imagery or the recognition of the dynamic interplay between the natural world and the world of the human psyche.

come to understand that without intervention—now—we will continue to precariously list in favour of a curriculum of objectivity and logic alone with dire implications for the future of our species as well as the whole ecology.



### Early Severances

The hallmark of modern consciousness is that it recognizes no element of mind in the so-called inert objects that surround us. The whole materialist position, in fact, assumes the existence of a world ‘out there’ independent of human thought, which is ‘in here’. (Berman, 1984, p. 57)

From an ecological perspective, everything in nature (including every human being) has a unique relationship with the natural world (the system we are a part of), and by its particular true nature (presence and activities) belongs and serves the whole in one or more ways. The conscious discovery and cultivation of that relationship, which I will refer to in humans as *ecological identity* (Macy, 2007; Naess, 1988/1998; Thomashow, 1995), is critical to uncovering what each person’s contribution (what I refer to as ‘true vocation’) to the whole system is. In essence, I believe it is core that we develop relationships with each other (and non-humans too) if we hope to evolve and mature.

So many people today are in a kind of systemic psychological separation from their original intimacy with the natural world, and hence experience a disconnection from their own true natures (by that I mean psyche or soul). This bifurcation can result in an inability to hear and answer the particular ‘calling’ of who they are meant to be and instead they find they may more easily succumb to cultural pressures and someone else’s idea of what they ought to do, who they ought to be. In my experience, when a call *is* heard, something inside us deeply shifts in response. I have found that when we answer through our unique, soul-rooted ways, that it is *in the answering* (not the answer alone) that we become more fully ourselves. In so doing, more often than not, we are acting in service to something greater than ourselves, which at the same time holds implications for the whole ecology.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> This is not to suggest that there is only one, pre-determined destiny for any individual. Nor is it intended to sanction totalitarian actions, such as are put forth in the “I am destined to be a master; you are destined to be my slave” argument. The fallacies in that logic are that it is no-one’s true nature to either (a) be a slave driver, or (b) be a slave; and (c) to tell

Further separations have been reinforced by much of mainstream education's chief aim toward employability with its overt emphasis on winning at competition, standardized testing and knowledge transfer, and "getting a degree in order to get a job". For the most part, this mentality leaves the natural proclivities, passions and the identity of the student out of the learning equation. Instead, much of our schooling reverts to an objectivism that has divorced us from the depths of lived experience in favour of a more abstract way of life. This also tends to preclude any profound sense of understanding of the planet as a whole, interconnected, and integral system and the intrinsic part we play within that system.<sup>11</sup>

Our relatively recent disconnection from the earth (within the last 400 years) is reinforced by a reductionist worldview with its orientation to see things in isolation and separation, in parts rather than in wholes, where we act as individuals rather than communities. This in turn feeds thinking, beliefs, and behaviours that make possible our Western ways of life with its tolerance for the kinds of actions that threaten the whole world system. This has been made evident by ongoing vast devastations and natural losses traced to climate change, a result of our refusal to make connections between the two.

In *Cosmos and Psyche* (2007), Richard Tarnas, founder of the graduate program in Philosophy, Cosmology and Consciousness at the California Institute of Integral Studies, posits that worldviews aren't merely how we look at the outer world around us, rather they equally represent and reinforce the deep structures that underlie and configure our interior psychic, somatic, and emotional lives, those deeply forged "patterns of sensing, knowing, and interacting with the world" (p. 16). He goes further to say that "the human

---

another person that they "ought" to be a slave acts in direct opposition to the idea that one should not allow another to determine their destiny for them. Furthermore, there are many different ways to express one's true nature. Should a person be called to healing, teaching, or art, for example, there are myriad different choices within those areas where one can express and fulfill their calling. Thus, the accusation that seeking one's true nature leads to a totalitarian social regimen fails to recognize the point that by fulfilling your calling, society is made *better* – not worse – by encouraging every person to do what they do best, and to engage in meaningful work. In so doing, this furthers the cause of social justice and equity, much in the same way that a Buddhist ethic does. Of course, this works best if everyone within a given community (on whatever scale) understands and believes that each member of the community has unique gifts and allows for the expression of that.

<sup>11</sup> "General systems theory is a general science of 'wholeness'"(von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 37) that studies and explains things within their own environment and shifts from a 'parts' mentality into thinking of wholes instead. The essentiality (and integral health) of the system lies in the sum of all of its parts and cannot be found singularly within any one part alone. Fritjof Capra (1996) notes that, "living systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller parts" (p. 36) and those properties "can be understood only within the context of the larger whole" (p. 37). Systems thinking then, is based on relationships. Earth scholar and ecotheologian, Thomas Berry (1999), said it so eloquently when he articulated that the cosmos is not comprised of a collection of objects to be exploited, but a communion of subjects in relationship.

being is a microcosm within the macrocosm of the world, participating in its interior reality and united with the whole in ways that are both tangible and invisible” (p. 16-17).

Whole systems thinking and the basic premise of ecopsychology both elucidate that what we do to ourselves, we do to the rest of the planet and what we do to the planet we are, in effect, doing to ourselves. Our attitudes and expressions affect the world through direct and indirect action and energy. In essence, we act out what we believe. As a single integral Earth community comprised of all members — both human and other-than-human — Berry (1999) explains, “every being has its own role to fulfill, its own dignity, its inner spontaneity” (p. 4) that when actualized can contribute to the health of the whole.

It is my belief that everything on this planet has its own right to live out its purpose in accordance with the universal pattern *beyond its use for humans*, meaning every being has the right to function and live in unison with the larger community. Each being brings its own unique capacity for relatedness, presence, action and communion; in essence, every thing has its own ‘voice’. The disheartening reality for most of contemporary society is that we may have forgotten how to really listen. Or could it be that we haven’t developed (or been taught how to retrieve) the resources enough within ourselves in the first place to be able to hear our own calling, let alone comprehend what the voices of all living things are trying to tell us about the nature of the world and how we belong to it?



### **disenchantment: the loss of animism.**

Throughout human history from our more tribal beginnings until just about 400 years ago, human beings have viewed themselves, as independent scholar Kirkpatrick Sale (1991) writes, as dwellers of the land — “inhabitants within a world alive” (p.10). Deep ecologist, Peter Bishop expands on that to say were “indwellers” where “all flora and fauna (were) assumed to occupy a unique place in the ecological totality...each possessing a complex consciousness, perhaps even a vision of the world, that is no less indispensable and of equal consideration and value to that of humans” (1990, p. 2).

Modernity’s pervasive divisiveness between nature and human, subjective self and the objective outer world of things, is traced to the beginning of the end of animism in

Morris Berman's (1984) *The Reenchantment of the World*<sup>12</sup>. This move to objectification, denied the felt interior capacity of the human and, at the same time effectively eradicated the notions of the possibility of all other living beings possessing an interior life. Tarnas (2007) writes, "disenchantment, the denial of intrinsic meaning and purpose, essentially *objectifies* the world and thereby denies *subjectivity* to the world" (p. 21), and has since altered the way humans have viewed themselves as they began to shape a separate existence from a world that was now seen as exploitable and that required domination for human benefit and purposes.

Enchantment<sup>13</sup> (animism) on the other hand, saw the aliveness (and traces of the divine) in everything including the land, sky, people, animals, plants and oceans. It held that cycles and patterns were significant and instructive. And while early forms of Christianity were often integrated into existing expressions of pagan belief systems, in later centuries more authoritarian interpretations of Christianity refused to allow beliefs outside of the emerging singular "logic" of monotheism. Lynn White Jr.'s (1967) position that "especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen... in absolute contrast to ancient paganisms [it] established a dualism of man and nature" (p. 1205) certainly holds true for post-Reformation Christianity that had become systemically linked to the use of individualism and capitalism and the commodification of nature (Weber, 1905/2002).

Early human traditions experienced profound intimacy with the natural world in all its living forms. Those living in tune with the land (with its vagaries of beauty and terror) found *the sacred in participation* (even it that meant being killed while hunting) where a sense of wonder with the numinous presence of the world was the primary reality (Abram, 1996; Berman, 1984; Berry, 1999). Worship of the wild and the sacred experience of

---

<sup>12</sup> Particularly, Berman illustrates this in his chapters 3 -4 on *disenchantment*.

<sup>13</sup> Folklorist Camilla Ingemark (2006) describes enchantment as an experiential "encounter with a supranormal being... and has an extraordinary effect, changing the relationship with the human world, on the one hand, and to the supranormal sphere on the other" (p.1). Political theorist Jane Bennett (2001) describes enchantment as "something that we encounter, that hits us... to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary among the everyday" (p.5). She also refers to finding wonder in "a world of lively and endless flows of molecular events, where matter is animate, without necessarily being animated by divine will or intent" (p.14). Her overall message is that enchantment will lead to a better ethic of care and greater compassion, both for human and nonhuman beings and for the environment, "because it is too hard to love a disenchanting world" (p.14). Enchantment presupposes a greater power, whether in the animate world or in a transcendent one and, no matter where it is encountered, or what precipitates it, is still about wonder, love, and what Bennett calls "joyful attachment" (p.14).

natural phenomenon forged deep spiritual exaltation, and an even deeper sense of community with all other beings (Berry, 1999). Berman (1984) called this early primordial worldview one of “*participating consciousness*” (p. 84) where the senses opened up a channel of presence to the life force that held significance for each living thing. He writes that:

The view of nature which predominated in the West down to the eve of the Scientific Revolution was that of an enchanted world. Rocks, trees, rivers and clouds were all seen as wondrous, alive, and human beings felt at home in this environment. The cosmos, in short, was a place of belonging. A member of this cosmos was not an alienated observer of it but a direct participant in its drama. His personal destiny was bound up with its destiny and this relationship gave meaning to his life. (p. 2)

Central to animism from an early primal world are characteristics shared with many traditional indigenous cultures, where humans are embedded within a world permeated with meaning, saturated with signs, symbols, stories, intentions, and “subjectivity, interiority, intrinsic meanings and purposes” (Tarnas, 2007, p.18) — the world was alive, enchanted and *ensouled*. Tarnas explains that “In the primal world view, intelligence and soul pervade all of nature and the cosmos, and a permeable self directly participates in that larger matrix of meaning and purpose within which it is fully embedded” (ibid). On the other hand, the modern view for the most part sees soul and intelligence as exclusive to the human subject, distinct and separate from an objectified non-human world. Some areas of science research however, are starting to see intelligences and sentience in other creatures; after 400 years science has ‘proven’ what we already instinctively knew (and what many of the spiritual traditions thousands of years old have been teaching us).

What has happened, particularly in the past two centuries with the adoption of a more modern worldview, is a kind of “correction” to old “superstitious” ways and “muddled thinking” (Berman, 1994, p. 58) found in earlier “participating consciousness” (p. 84). While our impulse to define ourselves as a higher form of intelligence separated us from the “brutish and untamed” world, it ironically cut us off from the vast meaning and intelligence found within the living world. Highly anthropocentric hierarchical dualisms were created that severed subject/object, self/world, inner/outer and humans/nature.

As an overarching mechanistic worldview arose with capitalism in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and attitudes inextricably linked with existing enterprises of economy took root, increasingly people abandoned the perception of a world where rocks and trees have an interior life. Instinct and intuition were held in contempt of reasonability; things needed to be absolutized and were, as a result, desacralized as well. This thinking helped perpetuate and spread the notion of the subject/object split as epistemology forked away from the poetic and the imaginative realms toward a gradual disappearance of animism.

While the sensual had been attenuated, it of course did not disappear from the psyche. Rather, objectivity simply became the primary way of knowing and the more corporeal aspect of existence went deep undercover. With the pervasion of the Scientific Revolution, the ‘hermetic wisdom’ (Berman, 1984, Merchant, 2008) with its correlations of “as above, so below” was banished to life at the dark edge of the forest, to be hidden in the shadows.



### **as above, so below.**

Hermeticism was both a tradition and a religion attributed to the philosophical writings of Hermes Trismegistus<sup>14</sup> who was called a prophet in his day for, not least of all, his early predictions of the oncoming of Christianity. His teachings emphasized the existence of a primordial universe where a supreme force was responsible for all of creation. It was said he received his teachings from Pythagoras who in turn was considered at the time to have been in some mystical way a direct descendant of the great Hermes, the Greek messenger god. (Hauck, 1999; Yates, 1964).

Hermetics viewed the world in resemblances, attractors, connections, and a “vast assemblage of correspondences” and webbed relationships, as recounted by della Porta (1558) in *Natural Magic*. The maxim of hermetic philosophy—*as above, so below*—offered that the world was comprised of correlations between the microcosm (earth/soul) and macrocosm (heavens/spirit) of the universe with the two intersecting at the fulcrum or centrepoint represented by an integration of opposites, a symmetrical and whole (holy)

---

<sup>14</sup> Hermes Trismegistus existence has been found in records dating as far back as 172 BCE and yet it is not yet agreed upon by hermetic scholars if he is but an amalgam of other great and mystical deities or powers dating all the way back to the Egyptian god Thoth as early as 1300 BCE (Hauck, 1999).

world united (Hauck, 1999). In effect, the hermeticist saw duplicates and replicates in an endless network of patterns and similarities where the “rocks of the earth are its bones, the rivers its veins, the forests its hair” (Berman, 1994, p. 62), where the small *was* the large, just as the universe is mirrored within each of us in *our* pattern of bones, veins and hair. Everything was taken as significant of something else and bore the signature of the creator in this patterned way as “there is nothing found in the whole world that hath not a spark of virtue [of the world soul]” (Agrippa von Nettesheim, 1533/2005, p. 71). Therefore, if everything must contain a part of the divine within it (i.e. God in everything); in essence, to the hermeticist, everything belonged to the whole and had a place particular to it within that whole with the phenomenal world issuing maps and signs as a method for divination.<sup>15</sup>

Philosopher Michel Foucault (1973) *In the Order of Things*, wrote that in nature-based cultures this was not a rival form of knowledge, rather it was part of the main body of knowledge.

Up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. (p. 17)

Disenchantment therefore, was equivalent to becoming “disgodded” (p. 58) as many gods and powers were seen as inextricably linked to creating and ordering all of life and death.

Aristotelian thought did much to revive the alchemical world view that permeated medieval consciousness with his doctrine of natural place and motion defended the idea “that like knows like” (Berman, 1994, p. 62), a precursor to the law of gravity. His work

---

<sup>15</sup> A good example of divination as knowledge was held within the *Doctrine of Signatures* (Boehme, 1621/1912) where resemblances in nature to parts of the body supposedly foretold of healing powers and properties. Walnuts shaped like brains were said to heal headaches, a carrot, when cut through resembles the iris and was believed to help eyesight, kidney beans were thought to be good for kidney function, a man’s face resembled his soul and eyes acted as windows to soul, palms could foretell future paths (Berman, 1994), snakeroot an antidote for snake venom, etc. Hence, the shape of something held a *signature of its purpose* and the imprint of its universal pattern. It is noteworthy that today, modern medicine is corroborating many of these early findings, for example; beta-carotene found in high quantities in carrots is in fact a substance that the body converts to vitamin A, an important nutrient for eye health. Walnuts are loaded with omega-3 high-quality fats that keep the brain fluid and flexible. These brain-shaped nuts are now called the ultimate “brain food” supported through studies linking low consumption of omega-3s to depression and decreased cognitive function (Blomhoff, Carlsen, Andersen, Jacobs, 2006; Sánchez-Villegas, Delgado-Rodríguez, Alonso, Schlatter, Lahortiga, Majem, Martínez-González, 2009).



assembled dimensions of the rational mind with the emotionality of soul to bring further (and sometimes far-fetched) insights into the nature of the world in his dismissal of dichotomous thinking. Aristotle was first to conceive of the philosophy that everything possesses “entelechy” (Sachs, 2005) meaning that everything in the universe is governed by the same laws of nature that create order and purpose. Within this belief, everything has its own inner drive to reach its potential and fulfillment, to realize its destiny and live a complete life if given the proper environment.

Another fundamental part of the epistemological framework of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was contributed by Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1533/2005) in his *De Occulta Philosophia of 1533* (also known as *The Philosophy of Natural Magic*, trans., 2005) that took into serious account a fate sealed by the pressing of cosmological influence by the particular positioning of the stars at birth that began astrological foretellings of character and disposition (a person’s true nature) in life.<sup>16</sup>

Yet despite numerous attempts at revival of the alchemical and magical hermetic traditions through the Middle Ages, Catholicism, Protestantism, and empirical science prevailed with promises of secular salvation, domestication of the wild, and expanding technology. Without personal connection to nature, nature no longer spoke and no longer needed was its mediator—the great god of nature, Pan. Trees became only trees, stones, stones, water, water—the consciousness of the living force of the world was repressed and any personal meanings found there vanished under the asceticism of a new style of managed care with Christ as shepherd (Hillman, 1972). Pan, with his distinctly sexual presence, his musty, hairy body, goat-like legs, tail and horns was banished safely to the depths of hell to merge with the image of the Devil. It is not a leap to see how the instinctual, sensuous and erotic body became representative of the source of sin or how wild nature became associated with evil.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> There is a noteworthy resurgence in some academic circles today to reframe and reinterpret these concepts through the study of archetypal astrology. While “hackneyed personality descriptions”, “superficial character analysis” “fatalistic proclamations” and “simplistic generalizations of Sun Sign horoscopes” comprise much of mainstream’s concept of contemporary astrology, this “belies its great heritage and is deserving of the skepticism with which it is viewed” (Le Grice, 2010, p. 57). Its value lies as a mythic perspective that uses depth psychology and the new sciences as a framework for making conscious the underlying meanings present in both cosmos and psyche within each of our own myth stories (what we are born with and what we live out) in an effort to better understand our personal relationships with world.

<sup>17</sup> Depth psychology provides clues as to the results of these societal repressions when ‘Pan’ (a phenomenological characterization of part of our instincts) is said to reinsert himself through the grips of the *panic* attack or the nightmare

One prominent exception of course was St. Francis of Assisi, who could be found preaching to all creatures as well as humans because he assumed everything had a soul. For this he was branded a heretic by the Church (yet in recent years has become known as the Patron Saint of Ecology after his canonization in 1228). During the Inquisition those brave souls who went against the grain of a more secular salvation suffered excommunication from church and society, even death (Nash, 1967). The forests became a place of “freedom from social ostracism” (p. 40) for many outcasts and was deemed the place where evil resided by those townsfolk who did not want to know what lurked in the shadowlands of society.



### **becoming civilized.**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the American frontier lands, the government of the day made it clear that “progress is God” (Nash, 1967, p. 41) and that the pioneer life with its goal of taming the wilderness, became a worthy cause for generations to come. In an 1843 document called *Early Recollections of the West*, Judge Wilkinson wrote that the pioneer mission was to take “unbroken and trackless wilderness” that had to be “reclaimed” and transform its savageness “into fruitful farms...and flourishing cities” (Nash, 1967, p. 161). This bias was formed like a hard cuticle of loathing and destruction against ‘nature’. Instrumental reasoning meant “creatures that surround us lose the significance that accrued to their place in the chain of being” which rendered them “open to being treated as raw materials or instruments for our projects” (Taylor, 1991, p. 5). This prejudice of usury “had the strength of centuries behind it” (p. 43) as it transmuted nature into energy for use and profit as resources to be harvested. This sacred loss between us followed the descending (and disparaging) trajectory of “magic”<sup>18</sup> as it formed the basis of natural

---

(that has us calling out for contact and comfort) that holds us in an immediate, demonic emotional state rather than taps into our more earthy instinctual and reflective psyches (Hillman, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> Magic in this context is not about charms and spells and amulets; these are more the domain of superstition. Nor is it about “magic tricks” or entertainment. Magic here is understood as something more natural. Wouter Hanegraaff, a Dutch scholar of religions, explains the theory of magic through an enchanted view of a divinely created world, based on the idea that “God had created the world as a beautiful and harmonious whole; and this divine creation was conceived of on the model of earthly realities” (Hanegraaff, 2011, p. 361) but since we cannot understand the mind of God, there will always be a component of mystery or “magic.” Hanegraaff also points out that magic is no more static and unchanging than any other kind of practice. Sociologist Raymond Lee (2010) defines magic as “not concerned with wizardry or arcane manipulations but (is) a means of addressing the hidden spectrum of existence in the mundane world. It... creates opportunities to transcend the rationalized structures of everyday life and restore truncated connections with nature” (p. 190).

science, and saw craft become commodity, and the esoteric ritual was “organized” into religious ceremony and dogma (Berman, 1984).

Tarnas (2007) argues that “world views create worlds” as they manifest in subtle ways in our interactions. “Our beliefs and theories, our maps, our metaphors, our myths, our interpretive assumptions—constellate(s) our outer reality, shaping and working the world” (p. 17). In an attempt to bring the natural world under control, we also in effect, tamed the “inner wildness of the human itself” (Berry, 1999, p. 50). We took our vastness of authentic spontaneity, connectivity and possibility and reduced it down to something manageable and polite, and called it civilized.

Not only have we become the oppressors of the natural world through our disconnected behaviors, many modern peoples have in fact repressed themselves by choking off their unique inner patterns of genius and particularity. If we psychologically trace the disconnection with our own vitality and aliveness with the loss of our participation in a world of meaning, then this may in part account for the rampant and escalating rates of depression (which is what happens after long periods of repressing energy) that my colleagues and I see first hand in psychotherapy. The dire results of losing our abilities to deeply connect with our own true selves (and with all others) means many have become cut off from not only their own souls but also from the soul of the world.



### **anima mundi.**

Jung (2002) interchanged the words “soul” and “psyche” in his writings, just as I have done here. He understood that “psyche comes from Greek for *soul, life and breath*; so psyche is Nature itself” (p. 1). Jung made the controversial observation that the soul was not mostly located inside of us but rather “the greater part of soul lies outside of the body” (as cited in Weller, 2011, p. 45), because we are enveloped in it...“as we live in psyche; psyche does not live in us” (p. 45). I believe Jung is referring to the soul of the world, meaning “this psychic reality where everything has interiority, in essence, has a soul, is *anima mundi*” (Hillman, 1989, p. 99) or *world soul*. Plato<sup>19</sup> (Zeyl, 2012) in *Timaeus* in 4<sup>th</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Plato later shifts his thinking to be more suspicious of soulful intelligence (Berman, 1984).

century BC first wrote of this when he said,

“We may consequently state that this world is indeed a living being endowed with a soul and intelligence...a single visible living entity containing all other living entities, which by their nature are all related.” (n.p.)

Similarly, many traditional indigenous cultures understand that participation is both self and not-self-identification at the moment of experience (Abram, 1996; Berman, 1984; Buber, 1970; Ricoeur, 1992; Some, 1998) where I am not only *like* raven, I *am* raven. The more sensuous intellect (where senses and intellect inform each other equally) develops through systemic identification with Other in a unified experience that is “not only a comparison - how I am like this other but more of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being other)” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 3). Original participation with the world holds at its essence what Buber (1970) called “I-Thou” feelings where I *am* the phenomena that is the same nature as me. And wild poet and scholar, Gary Snyder (2007) reminds us that the Chinese word for nature is “zi-ran” translates as “self-thus”(p.47).

In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur (1992) wrote that selfhood “implies otherness to such an intimate degree, that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other” (p. 3) where the ego boundary becomes permeable and in effect extends “oneself” into the larger body of the world in a more “ecocentric” relationship. This endorsed notion of subject and object as relative in a holistic world view (Abram, 1996; Berman, 1984; Berry, 1999; Seed, Macy, Fleming & Naess, 1988) brings a deeper sense of compassion to human to human as well as human to nature relationships.

Everywhere, in the living intelligence (consciousness) of the earth, mythologist Michael Meade (2010) posits, soul acts as “...an animating force of natural life.... the living, breathing Soul of the World”(p. 129). He wrote, “Aboriginal people in Australia call it ‘Yorro, Yorro’, everything in the world having soul, standing up and speaking to you” (p. 129). It is well known that in many traditional aboriginal cultures when a person is truly lost and has lost touch with their own soul and the pulse of life (i.e. the soul of the world), they put themselves at greater risk of actual physical death (Hillman,1996).



### enter Descartes.

The stage had been set. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Descartes' (1636) thinking — a summation of the reasoning of his time (as captured in his *Discourse on Method* that beautifully articulated the mathematics of the mechanical arts) (Merchant, 2008) — withdrew consciousness from the other-than-human world altogether (although it was already well on its way out), with his famous quote, “*Cogito ergo sum*” or “*I think therefore I am*”. Descartes' refusal of feelings as a valid source of knowing further divorced people from their sensuous emotional bodies (e.g., he did not say, “*I feel therefore I am*”) caused irretrievable damage. Being divided from the body meant people also became severed from the living continuum that is the body of the world. This fostered the decline of the “feeling intelligence” (McIntosh, 2008, p. 154) in a radical separation of self and object, mind from body, where the body was viewed merely as a necessary carrier for the mind.

Descartes' “new science of mechanics and a mechanical world view laid the foundation for modern scientific, technological and social progress” (Merchant, 1980, p. 99) with his idea that matter was comprised of only shape, “size, position, direction and speed” (Sachs, 2001, p. 3). In his pursuit of perfect know-ability, he denied that anything in the world had any *qualities* other than these superficialities (Sachs, 2001) and surmised that “lacking all qualities, it (world) has only quantities”<sup>20</sup> (p. 4) (brackets mine). While Descartes did not deny the existence of soul, he simply hoarded and restricted it to say that there is no soul but one's own (i.e. individualism) and that “the animals were mere machines, devoid of any inward life” (Sachs, 2001, p.5). He used reason to say that those who write, read, speak and think were evidently the only purveyors of any depth therefore, the meaning of *soul* was *relegated to the regions of the mind*. The body, now understood as a

---

<sup>20</sup> This line of thinking was reinforced by the state through the powers of Lord Chancellor and Attorney General to King James of England, Sir Francis Bacon (credited with founding empiricism) first by his dictum that nature should serve man (Shepard, 1982) and next by his reasoning that science was meant to be ‘value free’ and avoid any emotive arguments. This perception of science saw a universe bereft of inherent awareness, feeling and life (Hayward, 1999) where ‘reason’, effectively, bypassed the more subtle inner workings of the heart (McIntosh, 2008) and soul. For the science of the day, reason was by far an easier tool than emotion to use in a replicable way along with empirical evidence. It answered a different set of questions, but the problem was of course that once science decided on what questions could be answered, it effectively denied that other questions were even askable! (R. Kool, personal communication, 2013). When it came to affairs of the state, Bacon's ideas of knowledge and power (derivations of empirical scientific thinking) were fortified in an alliance between government, business, and the churches that effectively enshrined a myth of mistrust in instinct and emotionality in contemporary culture, religion and education (Orr, 2004).

machine, meant humans dwelled inside their own minds, (dis)embodied. Inwardness would now retreat in further isolation from the living world.

This period with its increased technological prowess and modern science (both closely linked to the highest office of the church)<sup>21</sup>, is most frequently credited for the malaise of modernity where a “civilized” worldview of domination, projection and separation was a cosmos without presences and intelligences of its own. The natural world was seen as lacking reason. When new lands were discovered, it was “the job of man to tutor the natives and domesticate the wild” (Shaw, 2011, p. 16). This narrative we told ourselves about the scientific workings of the world—recognized that meaning and purpose came exclusively from the human mind, making it all the more easy for the commodification of things (and people) to occur as capitalism, and colonialism took hold<sup>22</sup>.

The basic presupposition of the modern scientific method to rigorously “de-anthropomorphize” cognition meant “*facts* are out there, *meanings* come from in here” (Tarnas, 2007, p. 19) averting any projections or interpretations. Things had to be observed and analyzed from a distance lest any nonhuman object be invested with characteristics only attributable to humans<sup>23</sup>. It was considered fallacy and wishful thinking to project what was ‘human’ onto the nonhuman world. The coolness of objectivism took predominant hold as a pure form of reasoning favored the quantification of things in order to know them. Meanwhile the imaginative, storied world of the lived experience within the more qualitative traditions, which might be seen as an enrichment of the world, became retracted in shadow impoverishing our lives, and effectively taking away soul (Sachs, 2001).




---

<sup>21</sup> “Since both science and technology are blessed words in our contemporary vocabulary, some may be happy at the notions, first, that, viewed historically, modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology and, second, that modern technology is at least partly to be explained as an Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man’s transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature.” (White, 1967, p. 1206)

<sup>22</sup> “We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our whim. The newly elected Governor of California, like myself a churchman but less troubled than I, spoke for the Christian tradition when he said (as is alleged), ‘when you’ve seen one red-wood tree, you’ve seen them all.’ To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. For nearly 2 millennia Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred groves, which are idolatrous because they assume spirit in nature. What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.” (ibid).

<sup>23</sup> “Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man’s relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians. Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, we are *not*, in our hearts, part of the natural process.” (ibid).

### resisting the tyranny of reductionism.

Despite the many alternative philosophies available such as Artistotelianism, hermeticism, naturalism, animism, pantheism, and magic to name a few, the emerging dominant modern worldview laid the deep structure of Western ontology and epistemology. “[M]achines became symbols for the ordering of life itself” (Merchant, 1980, p. 227) whereby the symbolic clock with its well-behaved and reliable yet separate parts, became the powerful machine-model metaphor for “a new synthesis of cosmos, society and the human being” (p. 214) as a solution for social disorder and the “chaos” of nature.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, a philosophical writer of the 1700s articulated what he saw was happening in the culture around the ‘morality’ of the time. He understood that “our moral salvation comes from recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves” (Taylor, 1991, p. 27) in the way of “following a voice of nature within us” (p. 27). He wrote that our very freedom to choose for ourselves depended on not succumbing to the voices outside of ourselves that drown out this intimate joyful dialogic contact within, “*le sentiment de l’existence*” (Rousseau, 1959, p. 1047). Rousseau’s line of thinking is essential to building confidence toward our own sense of authenticity and bringing trust in the inner wisdom of soul in light of outward and prevalent pressures, even today.

Rainer Maria Rilke (2005, in Barrows & Macy, trans.), captures the ongoing danger of mechanization right up into the 20th century so well in Part Two X, *Sonnets to Orpheus*,

The Machine endangers all we have made.  
We allow it to rule instead of obey.  
To build a house, cut the stone sharp and fast:  
The carver’s hand takes too long to feel its way.

The Machine never hesitates, or we might escape  
And its factories subside into silence.  
It thinks it’s alive and does everything better.  
With equal resolve it creates and destroys...  
(p. 115)

In further protest against society and culture in the 1800s, the development and practice of the Transcendentalism<sup>24</sup> of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1836/2009), Henry David

---

<sup>24</sup> Born in the early 1800s in the eastern US derived from intellectual thought from Harvard and the Unitarian doctrine as taught in the Harvard Divinity School, its roots come from Christian Unitarianism, Buddhism, Hinduism and the Vedas, as well as indigenous worldviews.

Thoreau (1862/1982) and John Muir (1911/1987) saw the world as inherently good and everything imbued with consciousness. This held profound implications for normative society as it challenged the old entrenched subject/object dualisms. The Transcendentalist perception came under intense scrutiny and criticism in its belief that every tree, every blade of grass or passing cloud had a life of its own endowed with purpose and soul. Both the fields of ecopsychology<sup>25</sup> and integral ecology<sup>26</sup> are contemporary derivatives of this ethic where consciousness (and intelligence) extends to all living beings and is always considered before action.

Another refutation of Cartesian mentality in the early 1900s was brought into focus by mathematician turned philosopher Alfred North Whitehead's (1925/1967) "organicism" where unity was foundational to reality. Whitehead laid the ground for a philosophy that "never loses sight of the whole and must take into account the intuitions of the soul" (Kirk, 1993, p. 25) but always "begins in wonder" (p. 24) and more often in nature.

However, because empiricists saw the universe as the metaphor of machine (with distinctly separate moving parts like that of a giant inner clockwork), this fed dualistic tendencies and further separated human consciousness from nature with a "new mechanical order and its associated values of power and control (that) would mandate the death of nature" (Merchant, 1980, p. 190) within the human psyche. This mechanistic philosophy was effectively absorbed by society as it functioned as justification for domination; whereby in an ordered system, the old integral self that was united to others and other parts of the world was transformed into one who could more easily and single-mindedly compete to attain wealth and glory for himself, and be more easily managed.

Organicism, on the other hand, saw a world made up of complex wholes revealed to us through sense perception, patterns of activity, relationship and experiences. While the

---

<sup>25</sup> Ecopsychology (EP) derives from vast knowledge bases including deep ecology and depth psychology and fundamentally recognizes that what is done to the self is done to the world and vice versa within the vast web of interconnectedness that is world. Ecopsychology suggests that the psyche (soul) cannot be understood in isolation from the sensuous (world soul) that we are embedded in (e.g. in psychology's private session room) and that earthy nature cannot be fully understood as objects independent of subjectivity and relatedness. With a focus on sanity and sustainability as key to the way we act and live interdependently (Boston, 1996; Fisher, 1996, 2006, 2013a/b; Metzger, 1991, 1999; Greenway, 2009; Roszak, 1994, 2002; Roszak, Gomes & Kanner, 1995; Scholl, 2000; Sheppard, 1982) Eco-therapy finds partial roots in EP (Clinebell, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Integral ecology takes a holistic view looking at the world through multiple perspectives (the four quadrant or AQAL – all quadrants, all levels -model) from both the objective and interobjective perspectives as well the subjective and intersubjective perspectives which are usually left out and therefore problematic in most science-based studies (Esbjorn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009; Zimmerman 2009).



empiricist refused to recognize the internal experience as scientifically valid, Whitehead saw a larger more diverse and complete picture (Whitehead, 1925/1967). An organic worldview, he believed, must include the sensual experience and the interiority of the psychological *as well as* science. While he admitted that a complete knowledge of nature was not possible in its irreducible complexity, he refuted a world where sense perception was left out and brought his fundamental reconceptualization of reality aimed to re-enchant science (rather than dismiss it) toward a deeper relationship with nature and culture. Whitehead was the quintessential “both-and” proponent as he saw the epistemological necessity of valuing both inner and outer worlds.

Organicism embraced “an open universe, filled with purpose, meaning and genuine creativity” (Kirk, 1993, p. 25). Whitehead’s “philosophy of organism” reached out with a kind of re-enchantment as counterbalance to the corrosion of organic connectedness caused by entrenched Cartesian claims that saw the universe (including the human body) as automatic and mechanical (Whitehead, 1925/1967) and which remarkably has dominated modern thinking, even today. So it follows that in direct response to the deep and systemic effects of a de-natured world lacking heart and soul, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the study of the psyche emerged within the foundations of modern psychology.



### **Psychology’s Response**

Sigmund Freud, neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, was the first to label neurosis ‘the psyche’s revolt’ (McIntosh, 2008). He found that psychosomatic illnesses, disorders and depressions were the way the soul processed its malcontents (Hillman, 1996; McIntosh, 2008; Neumann, 1973; Richo, 1999). Carl Jung, Freud’s student found that,

The psyche rests in *Mythos*—the collective unconscious realm of myth, archetype and all the “numinous” or spiritual underpinning of life that comprises the metaphysical. Denial of this was at the heart of meaninglessness—the greatest disease of our times (McIntosh, 2008, p. 166).

Despite great gains in psychology and particularly depth psychology, not much has changed, because just before he died in 1961, Jung wrote *Man and His Symbols* (published in 1964) with this lament:

Modern man does not understand how much his 'rationalism' (which has destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put him at the mercy of the psychic 'underworld'. He has freed himself from 'superstition' (or so he believes), but in the process he has lost his spiritual values to a positively dangerous degree. His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this breakup in world-wide disorientation and disassociation. (1964/1981, p. 84)

Jung came to understand "the beginning of all things" to have arisen from a "feeling of primordality" (2002, p. 5) within the non-visible deepest interior realm of the imaginative wellspring of the primal mind. He criticized modern civilization for our loss of instinct (relegated to the unconscious or shadowy realms) that resulted in our current pathological condition (that in his estimation required a societal revival and integration of the dormant, wild, and primal self in order to heal). He took his pioneering explorations past Freud's ego-structured consciousness down into that "primordial layer ...that formed the irreducible ground of the human psyche" (Mayes, 2005, p. 14) when he wrote *Modern Man in Search of A Soul* (1933). According to Jung (1917/1926/1943), this very human soul quest toward more meaningful, more participatory, and productive lives can be realized if we are willing to mature ourselves by making conscious and acknowledging the truer self within that at its crux is connected to the whole universe.

If the human [soul] is anything, it must be of an unimaginable complexity and diversity, so that it cannot possibly be approached through a mere psychology of instinct. I can only gaze with wonder and awe at the depths and heights of our psychic nature. ...[F]or the only equivalent of the universe within is the universe without; and just as I reach this world through the medium of the body, so I reach that world through the medium of the psyche (Jung, 1906/1929, p. 331).

His down-to-earth side believed that with the decline of Western civilization, the loss of the medicines of enchantment (our connection to nature), and the tight grip of a more mechanistic mentality, we stood on dangerous ground. He feared our loss of the most "nourishing soil of the soul" (Jung, 2002, p. 1) in a forfeit of our true birthright to belong to the collective consciousness of something far greater than ourselves.



### **archetypes and the collective unconscious.**

In order to theoretically frame the deep structure of psyche and better elucidate what the psychological outcomes of separation from a “participating consciousness” (Berman, 1994) with the world might mean, I turned further towards the collected works of Jung (1917-1979).

Jung (1965) found that by dipping down into the deep psychosocial well through his work with dreams, defenses, hallucinations, memories, fantasies, fragments, artistic expression and imagination, and multiple other perspectives, we could tap into primal images, ancient themes, and universal stories (such as fairy tales that easily translate across many different cultures and traditions). He studied ancient mythologies and mythic patterns in his attempt to recover more of the authentic primordial self and to help his patients express more of their identity. He mapped out and explored a realm of psychic functioning that distinguished between the personal unconscious (containing experiences of our lives from birth) and what he called the transpersonal or “*collective unconscious*” (1959), a repository of the ancestral experiences of all of humanity. Within this treasury of stored images and themes, Jung named the shared energies and universal inborn tendencies, *archetypes* (1959).

Archetypes are primordial encapsulated stories or mythologies that arrive in the form of a seed in the consciousness. There were five that Jung (1959) was most fascinated by, that of the *persona, anima, animus, shadow and self*, although he recognized that there were many, many more. While any archetypal pattern is whole and complete in and of itself, it is only one aspect of being human and is not the person themselves, rather, each is a role they play. The archetype of the Wise Old Woman, for instance, denotes an aspect of wholeness, but striving single-mindedly for wisdom at the expense of, let’s say wisdom’s counterpart, foolishness, is to miss the joy found in living a more complete life (Woodman, 1982). We need to know the holy fool as much as the wise old elder of ourselves in order to fully develop. However, Jung was clear about archetypes when he said, “you should play your role, knowing that it’s not *you*” (Campbell, 2004, p. 72). Benedictine Monk, Brother David Steindl-Rast (2013) concurs when he offers # 56 of his 99 blessings,

“May I find my role, my roles, in this age-old play on the stage of the world and play them well, taking them both seriously and lightly, never forgetting their importance, yet never confusing my role with my Self.”(n.p.)

*Archos* translated from the Greek means “first” or “lead” (Barnhardt, 1988, p. 48) and *type*, also from Greek means “impression” or “mold” (p. 1180) which together give form to notion of the original or universal pattern or impression of a thing. Although it is not always easy to pinpoint an archetype in yourself, (often others can see it more readily than we can), depth psychologist Robert Johnson (1986) gives us a clue when he says, “We can feel the archetype as a charge of energy” (p. 33), whether negative or positive.

Jung (1959) identified archetypes as psychological products of the human imagination (as pre-existing derivatives from the collective soul or psyche of all humans) found in literature, art, religious icons and rites, cultural patterns, and symbolically in dreams and mythic stories. He viewed the infrastructure of the psyche as shifting patterns of primary urges, predispositions, needs, and shadow elements, comprised of a perennial mosaic of images, stories, motifs and archetypes so deeply embedded that we may never know them all directly, only unconsciously (Mayes, 2005).

Archetypes, present in all people, all the time, permeate and shape not only the individual psyche but help form our cultural myths and our collective ways of knowing. Jung (1959) believed that we are born ‘given’ archetypal energies deep within as a counter-balance to biological instincts. But it is the work of reclaiming what lies beneath the surface of life that makes conscious and integrates these patterns into the larger self because the soul has a gradient toward wholeness and maturity. Journalist Italo Calvino (1993), in *Six Memos for the Next Millenium* writes, “Jung’s method, which bestows universal validity on archetypes and the collective unconscious, is linked to the idea of imagination as participation in the truth of the world” (p. 88) as manifested through myths and symbols, religions and arts, dreams and memories. *Participation in the truth of the world*, is indeed, a more than fitting response to a vanquished participating consciousness.

In an educational context, archetypes can be explored qualitatively in the arts and humanities because they exist at a deep mythological and psychic level, arriving in images and emotions that represent the human universal and act as an invitation to the intuitive, showing flickering and hidden patterns, and traces of the divine. However, because

archetypes represent the collective, we see them manifest broadly throughout school personified in “The Wise Old Man”, “The Good Mother”, “The Good Father” or “The Mad Scientist”, “Mad Magician” or even “The Evil Witch” as the semi-magical teacher-beings who hold secret knowledge to aid (or challenge) the struggling young hero or heroine student. Jungian educator Clifford Mayes (2005) reminds us that we have likely all had teachers with archetypal characteristics such as: the zealous prophet on a mission, the knight in shining armor who rescues the distressed student, the philosopher who reveals universal truths, the Zen master who reflects to the student her own gifts, the earth mother who compassionately nurtures, or the wild bushman who takes his geography class on endless field trips, to name just a few.

Not all archetypes however, are positive, and in terms of transferences/counter-transferences and projections between teachers and students, may inflate classroom dynamics and represent more complex wounding and unclaimed baggage than a simple explanation in these pages will allow. I will say that because every culture on earth has mothers, fathers, sages, fools and magicians, everyone inherently understands these energetic patterns and images, but it is the work of the mature teacher to become aware of and make conscious both their positive and shadow archetypal attributes in an effort to welcome more of a collective wisdom to their craft and develop themselves fully.

For the most part though, Jung (1959) found archetypes were controversial and for many they were perplexing due to their mysteriousness and the difficulty in defining or proving them. He saw them as “forms of instinct” (Jung, 1959, p. 161) inhabiting the deepest level of the psyche in connection with the divine within, or what he called the *numinous*<sup>27</sup>. In taking Jung’s theory further, archetypes, when recognized and nurtured, may be essential to the journey toward wholeness if we can identify patterns of patterns (and in effect see our place in the schema of things) and allow more of the universal story of what it means to be more fully our human selves appear and unfold.




---

<sup>27</sup> From the Greek “*numen*”, meaning when the God’s nod in approval. Retrieved Nov 21, 2012 [www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=numen&searchmode=none](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=numen&searchmode=none)].

### **the alchemy of individuation.**

Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being....and in so far as 'individuality' embraces the innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization'. (Jung, 1917/1926/1943, p. 266)

A fundamental premise of Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (1953/1968) and a central framework for this thesis recognizes that each of us has an original and whole way of being human. It calls upon each of us to live our particular way (not imitating anyone else) and be true to ourselves or risk missing the point of life (risk being partials rather than wholes), which would be to miss the significance of "what being human is for *me*" (Taylor, 1991, p. 28). Individuation, rather than our current state of *individualism*, speaks to the right to develop oneself in one's own life, *but* it means taking into consideration the lives of all other beings in that process (in relationship) rather than just seeking satisfaction for the personal. Within an atomistic society that doesn't recognize the criticality of its ties with others, we find ourselves in contemporary life quite 'dis-enchanted' in that many are distanced from the natural world (and our cosmological beginnings). Is it possible that we have all but forgotten our way (forgotten our original set of instructions) that sprang from earthy roots? The poet David Whyte (1997) wonders, "why we are the one terrible part of creation privileged to refuse our own flowering" (p. 90)?

All too many people do not live their own lives, and generally they know next to nothing about their real nature. They make compulsive efforts to "adapt", not to stand out in any way, to do exactly what the opinions, rules, regulations and habits of the environment demand as being "right". They are slaves of "what people think", "what people do", etc. (Jacobi, 1967, p. 82)

Through outward pressures of conformity (that begins at home and carries on through to school and society) and an inward sense of entitlement for 'me, mine, myself' first, we are separated from our greater selves, from our individuated natures. This holds significant implications for our work and lives and brings to bear important questions about education's role in our reclamation (and maturation) process.

Jung's comprehensive and most famous *Collected Works* (1917-1979) laid significant groundwork for modern psychology through his understanding of transpersonal psychology. He believed that the search for soul is lifelong and requires the development of the unconscious into awareness where the self undergoes (either willingly or not!) an alchemical change in order to transform in relationship to the ego. This was the central concept of his work on the process of "*individuation*" (1965, p. 207) that stressed a pathology to wholeness. Like an alchemical process of transformation, dissolving the overbearing ego allows what is no longer needed to be let go and room is made for the integration and unity of the sub-personalities (including the persona, shadow elements, projections and archetypes) toward a more unified (ergo greater), more mature self.

The ego is a persona, a mask created and demanded by everyday social interaction, and, as such, it constitutes the center of our conscious life, our understanding of ourselves through the eyes of others. The Self, on the other hand, is our true center, our awareness of ourselves without outside interference, and it is developed by bringing the conscious and unconscious parts of our mind (soul) into harmony. (Berman, 1994, p. 67)

Jung (1921/17) capitalized the "S" in Self to denote the enlarged self that is required if we are to transcend the construct of the narrow, smaller ego-self, and individuate. In so doing, one gains deeper insight into how to fully develop each end of the spectrum of their inborn tendencies (unique combinations or typographies)<sup>28</sup> in pursuit of maturation. These can be viewed as different sides of the same coin; each is necessary to the whole.

Jung saw archetypes as possible *nodes of energy* that are present in all people, all the time as they permeate and shape not only the individual psyche but help form cultural myths, becoming the backbone of religions. His work unearthed ways to explore multiple and universal perspectives across many traditions in order to recover our authentic primordial Selves with an emphasize on the examination of our strengths and virtues, *and* limitations and liabilities (the shadow) as critical for the individuation process. The

---

<sup>28</sup> Typological theory later became popularly applied in the Myers-Briggs psychometric inventory (that credited Jung as its inspiration) developed by a mother-daughter team in the late 1940s named Myers and Briggs when they added two final dichotomies Judgment/Perception to Jung's existing typology of six, namely: Introversive/Extroversive, Thinking/Feeling, Sensing/Intuition and in so doing, created a reliable method of determining personality types. Read more on page 141.

shadow (in the personal unconscious) and the deep true self (in the collective unconscious realm) remains for the most part invisible while the ego-persona is what we see and therefore we can be seduced into believing this is all there is of the “self”. Shadow aspects, however, are sometimes so unpleasant they are more often denied or shut out completely (Jung, 1965). Educator, activist, and author Parker Palmer (2000) wisely noted, “An inevitable though often ignored dimension of the quest for ‘wholeness’ is that we must embrace what we dislike or find shameful about ourselves as well as what we are confident and proud of” (p. 6). I would posit the same is true for a whole education, one that looks to the mutual benefit of exploring both the dark and light sides of the human equation for a more genuine comprehension. Through self-reflective practices potential blind spots that beset and may inhibit students (and teachers) can be addressed through learning in order to bring awareness and recognition as to how we might avoid unwittingly perpetuating further dualisms and dualistic behaviours (despite our best intentions otherwise) and instead engender pluralism with its possibility for radical change.



### **the human shadow.**

There is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it positively refuses to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life’s significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth. (James as cited in Abrams & Zweig, 1991, p.164)

The persona or façade we wear is a kind of armoring or protective defensive shell that allows us to be socially presentable and appear how we want to appear. This is the ego’s attempt to hide our more shadowy sub-personalities, (the repressed or suppressed traits that are both sinister *and* golden that we all have) in a futile effort to keep us safe, small and socially acceptable (Abrams & Zweig, 1991; Bly, 1988; Hillman, 1996; Johnson, 1991; Neumann, 1973; Richo, 1999).

Hard as it is to swallow, Jung (1959/1978) understood that most often what we resent or find distasteful in others is what remains unresolved in ourselves and offers a good clue as to what is yet unacknowledged in us when he wrote, “projection makes the



whole world a replica of our own unknown face” (p. 9). Typically, we adamantly deny we even have shadowy elements because for the most part they are comprised of the unbeknownst aspects of psyche that until acknowledged, remain in the dark. Often and for too long, these undesired parts of ourselves have been relegated so far back inside of the psychic “long bag we drag behind us” (Bly, 1988, p. 17) that we have very nearly blotted them out altogether, but they are precisely the elements that require reclamation and integration in order for wholeness to be fulfilled. The bag needs to be opened in adulthood if we are to find within our own darkness our personal gold and make it conscious.

In the quest for individuation, we must wrest the ego from the powerful hold it has over us (yet remain in healthy accord with it) in order to turn to face *and embrace* what most troubles us (or rubs us the wrong way *in others*) as well as what is truly magnificent about ourselves (and what we see in others that we believe we could *never* hope to be). If not, we end up simply giving away the powers that are inherently ours to embody and live a half-life filled with low self-esteem, blame, denial, scapegoating, people-pleasing, hypocrisy, anger, resentments and repeated patterns of negativity while wondering why the world is such a frustrating place. Ignored for too long, our psyches will press in upon us to allow our “truth-in-waiting” (Richo, 1999, p. 98) to speak. Shadow work is both liberation and salvation at once. Honouring one’s shadow is whole-making, holy work.

Through studying Jung’s *Collected Works* (1917-1979), and the life work of assorted depth psychologists and teachers<sup>29</sup> poets and mythologists<sup>30</sup>, I have come to appreciate that the precise energy that it takes to stoke our darkest pain also powers our greatest brilliance. It is the same energy that is required to manifest our particular gifts and make them visible.

For example, if I think I “see” the kind of self-confidence in another person that I believe I could never have, then that energy will remain forever just a projection onto the “screen” of another fuelled by my own inner lacking and my willingness to give away those “powers” of confidence to someone else, outside of myself. Until I am prepared to do the hard work to reclaim the rejected energy that is really mine, I will never fully nurture,

---

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Aizenstat, 2011; Hillman, 1990, 1996; Hollis, 2006; Johnson, 1986; Neumann, 1954, 1973; Palmer, 2000; Plotkin, 2003; Richo, 1999,

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Bly, 1988; Meade, 2012; Oliver, 1992; Stafford, 1997; Whyte, 2007.

develop, and bring to bear my own sense of authenticity in order to more confidently take it into the world to share with others. Depth psychologist Robert Johnson (1991) advises, “The gold is related to our higher calling” (p. 8) but to ignore it can be as damaging as ignoring the darker stuff of the shadow.

In his 1945 essay, *The Philosophical Tree*, Jung wrote, “One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making darkness conscious” (p. 265) because, “darkness is *necessary* for union” (Richo, 1999, p. 280) and an acceptance of seeming opposites allows the psyche (made up of both the unconscious/conscious aspects) to do the work of individuation. But, as Jung (1945) went on to point out, “The latter procedure (making darkness conscious), however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular”(p. 265), (brackets mine).

Understanding the nature and value of our rejected and fragmented parts as well as attending to what we already know about ourselves is essential if we plan on growing up and becoming whole (Hollis, 2005; Moore, 1992; Plotkin, 2003, 2008a/b) however, while what is horrible and dark may be required, it is often unwelcome. That is why it can often take what appears as an ‘unfortunate’ experience or crisis to bring this darkness to the foreground.

In the context of education, Palmer (1983) sees implications for teaching of the larger and more sinister relationship between severance and human shadow as more than problematic. “When education divorces self and world from their transcendent source, (students) become locked in an endless power struggle to create each other in their own image...Such an education either turns out people who force their own inner distortions on the world or it produces people who have succumbed to the world’s distortion of themselves” (p. 12). This follows what Jung (1978) identified when he wrote,

The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate. That is to say, when the individual remains divided and does not become conscious of his inner contradictions, the world must be forced to act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves. (p. 71)

We can imagine (and have seen historically) that darkness unclaimed in the psyche, can become an unrecognizable projection onto others just as wild nature has in many ways

become monstrous to a partisan society. Neumann (1973) points out that indeed, no wars would be possible without a repressed shadow and its violent projection onto another.

What is called for is a way to acknowledge our biases and to befriend rather than demonize our dark side. It can be humbling and compassion-building to appreciate that we are each of us capable of *everything* humanly possible and nothing is beyond our doing, given the right (or for that matter, wrong) circumstances. In this way, we can begin to see darkness as a place of possibility rather than a liability, and do the deep reclamation necessary for our completeness (i.e. the retrieval of our projections) if we are effectively (and slowly) going to “eat” (integrate) our shadow. Bly (1988) reminds us that,

The person who has eaten her shadow spreads calmness and shows more grief than anger. If the ancients were right, that darkness contains intelligence and nourishment and even information, then the person who has eaten some of his or her shadow is more energetic as well as more intelligent. (p. 42)

To do this requires the safety of a caring, trusting environment and action. Out beyond Jung’s brilliant models, the confines of the session rooms, and our classrooms, out into the natural world itself within the embrace of embeddedness, we are—from the deepest psychological levels—most at home, as held in the embrace of our first mother, Earth. With proper guidance, nature and our deep imaginations can act together as a net to capture what we have thrown out in projection, and through its mirror-like qualities send it back to us for retrieval and metabolization. What is essential—both dark and light—must be made visible through expressions of reflective and poetic writing, painting, sculpting, crafting, dancing or enacting, so we may know and tap into these aspects of our true natures. In this way, we can name (and more consciously) ‘own’ them as necessarily ours. Only then can the slow alchemy of psychic transformation turn what we find worthless into something more precious, our gift for the world.



### **Selfhood and Ecological Identity**

Founder of deep ecology, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1989) wrote that,  
 “[T]he ecosophical outlook is developed through an identification so deep

that one's own self is no longer adequately delimited by the personal ego or organism. One experiences oneself to be a genuine part of all life." (p. 174)

He further expounded upon what he believed was intrinsic but often missing in the constitution of maturation when he wrote (2008, p. 82),

"But in the conception of the maturity of the self, nature is largely left out. Our immediate environment, our home (wherever we belong as children), and the identification with nonhuman living beings are largely ignored."

Naess introduced the the concept of the ecological self because he believed that in order to self-realize and then actualize these realizations into positive action that we needed to better understand our birthright.

We may be said to be in, and of, nature from the very beginning of ourselves. Society and human relationships are important, but our own self is much richer in its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not only those we have with other humans and the human community...but also those we have with other living beings. (2008, p. 82)

In a similar vein, ecophilosopher and activist, Joanna Macy (2007) calls for a "wider construct of identity, the greening of the self" (p. 148). She agrees that a more ecological consciousness with the worldview of "self as inseparable from the web of relationships that sustain it" (p. 151) is needed now. She urges us through her writings and her experiential teachings during this time of *The Great Turning* (Korten, 2006), to turn things around by embracing our grief and despair as a step toward empowerment, compassion, and hope.

I have often witnessed firsthand in the classroom when curriculum that schedules time to reconnect with the natural world is brought to bear in provision of the necessary space and time to slow down and embrace what is really at the edge for students that an aliveness occurs. When students can move beyond the constrictions of the ego and of our time where daily news brings endless horror stories of irreverable destruction, eradications and extinctions, and extend themselves toward something greater than themselves, they may come to know and embrace a sense of their own purpose in response to wanting to change the fate of the world (most often showing up in the form of a thesis). In being present to life in all of its beauty and terror (with good guidance and support), I have found in countless classrooms there is a coming back to life itself.

Theodore Roczak (1992), a keen observer of contemporary life and an articulate ecophilosopher, recognizes that we are made up of “the salt remnants of ancient oceans (that) flow through our veins, ashes of expired stars (that) rekindle in our genetic chemistry” (p. 319) (brackets mine) and in following in the very footsteps of Jung sees that the centre of our unconscious *is* the ecological unconscious, ergo the collective *is* the ecological.

Another exception to the modern disconnectedness comes from the First Peoples of the Thompson Valley in British Columbia who have, through their ancestral and traditional teachings, come to know the web of life as “Earth’s Blanket” (Turner, 2005, p. 19) in that it covers everything in the world (including humans). According to their old stories, it holds the integrity (sustainability) of the world as connected, alive and yet in fragile reciprocal relationship where “consequences of wrongful action are seen to be immediate and direct” (p.20). This understanding correlates with James Lovelock’s (1979) revolutionary Gaia Theory of the world as a self-regulating system making endless adjustments that have maintained suitable conditions for life over long periods of time.

Jung (1935) said that human consciousness is the universe reflecting upon itself and that place and self are connected to what we know and how we know it, as *we are the earth incarnate* (in flesh). Another way to look at this is that we humans are but one way the universe realizes its own imagination. Indeed from this perspective, we are not just living on this earth, we are a part of *how* it lives, are living elements of it. Philosopher Alan Watts (1966), in *The Book. On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* explains,

We do not “come into” this world; we come *out* of it, as leaves from a tree. As the ocean “waves”, the universe “peoples”. Every individual is an expression of the whole realm of nature, a unique action of the total universe. (p. 8)

Watts went on to say that to our great peril, we don’t see ourselves like this and more often than not act like “isolated ‘egos’ in bags of skin” (p. 8). The self-realization of an ecological identity means having full awareness that all of our actions (and thoughts even) have consequences. Recognizing that it is both a personal and a planetary act of grace (and salvation) to develop ourselves ecologically means to take responsibility for our own and our collective behaviours and in effect participate in rather than just use this world.

Many in our culture have somehow forgotten that nature is not something “out there” rather we too *are* nature, we are—in part—how the earth behaves itself. In effect

then, we are always in some way, *in nature* (in our own skins, breathing oxygen, etc.) regardless of the situations we find ourselves in, although I would argue that nature in the out of doors is perhaps the best context for learning more deeply about our own natures. *In Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*, Clayton & Opotow (2003), give us this perspective:

In a broader sense, the natural environment informs us about what it means to be human. We can only gain a thorough sense of our human identity – including, perhaps an appropriate level of humility in the face of our own limitations - through compassion with non-human entities. (p. 50)

In *I and Thou*<sup>31</sup>, Martin Buber (1970) writes of the twofold world that we all live in as he tracks our movements back and forth from the disembodied I-It objective mentality to the embodied I-You (or I-Thou) subjective mentality, which is one of true relationship. He posits I-You is *the* way of being in relationship and allows for a more direct experience of Other which in turn penetrates our lives, affects how we behave, and determines our very existence in the end.

As a teacher, it has been a most profoundly moving thing to witness this realization *in action*. As a student arrives back to class after spending time alone in nature to report having had a perception-shifting encounter with Other, it is usually followed by a passionate vow to be more mindful of every living thing. Often this experience can catalyze a student to feel empowered enough to take action to ensure positive and lasting change.



### **a crisis of perception.**

Pressing up against Earth's limits, we are being confronted with the limits of our thinking: a dawning realization that the fundamental problem is not primarily 'out there', but 'in here', rooted in the underlying beliefs and worldview of the Western mindset. (Sterling, 2007, p. 63)

However, much of our culture is today still greatly influenced by an "I-It", subject/object modern worldview that sees nature as something different (or less than)

---

<sup>31</sup>Ironically, there has been much concern over the use of "and" in the title and since the 1970 publication of the translation most Buber scholars now refer to this pivotal work as "I Thou" without grapheme or words, with nothing to separate the two, in keeping with Buber's main philosophy of unification.

ourselves or else we could not possibly behave in the ways we do. What reinforces a distinct separateness from and domination toward the rest of the world is that we have mostly lost our ability to live by our wits or pursue the wisdoms found in wild intelligences and instead seek out advice from newspapers, magazines, books, the internet, and TV. Instincts and feelings are often constrained to background while we attempt to consciously plan, manipulate and control outcomes, which corresponds to what is enculturated (and given preferential treatment) in our schooling and feeds a kind of power-over mentality with all of the value judgments and entitlements that go along with that thinking.

What we are living out is a kind of “ecological madness” (Shepard, 1982, p. 2) and as a result are suffering an “ontological crippling” (p. 33) effect from our broken bonds, our loss of a life in reciprocity with nature. I worry that our evolution may have been actually stunted or warped by this severance. What I see is a kind of grim chronic insanity where the masses in our culture are simply adapting to the prevailing enterprise while forgetting the original ecological harmony that lies latent within each of us in correspondence to the rich expanding manifold springs of the universe where we can drink and draw sustenance. Reclaiming our ecological identities is a kind of creative (mal)adjustment away from dominant culture (Hibbard, 2003) and may well be a way to answer the SOS (Save Our Souls) distress call the world is sending to us loud and clear through the ongoing devastations of weather and war.

At this critical juncture of our history which is more of a confluence rather than any kind of conspiracy, and without a deadend of blame or shame, what cannot be ignored is where we find ourselves now. We are in a place that can foresee the destruction of our biosphere, witnesses daily the losses of systems, habits, and species all over the globe, feels the deep systemic psychological and spiritual effects that centuries of dualistic thinking and lack of communion has had, and watches in horror as escalating wars over resources and differences threaten the real possibility of mass annihilation through nuclear proliferation. While many have called this time a crises of spirituality, environmental or moral ecology, Joanna Macy (2007) writes that:

Whether seen in its military, ecological, or social aspect, (the crises that threatens our planet), derives from a dysfunctional and pathological notion of the self. It derives from a mistake about our place in the order of things. It

is the delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries; that it is so small and so needy that we must endlessly acquire and endlessly consume; and that as individuals, corporations, nation-states, or a species, we can be immune to what we do to other beings. (p. 152)

And while many might say that currently it is an environmental crisis we face, I offer, as do Thomas Berry and Joanna Macy (2007), that it can be traced to more of a *crisis of perception* in that, “the deepest cause of the present devastation is found in a mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between human and other modes of being and the bestowal of all rights on the humans” (Berry, 1999, p. 4). It appears to me that we are indeed suffering from the false reification of the self without environment (or in spite of it) or as the Buddha said, we have an obsession with “me, myself and I” (Chödrön, 2007). This sits at the root of all human suffering in that we have almost entirely forgotten how and *where* we belong. We have also in many ways forgotten that we all need each other in community in order to thrive and survive. The small egoic self limits itself by leaving off the self-reflexive, imaginative consciousness that illuminates but a small arc in the swirls and back loops of knowing *but* is in coexistence with larger arcs within the entire “pattern that connects” (Bateson as cited in Macy, 2007, p. 154). The greater ecological self connects us with the universal, to the great cosmos and to ongoing unity, to creation itself. And it all begins, with the planting of a seed.



### **the seeded self.**

Early in my research, I looked into the nature of the self that connects us to the entirety of life by tracing back to the beginning when we are born into this world. However, in keeping to notions larger than small-self thinking, I was compelled to take up with mythologists, depth psychologists, and ancient philosophers to look even further back to writings that describe time, *before* birth.

In the final pages of *The Republic*, (2000, trans.), Plato recounts an old, old story, *The Myth of Er* that explains how we all come ‘called’ into this world, called in a particular way that is already fated for us. It goes like this:



All the souls had now chosen their lives, and they went in the order of their choice to Lachesis, who sent with them the *genius* whom they had severally chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fulfiller of the choice: this genius led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny of each; and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible, whence without turning round they passed beneath the throne of Necessity...they marched on... to the plain of Forgetfulness ...encamped by the river of Unmindfulness...of this they were all obliged to drink a certain quantity...and each one as he drank forgot all things. (pp. 276-277)

Like much of our language, the word “genius” has lost its earliest meaning. Rather than referring to the high scores of rare individuals on Intelligence Quotient tests (measuring but one part of our multiple intelligences), the etymology of genius can be traced back to early Latin, meaning, deity or “spirit of a place” or in some translations, the spirited wind that lives in a place (Hillman, 1996, p. 8). This implies that every particular spot on earth had its own unique essence shaped by a distinct wind that blew through it to render it unlike any other place. Similarly, the Greek synonym can be found in the word, “daemon” denoting the one selected for us that carries us into this world along with the destiny we will live out on earth (p. 8). The French translation brings us the “genii” referred to as a “tutelary spirit or jinn” (Barnhardt, 1988, p. 427) which became significant in fairy tales and myth stories. as the one who would fulfill our destiny (our deepest longings or wishes). It is no coincidence that around the late 1500s, early 1600s—about the same time as Descartes—the notion of genius devolved into representing a person’s singular endowment of natural ability or talent quite apart from any spirits in the world.

According to Plato’s myth-story, before birth each soul is given their own genius (or daemon) in the form of a soulful companion that selects for us, and carries into this world, the destiny we will live out on earth. Early Christian traditions spoke similarly of those who watched over us using the term “guardian angels” (Hillman, 1996, p. 9) as the personification of these guiding spirits. The way Mayan teacher, artist and storyteller, Martín Prechtel (2001) tells it, at your birth, your “*Aj elbal*” (p. 114) comes out right behind

you as an invisible soul born like a twin. Some might call it your ‘nature’. No one can see it, only you can feel it there. He believes that we have a personal soul inside our bodies as well as the invisible soul outside of us, surrounding us, walking with us through all of life side by side. It seems most every culture has a name for this soul pairing.

In *The Soul's Code, In Search of Character and Calling* (1996), Jungian depth psychologist James Hillman reexamines childhood experiences, thoughts, accidents, impulses, dreams, and expressions as the most significant shaper of biography, the essential blueprint to our lives (along with contributing aspects of environment and genetics). His epistemological understanding (shared with Plato, Aristotle, Goethe and others) was that we are born “called” into this world with a kind of “soul’s code” (1996). Hillman’s illustrious acorn theory posits that the soul, like the acorn that holds within it a unique and already formed image of the mighty oak tree it will become, holds the seed-pattern of the essential character of our true nature, of what we are destined to grow into and fulfill. The trick is that it awaits the exact and necessary conditions required for breaking open its husk and calling forth—*making conscious*—who we are and what we are meant to do through a process that may indeed take a lifetime to occur (if it does at all) with many twists and detours along the way. This would suggest new ways of looking at life’s purpose and our intrinsic selves beyond cultural notions of identity, work and society and holds implications for what we teach and learn, and how we seek vocation.



### **calling and true vocation.**

“Every man has a vocation to be someone; but he must understand clearly that in order to fulfill this vocation, he can only be one person: himself.”

(Merton, 1978, p. 133)

Teacher and scholar of mythology, anthropology and psychology, Michael Meade (2010) reminds us of the importance of other etymologies, namely, ‘fate’ and ‘destiny’ which are both so much associated with soul. Fate originally meant “it has been written” (p. 5) and to Meade, fate is what “shapes the particular plotline through which each soul tries to awaken and enter the great drama of life” (p. 5). And while fate’s work is here on earth, ‘destiny’ from “the Latin *destinare*” (p. 5) arrives to us from the heavens implying we are

also star-born (of the universe) and come bearing certain characteristics of those planets that aligned at our birth that influence us just as ancient astrologers knew (Berman, 1984; von Nettesheim 1533/2005) and modern astrophysicists have now rediscovered (Le Grice, 2010; Tarnas, 2007).

The rub is however, and Plato's myth (trans. 2000) is clear on this, that we are fated to forget what we are called to do the moment we are born! The Myth of Er and depth psychology agree that we come called but without any language skills or retrieval systems to access this knowledge. We are born innocent. Therefore, the soul's primary interest in this life, in my opinion, runs to helping us to recollect our authentic natures by taking us from childlike unconscious through to initiation to make conscious our wholeness (then in our final days let us flow back to a kind of unconscious innocence once again). It does this primarily by helping us to remember what we can become through promptings and primal nudgings that effervesce from deep within the unconscious (perhaps from our daemon or genius who remembers for us?) in the form of images, emotions, intuitions, inklings, deep creativity and dreams. It would follow then that as we pick up on those particular threads of remembrance that comprise aspects of the individual character we each have been given, and we do some of the hard work of retrieving other buried treasure aspects such as shadows and archetypes from within, we can begin to form a clearer idea of the pattern of our soul's gifts through self-realization. And, as destiny would have it, it is only when we make our soul's gifts visible by *giving our gifts away* in skillful and applied service to something greater than ourselves, that *self-actualization* (i.e. maturity and wholeness) can truly occur (Meade, 2010; Plotkin, 2008a/b) which is what finally initiates the adult self to take wing and sustain flight.

Meade, in his book *Fate and Destiny: The Two Agreements of the Soul* (2010) describes soul to be "Shaped in such a way that it carries in seed form something meaningful and valuable that cannot remain completely hidden" (p. 35). He suggests that intuition is what provides the best clues as to what we are moved and pulled toward in response to what the soul wants for us specifically, yet so often that can be in conflict with the way our family, teachers or society in general expect us to behave and can even prove unsettling.

American culture says that you must make something of yourself, but the

mythological understanding is that everybody already *is* someone. They have a seeded self at birth. As soon as people are aware of the uniqueness inside them, they can begin to manifest the stories they're carrying. (Meade, 2011, p. 7)

Without rites of passage, without soul recognition however, Meade (2011) offers that we accept and subscribe to "battles over possessions and power [that] substitute for the real battle to awaken the dream of the human soul" (p. 12). Unanchored in our innate, unique identities and yet wanting more meaningful lives, we are susceptible to mainstream culture's teaching of self-definition through competition and material accomplishments, both of which cause detrimental strains on finite, natural resources.

This is a really shadowy aspect for us if we buy into conformities, quietly acquiesce to the norms and values of mass culture, repress our instincts, and do not follow our golden threads of intuition. Campbell (1991) warns, "To refuse the call means stagnation. What you don't experience positively, you will experience negatively" (p. 22).

### **The Way It Is**

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.  
(Stafford, 1977, p. 42)

Through my experiences, I have come to believe that despite our refusals and denials, the soul *will* have its way with us. It will not allow us to stray too far from the original seeds of self, although we can spend a significant portion of our lives ignoring or avoiding what we are called to do until perhaps in mid-life, if we are "lucky" enough to have the opportunity to take a deeper look through what might appear at first as "crises" (Hillman, 1996; Hollis, 2005; Levoy, 2007; Meade, 2010). Perhaps, the soul is ironic or has sense of humour? Hard as we try to run from our very greatest potential of possibility, in

the end we may find we have been precisely delivered into what we had refused all along. What we in fact need to face, will come face to face with us, tapping us on the shoulder through repeated failed relationships, or a long series of meaningless jobs for example. In a kind of salvage of the soul, by facing up to what is difficult yet necessary, we stand a good chance of finally growing up rather than staying stuck in a kind of stunted pathology of immature, ego-driven, adolescent behaviours while expecting something to change as we inevitably age. Psychotherapist Christina Caldwell (1996) wisely notes “What we don’t complete will repeat!” (p.172).

Jungian psychologist James Hollis (2005) insists that “we do not choose vocation, vocation chooses us” (p. 149) (I take it he means *true* vocation or calling and not simply employment), yet whether we acknowledge it or not, we can spend a significant portion of our lives resisting, ignoring or shutting it out, sometimes at great cost. I agree with Hillman (1996), Furey (1996), and Levoy (1997) that true calls continue to come in loud and clear, persisting our whole lives until answered. If we avoid our own mythology, they can show up in what some might call crises or personal weaknesses such as: obsessive behaviors, chronic illness, particular misshapeness, failures, bankruptcies, and general angst and pain (Meade, 2010). By mythology, I mean the larger more mythic or mythopoetic story that connects us with something beyond ourselves, something much older than ourselves. I have found that these stories help to bring perspective and help us understand and live into our uniqueness, even through the telling of them. The darker more shadowy things that show up as harbingers of our vocation are also for the most part, in my experience, a most crucial and required part of the journey if what they have to teach us is included and transcended in the recovery of one’s giveaway to the world.

Often in life there can be great difficulties that appear unrelated to the rest of our story that come barreling in from out of nowhere such as, accidents, trauma, and even revelations that help us to better remember what is critical to our particular soul story, and help us to attend to what needs to be made conscious in the world. Meade (2010) goes further to say that those specific constraints we find on our lives (faults, wounds, old family stories, attitudes and proclivities) *are* our “fates” and that if we face them he claims, we may find our soul’s destination where our “dream in life” is now right in front of us finally made visible. This includes staying steady to our dream despite the tests of constant

disapproval. This is where we must *push back by pushing forward* in our lives. Another kind of equally difficult challenge (although it may not be evident at first) can be receiving constant approval that suggests we are the greatest at everything we do despite evidence to the contrary. Inaccurate depictions of who we truly provide other kinds of limitations.

Of course, there are other things that constrain and limit us from our destinies too such as: environmental factors, war, family history, severe trauma, genetic predispositions or the failure of nurturance for our deep imaginations. These “fates” can indeed wound us too, however, Plato (2000, trans.) observes that the code is already written in soul by the gods when we are born into this world and Meade (2011) posits we are somehow oddly engineered to work through and transcend precisely *these* limitations and obstacles to find (and embody) our unique soul story. This reinforces the idea that there are no “accidents” on the way to authenticity where absolutely everything counts for something. However, none of these ideas run counter to or preclude our free will, our agency of choice in life.

When we are our authentic selves, when we act with truth and originality, we “draw from the root of (our) deeper self”, from the primary place of our “deepest essence” (Meade, 2010 p. 84) and in so doing, are making conscious our true nature, awakening our uniqueness by bringing it to life. Jung found that, “in the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted” (as cited in Hillman, 1996, p. x). This *realization in action* is part of the work of integration toward wholeness that Jung so profoundly contributed.

Martin Buber (2000) also saw each one of us as endowed with the ability to satisfy a need the world has when we realize our purpose by enacting our potential:

Every person born into this world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique. It is the destiny of every person... to know and consider that he is unique in the world in his particular character, and that there has never been someone like him in the world, for if there had been someone like him there would have been no need for him to be in the world. Every single person is a new thing in the world, and is called upon to fulfill his particularity in the world... Every man’s foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring

potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved. (p. 16-17)

Parker Palmer (2000), reminds us that the root of the word “vocation” itself is found in the Latin *vocare*, meaning “voice” (p.4) as in something heard deep inside, like a call, rather than something we tell ourselves we ought to do for a living. By listening to the heart and attending to the soul’s call for selfhood, for what life intends for each of us rather than what we tell ourselves we ought to do, as well as embracing paradoxes of the inner and outer life through the integration of life’s lessons, personal truths and wisdom, successes and failures, strengths and shadow, wounds and healing, I have come to understand that it is possible to become “the person I am born to be”. The path to true vocation and wholeness however, is always presented so mysteriously and without guarantee. For the majority in our culture, this sort of intentional listening for a call toward vocation is not something we learn at home or school.

Calls are often metaphoric and elusive, and don’t take easily to naming or claiming, so they can so easily be dismissed as unimportant or not really real. Certainly, in my experience, I have received many symbolic imagery-filled summons specifically designed to snag me in some emotionally stirring way yet not providing me with a whole picture of what is to come. This can be a terrifying experience at first.

In his well-researched, and insightful book, *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*, Gregg Levoy (1997) offers that the world is full of omens with numinous signs everywhere if we are just open enough to suspend our disbelief and cynicism in order to receive them. His call came one California afternoon when “a part of the invisible world was made, for a brief moment, visible” (p. 1) to him. He witnessed a kind of Van Gogh style sky simultaneously filled with swirls of “pollen and seeds, radio waves and subatomic particles, the songs of birds, satellite broadcasts of the six o’clock news and the Home Shopping Network” (p. 1). He understood in that moment that in order for something to have meaning, it needed to be ‘received’ — in his case like a radio receiver! This was the incoming call he needed to take the necessary steps to stay open to be the receiver of a much more spiritual existence that was destined to live through him, although as in many of calls we first get, he did not answer it right away. Years later when crisis struck, he became aware of what that experience had really meant in a fuller sense of his own destiny.

*The Sacred Journey*, the touching autobiography of writer and theologian, Frederick Buechner (1982) illustrates the “call” phenomena by him saying how he noticed that “often it takes many years and many further spellings out before we start to glimpse, or think we do, a little of what their meaning is” (p.41). He understood firsthand that calls cannot be pinned down and are often not clear, but can be subtle, the mere offer a whisper. “Even then we glimpse it only dimly, like the first trace of dawn on the rim of night, and even then it is a meaning that we cannot fix and be sure of once and for all because it is always incarnate meaning and thus is as alive and changing as we are ourselves alive and changing” (p. 41).

And while calls can be received through a great variety of ways and at many different times in life, I have found that perhaps not all calls ought to be answered and even those that are can sometimes be devastatingly heartbreaking in the sacrifices they demand. Historically, for example, all of the great mystics and religious leaders received calls to go off to find their visions and images in wild, uninhabited, and desolate places after much trial and tribulation. It is written that the Buddha reached enlightenment after 49 days under the Bodhi tree on the flood plain of the Ganges. Moses was supposedly instructed to take off his shoes so as to respect the sacred ground on which he stood before the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Sinai) after many days. Jesus went into the desert to seek his vision and by some accounts remained there for 40 days and nights, and it is believed that Mohammed first heard the voice of the angel Gabriel in the lonely cave on Mount Hira outside of Mecca (Roberts, 1998). And of course, in *The Divine Comedy*, Dante (1555/1949) awoke to find himself in the middle of his life vastly alone in “a dark wood” (p. 71). With many of these calls came harrowing hardships that might have looked completely crazy (if not outwardly rebellious) to the society of the time.



### **wake up calls.**

I have come to understand (through teaching it) that lived experience - as told through an ecologically-focused biographical narrative – can be a kind of entry point back into connection with the world that helps ‘place’ us within the wider ecology. It seems to elicit a sense of place in students where purpose and contribution can more easily merge and be imagined. At the very least it helps them to discern what they value and what has



been temporarily misplaced in their lives. Leopold (1966) writes in *A Sand County Almanac* of a profoundly pivotal moment in time when the green flare in a dying wolf's eyes he had just shot pierced him in such way as to awaken something within him and forever change his behaviours toward hunting and killing. He went on to become a forerunner of environmental ethics and wilderness preservation. In essence, his eco-story, while sad for the wolf, was a necessary wake-up call, a wonderful prediction of a future life.

Father Thomas Berry (1999) experienced a magically profound moment in a field of white lilies where cricket, cloud and sky all conspired together in a conversion toward a divine cosmology that would later be foundational to his vision and understanding and informed all of his teaching and writing, although at the time he did not yet know it. This innocent day in a meadow stayed with him for a long time until finally it was made manifest through the wisdom of his life's work. Looking back on his eco-biography, we can see that the husk of the seeded self of Berry was cracked open at that moment in order to germinate what was to become ground for *The Great Work* (1999) of his life.

Persian poet Hafiz (trans., 1996) knows of the tenacious courting required to coax what is most essential and ancient from within us all:

### **We Should Talk about This Problem**

There is a Beautiful Creature  
Living in a hole you have dug.

So at night  
I set out fruit and grains  
And little pots of milk  
Beside your soft earthen mounds,

And I often sing.

But still, my dear,  
You do not come out.

I have fallen in love with Someone  
Who hides inside you.

We should talk about this problem-

Otherwise,

I will never leave you alone. (pp. 7-8)

There is significant work involved in answering a calling that requires the ongoing process of dissolving the hard-shell of ego<sup>32</sup> to “discover our deep identity – the true self within every human being that is the seed of authentic vocation” (Palmer, 2000, p. 9). Deep trust and the willingness to know ourselves well in order to make conscious the metaphoric, the invisible, allows us the opportunity to offer our soul’s gifts to others, and is nothing short of extraordinary. Buechner (1973) gave this practical advice as a starting point when he wrote, “our calling is where our deepest gladness and the world’s hunger meet” (p. 118), where what we love and love to do is met by a world that yearns for just that thing.

But where can this take place? How can this work be facilitated? I believe that school can be that place and teachers—if they are willing to create the conditions that allow students to hear what is calling for them—can help make this all possible.



### **childhood experiences in nature.**

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparell'd in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; -  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.  
(Wordsworth, 1807, p. 147)

In my research, I have discovered that what is vital to the act of fully answering one’s calling lies in our ability to be able to pick up on those threads of gladness found in the early imagination of childhood. This allows us to discern what drawn us in from early on. While it might seem aimless or frivolous, “to imagine is an act which gives human beings the chance to engage in something akin to creation” (Dubos, 1961, p. 43), and I

---

<sup>32</sup> While the husk of ego needs to be shed to reveal what greater self lies beneath, to be clear, the ego itself is subsumed toward (and is necessary to) that larger “S”elf.

would argue that deep play (as children and even as adults) brings us closer to our original nature and a sense of being in flow with the rest of the universe (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

I searched for more clues to our most authentic selves and true calling buried in the treasured moments and early patterns of unencumbered time spent in nature where deep wonder and blissful childhood delight came at a time when many of us identified so closely with the surrounding world. Could innocent memories of play and wonder be considered as partial blueprints for life, hold an ontological significance?

I chose to study the narratives of first experiences in nature by way of an ethnographic survey I called myplacebook.ca<sup>33</sup> that acted as an invitational repository for a wide variety of eco-autobiographies of place and identity. Recounting earliest experiences of pure, unmediated forms of connection in nature by answering the first of four questions<sup>34</sup> gave participants the time and space to contemplate and remember (and feel) what they loved and loved to do in natural settings as their younger selves. Questions #2 through 4 took a hermeneutical turn as I invited the participants' own interpretations of how this experience may have (in)formed or shaped their inner knowing and any future life choices. By taking time to sink in, write about, and then reflect upon these memories, many of the 35 participants came to understand that who they were talking about was not merely someone they *used to be*, rather, this was the person they *really are* and *have been all along* with connections to a world larger than themselves (albeit they admitted this was sometimes forgotten).

I was deeply touched as participants wrote in telling their stories of how they sensed their true nature *in nature* from young ages supported by a sense of self that was rooted in things such as the privacy and preciousness derived from secret and special spaces, or through long family traditions out on the land and waterways, or in relationship with significant animal friends. Attributions of enchantment (e.g. beauty, mystery, magic, and

---

<sup>33</sup> Intended s a more playful, eco-centric version of the anthropocentric and wildly popular social media site, "Facebook"

<sup>34</sup> Survey questions found on the website [www.placebook.ca](http://www.placebook.ca) and later in *Ecological Landscapes of Narrative and Identity: Can (First) Experiences in Nature Inform Life's Work?* (unpublished) April, 5, 2012:

1) Please recount your earliest experiences in nature. Be as descriptive as you can about the place and what you did there. 2) Has that experience in any way informed or shaped your identity in terms of: your beliefs, values, tendencies, interests, hopes, dreams or work? 3) Please describe your current work (include both paid and non-paid service). 4) Did anything surprise you or any insights or connections arise for you while you wrote about this memory? Other comments?

luck) spilled into and through many of their stories, as did the powerful healing qualities of nature. Often enough, just through the telling participants caught glimpses of how early fascinations through unmediated play and feelings of connectedness fed beliefs and shaped identities early on. Many could only remember what they loved once they began actually writing the survey and were surprised that they had either strayed so far off track in their lives from that love or nearly forgotten that these experiences had influenced their early choice- making so profoundly.

While I found ample evidence to suggest that early nature experiences and the memories that are created from them offer rich insights into a what a person is drawn to and even sometimes shows a kind of arc to vocation, I could not help but concur with Hillman (1996), Hollis (2005), Meade (2010, 2011, 2012), and not least of all, Plato (trans., 2000) and Aristotle (Sachs, 2005), in thinking that we are born seeded with an image that holds our destiny with our life's work inscribed in it, and therefore it would follow that what happens for us as children, in natural play, is not the *source* of this trajectory, rather an encouragement (or not) of it in subtle yet potentially significant ways. I had myself fallen prey to a kind of dualism in the framing of the questions. Instead of those early experiences themselves shaping or influencing future choices, I discovered that in fact these experiences tend instead to *reveal* to us more about the true nature of the seeded image we each carry by virtue of what we are drawn to. Nature, with its non-judgmental, slowed time, and mirror-like reflective qualities entangled with the unconstrained imaginative embrace of thinking, being and doing, became the perfect enchanted setting for this "reveal" to more readily unfold. Without worries and cares, in an unfettered place when we are supported by a wild flourishing world with hedges and fir trees and clouds in the shape of rabbits (and sometimes with parents or siblings), we are often more ourselves than at any time in our lives.

"Children's innocence endows them with purity of perception. They greet life; and especially the natural world around them, with an instinctively animist response. It is alive and personal for them. It has a voice." (Roszak, 2001, p. 297)

Hillman (1991) writes that our childlike imagining of the world through our noetic gifts of introspection and innocence as children returns us to a world ensouled by giving

everything a life of its own, an interiority, a spirit. Rather than projection, he looks to this as animation where even manufactured things announce themselves, bear witness, speak, show their ‘faces’ to us. Children have the time and the eyes to see these Other faces and get to know the world in an imaginative way. Early unencumbered experiences, with their emotions and impressions provide the rich soil for the seeds of us to find nurturance enough to burst open and take root through mysterious fertile adventures of observing and discovering the awe and beauty, soaking in the wonders of the natural world, holding conversations with magical Other(s) and from these sensual experiences, make sense of the world and ourselves in it.

Rachel Carson (1956/1965) suggested in her classic essay, *The Sense of Wonder*, that it is not enough for a child to spend time in nature, that in fact, they need at least one caring adult to accompany them, to see in them something unique and to help cultivate learning about what they love through play and imagination that resists explanations yet grows a deep responsibility and stewardship. Using all of the senses, and rekindling a sense of wonder and belonging was as important as knowing to Carson. I have come to know that deep play and sensuous slow engagements in nature — at any age — shows us signs and clues of what will or what wants to follow (or to lead us out) in the tracks of our life story.

While true nature may be best un/covered at a tender age in nature while we are still immune to the reductions and restrictions of Western schooling that will soon follow with its socialization of “right and wrong” and its narrow confines, it takes the keenly trained and eyes and ears of compassionate parents, teachers and guides, and the early adoption of reflective and contemplative practices to keep the husks from growing back even tougher than before if neglected for too long.<sup>35</sup>

Just as it is critically important for children to embrace their essential embeddedness in nature, I also know that it is equally imperative (for health, sanity and

---

<sup>35</sup> A wonderful game-changing example of fertile learning spaces is the Nature Kindergarten started a few years ago at Sangster Elementary in Sooke, B.C. based on wildly successful forest schools in Europe and Australia. Every day, when these children go out into nature for the whole morning (rain or shine) on the Royal Roads University trails and forests, they are empowered to take healthy risks and responsibilities and make choices for themselves in a more participatory instead of passive way of learning. The teachers and parents report that these children are transforming themselves through an enlivened education that they help to construct as they forge connections to each other as well as to the living world and as a result develop more compassion toward all of life. Overall, they simply seem more resilient and happy than if they were trapped inside all day.

development) that we continue to take our adult selves to the outdoor classroom to reactivate our own powers and proclivities and extend our understanding beyond data and discussions. Quite literally, we also must broaden our horizons if we are to hope for and make change.



### **'Off' to School**

Rarely does it (curriculum) signify possibility for him (the student) as an existing person mainly concerned with making sense of his own life-world and instead, we stay preoccupied with priorities, purposes of programs of 'intended learning' and intended (or unintended) manipulation...pay too little attention to the individual in quest of his own future...Teaching instead runs at a frantic pace toward discovering, mastering and learning 'accumulated wisdom' and 'common culture' as external to the knower. (Greene, 2009, p. 153) (brackets mine)

The reality of the enterprise of capitalism with its economic and social pressures means that most parents today have to work outside of the home instead of having time to get to know and raise their children, and thus may not as readily see into the nature of who their child is. Technologies like the internet, video games, and television, coupled with a busy schedule of sports and social activities in our culture, can take up the majority of childhood time. The "real" world wide web, the natural world in which we are embedded, is easily traded in favour of a "web" (www) that requires electrical outlets (Louv, 2008).

And while this is not meant as a relinquishment of responsibility or an excuse for lousy parenting by any means, it is also true that children spend such an extraordinary amount of their time in school that much of their development must occur there. I believe it simply makes sense that schools share responsibility for their maturation, which must also take place through an ontology of learning. But we don't often talk about helping the students to mature *per se*; this task is left up to whatever happens outside of school time, if it is addressed at all.

Environmental educator, David Orr (2004) reminds us of the lesson to be found in the etymology of *education* from the root 'educere' which means *to draw forth or lead out* (p. 12). By its namesake then, education is not found in the ability to fill students with more

facts and data like empty vessels, rather to tend to what silently runs beneath the surface, to draw out insights and imagination, and help coax an affinity for what students love. To be able to creatively and sensitively draw out what wants to be heard from the depths of each student—those early threads of proclivities and interests—in a multiplicity of ways is, I believe, part of our obligation to the profession. Robert Sardello (1992), co-director of the School of Spiritual Psychology and a student of James Hillman, suggests that we need to aim even higher still toward an education that doesn't end with just the eduction of the personal and inadvertently create further individualism, rather it "...means the drawing out of soul to conjoin with world soul" (pp. 49-50). What the student discovers about themselves (and what they *must* do as their soul's passion) in effect becomes an answer to what a better world needs.

And while some may argue that school is not the place for 'soul' per se or for students to mature themselves for that matter, and that the work of individuation is best left to the families and communities, Orr (2004) reminds us of another important etymology found in "the Greek concept of *Paideia*, where the goal of education is not mastery of subject matter but mastery of one's person" (p. 13) which cannot be possible without exploring a more inward and informal (but critical) kind of knowing of Self and Other. This helps make a compelling case for a more robust epistemological debate if we are to ask ourselves *what ends are we are truly seeking in teaching and whom do they serve?*



### **school as real life.**

"Imitating the real world...falsifies the real world." (Havel, 1985/1992, p. 65)

Palmer (2004) disputes attention to the inner life as mere romanticism, as does educational theorist John Dewey (1930, 1956) who said we must include not mimic "real world" lived experiences in the classroom or nothing meaningful will transpire. Not least of all, students will become bored and will tire of learning within a pedagogy of distraction from what is real to them.

Educator Martin Dworkin (1967) in his book, *Dewey on Education*, found Dewey to be a formidable proponent for a more vital and considered learning experience to make up

for the major lacuna of reflective and genuine experiences missing from most curriculum. Dworkin quotes him here, saying:

When we think that we all live on the earth, that we live in an atmosphere, that our lives are touched at every point by the influences of the soil, flora, and fauna, by considerations of light and heat, and then think of what the school study of geography has been, we have a typical idea of the gap existing between the everyday experiences of the child, and the isolated material supplied in such large measure in the school. (p. 78)

This speaks volumes as to how we tend to educate in accordance with the modern worldview of separateness as if all subjects could be divided out and studied apart from each other or apart from the thing itself. This kind of isolated experience reinforces a kind of arrogance implying that by removing ourselves from the world in order to study it, that we are somehow more worthy than other living things, somehow superior. But the etymological Latin root of “isolation” means to “make into an island” or “to act like the sun” with everything revolving around us (Barnhardt, 1988, p. 546).

The study of geography for example, has become objectified by relying on texts and maps rather than more often going out onto the land itself to be in relationship with it. Of course this cannot always be possible given that our studies stretch the globe, however, a sense of disembodied learning could easily be addressed in a more local and situated way by studying and experiencing firsthand the lands we inhabit and in effect bring learning alive. Instead we have erroneously reinforced that matter is simply “the stuff the world is made of” (Hayward, 1999, p. 63) to be viewed from afar. It is no wonder we see ourselves as different from the rest of the world. We have taught ourselves this in nearly every subject in school to match up with society’s notions of our cultural paradigms. Orr writes, “to dead matter we owe no obligations” (2009, p. 133), meaning that if we view the world as mostly dead and ourselves as the most alive, then we owe nothing to it, and it would follow that of course we have no obligation to live responsibly in it or in relationship with it. ‘Dead things’ are so often dispensable.

Another real danger is found in an illusory romanticism of childhood where the “*idea of childhood* takes precedence over *the real child*” (Smith, 2009, p. 378) and where the needs of a maturing child are discounted. Assumptions are made in the abstract rather than



rooted in the real, such that reductionist views of childhood favour a childishness in children “abandoned to a cage of their own subjectivity” (p. 387). Infantilized, they become more easily controlled and dominated rather than joining with their teachers and parents to be regarded as partners in learning. Children’s own inherent wisdom is rarely accounted for within a curriculum that specifically induces particular ideological and worldviews.

Politically slanted revisionist accounts of early colonialism where “explorers discovered America” for instance (often found in chapter one of our history text in the early 70s in junior high school) created a backlash within our student body that included sit-ins, school closures, and near riots. We simply “knew” this line we were being fed was dead wrong and was meant to control our ideas, and manufacture our consent about how heinously we had treated (and were still treating) our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. Learning that ignores the real needs of the maturing and inquisitive child (or teen) in discovering and making sense of themselves and the world they live in runs counter to the spirit and logic of the child’s own knowing and grants them “no interlocutory power within the overall social framework” (Smith, 2009, p. 378). In my case in Grade 8, we were compelled to take some of our power back.

Young learners will not have a sense of their own true natures and empowerment if we don’t, “reground our student’s lives in the power of their own souls” (Palmer, 1999, p. 16), and give them the proper grounds for learning in the first place so they can pose more difficult, more deep, and more beautiful questions (of everything) as they go along. Montessori (1964) recognized the need to educate even further—*beyond the physical realms*—when she wrote, “We have been mistaken in thinking that the natural education of children should be purely physical; the soul, too, has its nature, which it was intended to perfect in the spiritual life” (p. 374).

In *My Pedagogical Creed* (1929/2009), Dewey urged that classes “represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, the neighbourhood or on the playground” (p. 36). This he felt would help avoid the kind of education that values abstracts and cultivates an overt dependency on, and unfortunate trust in, judgment that lies outside of the student. Dewey (1929/2009) knew that education must be experiential and learner-based, an extension of student’s “capacities, interests and habits” and in relation to the living moment, “not a preparation for future living” (p. 36).

Educator Sir Ken Robinson (2010a) draws this out in his illustrated video, *Changing Paradigm*, where he passionately argues that students today don't feel their education is real, rather that it is structured more on an "us and them" model of institute vs. student, and is driven by economic imperatives. He says we are for the most part educating for cultural identities that don't fit and are marginalizing most of what students hold to be important in life. The result is that "most students' experiences of feeling like losers, idiots, imposters, while remaining unseen for who they are" (Palmer, 1999, p. 17) prevails. This may account for high attrition rates in high school especially in more traditional cultures that are closer to nature (with diverse adult role models) therefore, students really cannot see themselves as becoming anything like the adults teaching them.

Brazilian educator-philosopher and activist Paulo Freire (1970) in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, insisted that learning must *reflect the students' situation* and not simply impose the views of the teacher or the society. Instead it should be open to the freedom of dialogic exploration that refutes preaching or depositing knowledge into passive robotic learners like a "banking system" (p. 150). Instead of prescribed curriculum and pre-set examinations, Robinson (2010a) offers a divergent thinking model with its emotional capacity for many possible answers through dialogue and ways to know what is important to each student. I agree with his assertion that a kind of lateral thinking process, leading to engaged learning and educational paradigm shifts, holds epistemological implications for changing the world.

Dewey (1929/2009) felt, as did Jung (1956), that by stimulating and following the inborn instincts, the "child's powers"<sup>36</sup> (p. 34), that these threads of earliest consciousness (the powers) would lead to a form of true education and continue a process that Dewey held started at birth and shaped the true identity of the individual, his habits, his ideas, his feelings and emotions, his whole life. He insisted that formal education "cannot safely depart from this process" (p. 34) and therefore we must understand and encourage the unique proclivities and instincts of each child or as a society we will continue to suffer dire consequences from the results of education that is "haphazard or arbitrary" (p. 36). We see

---

<sup>36</sup> From further readings of Dewey (1965, 1929/2009), I understand "powers" to suggest a combination of: impulses and proclivities; personal strengths; intuitions; and the empowered ability to act based on making sound decisions and choices.

the results of that early warning now as many young people in Western culture, despite being the “most highly educated”, find themselves adrift not knowing where or how they fit in society. In essence, in deference to Einstein, we may be attempting to use the same thinking to try to solve the problems of a troubled world that created them in the first place.



### **learning by doing.**

Both Dewey (1916, 1929/2009), and Whitehead (1929/1957) knew “first-hand knowledge” rather an “exclusive association of learning with book-learning” (p. 51) is required “to stir the depths” (Kirk, 1973) and spark creativity. It requires a full range of practical, experiential hands-on activities. They both knew that the best learning came from “doing” despite its unpredictability. In the first place, Dewey (1916) saw knowledge as the “power to do” in that its content was that of “intelligent ability” (p. 184). In *Democracy and Education*, he wrote,

The knowledge with which comes first to persons and that remains most deeply ingrained is knowledge of *how to do*; how to walk, talk, read, write, skate, ride a bicycle.... When education, under the influence of a scholastic conception of knowledge which ignores everything but scientifically formulated facts and truths, fails to recognize the primary or initial subject matter always exists as matter of an active doing, involving the use of the body and the handling of material, the subject matter of instruction isolated from the needs and purposes of the learner, and so becomes just a something to be memorized or reproduced upon demand. (p. 184)

Nearly a hundred years ago, curriculum theorists like Maria Montessori (2009) and John Dewey (1929/2009) passionately believed that human wisdom would only grow out of *participation in living experiences* and not by the mere memorization of facts although rote learning does of course have inherent value in a fully rounded curriculum. They posited that it is precisely the work of education to take the richness of childhood innocence and wonder and help develop that into authenticity by nurturing each child’s particular genius and sense of self, and by asking the students questions like, *What are you*

*passionate about? What do you love doing? Who are you meant to be? How do you belong?* To me these are still good questions for all students to consider.

By guiding learning toward the introspective, the experiential and the embodied, we can enter the realm of what Palmer (1999) claims is “the sacred ground of learning” (p. 15).



### **lacks and losses.**

[T]he essence of authority (whose aim is reduced to protecting its own permanence by forcibly imposing the uniformity of perpetual consent) consists basically in a distrust of variety, uniqueness and transcendence; in an aversion of everything unknown, impalpable, and currently obscure; in a proclivity for the uniform, the identical, and the inert; in deep affection for the status quo. In it, the mechanical spirit prevails over the vital. (Havel, 1985/1992, p.71)

More often than not, despite these early educational notions and the emergence of the “posts” (post-structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonialism) “that served to threaten both the autonomy and the authority of the entire narrative underlying Western civilization” (Smith, 2009, p. 370), schooling today still privileges the intellect and cognitive powers in opposition to our natural human emotionality, intuitions, and introspection, and for the most part leaves off other important sites of learning such as human relationships, relationships with nature, and the wisdom of the body.

The very process designed to educate can in fact truncate learning, dampen curiosity and passion, and eradicate spirit if it doesn’t allow for the real interests of the students (Gatto, 1992) or the time and sustained attention needed to stay with a subject long enough so that it may reveal itself more fully and thereby engage real interest (Smith, 2009). Learning can feel more like a punishment coming from some nameless and faceless authority rather than being authentic to the student’s own life if it is forced upon the student from without rather than grown from an interest within.

And not least of all, physically, students are commonly held for long periods of time in the stiff confinement of hard wooden or plastic desks and chairs that Montessori (2009) deemed akin to ‘torture-devices’ serving to effectively quash the energetic spirit of the child

and set ruin upon the vitality of the body. How can students ever be fully engaged in learning if their own bodies—and their *feelings*—are unwisely cut out of the equation, leaving only their thoughts to prevail? A majority of students cannot *wait* to get out from under the restraints of what feels like a prison sentence and begin their “real lives, and may in fact be saving the best parts of themselves for weekends and summer holidays.



### **disconnection, disillusionment and dualism.**

Over a decade ago, Palmer (1993) saw a pattern of teachers being in real pain. So often teachers own learning and emotional growth is not supported within a system that looks to trim and cut excess wherever it can in an effort toward greater teaching efficiency and effectiveness (Hargreaves, 2000). Counterintuitive measures, such as downsizing while attempting to increase performance expectations (and class sizes) on impossibly meager budgets are a sad norm. News of teachers strike action and increased unionization by faculty members across the country in response to their pain is even more prevalent today.

Palmer (1993) goes on to argue that quick fixes and shallow technical solutions will not do and in fact looks to the unlikely place of the pain itself when he draws on the wisdom of the social activist and mystic, Thomas Merton who said that each of us holds a “hidden wholeness” (p. x) underneath the fragmented surface of our lives. This pain then, is representative of the disconnection teachers can feel from their colleagues, from their students, from the heart of their work, as well as from their own hearts (i.e. longing and wholeness are trapped in shadow). The deep structure base required to support teachers to become “active inquirers” (Leggo & Irwin, 2013, p. 3) into their own identities and practices where *learning to learn* rather than merely *learning to teach* (Rogers, 2011) is revered, means valuing and allotting time and resources to this end yet isn’t considered in many schools. This pain also comes from an objectivism that views teaching as a solo act, performed in isolation from but in competition with peers. It is also found in the type of ‘knowing’ that is seen as something the individual has that sets her apart from the pack and allows her to operate alone, which in itself is a guarantee of further disconnection and disillusionment.

In *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks (1994), reveres those teachers who “dare to create theory from the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys” (p. 74). It is the work of coming to maturation to turn toward what most disturbs or perturbs us in order to let it “enable us to remember and recover ourselves”(p. 74) and to let the difficulties we are witness to charge and challenge us to renew our commitments once we name and reclaim our pain. In effect, this leaves little gap between theory and practice, and teaching and doing, in a real and healing sense. What if these struggles (like the struggles our own souls point us to) are *precisely* what we need to learn as teachers in order to go through the darkness and reorganize and re-orient ourselves so we may bring more soul (more wholeness) to this profession?

Dewey’s (1929/2009) pedagogical creed implied the importance of teachers getting to know each student well enough to help them each shape their particularities rather than gear teaching always toward broad generalities (meaning efficiencies). If we teachers are going to be responsible to our profession and take the root meaning of “education” to inspire students and educe in them what they hold an affinity for, what silently draws them (so they may transform themselves and find purpose), then it is essential that we are responsible to these questions for and among ourselves and have made a determination that we are in fact called to this work rather than merely securing a steady job despite the pain. However, the realities of the day dictate large class sizes and workloads of such intensity that so often *it is the least that is the best that can be offered* by any teacher. And embracing this pain, asking the hard questions of ourselves, may simply seem like too tall of an order in many cases.

Michael Ignatieff (2012), Professor of Law and Political Science at U of T, writes in a *Globe and Mail* article on trends in higher learning, what he believes is essential and what concerns him most about the current system.

I’m a big believer in small classroom teaching and that just means resources. The core of education is this relationship between a teacher and a student. I want to get to know my students, I learn as much from the students as they learn from me. And if you lose that core, if you turn into a degree factory, it’s going to go....and under the pressure of austerity, I think there’s a risk we’re

turning our undergraduate education system into a degree factory. (Globe Focus, p.4)

Yet within the economies of reality in education today, the challenges of large classes and workloads are great. Dewey (1929/2009) posited that despite all of our challenges “(e)very teacher should realize the dignity of his calling, that he is a social servant” (p. 41). I believe Dewey meant service with a capital “S” as in the context of the one *called* to teach in service to something greater than herself. In this regard, while we do receive some monetary compensation for this work, we also receive a form of symbolic salary when one’s heart and soul are connected to the students and the spirit of learning.

Aside from pedagogical styles that are often thoroughly individualistic and clever techniques and methods that are designed to get the job done, teachers are not often asked to peer too closely into the conscious awareness of the ‘teacher-self’ that is filling the role of educator in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom. We need to ask ourselves, “*What resources do we need to support the individuation of ourselves? In essence, how can we become more reflective practitioners that know ourselves well so that we may start to know our students just as well and in effect become more responsible to our task?*”

In my experience, it is common to see teachers (from K-12 through to post secondary) left on their own after submitting lesson plans and having made it through the teacher’s college gate. In a kind of classroom exile, teachers are *paid to know* and become authorities despite any apprehensions, gaps in knowledge, lack of skills and or supports. In many cases, in public schools especially, professional development has devolved to half-day workshops—snapshots of learning if you will—that can hardly begin to reach the significant depth required for more robust and continuous learning (and we *know* this from principles and models of best practices in education).<sup>37</sup> Sadly (and ironically), this becomes a commentary on what is considered valuable and worth investing in, in education itself.

In any real sense, learning is a life’s work and ought to be a way of life for educators where the aim is “for a job to be not just a job, but a life—a place to grow, develop character, learn about living, share relations with others deeply and complexly” (Smith, 2009, p. 382) which means teachers must be deeply attuned to life and the lived experience

---

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Brookfield, 1990, 1995; Entwistle, 2001; Greene, 1978, 2001, 2007, 2009; Martin, 2001; Mezirow, 1991; Noddings, 1998; Palmer, 1983, 1998; Rorty, 2001; etc.

themselves (Brookfield, 1990, 1995). If not, in my experience, those teachers trading their time for money, often experience resistance from students and can suffer burnout.

Just as students cannot relate to only facts and logic in order to learn well, teachers require the same kind of soul-furthering, imaginative engagement (and play) that reveals an expanded world that is complex, layered, diverse, interconnected, and frankly, fun! Children learn so much about themselves and each other from play and the arts, and of course the same is true of adults as they re-develop the capacity to play, to express themselves deeply, and in effect come to know themselves and each other more.

So that we may recognize the humanity in one another more, I have come to believe that teachers need to cultivate and share best practices within communities. This would allow for the kind of deep creativity that supports mutual engagement and trust, fosters experiences of thinking and dreaming curriculum together to flourish where each one mentors the other in the journey to authenticity and excellence.<sup>38</sup> Rather than compete with each other or position themselves against one another for scant resources and reduced budgets, community thinking allows teachers to better attune to others in a real sense and develop the kind of compassion that shares hope. However, imagination and intellect need to be cultivated and explored equally as critical competencies that balance each other out and blend together for this to happen (Brookfield, 1995), which becomes fundamental to the teaching required in school.

Knowing, is in fact a communal act of mutuality (Palmer, 1993) not something privatized or to be held over one another. We cannot begin to know something “out there” without it already being a part of us “in here” because we know we are inherently an embedded microcosm within a larger macro web pattern of our life system. This also means that it is not really possible for us to be separate from our subjects, our students, our colleagues or ourselves at any time. It is an illusion borne of dualistic thinking and “(t)he myth of objectivity, which depends on a radical separation of the knower and the known” (Palmer, 1993, p. xv), arguably moving us further into moral and spiritual bankruptcy. In,

---

<sup>38</sup> One example is Edcamp, the “unconference”, a teacher driven response to professional development that creates and supports communities of practice on both the local and global scale (online). Through one day, free sessions that are really conversations rather than keynotes or workshops, sharing and learning together is the key and the curriculum is set in the moment. The vision is to “promote organic, participant-driven professional development for K-12 educators worldwide” however it is limited to only a day’s worth of learning. (Retrieved June 16, 2013 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EdCamp>.)



*To Know As We Are Known. Education As a Spiritual Journey*, Palmer (1993) takes from his own deep Quaker traditions to build authentic education and knowledge of self and other through deep listening and contemplative practices, of being open to life with its vast conversations where there is equal respect for *all* voices in both speech as well as within silences.

“What scholars now say—and what good teachers have always known—is that real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other and with the subject” (Palmer, 1993, p. xvi). I imagine Jung might add—and with *‘them-Selves’*. We all learn and benefit from a curriculum that recognizes students as “young partners in the journey toward mutual maturity” (Smith, 2009, p. 378). But notions of students as “partners” or in “relationship” with teachers, or “silence” “knowing together”, or “contemplation” scheduled into valuable school time, is not common practice.

I have found that more often we tend to treat education like a business with students as commodities to be traded, as we make teachers responsible to “product-based measures” (Smith, 2009, p. 370). Too often teachers think they must bend and twist themselves to fit a misshapen ideal performance measure invented outside of their own judgment, or fit a reform or ministry driven curriculum or departmental plan that holds little consideration for their soul, or that of the student. Accounting for “bums in seats” or FTE’s (full time equivalents) at any cost means more funding which means more revenue on the books and of course, further reputation building. Students are expected to move through “the system” in a timely manner (so revenues keep flowing), with penalizing consequences for those teachers whose students do not achieve this end. This reinforces the notion that teachers themselves have miraculous powers to transform students when in fact we know transformation and real learning occurs from within each student, *supported* by teachers and the conditions they can set in class.

On one hand, teachers must create those conditions that invite the utmost creativity and play while, on the other hand, ensure conformity and compliance. It is a fine balance between worlds. To teach consciously, to be aware of our biases and what we are and are not, while encouraging the lives of those in our charge holds vital consequences. We all know of a situation where a kindly teacher who took extra time with a particularly shy but promising student made all the difference in the world or conversely how an ill-considered

comment may have discouraged or stunted a passion. I have unwittingly made these missteps myself.

Scientist, poet, writer and teacher, Loren Eiseley (1962), in *The Mind as Nature*, wrote that over 50 years ago education overall had an “impatience...and lust for immediate action” (p. 24) and yet remarkably today teachers still battle this same circumstance. In order to ensure proper support for the developing mind of the student and “fight for an oncoming future, for something that has not emerged” and “which may, in fact, never emerge”(p. 24) is tricky at best and requires intuitive and thoughtful teaching. So often, despite “contingencies and weariness” (p. 25), it is not only for the sake of the future (of the student) that teachers must fight, but for the justification of the profession and quite literally (if teaching is her calling), for her own soul.

Given all of this, in our current institutions, teaching is often under-appreciated as many teachers remain disempowered and competitive while vying for inadequate resources. The true power in universities seems vested in boards of governors and financial vice presidents that aim for more students at any cost in order to turn out more workers (this in answer to the rhetoric of present day governments that call for careerism as a main educational outcome and who hold the real financial power) while keeping learning ledgers in the black.

That same *Globe and Mail* article (October 6, 2012) cited above, focused on the necessity for reinventing higher education and noted that with regard to post-secondary learning in Canada, “being the most educated, it turns out, may not be the same as being the *best* educated.” (Globe Focus, section F, p.1). This editorial offered that being “less bound to lecture halls”, and bringing “more innovative curriculum” (p.1) could radically reshape outcomes that include the ability to adapt, make decisions and problem-solve, relate to self and others well, bear confidence and social and emotional intelligence, and not least of all, think divergently. The article supports the argument that the way into the future of education may in fact be through human maturation and relationships, and through, no less, the visionary calling of the human heart out beyond classroom walls!

But there is little inspiration, encouragement, comfort or safety, let alone community support, in many places to even consider the heart (or soul) in teaching as teacher-scholars are so often under constant threat of assessment by superiors (who are

sometimes not even teachers themselves), disgruntled parents or students, high pressures of standardized achievement, and the further disempowerment brought on by teaching in silos. Rarely can teachers immerse themselves in the kind of community that encourages meaning-giving ideas and share fully in the possible brilliance this can provide.

### **small measures.**



In *The Heart of Learning* (1999), Palmer addresses reductionism as a great foe of the soul in education. With its destruction of otherness that crams everything into neat categories to be studied, it often ignores what does not fit into that 'box'. He goes on to say that this provides "a desacralized flatland of learning" (p. 23) devoid of respect for diversity and particularities that turns away from the "precious otherness of the things in the world" (p. 23). He cautions it can diminish the scope of who teachers are as people and who the students are on their way to becoming. It can be easy for teachers to become overwhelmed and retreat in isolation in response to teaching in soulless buildings in revenue-driven programs with fixed objectives that often erode the vast potential of learning and divide it into small manageable parcels of measurability.

In effect, teachers are often being taught to "walk around possessed by the dullest parts" (Weller, 2012, p. 55) of themselves, and are promoted and rewarded as they whittle down to the narrowest slice of their potential to teach with dull repetition and monotony. Fear drives the scarcity mentality that there is "never enough" and where only a rare few will be privileged to succeed. A more abundant (and natural) way of thinking derives its energy from the systemic knowing that this world is patterned with a million possibilities. I concur with Palmer (1999) who writes that we must set our sights on "reclaiming the sacred in knowing, teaching and learning" (p. 15) if we have the eyes (and hearts) to see those millions of possibilities that lie within reach of the human soul and free the process of growth in our students rather than cripple it. It takes an intentional, persistent and creative effort to swim against the stream of slow deterioration in order to keep a more embodied and responsive curriculum afloat and alive.

Contemplative learning that frames the students' here-and-now experience and in its reflectiveness pushes past the familiar curricular edges deep into matters of the heart with rich and complex outcomes that open to life and our deep potential, is often left out.

Stretches of time set aside for contemplation and reflection that render and ripen thought or the space enough to give voice to metacognition in its identification of perspectives, biases, and values, through the meandering nature of journal writing for instance, is usually at a premium. These practices tend to get buried in a kind of hidden or subversive curriculum that is either not discussed openly or is relegated to spare time beyond 'more important' class time (meaning they are a lot less likely to happen if at all).

What cannot be evaluated within a marking rubric is frequently not valued at all and risks being discarded entirely. This can be demoralizing to the teacher who desires to create different conditions in her classroom where what is stirring deeply in the souls of the students is at the frontier of her teaching and is what directs a living and fresh curriculum that refuses to stop and measure emerging learning. Learning that asks teachers to address real and sometimes individual issues (that cannot be determined in advance) requires a level of hermeneutical skill that also must evolve through practice.

In my experience in post-secondary teaching for instance, there is a rub when attempts are made to measure something soulful or reflective. This type of hard-to-assess learning tends to be allocated to the smallest percentile of the whole mark (the final mostly inconsequential 10% for instance) that virtually anyone can achieve or is commonly known as the easy 'participation mark'. Simple physics tells us we simply shouldn't try to squeeze something enlarged like emergent learning into too small a container! It will never fit. Nor should it. However, I have found that if we don't account for in some way what has happened in the more reflective, embodied and artful expressions of the student, we risk de-valuing the experience entirely. In a one-size-fits-all curricular legacy-hangover from a century-old romance with scientific methods and objectives (Bobbitt, 2009; Popham, 2009), a more elegant approach is needed for us to understand and in some creative way assess what has happened. I look further into this possibility in the section Objectives and Objectivism (p. 137). Poet David Whyte (1997) wisely warns us that, "what you can plan/ is too small/ for you to live" (p. 26). Good advice if we desire a richly layered curriculum that encourages we learn (and in turn live) large.

**good science.**



I do want to be clear that in my mind good science with its emphasis on that which is

measured and quantifiable, rightly pursued, is not an enemy of education. However, it has for too long erroneously trumped other kinds of learning that a more balanced education would provide.

I am astonished to find that within many science programs, there still exists a taboo against using the pronoun “I”, or including the student’s own intuitions or insights in their research despite a human history rife with examples that many of the most profound scientific discoveries were arrived at through heuristic and intuitive ways of knowing. Many students who come from a science background won’t even entertain blending their own reflections or ideas and would rather take and synthesize the words of those who have published before them ahead of their own insights and understandings. From an applied and whole-person learning perspective, this never fails to shock me, yet sadly, there remains in many academic contexts real, fear-based misconceptions and an underlying ambiguity about what passes for knowledge (and scholarship). French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1999) suggests,

Knowledge is not science and cannot be separated from the various thresholds in which it is caught up, including even the experience of perception, the values of the imagination, the prevailing ideas or commonly held beliefs. Knowledge is the unity of stratum, which is distributed throughout the different thresholds, the stratum itself existing only as the stacking up of these thresholds beneath different orientations, of which science is only one. (p. 44)

I view science, like art or geography, as a lens for seeing the world, but it is *not* the world. For example, we don’t study *art* per se, rather we study *the world through the lens* of art history or art-making or our interpretations of art. Subject concentrations (or majors) can bring the focus in tight, however, good teaching, in my estimation, helps students to also zoom out for a wider purview of what is possible in the scope of the world (which includes ourselves and the non-human world too).

Science is but one measure or lens; there are many other ways to understand the nature of things and it is certainly not the only perspective worth considering as “real” or “true”. The old Zen adage of the hand pointing at the moon while the fools look only at the fingers, comes to mind here (Holstein, 1993). Can we be so foolish as to be seduced into

looking only at the models and technologies (in this case, science) that in effect is pointing *at* the thing (world) and mistake *it* for the *thing* of importance itself? Polish-American scientist and philosopher Alfred Korzybski (1994) remarked, “the map is not the territory” (p. 61) encapsulating his view that an abstraction derived from something, or a reaction to it, is not the thing itself. Whitman (1867/1962, p. 304) summed it up beautifully in this poem,

**The Learn'd Astronomer**

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure  
 them,  
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause  
 in the lecture-room,  
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

And of course there are fantastically good teaching examples in our school K-12 system of a pedagogy of both science and soul with teachers who help students to look at and *into* the nature of things at the same time. I have heard many of my biologist and environmental educator colleagues remark how one particularly wonderful science teacher they had in public school fostered a sense of wonder and adventure in them at a tender age, opening up entirely new worlds of learning, inspiring a future trajectory. Experiential science for example, invites active participation in decision and meaning-making by encouraging students to ask questions, investigate, experiment, solve problems, reflect on their cultural and past experiences, integrate traditional Aboriginal knowledge with Western science concepts and construct meaning of the world around them linking field, laboratory, library, and classroom experiences with real-life situations and applications.



**education as careerism.**

In *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum (2010) like Palmer (2012) fears that with our current educational focus we are losing ground in education to the competitive pursuit of the “highly applied skills suited to profit-making”

(Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2) through overt objectivism. Nussbaum makes a compelling argument for the humanities and artful expression in schools by reasoning that the very fate of the world is at stake and hangs on the humanistic aspects of “the imaginative, creative aspect and the aspect of rigorous critical thought” (p. 2) that are either cut out or ‘counted’ out in some way. She fears we may not be educating for the capabilities or competencies required in the near future to handle the world’s pressing problems. She argues for learning that allows “thought to open out of soul and connect a person to the world in a rich, subtle and complicated manner” (p. 6) by considering the inner faculties of imagination and creative critical thought. Nussbaum fears, like many of us, that by losing ground in curricula we may fail to create world-citizens that can see beyond our temporary shortsightedness.

Thirsty for national profit, nations and their systems of education, are heedlessly discarding skills that are needed to keep democracies alive. If this trend continues, nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizen who can think for themselves, criticize tradition and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements. (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2)

Dewey (1929/2009) knew that careerism was too narrow for education. He saw it as an abdication of the teacher’s responsibilities if learning was to speak to the heart of the learner, incite natural curiosity and creative responses, or become real in any sense. In his *Philosophy of Education*, while he doesn’t necessarily use the word ‘soul’, Dewey (1956) certainly argued for outcomes that included “freedom”, (self-)“responsibility”, “wisdom”, and “growth” in the sense of “the full development of the individual” (p. xxii) (bracket mine). He insisted the process ought to include “flexibility, continuity and dynamism” (p. xxiii) as a conscious, creative, interactive activity that moved *toward* the needs of the student and away from the static of desks and chairs, recitation, and rigid instruction. He believed that education had failed “to recognize the essential relation between means and ends” (p. xxiii). Dewey further believed that when we honour the student and follow the “*laws of the nature*” of that student (Dewey, 1929/2009, p. 41) that we are preparing him for command of his life in service to society. I couldn’t agree more.

This is of course a rejection of the prevailing mechanistic discourse with its scientific methods and instrumentalism that teaches for shortcomings and gaps, errors and imperfections, toward efficiencies that advance the function of training for “social progress” and “proficiency in citizenship” (Bobbitt, 2009, p. 15). Bobbitt wrote that in 1918 and still today, “for the most part, contemporary education remains geared to downloading facts and fostering compliance, [where] we seek to shape a populace for the marketplace and treat the student as a receptacle to be filled and controlled” (Hart, 2001, p. 4). I have experienced education firsthand that has adapted a business-model stressing significant emphasis on training (skill-building) and the transmission of knowledge over the need for spaces of inquiry as required for transformation. This design best prepares students to preference individual success and material wealth over advancing broader social, moral, and spiritual gains.

Without making time and space to slow down in school, listen to the voice of soul and reflect on the vitality and wisdom there, the kind of crises we face in education that Nussbaum (2012), Orr (2004), Palmer (1983, 1999, 2000) and others fret over may not only do great damage to the future of the individual but to the world where the individuals taught in this way become future decision-makers. Unfortunately, this is already upon us.



### **objectivism and objectives.**

When we look into current educational practices, and study curricular theory from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1930s and up through the 70s, it seems little has changed in terms of how we objectify and account for learning overall (Flinders & Thornton, 2009). More often than not, emotional or intuitive understandings are marginalized, considered too personal and unruly, or are discounted entirely.

Orr (2004) reminds us that,

“There is no way to separate feeling from knowledge. There is no way to separate object from subject. There is no good way and no good reason to separate mind or body from its ecological and emotional context.”(p. 31)

Still we try really hard to do just that with the majority of our teaching, tests, and measures.

Palmer (1983) looks to the Latin meaning of word ‘objective’ which is “to put against, to oppose” or the Germanic which translates to “standing-over-againstness” (p.



23) to reveal that objective learning stands in opposition rather than in connection with the self and the world. In his essay, *The Hidden Curriculum* he writes,

If we believed that knowing requires a personal relationship between the knower and the known (as some new epistemologies tell us) our students would be invited to learn by interacting with the world, not by viewing it from afar. The classroom would be regarded as an integral interactive part of reality, not a place apart. The distinction between “out there” and “in here” would disappear; students would discover that we are in the world and the world is within us; that truth is not a statement about reality but a living relationship between ourselves and the world. But such an epistemology is rarely conveyed by our teaching; instead, objectivism is. (p.35)

Objectivism disinvents us from the type of learning that requires a living relationship between ourselves and the world—a subject to subject relating—as it divorces us from our depth of experience and takes us to a more abstract view of life. Arts-based educator and curriculum theorist, Eliot Eisner (2009), posits that instruction yields such rich complexity and dynamism that its outcomes are far too numerous on the whole to be solely defined by objectives, and only a small part of what we teach is predictable anyhow. He goes even further to say “imposing logical requirements (objectives) upon the process (instruction) because they are desirable for assessing the product (student/outcomes) is...an error” (p.111) (brackets mine). Why then do we fall into the trap of adhering to a value system that relies so heavily on learning objectives when the job seems impossible?

Curriculum ought to always emerge and invite (rather than impose or force) and affirm the student’s work through the act of co-constructing and negotiating meaning by sharing insights and understandings (Greene, 1988b, 2001, 2009; Sterling, 2008) rather than be “reduced to a pressure from without” (Dewey, 1929/2009, p. 34), and should not be disseminated by just one expert, which, while this may lend certain results, cannot be considered wholly educative in the end. Yet there are few ways to evaluate what kind of creativity has taken place without running the risk of stifling or dampening the creative process. This is fluid space that I believe comes closest to reproducing how consciousness evolves. An extrinsic assessment goes against the grain, runs counter-intuitive to the

notion of expression being a refuge free from the restrictions and expectations so much associated with judgments and marking. In fairness, experiential and emotional learning can be difficult to prove, yet in its originality it also cannot be falsified or disproved either.

Teachers with more intensified workloads tend to look for simple and effective ways to teach to and measure against a standard. However, that leaves little room for what Eisner (2009) calls “expressive outcomes”. He compares curriculum building to “art-making” (p. 112) with wholly unpredictable ends that (if we are offering sufficiently worthwhile, rich and wide opportunities for students) will be highly creative and unique to the individual and therefore cannot be set beforehand. He goes on to say that, “the end achieved ought to be something of a surprise to both teacher and pupil” (p. 109).

And while I understand that objectives can certainly help direct and focus learning and provide a kind of lens for activities and readings, educator James MacDonald (1965) wisely suggests they are more like guidelines rather than rules, and that,

Our objectives are only known to us in any complete sense *after* the completion of our act of instruction. No matter what we thought we were attempting to do, we can only know what we wanted to accomplish after the fact. Objectives by this rationale are heuristic devices which provide initiating consequences which become altered in the flow of instruction (p. 613)

(and I would add)....between the dynamism and complexity at the confluence of student, teacher, and world.

And do we really *want* to measure emotional learning anyways? Objectives and techniques are only necessary “until the real teacher shows up” (p. 5) writes Palmer (1998) meaning the teacher must have the courage to provide initiations that open students up and inspire learning. It is my belief that as an educator, I must continually seek out and find creative and elegant ways to witness the lived experience of what personal learning has taken place for each student without sacrificing meaning or withering mystery. In my experience, this potential lies within the pedagogy itself, and I believe within the courage of the teacher herself to take the learning where it needs to or rather perhaps wants to go.



### **the trouble with teaching.**

It seems to me that teachers in this truly brave sense are few and far between. Many

I know are simply exhausted. Some, especially those in elementary grades, feel forced into adopting easy-outs as efficient ways to get the job of teaching — to a pre-determined standard — done. They are careful to not stray too much from the curriculum, and “stay on course” and “on time” which tends to pit each against the other in win-lose competitions for highest grade averages and overall student achievements. This is a very stressful scene to be involved in and runs counter-intuitively to the idea of getting to know your students well in order to help them become more critical and imaginative thinking and feeling humans.

Despite a sense of “just knowing” that nondualistic thinking is key to good and impartial learning and a wider comprehension, and wanting to cultivate a more authentic teaching practice, I have known many teachers who felt they were forced to trim down original course material to something more simplified, to shrink it down to small increments of measurability in order to more easily evaluate for grading purposes. There is a subtle yet insidious erosion that occurs when something that cannot be measured or accounted for must be reduced down to fit within existing structures rather than honoured for its own particularity. “The original intent of a course or educational program becomes worn down to that which can be explicitly evaluated for grading purposes and that which can be taught easily through verbal materials (lectures, discussions, reading materials, etc.)” (Krathwohl, Blook & Maia, 1964, p.16). It is fair to say that overall, not much has changed in how we educate since this 1964 lament was written.

Within a scientific and more mechanistic pedagogy, everything needs to be analyzed and classified rather than merely experienced for itself. For some studies, a non-sensual type of knowing can be adequate however, not all learning ought to be neatly split off into repeatable, measurable parts precisely transferable to a marking rubric that is most often, and sadly, the remains of a one-size-fits-all measurability of conformity that only serves to “dumb us (all) down” (Gatto, 1992) (brackets mine), teachers included, in the end.

Afraid of failure and making mistakes, teachers can “develop self-defeating success strategies” (Baumbach, 1970, p. 6) rather than taking the time to get to the heart of something. It might be simpler to look for easy answers that someone else has already come up with in a “system that rewards energetic caution” (p. 6) but by adopting these easy answers we can severely limit their own potential and genius too. Freire (2001) reminds

us that, “we have to know it—and teach it—by living it” (p. 151) providing a more honest approach to teaching within our willingness to go where the learning leads us, take risks to help others choose for themselves with the freedom to pose more and more good and difficult questions, and after all, abandon expectation and prescription despite the risks involved.

Finally, we must support each other as we “learn to move back and forth” between the challenges of “domains of policy” and the particular learner, writes educational philosopher and teacher, Greene (1995). In a kind of dance between “the situation specific undertakings, the immeasurable and the unique” (p.11) I believe we can create the conditions towards better ways of teaching and learning with the possibility of a better world rather than simply adjust to a flawed system. Palmer (1998) cautions us to remember what we must consider in doing so.

In our rush to reform education, we have forgotten a simple truth: reform will never be achieved by renewing appropriations, restricting schools, rewriting curricula, and revising texts if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends...if we fail to cherish – and challenge – the human heart that is the source of good teaching. (p.3)



### **An Interdisciplinary Approach**

We have already historically witnessed the devastating societal results of learning theories without values, of solely seeking answers instead of lingering within the questions themselves, of seeking ideologies without gaining conscious awareness; there are wars and mass genocides to prove it (Orr, 2004). This same thinking fuels barbarity because in the abstract without conscience, everything becomes a commodity to potentially destroy and dominate.

How on earth can we possibly study the “environment” in school as a separate subject from everything else and get away with it? Orr (2004) writes that because we are embedded in the world, “all education is environmental education” (p. 12) and therefore, to view it any other way is to cause—even unwittingly—further dualisms that allow us to

divide learning into separate subjects to be studied in different rooms in isolation from each other. We continue to compartmentalize content into courses rather than call for an inter- or perhaps even wider trans-disciplinarity that would legitimize border crossing in order to “weaken the hold of narrow professionalism” (Orr, 2004, p.102) while honoring what is beckoning to the student to be studied.

There is a wonderful example of what is possible when we reimagine learning differently in a TEDx talk given by an inspiring thirteen year old named Logan LePlante (YouTube, 2014), who has effectively ‘hacked’ his education. Hacking to Logan, is a mind-set and doesn’t just refer to some computer geek breaking laws. In his case, hacking includes (re)inventing his own education. Inspired by Sir Ken Robinson’s (2006) TEDx talk, *How Schools Kill Creativity*, his parents took him out of mainstream education because they feared what would happen to him if he stayed. Logan sees hacking as being innovative and creative, being willing to challenge and change existing systems to make them different and better. He gives priority to the practice of being happy and healthy rather than worrying about what he will do when he grows up which if you think about it isn’t such a bad way to approach life because happiness and health often elude even the most ‘successful’ professionals these days. He is, in his own words, “stoked” about his education (not a common utterance from most teenage boys!) letting his own curiosity, under the guidance of his parents, take him to subject areas and places (and even out to meet people who can help him learn through their experiences and expertise) that traditional schools just couldn’t afford to offer. I can see one way his competencies are made evident by his ability to have researched and delivered such a world-class talk about it.

Although many universities and colleges espouse the virtues and benefits of interdisciplinarity, rarely does it receive the backing and resources required for wholesale acceptance within the organization, meaning full student participation.<sup>39</sup> Of course by its nature, interdisciplinarity is simply less linear, harder to track and more complicated overall, perhaps even a bit messy, yet those are not good enough reasons to shy from an

---

<sup>39</sup> In the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University an experiment to encourage more interdisciplinarity allows students to create their own curriculum. Independent and self-directed study tailored to their needs and interests, includes experiential components, practicums, and internships that foster proclivities and recognizes each student as unique, in effect, cultivating a sense of “who they are” with “what they do”. Retrieved June, 2013 from <http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about.html> .

organic process that allows students to tune into their interests and really become “stoked” about learning.

If our aim is to create a more diverse world without cultivating narrow attitudes or preferences for one discipline over the other, we will need to bring on learning that is both deep *and wide* as well as inter-referential to acquire broad, contextual knowledge and understanding. The mistake has been to think that somehow by line blurring or through the independence of self-study there may not be the same rigor, skill and commitment involved, however, the opposite tends to be true. For the interdisciplinary students there is perhaps even more emphasis on performance under scrutiny. In my own experience as an interdisciplinary doctoral student this has meant that I have tended to overreach and even sometimes, overdo the required work.

What if we view interdisciplinarity as the epitome of “applied” learning? Would those students have a better balanced impartiality, a stronger foundation for peace and more compassion for diversity? Or develop more divergent solution-finding skills from a more extensive knowledge base and a wider, overall comprehension (Orr, 2004)?



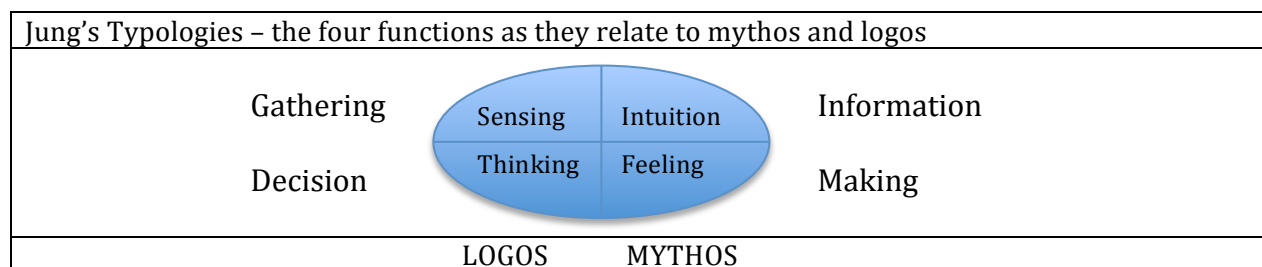
### **a typography of learning.**

In 1921, when Jung wrote *Psychological Types*, he was trying to understand how we each best relate to the world which yielded the insight that “every judgment made by an individual is conditioned by his personality type and that every point of view is necessarily relative” (1965, p. 207). His work revealed that while we come into this world with innate proclivities, preferences, biases, and attitudes of: how the psyche is ready to interact with the energies of the world (introversion or extroversion); how we function in perceiving and gathering information (sensing or intuition), and; how we organize that information and make decisions (thinking or feeling). Typographies, Jung posited (1921), reveal what at first appear to be a paradox of opposite preferences or traits in the end prove instead to be a continuum. He saw that it is the work of the developing adult to take up a “both-and” proposition of each of these dichotomies toward a more complete and mature way of being. Of course, Jung also understood there to be other factors that would also influence a person’s development such as gender, genetics, environment, birth order, age and family

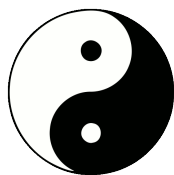
values, to name a few.

In most of education today, there is an overt emphasis on logos — meaning the ability to think and speak, (Gadamer, 1976) or what Jung would call the more logical and rational sensing-thinking functions of his typology. This is clearly favoured over the more inward aspects of learning of intuition-feeling — those aspects that invite imaginative expression and ineffability, as found on the right hand quadrants of the diagram below (Figure 3). It would seem that as we tend to value thinking and speaking more, we are in effect, devaluing the ‘softer’ facets of intuiting and feeling and thus further entrenching the system of hierarchical dualisms.

**Figure 4**



At the same time, Jung was writing up the typologies (1965), he was studying the newly translated Chinese text, *The Tao te Ching*, (Bahm, 1963) written centuries earlier, where a great insight came for him from the symbol of the yin-yang (Figure 4). Yin-yang literally means shadow and light. The symbol is used to illustrate how what can seem opposite or seemingly contrary, in fact connects to create a circle dependent on each half for its whole and interconnected nature.



**Figure 5**

The Yin-Yang Symbol

In recounting his life in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung 1965), what particularly struck Jung about this symbol (and influenced his thinking) was how within each of the sides of the whole, the other opposite aspect was present in a small but significant dot

which brought to light the unity of all aspects of inner development as necessary in the concept of wholeness despite our dominant drives and inborn tendencies one way or the other. Reaching maturity then, would require nothing less than the opportunity to integrate all aspects of the self (both dark and light, unconscious and conscious). If we are interested in educating toward maturation then, it would behoove us to equally embrace both logos' sensing-thinking functions, as well as mythos' intuitive-feeling ways in order to create opportunities for balanced development and enduring understandings for all types of students. William Stafford (1993) penned it beautifully here in the first stanza of *A Ritual to Read to Each Other*,

If you don't know the kind of person I am  
and I don't know the kind of person you are  
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world  
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star...(p. 135)

In the wisdom of the poet, if we do not follow our human destiny and get to know each other (despite what may seem like contrariness at first) in order to work and learn together, not only may we fall into old, unsustainable and unfortunate prevailing patterns, but the result may be catastrophic, which is what we are beginning to experience now with the troubled ways of “the state of world affairs, the vanishing forests, and the rise of psychic and environmental pollution” (Deardorff, 2011, p. xiv) as contextualized within the lack of an earth community. This is how dualistic thinking — and behaving — that preferences the mechanical over the vital, the head over the heart, the uniform over the diverse, the known over the unknown, logos over mythos, continues to unravel the world and threaten us all. This little but powerful black and white symbol shows us something else is possible when despite our dominant drives, we embrace the other and in so doing, create an intact world, a balance that is differentiated, yet whole.



### **the proposition of mythos.**

In modern, Western culture, with its current myopia, we continue to value “factual truth” overall and in mainstream education in particular, “Logos, the realm of objectivity and logic, the triumph of reason over instinct, ignorance and irrationality” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 79), tends to prevail. Along with the historical context of a host of educational reforms



implemented over the past century to create more worker-citizens, “logos” is mostly driven by our insatiable clamoring for a never-ending glut of information delivered at high speed, through advancing technologies that require rapid adaptation and shifts in skills. This “cult of speed” we experience demands higher and higher levels of productivity and performance that come at any cost, with an overt preference for group and team work over time spent in solitude and reflective practice (Dirkx, 1997).

The non-ego based mythos, on the other hand, “involves very personal, imaginative ways of knowing, grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 80) yet is not a purely private fictional fancy. In other words, mythos is borne of the imaginal and comes from a more universal domain. It comes from an intermediary realm that bridges the celestial and the terrestrial, the inner with the outer, as it sits at the confluence of death and life, absence and presence, shadow and light, (Snyder, 2007) pouring through in creativity and expression.

Mythos can be illustrated through visual representations that provide a more direct access to reality even more so than concepts and discourses can. It is common to hear people say, “I see what you mean” to denote that through “imaging” they have gained a sense of knowing. Etymologically, the word “theory” translates from its Greek origins to mean a “*vision of reality*” (Barnhardt, 1988, p. 1132) (*italics mine*) because it is through speculating (looking at or observing) and imagining something to be, that it can begin to manifest and function as a theory or practice. But mythos is of course not only found in images, rather illuminations come in a world of forms including songs, stories, and poems. When we sing, recite, dance, paint, sculpt or draw, I believe we are paying homage to the *mundus imaginalis* (world imagination) of which our own imaginations are a part.

Upon closer inspection, mythos comes from a deeply potent and imaginative place where symbols, metaphor, narrative, and poetic ways of meaning-making extend to the deeper reaches of the human soul in attunement to the world through accessing images and feelings (Dirkx, 1997). Mythos can sound fantastical and could easily be confused by those who may be taken in by the more contemporary and widespread misuse of the word “myth” to mean something that is false or untrue. Instead, mythos invites depth of presence and authentic engagement that calls us to reintegrate ourselves within the ancient and living world, thereby lessening the nature-individual, human-nature divide.

Mythos *is* of the inner world of imagination, meaning and magic. Its activation requires an inner eye to reveal thresholds of unison with nature, with soul. Jung's (1959) theories of 'collective consciousness' take after mythos as they include the whole universe by design, are rich in ambiguity and thick with suggestion of conjured images, symbols, poetry, patterns, and archetypes as a broad way to explore and experience that which is universal rather than merely personal.

Mystery is at the core of mythos where an inside/out perspective of our psyches has an opportunity to respond to the world exclusive of claims of empirical truth (Schmidt, 1985). A whole education then, one that balances the visible logos rationality and the invisible spellbinding mythos, would have to in the end be equally faithful to both. However, this realm, what I have come to know as the "poetic truth", is what is most often absent from curriculum. This is our failure to accommodate the myriad ways students know and learn. Creativity it seems is more often viewed as something one or two more talented students possess and is marveled at in presentations rather than understood to be a required competency. So little class time and research has been devoted to the dimensionality of the elusive soul and its imaginal realms that the ego-based logos—so much more definable and controllable—tends to overshadow the more mysterious and unconscious realms of mythos and takes the lead.

While head over heart thinking may be strong empirically, I have come to appreciate that it is weak in its wisdom and we can suffer for our disproportionate epistemologies and pedagogies that are partial to a logos approach. When we try to capture life only under the glass of science, Lao Tzu wisely said, "This is like pinning a butterfly: the husk is captured, but the flying is lost" (Walker, 1992, p. 8). A more mythic approach might include a deep identification with the butterfly that asks the student imagine where it will go, how it lives, what it means to be alive in this way and even possibly fly as butterfly.

The ancient mind knew that truth can best be found in both fact *and* story, poetry and song (McIntosh, 2008) and these ways of knowing, particularly the latter "are what shape our experience of and participation in the ongoing birth of the world into reality" (p. 110), are what comprise the language we require if we are to enter the uncharted territory of soul. "We know from research," writes Palmer (2012), "that the brain's weakest function is the retention of isolated bits of data. Its strongest function is the retention of pattern,

narrative, story and system” (p. 7) providing the premise for the “the kind of learning that goes deeper and lasts longer” (p. 7).

*Poesis*, the root of the word poetry translates as “the making” (McIntosh, 2008, p. 110). The poetic, the communicable form of mythos, is a way to make meaning by bringing the totality of the outer experience and the inner human life together as it considers what *feels* true. Mythopoetics (fr. Greek ‘mythos-making’) (McIntosh, 2008) comes from a deeply potent and imaginative place of allurement and transcendence. It is the linguistic construct of mythic encounters and experiences through the power and drama of re-enchantment. Rife with emotionality, saturated with possibility and uncertainty, mythopoesis offers a kind of phenomenological “seeing into” things in response to the animated world calling us to remember our oldest stories, folktales, legends, histories and the ancient narratives of creation and of the *numen* (the gods and goddesses of mythology). “Mythopoesis is therefore the upwelling of reality from deep springs in the psyche of the world” (McIntosh, 2008, p. 110) and the expression of that truth when the soul is called out of the house into the wilds. Poetry is of course its natural result.

The study of mythopoetics (and mythologies) as a source of knowledge tends to avoid reductionist interpretation or the need for scientific legitimacy in its promiscuity to connote rather than denote and can help us make sense of things. It can haunt us long after a poem or story is read as it continues to pierce the membrane of the familiar with its fluency in the universal. It acts mysteriously invitational, like a portal for re-enchantment with its hallmarks of strangeness, home to the outlandish and the presence of Otherness. Mythopoesis is densely elusive and exploratory in that it cannot be “limited by the harness of social approval” (Deardorff, 2011, p. xiii) or pinned down entirely, and often leaves us wanting more and still wondering. There is much of the Trickster (Hermes) archetype alive and well here.

It’s easy to see how hermeneutical thought can be linked to it as curriculum theorists and educators from both the critical and interpretive approaches can be found to embody mythopoetics in their scholarship (e.g. Schmidt, 1985; Doll, 2000; Holland & Gamon, 2008). Curricularly, it is most often located in narrative, especially used by those who teach young children (Holland & Gamon, 2008) but I suggest it belongs at all levels of learning where story-telling and poetry are honoured.

Renowned poets and writers such as J.M Barrie, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Hermann Hesse, John Keats, C.S. Lewis, Lewis Carroll, Rainer Maria Rilke, J.K. Rowling, William Shakespeare, Wallace Stevens, J.R.R. Tolkien, William Wordsworth, William Butler Yeats, and of course Homer all wrote mythopoetically as if in a dreamworld, evoking an unconscious, transliminal state (of neither here nor there but both here *and* there) and opened hidden pathways where one might just as easily find caterpillars smoking hookahs, boys that can fly, gold rings that speak, circles that hold secrets or maybe curtains over doorways that advertise “Magic Theatre” (Hesse, 1927/2002, p. 32) within worlds that are in fact, *not for everyone*. I have found mythopoetics to be where mindscapes and landscapes are interwoven with the fabric of daily life enlarging the notion of the self within a wider, wilder archetypal context layered through with time, space, beauty and mystery.

But, as in any great story or myth, there is also a cautionary tale here in the temptation of the backlash to preference the imagination alone. When left untethered and unexamined, it can also mesmerize with its powers of technological creations such as we see with television and the internet that create strong counter-realities as poor but bedazzling substitutes for the bonds of friendship, real communication and nature. In a type of “Sorcerer’s Apprentice” (Goethe, 1797)- like madness, “[U]nbound, directionless and idiosyncratic imagination of our times is suspected of opening a chasm between humanity and the divine; it is likely that the myriads of imaginary dreams of virtual reality produce a world in which God has become implausible and seemingly unneeded” (Laude, 2009, p. 14). The imaginal and the rational (the yin and yang) need to balance each other in order to provide access to the utmost treasury of what is whole and wise at once. History (and my studies here) have shown that each one left to its devices without the other eventually becomes lop-sidedly destructive.



### **“Fields” of Green**

The Celtic worldview, with its animistic recognition of the mythic and elemental nature of nature embodies the mythopoetic and manifests this in folkloric energies and powers of devas (spirits) of the faerie realm. This is known as “indigenous green consciousness” (McIntosh, 2008) or Celtic consciousness and was actually a first form of

very deep ecology that inspired some of the most famous and well-loved Celtic musicians, poets, and writers through the centuries, keeping the culture and history alive through the mythopoetic domain.

Jeremy Hayward, a molecular biologist at MIT and a Cambridge graduate of physics, makes the point in his article, *Unlearning to See the Sacred* (1999) that “we need to teach that the science of this century is in no way incompatible with a sacred world; a world in which matter and mind or spirit were never separate in the first place” (p. 76). Hayward claims that matter on the physical level and the ultimate “beyond” (sometimes called ‘God’) as held within the great spectrum of energy (referred to as the ‘Great Chain of Being’), fails to consider the intrinsic intermediate realm between so-called dead matter and transcendence on the spectrum as the inner realm of “awareness-energy” or “psycho/spiritual/material energy” (p. 67), a unity between the outer and inner, the material and mental/spiritual worlds. This liminal space, where subtle energies, “a vital aspect of human experience” not exclusive to humans alone, brings a level of awareness-energy to all matter such as rocks, trees, the wind and the grasses, bringing everything alive.

I have discussed the old separations between our physical earth world and the rest of the living world as the direct result of the powerful influences of mechanistic science and cognitive reasoning. However, many ordinary people, reputable scholars, bureaucrats, scientists, (not only children) continue to report seeing and feeling the presence of intermediary beings such as faeries, gnomes, devas and other elementals (Hayward, 1999). In the University of London psychology department there is a university level course seriously designed for those who have seen faeries to share experiences and deepen understanding through open academic discourse. The miraculous Findhorn community in Scotland has for years created a vibrant and celebratory culture around both inner and outer worlds, in praise of both the visibles and invisibles that comprise our world (Hawken, 1975).

Hayward notes that “at Princeton University, in the aeronautical engineering department...for nearly twenty years in a small laboratory called the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research, or PEAR...experiments have been conducted on psycho-kinesis and remote viewing or clairvoyance” (1999, p. 74) where with a high degree of certainty, they

have established that “awareness can influence physical reality” (p. 75), meaning that through experiments with intention-setting there are strong suggestions that what each of us does invisibly affects the other, meaning “that some aspects of the mind have field-like, or nonlocal, characteristics” (p. 75). This would indicate that we are part of something greater than our localized minds in that our thoughts and emotions can affect the field around us<sup>40</sup>.

But these more recent findings also fit with some of Einstein’s earlier theories (Einstein, Podolsky, & Rosen, 1935), where he asked the question, “Can a quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete?” (pp. 777–780), to which he and his colleagues responded, “no”. Instead, they found *the field to be the reality* – not just physically but *metaphysically* as evidenced by a deep and webby interconnectedness that in quantum physics showed that when separated, atoms that have been together previously will continue to respond to each other, even at a distance. Einstein at first called this “spooky” science, but now quantum science calls it *entanglement theory* based on the Reeh-Schlieder theorem (1961). Suppose then, that the entanglements, the interconnected behaviours and interactions of the field around us in that intrinsic, intermediary realm that Hayward (1999) called *the sacred* is the same energetic field that great poets, musicians and artists have always been able to dip down into and converse with, allowing something greater than themselves — the mythos — to flow in and through them. But because we more often teach that we can believe only what we can measure or see, we tend to make light of anything that does not fit that criteria. Wilderness

---

<sup>40</sup> The Institute of Heart Math (IHM) in California has been conducting similar experiments on emotions, heart intelligence and intuition. IHM researchers claims that, the brain, which was once thought to be the centre of intelligence based on the belief that it sent out more signals to the body than it received (and that the body was mostly designed to effectively carry the brain around), is in fact exceeded by the heart by its amount of signaling. And while a lot more research has to be done, it may turn out that the heart in fact accounts for more of our “intelligence” than the brain (Heartmath.org, 2012). The experiments, mirrored and corroborated by those at the Institute of Noetic Sciences in California, in Lynne McTaggart’s (2008) book, *The Field*, and Rupert Sheldrake’s *Morphic Resonance*, (2009), measure the radiating beating heart and the magnetic field it creates. Measurements found in these experiments indicate that we are all a part of a sending and receiving field in which we detect (and are detected by) each other (and all other living things) in every moment. This means that what we think or believe, what we are *feeling* at any given time, can truly affect the other psychologically through the physiology of the field. This may be something many of us have sensed for some time, and certainly that indigenous spiritual cultures, Eastern religions (and poets) have espoused for centuries. It is only now however, that science is catching up. The human heart sends and receives information this way all the time but because this is invisible to the eye and hard to measure, science had discounted this line of thinking as irrational. This view has caused much malaise, let alone a terrific sub-culture around those who believe in what is not visible to the eye.

preservationist and writer, John Muir (1911/1987) offered, “When you try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe” (p. 157).

Jung (2005) knew that the dipping down into the sacred wellspring of the natural mind, the source from which the collective consciousness flowed, was essential for the creative and whole (holy?) life. Picasso, Puccini, and William Blake to name just a few have attributed their streams of creativity as coming from beyond themselves, as a kind of power or energy that flowed through them, or conversely as “someone” who accompanied and inspired them (if even in an imaginary sense), in the case of a Muse or a spirit guide. Robert Burns, one of the most beloved and capricious poets of Scotland, constantly reminded us of the fantastical world as animated “by faeries, and brownies and witches, and warlocks and spunkies, and kelpies” (McIntosh, 2008, p. 25).<sup>41</sup>

Magic realism—part of what makes up the green consciousness of the native Celtic mind—has never been lost completely to modernism and in fact, has enjoyed a resurgence in the past few decade as all things Celtic have surged in popularity. I believe this to be in answer to the desperate call of a society seeking a more fulfilling and conscious existence with roots in wildness, story and myth. Engaging with the past (our ancestry) in this way, gives people get a sense of stability and continuity that addresses the perceived lack in modern life of a simpler life (if indeed there ever was such a thing), and of a more sacred and re-enchanted time (Blain & Wallis, 2007). Writer and master storyteller of Devon, Martin Shaw (2011) writes, “Myth presents the paradoxical view that we are to dwell in the tension of a ‘crossroads’” and, “that this very complexity provides the grounding of an authentic human life” (p. 7). The Persian poet, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, known simply as Rumi (1207- 1273) perhaps spoke of this ineffability best.

Beyond our ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing,  
there is a field. I’ll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*  
doesn’t make sense any more. (trans., 2004, p. 36)

---

<sup>41</sup> For example, and sadly for us, our anthropomorphic renderings of the magical, ineffable faeries have devolved into trite lifeless, plastic-winged Barbie doll figurines that utterly miss the mark. Many older Celts believe that it was when we all started to go to public school with its machinations of black and white rationality, that we began to lose our ability to see the full spectrum altogether, including these more greenly beings (McIntosh, 2008).

“Green” itself, with its freshness of promise and radical source of hope, its notions of the rejuvenation of the old and restoration of the tired world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has quickly been embraced by popular culture in everything from soap to politics. This is quite unfortunate because it has also effectively been distilled into yet another cliché label for opportunism that often risks meaninglessness (Bishop, 1990) (and further dualisms) and may miss out completely on the invisible but significant aspects of a greenly, enchanted world.

Another green aspect born of the fray of modernity, is the “greening of psychology” that moves from orthodoxies of the stale session room and the tracing of narrow ego-centric pathologies of the self to a more ecopsychological approach of embracing an eco-centric wholeness of self *and* world over the old egocentric desire for control (Roszak, 2002). This is in some ways a continuance of what Jung (1959) came to understand with his more ecological extensions of the greater universal identity as he moved away from Freud’s focus on the examination of self (with nature only as backdrop) toward a recognition of self within the collective. Jung’s (1959) view of self as universal with archetypal energies flowing through us all in the regenerative and vital depths, meant we were soul-to-soul with anima mundi.<sup>42</sup>

The greening of psychology symbolizes a shift of concern for self, to concern for self *and* Other and could be called the “dark” rather than “pale” green approach (Bishop, 1990, p. 18) or what is more recently referred to as “deep green” (McBray, Keith & Jensen, 2011) in an effort to resist succumbing to an insipidly pale green with its “feel good” aims of green-washed consumer capitalism and a shallowness to cash in on the moment rather than invest long term in an indigenous green ideology of real change. The “dark” supports sustainable change and care aligning with the long range principles of deep ecology (Naess, 1973) and requires “an imaginal descent into ‘greenness’, into the interior alchemy of ‘green’” (Bishop, 1990, p. 18) with its wholesale, transformative nature out past literal or pop environmentalism, out into the field itself!<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Jung’s love of the natural world was evident later in his life where he claimed he found therapeutic benefit for his patients and his own great solace there (2002).

<sup>43</sup> Early alchemists found that in the process of alchemy, in the early stages of transformation, base metals turn green before they can become gold (Berman, 1984; Hauck 1999) rendering “green” an apt metaphor for the transformative qualities found in magic realism.



Returning to what Hayward (1999) offers as a revitalization of traditional knowledge, stories, and myths, means seeing the sacred, but only if we can unlearn a science of separateness and instead teach to see the invisible, mysterious energies of aliveness in everything. The sacred, intermediary realm (mythos), is the “where” of soul.

Re-spiriting or ensouling education recognizes the importance of spending quiet and contemplative time deeply listening to the voices of nature, where matter, mind and spirit are not separate, where we can reconnect with the “inner world of gods and nature spirits, dralas and muses” (Hayward, 1999, p. 76). We know these kinds of creative practices evoke more compassion and empathy for the intelligences found in all of life and hold implications for what we believe and feel influences our future choices and behaviours, because when we know something (or some place) we are more likely moved to love, care for and protect it. Stephen Jay Gould (in Orr, 2004), said that “we cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well - for we will not fight to save what we do not love” (p. 140). Therefore, I believe that it is the job of education to foster not only a deep love of nature and an understanding of the interiority of nature (the invisible realms) but to do so in relationship with our own invisible deeps, and interiorities, for the sake of all life.



### **fertile soils for the soul.**

Often the word “soul” is absent from common educational discourse, is rarely invited into the curriculum, and is still devalued by some in academia as “mystical or new age jargon” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 84) despite its age old and eternal nature. In fairness, I realize that it is elusive and difficult to pin or to know. When Aristotle sets out to define soul he is not saying, “let us agree to use this word this way” (Sachs, 2001, p. 2) rather he thought it would be ridiculous to convince anyone that there is such a thing and was more interested in coming to a common understanding of what the *experience* of soul is. For the most part he simply calls it ‘nature’ – “what is shared by living things and the elemental universe” (p. 2) knowing that nature cannot be recognized or present *without* soul. Hillman (1989) writes that soul is more of “(a) viewpoint towards things rather than a thing itself” (p. 20) and that it can never be grasped apart from things “because it is a reflection in a flowing mirror, or like the moon which mediates only borrowed light” (p. 21). It is most certainly

the stuff of myth and poetry in its ambiguity as it can be difficult to name and put into words, yet “however intangible and indefinable it is, soul carries highest importance in hierarchies of human values, frequently being identified with the principle of life, and even divinity” (p. 21).

The noun “soul” is often used interchangeably with the word “psyche” in this study. It is also the name of the woman in the myth of the origin of love, *Eros and Psyche* (Bulfinch, 1942; Neumann, 1956) and as mentioned previously, refers as well to the Latin *anima* (the animating force or energy of all life). As something invisibly shaped from within, something with a dimensionality of depth, that is both deep and *downward* (even dark in its earthiness), it is become distinct to me from the notion of ‘spirit’ which I have found is universally regarded as something that rises *upward* (is light-filled) in its ascent.

Soul may refer to many things, such as: those qualities that most authentically define and express who we are (e.g. our true nature or genius) that represents what we truly long for in the depths of our beings; the deepest connection point of intimacy with another and in the non-ordinary sense, with place; a strand in the wild braid of life that entwines with the soul of the world; a mysterious portal for dreams, fantasies, deep creativity, symbols, images, archetypes and imaginative possibility; the place ancient philosophers imagined alchemical and continuous transformations to occur; the keeper of one’s inner gold, holder of the inner vision and light; the gravitational nucleic force where the multiple selves of who we are, constellate; and the domain of the soul-guide chosen for us at birth that bears our unique seed or image of what we were born to bring to the world and whose main concern is fulfilling meaning and contribution from that personal encoded blueprint toward life’s work and calling, to just name a few.

For the purposes of this study, when I refer to soul, I mean all of this and probably more because soul, like the Tao<sup>44</sup>, is ineffably eternal and cannot be named. But if it could be situated at all, I believe that mythos would be soul’s natural homeplace. But as Melville (1891/2001), reminds us in his mythic adventure, “It is not down on any maps, true places never are”(p. 53).

---

<sup>44</sup> Tao te Ching was written in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century by Lao Tzu and is fundamental to the philosophy of Taoism. It is also inspirational beyond the religion itself. The first lines of the Tao reveal it cannot be named and that which is, cannot be eternally real. (Mitchell, 1988).

In following the thinking of Plato (trans., 2000) and others (Brache, 2008; Hillman 1996; Jung, 1928, 1965; Meade 2012), that we live in psyche, a world ensouled and animated (*anima mundi*), it would follow then that we also teach in psyche “enveloped in a field of consciousness where everything possesses a soul” (Weller, 2011, p. 45). Instead of a projection of our own minds onto things, I have come to understand that our souls are bound to the world soul through an interconnectedness that indigenous cultures and our greatest poets have always known and felt. I have experienced that when a mythopoetic atmosphere is created, it can serve as an open invitation for this fluidity.

The soul is the quintessential “both-and” element acting like a “glue for the world” (Meade, 2010, p. 129) with its indwelling, animated *and* connecting force to things larger than the ego-bound body. A soul-infused (or ensouled) pedagogy is not only necessary to awaken to one’s own nature but is also critical for alleviating dualisms by creating more inclusive animated and imaginative learning environments, even I believe, to the extent of the necessity of evoking non-ordinary states of experience.

To be natural with nature is our first intimacy as children. It is an enlargement of our lives through discourse with the immense other-than-human world that can awaken our senses what it means to be fully human. If our souls are maimed, cut off from their source and put into civilized vases on the table, they will not continue to bloom (Lawrence, 1928/1968). To Palmer (2000), the best way to know your own soul is to walk quietly into the woods, sit, listen deeply and patiently, and wait. He offers that we cannot separate teaching and learning from the natural world because in our efforts to understand it, we must experience it relationally. “The sacred ground of learning is more easily evoked in nature than indoors” writes Christopher Brache (2008, p. 158) because being nearer to living things, and seeing the larger story of living systems, makes it easier for us to see our connectivity, and acts as a primary reminder of the interdependence of everything.

Dewey (1956) worried about the effect of dualism on modern thought (and sanity) as he believed it would lead to more dualisms. He also wrote of the importance of the environment in learning. And while he likely meant a dominantly human one, he regarded the “hills and plains, plants and animals, climate and change of seasons” (p. 10) to be part of the fabric of a meaningful and real life and not merely as physical things independent of the actual experiences of the student. Indian educator, Rabindranath Tagore (1961), much like

his contemporary Jung, regarded nature as the source of all life. He taught an attitude of communion with nature in his efforts “to deliver the soul from the grip of the ego self” that wants to manage, control, consume or manipulate the world and instead teach students to “feel the immense mystery of the soil, water and air” (p. 94), creating a “natural sympathy for all of life” (p. 95) toward an ultimately more sane, compassionate world.



### **toward arête.**

The patterns of separation are all here. Early disenchantments came from systemic separations from nature, myth and imagination in favour of the well-oiled machine metaphor of the capitalist enterprise. Schooling, from its early design was an attempt to reproduce rational, useful citizen-machines (that could most readily keep the clockwork ticking) therefore, subjects taught within a hegemony of objectivism and logic-mind held a fear and mistrust of the immeasurable, the mysterious, the animistic and magical workings of the invisible world.

With a deliberate focus on turning out “good citizens”, we have as a society fostered a tendency toward the elimination of those characteristics out of sync with the ethical ideal (Neumann, 1973) and instead rewarded the overinflated persona (what we appear to be), the component most closely tied to ego. In doing this, we have effectively held high the torch of acceptable, social presentment through the denial of the “negative”, scorn for the “weakness” of emotionality and disregard of the value of the felt senses. We have in effect, sacrificed the authentically wilder self for the false facades of society by adopting the uniform or mask that would keep hidden (and small) our unique qualities rather than celebrating them. And this certainly hasn’t advanced a real sense of community or citizenry as we have seen in more recent times. What it has done is make it easier to scapegoat and demonize all those who are different from us as we project our own shadowy aspects out toward the world. Rather than see the strengths of a kaleidoscopic and diverse living world, by taking up with instrumentalism and rationalistic thought, we have for the most part effectively (dis)counted what cannot be reduced, analyzed, repeated, empirically measured or easily reproduced. We have in many cases sidestepped the feeling, “awesome” way of imagination, heart, and soul and instead created a campaign of opposites and exclusion.

It is difficult to imagine that despite the early wisdoms of Dewey (1929/2009) and his good colleagues like Montessori (2009) and others that education has continued in this lop-sided way for so long. Sustainable educational practitioner Stephen Sterling (2001) sees the necessity for education to be both social *and* job-related, as a place where radical changes can take place that reveal innate potential. I concur with his call for educational policies and practices which are:

Sustaining: in helping people, communities and ecosystems; and tenable in its ethical defensibility, working with integrity, justice, respect and inclusiveness; healthy in that it is a viable system, embodying and nurturing healthy relationships emergence at different system levels; durable: in that it works well enough in practice to be able to keep doing it . (2008, p. 65)

Yet despite herculean efforts in the arts, humanities and human sciences to advance (and in many instances currently, attempt to save) pluralism and time for self-reflection within scholarly discourse, and in so doing examine what counts for knowledge, right now British Columbian universities are cooking under pressure to make skills training and jobs a priority. If they cannot, they are at real risk of losing significant student funding, what underwrites the ability to teach. Competencies that involve developing an interior life, expanding a sense of the imaginative, developing relationships with all living beings or evolving into maturation need a continual advocacy and defense under regimes that measure our worth by what we can cut out (e.g. efficiencies) rather than what can be educed and made manifest.

Could it be that we refuse to change the ways we educate because the alternative is simply not so easy and would require our “all” to reimagine and revise? Somehow, we seem to have traded off what is true and good and beautiful for something more convenient, and in so doing, are now realizing a destiny where graduates are not necessarily equipped to live in and solution-find within the world we have created for them to inherit. I fear our attempts to educate are failing our students.

In a society where “hip, educated professionals” seek their information and shape their opinions directly from the flat screen of the internet, television, Facebook and Twitter and spend more time following others than finding out who they are and where they belong, we are separated further from each other under the guises of technological

connection. Even the most significant Western cultural traditions are being reduced in a wholesale way to consumer holidays and popular movie-fests that show us what family life we are supposed to have.

Evidence I have found here supports that a more embodied and less codified kind of education can begin to track and distinguish our “appointment” in life (which includes a genuine hospitality toward unanswered and maybe even *unanswerable* questions). My bias is toward the kind of whole person education that helps students reclaim their ecological identities (opening to their seeded selves) by spending time alone within the context of the living world, where they may more readily gain an authentic sense of place and soul’s purpose, and of belonging through reflection, ceremony, being witnessed and received.

It is my hope that through some of the steps, pedagogies and nature-based practices I offer in the next chapters we can take another look at ourselves and at the way we educate. That includes re-enlivening our sense of what it means to know both personally and institutionally who we are, and not least of all, rediscovering our wild affinity with the living world where we live and where we come from. This has escalated in importance for me and likely permeates my work so deeply now because at this time I believe we are being summoned by the very world itself to make urgent changes.

My argument for a more ensouled way of learning from early on and throughout our lives opens us—both students and teachers together—to live into the possibilities of educating non-dualistic ways of thinking and feeling. For example, I can imagine learning that has room for study as much as play, for contrariness and healthy conflict, tensions and ambiguity, shadow and expression, and with the time and space enough to cultivate multiple intelligences. I can imagine a discourse where the word *genius* is commonly heard in the sense of welcoming each person in full participation and unique consciousness with each other and the world. I long for a pedagogy to prevail that can accommodate and invite the kinds of practices that teach purpose as much as usefulness, that nourish both an inner life and outward expression, and help inform a more “eco” rather than “ego”-centricity.

I believe that if we don’t shift our narrowly dualistic approach, education will never mean anything to students other than a system they must suffer through and learn the precise patterns of by either imitating it, staying silent, or shrugging it off entirely to drop out early. Where is the mystery in going straight from elementary to high school to college

only to land a job and a mortgage? Where is there provision of a wider perspective to find out what it means to be fully alive and in unique and soulful contribution to one's community in such a trajectory? How can we possibly know ourselves (or the world) well in order to satisfy our deepest human curiosities and longings if we are simply being made useful, to be cleaned up to be "just like the rest of them"? To the healthy, hormonal, spirited teen like Logan LePlante who hacked his schooling for his soul's liberation, and for those just beginning to catch clumsy glimpses of the exotic, the heartbreaking, the dark and the beautiful aspects of life, mainstream schooling can be tantamount to "a gospel of despair" (D. Whyte, personal communication, May 2012). Talk about a (dis)appointment!

And of course given my own path, I believe the university has a special task in all of this. Its intellectual, political and economic orientations "teaches all of those professions that control the human endeavor" (Berry, 1999, p. x). It must be our obligation then to guide ourselves out of exploitation toward a more sustainable future through cross-curricular explorations of both the arts and sciences, the rational and the imaginative, and where the living world receives the attention and consideration it deserves.

If we are to get to the heart of things—how identity, beliefs and values as held within the dominant expansionist worldview cultivates the kind of dualistic thinking and the behaviours that threaten our very existence—then we must look at what is possible if we squarely address our ecological identity in systemic relationship and interdependence with other living beings (D.M. Taylor, personal communication, July, 30, 2010). If we are to reach our potential and fulfillment, and live a complete life, we must continue to create the most creative educational environments possible where the innate gifts of each person become evident and are made more visible through full and authentic expression. Plato (1984/2000) called this quality of excellence and potential, this all round expression of what a person is able to be, "arête". This notion of fulfillment extends beyond the inner life alone to affect the outer life, to have influence and correspond with the entire global village.

I can't help but wonder what is possible for our time if we no longer reduce our freedoms, but rather reduce our doubts about the value of emotionality and the imaginal realms in learning. What would happen if we elevated our trust in the possibilities to risk what is to become rather than attempt to know-it-all and crush the mystery? What could

the epistemological implications for education and the ontological implications for the entire ecology be if we seek alternative ways to relate to and interact with the world?

Perhaps we could start from a more conscious, situated, related, temporal and imaginative approach to learning, one that extends knowledge by including *both* mythos and logos together, and begins by entering the largest, most wild conversation we can have with the living world by simply taking education out for a walk. When a traveler once asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors." (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 298).



### **There Be Dragons...**

"Beginnings are such delicate times" (Herbert, 1965/1990, p. 2)

It takes real courage to take the first trembling steps toward adventure into the unknown because you are setting out from the territory in which you live, the place where your deepest feelings and your familiar safety resides. I wanted to bring myself closer to this research as viewed through my own intimacy with nature and a necessary darkness. I have come to understand that if you dare to trust that insistence of leaving and going where no one has ever been before exactly, then you will be entering into your originality, into that upwelling of your own particularity, toward that dilation of the heart that invites those strange and never-before-seen elements required for the inspiration to keep going. What one might find and bring back may not only touch something deep inside, but most likely will touch (in both beautiful and unsettling ways) those who encounter that story.

This was the time for me to be authentically myself in my research journey, with no regrets. I knew if I could do that then there was a good chance I would find only more allies to assist me to delve into the core of my being in relationship with the world. In the end, I hoped I would find out more about how I could share with others what I had found and in that service find deep joy. Campbell (1991) concluded, "I don't believe people are looking for the meaning of life as much as they are looking for the meaning of being alive" (p. 149) but to Campbell, the bigger question was whether or not you were going to be able to say a hearty yes to that adventure! Commonly, I didn't see myself as a hero or a real risk-taking adventurer. I was beginning to feel much like Bilbo did when he so aptly expressed on the



precipice of his life-changing trip with the dwarves, “We are plain quiet folk and...have no use for adventures. Nasty, disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!” (Tolkien, 1937, p.13).



### **leaving home.**

Traveller, there is no path  
The path is made by walking.

By walking you make a path  
And turning, you look back  
At a way you will never tread again.  
(Machado, 2003, p. 12)

In the 1939 film, *The Wizard of Oz* (Taurog et al) when Dorothy left a pastoral Kansas life for her new-world journey, she did so in the midst of a great storm as her discontent literally unseated her. To leave what you know and separate from the comforts and confines of your life in answer to the ego-transcending and mythic call is what I came to understand would be the first trial of many. There would be more along the way — obstacles (that helped and hurt), ‘dragons’ that were meant only for me and doorways that would appear (when I thought there were only walls) that opened for me and no one else. There would likely be ruin, ruptures, and wretchedness enough required for transformation and re-orientation. Sign me up!

In Arthurian quest legends, the knights who quested in search of the Holy Grail (a symbol for soul) could only go into the dark forest on the path that was only for them because if it was their true path it could not be the well-worn path of another. Campbell (1991, p. 22) gave these further instructions:

Follow your bliss.  
The heroic life is living the *individual*  
adventure...

You enter the forest  
at the darkest point  
where there is no path.

Where there is a way or path,  
it is someone else’s path.

If you follow someone else's way  
you are not going to realize  
your potential.

I had found confidence in the notion that there would be friends of all stripes to help me face my tasks and challenges and see in me something greater than I could begin to imagine for myself. Friends, those unlikely (human and other-than-human) characters who teach us about love through encouragement and support by personifying for us those hidden and required powers that lie within us. And if we choose to befriend those hidden parts of ourselves we may have forgotten in the rust of rain, or have left dangling in the winds, or that we consider as weakness or impossibilities to manifest (and yet are intrinsic for making the full circle back to home), we really stand a chance of finding something out.

And of course there are no promises of what will happen, or if anything will happen, or if I will even make it back! Campbell (1991) warned that, "there is no security in following the call to adventure" (p. 22). To take this brave first step is the innermost care of and commitment for my true self. I sense that the real achievement here will be to walk on through the doorway, get on that plane, then leap and come back to tell the story.

Depth psychology (Johnson, 1986; Hillman, 1989, 1991, 1996; Hollis, 2005; Richo, 1999) and Jung (1917-1970) as the forerunner of this line of thinking, tells us that results can only be brought to light when we venture into penetrating darkness to first dissolve to old ways, then reorganize ourselves through an integration of new information and experiences and emerge again carrying with us our "jewel point" (Campbell, 1991, p. 23). There is both a (dis) and a (re)orientation time required in the search for and transformation into (or remembrance of?) what Jung (2002) called "the natural human being" (p. 5) or what I am calling, soul. The traveller's ability to awaken, to hold (and suffer with) the invisible wild tensions of both ecstatic abundance and utter desolation found on the solo quest journey will determine the disclosure of her true and wild inheritance. In that most vulnerable place as she bravely steps onto the ragged road to soul, as she sheds the old skin of encumbrance, she will shape a new life, a more full humane existence (in spite of all notions, and appearances at first, to the contrary).

### The Journey

One day you finally knew  
 what you had to do, and began,  
 though the voices around you  
 kept shouting  
 their bad advice-  
 though the whole house  
 began to tremble  
 and you felt the old tug  
 at your ankles.  
 "Mend my life!"  
 each voice cried.  
 But you didn't stop.  
 You knew what you had to do,  
 though the wind pried  
 with its stiff fingers  
 at the very foundations-  
 though their melancholy  
 was terrible.  
 It was already late  
 enough, and a wild night,  
 and the road full of fallen  
 branches and stones.  
 But little by little,  
 as you left their voices behind,  
 the stars began to burn  
 through the sheets of clouds,  
 and there was a new voice,  
 which you slowly recognized as your own,  
 that kept you company  
 as you strode deeper and deeper  
 into the world,  
 determined to do  
 the only thing you could do-  
 determined to save  
 the only life you could save.  
 (Oliver, 1992, pp. 114-115)

This journey—my journey—had come to represent my deepest desire to be taken into the “depth of things” in preparation for a future means of aligning what I valued with what I ultimately do (and teach) in the world. I found more clues within the root of the word desire itself from Fr. *desiree* meaning to keep one’s stars in sight, or “to await what the stars will bring” (Barnhardt 1988, p. 269). I sensed this would require a kind of

patience that I am not used to. I found I had to suspend any notions of what was to come (if anything was to come at all) and put my trust in the cosmos.



**ready, set—now... go!**

It was, as the poet Oliver (1992) points out, “already late enough”. If I was to offer anything worthy of contribution as a teacher, then I must be willing to set forth onto that road to stride deeper and deeper into my life to mine for the particularity of my own nature. I wanted to become initiated, through my own metamorphosis, toward an embodiment of change that could serve a deeper more authentic, living quality of teaching and in turn serve students a heaping of their greatest awareness and potential.

But first, I knew that this would require a dangerous kind of coming apart at the seams, which in heuristic terms, made perfect and necessary sense for what would follow. No other person’s journey before me would do. No other person’s path could be my own. It was not down in any books. I could not study this, I had to wholly *become* this experience. I knew that I must set out into this wild night —on a kind of quest of my own—determined to do the only thing I can—determined to save the only life I could save. My own.

*May 15, 2010*

*On my preparation for this quest, I took a “day walk”—an all-day wander and fast at East Sooke Provincial Park that included finding thresholds to help me cross into the liminal transition from ordinary consciousness to an altered one.*

*Somewhere at about the eight hour mark after being lost and found a number of times as I headed for home, I encountered a beautiful mossy-headed rock in the perfect shape of buffalo. It had tiny, impossibly leggy, green-stemmed woodland blossoms radiating from its head in all over fragile, white flower curls. ‘He’ had a stoic face set in a frown that juxtaposed this crown of wild and tender sprouting faerie-like beauty. This made me smile and I spent a considerable pause of time conversing with and touching my stone-headed friend who seemed so much like that one of me that is stubbornly refusing to get ready for this trip yet literally radiates with the possibilities of what will bloom! I/thou.*

*I marvel at how much I can overthink this experience already and so I try to remember to let the poet Mary Oliver’s (1992) words guide me and to “...let the soft animal of your body love what it loves” (p. 110). Simple as that.*

**From:** Hilary Leighton // <hilaryjl@telus.net >  
**Subject:** Request for your support...  
**Date:** May 27, 2010 9:15:19 PM PDT  
**To:** < my friends and family >

Dear All,

From the morning of the 7th of June 'til the morning of the 11th with the 10th evening being especially important, I will be fasting and out solo on the land in Utah high in the Abajo Mountains about 9,000 feet up within an oak and pine forest overlooking the Valley of the Gods. I ask that you please pray for guidance for me at that time, and keep me close in your thoughts as I go deep into the wilds of soil and soul.

Love to you,  
 Hil  
 xo

*Saturday, May 29, 2010*

*My new tent, the Hubba Hubba™ is crazy beautiful. Seduced me completely in the store. No sooner do I get it set up in the dining room when my 160 pound dog goes in and circles round and round to tamp down 'the grass' of it, settling in with a floor shaking thud. I think he is trying to say, "Here, here I am, I want to go with you, take me with you..." He tries to pin me down, to beg me not leave—and just like the loyal companion that lives deep in the psyche of me—he gives me the long look of, "Please don't go! There is danger there, we are scared!"*

*I have heard that loyal part of me so often begging me. It is the young voice of fear clutching at my ankles, "shouting its bad advice" even as I pack for this journey saying, "Don't let us go, stay snug and safe, let's just stay as we are... because...something is going to happen, something is going to change". All I can think in response is, one can only hope!*

In psycho-spiritual preparation for this journey, for seeking an encounter with soul, I have been journaling my deepest feelings and thoughts, arising insights, unfettered worries and fears and any dreams that dare to burble up to the surface. I have asked myself, "Why now?" and "In what way is it already late enough?" just as the poet asks. I take note of the symbols and images that repeatedly show themselves to me. I have written an outpouring of prayers and composed a personal myth story. And yet, I wonder if one ever feels ready?

*Sunday, May 30, 2010*

*I am turning 50 tomorrow and stepping on that plane Tuesday for Durango to begin a vision quest from June 2-13th with my trusted guides and friends (whom I*

*have yet to meet) — a dozen other courageous souls!*

*As part of my physical preparedness, I have been sleeping deeply and well and I have taken care to minimize my food consumption, avoid meat, sugars and refined foods. I feel strong in my body today despite the worry that this past winter of my discontent has created a bit of sloth in me. But perhaps I have needed this extra weight to keep me grounded in some way as it has offered a cushion against a frozen world? I worry that it will slow me down, take away my energy and hold me back in some way. I suspect this will be a part of the journey as much as anything else as I move into a place of feeling more (including my own hunger).*

I sense that I have begun to separate myself from my ordinary life and the mainstream already. I notice this more and more. I also notice a feeling of nostalgia already seeping in through the corners of my mind's eye as I know that things will not likely be this way to me ever again as I prepare to leave home and lay to rest the old story of my life. This quest is a conscious break from what I have come to know as my life. I have been saying good-bye to outgrown identities and old patterns of fear that kept me small and sometimes nearly invisible, even to myself.

*Barely perceptible, a hint of new story is emerging at my edges. I catch glimpses of it but sense it needs time and a change of scenery still.*

I walk through the house listening for what wants to accompany me. What might I sacrifice in a fire ceremony that represents what I no longer need or hold myself back with? What will I surrender to the flames and by doing so make sacred the relinquishment of my attachment? I want to honour what will become my past, all that had helped usher me to a new place for which I am already strangely beginning to feel grateful. I select something of my late father's that has been both obstacle and attachment, that will burn easily and doesn't weigh too much so it can be carried in my backpack. I sense it will not be a "good riddance", but more of a bittersweet letting go of something that at one time, in some odd and misinformed way, I think I believed was needed in my life in order to survive. This is powerful medicine.

I received a comprehensive packing list about a month ago and have followed it seriously to the letter upon reading this bold warning ... **"Once you arrive at the quest, there will be no further opportunity to acquire any additional gear. If you arrive with inadequate equipment, we will not be able to let you go into the wilderness with us.**

**We cannot emphasize this enough!!**" (Animas Valley Institute, personal communication, April 17, 2010).

In response, I want to say, it is not the inadequacy of the equipment I worry about, it is the untested quality of my own resilience for this type of non-ordinary journey that keeps me awake and scares me half to death. The kind of death I guess I need. And perhaps, staying awake right now *is* a really good thing. Perhaps, I have already been asleep for long enough in this lifetime. Perhaps, eyes (and heart) wide-open going in (and going down) is something missing from their list of what to bring.

*Monday, May 31, 2010*

*This is serious business this dying to old ways! The dining room has been transformed over the past weeks as I have laid out, chosen, packed, repacked, reduced and reshuffled in an ongoing silent conversation with myself. I want to only take something that "out of a shadow of a doubt" wants to come with and will not disrupt the environment. I also don't want to analyze or interpret too much. I wonder if that is possible for me?*

*I measure the loft of my sleeping bag again with a ruler. One can never be too sure. Four inches from head to toe minimum. Mine measures six. The mountains in June can be freezing at night and there can be snow. I decide to pack my silk longies. I have really good and well-loved gear and pretty much everything they have recommended with nothing extraneous as I pack sparingly. I count all of the items and check them off the list thrice. In the end, I forgo my beautiful new tent and take only a large lightweight waterproof tarp and assorted lengths of rope so that I may be closer with the world at all times. I imagine a real "living room" as home.*

*I have watched and learned campcraft from others along the way so I feel I will be as comfortable and prepared in the wilds as can be...but, I wonder, can anything really ready me for this?*

I am leaving with the intention of listening deeply for, and being broken open to receive, a clarion call for true vocation. What gifts are seeded in me for this world that have yet to begin? How through my uniqueness am I to bring them for my people? I pray that I will become an invitation, and that the world will sing *me* like a hymn. This is the most profound method of (re)search (of self) I have ever endeavored. I need to let happen what needs to happen. To evoke in myself a kind of *primal trust*.

At the very last moment, I slip in a green plastic child's teacup recovered by a friend, a kindred spirit, from the Great Salt Lake flats of Antelope Island. It represents the kind of generosity of spirit and hospitality that brings much needed nourishment. For reasons

beyond me, it seems critically important to what lies ahead. I take a raft of prayers, written in the last few days, to help float myself safely through the narrows of the fear I feel. I think that perhaps they will come in handy as something to clutch onto if I leap off the side of a mountain. Either way, they too are packed.

I add a fresh journal, assorted colours of fine tip felts, and a small blue-beaded rattle (for protection) that was a gift from my dear friend and wild mentor, Annie Bloom. I carefully nestle these things within the thick brown woolly folds of a wondrous and versatile, old and well-loved companion, my cloak. Storyteller and mythologist, Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) writes about the necessity for packing such protections,

In fairy tales, certain magic objects have transportive and sensory abilities that are apt metaphors for the body, such as magic leaf, magic carpet, cloud. Sometimes cloaks, shoes, shields, hats and helmets give the power of invisibility, superior strength, far-vision and so forth. These are archetypal kith and kin. Each enables the physical body to enjoy deepened insight, hearing, flight, or protection of some sort for both psyche and soul. (p. 217)

What comes to mind as I do this is the wisdom of Meister Eckhart (as cited in Woodman, 2000) who wrote, “When the soul wishes to experience something, she throws an image of the experience out before her, and enters into her own image” (p. 229). That long, loose-flowing hooded cape of the forest dweller who strides deeper and deeper into her life, into the “wild night and the road full of branches and stones” (Oliver, 1992, p. 114) is traveling with me to star-filled intermediary lands, to “the dancing ground of radical uncertainty” (Shaw, 2011, p. xv) on a tripartite journey. I hope it will bring with it the necessary protective and enabling powers for a clear and magical flight.





## Part II - Threshold/Initiation



Photograph #3. Retrieved from open source  
<http://www.fanpop.com/clubs/trees/images/21056619/title/trees-wallpaper>  
 November, 2013)

Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life. (Hesse, 1920/1972, p. 74)

Before (and after) I crossed the thresholds of international borders, and wild mountain places of soil and soul, I took to crossing more local thresholds on a series of Thoreau-inspired walks in order to literally wander off and be taken up by heuristic immersion *as practice*.

What began with getting ready to go at the end of Part I, carries on within this mid-section through to The Return in Part III, where I have recounted the deeply significant psychological healing toward individuation I experienced while on a contemporary rites of passage vision fast up in the Abajo Mountains of Colorado. This soul-furthering adventure

(what comprises much of my fieldwork as excerpts taken directly from my daily journal that appear as italicized text) with its life-shifting experiences helped affirm my philosophy of *education as initiatory journey* while furthering my capacity and courage to teach.

At first the quest trip was intended to support my work as a sub-context, however, what soon became clear and was most potently surprising for me was to find that the experience (then and even now as I reflect upon it) aligned beautifully and continued to in/form inter-referentially with the rest of my research (*and the rest of my life a*) as it unfolded (and continues to unfold) post-quest. In hindsight, I was taken so much further afield than I had originally anticipated from just rambling notes or memories. This was made evident to me only through the writing process and carried on right through to the very (astonishing) end of the study as my understandings deepened beyond what I remembered had happened.

This entire section was akin to “taking a plunge” (Halifax, 1999, p. 174), taking a fall—to fall off the world, fall over the edge, fall more awake, and to fall more deeply in love with the world as I fell more deeply into the phenomena! Much like the adventure therapy ‘trust fall’ that relies on the strength and attentions of the many, I let go of my grip on this research toward the attentions and strengths of the world itself and what was to come and fell toward an abyss. This was a tricky stage of my experience because I felt like the exposed snake, who is at her most vulnerable after shedding her skin. It certainly belied any writing schedules I attempted to keep, which Moustaskas (1990) would be quick to remind me is normal for the heuristic researcher. To set forth here was to walk out toward an edge of what was waiting, and to wonder what required initiations might ensue toward a call to teach and the meaning of that in relationship to world.

The immersion and incubation period must be “a time when myth and story unfold and where love and death become amplified for the initiate” (Halifax, 1999, p. 174), if it is to ‘be’ anything at all. For me, this experience was a trembling, transformative, reflective, submerged place that I visited with elements of myself that dissolved away, while others were freshly revealed. Things got lost here (e.g., rational thinking, what was no longer needed, maps and general directions, a favourite piece of jewelry, time, etc.) which necessitated a kind of feeling around in the dark to find meaning, and bear witness to simply what was. This was a place of (be)coming... but not quite yet.



### **Walking Out to Walk On**

In walking I trust that our thoughts will be clearer, fresher, and more ethereal, as our sky,—our understanding more comprehensive and broader, like our plains,—our intellect generally on a grander scale, like our thunder and lightning, our rivers and mountains and forests,—and our hearts shall even correspond in breadth and depth and grandeur to our inland seas.

(Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 307)

Walking out of the classroom confines, reconnecting with our natural intelligence allows new never-seen-before possibilities and a progressively deeper apprenticeship to nature. I have found that as students come to awareness through more and more direct experiences through walking a wild curriculum they appear to take on a kind of response/able-ness to the places they traverse in a shift from mere tourist to inhabitant. It is here that many begin to care deeply about what will happen in these woods and in the larger ecology and think about how they might help keep the environment free from harm and in a state of health starting with writing about it or producing projects and initiatives.

For the past five years, at the end of the very full first day of first week residencies, I have led a cohort of graduate students out to the Edwardian gardens through the Royal Roads forest in an effort to better “land” them at the university. This beguiling land, an earthy (re)reminder of what brought them to an environmental studies program in the first place, will be their home for the next three weeks while they embark on intensive study and research. Our twilight walk on a summer’s eve is, I have found, an important turn for many of these students who have just spent considerable time and effort jumping through the hoops of academia, seeking the approvals necessary to even be admitted. They find themselves now, sitting cross-legged “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1967/1998) in the sweet long grass with daylight (and the largess of their first big day) fading, listening to crickets accompany the story I am reading. I encourage them to let their minds drift while their bones settle into the cool, accepting earth. I have heard (repeatedly, later on from many, even sometimes years later by e-mail) that this innocent enough inaugural experience (combined with an evocative writing exercise we do together designed to tap into their deeper reserves of authenticity, voice, inner wisdom, and calling) is powerful enough to stir up the beginning traces of a final project or conjure up the first threads of a

thesis topic - all on their first day! A more embedded, embodied, personal and relational engagement can often be a significant epistemological shift that enlarges the sense of self to identify with the larger ecology in terms of self-actualization and belonging (Naess, 1988/1998). This repeated experience is evidence enough to me that when imagination, “the primary activity of soul”, (Hillman, 1989, p 16) is given the first row, and the conditions are safe and inviting, then whatever each student has within them already, can begin to reveal itself. Soul however, remains wild, elusive and “exceedingly shy” (Palmer, 2000, p. 7) and will often need a longer and much quieter time than a short walk, story or writing exercise, to show its wild self fully.

Walking is the tonic for everything, it seems, and stimulates the mind to take in the world in ever widening arcs of perception when one is present in the walking...that subtle movement back and forth between the landscape one is traveling in and the unfolding thoughts within. (A. Bloom, personal communication, June 6, 2013)

“Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility” (Snyder, 1990, p 19). I have found that a practice of walking is realization in action, a moving meditation in the here and now that helps us to widen our focus by moving our intelligence from the hegemony of the head into the whole body, expanding into and more easily connecting with, the world. Rhythmic movement transfers energy back and forth from left-logic to right-artist brain where inspiration arrives in the discovery of new perspectives and more soulful possibilities. This is where we tap into inner resources, and saturate the senses beyond the classroom walls. When we are free to roam, imagination takes the cue. In a synthesis of reason and intuition, wandering, getting lost on purpose, allows us to wake up and *learn by going*.

In an understanding that we are the human elements derived from this living earth, perhaps we could consider extending Heidegger’s notion of phenomenology to being-*of*-the world or maybe even or *with*-the-world rather than merely ‘in’ it because it is in relationship that so much happens. Although I believe Heidegger was attempting a non-bracketed off inseparability with the world with this phrase, it still sounds as if we were

put “in” the world somehow rather than actually having evolved from this place. What is required for a shift in awareness, I believe, is a learning context *the size of a planet* including a curricular ritual of going outdoors to seek a deeply creative educational experience with results not yet known. We not only learn by going, but in a reflective sense we are learning about learning as we look into the nature of things and then reflect on what we have found. I knew if I was to call on my students to take up this practice, if I was to teach this practice, it was essential for my authenticity and integrity that I be willing to cultivate my own ecological identity, and just walk.

Walking has been my preferred choice of transportation since I could stand on my own two feet. It seems I have always been on my way to something or somewhere. Or maybe a better description for me is— propelled—because so often it feels like I am being thrust into adventure by some unseen force behind me. And here in these pages, as I walk to write, walk to know, it is no different. I was being propelled as I walked into a non-ordinary state as a regular practice of being (and sitting with) the world — listening and wandering in forests, fields and bogs, traversing the interdisciplinary lands between the human soul and world soul in conversations that felt like they spanned heaven and earth.

Henry David Thoreau, in his excellent essay, *Walking* (1862/1982) wrote, “I believe there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which if we consciously yield to it, will direct us a right.” (p. 303). Through these next pages of bearing witness to a heightened vulnerability found in dark and curious spaces of the in between of things, I put my trust in my heart’s inner compass and waited for the needle to settle in what magnetized me to the true North of my future. I could imagine this would not be any sort of usual journey, definitely not down on any map.

My own numinous experience of nature immersion begins close in, with small steps near home. I walked out of the confines of what is and isn’t scholarly research, walking into the forest on my own path in widening circles of wandering where I asked more and more beautiful questions from wisdom found nearby.



**in my own backyard.**

“...in Wildness is the preservation of the World” (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 309).

Thoreau was heavily criticized for his walks in “the woods” when it was discovered that he really only travelled extensively in and around Concord, the small New England town where he lived. Environmental writer Rebecca Solnit (2013) proposed that quite often Thoreau ate a lunch prepared by his mother and his sister would take in his laundry. He never strayed too far from home. While some have called him a hypocrite for “pretending to be a hermit in his cabin at Walden Pond” (p. 19), for shoring up in his “living laboratory”, in actual fact it seems, “he was not retreating from anything. He was advancing toward other things” (p.19), greater things that the freedom to roam would evoke in him.

Despite their short distances, his travels gained significant ground in terms of what he learned by walking as made evident by his celebrated writings. While stepping out onto those local lands he was also travelling to the deepest reaches of his own interiority,<sup>45</sup> the wild landscapes of his own soul where his thinking and writing were shaped by a confluence of understanding between the two terrains. What I believe he was referring to with his statement about preservation and wildness was as much about the inner and natural wildness in us all as it was about wild nature—and of course, both can be dangerous, threats to a more civilized culture with its obedient and law-abiding citizenry.

It is a good place to be more clear about the criterion I have used to define “nature” within these pages and what corresponds with what I believe Thoreau was writing about in his journals. When he was wandering in “wildness” it was most often misunderstood to mean far-out places but in his case, it relates more to *being in relationship with* the world rather than *where* in the world one might be. My definition just as easily includes nature in our own backyards—the rock outside your door, in nearby lakes or ponds, or in gulls flying overhead in the sky—rather than only in exotic places.

“The undiscovered country of the nearby”, writes John Elder (2013), a Yale scholar, nature writer and naturalist, is found in the wild places close to home that await the explorer. Elder speaks to the quality of close interactions between humans and nature where thickness and intimacy allows us to “discover more and more within a smaller and smaller radius of home” (p. 6). He sees that in these relationships are the keys to our future abilities to preserve the web of life and the systems and natural patterns we depend upon.

---

<sup>45</sup> His inner travels were also a sustained political critique of modernity. Walden’s Pond and his cabin were a symbolic redoing of America, hence he came to live” there on July 4.



As local and situated as his experience was, it served to make Thoreau's point that it is in "wildness" not "wilder-ness" that preservation of the world will be found. As we see our natural relatedness with the living world, as we see ourselves as kin, we are less likely to harm or degrade it and are more likely to be moved to love and protect it.

Elder (2013) quotes preservationist Leopold when he said, "the first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts" (p. 7). Therefore, when we are in healthy relationship with all of the parts of nature, even in those spaces overwhelmed with human habitation and including those nearby places, we may begin to see the importance of preserving nature everywhere instead of exploiting and plundering it for its minerals, water and oil while only preserving certain "wild" or "pristine" spaces deemed "reserve".

To avoid any lop-sided notions about what constitutes nature, I recognize that there is plenty of wildness to be found in human-made city spaces too. "Wild" is less a characteristic of our environment and *more a characteristic of us and the way we interact with our surroundings* from an ethos that recognizes we are wild<sup>46</sup> too. Deer still roam the streets of Victoria, moose and elk graze on the university grounds in Prince George, and coyotes wander in and out of San Francisco. We do not need the woods to evoke wonder, to play, build, destroy, and discover; we do that wherever we are. Just look at children in their small front yards or on mostly asphalted school grounds where a small patch of green is as good as a vast prairie, a rocky outcrop becomes a mountainous terrain to be scaled, a sunflower face a seed galaxy awaiting exploration and befriending. Because we are nature, wherever we go, there it is/we are.

A conscious connection with nature brings participation and loyalty, not a fouling of the nest. When we belong somewhere, when we know it intimately, we long to be there and form all kinds of affiliations in terms of the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and otherwise. Just as Jeremy Hayward (1999) urged us to "unlearn to see the sacred", ecologist, artist, author and educator, Dolores LaChapelle (1988) offers that when we see "the pattern of the on-going whole" and ourselves produced from within that pattern, it follows that "therefore we fit within the ongoing relationships of the whole."(p. 124).

---

<sup>46</sup> And by *wild* I mean the undomesticated life force of something (or someone) seeking to actualize its (his) latent potential (personal communication, Taylor, 2014).

Elder (2013) implores us to correct our “double vision” (p. 9), our perceptions of separateness and dominance. He invites us instead to see, taste, touch, hear, smell, breathe in, and in a Dionysian capacity, celebrate the sacred in everyday work, in the food on the table, in the attitude we take to forming relationships, and toward the health of our communities that cannot be separated from where we live.

While Thoreau walked, many find entry into nature through the world of science by taking short field trips to observe and study natural systems and the principles of biodiversity or by taking interest in geography or ethnobotany or biology. Some look into nature in a lab. But the natural sciences are only one kind of leaping off spot and scientists are often blind-sided in their aims by the deeper relationships that await us when we completely immerse ourselves in nature and let her “have her way” with us. To my mind, all of education could be greatly improved by moving into a wider ecological context where our sense of primary relatedness becomes more accessible and where we see that we are all part of a much larger community that extends past humans and our need to know. Out past lectures, labs, slides and texts, something entirely more can happen when we spend time *by ourselves* outside. After all of the time I have spent walking, wherever I have gone, I know it has become a part of who I am. It somehow forms part of the intelligence I carry with me as it continues to carry me along with it.

And there are of course serious mysteries and complex competencies that lie out beyond our studies or comprehensions, and those may never be revealed despite all of our observing, playing, searching and endless walking. The world was not made to be studied in or used as a playground for us—these are secondary things. In his essay *Nature*, Emerson (1836/2009) wrote it would be impossible for the wisest of persons to “extort her secret and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit” (p. 2). However, this doesn’t preclude a lifetime of trying to get to know her better and be an apprentice to her dazzling brilliance with every step.

If I have the capacity to take another walk, or to respond with a whole heart to the beauty of the world, or to engage with a person who has a different perspective, then there is something in life that I can affirm. (p.14)

Of course, we humans are all still wild to some extent. Our bodies remind of this all the time in their refusal to be managed or controlled. In fact, we are made from (and are



still being made from) the stardust of exploding stars. Every day, “earth receives ten tons of dust from outer space. Not only do we take in the world with each breath, we are inhaling the universe. We are made of stardust!” (Tempest Williams, 2012, p. 40). In *Earth in Mind* (2004), Orr explains:

We are of the earth; our flesh is grass. We live in the cycle of birth and death, growth and decay. Our bodies respond to daily rhythms of light and darkness, to the tug of the moon, and to the change of the seasons. The salt content of our blood, our genetic similarity to other life forms and our behavior at every turn give us away. We are shot through with wildness. (p. 212)

We are a most amazing inspiration of the universe—as part of earth’s consciousness made flesh, as part of earth’s deep dreaming imagination personified—we are embodied stardust. However, within our more modern worldview, it seems we may have temporarily fallen asleep to this more primal aspect of ourselves, and hence, fallen out of touch with the wildness in ourselves, let alone the other wild ones.

By no means was Thoreau being intentionally hypocritical by having his mother bring him sandwiches or for sleeping at home most nights in his own bed because in mythic terms he was repeatedly going out each day for long stretches, crossing into his own threshold experience in order to source the strength and power of his true nature and reclaim the wildness of himself while searching for what was good in all living things. It seems that Thoreau lived an awakened life by making time for solitude, for dreaming and wandering in nature. In addition, he found humans to be equally as significant and beautiful at times as their woodland counterparts (1862/1982), spending ample time with his human neighbours (who became an intrinsic part of his lived experience and lifelong education).

Many philosophers, wilderness writers, poets, and ecopsychologists have found that to become our more fully human selves we need to *step out* into the world of otherness. My intuition tells me that all of nature, not just beautiful, un-lived lands but in places that are inhabited with animal and human life such as migration paths and city spaces too, needs us as much as we need it. In effect, I have for some time now sensed that there is a kind of a loving and healing reciprocity that happens when I attend to and acknowledge the living

presences around me. A lone cherry blossom planted on a sidewalk or a hedgerow in front of a house, even weeds that push up through the cracks in concrete, all seem to emit something of their aliveness to me. I have come to believe this communication extends beyond any wishful thinking on my part.

In keeping to small steps nearby, I find a portal to wonder as I wander on forest paths and in the swamplands of the bog. Here, I begin to really (re)search (my own self). It is time to bravely part the veils of separation, to slow, to listen, to tend, to risk, to fall open, to let winds blow through me, to (re)member (myself and) what I am to do.

By allowing myself to be “courted” by the world, to be taken up by this call to search out my passion to “teach wild” through self-inquiry, reflective practice and deep discovery in dialogue with the living earth, I am also crossing over another kind of threshold from which there will be no returning to what was before. I sense I can no longer be swayed by easy answers or pre-arranged plans if the authentic is to unfold. There are of course no guarantees of what I will find or what will find me. Right now, *not knowing* is the only thing I trust as another tacit level of unconsciousness is revealed. Poet Adrienne Rich (1963/1967/2002) writes of these perils and possibilities,

**Prospective Immigrants Please Note**

Either you will  
go through this door  
or you will not go through.

If you go through  
there is always the risk  
of remembering your name.

Things look at you doubly  
and you must look back  
and let them happen.

If you do not go through  
it is possible  
to live worthily

to maintain your attitudes  
to hold your position  
to die bravely

but much will blind you,

much will evade you,  
at what cost who knows?

The door itself  
makes no promises.  
It is only a door. (p. 24-25)



### **divine wandering.**

*One of my students spies a photo of my dog in the office and asks tentatively,  
"Oh, is that a Great White Pyrenees?"*

*"Yes", I say.*

*A shooting star of love arcs across my heart as I look over at his magnificent  
image on the wall. (I love this one so much it hurts).*

*"Hmmm," she says with a slight frown, "they're a wandering breed".*

*"Yes", I say with a broad grin, "I know."*

The great ambulator, Thoreau (1862/1982) viewed walking as genius and held "the art of walking" in a nearly spiritual capacity where insight followed sight (p.295). He looked into the etymology of *sauntering* where, more than mere idle amblers or countryside rovers, walkers in the Middle Ages were those who walked in a kind of pilgrimage to the Holy Land and were each referred to as a 'Saint of the Earth' or a "*Sainte Terrer*" (p. 295). To be a saun-terer, then implied that one's desire to step out into the world on a regular basis was in a sense akin to a spiritual quest, perhaps in the search for something of the divine.

Today, those who wander are not usually noted for this particular genius despite the fact that every significant religious leader, as I have previously mentioned (p. 113), seriously wandered (and often for years) until each made a world-shifting return. When we literally take our ideas out for a walk and let the primacy of experience flow in and through us and pay attention to the beauty of the small and the ordinary, we may begin to recognize the world as ensouled where everything has a life of its own. This experience can inform and help to grow a wider sense of compassionate awareness and help wake us up to the life that is teeming all around us that can so easily be passed by in a hurried, modern existence.

Many indigenous cultures already know how to do this. They know to listen to light, to heed the intuition of the river, attune to the voice of the wind, converse with the invisibles and the ancestors, respect mountain patience and honour the wisdom of the stars. Many know that we must let the world shape us rather than the other way around, and to trust that.

A second interpretation Thoreau (1862/1982) provides for saunterers, comes from the Fr. “*sans terre*—to be without land or home” (p. 295). He offered that instead of the literal meaning of being homeless, it could practically mean that one who roams is not limited to any singular home or place rather is *at home* in the whole wide world. I have come to realize that watching my own dog, he too is a holy saunterer, a dyed-in-the-wool moseyer as he sashays ahead of me on the trail with the loose hip-swaying swagger of a young, large hound. I cannot help but admire his *at-home-ness*, wherever he is.

Like all good phenomenologists, my faithful four-legged companion, Oberon and I wander out into the world regularly and many days we head out off on coastal trail that begins as an old logging road through a lush old growth forest of Douglas fir, Western hemlock, Sitka spruce and windswept pine near the ocean. At the trailhead, the profuse wetness of his dark nose-decoder tells me his most discriminating nostrils are actively detecting and deciphering a secret sensual prose, catching codified whiffs of the aromatic stories of the ones who live here as he tracks what has been and what is coming.

Part of the olfactory adaptation of my canine’s brain is his long lovely snout with over 200 scent-sensors that allow him to sniff out his path with what I believe is “sensate intuition” (Hillman, 1989, p 62). Oberon often seems to *read* the world as I might read a map, although I imagine his points of interest are more elusive (and effusive!) than mine. He makes sense of scents (as any true poet would) in his perception of the invisible. Could I divine our trail using only my nose to know?

*I close my eyes to breathe in and deeply fill my lungs and belly with the same air being breathed by black-tailed deer and red-tailed hawk, air filled with millions of traceable argon molecules that had once been breathed by both Joan of Arc and the Buddha. I am connected here and now and even before.*

*Listening through every pore, I allow my soft animal body to enter this place and open to possibility. I open my eyes. Out of the static, I am (ec)static! I see poetry everywhere. Oberon’s tail leads us over an imaginary threshold of wonder and I*

*wonder, what is on the verge for me? What are we onto here and what is trailing me?*

*We are bounded on all sides by unanimously sprouting alder and willow regenerating like an exotic anti-gravitational ground fringe. I feel like I am in a dream. Transforming from food to flower, fiddleheads unfurl their spiky spines stretching, becoming fern.*

*The world is unfolding around us as this early wild spring wind coaxes a language of creaks and moans, a republic of sound! The hard cuticle of winter has been pushed back to reveal what was hidden, running beneath. A small but enthusiastic brook babbles news from upstream. Missives of blackened twigs and snaggy debris sail into our hair from a canopy of birdsong that calls us to look up. Liminal light streams in filamented fingers through needled branches, breaking on my chest precisely where my heart is, warming, open a sliver of possibility.*

*I am (re)minded this perennality of spring is like my own (re)search, (re)turning – turning into words. I notice the small tight buds on the Indian Plum that look like miniature green hands folded skyward in prayer. Soon they won't be able to resist this celestial combination of wind and sun and light and rain to become more themselves, in full-leaf glory. I too send out a small prayer that this still unseen bud in me, something tightly held (but I sense is on its way to the more lush promise of narrative blossoming), will no longer resist and simply open.*

*For right now, this ephemeral space of complexity and teeming vitality elaborates through its own exquisite and evolving story in the wordless grammars of leaf-lace, maidenhead and sword fern. It is time to listen.*

As I walked into the world, my inward clutter cleared out, while my unconscious burbled up with images, symbols and intuitions and what felt like eddies of remembrance off the dark shores of my psyche. In a departure from the everyday experiences of the familiar terrain that was my life, swirling streams of consciousness filled with inner-questioning, self-dialogue, imagery, sounds and deep conversations that crisscrossed species borders occurred.

*I meet an energetic chocolate brown hound at the lake who runs ahead and hides things on his walks. One same stick keeps him incredibly happy and busy week after week I am told. His game is to remember where he stashed it along the trail and go searching in the bush for his prize - is it still there? Did another dog find it? Has it disintegrated over time? If he finds it – and he usually does, he drags it out (trailing vines and debris) and runs further ahead only to hide it once more until the next time he is lucky enough to pass this way.*

*I feel like we two have a lot in common. I have been stashing treasured insights, inklings, words, ideas, stirrings, threads of thought out here for weeks, actually months now and as I walk this path, I retrieve what I have buried, uncovering them and sometimes moving them forward either into my existing swirl of thinking, onto my digital recorder and later the page, or else stash them up ahead only to perhaps recover them later on. Sometimes I lose them entirely as they get overgrown and unidentifiable, even to me. Yet I have never really lost anything too important out here no matter how muddied my process has been, no matter how full and overfull at times.*

*There is—I have come to understand through this search—always more golden treasure to be found in the cool green forest, in the moist mist, in the blessed quietude, in the promise of the freshness of a Fall morning. Always more to dig up, bury and dig up again. More to advance, more to secret away for another time. I can always come back here, get out my inner map-works and with each step, on every path, retrace and retrieve, be open to receive any unexpected windfall, or a surprisingly potent half-buried boon.*

Walking was thinking, walking was feeling, walking was learning, walking was writing to me. None of it was a separate process. As I opened to life's myriad possibilities with its unexpected teachers and allies, fresh ideas and new connections opened to me. Patterns were seen and heard, recognized and reflected, and then became treasured meaning to be conveyed through the poesis of language.



## **Indwelling**

It is an extraordinary indigenous idea that to find an authentic centre we have to wander lonely beaches and sleep under hedges, longing for something we know is lost. To make a place in us for a small, cultivated altar to the bird that flew away. (Shaw, 2011, p. xvi)

As I look back into the six stages of heurism, according to Moustakas (1990), I see that I have been in immersion and incubation for some time now. Everything has conspired to lead me —every word I have read, every movie I have seen, every conversation I have had, every class I teach, every dream I remember, literally, every step I take. *Every thing* seems to confluence in an intense swirling creative focus of indwelling.

I was in constant conversation with this work for many, many months with such a deep intensity that I (almost) didn't feel fit for the world anymore. And, happily it occurred

to me that that was required. Any fallow time *was* part of the heuristic ‘rabbit-hole’ journey and my impatience to know, to write, to finish *was* the concentrated pressure required to cook up images and heat up the emotional stirrings in my consciousness in a precise way that allowed it to become altogether original. This realization was especially important for me and arrived just when I thought I could not possibly stand the pressure for one more minute.

It was necessary for me to come undone by this process, and spend sufficient waiting time between the “death” of old ways of being and knowing and a symbolic “rebirth”. I had a lot to “unlearn” in order to see deeper patterns and connections that could tell me more than my own imagination could muster as I delved down deeper, peeling away more and more layers. I reminded myself to yield, to attune, to be taken up (and in) by what was unfolding, what was being born here, now, and new. I had to place my faith (and hope) in further threshold crossings and the sacrificial fires of the initiation to come.

I was not idle. I walked out into the freshness of the world every day, which felt like a healing balm for my soul. I needed to enter the forest in order to disappear for a while and walking made room for something new to emerge. Here, it seemed my questions were too heavily word-filled, required too much thinking to be concerned with, so I let them go too. What kept surfacing with each step instead was one essential-to-the-bone question that I held tenderly as I moved (and as it moved me) and that was simply, “*How can we love more?*”

I took that to mean in the *falling* sense—falling in love, falling awake, falling off the uncontrollable, mad ride we are all hanging onto for dear life, falling away from strategic mind—to *feel* more. It was critical that before engaging my intellect, I must invite a sensual inquiry first, without agenda. By sauntering out and then inwardly noticing what I was drawn to as a first point of awareness, in communion and communication with the larger world, I treated my body as a finely tuned intelligence rather than an after/thought. My senses became my homing device.



**to “lean and loafe”.**

We are in the world with our bodies and in so far as we perceive the world with our body...thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were the subject of perception. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 206)

To take time “to be idle and be blessed” (Oliver, 1992, p. 94) and to sink in, was to remember and honour our biospheric, webby roots, those “mutually dependent phenomena, both sensorial and sentient, of which our own sensing bodies are a part” (Abram, 1996, p. 83). This densely interconnected perceptual reality with the body as nexus that “emphasizes connectedness and relationship” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 38), was the place of heuristic inquiry that would not adhere to timetables and deadlines.

We may think of the sensing body as a kind of open circuit that completes itself only in things, and in the world...I am a being destined for relationship: it is primarily through my engagement in what is *not* me that I effect the integration of my senses and thereby experience my own unity and coherence (Abram, 1996, p. 125).

To trust in the gravitas of our own body-data, “an inquiry of body and soul” (Snowber, 2002, p. 21) contributes to forming a body of phenomenal knowledge that allows comprehension, not just intellect, and rather, insists (as phenomenology does) in slowing down and listening to the world *speak* where knowledge is made through an embedded, reflective, evocative, and recursive, earthy dialogue. “The body “ writes Jungian Marion Woodman (1982), “ is the instrument of initiation” (p. 105) and in its graces and great agonies makes clear our sacrifices and acts as threshold in and of itself. The body is how new vision manifests first. It is the starting place for what we know.

"The most valuable thing we can do for the psyche, occasionally, is to let it rest, wander, live in the changing light of a room, not try to be or do anything whatever" (Sarton, 1973, p. 89) and in this blessed place take in experience through a saturation of the senses that moves from consciousness through each molecule of our bodies in a kind of phenomenological intimacy where being and knowing become closer, and we "know the



thing by becoming it" (Dooley, 1995, p.79). Whitman (1855/1955) likely said it best in *Song of Myself*,

I celebrate myself, and sing myself  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air.  
(p. 49)

The effect of time and solitude can be an exquisite attentiveness to the confluence of sensual human body with world body where human soul and world soul — *anima mundi* — meet and converse in a midwifery of experience. Soul looked out through my body window (eyes and other orifices too including pores) into the mysterious dazzling world. I felt a sense of gravity and groundedness, weight and weightlessness as I soared across imaginal thresholds where my mind, imagination and heart engaged in a soul-to-soul whisper of a conversation with the world.

To experience a kind of timelessness where every moment is pregnant with meaning and worthwhile as we touch into soul, is called "*kairos*" from Greek meaning the opportunity of experiencing "time outside of time" (Meade, 2012, p. 72). Often *kairos* refers to an "awakened time" (p. 72), an ecstatic liminal threshold betwixt and between. Joanna Macy (1998) calls this *deep time* where a felt sense of embeddedness in the cosmic and earthly unfolding of all of life takes place wordlessly revealing what poet Mary Oliver calls "our place in the family of things" (1992, p. 110). I could at times feel like I was falling under a spell of eternal time as the quickened pace of the everyday melted away in my solitude. I moved from the grasp of "*chronos*" (chronological time) (Meade, 2012, p. 72) to tumbling headfirst into the open embrace of *kairos*.

As we turn toward the world in its felt immediacy (which is the essence of phenomenology), "we move into a receptive mode to soak in the world, rather than a transmission of thought and as we let it permeate our senses, we gain a new perspective, a new view on the world, worldview" (Goethe cited in Bortoft, 1996, pp. 73-74). We are open systems conditioned to relationship, and according to anthropologist and cyberneticist

Gregory Bateson (1979) we are designed as systems to receive, interpret, respond, and receive in patterns of repetition between incoming signals and feedback in an endless spiral of give and take.

If we take up residence in this interdependence and if we are open enough to really receive, the world may turn toward us in “*syn-chronos*” (Meade, 2012, p. 72), experienced as the coming together of *all* time, where there is a meeting of meaningful coincidences of things and thoughts that show us more of the subtle mysteries of this intensely graceful and conscious time far from the clumsy groping of dualisms and rationality. This can seem like magic time.

In Western thinking, synchronicities have been referred to as fate or God, while the concept of the *Tao* in Chinese philosophy sees this as *mutual causality* beyond the relation of cause and effect where “the state in which ego and non-ego are no longer opposed” (Jung, 1960, p. 72). It is also known as “the pivot of the Tao” (p. 72), where time is fluid, borders and boundaries melt.

Another name for this imaginary pivotal centrepoint between what Hillman (1996) and others (Plotkin, 2003, 2008a/b; Sewall, 1999) believe is the Underworld of soul and the Upperworld of society, is *axis mundi*. It is said that this space goes beyond earthly concerns where actions taken in support of life call forth unexpected allies and emissaries with imminent changes to the self. It is said “Providence” moves in bearing opportunities, strengths and clarity never before imagined (Sewall, 1999). This “place” is of course not on any geographical maps. It is where the horizontal and vertical meet representing intersections of earth and spirit (like a religious cross), where the two triangles of the hermetic star joint at the meeting fulcrum of—as above, so below—placing the earthy realm of human soul at centre. The ultimate earthy “both-and” space where opposites converge as one.

This domain is made up of place and space and time in ancient intersections, in mythic patterns that have been woven into the fabric of our religions and cultural stories for all of time. These are archetypal patterns that allow us to see out beyond what is visible to the eye, to recognize emergence and the larger contextual understandings that we can only follow by “pondering with heart” (Goethe in Sewall, 1999, p. 148). *Yoniso manaskara* is a Buddhist phrase “that refers to a way of being that is necessary for perceiving the nearly

invisible and yet ubiquitous fact of relationship” of all things (Sewall, 1999 p. 137) available when we give ourselves over to interdependence. “Manaskara” translates to “ponder and to take heart” while “yoniso” relates to the Sanskrit word “yoni” meaning womb and by extension, origin or *way* of being born (Sewall, 1999).

Joanna Macy (1991) in her book, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory*, writes of this teaching as *dependent co-arising* meaning that if we offer ourselves to that which we see, we are reborn into a mutual interdependence with Other. To achieve this we require soft eyes, “eyes of the (pondering) heart” if you will and a complete surrender of the ego to allow soul-to-soul communication in a perceptual shift of our being. If we allow ourselves to abandon the notion of being in control and instead allow ourselves to be more woven into the “matrix” (p. 63), we may experience “a reversal of the world, the ground of our being—the relational field within which we are embedded—shifting into primary awareness” (Sewall, 1999, p. 138). This primary awareness has deep roots within the philosophical traditions of phenomenology which endeavors to arrive at a better understanding of perception and consciousness in its “study of essences” through “a direct and primitive contact with the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii) as we move out beyond the mere *description of*, and into a kind of deeper *subscription with* the world we step into.

This phenomenological, hermeneutical, and intuitive apprehension of course cannot be analyzed, rather, it “is a cyclical-reciprocal seeing *into* a phenomenon and into one’s practiced imagination” (Sewall, 1999, p. 149) using mythopoetic (deep) imagination where multiplicities become unified and things show themselves to us. Where, if we sink in and attend mindfully, we may in fact be able to listen *to the world listening!*

Developing such a quality of attention and the cultivation of this new habit takes practice and needs time, quietude and stillness—the exact quantities and combinations of which are wholly unknowable in that they would be different for everyone. Plus results vary in that there may be differing degrees of directness of experience of the intensity and depth of a thing dependent upon our own abilities to trust and open. Meade (2012) reminds us that “ecstatic” (p. 73) literally translates to mean *out (ec)*, *of the stillness (static)* coming as an ineffable illumination that naturally can follow tranquility. I simply knew that I had to give myself time. However, I also understood that before light, darkness is required *and* necessary. Beat poet and itinerant wanderer, Kerouac (in Richo, 1999) wisely

knew, “While looking for the light, you may suddenly be devoured by darkness... and find the true light” (p. 118).



### **New Life in Dismal Places**

“Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps....a few square rods of impermeable and unfathomable bog....That was the jewel which dazzled me.” (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 310)

An ecotone or the ‘edge’ where two or more ecosystems meet and are in tension, is a place that contains some of the highest levels of biodiversity. When habitats blend, unexpected growth possibility and new life flourish. Unlike the dense, slow-growing, mature forest, at the blurred and muddy fringe (under right conditions), so much happens! Many die here in service to new life due to their fragility or lack of resilience in this unstable environment of flux and change. But nothing is ever wasted. As the old fall, they become a reordered nursery for the young to feed and steady themselves upon, creating something new from the fecundity of decay. Mostly, this is a place teeming with life (and death), where so much happens all the time, therefore change is guaranteed. Although, like the heuristic journey, to the onlooker it can look like nothing much is happening at all because in terms of extraordinary growth so much occurs slowly, underneath the surface.

The bog for me embodies the liminal and the possible. It is filled with interdependencies and uncertainties of inbetweenesses containing neither this or that but of *both* this *and* that and is a place of light and dark, wet and dry, known and unknown, top and bottom, east and west, where subterranean dimensions of complexity and mystery mingle, merge and emerge. It is an apt metaphor for what is required of the heuristic journey.

Curriculum theorist and renowned teacher, Aoki (1993) used the Japanese character *yūmu* (有無) representing both “presence and absence” (p. 205) to illustrate metaphorically a need to move away from privileging one thing over the other. He recognized everything was interconnected in the world and everything, in its inherent authenticity and ‘selfness’, refused to be static or fixed in one place. Part of the tension

required for the mystery of life to have its way with us, is to embrace uncertainty, not rush to fix or solve, not preference good or bad or right or wrong. It means that to have the courage to let the darkness take time to render us down is to develop some capacity to stay with the unknown.

The great romantic poet Keats' theory of "Negative Capability" (in Motion, 2001) is best described as "when (one) is capable of being in uncertainty, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (p. 217). Things can be and not be at the same time. We can know and not-know at once in the inbetweenesses there. We are always living in two worlds at the same time.

Woodman (1997) writes, "We (must) learn to live in a paradox, in a world where two apparently exclusive views are held at the same time. In this world, rhythms of paradox are circuitous, slow, born of feeling rising from the thinking heart. Many sense such a place exists. Few talk or walk from it" (p. 51) (brackets mine). It is not easy to tolerate or even to love the darkness of uncertainty, but I have found that it is necessary for human development so that we are no longer split off or split from our shadows. The darkness is where it is necessary to begin to adjust our eyes to see what connects, what patterns lie underneath. Stafford (1993) reminds us of the critical importance at this juncture of staying awake because "the darkness around us is deep" (p. 136). We need help to pull through. And of course it is never easy.

"Oh, if only it were possible to find understanding. If only there were a dogma to believe in, everything is contradictory, everything tangential: there are no certainties anymore... Isn't there any truth?" (Hesse, 1943/2002, p. 83)

*Truth* becomes the truth of experience. Self-knowing – coming to one's own truth - and the way to individuation includes wrestling with angels and demons in the archetypal journey of the hero (Campbell, 1949/2008). In the *Divine Comedia I: Hell* (1555/1949) Dante Alighieri awoke in the middle of his life to find himself in a "dark wood, where the right road was wholly lost and gone" (p. 71), where his middle age ego had dissolved into darkness and for a time (what can seem an eternity) the real self had yet to show up (Berman, 1984). Not an adventure for the faint of heart! Jung (1946) called this process "the night sea journey", (n.p., para. 455). He viewed this "descent into Hades" (para. 455) as a necessary immersion into the symbolic dark waters of the consciousness; that by virtue

of going down, down into the depths beyond, one would come closer to the truth of the human psyche in the unconscious. The darkness of the initiatory journey of the human soul corresponds with panarchy theory's "backloops" phase (Holling & Gunderson, 2002) where within this universal pattern consisting of nested cycles within cycles, disintegration for reorganization toward a new level of adaptation, occurs.<sup>47</sup>

Spanish poet and playwright, de Lorca (in Buhner, 2010) referred to this darkness in the poetic sense as being holy, as if we have been "baptized by dark waters" (pg. 85). When something happens that is unnamable and otherworldly, when something brushes past us with a life of its own, something sent forth by the dark earth herself, he named this "*duende*" and knew it to be the felt sense of the presence of death (I would offer "grief" could also be substituted here) in that we feel a kind of dark powerful pull toward what is feral and most alive (Bly, 1975). But, de Lorca was not referring to the common sense of Western society's ideals of death; rather he meant more of a dark perspective of something flowing through us out of the imaginal realm filled with mythic substance, coming into the world through primal feelings.

Duende comes from the Andalusian people and translates to mean the energy rising from the dark earth, nature moving through the soles of the feet as witnessed and deeply felt through expressions of poetry, music, dance and art. There can also be a kind of elation found in this site of rootedness as "some transcendent thing, some soul force has moved from somewhere out there to in here" (Buhner, 2010, p. 85) and a deep but fleeting sense of connectivity with everything at once. There is a sacredness, a feeling of the holy and the eternal in duende, something older and greater than the dark night we find ourselves in.

While mythic journeys always involve the dark, they almost always also involve a

---

<sup>47</sup> The "backloop" phase goes like this. As the old identity is separated from the familiar, stripped from its reference points and anchors of safety in a kind of severance or breaking away from the steady state, it breakdowns and collapses into the darkness and falls into the backloop experience of the "dark night of the soul". In the dark, where for a time of in-between there seems to be nothing happening, lies the disappearance phase where we liquefy like the butterfly does but don't die off completely. It is our resilient natures that allow us to become more fluid and permeable in this phase so we may be pulled through. Resiliency is also determined by our ability to absorb the shock of falling and falling to pieces if we pool from a wide range of novel responses and in effect reorganize through self-organization. In this liminal place, capacity is built by localizing, starting close in by making powerful new choices and find strength in allies and community. If, in this stage we build toward a vision for a compelling future by learning from what has happened and adapting, then the initiation to a new level of integration and identity occurs and inevitably we arrive at a more clear understanding of our purpose and life's meaning (D. Taylor, slide presentation, 2012).

dragon or two, a monster, a giant fish, or a demon in an abyss, a cavern, canyon, forest, island, castle or watery or shadow-filled place. The ritual aspect of going (down) also requires a symbolic and temporary death in order for rebirth and renewal to take place and make room for something new to happen. “No amount of good intentions, conscious intelligence, forethought, planning, prayer or guidance from others can spare us these periodic encounters” writes Hollis (2006, p. 3), and while this may in some way scare you to read this, it can be said (and my own experience confirms) that almost always there is *a corresponding enlarging purpose that arises from this suffering*.

Maslow (1971) and Jung (1945) recognized that it is rare to go willingly into such boggy gloom, in fact, we are often repelled by it, wary of the promise of treasure at the end. Why not just stay comfortable at home and naturally avoid this type of terror altogether one wonders? The poet Antonio Machado (trans., 1996) wrote this about the sea journey:

Mankind owns four things  
That are no good at sea  
Rudder, anchor, oars,  
And the fear of going down.  
(p. 212)

Religious scholar, André LaCocque and his brother psychotherapist Pierre-Emmanuel LaCocque (1990) understood the journey to hold parallels to the Judeo-Christian parable of Jonah where as hard as Jonah tried to run from his fear (which was also his greatest potential), after some time in a terrible and fetid darkness, in the end, he was precisely (and ironically) delivered into the life (his soul’s purpose) he had been refusing all along. Hollis (2006) concurs, “Often, much later, we are able to recognize that something *was* moving us purposefully, initiating a new phase of our journey, though it certainly didn’t feel like it at the time” (p.4). Always there are great difficulties (in the bellies of giant whales in this case) or ‘accidents’, complexes, traumas, illnesses, or revelations that help us remember what is critical to soul and what needs to be made conscious in the world if we surrender and go into (the gift of) darkness for a time (Jung, 1953/1968).

And we always have to go alone to answer this call. Indeed, Dante awoke alone (1555/1949), the Arthurian knights seeking the Grail always entered their own paths in the dark woods, just as the dark water of Jung’s (1949) night sea journey is a solo swim. No one can save you here but yourself. An immersion into the deeps where the deeps in you

have cried out and the universe is responding is where your real apprenticeship to soul begins.

In *The Tempest* (Shakespeare, 1610/2003), Prospero wails, “This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” (Act 5 Scene1, p. 13) for he had begun his long solo journey through his own hell to soul. Here the invisibles, *the holies* are at work. Questions will not be answered directly and feelings will be the only compass one can read. A great (re)membering is required to bring to life—*bring to light*—the images we were born with, to recover the seeds we originally carried over from another greater darkness (before we were born) in order to make them visible for the world through some form of delivery system of contribution (yet to be imagined or created). Goethe (in Buhner, 2010) wrote this of his own dark journey:

“I was, indeed, then in the dark and struggled on, unconscious of what I was seeking so earnestly; but I had a feeling of the right, a divining-rod that showed me where gold was to be found.” (p. 1)

Deep encounters require profound privacy, disappearances in cocoon-like spaces of gestation or odd and fragile spaces spun from the shedding of skin no longer needed, burned and melted by the fires of rage and suffering, muddied by the spilling of blood, sweat and tears. This is a vulnerable, intimate space that makes its own complicated arguments in attempts to articulate the mysterious while honouring the dynamics of the multiplicity of the in-between. At intersections of the relational and spatial, of theory and practice, of human and nature, of knowing and not knowing, of body, mind, heart and soul, I began to unearth more of what it means to be human in a primal sense of world knowing.

### **In Impossible Darkness**

Do you know how  
the caterpillar turns?

Do you remember  
what happens  
inside a cocoon?

You liquefy.

There in the thick black  
of your self-spun womb,  
void as the moon before waxing,



you melt

(as Christ did  
for three days  
in the tomb)

conceiving  
in impossible darkness  
the sheer  
inevitability  
of wings.  
(Rosen, 2009, p. 182)

Just like the butterfly, we require a kind of “psycho-spiritual cocooning time” (B. Plotkin, personal communication, 2009) in order for the inner conversation (and conversion) to take place. This, for me, was a time of rest and wresting, wandering and wondering, knowing and unknowing, unraveling and reorganizing, where my intuition ran in advance of my thinking, providing the necessary imagery for my soul, intuition enough to ensure the unfolding of my own trembling wings that would eventually allow me to emerge in flight. I have come to understand that this imagery comes from our deepest source of who we are, “draw(n) from the root of (our) deeper self” from the primary place of our “deepest essence” (Meade, 2010, p. 84) (brackets mine) making conscious our true nature, awakening our uniqueness by literally bringing it to life.

There is something to be said also for the gestation time needed of going back and forth across the doorsill, like a snake rubbing itself into vulnerability along the rough ground, sloughing off what is no longer required. There can even be much lingering (even stillness) on the threshold in order for something to happen before the two sides (of our natures) finally unite. What emerges, what Jung (1960) understood to happen if we are able to bear the tension between opposites, allows them to melt in incompatibility to create a “reconciling third” (Tarnas, 2007, p. 266). This is also known as the *third way* of Buddhism through which a uniting and transcendence allows something surprisingly different, ultimately better to take shape, than either could have been singularly. This is a critical mindset for individuation. Like the yin-yang symbol of pairings (rather than paradox), the necessity union for making wholeness is created, *is* the crucible of human maturation. “Everyone...goes through consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or

forcibly” (Tarnas, 2007, p. 266) being strung between seeming opposites until we learn to integrate, to endure the two that live within us—both the masculine and feminine, the shadow and light, mythos and logos, psyche and matter, head and heart—without moving to be rid of one or the other, rather to see pairs as “eaches”, as necessary to the whole.

Jung (1965) took the daunting gap spaces of darkness as sure sign of the rightness of someone’s life no matter how difficult the process. Depth psychology claims that any maturing process to be trusted has to succumb to the fires of tensionality, allow things to breakdown in order to breakthrough, then include and transcend what has transpired while we continue to tend to and integrate all parts of ourselves in order to fully mature (Hillman, 1996; Hollis, 2006). Blake (in Woodman, 2000) from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, offers what is vital.

Without Contraries is no progression.  
Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and  
Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary  
to Human existence.  
(p .80)

There is an unsung deliciousness to darkness with its rich unimaginable rewards, its boons of unlikely friendships and allies, its profound lessons and impossible emergences all being cooked up in the *stew of you*, in the cauldron of consciousness. Instead of slaying the dragon, *befriending* and assimilating dragon-energy is what I have come to appreciate was needed. By turning to face what we most dislike in acceptance and with compassion, we are indeed liberated from the shackles of our fear to embrace our full human destiny.

### **In a Dark Time**

In a dark time, the eye begins to see,  
I meet my shadow in the deepening shade;  
I hear my echo in the echoing wood—  
A lord of nature weeping to a tree.  
I live between the heron and the wren,  
Beasts of the hill and serpents of the den.

What’s madness but nobility of soul  
At odds with circumstance? The day’s on fire!  
I know the purity of pure despair,  
My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.  
That place among the rocks—is it a cave,  
Or winding path? The edge is what I have.

A steady storm of correspondences!  
 A night flowing with birds, a ragged moon,  
 And in broad day the midnight comes again!  
 A man goes far to find out what he is—  
 Death of the self in a long, tearless night,  
 All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.

Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.  
 My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,  
 Keeps buzzing at the sill. Which I is I?  
 A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.  
 The mind enters itself, and God the mind,  
 And one is One, free in the tearing wind.  
 (Roethke, 1975, p. 231)

Jung (in Hillman, 1996) found that, “in the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted” (p. x). This requires that we take a leap of faith in knowing that we can fly without grasping for the outcome of a particular flight pattern, rather, to celebrate what we *know* in our souls and this is that we were designed to take wing.

But the initiatory process – essential to the health of the entire ecology (human culture included) in order for its members to grow whole rather than just old is most often absent from our society. When we fail in our obligation to provide these processes and proper rites of passage to our young (and those in midlife who find themselves in the darkness of crises), we remain in a semi-permanent and pathological state of adolescence without access to our wholeness and maturity with its ageless wisdom, without the guidance needed to carry us along the evolutionary trail. While the darkness does not promise or provide direct answers, it provides the conditions necessary for a world ensouled.



### **sanctum sanctorum.**

When I would recreate myself, I see the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable, and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place—a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow of

Nature. The wild-wood...the same soil is good for men and trees. (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 311)

Thoreau knew that traversing the woods was a threshold to wonder, an ingress to the rest of the world that most people were unaware of or had fallen asleep to. John Muir (1938) wrote, “the clearest way to the universe is through the forest wilderness” (p. 313) where he knew that “between every two pine trees there is a doorway to a new way of life” (in Turner, 1985, p. 193). He found the forests and the mountains to have their own talkative nature as they became his closest companions.

The forest is a sacred place to me. A place I have felt most at home and most natural in for as long as I can remember being in the world. I can attribute particular memories of my own happiness in correlation to trees shedding their leaves in the fall. I sense I am more related to the trees and the forests than to my own human family at times. I realize that this kind of “crazy” thinking might have landed me in a permanent facility just a few short decades ago or been just cause to banish me to the outskirts of society, however, I can’t help but wonder if this is might be just the kind of crazy we now need a bit more of?

The forest is also a point of departure into the earthy bog, a place I have found despite its appearance holds numinous mystery and rich reward, is a dark portal to intimacy and communion.



### **bog mind.**

I smell them before I see them. skunk cabbage. The first ones of the year! I am thrilled at the sight of hundreds of bright yellow torches pushing up through the swampy forest floor. This is the surest sign of spring to me. But this year as I walk along, I imagine a whole perditionous army from the deeps thrusting their burning light-sticks up through dark soft bog-mud, lighting the way for Spring while marching in full force. Hermes, the messenger god of the Underworld, must be sending up legions of illuminations from beneath, offering fragrant gold that pierces the dark skin of winter. Perfect hermeneutical grounds, I’d say. I wonder, what lit-up treasure might push up through my bog-mind (not to be confused with mind-boggling) and illumine my thinking?

### Skunk Cabbage

And now as the iron rinds over  
 the ponds start dissolving,  
 you come, dreaming of ferns and flowers  
 and new leaves unfolding,  
 upon the brash  
 turnip-hearted skunk cabbage  
 slinging its bunched leaves up  
 through the chilly mud,  
 You kneel beside it. The smell  
 is lurid and flows out in the most  
 unabashed way, attracting  
 into itself a continual spattering  
 of protein. Appalling its rough  
 green caves, and the thought  
 of the thick root nested below, stubborn  
 and powerful as instinct!  
 But these are woods you love,  
 where the secret name  
 of every death is life again – a miracle  
 wrought surely not of mere turning  
 but of dense and scalding reenactment. Not  
 tenderness, not longing, but daring and brawn  
 pull down the frozen waterfall, the past.  
 Ferns, leaves, flowers, the last subtle  
 refinements, elegant and easeful, wait  
 to rise and flourish.  
 What blazes the trail is not necessarily pretty.  
 (Oliver, 1992, p. 160)

These bog cabbages look to me like they have a bold sense of humour with their big heart-shaped leaves peeling back in a fibrous burlesque to reveal a long phallic banana like flower-spike that lives up to their Latin name of *Lysichiton*, meaning loosening (lysis) of the tunic (chiton). Indeed! Their earthy spontaneity and brash unselfconsciousness within this gorgeous self-organizing ecosystem (re)minds me to lighten up a bit too! I notice at the end of the description in the field guide (MacKinnon, Pojar & Coupe, 1992) that these golden beauties are colloquially referred to as “*swamp lanterns*” (p. 224). But somehow, I already knew that even without looking it up.

Listen.....  
 I am this bog  
 I am hermit thrush

I am sedge  
I am the still

I am metallic-blue dragonfly  
And this white star  
of a moth  
I am windy lake  
I am dark mud  
and rush  
I am silence

Despite its proclivity toward darkness, in the bog, everything to me seems more animate and alive in its mucky unsettledness. I find a marriage of opportunity and awe. Lady slippers in their elegant sensuousness seem to be awaiting the tiny feet of faeries. Insects constellate like tiny stars around invisible planets. They swarm and buzz me but don't land. A lapis-back dragonfly with his enormous iridescent green eyes hovers nearby. A strange ethereal call from the woods behind me hangs like mist in the air, then big thick earthy silence and its long echo resounds in my heart. On closer inspection, it appears there has been a quick fire here as the wood seems charred. But likely not. It is probably just the blackening of rot and the sully of patient ruin.

Everything is interacting, pulsating, thrumming, humming, singing its own song. This feels like a mythic encounter. Without analyzing it, it feels like pure engagement as the strong present moment moves through me as much as I move slowly along. The edge of my consciousness is like the edge of the bog—both are powerful attractors for me with a serious pull of gravity. I fall into the relief of in-between spaces as I descend onto mats of sedge and sphagnum up to my elbows, grounded, *bogged down*. I sense some inherent destiny fulfilled for me here, sent to me from someplace older and someplace else beyond my complete understanding. By this, I am student and participant in a mystery not to be solved but to be lived in this transformational sanctuary. What lies *between* these spaces—the interdependencies, the complementariness, the more elastic possibilities that exist when my research expands, interacts, and emerges into an uncharted sensuous exploration—continues to intrigue me and illuminate my thinking, continues to show me more about life. A sacred fluid intersection of nature, identity, self-awareness, selfhood, and vocation seemed to converge in a dark and teeming hollow, out of bog-mind.

At the edge of consciousness, for example, the mind teases us, suggesting that the other side is endless, fathomless. The edge between land and sea, like other ecological edge effects is teeming with life, with abundance, as species stretch between ecological zones, as if the world is more, *always more!* (Sewall, 1999, p. 135-136)

I sense that for all its dismal fecundity, this place is also filled with hospitable ways to let go of always being wise and right, to let what wants to happen, happen. Just like interdisciplinary studies where the most fertile in-between places (while seldom traversed because they are for the most part the hard to navigate and name) are precisely the unpredictable conditions where I know I, (and this research), will best thrive.

It dawns on me that nothing alive was conceived in light. I wonder, is that true? We are born in the darkness and breathe into the light. I trust what feels at first intensely dark and personal, will in time shift to something wide and relational, something more brilliant, more universal.



### **Practice by Going**

The path I am walking here is not the *thing* itself, but in itself it has its own “thingness”. Hayward (1999) reminds us that all elements of earth have awareness-energy in the intermediary realms. Heidegger (1971) wrote that the path itself has consciousness, has its own “pathness” per se.

Heidegger (1971) while writing to advise a student about the nature of “pathing”, found that “a path of responding examines as it listens” and as it responds, holds the risk of “going astray” even “leading astray” (p. 184). The one who is traversing the path needs *practice in the going*, to stay the course “unswerving, yet erring”(p. 184), yet be willing to be led off track because in following Heidegger’s line of thinking, in the essence of the path’s interiority one must consider and respect that it has a life of its own (the essential nature of ‘path’). While it may sound naïve to say, it does feel like a relief to me to know that what happens out here is not entirely up to me after all.

Like the path, I yearn for my writing to have a life of its own, to write itself *through* me. And as the path “paths” by merely going along, is my writing *writing itself* in some way

the more I keep writing? I think so. Does it too have an interiority that exists outside of me, or perhaps, in spite of me?

Thoreau (1862/1982) knew, “Walking and thinking are fine companions” (p. 299). For me, it is in walking and thinking, that I find the writing legs required to go the distance and pay homage to the wildness of the world without reducing it to something ironic, flat or lifeless and risk further dualism. I realize that more and more I know something by walking it into the world, where my mind and my feet are synchronized and as I walk, my thoughts wander back to revisit passages I have written as I rewrite them with every step...

*The path both welcomes and daunts. I push past nearly invisible silken spider webs cast out like fine nets across the path in the hopes of catching something impossibly large. I push through arms extended, head thrown back, chest forward as if breaking through the gossamer finish-line banner of a wild race I have barely begun.*

*This path speaks a stony language, hard vowels that mirror my own aggregate logic. And this wet-coast trail reminds me that I too am sometimes dark and thickly muddy both in words and mood. I notice how the particular heaves and sags in the rise and fall of the path is like my process at times, yet there is a steady reassuring sense of path continuance here akin to the hope that permeates my own onward movement.*

*A sudden exuberance spreads in me at the throaty exaltation of the tree frog imitating mud and mist. I feel expanding happiness at receiving this fertile call. I want to sing back but know no acceptable toad trills. Instead, I send out my silent gratitude for these bulgy-eyed, bejeweled amphibians, for being known.*

*I remember hearing once that the pattern of the human iris and the spiral in the pinecone are of the same design. I needed no more evidence of universal architecture and wholesale kinship. When I realized that the fingers of lightning that shiver across the skin of this land are the same as the flashes of light that spark and discharge across my brain’s neural pathways every waking second, I felt more at home in my thunderstorms of thought.*

*I am grateful for this place and I get the sense that I am also being rewarded for taking the time to show up and slow down, to let my mind and body wander. My ever curious feet guide me away from the sedimented knowledge of this well-worn main path to a lesser traveled one and deeper into the wood of unknowing. Where will this exploration take me?*





**am path.**

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I — took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.” (Frost, 1916, p. 105)

We grow up to perceive certain things and not to perceive other things. *And what we can and cannot perceive depends to a surprisingly large amount on what we believe: on our vision of our world and what it is made of.* (Hayward, 1999, p. 63) (italics mine)

If we are to think that the world is only that which is physical then that is how we will perceive it. In a break from the geography we may know, perceiving the reciprocity of aliveness of another being with *all* the body's senses is a wholesale shift that uses the temporal body as the fusion point of perception, not the mind. We cannot help ourselves, just as breathing is not voluntary, our exchange with the world isn't either. *Be here now* took on a whole new meaning for me that didn't just speak about presence in the moment but spoke about *the world being me* here and now. We are indeed what we've seen and where we've been.

There is ultimately no such thing as an observer or an object, only a foggy ground between the two. It's as if I have abandoned the place in the sentence that was occupied by the words “the observer” and I've taken up residence in the verb “looks”, literally between the words “object” and “Observer”...what I have been calling the observer evaporates, and what really takes place is a “betweenness” (for lack of a better word): part of me is the object and part of the object is me. (Elkins, 1996, p. 42)

In an overlapping and blending of all modalities of the senses at once, called synaesthesia (Abram, 1996) one might in fact, *hear* the sky, *feel* the cry of the gull or *see* radio waves. One can imagine that this experience could more closely resemble the “primordial preconceptual experience” (p. 60) of our more animistic ancestors in their directness with the experience of being alive and taken up by a more “participatory consciousness” (Berman, 1984, p. 84). Our more modern estrangement with the “entities and the elements that surround us” (Abram, 1996, p. 60) means we may be unable to shift easily into the body as central to knowing from the hegemony of a more mechanistic

mentality.

“By seeing, hearing, touching, and tasting—by ingesting (and metabolizing)—we become the world *within which we are*” (Sewall, 1999, p. 263) (brackets mine). One way to (re)mind ourselves of that is when we touch the bark of the tree to remember it is also touching us at the same time, so in effect, we are *being touched by it* as well. With this awareness, comes a flood of compassion in me as well as appreciation for the life I am awakened to of the other being. There can be surprising waves of emotion that arrive with such realizations and often soon after, in my experience, a kind of grief may follow for not having awoken to the aliveness of Other sooner and for having missed the chance for companionship with the living world after such a long immersion within a hurried, egocentric human enterprise.

When my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence—to the way of this stone, or tree, or table...In this manner, the simplest things may become a world for me, as, conversely, the thing or being comes to take its place more deeply in my world. (Abram, 1996, p. 52)

The line between the visible and invisibles is an easy one in childhood. The delight in mystery of what is happening or about to happen, and learning about the world by doing, by being involved is an easy balance between imagination and rational thinking. Children tend to experience the world more poetically, to feel the world in so many points of contact with their awareness. I can remember at times being so immersed in it as a child that it was as if I was standing in a river of world letting it flow all around my legs.

Places of our childhood are imprinted deeply in our psyche because they helped shape our identity and fostered a sense of belonging to someplace. In his essay, *A Child's Sense of Wildness*, environmental educator Gary Paul Nabhan (1994) overhears a young woman who while revisiting her childhood play area is overwhelmed by emotion as she exclaims, “I remember these rocks!...they are as familiar to me as the freckles on my arm...” (p. 14).

The experience of walking down a city sidewalk and hearing the call of a lone wildflower impossibly thriving up through a cement crack, waving us over to speak in yellow and white does not seem unusual to the young one who knows stones can have opinions, the wind can sing songs and the trees can definitely have personalities and lives of their own. This form of poetic understanding and knowledge is “one we rarely include in our current estimates of intelligence or achievement” (Lewis, 2013, p. 29) and arrives through the “play of our imagining that allows us to inhabit aspects of the world seemingly distant from ourselves” (p.28). It requires the kind of time we don’t usually devote to such things in school because we do not consider them to be important learning - it is “play” after all (Grumet, 1993).

As children we need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles and watch ants, to build with dirt and sticks in a hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds and chickadees...these childhood experiences form the secure foundation to which we return again and again in our struggle to be strong *and* connected, to be complete. (Nabhan & Trimble, 1994, p. 75)

Our connectivity with life doesn’t have to end in childhood as just a passing innocence, rather it can be something we have and will have (if we continue to develop and reflect on it) our entire lives. Within this imaginative realm, we, wildflower, cracked open cement, flowing river, field, all share the lexicon of aliveness found within the mythopoetic.

The ability of children to easily enter into the life of something other than themselves—to exchange their own mind for the mind of another—grows not only out of their innate playfulness, but out of a fluidity and plasticity of thought that is, in many ways, a poetic gift. (Lewis, 2013, p. 28)

Making the identification seamlessly with Other, exchanging thoughts and feelings, devising and sharing secret languages, getting to know what it is like to become another being, is a pure childhood enchantment. This is the same enchantment that existed long before we compartmentalized the world into subject matters and disciplines. Within this deep intermediary realm exists a primordial dimension where acts of bodily imagining create fluency in the wildness of thought from multiple perspectives—where everything I perceive suggests a familiarity and hospitality although I may never have been on this path before.

From this mythopoetic place comes a more ecological means of thinking and perceiving where I can see whole ‘worlds’ connected and interdependent on the other.

As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensation borne by countless other bodies—supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granite slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by unseen, imperturbable wind. (Abram, 1996, p. 65)

A return to the senses is a situational place of making sense of the world. As sentient beings, we are included in a sensory world where “we might as well say that we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself *through us*” (Abram, 1996, p. 68). The body’s silent temporal conversation *is* our perception.

*Each step I take on this pathless path, I can feel the ground rise up extending to meet me as if in a dream as my foot presses down into the soft earth only to be met. I feel a reciprocity of spirit, a meeting space existing just here between us that stops me from hurriedly going along to get to somewhere else.*

*It breaks my heart to think I can do that so often, just walk on by not noticing there are miracles everywhere! How easy it is to simply ‘use’ this path as a trajectory to get to where I am going without any acknowledgement of its aliveness! I realize that already I am everywhere I ever need to be at once.*

*Nowhere to go, nothing to do.*

*I fall into a rhythm like falling in love and am in relationship with the walking rather than focusing on the finish. Being-on-the-way allows me to listen to the inner journey of my phenomenal walking body giving me time to think and reflect, to in/form, and metabolize original thought untrammelled by the constraints of logic and a persistent need to be right.*

*The present is not that which is, rather that which is being made! Shifting from the centrality of my head to a more complete physicality, I am learning through my whole body.*

Out wandering, I suddenly find myself on “another path” using a different kind of cognition, namely analogical thinking, perceiving what is around me by breaking through to a place where the veils of dualism lift and everything I see is alive. There is no place that is not looking *at me*. Goethe (1979/1995) saw this way of perceiving as a way toward understanding when he wrote, “My thinking is not separate from objects; the elements of

the object the perceptions of the object, flow into my thinking and are fully permeated by it; my perception itself is a thinking, and my thinking a perception” (p. 39).

Nothing is isolated from anything else, nothing is any less alive than anything else, it is easy to understand from this vantage point that everything has a soul. When I follow my feelings and look into the heart of something, into its nature, then sudden epiphanies, deeper wordless connections are felt. I experience flashes of insight and inspiration in ‘eureka moments’ that arrive on multiple levels of thought-patterns and a general sense of great unity. Apparently unrelated things converge and communicate, make sense through sensing.

Martin Heidegger (1974) held forth the notion of the universe in a fourfold way that was much like a mirror that reflects to reveal the essential nature of every living thing and the endless patterns that are repeated within and without. Just like rivers replicate our veins (or vice versa), this landscape is like my own skin, these ripples could be my thoughts. In the giant reflective surface of nature, I can see that *I am in the universe and the universe is in me*. It is a perfectly clear mirror that shows me what I precisely need to see and learn, without judgment or distortion.

We see ourselves mirrored and potentiated in the myriad of patterns of leaf and limb, of animal totems, of spirals, the ripples, and the meanders that carry us downstream. Our own true natural organic selves are revealed. We see our own patterns rise to the surface as we find ourselves meandering among the relations, as we begin to *get it*; to see and understand that we too are nature, that we too are truly of the earth. (Sewall, 1999, p. 150)

When we embed ourselves in nature, we are seeing nature (through our eyes) and being seen by nature (through thousands of “eyes” including our own). This realization can be a completely moving experience.

*Entering this allegorical landscape, is like looking into an accurate mirror of my psyche, reflecting back to me my own interiority. As I see branches outstretched I feel my own reaching, and these shifting clouds mimic (or evoke?) the same unsettled atmosphere in me. How is this soft velvety stalk of this vine with its spiky defenses a replica of my two sidedness?*

*I pay attention to these signs, continue to look for holy emissaries, and unexpected natural teachers everywhere. It feels like enough to just show up and take this privileged form of dictation.*

Wild mirroring is a hermeneutics of perception where reciprocity is granted. While seeing “into” something we actually see “into” ourselves at the same time in a dynamic and compassion-laden intersection of Self and Other. There is a living symmetry between things, a likeness of being, a similarity linking things and experiences together. “Metaphor is a very short story that stitches the world together, weaving similarities with recognition and language” writes Sewall (1999, p. 145). Anthropologist Gregory Bateson in *Mind & Nature*, (1979) referred to metaphor as “the ground of kinship” (p. 8). This depth of perception is a learned skill that educes a sense of belonging when we see connections.

Fallen from an old cottonwood a broken branch waits  
 A broken branch patiently waits while creatures find nourishment in her bark  
 While creatures find nourishment in her bark the old branch is made holey  
 The old branch is made holy as strong winds blow through  
 Strong winds blow hymns to the wild  
 Hymns to the wild are Earth songs  
 Earth songs are like prayers from broken ancient branches  
 Ancient branches, fall, pray and sing.

And despite how full this experience may sounds, there is also a kind of emptiness here as well. I feel like an empty vessel that still holds the “thingness” of the jug (Heidegger, 1971), as I too hold open space for what I trust will pour forth from my own essential nature. Heidegger (1971) knew that because we are made of earth, come from earth (and earlier from stars!); he saw the “thingness” of things in their true purposeful forms as an inherent part of living nature but as unique as each star in the night sky. It would follow then that this document is becoming a true expression of the world *worlding through me*, the earth imagining itself if I intentionally give it room.

*And when I let life write itself through me in this way (by getting out of my own way in some respects), I am also the world (re)membering its own stories of identity and kinship. I am a participant in a highly instructive discourse, the largest dialogue possible. Through metaphor, mirroring and cross-species dialogue, in an intimate and precious stream of wild conversation, the world speaks...I listen and write....listen and write...and listen some more.*



**i-thou, i-thou.**

“We are nature. We are nature seeing nature. We are nature with a concept of nature. Nature weeping. Nature speaking of nature to nature.” (Griffin, 1978 p. 225)

I continue to wander and wonder as I turned my attention toward flora. I want to get to know more about what grows here, who lives in these woods? Hillman (1991) writes that our childlike imagining of the world returns us to a world ensouled by giving everything a life of its own and wants to know and be known.

*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* is known as “Bear (ursi) Berry (uva),” or “Bear’s Grape”, but its indigenous name is actually, “Kinnikinnik” (pronounced Kinn-ICK-inn-ick) (MacKinnon, Pojar & Coupe, 1992, p. 82). Stemming from the Algonquin dialect, kinnickinnick is purported to mean “smoking mixture” (p. 82) as the leaves were primarily dried and crushed and used to smoke with tobacco or other leaves. According to the field guide, if one dares, it makes a not so pleasant tasting, wretched-coloured tea to be used as a tonic or diuretic, as well as a powerful astringent with antiseptic properties. So much service from one small brave, earth-hugging, plant with a strange tongue-tickling name and to think I could have simply walked on by! I stop to regard its ingenuity and offer praise for its generous nature as demonstrated through brilliant bright green spoon-shaped leaves.

Sometime later, while teaching an environmental class, a final presentation in the forest combining ethnobotany and storytelling reveals to me more about the mystery of this little plant’s name and my attraction to it beyond its cleverness. In a local native tongue, so the story goes, it is understood that, “ki” means “I” and “ni” means “you”. *I-thou*. While it is unlikely I can verify this translation, it informs my thinking nonetheless of the real lesson for me here. To look *into* the nature of this plant— to its “thingness” (Heidegger, 1974), to its essence—rather than merely look at its physical properties through the lens of a field book description in order to know it, allowed me a better appreciation for the interiority (or soul) of the plant.

While much of classroom science’s interest is concerned with describing outward qualities and physical nature, the more integral discovery for me lies within the *nature* of the plant itself. This becomes an entry point for me into a deeper more soulful conversation

with kinnickinnick in light of its name. A name that wants to be said twice, like a hermeneutical summons that asks me to look and look again at the phenomenon. I want to know this one and *be known by it* through our interaction. I begin with the question, “Who are you?” I repeat it several times then sit quietly and wait for something, anything, to come.

Existential philosopher Emmanuel Levinas’ line of thinking (in McKay, 2001) suggests that in our attempts to understand the world we must put a face to things in order to bring a kind of human-centered relatedness that allows us to see ourselves in that aliveness. His ideas went further in saying that in order to be fully ourselves, we first must be responsible to others, and in fact, can in that responsibility better define ourselves through relationship. Rather than anthropomorphism, I believe Levinas was interested in seeing the soul in things. When *we see ourselves in others* (Armstrong, 1997/2006; Buber, 1970; Macy & Brown, 1998; Seed, Macy, Fleming & Naess, 1988), we begin to see ourselves as related to one another, more same than different and we become more compassionate.

Ecopsychologist Bill Plotkin (2008b) goes further to say that, “learning to cooperate consciously with grace—as individuals and as a species—is one of the essential elements in our current evolutionary opening” (p. 28). I have come to believe that it is a sure sign of maturity to be able to see our similarities with those (things and people) who first appear so differently from us. We are simply different combinations of things. This kind of awareness is what the Buddhist monk and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh, (1993) calls understanding “inter-being” (p. 134). When I look deeply into the nature of the kinnickinnick for example, I will see it is made up of the cosmos in that it has non-kinnickinnick elements too such as: “sunshine, clouds, earth, minerals, heat, rivers, and consciousness” (p. 133). There can be no clear distinctions made then between us because we are both comprised of such combinations of the universe itself—each particular to its own uniqueness, but made of sameness nonetheless. This simple yet profound insight can profoundly affect behavioural change and build lasting compassion for Others, while engendering action to protect and save all life.

To do this, we must use what Joanna Macy calls our “moral imaginations” (personal communication, August 2012), the ability to deeply identify deeply with another from multiple perspectives. This holds implications for the fate of the whole world if we have the



courage to imagine in this way. “*Moral* consideration of others—can be achieved—and much more —through a widening and deepening of our (ecological) sel[ves]” (Naess, 1988, p. 20) (brackets mine) which requires a move from self-awareness to increased self-*realization* or awareness in action, as in *interaction*.

We are in fact always communicating in a prelinguistic language of glances and awareness:

[W]hen a lake or a pinemarten looks back, when we are—however momentarily—vis-à-vis— the pause is always electric. Are we not right to sense in such meetings that envisaging flows both ways? (McKay 2001, p. 101)

It’s true. We are both seeing and *being seen* by mammal *and* water. Receiving and being received. Yet something else happens if we don’t just look back but stay quietly for a time in the company of this creature whether it be mighty oak, mud or moose. If we are willing to be vulnerable enough to suspend our judgments and preoccupations, be patient and courageous, we can begin a cross-species communication in what Plotkin (2003) calls “talking across the species boundaries” (p. 168)—a preverbal form from a time before human language. If we try it, we may discover that the ecological self is surprisingly adept at it.

**“Just a minute,” said a voice**

“Just a minute,” said a voice in the weeds.  
 So I stood still  
 in the day’s exquisite early morning light  
 so I didn’t crush with my great feet  
 any small or unusual thing just happening to pass by  
 where I was passing by  
 on my way to blueberry field,  
 and maybe it was toad  
 and maybe it was June beetle  
 and maybe it was pink and tender worm  
 who does his work without limbs or eyes  
 and does it well  
 or maybe it was walking stick, still frail  
 and walking humbly by, looking for a tree,  
 or maybe, like Blake’s wondrous meeting, it was  
 the elves, carrying one of their own

on a rose-petal coffin away, away  
 into the deep grasses. After awhile  
 the quaintest voice said, “*Thank you.*” And then there was silence.  
 For the rest, I would keep you wondering.  
 (Oliver, 2004, p. 45)

What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in the forest, at night, cherished by  
 this wonderful, intelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting  
 speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself over the ridges, and the  
 talk of the watercourses everywhere in the hollows! Nobody started it,  
 nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants, this rain. As long as it  
 talks, I am going to listen. (Merton, 1966, p. 10)



### **bonding in place.**

“It takes clear space, contemplative time and good conversation to engage  
 and understand complex problems.” (Daloz, et al., 1996, p. 39)

Hermeneutical phenomenology is interested in the world (human and other-than-human) “as we find it” (van Manen, 1990, p. 18) and how it really is, *in situ* (situated). This (re)search of life-world requires mindfulness and “the attentive practice of thoughtfulness” (p. 12), an attunement to what is here without the need to project ourselves onto it or move to change or fix it somehow.

What began for me as an imaginative curriculum intended to evoke a practice of deep listening through *site-sitting or place-bonding* became part contemplative tool and part data source through an ongoing nature-based dialogue. Site-sitting is like a psychic alignment of both the inside and outside atmospheres in balance and in conversation (without the ego running interference or concerning itself with itself so much). As I sit in silence and listen, observe, and interpret experiences in relationship to the earth itself, I become *researcher as instrument* where the validity of this method hinges on my level of commitment, presence, and consistency. In this way, I rely more on my own contemplation on and originality of experience of the phenomenon than on the experiential accounts of others resulting in a hermeneutics of “wondering about and searching, delving into a phenomenon, awakening to it and letting oneself be inspired” (Tesch, 1990, p. 70).

Regular site-sitting practice allows for original insights to surface, helps me stay connected to my own nature *in* nature, and stay authentic to the immediacy of the process as I invite the natural world to speak through me in what Martin Buber (in Dillard, 1974) called the “infinite ethos of the moment” (p. 97). Parker Palmer (2000) offers that if you want to encounter soul you should know that “soul speaks its truth only under quiet, inviting and trustworthy conditions” (p. 8) because for the most part it is cautious, savvy and resilient, fierce and “yet exceedingly shy” (p. 9) like a wild animal. He writes that if you want to catch a glimpse of “the precious wildness you seek” (p. 9) you must move quietly into the woods and sit patiently and attentively for some time at the foot of a tree. This is good advice. But I know that for myself the woods are not always possible (and could become an excuse for not engaging often in this type of discourse). At first I imagined I would have to venture quite far to seek out a wild place that somehow felt sacred “enough” to me if any place bonding were to take place. I soon realized that the enormous rock in my own backyard (taking up nearly the entire backyard) is the place for me to sit. Too easy? No. As it turns out, just right.

*I sit in early morning first listening to the cacophonous seagulls extolling sea virtue and crows cawing to each other while swooping in and out of twisted Garry oak limbs that hang like bony appendages pointing this way and that.*

*I can see animals and mythic beasts here petrified in stone. A prehistoric lizard with a broken mossy snout lies with tailed curled up on my left, one eye watching me, while to my right two large slender cats with lichen-covered haunches entwine, heads nestled and hidden from view. Then a sea mammal, a whale with sedum barnacles! I know there are more waiting for me if I take time to sit in discovery and let my imagination go wild. Like in the songlines of aboriginal Australia, I wonder what stories and dreams these creatures have to tell about the beginning of things and how things are? What wisdom is trapped here in this rock hard place? Can I, if I sit here long enough, coax them to speak and sing? And do I have the ears the imaginative “heart ears”—enough to hear and understand this wild vernacular?*

*Then, as I listened, I felt her. “She” is alive, very old but very much alive! Although neglected at her backend—full of debris, old wood, overgrown brambles and invasives, even human refuse—her face is stunning, replete with clinging moss communities, small enclaves of sedum, fern and cedar and a host of perennial blossoms that pop up unexpectedly and leave just as quickly. Daffodils, tulips—the bulbs that bury deep to escape summer’s heat and wait seem to have nudged a small purple sister crocus up to join the sun-kissed California poppies. This rock is*

*definitely female. A feminine energy hummed right up my spine and went straight to my heart, wordlessly sending this message I received loud and clear. I feel only compassionate recognition for a place that is mother-home to so many.*

*I was cautious in the first years of home owning about “clearing” and cleaning out this stonescape, until I could see what wanted to come up. I know now that I must continue to be careful and tend this sacred place, must air out and release the old to allow the new. I wonder, how is this like my life, like this (re)search? I too can have great presentation at first glance but if I look more deeply into things (instead of merely at them) I can also see some neglect in “an overgrown backyard” of me where “fruits” risk shrivel and rot without the chance at sweet ripening if cut off from enough air and light and water and breathing room. And refuse? Why hang on to old junk? I feel a deep need to clear away some stuff of my own, let go, see what lies beneath all of this.*

*How must I tend this site? I know that metaphors conceal as much as reveal, so carefully now my excavation begins. This place and I will be in situ. I will rise before the sun to learn the songs here and to read rock Sanskrit made of mud and moss, to feel the aliveness of the earth through her mineralled surface and remember that I belong here too, just as she does. We are both of this earth.*

*And I will come back at different times of day and night, in all weather and all seasons as I have so much to remember here, so much to learn. This is a humbling experience. And miraculous too -- I almost forgot that right outside my door, the sacred lives in my own backyard!*

This practice is remarkable, time slows and distorts, conversations happen between species (between invisibles) without words in a language of the senses that I am strangely fluent in. I feel a renewed depth of interconnectedness with all beings and with my own satiated heart. I have had an infusion of the sacred, a living communion through animistic discourse, an experience of the articulate speech of Other. Abram (1996) writes:

The animistic discourse of indigenous, oral peoples is an inevitable counterpart of their immediate synaesthetic engagement with the land that they inhabit. The animistic proclivity to perceive the angular shape of a boulder (while shadows shift across its surface) as a kind of meaningful gesture, or to enter into felt conversations with clouds and owls – all of this could be brushed aside as imaginary distortion or hallucinatory fantasy if such active participation were not the very structure of perception, if the creative interplay of the sense in the things they encounter was not our sole

way of linking ourselves to those things and letting the things weave themselves into our experience. Direct, pre-reflective perception is inherently synaesthetic, participatory, and animistic, disclosing the things and elements that surround us not as inert objects but as expressive subjects, entities, powers, potencies (p. 130).

*At some point, about 50 minutes into the process of place sitting, my mind's eye dilates. Without thinking, I slip through an opening into a sensual world where my entire body surface is sensitive and awake with heightened awareness. My inner dialogue has finally stilled, the constant chatter is gone and yet my ears are filled with an impossible silence that reverberates as it wraps itself inside and around me. Things literally shimmer with energy. I cannot tell where my skin begins or ends or if I am the skin of the world. This is a domain of pure feeling where my usual mental activity is taking blessed rest.*

*I notice two absolutely luminous and nearly translucent blades of grass waving and bending in a kind of shy and awkward back and forth from each other. I cannot detect much of a wind and I cannot see other grasses moving in this way. I am not sure if I have ever really seen grass move like this but I do recognize this as a familiar erotic dance I have witnessed in the human world in ceremonies of celebration and worship (I check myself for overt anthropomorphism and decide that is a wrong-headed notion). When my attentions return to the grasses, I realize there is an ensouled force present. But of course everything communicates with everything else beyond words and to music we haven't the orientation to hear. I have only had this temporary privilege to awaken to this scene and completely marvel at this vivid moment. To glimpse such sweet aliveness! I am lost in this living experience.*

*Then, I feel sadness flood up from my core over-spilling in fat tears of being terribly sorry for the grace of what I must have missed all along in my busy schedule of hurrying on by. The sacredness of aliveness in every tiny thing. How could I have missed such preciousness? My heart tugs at my throat, wants to utter a wild and thick cry for the love of it all, and make a vow to sit still and be witness to this beauty every day. My eyes soften. I feel awash in tender compassion for my grass companions, who simply keep on dancing.*

How wonderful it would be if one could only be worthy of hearing the song of the grass. Each blade of grass sings out to God without any ulterior motive and without expecting any reward. It is most wonderful to hear its song and worship in its midst. The best place to meditate is in a field where things grow...one should meditate in a grassy field, for grass will awaken the heart. (Nachman of Bratzlav, in Besserman, 1994, p. 1)

I feel as if fresh energy is pouring from me now. Keats (cited in Goellnicht, 1984), offers this description of being-in-the-world as the best instruction for the gradual ripening that comes from site sitting:

Let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive— sap will be given us for Meat and dew for drink— I was led into these thoughts...by the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of Idleness... (p. 110)

I lose track of all time. I never know how long I sit before my central focus returns to the inner voice and the rational mind when all other voices are stilled. I sense that with prolonged engagement there is more validity and in my practice of sitting, I am developing more and more trustworthy data over time. When the pendulum swings back the other way, I realize I have already slipped back through the small tear in the imaginal fabric and must gather myself up to go inside knowing I can return any time to this miraculous place to be lost and found at once, to be idle and be blessed, saying “Here”.

### **Lost**

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
 Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,  
 And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,  
 Must ask permission to know it and be known.  
 The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,  
 I have made this place around you,  
 If you leave it you may come back again, saying Here.  
 No two trees are the same to Raven.  
 No two branches are the same to Wren.  
 If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,  
 You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
 Where you are. You must let it find you.  
 (Wagoner, 1999, p. 10)



### **getting lost on purpose.**

“If you are to experience this noble birth, you must depart from all crowds and go back to the starting point, the core (of the soul) out of which you came.” (Eckhart cited in Woodman, p. 40)

“But the walking of which I speak has nothing in it akin to taking exercise.”(Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 298)

There is a poem within the epic *Lord of the Rings, Part I, The Fellowship of the Ring* which is part of an instructional letter from the wizard Gandalf to Frodo, Tolkien (1954) where he wrote, “not all those who wander are lost” (p. 182) as it pertained to the fair hobbit’s itinerant search for the golden ring. Wandering pedagogy—a pilgrim’s journey to an end unknown—can have moments, when seeking lost “gold” through a sensual inquiry into our own creaturehood as the earthbound (and sometimes hobbit-like) creatures that we are, when we can surely feel lost ourselves. I sure have felt that way, however “lostness”, in my experience, is most often a requirement, a necessary precursor to any sort of worthy way finding and honesty of the soul. It is not the time to panic, rather it is a time to settle and ground, watch for signs, hope and pray, listen and wait.

We would fain that walk, never yet taken by us through this actual world, which is perfectly symbolical of the path which we love to travel in the interior and ideal world; and sometimes no doubt, we find it difficult to choose our direction, because it does not yet exist in our idea. (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 319)

*I slow to pace myself to the pace of my heartbeat. I let my breath be the contemplative bridge between body (self) and the world, removed of binary tensions and fracturing. Each step, an in-between space of possibility of being here, now. This is really the way to experience life, to literally let myself bump into experience and things. Where everything is waiting here...everything is speaking.*

There is an importance to paying attention to the immediate intensity of life rather than wrestle with the meaning of it. This process of writing life reminds me that the sensuous body is intrinsic as a lens of self-reflexivity, a conduit of both heart and head where new and important things arrive in unconscious and non-deliberate ways of their own accord. At the edge of waking consciousness, I track subtle and fleeting thoughts, feeling, images, perceptions, imaginary conversations, waking dreams, daydreams, and wisps of dreams or memories that pad shyly and warily at the edge of my awareness. I watch closely, tracking what calls me, what areas beckon me to come and spend time there.

I live at the edge of tears for the astonishing beauty of such a sacred tree filled space. In silent reaction, I sense I am growing taller and stronger myself under the influence of these ancient beauties by some powerful form of spiritual osmosis.

*I begin observing by closing my eyes. Instead of craning to try to see, I listen, standing still, eyes closed, for better in/sight. A chorus of small birds send up an escalation of desperate chatter. And higher up, a small aircraft, a few gulls, and then the drone of emergency sirens in the distance that elicit a chorus of hounds somewhere to join in and mimic the rise and fall of that warning. I wonder what emergency is there here for me, here? Where's the fire, in me?*

*I bring my focus back to the wood. Then I hear something soft and full, almost jazz-like in its musicality -- the sound of a thin rain falling on the duff, on that leaf, on plush moss, on bare rock, on my skin. All slightly different but definitely all water sounds. Is my hearing that fine-tuned? Instinctually, I open my eyes to see what I am hearing. Everything shines, is slightly amplified in colour when wet. I feel so tender toward the rain in its beautiful splashy dance! Then, I get the distinct sense that all along this place has been observing me as I have walked and stood to listen ...that there are benevolent eyes everywhere, even the rain sees me clearly.*

*I feel myself slip out of the feeling of me-as-centre and dissolve into a kind of relationality, connected at core to everything and yet still paradoxically, each thing appears different and unique at the same time. Same and different, intimates but not necessarily opposites! I am understanding a larger kind of "webby-ness". This thought overtakes me, is beyond words. I have a newfound appreciation for what being al/one means. A far cry from lonely.*

Allowing mindscape and landscape to confluence in a fluid experience of life in me, nature bears silent (and not so silent!) witness to the story of my life unfolding. And I bear witness to the world bearing witness to me bearing witness! This is a deeply reciprocal, even playful event. This world is alive around me in every respect, sensate, personified, feeling, like me. "The presence of the world is precisely the presence of its flesh to my flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968. p 127.) Here, my sense of belonging expands in relationship to a feeling of primordiality or what I have come to know as my original nature. I am not only from this place; I am also *how* it lives!

By relating more widely afield, I have become more relational overall. As I expand to embody a less insular or circumscribed worldview, I make and embrace new and often faceless friends. Finding wisdom here both in name and spirit. *I-Thou, I-Thou*. A small leathery-leafed, papery-barked (unexpected) teacher told me so.



While we like to name things in order to order them, I sense we must be careful about the reductionist constructs of scientific and archaic languages in terms of objectification and further separation. In community, we are usually called by name and yet of course that is not all that we are. Wildlife artist and environmental activist Robert Bateman tells me that one of his reasons for creating the *Get To Know* program was so that schoolchildren could first learn the names of their biological neighbours (in addition to their human ones) because he believed that within that curiosity “when you name something, you tend to get to know it and there is a better chance you will come to cherish and protect it.” (personal communication, 2006). Another fine example of the necessary confluence between science and soul. While I do not know many of the Latin names for my neighbours, sometimes I know their more common ones. However, I am in practice now of allowing my sensuous curiosity to ask them about themselves if we haven’t been formally introduced before. And yet, I can’t help but wonder what difference a name really makes when one is standing hip to hip with an impossible fir or admiring an improbable cushion of moss? Can any language combination adequately mirror the exquisiteness of the experience of walking deeply into the wet dark green forest? Can words alone bring the truth of that experience to bear? Forests are like cathedrals to the divine and time spent there becomes for me a holy/day, a holiday, a holon/day of communion.

Ah, not to be cut off,  
not through the slightest partition  
shut out from the law of the stars.

The inner -- what is it?  
if not the intensified sky,  
hurled through with birds and deep  
with the winds of homecoming.  
(Rilke, 1995, p. 212)



### **Fernophilia**

If you make an acquaintance with your ferns, you must forget your botany. You must get rid of what is commonly called knowledge of them. Not a single scientific term or distinction is the least to the purpose, for you would fain perceive something, and you must approach the object unprejudiced. You must be aware that no thing is what you have taken it to be. [To truly

perceive something truly] you have got to be in a different state from the common. (Thoreau, 1961, p. 210)

Within terminologies found in psychology, phobias are considered aversions to things whereas philias are the allurements, the loves we are drawn to. This deep emotional affiliation that may be rooted in our genetic make-up (although it is hard to prove) where strong attractions might trace back to instinctual tendencies to naturally go to the very source we come from (the Earth) for guidance and support, manifest in sub-conscious attempts to seek loving connection with the world. Strange attractions and nourishing friendships can evolve here.

James Hillman (1989) explains *we are creatures of longing* anyhow and longing needs union. He goes on to say that if you know what you long for, you will know who you are....and ultimately where you be-long. Arne Naess (1989) wrote of a transcendent quality where, “the ecosophical outlook is developed through an identification so deep that one’s own self is no longer adequately delimited by the personal ego or organism. One experiences oneself to be a genuine part of all life” (p. 174) where what is vibrant and eternal, connects us to parts of ourselves beyond ourselves, rising up and out to meet the landscape we are in.

For me, the fern transcends its commonality. It is something I have uncommonly fallen head over heels for. Literally. You might say *I have a fondness for frondness*. I began to look more deeply into its nature<sup>48</sup> in order to know it more intimately.

And if I need more convincing of our relatedness, I look to each leafy frond where “lobe” and “tooth” act as sensors to gather information and discern conditions (Cullina, 2008). Ferns either clump or run, live in clusters or are nomadic. Soon enough, I self-diagnose as a true *fernophilic* as I fall more deeply in with fern. I am beginning to more fully understand what my friend Robert Bateman meant as he urges us to fall in this way,

---

<sup>48</sup> In, *Native Ferns, Mosses and Grasses: From Emerald Carpet to Amber Wave*, Cullina (2008) tells us that ferns are more similar to humans than to seed plants. The fern, apparently, proliferates using sperm and egg, just like us. The tiny fern embryo is first surrounded by a food-rich reserve encapsulated in a womb-like seed casing to survive weather and world. Life begins with billions of dust-like spores hitching a ride on breezes looking to settle in on damp soil, rock ledge or mossy bed. Once “wetted and warmed”, a spore germinates with fine-as-hair rhizomic roots to hold impossibly fast while this young gametophyte grows for weeks, months, even years before releasing sperm that swims, propelled by its whiptail across a film of water in search of unfertilized eggs. Sperm and egg together each successfully contribute one set of chromosomes and miraculously a tiny fern begins to grow.

for earth's sakes!

**10,000 Names for Fern** (and any number you can call yourself)...

Staghorn, Sickle, Scaly, Fishtail, Lacy, Long, Fringed, Ruffle, Birdsnest, Cloak, Jeweled Tongue, Graceful, Peacock, Longtom, Echo, Feathered, Countess, Forest Plume, Eared, Deer, Toothed, , Octopus, Necklace, Serpent, Wavy, Royal, Zigzag, Cinnamon, Ladder, Elegant, Copper, Fountain, Puzzling Quillwort, Chaffy, Scaly Dwarf, Unswept, Interrupted, Fragile, Filmy, Weft, Spleenwort, Pointed, Bellybutton, Batwing, Bulbous Addertongue, Northern, Birdwing, Weeping, Pale, Polished, False, Prairie, Grape, Ribbon, Dainty, Scalloped, Lady, Lanceleaf, Fairysword, Deepwoods Tansy, Rainforest, Queen's Veil, Starscale, Rockledge, Slender Lip, Clubmoss, Clambering, Fragrant , Glossy, Goblin, Paradox, Shiny, Lattice Vein, Mrs. Cooper's Lip, Streamside Sword, Streambank, Water Spangles, Indian Dream, Maidenhair, Woolly, Tailed, Rock Cap, Birdfoot Cliffbrake, Hairy, Fairywand, Heartleaf, Bog, Hand, Moonwort, Musk, Three Fork Polypody, Little Curlygrass, Western, Star...(MacKinnon, Pojar & Coupe, 1992)

Away from the safe confines of the ordinary and acceptable into the untamed and uncertain... at a crossroads of the livingness of everything: fern, fir, rock, sky, grasshopper, mud, moose, mountain, I found myself in a love affair sensuously borne of silence and wild thought where after initial groping around here something ripened into a serious understanding of myself as I looked about the world. I felt the more I dug around, the more the veil that separated me from the rest of the world—the gossamer curtain of spider web and mist—parted to show me more all the time, with each step forward.

*I admit it. I am biophilic. A slug-loving, mud-rolling, moss-caressing, bark-licking, tree-hugging planet-lover. Beyond help. Beyond the cultural notions of romance and need, I have a serious universal crush on this place and its wild ways. (I think it is reciprocal). The world wakes me up some nights just to hear me whisper one of its names! Milky Way... moon...wind... stars...snow... I am not looking for a cure for this, I am in for the long run...and of course, the slow walk.*

Although I felt quite like a neophyte at this threshold space, I sensed that once I had found it, I would remember how to get here again. And I could return again and again to drink deeply, drawing from this source for a long, long time to come.



**grounds for learning.**

Oberon is mythic. First of all, his name comes straight from Shakespeare's (1596/1937) play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Oberon is of course The King of the

Faeries. Secondly, he is mythic by proportion at 160 pounds (although ribby and fit) but also, thirdly in the mythic sense, I get the impression that there is an old destiny being fulfilled by us walking these woods and boglands together. Campbell (2004) writes that “the dog that can follow the invisible trail for you...that is the one who ”will be your Hermes guide” (p. xxiv) to the Underworld of the Soul. He certainly never lets me forget for one instant that something better lies in waiting for us if we just go outside! We are together our own archetype, as I sense we have wandered many times before. In the energetic way we are together there is something wandering in the spirit of the two of us too.

My hound is often impatient (like me) for staying too long indoors and is always eager to loosen the “rust” of sitting that Thoreau (1862/1982, p. 313) lamented in his writing. In his 1997 book, *The Others: How Animals Made us Human*, human evolutionist and ecologist, Paul Sheppard writes “animals made us who we are” (p. 130) in that Others have made us uniquely human by virtue of their otherness. Consciousness evolved in response to an earlier existence of predator and prey as we learned to survive and meaning was made of tracks and signs and relationships (Watkins, 1978). In ancient cultures animals were recognized as totemic, providing the necessary guidance required for life. Their traits of cleverness, swiftness, cunning, and grace, for example provided learning grounds for identity as much as any other natural thing or cycle such as night and day, sunrise and sunset, weather patterns, and season changes, did. They are our kin and help shape us, while continuing to hold an intimate place in our psyches. If we try to tame them to our domesticated schedules too much, we can break their spirits.

For several minutes, Obbie (for short) circles the spot he has chosen to lie down in—a throwback to his wilder, grass tamping down days of making a safe bed. This movement is not unlike my own circling in the woods, this circuitous (re)search, these spiraling words and not least of all, my coming full circle in becoming more like my original (childlike) self. I know I must go on, keep practicing, go deeper, onto the wild road of the dark night despite all the warnings and cautionary tales of getting lost forever and coming completely undone.

We are all instinctual and wild. When we breathe, our hearts beat and for the most part, our bodies regulate themselves. We have instinctually developed knee-jerk and quick turn-of-the-head reactions, reflexes, and a heightened of awareness that overtakes us when

we believe we might be “gobbled up” to keep ourselves safe from harm and predators (Snyder, 1995). I enjoy being animal, exploring my shared biological being-ness with this funny animal teacher of mine in his fur coat, knowing we are both on the food chain menu today. He urges me to saunter out with him into the day, looking and then looking again to catch glimpses of the wildness we hope to see.

So we saunter...till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever...shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bank-side in autumn. (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 326)

We two are on the verge of something great here.

*As O and I wander under early morning starlight, as I fall more deeply into enchantment, I am becoming Fall myself, moving down, down into the earth letting winds and rain help me shed what has come to a noble end, what can no longer hold on or serve my life's purpose. Can my own 'leavings' slowly become fecund nourishment for what's next?*

### Final Homage

(to poet-educator Carl Leggo)

in East Sooke Park  
at the end of the western tip  
of Vancouver island floating  
on the edge of a tectonic plate  
I learned dog logic  
how to live presently  
drinking deep draughts of  
wellspring water  
from inside and  
out

rain more rain  
will come and erase  
the memory we shared  
yesterday, we'll walk  
more paths like lines  
on this page, fleeting  
and transitory traces, both  
here and gone

as the sun sets on the ocean  
I make poems and find emptying

spaces of stillness and shadow  
 but like these crying gulls  
 I can never tell you all the stories I have  
 known and will know in this place

Dissident playwright and president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel

(1985/1992) knew all too well of the difficulties that await those who find themselves at a sooner or later at a crossroads where one,

has exhausted his initial experience of the world and the ways of expressing it and he must decide how to proceed from there. He can, of course, seek ever more brilliant ways of saying the things he has already said; that is, he can essentially repeat himself. Or he can rest in the position he achieved in his first burst of creativity, subordinate everything he learned to the interest of consolidating that position... (p. 3)

But he opines a third most sensible option that is of course the more risky. If taken, it offers the great possibility of “a new, more mature self-definition” (p. 3) to correspond with a more authentic engagement with life, but it does not always arrive right away. “His original élan, self-confidence, and spontaneous openness have gone, but genuine maturity is not yet in sight...” (p. 3). In order to experience this transformation, he writes, we must be willing to leave the safety and surety of what we know and step beyond the all too familiar binds of culture and tradition. He further cautions once this choice is made, there are no easy guarantees and in fact,

“...anyone who chooses this route – the only one that genuinely makes sense – will not, as a rule, have an easy time of it....and some things are hard to part with.” (p. 3)

It was time to depart on a larger quest, and to part with my noble enough life and enter into the heroine’s journey. If my bog mind is ever going to come into the light, if my practice is ever going to transcend mere teaching tricks and techniques to embody the extraordinary and come to mean something for others, then it was time to go and the hour was late enough (in my life). I go with the hope of expanding my research boundaries, take my pedagogical wanderings more seriously, take my quest/ions on a guided initiatory journey across another series of thresholds in order to face my deepest fears of shadow, archetypes, scary monsters, steep canyons and the dark itself (ahem, the dark *of* myself?).

In offering further tuition to the task, (and to manage some of my expectations, worries and optimisms), I begin by considering a number of questions offered to me by those who have walked ahead on this path. I soon realize there are no easy answers here, only ways to seek to (in deference to Rilke, 1934/1954) *live into the questions* one small step at a time.

What phase of my life is ending?  
 What will I pray for?  
 What is getting ready to be born in (and through) me at this time?  
 What has died already?  
 What obstacles and attachments still attempt to protect me?  
 How have these obstacles and attachments benefited me so far?  
 Am I willing, am I able, to let them rest, to ask them to release their tight grip? Can I accept and fully embrace this loss?  
 Which god did I offend? What gods did I leave behind?  
 What is it that I seek? What do I long for?  
 In what ways am I prepared to be available for whatever gifts I receive?  
 Who are my people?  
 What significant ones do I need to say difficult and important previously unsaid things to, even good-bye?  
 Why is this the right time to take responsibility for any pain I have caused?  
 Why is it the right time for me to resolve loose ends, take up the anchor...?  
 Why is this the right time to cry for a vision for the world in a sacred way?  
 Why is it the right time for me to take my gifts into the world?<sup>49</sup>



## The Vision Quest

Our first few nights out on the vision fast were at a mid-level campsite in the Abajo Mountains in the La Sal range near Blanding, Utah. West of the Rockies but younger, these igneous intrusions are said to be between 22-29 million years old and form part of the Colorado Plateau. There must have been a quick fire that tore through here not so long ago because no matter how careful I was I smeared black soot all over myself. None of us could afford to pack spare clothing, so I surrendered to being blackened from head to toe as if perhaps I was being 'seasoned' for what was to come.

It took me an extra-long time to find a site for sleeping the first night because I helped other wilderness novices find a level place not too far from the camp kitchen but with enough privacy. By the time I realized it was getting dark and time was short before

---

<sup>49</sup> Synthesized in part from a pre-quest package from the Animas Valley Institute.

we were to meet as a group again, I was not prepared for the night that would surely come. I scrambled around and in my distraction, ended up losing a piece of silver jewelry I had worn for nearly a decade which was dear to me. Despite my frantic searches it had vanished into thin air. Apparently, letting go includes real treasure.

*I am feeling a great desire for a sweet thing in my mouth, for satiation, for cessation from this anxiety, a temporary escape hatch from struggle...right into the trap of addiction — all at the expense of soul. I tell myself this is ego's scheme to keep me slow and full, numb from feeling through a kind of misdirecting of my conscious investment in the agenda of soul. This is my pattern of distraction. My common avoidance of life's larger possibilities. Dante (1555/1949) wrote of gluttons who spun endlessly in the circle of hell. That could be me.*

*Will I be able to face these old patterns, stay with my own desires without trying to fill them up, bear the unbearable and break the sweet chains? Nourishment, not sedation. Does sweet food fill the empty spaces in my sweet soul? Doesn't seem like it because it does not last long and later I feel more empty, craving more and more and more. This is one sweet death I must experience in going solo without food for a stretch of time. My sneaky ego-self wants me to stash some chocolate in my pack just in case but I resist and simply breathe through this temptation. I trust there will be soul food instead, but I wonder will it be enough to sustain me on this harrowing journey...?*

The next morning, we were sent out on a wander after a session of tending to (listening to without interpretation) fresh dreams of others including having a partner hear our own dreams and then embody them with us through movements and sounds.

*I dream of a long slender hairless ginger cat in a ditch held together on closer inspection by staples and symbols. In my dream, I carefully remove the metal pieces, anoint the wounds and know she will be alright as she stretches out in full appreciation for my tending to her.*

*I too stretch long and luxuriously (like this healing cat) and immediately pick up on my own longing to stretch out my body more fully as an aspect of my own wellbeing. I realize in that one small movement that longing needs to be stretched out and moved through, lovingly anointed and tended to. Losing touch with my own longing (and the way to feel and express it) signals a true loss of connection with my soul.*

This was already becoming highly evocative work—the type of work that was now “working me”. The entire day began to feel a bit like I was still in a kind of dreamtime. I walked the eastern slope of the mountain trying to avoid others to have some privacy with my thoughts. Perhaps I would even blow off the exercise and nap because I began to feel



exhausted. I checked to see if that was another ego-escape hatch popping open for me. The answer came quickly because an instantaneous feeling of no longer being sleepy followed that thought. I was now wide-awake.

Picking my way along downslope, I came upon a rock face on a ridge in the remarkably distinct shape of a mother-hen. She was large, a nurturing symbol sporting a kind of stone apron who, when I took time to sit beside her, offered me the wisdom of these words, *"She knows how to take care...of herself"*. Nothing has ever sounded sexier to me. *She knows how to take care of herself*. Had I forgotten how to do this? Had I lost the ability to care for myself in my bent of lovingly looking after so many others? Why did I leave the last dregs of my own love for me? Why have I put myself (dead) last? I recorded this conversation with words and line drawings, thanked the "rock chicken" and moved on.

Already I was living deeply within each moment, immersed with the mysteries. I was finding that in that presence of mind and body, I was opening to a higher level of vulnerability and primal trust in this process. It would have been too easy to begin discounting these experiences, so I continued to follow my intuitions and track fascinations that led me further on.

When I returned to camp, we gathered to tell of our wanderings. I quietly listened to the many stories and found that I had nothing really to offer. But I found myself saying out loud at one point, "Nothing really happened for me", and at that same moment in a kind of knee-jerk reaction to my own words, flipped my journal to precisely the page where I had earlier sketched a dark figure leaning up against a tree. Oh, I suddenly remembered, "Except that on my way back from wordlessly conversing in fowl wisdom, I saw this strange yet familiar figure from my dreams and sketched it. I have known this one well. In my dreams he is the one who magically turns things into other things —chairs into tables, trees into levers, dials into the face of a wolf, windows into floors, etc." It all made sense in my dream-world, but it sounded crazy translated into the day world of language and logic.

I realized I wasn't brave enough yet to actually have a conversation with this dream character, to ask it what it wants by showing up like here. I had just fallen down at his feet and immediately sketched him, this dark figure that seemed to have somehow been following me my whole life. Tracking and being tracked. I realize now that as far back as I can remember, he—this figure—has appeared for me, first through my love of the

Tasmanian Devil character in animated cartoons from childhood, later as the bear I have encountered on the path too many times to count in up close and personal meetings in the forests of BC, and more lately as the “mad magician” of my dreams who turns things into other completely different things. Not least of all, he embodies the same barrel shaped of my former husband (whom I was wildly in love with). All were strange yet familiar attractors, perhaps embodiments (or projections) of some part of my internal nature, my own animas?<sup>50</sup> I nearly forgot to speak of this encounter! Fear can be such a powerful screen. I wondered, could I let my fears, my strategic mind rest now so that deeper conversations might take place?

Joseph Campbell (1991) wrote, “there is always danger at the threshold” because it is here we “leave the temporal body and” (if we are brave enough and warrior-like enough), “let spirit enter” because “the goal of the journey is to discover yourself as consciousness” (p. 156-7). For me, this meant allowing all the parts of myself to surface and catch their breath (just as I would be catching mine!).



### **basecamp.**

Arrivals do not guarantee comfort! In making the trek up the mountainside to our quest campsite, our shared home for the next eight days, I was more tired than usual. I realized it had little to do with the weight of my pack or the upward climb, rather I was, to my marrow, bone tired of everything. It seemed that metaphysically I had been on my way up here for a very long time, maybe for a decade or a lifetime, I was not sure anymore.

I pitched my tarp high, strung up between three aspen with giant watchful eyes. I longed to sleep open without walls on the bare ground, with all but my bare skin and backbone on some feathery down. My tarp ceiling was so high up that birds could easily swoop through it. I hoped they would. I could walk in without ducking. It felt spacious, like a green living room beside a tumbling, happy sounding mountain stream. Perfect set up for

---

<sup>50</sup> The anima (in the case of men) and animas (for women) both mean “soul” in Latin and represent the outer respective feminine or masculine identities and roles (Hollis, 2006) we are attracted to in an effort to regain our wholeness through integration of both the masculine and feminine aspects of ourselves. Yet for the most part, in Western cultures, we tend to instead get hooked on relationships of projection and romantic love that never can wholly satisfy this greater longing for the true beloved within us all.

joyful hydrating and washing of feet, hair, face, body and hands regularly. Time to unsoot myself.

We're in an abandoned cowboy camp where I imagine the men would have come in summer seeking coolness from the desert heat and green grasses for their livestock to graze upon. There was a beautiful trough system rigged up that flowed directly from the snows on Mt. Linnaeus—outpouring pure fresh water that needed no filters or tablets. What a delicious delight! This could be paradise...if only I could stop worrying about what was to come.

The next two nights were restless for me despite my exhaustion. I think insomnia is also part of the intended process so I consciously made friends with my tiredness and didn't attempt to fight it off, rather invited it to settle in. This turned out to be a good choice.

*I wonder, what if every step I take here is intentional? I mean what if every movement were one of grace and consideration? What would it look like for me to step wholly into soul? Speech, movement, intentions. Just to have the time and space to attend to dreams, symbols, deep listening?*

*I am reminded of the question that is so often asked before council circles, "Do you love yourself enough to listen with the ears of your heart to all the other voices of yourself speaking?" Yes, yes, I believe I do.*

Before we left the retreat centre (our pre-trip night together), we gathered to 'land' ourselves, with a ceremony of calling in the six directions. This was a pan-cultural way to call on the wisdom and teachings of all living beings and places to guide us and watch over us on our journey, a custom found in some indigenous cultures.

I offered to call in the final direction, *the core of the earth* because I deeply wanted to participate and bring myself forward out of any shadows of judgment or distance I was feeling in that judgment for others in that moment. I could not tell if my resistance was one of boredom or fear—or if they were one and the same in the end or all just a clever ego rouse designed to keep me strategically out of this experience.

My words came with much difficulty, which is unusual for me. I felt self-conscious and small, ridiculous even, because I was all too aware that while we sat here in ritual, the core of the earth was indeed in trouble. British Petroleum had just punched a hole in the

ocean floor (the size of a small nation) and while I spoke, literally tons of black oily ‘blood’ was spewing into the ocean non-stop. And to top it off, my complicitness seemed shameful to me as I had just flown all this way, halfway across the continent in a big jet plane that depended on BP to fuel itself, to come and enact a quest! Later in my room, I wrote in my journal about what I would have hoped to have offered the group in terms of something more eloquent spoken in homage to the core of the earth such as this:

*Pumping, ecstatic, heavy, red, juicy lifeblood, centre, core, vital, open, every cell in our bodies needs heart! Every cell in the earth needs heart! The only constant place connecting to all other parts, making music all the time; heartsong. Through the heart we can see the invisible, we feel...heart-felt. Pumping, surging, singing...homeplace of Love, inviting love, asking for love, seeking love, giving love...LOVE!*

The next morning in our final council circle before departing up the mountain, when it was my turn to share, I suffered a horrendous nosebleed. Blood spewed out across the circle in frightening amounts. I could not finish my words. I laid back on the grass to calm down, trying to stop the flow but it lasted about twenty minutes. One of my guides later asked me if I remembered what I had been sharing at the precise moment the nosebleed came on. I didn’t recall. Apparently, I was in full lament over the unstoppable gushing “black blood” outpouring into the ocean from the drilling incident. Was I feeling it all so deeply, feeling so much for the earth that it was possible my body was suffering a kind of empathetic hysteria?

The nosebleeds continued until we reached our cowboy camp on the third day. It was getting to be such a problem that there was talk of driving me back to the town of Blanding to have my nose cauterized in hospital. Eventually though, I stopped the bleed by stuffing cotton baton soaked in—wait for it—petroleum jelly up into my nostril and avoided any further blowing. *Petroleum jelly*. The stuff that comes from oil companies is the solution for my own wreckage as well as the loci of my lament. The contrariness, the irony was not lost on me! Everything that seemed in opposition was in fact not, really. Was this a beautiful alchemical allegory to demonstrate that within the poison lies the cure?



**far out.**

Four days were spent in preparation for another four-day span of time alone including a day of scouting out our solo spots. We wandered as a group to three possible sites through pine forests, open meadows, woodland scrub, and over to rocky edges.

*The moment we land in our last location, a small meadow at mountain's edge skirted by aspen and oak, I know this is my spot. I claim it right away by tying my bandana on a branch. I am asked if I would like to look further, not be too quick to judge and I adamantly decline. Am I sure? Yes, to my heart's core.*

*I trust that and look no further. To me this place is filled with opportunities and clarity, emissaries and invisible allies, a confluence at the intersection of above and below...axis mundi. It is perfectly familiar in the strangest of ways because I have never of course been here before, however, it is already somehow imprinted in me as the place I belong. I know it and it knows me. I get a good and holy feeling.*

I set about filling up and carrying down 3 x three-gallon water sleeves from base camp in preparation for the impending days. I realized my spot was not so near to camp after all! It was a good uphill climb back, about 20 minutes or so through streams, various fields, and a number of small forests spanning three fair-sized hills. The last one was so steep I have had to already partially claw my way back up. This is a typical pattern for me. I tend to go off to the edge when making my camps while the whole time I think I am close to everything and everyone. I cannot help but wonder, dear *Hilary*, *what edge are you working right now? What edges you on?* I was impatient with trite and easy answers, I didn't bother to go there. Although I was *feeling edgy* for sure, so I just kept busy.

**final preparations.**

We were prepped for what was to come. At least about the practical aspects of self-care and what signs to watch for in case of trouble. Here is my partial list gleaned from multiple conversational snippets, helpful suggestions (M. Marsden & P. Scanlan, personal communication, June, 9, 2010), and a handout from the administrative office of the Animas Valley Institute (2010).

**The Symptoms of Fasting**

1. You may experience being hungry or you may not.
2. There may be moments of weakness.

3. You will feel everything, and particularly will have moments when you feel clear, feel energized.
4. You will experience fatigue. You will need to nap during the day.
5. You may find you have reversed your days and nights.
6. Many experience nausea, feel woozy.
7. Remember you must hydrate. Your urine will be clear and copious. You may urinate often.
8. You may experience vomiting once or twice (36 hours into fast).
9. You will experience a more rapid heart rate.
10. Remember to get up slowly as you may experience some dizziness.
11. There might be mild belly cramping.
12. You will experience constipation and over time, with enough time, elimination will eventually shutdown.
13. Weight loss is imminent.

Other than number 13, I cannot remember why I decided to do this at this moment. It sounded to me like one of those horrible warnings for the side effects of medications that CAN KILL YOU. I had taken notes and was aware of what I was going into. I hoped I was one of the ones who was not too hungry after all. I reviewed my prayers and started to list some safety guidelines I had learned over the years just in case I needed more reminders in the field.

### **Safety First**

- ✓ Stay warm and dry, keep your sleeping bag dry
- ✓ Don't get too hot (we're in the desert as deceiving as the mountain can be), keep cool (wear a hat or head-covering always) and watch for sunburn —you will dehydrate quickly so drink a lot of water and take electrolytes in your water if necessary. If you are too hot, soak clothing and stay in shade. Put a wet bandana on the back of your neck and lie down.
- ✓ Don't over exert yourself.
- ✓ Don't wander too far from your place.

- ✓ Don't drink too much water or you risk flushing out the salts and minerals you need for sustaining your fast.

Here's what hypothermia looks like: shivering uncontrollably, poor judgment, unclear, mumbling, confusion and later on stiff muscles, cramps, lack of coordination and pale blueberry skin. The final straw? Eat food and drink liquid. Return to camp when you are revived. This cannot happen to me, right? The ante has of course just been upped.

The nights before we left camp for our solo time, we held two events—first a drumming circle where we dressed up and danced for hours and hours under a star-filled sky until our strategic minds no longer stood a chance. And second, on the last night, we participated in a fire ceremony where we each took turns burning something we brought that we no longer needed (metaphorically or literally). This might represent something we had been attached to or something that stood in our way now, or both. I could tell it was a deeply personal experience for everyone. I was moved by the depth of sharing and emotion as we each knelt in front of the flames one by one to sacrifice something meaningful from our lives.

As I burned something owned and cherished by my recently deceased father, I spoke to how this popular men's magazine represented to me the wounds inflicted on myself and others by his overt objectivism and severe judgment of women and their bodies. And, as did this, I offered that over time and much self-reflection, I had come to realize that negative judgments are in fact the other side of the coin of aesthetic judgment, appreciation for beauty and subtle discernment. I realized while tearing and burning that I inherited these more golden traits from him as well. I acknowledged that while part of what I bring to the world is an artful nature with an eye for beauty and an ear for truth, as well as a practical ability to create the conditions for beautiful curriculum and aesthetic programming in education, I could also see that the cost of this "gift" had as a direct link to my greatest childhood wound of never being (perfect) enough. Early injurious indiscretions on the part of my parent (not in a physical way, rather in a psychic and intellectual way which can be just as shriveling to innocence) were being subsumed in the flames too. I could also appreciate that my father was in some profound way wounded himself (as most humans are) and that he did the best he could with the information and support he had (or rather didn't have) at the time. It felt purifying and satisfying to burn

something, to watch the pages go up into the black of night and yet I am shaking when I return to my tarp despite the warmth of the evening and the fire.

This final ceremony was more powerful than I had reckoned it would be. Sometimes those things that have held us back have done so in a necessary form of protection of a young one who could not or did not believe they could adequately fend for themselves or show themselves fully (such as was my case). I probably did need to defend against objectification and extreme judgment at the time, however, as the adult woman I am, I no longer need that kind of protection. It only limits me now from becoming more fully myself and threatens to become my own worst stumbling block if I objectify and judge others. We have learned from history how easily the oppressed can become the oppressor (Freire, 1970), most times unconsciously. And at times I know I have become what I most held in disdain. I realize that if I don't choose to surrender now, to release the block I have used as a defense for myself all these years designed to keep out the pain of vulnerability and discomfort in facing what I was covering up, then what I don't release will end up causing me more pain now than perhaps the original injury. If I am willing to stay open enough to not rush to fix or fill myself while this part of me dies off and burns away, if I can wait and trust, then maybe something new will rise up from these cold ashes. Nature does not sit empty for long. I trembled with the anticipation of that and the temporary emptiness of nothing left to hold onto (or to hold me back). *Be careful what you wish for* was the mantra that sent me finally off to sleep.

**A note to the reader:** At this point my writing switches to a more present tense in an effort to capture more of the immediacy of my experience. It continues like this for the duration of the quest experience.



### **taking leave.**

Early the next morning, I pack up my "living room" taking only what I need for three days. No food, nothing superfluous, just my clothing layers, rattle, journal, washbasin, tarp and ropes, sleeping bag, and my woolen cape of course.

*I am still shaking. Is it that we began the fast yesterday and my body is unable to shake the chill of the morning? Is it edginess? A hangover from last night's*



*understanding of necessary emptiness and death? Fear of falling more deeply into another kind of fire? All of the above?*

Before we can safely depart, we must engage in a very serious final ritual, a leaving ceremony, where an imaginal portal is opened to the Underworld, to *the world of soul*, and where we will, one last time, witness the longings of our fellow travellers and be smudged with smoky boundaries of protection by the guides before we disappear.

We each take turns placing something significant we have brought with us on flat rocks in a stone circle in front of us. This makeshift altar becomes an accumulation of small items, each one representing something personal of this world that we each feel a strong desire for—at least strong enough to come back for. Not in the material sense, but in the love and commitment sense. People can often resist returning to this world, therefore this is symbolic for keeping us grounded and “here” in the more human context. Some place photos or items from family members or things that represent the work they do in the world. I place that small plastic teacup (unearthed on another trip to the backcountry of Utah by a dear friend) that signifies for me my deep calling to nourish others (in myriad ways) and in so doing, seek nourishment myself. It speaks to my service for the world as teacher, as childlike creative, as mothering one, and as one who is destined to feed (bellies, souls, imaginations).

We in turn read our prayers once more except this time I detect most of us have a quiver in our voices. Then, one at a time, *when we are ready*, we each slip through the circular stone threshold, strap on our packs and silently begin a slow march off in the direction of our respective camps. This is powerful medicine for leave-taking.



### **Day One – Al/one**

We are each paired with a buddy for safety. Not that we will actually see each other during this time, rather, each of one of the buddies will go to a designated place — called the *stone pile* —purportedly situated in between the two solo spots to check that the other has safely been and gone that day. It is customary that stones are added to a pile to count the times that each has visited however, due to an absence of rocks at a ‘stone pile’ site situated in the middle of a meadow, my buddy and I have agreed that in our particular twosome, we will each move a big old stick back and forth across a huge fallen log each day.

Every morning I will move the stick over to the north side as a sign of good health and having visited this spot. My buddy will move the stick back to the southern end of the log in the afternoons. There is a modicum of comfort in knowing there will be a connection between us despite time and distance and any other vagaries that may come our respective ways.

Finally, I arrive with high anticipation. I set my tarp up between two beautifully straight aspen over a kind of indent in the land that may have at one time been an old overflow streambed or maybe just the slope of a small berm, it's hard to tell. I lie down there to ensure it is snug for sleeping. My view to the west is of sky and aspen next to a ridge row of oak just about ready to leaf out. It feels like a cozy spot, an earthen, womb-like space that fits my body perfectly. Right beside me, I can hear the high watery song of the stream as it narrows to make its way down and over the side of the cliff. This is perfect. Hemmed in to the west by the band of small oaks with an open meadow in between, a grove of sentinel aspen to the north in the shadow of the mountain, the innocence of the stream to the east and then old forests beyond, and to complete the circle, the wild canyon lands to the south at my feet.

*I wander the south slope to find that I am sitting up on the edge of the world. An incredible expanse of landscape before me is my worldview! I see Ship Rock in New Mexico – that huge triangular rock face that appears to be setting sail for mythic shores. Bears Ears to the southwest like two symmetrical dark points of stone that look exactly like a huge bruin lumbering his way along behind that ridge head down foraging for berries. Or am I just hungry? And further south still, Monument in Arizona looking from this angle like a replica of Stonehenge.*

*I sing a kind of indigenous lullaby to bear as raven flies by to acknowledge my presence. Suddenly, an enormous wind comes up (that blows off my hat) and I open my mouth to let the wind sing through me. I read my prayers out loud to the canyon. It feels holy and right. I am perched at the northern edge of this astonishing red rock abyss, my homeplace for the next three days. I know full well, I was as much chosen by this place as it was chosen by me.*

I move slowly back to my tarp and dream the afternoon away, in and out of sleep and rest, with intermittent cloud-watching. I must remember to keep track of the days by making scratches on the back of my journal. I can see how easy it would be to become mixed up because I will of course sleep sporadically as everything takes more energy than usual. To draw a basin of water, for example, and wash is a complete all-morning project

that requires a significant lie down afterwards. I was warned about this. It is so easy to get confused, to get lost out of time. Time doesn't mean much away from clocks, meals, and having to do. Here, I must go by the sun, awake just before it kisses the earth and sleep when it disappears and the moon comes to call. I must conserve my energy for short wanderings, for ceremonies, and for staying awake as much as I can! This is a precious time and I don't want to sleep it all away!

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.  
 Don't go back to sleep.  
 You must ask for what you really want.  
 Don't go back to sleep.  
 People are going back and forth across the doorsill  
 where the two worlds touch.  
 The door is round and open.  
 Don't go back to sleep.  
 (Jelaluddin Rumi, trans., 1997, p. 36)



### **ceremonial advice.**

"You, sent out beyond your recall  
 Go to the limits of your longing."  
 (Rilke, 1997, p. 128)

Before we left our basecamp, our guides held individual meetings to offer some suggestions of what we might do with our solo time and to talk more generally about ceremonies. When it is my turn, I am perplexed by the need for this conversation and ask, "*Well, what isn't ceremony? Isn't the whole thing one giant ceremony?*" I receive a silent nod of approval and then go about my day. No more need to consult on this point.

As list-making is my preferred way to think through my plans, I find it helpful to number off possibilities for myself anyways as the twenty-four things I might do over three solo days:

1. Hold a Gratitude Ceremony for the beings of this place.
2. Create a purpose circle (big enough to lie down in) for ceremonies and ordeals, for listening, for your last night's vigil.
3. Cry. Grief cry for the world in a *cri de coeur* (cry of the heart's longing).

4. Visit Death Lodge. Find a place that looks dead to you. Let what needs to die in you surface. Have a conversation with this aspect of yourself. Stay as long as it takes.
5. Speak prayers for others and the world—often.
6. Talk with the ancestors. Seek their help, listen for wisdom.
7. Rattle in the dark. Rattle to become the invitation yourself. Rattle 'til your rattle rattles you. Let whatever dark mysteriousness is in store come for you. Have a conversation with it. Or don't.
8. Listen for allies and emissaries everywhere.
9. Sing. Become the hymn.
10. Re-tell your life's story.
11. Re-tell your dreams.
12. Practice sacred silliness to balance out this seriousness.
13. Apprentice to everything.
14. Let yourself be courted by the world.
15. Make love to yourself, to the world.
16. Ask for a name. A true name.
17. When hunger comes ask what am I really deeply hungry for?
18. Watch "boredom" as ego's way to sabotage this experience. Lean into that —be so bored and boring that you amp it up. Notice what happens.  
What's boring about my life? What is *boring through me*???
19. Call for help from the world. Do not worry about what others would have to say about this, especially your inner critic most of all.
20. Write everything down, chronicle this entire time knowing you *won't* remember a thing afterward.
21. Linger with everything, touch in where your curiosity leads you.
22. Oh, and be sure to let your heartbreak ...open.
23. Repeat # 22 often, even daily.
24. Dedicate this one large ceremony itself.

I further remind myself to speak softly to my strategic mind, to invite it to rest often, and not be impatient if I slip and forget and start to analyze things. I remind myself to

simply wander and roam wild landscapes from dawn until dusk, speak out loud the questions I have, then surrender to the space of the day. I will allow myself to be moved as I move over the land. Every step a ceremony, another threshold being crossed.

Each ceremony has, I have come to find—like the hero's journey (Campbell 1949, 2008)—three parts, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning ushers us into non-ordinary space, sacred precincts that provide room for the middle or “symbolic statement” (Plotkin, 2003, p. 184) or enactment to be made and of course the end (re)turns us back to where we began moving “from the sacred to the ordinary”. We are often, in some way, transformed by this experience, bringing home some of the sacred. All ceremony requires meaningful sacrifice. I don't just mean the letting go of something one no longer has use of, rather it is more of a letting go of something that it is painful to say goodbye to because despite what hold it may have had, it was in some way engineered at one time in our lives to make us more safe, to protect us from harm.

So just in case I do forget while in the wild throes of ceremony, I write out the only taboos (as I understand them) that must be upheld for the integrity and power of ceremony to be fully realized (P. Scanlan, personal communication, June 8, 2010):

1. No food.
2. No human shelter.
3. No speech with humans.

And some choices of what I must do when and if I happen to encounter other people on the mountain:

1. Stay still.
2. Ignore them entirely as if you are ghost.
3. Engage. Converse little enough to deliver the message of what you are doing here.
4. Re-landscape your ceremonial circle and your space once they have passed through.

*There's no turning back. Am I willing to accept all consequences of these ceremonial acts (even though I don't know what they will be)? Am I willing to be shaped by them? I am willing to court the mystery of my life? Can I let the life that has been wanting to live in me, really live itself out? I remember it so clearly from childhood— the deeper truer life of me, the one who has walked alongside me for*

*so long but is not really like the persona of me, in fact is often quite the opposite! The one who tugs at the sleeves of my soul and says, "Wait, there is so much more!" Even the dark times have been preparation ground for this threshold I am now crossing over.*

*Ceremony is a ritual act guided by my experience, a conversation with the sacred Otherness of life, calling in different inner parts of me, calling on the holy, the Beloved. This is like lobbing the ball into Mystery's court only to patiently wait for the return volley.*

*What is my intention here and now? I must remember to ask myself that over and over in order to be clear. I must remember to also call in allies and ancestors, images and dreams, to bear witness to what happens. I must remember to say a hearty 'yes' to the opportunities that present themselves — even the terrifying ones. Will I keep my head about me? Can I see these as opportunities as well? Can I approach the dark one of my dreams lovingly (ask yourself, are you willing to stay open and find out more, be curious, build a relationship with this one, live into this dream?). I must step tenderly, yet deliberately, into this experience to save my other, more truer life, from wasting away forever.*

*I will go with the wisdom that when a ceremony feels finished, I am done. And then, I will remember to listen a long time afterwards. I write this down again.*

*So here I am, finally, at the edge of things, standing humbled by the vastness of my own abyss. I dedicate this fast to all those before me and all those to come...we are all students in the presence of our great teacher, the Earth.*



### **a funny thing happened...**

While returning from my afternoon "stone pile" visit on the first day, I was quite taxed as my strength was waning, so I found a big old pink rock to perch on. I decided to watch the brook awhile as it made its way downstream.

I realize my inner dialogue has not yet taken a break, has not perched itself on the sidelines at all during my entire walk, so I thank my strategic mind for taking such good care of me all these years, for protecting me from difficulties, threats and pain, and I ask it to please let me go on this journey alone. Just for now. I assure it we could (and likely will) talk again later. I needed my inner critic, the one who pushes me on, who says "never enough", in this moment, to rest and let my heart be still, to allow me to listen with a waiting and open soul without judgment, without agenda.

*Within a moment or two, I hear something spoken to me so softly in the morning light that I nearly miss it. I swear it was the overflowing crystal blue stream that murmured,*

*“I may not be perfect, but I am perfectly myself”*

*as it somersaulted its way down, tumbling toward the canyon. I repeated this out loud several times.*

*“I may not be perfect but I am perfectly myself!”*

*Of course! I threw my head back and laughed such a deep belly laugh that I felt I was tickling the bottom of my soul. How true! I am perfectly myself... no matter what! No matter who says otherwise, no matter my own harsh judgments.*

*I laughed a long time followed by tears of tender realization for the extraordinary amount of time I have spent being so hard on myself. What mountainous effort this has been! When the voice of my father was no longer the judge of perfection, my own inner voice expertly took over the reins and continued to relentlessly drive me on from my late teens until now, controlling my every movement and not least of all judging all others in its path.*

*So simple and yet so profoundly moving. “Perfectly myself”. I feel my inner critic’s grip ease enough to let go of those dark untamed horses of me (what had become my “night mares”) and let them run wild again, free. How perfect. Perfectly myself.*

*I bend over to look more deeply into this moving mirror reflecting sky and cloud, with bubbles rising from the depths of a current running beneath. A thousand blue eyes looking at me, witnessing as I ceremoniously send a lifetime of judgment and jockeying off in downstream tears to mix with and be purified by the tumbling of sweet mountain waters. I imagine melting those icy verdicts I have clung to in this stream’s effervescent persuasion—polishing off the grit of old convictions, smoothing the harsh edges of stony decrees—as these meltwaters and my tears become something so much more exhilarating and alive, swimming together. This is powerful action that distils for me a more gem-like essence of my own qualities.*

A true game changer. I feel completely exhilarated and alive. This stream—a chorus floating up from dancing waters that echo off the lupine flanks of a giant mountain—a truth waiting to be spoken. Ridge-top river and river of consciousness entangled in a numinous syntax of burbles and spills, outpouring into open canyons of thought. This morning, I have drunk deep draughts from this mysterious segue, let it wash over me fluid and timeless imagery, a wellspring of vigor. I feel impossibly refreshed like waking from a really satisfying sleep. Clearer (and cleaner) than I can remember feeling in a long time, if ever before. I will not overthink what is flowing through me, still. Hermann Hesse (1951) wrote,

But today he only saw one of the river's secrets, one that gripped his soul. He saw that the water continually flowed and flowed and yet it always was there: it was always the same and yet every moment it was new. Who could understand this, conceive this? He did not understand it; he was only aware of a dim suspicion, a faint memory, divine voices. (p. 83)

It is true. Everything, everything, everything *is* ceremony here!



### **gratitude.**

Earlier, before visiting the stone pile, after setting up my camp, I created a *purpose circle*. I happened upon a perfect circle of aspen and asked permission to enter. It seemed the aspen were unanimous in their silence (and I clearly did not hear a bellowing “no”), so I stepped carefully inside and began to go about clearing away any big woody debris to make a space for ceremonies and sitting. I decided to make it a more intimate circle by placing the larger fallen branches I was clearing away in between each of the trees overlapping between their bases in order to close the circle. I purposely left the westernmost piece of a branch slightly ajar in order to invite Mystery or the Muse (known in Greek mythology to live in the West) to come calling.

I decide when I am finished that it is also a good time for an inaugural official ceremony, something spontaneous to set the atmosphere of my time here in this place. I wanted to bring my gratitude for all of the venerable teachers I have encountered in my life. I seriously prepare myself by wearing a shimmering shawl to represent the luminous wisdom they have shared, and strap bells (symbolic of awakening consciousness and the celebratory nature of the dance of learning) on each ankle.

*I begin by sitting quietly in the centre and evoke each one of the faces of my teachers. They come to me vividly and easily. I proceed to each tree, touching them, stroking their 'faces', speaking their names, bowing to them as I offer my deepest thanks for what they have taught me. When I feel I have praised that teacher enough for their bestowing of gifts to me, I kiss the tree and move onto the next. I weep a lot.*

Strangely, this ceremony flows easily. I don't hesitate at all and I don't get stuck or lost the entire time. I don't think I am thinking, rather this is more like the flow of a stream of consciousness. The whole thing flows beautifully, magically, accompanied by the tiny



tinkling of bells as I make my way around the circle without missing a soul that I want to thank. I notice that there are just enough trees. In fact, there are 21 in total and there are exactly 21 teachers I wanted to bring into this circle. Coincidence?

*I sit back down for a long time in the centre looking up through the cathedral like green canopy to sky feeling so very fortunate to have had such good guidance. I ask for anything they may offer me in terms of my own teaching practice, anything at all. Nothing really comes except a sense of completeness. Just to make sure I haven't left anyone out, I make a quick list in my journal of all my great teachers and sure enough, I arrive at that same number.*

Throughout the first morning, I am surprisingly not hungry although I have several times thought about going back to the little breakfast café in Durango that I visited on my way here for the Southwest Special. Then I quietly bring myself to the present. No, I am not really at all hungry, yet. I take another grateful sip of water.

In preparation for sleep that night, I carefully draw a basin of water from the stream and begin to slowly wash my face, neck, hands, legs, and finally run water through my hair. I re-layer for the night feeling like I have new skin. *"She knows how to care for herself"*. Yes, yes, I do. It is a ceremonious act to care for oneself, because (to paraphrase Tom Robbins) you must treat your body like a temple, not a drive-in (1990).

I lay down in my womb-like space on my sleeping bag in the warmth of a June twilight despite this incredible energy I have inside me. I know that I must lie down and just be with that energy, not necessarily move with it. I have it inside me but maybe not the ability to exert it any further outside of myself. Strange, not something I would ever separate out in my thinking before. Containing like this is an experience I have not had very much practice with. Just being with my own energy. It seems that every thought I have right now goes deeper than it has previously, and I notice I can definitely smell more today.

From my laying down position, I can turn to the right just enough to see that the ridge of oak trees are really starting to leaf out now and just make out the faint outline that they make of a giant mouse or squirrel wearing what appears to be an apron (or a cloak?) and holding what seems like a large nut (or gift?) as she faces out into the darkening canyon. Unmistakably, the more I look as the light fades, the more I am convinced, it is a giant squirrel. I know this will and does sound crazy and yet in a non-ordinary state of mind, it also sounds like something I would have expected at this point in time. When the

belly is empty, the mind tends to feast on strange nourishments. I blink several times and adjust my head on my makeshift pillow to see if the image changes at all with my position or angle, but no. “She” remains standing there like an acorn sentinel for the world, meant to show herself to me.

Before falling asleep, I call in any allies and ancestors in silent prayer that may want to come and bear witness, may want to help me keep saying a steady ‘yes’ to the opportunities right in front of me, despite how they may at first appear. An acorn-bearing sentinel. I don’t want to over-analyze or interpret. I want to let wild things —*both inner and outer*—converge, entangle, and deepen. I want to track images like this and wisps of my dreams mixed with up-floating memories as they pad softly at the edges of the morning dew of my awareness. I pray to let my mind surrender to my heart (and its eyes), and to let my heart break —open— further, still. For now, the only advice I receive is, “*time to sleep*”, as I dissolve into the cadence of my beating heart.

### **Sleeping in the Forest**

I thought the earth remembered me,  
she took me back so tenderly,  
arranging her dark skirts, her pockets  
full of lichens and seeds.

I slept as never before, a stone on the riverbed,  
nothing between me and the white fire of the stars  
but my thoughts, and they floated light as moths  
among the branches of the perfect trees.

All night I heard the small kingdoms  
breathing around me, the insects,  
and the birds who do their work in the darkness.  
All night I rose and fell, as if in water,  
grappling with a luminous doom. By morning  
I had vanished at least a dozen times  
into something better.  
(Oliver, 1992, p. 181)



### **Day Two**

I wake up at 5:30 a.m. despite having awoken many, many times in the night to first check where on earth I was, get up to urinate several times and then later due to vivid

dreams about my work at the university. I remember we were selling everything “down to the bone,” and there was no longer any “security” force at work there anymore. A quick first associative thought for my dreams is that perhaps my own ways of knowing are getting rid of what is extraneous, “selling off” what is no longer needed, getting down to the bare bone essentials without need of old guards. Well, *that* doesn’t need to be analyzed!

As I approach the day, nausea sets in and a small nose bleed begins. Thankfully, this one does not last long. I check myself and I am still not hungry but I am significantly weaker this morning and will have to slow my pace down. Wrapped up in my woolly cloak, I gently and gradually make my way to over to the canyon ridge to witness dawn.

*So light and pinkly rosy, Dawn reveals herself to sweet birdsong accompaniment. Her blush turns the tender tips of the Bears Ears, translucent. Crimson light stretches out just across green hills as if I can, for just a brief time, see the passion of the land exposed.*

*Woodpecker begins his steady Morse code rhythm. I wonder what the birds are saying to one another and to other wild things? Wake up! It’s a new day, anything is possible, and it’s not too late to come together, to be a better world. The oak trees look spent from a wild night of dancing, more ragged around their edges. Like me. They do seem to be more like a twilight people. That is their better light.*

*This rugged canyon looks softened, indented as if a giant just got up from a long sleep leaving a deep impression just before setting out to swallow the moon. Nothing looks stony in the gold of morning as fingers of light fill in the spaces left by long shadows on the land. Shadows that are beginning to pull in and sleep themselves now. Soon more light will completely cover them like a bright blanket until the darkness calls them up once again to stretch and lengthen, to show themselves tonight. Shadows are always lying here in the land while we go about our daylight business! While we wake, walk, ride, live, play on their bodies all day long oblivious that they sleep just beneath us, are alive, and always have been there. Good insight.*

Time begins to move in a curious way, sometimes slow (afternoon) and incredible lightning speed (morning), either way, it is all fluid presence, just different viscosities with different textures and feel.

*The sun casts a raw truth on everything as it climbs. Every morning yellow Sunman and pink Ladydawn consummate their love at the edge of the world before parting ways. There is so much love here! It is the original message...yet somehow we have for the most part fallen deaf to it and tried instead to find love in non-alive things, things that require a deadening of the spirit. Why is that attractive to so many? There is no substitute for this real thing.*

*Love lives in these grasses, in wild birdsong, in rush of water, in flowering ones, in rock and bone, in the sun's sweeping glance over landscape, in paws, wings and roots. The poetry of the land does not need classrooms or books or even mentioning! It is felt. It is omnipotent. It remains in all weather, all seasons, for all time...*

*Will I be able to still see with eyes that see love everywhere, with my "heart eyes" once I leave here? And for always? Once they have opened, will they never again close? I pray for that kind of vision to take back with me.*

Twelve minutes of solid plodding to the stone pile today. This is double the time it took me yesterday and it seems even longer (but I used my timepiece to check). Everything requires enormous effort. I can see my buddy has been here and left me a knotted orange rope tied around the large stick. It reminds me of the orange robes of the Hare Krishna monks and I associate this as the kind of prayerful wishes he might send out to me. I move the stick to the other side of the log, tying a small bouquet of wildflowers (mostly found in my camp) round the stick through the rope, laying out on tender flowers on the big log so they will not be missed. I feel teary and so grateful knowing my partner is well and has been here. We are, in a way, in connection still. I feel I am not quite so alone.

I trundle off to go sit on my old rock friend and see what the stream has to say to me today. It seems like I too have a stream that has been running beneath me, always bringing debris, sediment, freshness and news from the sacred snowy mountain of soul. Today, there is more mud, more swelling and swirling. Her course has become wider and wilder. I feel her muddiness, her stirred up ways in me, too. The snowcap on the mountain must be shrinking in this June heat because this stream balloons to accommodate. It loosens and carries downstream chunks of its own shoulders, its churning waters helping to dissolve its banks into liquid form. Oh, how everything changes, (except what doesn't because no change equals death). I revise that—everything *alive* changes. One day, clear and (stream)lined, next day muddy and whelming. Perhaps the next day clear again, who knows? That sounds about naturally right for me too.



### **wild conversations.**

*I am in love with this wild earth and all living beings as cells of that living body.  
The unfurling leaf, the babbling brook, the solid stone, the dancing fire, the dense*

*wood, the azure sky, the slow brown slug, the busy ant who is crawling in mad circles on my tarp, the old grey aspen with its many eyes, the soft sticky mud, the gangly mayfly, the majestic moose, the grand maple, the swimming schools of fishes and the slower cold blooded ones, the feathered ones, the bright stars that watch over me each night, the shifting clouds, the mercurial air, the face of light in all its complexions, the depths of darkness...no end to this spiraling mystery!*

It's a squirrel for sure and from where I am lying down here, she is bearing her most prized gift, a nut as food for the world. And there is no mistake, she is most definitely wearing a cape! Here is my story, as I have come to understand it, gleaned through our squirrel-to-human conversations.

*Perhaps my own insatiable hunger is really a deeper desire to feed myself the feast of love for this wild earth, this place, this body, this now - all soul food. Part of my gift for the world then is, as I understand it, comprised from creating nourishment and nourishing experiences for others (spaces, programs and pedagogies), is "soul food". Yes, sure I love to bake and literally always bring the celebratory aspects of food and eating together to the classroom as we lean in and face some hard tasks together, yet I am aware of a deeper hunger that prevails in the world. "She who helps feed the world by her ability (proclivity?) to cook up emotional stirrings, to heat up the cauldron of consciousness over wild heart fires of enthusiasm and love" ...could that be me?*

*And, this may look nuts! (Am I going nuts by falling into discourse with an oaken squirrel woman?). I know that through simple food, or a simple nourishing gesture there is always a silver thread of love - that same fine line that runs through every living thing. Or could it be the same silken yarn of fabled ages used to weave or knit the world together or the gossamer silk spun by the ancient Spiderwoman to form that most intricate, worldwide web?*

This must be the thread I follow, the one that my own survival depends on. If I don't feed myself properly (metaphorically, psychically, emotionally and physically) I will not be ready and able to give away my particular gifts for the world after all. "*She knows how to care for herself*" is indeed part of that thread, maybe the self-love anchor knot to give this passion of mine enough strength to moor. It is not so easy to avoid the irony of starving oneself off from important self-care while attempting to offer up platters for the world (ergo starving off any real chance of meaningful relationship) especially within psychotherapy and teaching practices where burnout rates due to agency like this (e.g. expensing ourselves) can be high.

Strange but true, Mrs. Squirrel tells me this in a wordless conversation that this is

more of an energetic transference between species, just as red robin does a fly through my camp to remind me that both squirrel (Nutkin) and robin (Red-Breast) have been companions to me from a Beatrix Potter-enchanted (1903; 1902) childhood as soon as I began to know the world through books. This also reminds me to keep dialoguing with my original voice, the voice of my soul, (regardless of geography) and not to rely so heavily on the wisdom of others in books. To trust my deeper intuition which might (as in this case) mean having the courage to share this craziness as a way that just might give others the permissions and the encouragements they need to be equally squirrely! And not least of all, to let what happens in that non-ordinary space together, through compassionate practices, teach us all more.

It has always been my proclivity to see faces everywhere and especially where others may not. Ever since I was small, I remember having a strong sense of being watched, not in a malevolent way, rather in a kind benevolent way, especially in the forest. This cloaked squirrel woman could easily be sneered at or discounted entirely, heck, they might ridicule me as the one who, "*talks to trees!*" She is for me a signifier that I must go beyond rationality, continue to turn toward what might be treated with disdain or too easily labeled by a society bent on dualistic thinking, and to look more closely *into* what presents not just the surface or socially acceptable aspects of things (this includes humans and nature). I vow to see more in things, not simply judge by the covers, rather turn toward what at first may seem silly and senseless, and accept what is different than me. I imagine this will help me to see more of how we are, under closer inspection, all related. I must take this message back to my people through compassion, insights, practices and behaviours, starting with a true love and acceptance of self and the ability to see that we all need love in the first place.

The steady metronome of the cicada tells me it is high noon. The squirrel woman has transformed into a daft but innocent looking fool. I mean it, today and each day after precisely at 12 o'clock (I check my timepiece daily to be sure), just as the winds tend to pick up, the shape of the oak leaves takes on the demeanor of a clown wearing a tall fez with an open and laughing mouth. He is definitely carrying a bunch of flowers!

Again, I squint and shift several times, only to realize that this character is also familiar especially to one whose name is derived from Latin *hilarious* and who teaches

Laughter Yoga!<sup>51</sup> Perfect. Humour brings perspective to cut through the serious glare of the middle of the day, just when I need it most. It provides a levity that is welcome and just as sacred as the solemn nature of the other “conversations” taking place. The holy fool, like the fool in the tarot deck, is one archetype I am no stranger to and readily embody. What myths and fables have espoused for centuries is that when it comes to silliness, wisdom is not an opposite at all, rather if we persist in our foolishness, wisdom (often) ensues.



### **a council of elders.**

I make time to revisit my purpose circle but now it is no longer simply ceremonial space held by my aspen “teachers”, it has appropriately transformed for me into a *Council of Elders*. This now appears to me to be a place of both innocence and wisdom where all things can be witnessed and mirrored. It feels reverential to be here, to feel the surprising intimacy of the collective knowing and age-old strength of these trees. They are in all different stages of shedding their tough bark exteriors to reveal ancient scarified Sanskrit written by insects getting under their skin! I get the sense that if I am willing to just sit here, I will continue to receive instruction on ways to start living my story into the world. I want to learn how to *become* the story; rather than just tell and retell it, how to bring it to life through living practices.

In thoughts that land in my consciousness like a mirror reflection of what I see, the “council” *tells* me to find ways to strip away my old bark of protection to reveal the sacred truth living (and scribing a life for itself) underneath me. This will be the beginning of what I am to give away within the banquet of sharing a deep appreciation for the beauty of each story and each storyteller. A loving pedagogy. I know from my psychotherapy training that *healing is more about being seen and heard, not solved*. Sitting here, drinking in everything, I am *seeing and being seen* at the same time. I experience such intensity of the universe as an ever-expanding presence (breaking over me like a great wave of vivid awakesness). Such psychedelic brightness all around me. Suddenly, I am within a million facets of miraculous

---

<sup>51</sup> Laughter Yoga was established by Dr. Madan Kataria over 20 years ago while he was doing research on the effects of laughter on health and wellness. Today there are over 6,000 laughter clubs in 60 countries that teach levity as social medicine for wellness, societal cohesion and fun. Kataria continues to teach and spread joy throughout the world with a particular focus in fields such as social justice and prison reform, health and wellness, aging and community, and education (Retrieved from [www.laughteryoga.org/english](http://www.laughteryoga.org/english), 2005).

kaleidoscopic design where layers of every colour, sound, smell, pulsate and swell outwardly. The volume of everything is turned up! I cannot tell where I begin or end within this extraordinary intricacy of complexity. I begin to feel nauseous from the overwhelm of this saturation, sick with the extreme rawness of exposure where even the tiniest movement to lie down is amplified in a hyperbolic world.

#### **SERIOUS SIGNS OF FASTING**

1. Low blood sugar, feeling really weak and can't stay awake.
2. Headache that won't go away.
3. Fainting.
4. Constant dizziness – light flashes.
5. Constant vomiting – can't hold water down, vomiting blood.
6. Blood in stool.
7. Any of the above signs, return to base camp immediately.

I might want to add to this list...

8. Talking to trees that look like mother squirrels wearing capes!
9. Afternoon council hallucinations
10. ...but for these last two stay where you are, don't return to base camp.

How serious is this to my sanity? Somehow, I understand it is strangely and more accurately, *essential* to it. But that could be the ketosis talking...rather than a secret kinesiology of things. Or maybe both?



#### **Day Three**

“His seeing was never the same again. The connections between things had changed.” (Hejmadi in Sewall, 1999, p. 106)

I awake on the last full day on my solo journey to an enchanted world of vibration and colour; softer in the morning light than yesterdays over the top revelation. The field to the west just beside my “bedroom” has suddenly bloomed into a type of waving yellow gladness I have never witnessed before, as far as the eye can see. Yellow! I am unpetalled, opened by this scene of overnight miraculousness. I can feel it deep in my chest as my heart expands to take in the muchness of this beauty.

Yellow! That is not nearly enough of a word to express this buttery sea. I yell it out! Yelloooooow! My heart echoes in happy response. This calls for celebration!

I get up carefully, after substantial eye gulping on this gorgeous scene, and begin to wash from head to toe with very cold spring water. I suddenly realize that before the new



can come on, every single point of contact first needs to be soaked. Before the snake can regrow her new skin, she must first be exposed, saturated, made fully vulnerable to the world. There is no shelter from the world for the ones who want to (re)grow, (re)place themselves. It strikes me as strange that we also refer to skin as a “hide”.

I anoint myself with oil and stretch out in the sun. I feel like that lean and long stretchy cat of my dream—full of wellness and healing power, old binds and constraints removed. I put on only my cape, naked underneath and proceed with my now empty portable sink out to collect wildflowers. First of course, I ask if picking some of these lovelies for ceremony is allowed and I listen to the field a long time. I eventually believe I hear, “*Yes, we love a good ceremony, we are perfect adorners for such things*”.

There are deep and abiding rhythms in life, innate creative aspects where spontaneous cooperation exists between all living things no matter how small. Everything knows the great thrust of creativity that started with the Big Bang and has continued for 13.7 billion years, advancing, creating, all the time. This creative push lies beneath existence, it is the miracle of life. These sprouts are inwardly connected to the inner flowering of the earth, to the inner world of earth.

*Flowers are like fountains of colour and sweetness from the earth's soul manifest in petal, stamen, stalk and leaf that have pushed up from unknowing (in the dark soils) to knowing (in the bright sunshine), constantly being surprised by themselves. Yes, this is a field of surprise, gladness and more surprise.*

*While I am outwardly connected to the soil, I am inwardly connected as well to the soul of the world, which is of course, all around me here not just within the inner realms. My heart blossoms in response to this happiness in full bloom making my love more conscious for all of the world to feel in a inward/outward dance.*

I proceed carefully, moving across the field where I begin to see other flora have opened in the night, wild blue delphiniums have joined the festive fray, an entanglement of jewel tone sweet peas with mountain dandelions and aster, and another yellow flower I do not know the name of yet. So many happy faces shining in the sunlight. It strikes me that for many, today will be their dying day, which correlates with the height of their blossom, and they are nearest to death, tomorrow, a puffball. I pick slowly, tenderly, careful not to pick too many, or choose the tallest or most perfectly formed flowers so that these ones may broadcast their seeds and regenerate themselves to ensure a strong future stock.

I proceed across the field to my purpose circle of aspen, toward the Council of Elders.



**body of the earth.**

The goal of life  
is to make your heartbeat  
match the heartbeat of the universe  
to match your nature with Nature.  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 148)

I want to offer myself back to the earth. I spread my big warm cape down like a woolly tarp to lie upon. Like a body garland of gems reflecting their translucent faces into the light, I carefully arrange flower-jewels from the field in their wondrously-optimistic-hope-for-the-world-ness, all over my naked body. From stem to stern, artfully covering the spaces between my toes, along the lines of my legs and thighs, to circles around my belly and chest, up to my lips, nose, eyes, forehead and at last, to the top of my crown, I lay out these emanations of light and sky and sweet possibility all the way up as I slowly lay down. Quiet and full joy vibrates along the meridians of my body while whole ant communities write flower maps on my skin with their tiny feet. Not bothered one bit, I continue to sink into the earth.

Now rising and falling up through me from the earth, comes this deep chant...

*I am body of the Earth,  
I am body of the Earth,  
will I flower today? Oh!*

*I am body of the Earth,  
sacred body of the Earth,  
will I flower my way...? Oh!*

*You are body of the earth,  
you are body of the earth,  
will you flower your way...?*

I somehow know the words without thinking them, I know the tune without having heard it ever before (at least to my recollection in the moment). I keep singing and singing this over and over, until I realize the ceremony is complete. Time to gently brush everything and everyone off my skin, thank the aspen circle for it's witnessing, and bow to

the canyon beyond as I slowly stand up. Hands pressed in prayer above my head, eyes turned skyward through the tree tops, I send blessed thanks for this holy/day, for the receipt of this earth recital, this song of flowering, perceived through me.

I am no longer tired at all! I feel totally energized as I wrap myself in my cape and am about to leave the circle when a yellow butterfly flits into the centre and back out again. Soul in flight, on yellow wings. Yes, *now*, this ceremony is complete. I leave trailing this tendril of a thought, "*Can I love my body as if it is the body of the earth itself?*"

Because of course it is.

I take my things back to my camp and go back to the canyon edge to sit awhile and let what has just happened wash over me. I am a bit worried about my energy tomorrow for packing up and out of here so early. Maybe not too early, say 6- 6:30 a.m. to make my way up to the stone pile by 7. Then together, my buddy and I can climb the last steep hill. But for right now, I am still here and will turn my mind back to a final ceremony that calls me on into this last night. First though, I need a nap!



### **time in death lodge.**

I awake again around five o'clock and don't have too much energy at this point yet notice that I am nowhere near hungry and have not even thought about food or hunger for some time now, maybe a day or so. Amazing. I wonder if I will ever want (or need) to eat again? It seems so foreign to me now and I certainly don't want to break this spell I am under. I must remember to drink more water. I need many gallons a day to keep my pee clear and copious. Thankfully it still is. *She knows how to take care of herself.*

Due to fire restrictions in the area, I decide that instead of the Ordeal of the Sinking Fire, (a letting go ceremony suggested back at camp that helps prepare the ground for the last all-night vigil), I will instead hold the Ordeal of the Deep Burial ceremony (a name I make up on the spot). This will be meant as a form of dedication to all of the parts of myself that I would like to let go so I may follow along the trail of the "*perfectly myself*" experience I had at the brook on the first day. It is meant as an honouring space to anything about myself that I no longer need in its current form and allowing it to die off with grace. To bury these aspects of me so that they may have the benefit of necessary dark workmanship and

the glorious nourishment that earth is. I believe this may be another way to mature myself. This will not be like burying something deeper I don't like about myself in order to ignore it, rather, it is a ceremony designed to appreciate something I once needed and now can lovingly, let go, give back to earth.

I consider death an ally. Death is right here, with us all the time in fact because we eat death every day. It feeds the living. Nothing on our plates is alive; it has sacrificed itself so that we could live. Sounds familiar. Sounds like the grace we used to speak at the dining room tables of my youth. Grace. There it is again.

Indeed, I know that I need to die to certain ways of enculturation and divisiveness in order to live more full heartedly and embrace impermanence, our fleeting preciousness. There is no time to waste! Can I see difficulties as invitations, challenges as entry points into a deeper union with the self? Can I lose what I have known as an initiation into the unknown, open to fears as portals to identity and simply, surrender? I think these are all good starting places towards integration and wholeness. Ensler wrote (2013) "The question is not: Will you die? The question is which you needs to die off, so that the new self can live and thrive in a new, loving world" (p. 180).

I begin by finding a long thin dead branch and drag it into my circle. I start breaking off many smaller twigs, snapping off pieces of near equal length. Then, I set about digging a hole. Just as the sun is going down, I again read my prayers out loud in the dying light and then one by one, I name —out loud— the ones of me (and their behaviours), I would most like to heal.

The old skin has to be shed  
before the new one can come.

If we fix on the old, we get stuck.  
When we hang onto any form,  
we are in danger of putrefaction...

...Destruction before creation...

Every process involves  
breaking something up.

The earth must be broken  
to bring forth new life,

If the seed does not die,  
there is no plant.

Bread results  
from the death of wheat.

Life lives on lives...  
(Campbell, 1991, pp. 18-19).

There are no less than 33 things I want to transform about myself. 33! That must be a record. Apparently, my over-achieving tendencies extend to my shadow aspects too! I realize I am shaking badly. I have quickly written them all down so as not to forget what I will bury. They simply outpour like dammed up water that is finally getting a break. Here we all are, 33 of us, ready to die together. These things have always been with me it seems. Some are great holdbacks, some have shown me a lot of strength and power. And some are just along for the ride. I am considering some I will even miss. All weigh heavy in their familiarity. All keep me from living the life that wants to be lived through me. I continue to tremble despite the warmth of this summer evening.

It feels sacred to acknowledge these attributes of myself, first on paper, then to speak them each out loud as I take a small twig and break it in two to represent a break from each one and in succession bury them into the healing deeps of earth. Soul to soil, soil to soul. I weep long and hard, recognizing the worth of each one as I pray for transformation and for the kind of alchemy that will take these basal aspects of me and transform them into some kind of gold I can share with others. Breaking out from old patterns *is* my heroic journey in its foremost desire to light up consciousness (Jung, 1953/1968), but it is so damn painful, so hellish and putrid to admit and remit these things. I continue to weep and wail, rocking back and forth.

Then, after a few minutes, there it is. It dawns on me that by turning toward something and then literally turning it completely around is to see the gift (the gold) *in* the resistance, *in* the greed, *in* the obstinacy and vanity, *in* the judgment, *in* the escapism and addictions, *in* the defeatist attitudes and the delusions, *in* the forcefulness and *in* the laziness, *in* the oversleeping, *in* the obsessions, *in* the stifling fears, *in* the arrogance and the distance, *in* the mistrust and the worry, *in* the self-sabotage, *in* the thoughtlessness, *in* the anxiety, *in* the over-planning and over doing, *in* the know-it-allism, *in* the dependencies and

the deceit, *in* the forgetfulness. It is all there, *in* the wound, and *in* the pain. Our incompleteness is our authenticity! It is not worthwhile to try to toss away these things, rather, it is in the reclamation work of diving straight down *into* the wreckage of them toward the invisible treasure surprisingly salvaged. Again, same coin, different sides. This is becoming my common theme.

*No death, no life, no transformation, no change. I must learn to keep dying...*

*I must be willing to let go of the life I planned in order to live the life that is waiting for me to live it fully. I will become more myself if I am willing to face and accept, acknowledge, trust and forgive by telling my truths and my stories. From there—compassion and a kind of understanding that it doesn't matter what has happened rather, what I do with what has happened— that counts.*

*This is where I call on Arthurian courage to go into the dark forest path of my life to seek the mysterious golden chalice that lies in the hardest places ...of me (held captive in the fortress of the resistor, my ego). This is the living myth of the Holy Grail of the Knights of the Round Table, this is authentic journey of the heroine to soul, to the most fulfilling state of being completely and utterly human.*

*I am reminded "grail" comes from "gradually" like something that emerges over time (a lifetime perhaps?). And like the legend of Parzifal, I now know that the most value is in the search of the mysterious object of the quest, not in the thing itself. It is in the life itself of the one who belongs to the mysteriousness of soul and in so doing belongs to the mysteriousness of the soul of the world, apprenticing to something older and greater that includes yet transcends the one to include the many.*

*What others think of me must be put aside now. I must die in order to live. When I do, things shift, veils lift, the universe will open doors where there once were none. And these doors are meant only for the one waiting at the threshold to pass through, here and now.*

Campbell (2004) called the portal to bliss "the active door" meant as "an archetypal image that communicates the sense of going past judgment" (p.115). I know now that each of these harshest aspects of myself had precisely something to contribute to my own genius, to my particular way of giving back to the world through my giveaway. In fact, it might be that in order to be alive I cannot and *should not* try to side step these inevitabilities as they are what is necessary in living out the full human story, the one that is currently unavailable for viewing (Prechtel, 2001). And for the most part, in terms of this ceremony here tonight, I must first be willing to give them away in a sense (no longer try to

control them) with the realization that they are never gone, rather (and I hope) they will be transformed and integrated in some other way. They will not remain as the opposite to what I want, but instead become (through the burial and change process) an intimate to what I need to become a full participant in life.

Campbell (1991) also wisely noted, “Where you stumble, there lies your treasure” (p. 24). I have come to know that I cannot use my daylight thinking to see into the darkness that is deep, to locate treasure that is out of sight, buried under old liabilities and limitations, therefore, (like the Parzifal myth) there must a lancing from “the dark arrow” that must “enter our flank” (Shaw, 2011, p. 195) that accompanies this courtship of extreme love. We have to bleed out. There must be pain and sacrifice, real death, in order for there to be life. I experience this as a profoundly felt shift—heartbreaking, really. In making conscious what I had thought I needed to be rid of entirely, the energy trapped in the negative trait is the same energy required to be turned upside down, sliced open and bled out, in order to expose the resources underneath (the gold within me) for integration, toward wholeness, or else I will forever remain but a shadow of my truer self!

I know now I am onto something here. I vow to keep tracking (and overturning) these seemingly undesirable energies (despite how they present themselves), in order to know what lies beneath, to find what wants to be expressed. And, even if it seems like maybe not so much has happened here right now, I sense something is definitely coming for me. I sit a long time. I listen a long time. I re-landscape the earth where the hole has been, bow deeply, kiss the ground in thanks and take my leave on this, my last night.



### **shadowlands.**

“If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is : infinite.” (Blake, 1996, p. 90)

As evening begins to descend upon the final day and long shadows become secret striations on the meadow, I feel a slight chill and wrap myself in my cloak including pulling up its great hood. I begin to wander out across the meadow toward the leafing oaks with my candle lantern in hand just as dusk descends.

Halfway across, I catch a glimpse of my own shadow. I instantly recognize the

cloaked figure! It is the Hermit himself. The hooded outcast that lives as edge-dweller of the forest in between worlds—entirely not fit for either and perfectly suited to both—replete with lantern for lighting the way for others (as all teachers must). It is she who is just as comfortable traversing dark places as well as spaces of light, with her one foot in the world of humans and culture—in this case, (edge)ucation— and one foot firmly planted in the musky, muddy, root sprawling, wilds.

And then this literal thought arrives—the archetype *lives* in shadow!

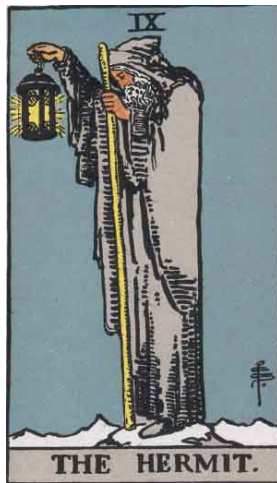


Figure 6

The Hermit Archetype

A depiction of the Hermit archetype from the tarot card deck (de Laurence, 1918, p. 57).



### ***archetypes embodied.***

And it is only those who can traverse the between worlds that carry with them the balance of the sacred conjuncture of divine and human, and the power to bring back to the people this knowing of both and all. (Houston, 2009, p. 39)

The Hermit (IX) is the ninth trump of the Major Arcana in the tarot<sup>52</sup> card deck. Tarot has been commonly used by mystics and occultists since the 15th century for playing games and for attempts at divination or as a spiritual guide map (de Laurence, 1918).

---

<sup>52</sup> Like regular playing cards, tarot decks (with 78 unique cards in total), contain four suits (called Minor Arcana) and in addition to 21 pictogram trump cards (called Major Arcana) with a single card known as The Fool, that acts as the top trump card.



The archetype of The Hermit is closely associated with the hero's journey, with its inner search for deeper understanding through a retreat from the world, inward gazing, deep and lengthy reflection, solitude and guidance. The Hermit lives what could be described as an interdisciplinary life wandering between worlds. She must withdraw from the everyday pace and deluge of society to become comfortable in her aloneness and to know herself well. This enables her to bring her full self in service to others upon her return. Sounds strangely hermeneutical, even heuristic to me. Campbell (1949/2008) wrote,

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow (hu)man. (p. 23) (brackets mine)

This mythopoetic forest dweller is the one called to leave the comforts of home (representing the external world), to wander into the darkness of the forest (representing Underworld or soul). Armed only with insight and compassion, he must meet the mysteries (the dragon and or beasts), withdraw for a time to contemplate and make meaning, find mastery and knowledge (treasure) then integrate and bring forth lessons (gifts) learned on the return by shining the lantern of illumination (knowing). Jung considered this occupation to be central to our humanness when he said, "As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being" (Genn, 2013, n.p.).

Until we identify the energy node of the archetype within us, the larger story we are destined to live, retrieve and embody as part of greater selves through conscious integration, will forever follow us (and live) in shadow! Aha! How a literal experience can so beautifully translate into wisdom! Archetypes are found in shadow. It was darkness that illuminated this truth.



***intimates not opposites.***

"For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in all of us, to go forth and reconquer the Holy Lands." (Thoreau, 1862/1982, p. 295)

The Hermit can be found walking the shadowlands, moving back and forth across the thresholds between light and dark, between the human and more than human worlds, speaking in languages that have been forgotten, conversing with all species. The Hermit, the namesake of Hermeticism, moves easily between the rational mind and the imaginative mythos, just as she moves along the edge between town and forest as partial outcast uncovering terror and beauty in equal parts only to finally realize they are —when metabolized properly—one and the same, not opposites. Once that knowledge is integrated into her way of being, she then becomes the personification or embodiment of the lesson herself. She becomes more herself, more of who she really is meant to be. The Hermit has metabolized the lessons of life to the point that she *is* the lesson incarnate.

“One thing is absolutely essential to the notion of archetypes: their emotional, possessive effect, their bedazzlement of consciousness” (Hillman, 1989 p. 23). But, a potentially dangerous aspect of this is that one can become possessed by the gravitational pull of a life of complete solitude and isolation, to become wholly withdrawn from the world never to return, never to shine the light of knowledge in order for others to find their way and their true natures. In essence, there is the risk of going dim and like a stifled flame, going out. There must be equal desire to be in the human world in order to safely bring this energy back. The Hermit is the one who makes the path by walking the path, creating with each step. The hood is significant because it both protects, insulates and sometimes partially hides him from the world, yet this garment must be cast off in the final steps of the return in order to guarantee a full rejoining with the human world and a clear declaration of revealing of the truth.

I know in my soul that I most closely identify with The Hermit, that my deepest ancestral ties to the forest come from that same ancient energy of traversing and conversing, that contemplation and introspection, that long dark journey that I have always been on before I was ever here. I have known this for a long time especially in graduate school when I donned a burlap sack with a huge hood (fashioned from big coffee sacks) and took up this part (or rather found myself being taken up as the hooded figure) for a presentation on embodiment and learning.

What felt like a supremely deep joy akin to homecoming happened for me as I stepped through the woods, draped and caped, listening, keen, awake and alive. It felt like

an ancient thrill. This is why I have never felt silly in my cape, I know it is part of who I have always been and am meant to be as I take up the charge to live into the mythology that is the living story of my life. Merton (2002), the religious mystic wrote, “We make ourselves real by telling the truth” (p. 188) and, I might add, by *embodying* the truth of who we really are when it comes to these powerful energies (ancient patterns) of our true natures (innate patterns). Archetypes are that pattern of patterns.

Merton’s religious training would have helped him to know this because as a contemplative he looked into things like the etymology of religion itself which stems from Fr. *religare* meaning “to bind” or the “bounds between humans and Gods” (etymonline.com). When we become more tied to the earth through these energy patterns and by virtue of that become enlarged by them, we are touching soul to soul, and can return to tell the real truth of experience. The edge where we most seamlessly bind ourselves to Others is an exemplification of that early etymology and acts as an antidote for our times. Simple as that, no dogma, no politics, just plain old connection. In that vein, I am a most devout disciple of the world this morning!

And landscape archetypes, like rainbows that lead to pots of gold, or paths that veer off into dark woods, broken branches that point the way, etc. are all laid out before us if we have the eyes to see “where we are and where we are going” (Sewall, 1999, p. 157), if we are wise enough to allow our inner intuitive compass to guide us there. On the way to *there*, there are many tracks and signs to follow such as our natural leanings and attractions which define the arc of the trajectory or purpose of our souls in relationship to earth. When we “align ourselves with larger forms and forces”, feel the energy of a place and the “ecological powers” held there, (feel the “gods” or spirits that reside there), we become “visible through the phenomena, through the patterning held by the land” (p. 155). It follows then, that in these places, more and more numinous and synchronistic experiences will be likely to occur for.

I realize I have needed this expansive of a view in order to broaden my own worldview. This whole place to me is a geomantic map where souls exist and meet in conviviality and conversation on the edge of wonder and imagination. This is the crossroad between human and other-than-human worlds, between above and below where, if I follow threads, dreams, images and intuitions, shadows and light, and listen deep for a long time, I

may be lucky enough to encounter my own soul. But, most of us now are cut off from our own mythologies and earlier innocence and wonder, refusing to embody the energies (archetypes) that court us or hear the calls that deeply sing in our bones and in our blood. In turn, many are indeed cut off from the gods, from the ties that bind us to *anima mundi* which many depth psychologists believe accounts for rampant outbreaks of neuroses and depression in contemporary life (Hillman, 1972, 1996). Missing my soul on the trail may mean missing out on knowing what larger service I am called to perform, what purpose I am to play in the scheme of things.

This *is* lived experience, an inhabited, lived experience. This experience is not meant to explain the world as if from outside of myself, but to give voice to the world soaked in life force from my situation within it, recalling my participation in the here-and-now, rejuvenating a sense of wonder at the fathomlessness of things, events and powers that surround. For example, Shiprock reminds me it's time for me to set sail and live my life as if it were the precious gift that it is. I must (re)member (renew my membership with the living world each day) and bring encouragement, provide real sustenance along the way for others. Not as a daughter of the earth who knows something others don't, rather from one who loves the world madly, acknowledges the soul of the world, holds and shines her lantern of light while traversing the shadows and navigates a way to live in fulfillment of the obligation to respond to the call of belonging.



#### **Day Four – Solo's End**

More deer this morning. They love the oak forest to the west. They are watching me as I rise. I have always felt kinship to the deer-people. Deer are my spirit guides that have (during other encounters in earlier times) always shown me bright wisdom beyond words. I see and am seen by them everywhere I go.

I realize that although the final night was supposed to have been an all-night vigil, I did drift off to sleep around midnight. I couldn't stay awake. I had the intention of befriending the dark, of rattling until my rattle rattled me as the fat stars came out. Once night fell, I stayed out in the field for as long as I possibly could. I rattled for something to stir until at one point, I did hear a deep rumbling in the not-so-faraway bushes to the north of my small camp. Instead of summoning my bravery, I scampered off to the safety of my

sleeping hollow. I kept watch with wide-eyed terror for some time but must have finally fallen off to sleep. I remember thinking just before I did that my heart was beating far too fast and then I remembered that rapid heart rate is an expected sign of the fast itself. I must have relaxed enough because I slept soundly through the rest of the night.

Now, I am back at the edge of the world witnessing morning one last time before I pack up my temporary home and head on back up the three hills to join my buddy and migrate back to camp. My last edgy morning begins with courageous bands of orangey pink clouds streaming to the east. Packing up can wait. The rest of the story can wait. I am here now in this uneven earthly beauty. It is important to watch the sun rise.

I am bundled up wearing all the clothing I have as it is cool outside and I am chilled to the bone in my weakened state, when suddenly, two ears appear above the bushes ten feet in front of me on the slope. A young deer! What luck! We face each other for just a moment and then somehow we startle each other (was it me?) and he jumps away only to more slowly move off, munching small hedges as he goes east toward the sun. This is why I had to come here this morning; this young one and I had to meet in our startled curiosity. I felt such a surge of possibility pulse through me in this vis-à-vis experience (McKay, 2001) that moment of “electric pause”, a moment of pure *duende*, where an erotic experience floods through and fluidly (in)forms, and (re)minds me of a deeper kinship with all. In mythological terms this is known as a moment when the gods wink, a numinous experience with Other where we feel seen *as we are seeing*. (Re)spect. Seeing and being seen. Mirroring wildness through our own wild eyes and seeing ourselves mirrored in the wild eyes of Other. Is there anything so quietly exulting?

Now that my eyes have adjusted to this expanse, this long view of the world, I wonder will I be more apt at longitudinal thinking? How will I readjust to small scapes again when I go home? This place is etched into my soul, its truth and beauty, its wide purview will, I believe, stay with me. I have been a part of its life and it has been a part of mine. I hope we will be infused in each other forever in some way. Definitely there has been no tourism here, as I have looked into things rather than just merely at them. The images I am filled with are not static or “taken” from here like photographs, rather they continue to “give” off a vibrant and tremendous living energy, intact in my mind’s eye.



is it not a dark mirror  
of my own shifting moods  
and confusions?

This vastness *is* my vastness,  
This blue sky  
the same wide blue  
truth I have  
come to know

What can multifarious aspen  
eyes tell me  
about being watchful  
and bearing silent witness?  
And what can this lustrous orb of  
red berry recommend  
of the ripening  
in me?

Stone monuments  
stand guard  
like the fortified ones  
of me  
(only now  
from a great distance)  
This edge has become  
the sheer inevitably  
of my own descent  
to soul

What might I have missed  
not seeing  
the free fall of sparrow  
as my own  
heart's delight in flight?  
What have I not learned  
of quietude with  
-out studying  
the long, slow traverse  
of snail?  
Does the tenacious ant  
in her busyness embody  
my same frantic pace?  
And the fly  
in his single-mindedness  
my inability to let go of

getting it  
(right)

I hear the yelping of a dog pack  
and take it to be the same  
brutish outbursts of insistence  
I can at times act out  
Their lonely howls  
my solo sadness

I wonder,  
what do shadows reveal  
of the mysterious and dark  
lengths of me?  
Morning blushes in  
her pinkness like a dawn  
of ruby awakening  
arising at my brink  
The sweet chirp  
of cricket echoes  
my steady contentment.  
And the unwavering  
commitment of moon  
—in all her phases—the same  
fullness of authenticity  
in me

Tonight  
I am  
desert and mountain  
field and oak  
stream and sky  
taking on human form  
Red rock, grasses  
leaves and petals  
silent places, ancient  
waters, omniscient sky  
I am wildness  
personified

To know  
and be known  
is as sweet as  
sweet light falling  
like a golden dusk  
of love shimmering



in me.

### **What to Remember – Part II**

Sweet light is falling gently.

The canyon is the chasm between worlds,  
between action and inaction,  
between wake and sleep.

The hole before the whole,  
the divisions and the downward slopes  
that I have slipped into,  
the natural undulations of land  
and sky, shadow and light,  
indistinguishable  
from my own deep canyon  
of longing,  
my own  
gorge(ous) heart.

Earth is fecund,  
emerald trees, soft  
carpets of needles  
and duff,  
green and  
clean to the bone,  
to the marrow  
of truth.

This  
inexplicable place  
a magnificent prominence  
infuses me,  
*is me.*

Here,  
expanded, purged  
so the soul may live.  
Cut-away from  
the extraneous, dross  
burned off,  
gold shimmers  
impossibly, becoming  
the riches to take

back for the world.

Commit to magnificence,  
 Pour yourself out to  
 empty to a flood  
 of earth's goodness.  
 Release divisions between  
 things and entertainments  
 that feed malignancies  
 and inertia.

Stars remind  
 us to shine.  
 Full presence,  
 full creative  
 radiance,  
 full breath,  
 full  
 heart,  
 Full fills  
 destiny.

A man tracks himself through life. One should be always on the trail of one's own deepest nature. For it is the fearless living out of your own essential nature that connects you to the Divine. (Thoreau in Richardson, 1986, p. 291)



### **the bottom of the world.**

Within Siddhartha there slowly grew and ripened the knowledge of what wisdom really was and the goal of his long seeking. It was nothing but a preparation of the soul, a capacity, a secret art of thinking feeling and breathing thoughts of unity at every moment of life. This thought matured in him slowly...harmony, knowledge of the eternal perfection of the world, and unity. (Hesse, 1951, p. 107)

In this high mountain space teeming with the kinds of questions that have “no right to go away” (D. Whyte, personal communication, 2012), I stepped through a stone-portal and caught glimpses of the essence of things, felt faint stirrings of the mythic, of something greater that belongs outside of notions of time and spaces, connects with something more ancient out beyond our world.

Just as the Thoreau so well knew, “human nature in general is revealed to each person through his own nature in particular” (Richardson, 1986, p. 298). I let my particular nature roam free and be particular here. As I wandered in a non-ordinary state, I touched down into an experience of touching the wildness of the world. In a most sacred of experiences, I lived my questions in the inbetweenness of things, in the gap spaces where I could more readily see myself (physically and psychically) patterned after world itself, and where invisibles were made visible through senses and feeling. I lived into *a livingness of things*.

Your wholeness cascades into many shapes.  
 You run like a herd of luminous deer.  
 and I am dark, I am forest.  
 (Rilke, 1996, p. 6)

So much was revealed that I still cannot fully say. Uncovering insights and personal truths, inexplicable and breathtaking beauty, interpreting impressions and complexions, arriving at inklings of understanding, holding ambiguities, and delving more deeply down into psyche in search for connections and interwoven relationships of web and root, branch and sky was a wild dance of back and forth, inside and out. This was all just a beginning. I am sure of it.

“In the Navajo traditions” writes Laura Sewall (1999), “things are conceived as paired powers not made opposites, Night with Day, Woman with Man, East with West...each need each other to make the whole” (p. 130). Over four days, I carefully untethered my thoughts from much of what they had become so fastened to, and my emphasis shifted onto the energetic nature of things and their sympathetic parallels. I came to abide by an ecology of *pairings rather than paradoxes*, where it is necessary to turn toward what is dark or most unlikely (yet is both utterly strange *and* hauntingly familiar at once) in order to reclaim what is necessary for completeness. Wholes, in their elegant replication of the patterns of living systems have become a gestalt of the human maturation process. I saw everything open before me, flowing in and through me, filling in my gaps. This has been terrifying and beautiful, at once.

And I took deep satisfaction in savoring a sometimes more gradual and delicious understanding that arose at the edges of my consciousness like the slow dawn of morning. I gazed for long hours into the giant mirror of the world and caught sight of the silver truth

of earth's wisdom. Sometimes, it showed me things I did not want to see in myself, held up painful visions that offered me a sobering reflection but always it offered surprisingly accurate and potent intelligence. I found a new directness with the world. I found my "mythic ground" (Shaw, 2011, p. xxiii) living close to the mysteries in and outside of my self. Some of those mysteries unraveled for me while others became complex and out of reach, yet no matter, the experience became a perfectly imperfect result, in and of itself.

I discovered deep joy from the indulgence of an untrammelled freedom of the "aesthetics of self" (Foucault, 1973, p. 245), as I rolled around and played in the deep, sticky, dark mud of it all rather than attempting to reach any particular end. What was reached was a direct ritualized experience in the Underworld of soul, a tapping into the wellspring—the source of the collective consciousness toward unity and communion, through relation and location.

Such immersions create "a mystical place where you are so deeply inside your body, inside the inside of the cavern that is your body, so deep inside that you scrape the bottom of the world" (Enslar, 2013, p. 163). *The bottom of the world* is the best meditation ground, the best place for communion (and soulful communication) to occur. Everything was animated and alive, felt through "a nonphysical touching" (p.139) in a realm of extensions and embeddedness where the whole world is soul "speaking" through a hermeneutics of mystery (that I sense will be unraveling in me for some time, if not the rest of my days).

I began (or resumed?) my most fierce, loving and *feeling* conversation with soul, the Beloved, where I believe the greatest chance for true and marvelous lifelong friendship lives. I have it seems, quite innocently, been following the poet David Whyte's (1997) advice to:

Hold to your own truth  
at the center of the image  
you were born with...(p. 24)

as I pull my cape around me to mind my life and keep walking out toward the starlit and windy edges of world to gather more light for my return.

Now I know why people worship, carry around  
magic emblems, wake up telling dreams  
they teach to their children: the world speaks.  
The world speaks everything to us.

It is our only friend.  
(Stafford, 1994, p. 3)



**crossing (back) over.**

Furthermore, we have not even to risk adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us, The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path and where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god. And where we thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the centre of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world. (Campbell, 1988, p. 123)

Time to go. I carefully pack up all my gear (in slow motion) being careful to thank every single thing I brought with me for its purpose and help, tucking it all away safely for the long climb back. I scan my site for any errant items and then begin a methodical re-landscaping —swishing up grasses, re-scattering woody debris that I had cleared away for comfort, and I extend my deep gratitude for this place that was my home by offering a prayer of thanks (especially for this particular sleeping spot that was both earth womb and perfect vantage point for cross species communication for three long days and nights). My heart is full with appreciation for the generosity of spirit I have felt here, for all of the gifts I have received. I also pray to be able to see with these soft eyes, in this way, always. That once opened, I plead, let my eyes never close to this astonishment again, never close to the unity of the world. I pray again for that vision to accompany me home.

I put one arm through my pack and carefully, balancing the bulk on a small berm, I stand below and take on the other strap feeling the weight which seems so much heavier than three days earlier. I steady myself, distributing the weight with my posture and finally straighten up fully, confident I have the core strength needed to carry on. I begin to walk along the bank of the stream but before too long, I turn back toward the canyon one last time, to the field, now mostly covered in puffballs, to the leafing oak ridge, and to the tall and elegant aspen circle and blow a big kiss. I will walk upward across three hills, large fields and woodland patches to meet my stone pile buddy at our spot and then we will make our final ascent back into camp, up into the world of humans from a world of mythos and soul. I am shot through with grief at leaving and yet I know, I *must* return in order to

fully live. I have loved this part of my life perhaps the best of all so far. And yes, thankfully, my early fears are now confirmed. I *will* never be the same.

*The enchanted world is an unbroken and sacred experience that was here long before I came and continues long after I leave. Something of me remains here though and some of this place I will pack out with me, carry always. We have exchanged ourselves with each other and will never quite both be as we were. Yet I am also picking up a sense of such familiarity that perhaps this place has been in part, in me all along, and I in it. Perhaps this was a reunion of an eminent scale. That could be why we chose each other. Someone once said that lovers don't find each other, rather they are in each other from the start. The rest is (re)cognition. Just as the world enters me daily through food, water, air, dreams and images, I literally opened to the world as it was and it opened to me as I was and in doing so we poured into each other. Like the mythic serpent ouroboros, swallowing its own tail, with every bite we take, every breath we breathe, the world is eating and breathing itself.*

*In this way, what we know of our kindredness, our intimate sense of deep relatedness, is shared in common flesh, becomes our fleshy obligation of belonging (Caputo, 1993). A magnificent gestalt, the circle of connection, the circle of life. Nothing separate. It is not earthly possible.*

*Within this strange immersion/emergence, I have been taking on a new shape, have been (in) and (re)formed. In the cracking open of the tough husks of me, the seeds of a rich life are revealed in what I must attend to, cultivate and en-courage. What I must and will become more of requires pure heart.*

*I am taking on the shape of the world here, am more compassionately carved out, more expanded with every in-breath of canyon, more fluid with every cool sip of mountain stream falling into my body. And I imagine soon enough I will become more grounded with every taste of solid food. I have become more world, by knowing and being known, by seeing and being seen, in a sweet reciprocity of love as boundless as the cosmos is vast.*



### Part III - The Return



Photograph # 3. *Used with permission by J. Schulz*

The Return is not an easy transition for most. In fact, it can be a very dangerous time. This is where we come full circle, arriving back to ‘the village’, back home per se to share what has been encountered “out there” by bringing back the treasure of what has been learned “in here”. However, attempts at describing such an intense personal reaction while at the same time articulating the wider range of relational awareness experienced with the world, will definitely have its critics. There will be those willing to take signs and symbols and try to interpret or over-analyze them and in effect, rob the journey of its initiatory power by trying to make too much sense of the experience. Telling of the journey too soon—or even at all sometimes—can also steal from its fullness by distilling down its immensity and it might create unsettledness in some who may refuse its deep mythos, passing to off as fiction.

At this point, at what seems like the end of the journey, I am only beginning to understand more clearly how my own practices and exercises (and those of other teachers I have found to be effective) can contribute to the craft of teaching and to the notion of



bringing soul to school, of cultivating soulfulness there. Accordingly, as part of the return, I offer up a treasured selection of pedagogies and practices that make explicit nature-based, contemplative, imaginative and reflective learning that other educators might also find useful here. But first, I must come back from the brink.



## Entranced

### How to Regain Your Soul

Come down Canyon Creek on a summer  
 afternoon  
 that one place where the valley floor opens out  
 You will see  
 the white butterflies. Because of the way  
 shadows  
 come off those vertical rocks in the west, there  
 are  
 shafts of sunlight hitting the river and a deep  
 long purple gorge straight ahead. Put down your  
 pack.

Above, air sighs the pines, It was this way  
 when Rome was clanging, when Troy was being  
 built,  
 when campfires lighted caves. The white  
 butterflies dance  
 by the thousands in the still sunshine. Suddenly  
 anything  
 could happen to you. Your soul pulls toward the  
 canyon  
 and then shines back through the white wings to  
 be you again.  
 (Stafford, 1993, p. 31)

We are the first ones to enter back into camp, back to where we started. My buddy was anxious to get back. I wasn't. I could have stayed for many more days I think. We are greeted by hugs and eye-to-eye contact that is a bit overwhelming and I realize I am crying. Not because I missed everyone or people in general or because I hurt, but rather because of this intensity of being so close with people, the feeling of so much love. However, even



wordlessly, there are demands being made of me with eyes, curiosities, and predilections of conversations to come. I am told I smell great and look like I swallowed the moon with eyes as shiny and bright as Luna herself. Goethe (1948) knew that something placed out in the sun attracts its rays and is “luminous for a time by night” (p. 388). Perhaps he also knew this same thing happens to people. My skin looks moon-drenched, literally glowing as if there are beams pouring from my pores. When I stood at the edge of that Colorado canyon on that first morning, alone, it was like I was given a love potion that hasn’t worn off. I know I have changed, inside and out.

### **With That Moon Language**

Admit something: Everyone you see, you say to them, “Love me”

Of course you do not do this out loud, otherwise someone would call the cops.

Still though, think about this, this great pull in us to connect.

Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying,

with that sweet moon language, what every other eyes in this world is dying to hear?  
(Hafiz, 1999, p. 322)



### **cautionary tales: the dangers of reentry.**

“I’ve been things and seen places.” (West cited in Benke, 2013, p. 17)

“I feel like letting my freak flag fly...” (Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, 1970)

Much like the experience of being born into this world, I arrived back without words to speak of the experience I had in this place. I know that what is getting ready to be born in me is significant to my life’s path and yet it is also like an unspeakable dream that could easily be forgotten by a loyal, protective ego that knows the world is closing in, coming in fast, looking for answers. I don’t want to be clever or cunning with what to say and what not to say. I could just as easily lose track of all this as if watching a wild tail swish around

the corner out of my mind's sight, out of my grasp if I open my mouth too soon. Thankfully, I have written 47 pages in three days upon which I can reflect on and be reminded by, draw from as a data source. Yet, I wonder how will it make any sense at all? (And does it really have to?)

*I feel as if I am still in a creative trance – but vividly awake at the same time, an altered state of consciousness. Then I realize that something followed me home...  
can I keep it?*

Not everyone comes back as gently as I have. Some arrive with their eyebrows singed or hair partially missing and their clothing still smoking from having jumped through the fires of the return. There is no right way. There is often radical uncertainty and much resistance to coming back to what lies in wait there. The fear of reductionism is real, especially after being so enlarged by this subjective experience. It can be easy to imagine what objectifications of smallness might await each of us.

The return can be a dangerous time all right. I list reasons as to why:

- 1) The gifts you bring back go unreceived.
- 2) You come back and nobody knows what you are on about as you are acting strange, clearly not “yourself” (!)
- 3) Nobody might believe you.
- 4) Nobody cares.
- 5) You fall right back into old patterns of forgetting who you are, and what just happened.
- 6) You might fall back asleep only sometimes it is a deeper sleep still.
- 7) You rush into things in headlong enthusiasm and end up crashing hard.
- 8) There can be despair, after awhile, even depression and definite aloneness, perhaps even a psychotic break of sorts experienced another *dark night of the soul* as you continue to unfold and fractal.

(However, “breaks” can be overrated and may be, in the end, welcome if the break is from a soulless existence).

Not to fret. All of this can be expected of one who has ventured out this far and seen so much. I don't even feel fit for the world. Ironic as this may sound, this could be good

news! Anyways, the objective for me wasn't to better fit in within a dysfunctional society or become more satisfied with life as it is, rather it was to come back with some clarity (or at least the glimmer of clarity) about my life's purpose and what that means in terms of helping to reimagine how we educate for the sake of engendering more adults (and elders), for sake of future generations and species.

The return does not guarantee I will be happy, rather it offers a chance at wholeness that often comes with even more struggle. Returns, I have found, are like bridges between the numinous "other" world and living a more complete earthly life, and sometimes there are slats missing on the bridge and the waters underneath rage up in a froth, and threaten to drown you as you cross back over. Poetry can be a compassionate lifeline on the return because it is the result of mythic encounters like the one you just came back from. And it is good to remember that time alone is still crucial. I made a slow re-entry, as is advisable, entering gently, gently back into the society I left behind because after all I'd been through a lot.

Vision quest guide and storyteller, Martin Shaw (2011) reminds us that "initiation myths often deal with rupture" and while we would naturally assume that would be a bad thing in terms of societal appearances, he posits it is not necessarily so. Hierophany, meaning "'sacred", "holy" "to bring to light" (Eliade, 1957)<sup>53</sup> or what Shaw calls "a sacred rupture" (p. 7) can be the crucible for transformation and individuation. Shaw (2011) views myth (story) as a "collision of ruptures" situated in "our ruin, our axis mundi, our place of orientation, our holy hills, our cathedral" (p.7) with connections to the divine, to the gods of old. Jungian Marion Woodman (1988) writes that a trip to the Underworld of soul, where the descent is mythological, is a journey to a holy place "in which the ego has become so overwhelmed by a wave from the unconscious" that "energy that is normally available to consciousness falls into the unconscious" (p. 177) and creative energies go through transformations that the unaware ego may know nothing about. Images, truths, and "ideas mature (and are) brought into physical realization" (Shaw, 2011, p. 28), revealed upon return.

---

<sup>53</sup> Mircea Eliade a noted scholar of religions, describes a hierophany as "an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different" (Eliade, 1957, p.26).

My advice is the best way to *tell* of your experience is to *live* it into the world. If someone near to you persists on hearing what on earth happened to you “out there”, and if you feel like it, it is a good practice to schedule time for your story by asking them if they are willing to also share some of their story with you (which makes this less of a spectacle and more of a conversation). If you choose to tell it, practice listening with *heart-ears* to gauge how deep they are willing to go with you and you will know how deep to go yourself.

There is always risk in telling your story too briefly or in too much detail so that it becomes just another story rather than something organic that you can continue to be in relationship with and can continue to mine for more gold. Too much and too soon will surely kill off its aliveness. Be careful not to lose what you found too quickly upon your return to the social world. It is easy enough to dilute the potency of this elixir by doling it out to those who will not take it for the powerful and sacred medicine it is and ask only for highlights or excerpts. One must exercise caution and care over their myth story as if it is a living thing—because it is. Poet Naomi Shihab Nye (1994) offers this excellent advice,

### **The Art of Disappearing**

When they say, don't I know you?  
say no.

When they invite you to the party  
remember what parties are like  
before answering.  
Someone telling you in a loud voice  
they once wrote a poem.  
Greasy sausage balls on a paper plate.  
Then reply.

If they say, we should get together  
say why?

It's not that you don't love them anymore.  
You're trying to remember something  
too important to forget.  
Trees. The monastery bell at twilight.  
Tell them you have a new project.  
It will never be finished.

When someone recognizes you in a grocery store  
nod briefly and become a cabbage.

When someone you haven't seen in ten years  
 appears at the door,  
 don't start singing him all your new songs.  
 You will never catch up.

Walk around feeling like a leaf.  
 Know you could tumble any second.  
 Then decide what to do with your time. (p. 29)

Shaw (2011) advises that we don't go easy on ourselves, that living out the experience means that we must allow ourselves to "feel strange, even slightly magical" (p. 61), that it is essential to continue our conversations with hermit thrush and oak leaf, that we write letters and poetry, create altars, dance, sing, keep practices with the world and offer ourselves freely in ways that feed our souls, no matter our credentials (as the warring faction of our egos will be eager to remind that we do not of course have qualifications enough to do this work).



### **a word about forgetting.**

I forget Allah 100 times a day!  
 No, no, wait...  
 I forget Allah 1,000 times a day! (Anonymous)

I do not want to forget the gloriousness of soul because then I am forgetting myself, yet the world closes in fast. Soon, I will not even smell like grasses or stone. I will forget to find the moon some nights and may even lose my desire to sleep out under the stars, start acting too small again. I could begin to take things like water and sunlight for granted once more. I want to remember this sense of wonder, the same way I felt as a child but have lost touch with in recent years. I want to remember how precious life is so I will remember what I am to do with mine. Wordsworth knew forgetting the bliss of innocence and wonder is what holds us prisoner to societal ways when he wrote this poem in 1807:

### **Ode: Imitations of Immortality**

Our birth is but a sleep and a  
 forgetting:  
 The Soul that rises with us, our  
 life's Star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar:  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,  
 And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home:  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison house begin to close  
 Upon the growing Boy. (p. 92)

It is so easy to forget. It can be as simple as encroachment from ego while it claws its way back to the top of the heap, however, Meade (2012) offers a less sinister reframe:

The symptoms of forgetfulness can be seen as attempts of the psyche to call attention to the importance of remembering, especially remembering what is most important in the life of each person. The disease of forgetting plagues modern people may be related to the lack of finding a conscious purpose early in life and failing to recognize oneself as a true individual. (p. 100)

I take solace in knowing that my own psyche will keep dredging up these importances for me through dreams and images, experiences of synchronicity and stories—even this writing. I imagine that later in the classroom as I open my mouth to speak what falls may resemble a sharp tooth or curious tail, a feathered wing or hunch of fur. Part of my reentry vow is to wakefully embody what has happened, by living it, writing it and *teaching it*.

*I am a project that will never be finished! I feel like stone, leaf, wind, bone, and water all at once. I can still taste fire on my tongue, smell earth on my breath. At the edge of my consciousness, still unseen yet forming all the same, these ones of me are quietly getting ready to be born and need to be packed out with me when I go. They are:*

The one who sings songs from the earth, listening from the ground up,  
 The one who has a conscious relationship with everything from food to father,  
 The one who understands the natural cycle of bloom-to-die, die-to-bloom,  
 The one who accepts her place in this glorious cycle as a willing apprentice to death,  
 The one who courts mystery and adventure, seeking portals in darkness,  
 The one who knows there is wildness aplenty in her own body  
 (yet realizes her psyche is so much larger than her own body)  
 The one who is prepared to surrender to the deepest stirrings of her soul,  
 (regardless of geography)  
 The one who is called to bring soul to school



## Stories for the World

I would describe myself  
 like a landscape I've studied  
 at length, in detail;  
 like a word I'm coming to understand;  
 like a pitcher I pour from at mealtime;  
 like my mother's face;  
 like a ship that carried me  
 when the waters raged.  
 (Rilke, 1996, p. 33)

When it is my turn to tell my story to the quest group in circle and to be mirrored by my guides, I am not sure I can make sense of it enough to tell it. I am usually not at a loss for words and yet I don't want to distil it down or dilute its magnificence in any way. I want to be very careful about what I say and what I leave out that has not yet completely formed for me. In the end, I don't really remember how it all went except that there was a need in me to be brief accompanied by a tremendous pounding of my heart (Was that my ego trying to quell this story or my passionate longing to share it? I could not tell). I was not convinced that my fuller story belonged in the world yet. Here is what I gleaned from the mirroring I received later:

- ❖ She sees beauty everywhere and in everyone.
- ❖ Eloquence is part of the nourishment she brings.
- ❖ Somehow the sacred fool and the maternal nourisher alchemically and wisely mix.
- ❖ She is lover of the earth, body of the earth, flowering her own way, seeing the flowering in others, cross-pollinating poetically, and imaginatively and often, with other living beings. Her work is to cross-pollinate!
- ❖ She surrenders to the unity of things, no longer fighting *for or against*, rather she is in conversation, (and finds salvation) with the stream of things (as it speaks to her directly). She belongs to the unity itself.
- ❖ She loves to provide sustenance of all kinds (soul food too) as she cooks up dreams, mixes love and enthusiasm into thick, emotional stirrings, heats up the bubbling and boiling cauldron of consciousness over radiant heart-fires (sometimes her own)...

“Above all, he learned from it how to listen, to listen with a still heart, with a waiting open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinions.” (Hesse, 1951, p. 87)

*Traces of a soul name... ‘Radiant Heartfire’, the mystical cook, the one who serves up platters of nourishment made from elements of: ritual, beauty, poetry, winds, flowers, mystery, trees, lands and lakes, fire and sky, song, joy, wild prayers and grief for her people, for the world. When I say it out loud or hear others say this name, I feel like I have a sweet and precious secret and blush inwardly most of the day.*

*Just call me “Radiant” for short, I say. (People mention this suits me). Apart from how lovely it sounds, I hope it helps me remember who I am, what I am to do.*

As I listen to and get lost in the intensely personal stories of others, time slows to “the pace of being human” (M. Nepo, personal communication, 2009) and I begin to literally see through any blocks of fear or awkwardness with their words to glimpse what I imagine are those person’s purest (most soul-infused) intentions. I can (with some surprise) hold up a radiant and clear mirror for them to see themselves more clearly. I offer directly back what I have heard, not so much as in paraphrasing and never giving advice, rather as intuitive phrasings retrieved from the verbal and non-verbal clues, from the atmosphere of the story itself, just for them.

I often had to close my eyes to hear with emotional acuity those archetypal energies that dissolved and reappeared, rose and fell several times throughout each telling. It is risky business to fiercely mirror another person’s larger-than-life story but well worth the risk if we are to live (and work) in soul. Then I make the connection that this is how I listen to students who are struggling to gain their footing, find their path. I know this work, I know how to do this in service of others being witness to themselves, to their larger story.

Beat poet Allen Ginsberg gave this advice, “Follow your inner moonlight, don’t hide the madness.” (in Benke, 2013, p. 6). To me that means to deeply trust my inner intuition, my inner radiance, but be sure I am being utterly faithful to the teller and not just my smaller self who may just be showing off her cleverness. However, I can also understand that because the mirror in this case is a human one, it will not always be so clear. In fact, I



will always in some way be subtly bent through my own hermeneutics of understanding. And of course, there is more to learn through practice. Moonbeam eyes seem to help.

The return is seeing  
the radiance everywhere...

If you want the whole thing,  
the gods will give it you.  
But you must be ready for it.  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 25)



### **the gift of the story.**

[T]he principal gift of storytelling is that it makes space for relationships to develop. In the shared experience of the story, (we) become a tribe of listeners, dependent on each other to protect the storytelling pace from intrusions and distractions. There is no doubt that storytelling builds community. It creates time of respect and attention. What we discover is that for the storytelling to work, each member of the group needs to be fully present. It is both the generosity of the teller and the generosity of the listeners that allow the story's images to be like seeds borne on the wind to fertile soil. (McLoughlin, 2012, p. 11) (brackets mine)

In Plotkin's (2003) *Soulcraft. Crossing into the Mysteries of Nature and Psyche*, he writes that "story is the very fabric of our lives...(and) every relationship is a story...a story longing to be told." (p. 204) (brackets mine). While we cannot change the past, sometimes there is real medicine to hearing our own stories (as we tell them), and in effect, become aware of old narratives that no longer serve, and instead find ways to re-story, reframing our relationship to what is past. Stories can also be great mirrors of reflection for what is past and present, for inner as well as outer landscapes to confluence and mingle.

In an interview entitled, *Your Own Damn Life* (2012) on the story he claims we're born with, Michael Meade reveals that from an early age he used story-telling and his deep capacity to listen to find his way in the world and to steer clear of trouble. Today, he works with story, myth, and song from other cultures to help people discover their true natures and contributions through the nonprofit Mosaic Multicultural Foundation in Seattle, Washington. He works mostly with youth, assisting them through rites of passage

ceremonies to discover their own imaginative essence and become more of themselves within a culture that is all about conformity and making something of yourself by society's standards. As one who is living his own gifts and moving into elderhood now, Meade listens deeply for and draws out the particular genius of each young person he is helping, offering possibilities that lie beyond the flat screens of technology. He offers alternative emergent and encouraging types of education that support genuine vulnerability, authentic authority, instinct, courage, creativity, feelings (both deep love and deep woundedness), and not least of all, an engagement with nature. He believes, as do I, that our natures are connected to greater nature, and therefore these young people learn more about who they already are and live that more fully when they go out and stay outside for some time.

Telling our stories (even the ones riddled with emotional shrapnel), stories that we need to hear despite how difficult it is to listen to their horrific truths, can help us to know the world, by coming to know the truth of the world. Sad and terrible stories can "own and direct us" because "stories that would never let go" (Enslar, 2013, p. 154) are the stories of survival that need telling as much as another other stories do, so that in their telling, they can be transgressed (Macy & Brown, 1998; Macy, 2007).

I have found that *how* you tell your story determines what part of it you are still living. It can be just as revealing in terms of what you are not saying (correlating to what you are not living) by what you choose to leave out. "One of the most healing and empowering things we can do in this life, is to tell our stories", writes Bill Plotkin (2003, p. 206). I believe this to be true, yet I would offer that that healing can stretch beyond the human realm. The more I experience storytelling in natural places, around fires, sitting in circle on the land, the more I understand that the land itself is also somehow a part of that healing process as it too is being transformed in the telling. A further obligation of the storyteller is to also keep telling the stories of place, to keep those stories alive too. In order to cook and rise, stories require equal measures of logos and mythos, essential ingredients that animate and inspire. And stories tend to travel in the same direction as all good triadic journeys too.

Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of

finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen.  
(Tafoya, 1995, p. 12)

Stories offer relationship and carry psychic weight, must be treated like a powerful stranger come to visit. Campbell (1991) knew that “mythology helps you to identify the mysteries of the energies pouring through you.” He writes that most important of all, “therein lies your eternity” (p. 40). (Re)creating our personal mythologies or myth-stories in the telling makes a connection between our waking consciousness and the universe by locating us in relationship to nature with its invisible underlying connectedness to everything. Mythologizing our life stories allow us to *live the myth* by revealing the plotlines of our humanness through the storied layering of significant symbols and imagery that depict what we each hold meaningful, valuable, and sacred, from the past and the present. This is how we find our way.

Myth is not necessarily something from long ago, rather when we open up to its timeless images (Hermes was after all the storyteller god), it operates in a kind of numinous present that deepens its powers and intricacies through disclosure. And in the telling, repetition holds enormous weight, like storm clouds gathering, like a falcon circling, circling around its nest or prey. Stories contain doorways to another world, entryways to what hermeneuts know lies beneath, provides segues (where there were none) to loose wild fields of flowering thought.

By their energetic nature, stories helps us to know ourselves more deeply by bringing us more awake, by helping to enlarge our capacity to receive, which in turn allows us to be more capacious, more compassionately giving of ourselves. They can instigate “an intense personal reaction and at the same time a wider range of relational awareness” (Shaw, 2011, p. 7) and in effect, help us develop sensitive ways to reach each other and be reached without having to convince, convert, or blame. I find storytelling is the mother of dialogue, which means if when someone tells, and someone listens with an equal sensitivity, then we can experience a wholesome, nurturing quality of relationship that is rare in a competitive culture. It is difficult to stay in judgment or remain distant from someone whose story we have heard because stories educate and open the heart. Attuning and listening deeply calls our greater selves to the table, contributes to the development of a more healthy interiority, and fortifies our connection to soul and each other.

There is enormous power in the telling where meaning is conveyed in a way mere explanation never could. Stories are richer, and more personal wrapped up in a “mythos of image-laden syntax” (Deardorff, 2011, p. xv) as depicted through the timbre and cadence of voice, flush of skin, depth of breath, visible or invisible emotions, word choice (and as mentioned, what we choose *not* to say), palpable energy, and intentional spirit of the teller, as *embodied*. And not least of all, but most often overlooked, is an alchemical mixing of the physical and morphic (energetic) fields surrounding the story being told if one pays close attention to what is happening around us in the living world at the time of the telling. Shaw advises that “Telling stories is a triadic engagement between the velocity of story, the intelligence of the tongue, and the imagination of whatever is listening in—and something is always listening in” (Shaw, 2014, p. xvi). I have had personal experiences such as: an owl perching on a nearby branch, joining a twilight council where heavy emotional lifting was going on that called for wisdom, a cloud in the shape of a lips moving overhead just as a dreamer is telling of her last night’s dream of finding her Beloved, and dust devils appearing behind a man telling of his struggles to wrest his own elusive demons.

Mythologist and storyteller, Daniel Deardorff (2011) claims stories are *carried* by the teller and rather than being simply told over and over in the same way, he sees them as alive entities, that change with each telling because they include the freshness of the moment, the sweet remembrances of the past (as influenced by the present state of mind and heart of the teller) laced with glimmers of what is to come. Story becomes more each time it is told as it tends to snowball into something larger than its former self by including and transcending, gathering and growing, collecting up sticky feathers and fallen leaves, needled duff and debris, wind, breath and insight, strange and necessary ephemera from where it has been. In the end, the story can also carry you...

In hearing the stories of others of course, we begin to hear our own story unfolding, hear the echo of our soul’s longing. We can often (and with practice) pick up the threads of the universal (the archetypal) in every story we hear, start to understand the pattern of the weave of the world itself.

Father Thomas Berry (2002), in his video *The Great Story* (Stetson & Morell), was encouraged by the sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, to “tell the story” of the universe. In adapting his line of thinking, as humans (and particularly as teachers) as a natural

extension of the universe, we ought to encourage everyone to tell their stories (the “autos” and “bios”) as a part of our birthright. Is my story for instance within these pages any less authentic or important than that of the grass or the wind or the seas? Don’t all stories conspire to tell the entire universal truth of life...of love?

In *Seeds of Generosity, Storytelling in the Classroom*, storyteller-educator Margot McLoughlin (2012) offers that through her experience as a teacher she has come to believe that we can more fully imagine our future lives through the sharing of stories, can begin to reframe our worldviews, and think out loud in community by talking our stories. She sees storytelling as an entry into the world itself through imagination and metaphor where empathy is strengthened and a more genuine love and understanding, a primal trust of one another can take root. Here, our caring for the living world of which we are a part becomes the story we live out.

In traditional Australian Aborigine culture, stories are received first as dreams that emanate from the land and are handed down generation after generation in an oral storytelling culture. Author and adventurer, Bruce Chatwin (1987) referred to them as, *The Songlines*, meaning the invisible lines that connect with the time of creation or the eternal ‘Dreamtime’ (which is the dreaming of the world into existence and its survival).

No two Dreaming stories are the same, because they relay the defining totemic relations and characteristics of particular places. However, they do share common forms, purposes and themes. ...Dreaming stories...articulate a relational ontology within which the very being of the...children and animals is co-determined within a nature culture imbroglio, and is inseparable from the country. (Taylor, 2013, pp. 93-94)

Through the ritual of storytelling, what is remembered is that humankind has a particular and crucial role to play, evolutionary work to fulfill. The dreaming stories of the Aborigines provide intelligence that continues to “correct the waking course” (Woodman, 1991). They are considered sacred transmissions that bring meaning and unite the people with their deeper selves and the ongoing creation of the world. These dreaming stories are initiatory maps of the indigenous world that crisscross imaginal boundaries of space and time, are revered as the highest and most true guides to the soul-making of the Aborigine people.

Buddhist Joan Halifax (1996) equates all “learning as an initiation” (p.173), as in her view it embodies the phases of: separation (leaving the safety of the known world or village to step into the forest); threshold experience (entering the unknown to bear witness and crossover - often at great personal risk); and reincorporation (return to the village to share the experience). And while an initiatory journey and direct experience is one way to ensure maturity in the tribe (or in Halifax’s case and ours, the classroom), there is clear evidence of transformation as *the journeyer becomes one with the sacred story she tells* (and lives) upon re-entry. Soul *is* the story. The gold (of soul) is manifest first in story. This is the gift she now bears.

You must return  
With the bliss  
And integrate it.  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 290)



### **A Work in Progress**

After the vision fast, I am suspicious of what I want. I notice what indulgences are getting my attention because I worry about the true costs of everything—for example, I wonder how an item in my hand was made, shipped and sold to me. At whose expense? Who or what gave their life here? Things will have to get a lot more expensive if they reflect true costs, then perhaps we would see that the path to happiness is not paved with the bones of others; rather it is grown from within.

When I spend time outside in the natural world, I can see the enlargement of things that are important in life. Health, family, community, open and wild natural spaces, fresh air and water, enough healthy foods to grow and eat, time to reflect, learn, play and laugh together become obvious treasure, help bring perspective.

In Western society, we tend to continue to make the same mistakes. For instance, we are for the most part obsessed with technologies that in their allurements keep us farther apart rather than deliver on their promise of connection. And anyways that is connection with only one small part of the planet—humans—which effectively leaves off the rest of the living world. We need to cooperate, not dominate. Conciliation not competition. Blind ambitions risk relationship for the glory of the one. Many indigenous

cultures already know this and so I believe does the “Indigenous Soul” we all possess (Prechtel, 2001, p. 113)—the soul that is truly at home in the world and won’t take more than it needs or create waste—just as nature never does (except for humans who have long ago broken those sacred and natural universal laws with the tendency to hoard and huck).

Being good to one another in communities of care means knowing the natural laws and natural cycles enough to let something (or someone) die when it is their time, finding the truth of who we each are and what we are to bring to the whole, and to let nothing stop that. I long for a time when we no longer feel compelled to continually try to stuff the gaping *whole* inside of ourselves with more stuff and amplified entertainments, and instead let the world (including humans) mirror for us our own potential fullness.

I have come to understand that somehow a healthy return leaves room for some things to remain in shadow (where there can be both good and bad conflict still to come). *Work in progress, woman in process.* My authenticity, my humanness depends on incompleteness. For me, the return is the time to cultivate a more soulful relationship with the world, a more soulful existence that does not depend on exotic places, rather lives in me through “right speech, right action, right livelihood, and right thinking” (Plotkin, 2003, p. 233) and I would add “*right feeling*” that must include solitude as an artful practice with time to wander still.

“*Solitudo*”, Plotkin (2003) reminds, comes from Latin and means “nature” (p. 235), therefore, at least etymologically, it follows that being alone is natural. As I reenter the hectic world I inhabit, I vow to avoid old patterns of indulgence and the distractions of inane entertainments and over busyness, to spend more time alone, outside. To me, this initiation “feels like an opening sentence of a new conversation” (Plotkin, 2003, p. 325) between myself and the world. I also get the strange sense that this has been taking place for some time outside my awareness, maybe for all time since birth. I am committed to keep this dialogue going.

Now, nothing outside of me seems to scare me because I have already been to the edge and peered into my own darkness, and found a kind of reclamation there through befriending instead of a pit of bottomless despair or a dire end. There is nothing that can hold me back now, no excuses of fear, no ego that won’t let me enlarge my life through conscious awareness (and let the world be aware of itself through me). How will I best

approach the mystery of my life? How will I become the invitation for others? Will I continue this courtship of my beloved soul (who is with me always), and with the beloved earth itself (world soul)? How can I help others retrieve the truth they were born with, spot and track their original patterns, for the sake of becoming more human? How will I continue to encourage surrender (my own and others) to the necessary experience of a kind of dismemberment from old cultural patterns and the tyranny of the socially acceptable personae? As disagreeable as it sounds, how can I initiate for others this kind of devouring by the world (which is of course the world devouring itself ouroboros style), as an essential element of world nurturing itself so all souls may be fed?

I believe you either get it going in or coming out. Most of us are kicked into change, rarely do we go consciously or willingly (i.e. do something as silly as actually sign up and pay for such a quest). Often, accidents or illnesses help us to face our death (or types of metaphoric death) in order to retrieve a sense of clarity and purpose. What might at first seem to be more of a destructive force than a constructive one, an initiatory journey can provide a reorientation from the crises of perception of separateness to a context of connectivity and deep responsibility. What leads us to go out beyond our fears and judgments, to give up what no longer serves and help reinvent cultural support systems (schools included) to engender more responsible, loving, mature adults, is what is essential now for an intact world.

And we're in a bit of a rush here given the slippery, dangerous slope we are on. We have engaged in many selfish, immoral, and wrong behaviours for centuries, eradicating and extricating without restraint, to feed an insatiable enterprise of commerce and gain. Nature's pressures are revealed to us daily through extreme weather and the looming threat of climate change, and atmospheric changes that now spell an unsustainable world. There is real risk for survival of future generations (both human and other-than-human). Smart phones, shopping malls, voyeuristic television and central heating and air conditioning keep us held in a perpetual dazed state of forgetting who we are and what is truly important for a life. We are capable of so much more. Perhaps the reintroduction to our wild-hearted human natures will be the most essential act of ecological restoration for our time? That is why a conscious break from society is needed—not necessarily in the form of a quest, however a true “break” always requires the help of a teacher or guide.





**a most mythic discovery.**

What can educators do to foster real intelligence? Develop the kind of first-hand knowledge of nature from which real intelligence grows. This means breaking down walls made by clocks, bells, rules, academic requirements, and a tired indoor pedagogy. I am proposing a jailbreak that would put learners of all ages outdoors more often... (Orr, 2004, p. 52)

Through this writing process, I began to see that in essence, in some way, *all outside learning can be viewed as an initiatory journey*—even on a micro scale. I knew that more time was required, more than an afternoon or a one-day workshop in order for non-ordinary states to take hold. When we allow time for that to happen, our once tough husks have the chance to split open on that threshold experience, to allow the seeds of us to grow.

Our modern lives are caught in situations of valuelessness through overindulgence, and disproportional affluence and abundance. According to Abraham Maslow (1964), peak experiences —those numinous moments in life that bring inherent meaning and value to modern lives *are* the initiations, *are* what defines our deepest humanness. Immersions and threshold experiences however, can either be flooded with compassion and love or be desolate and disparaging. No one can say for sure, but one thing is certain, it needs time. This time can be built intentionally into curriculum rather than hidden in the shadows of “after we have done the more important work”. The more risky outdoor adventures have fallen out of what little popularity they may have once held from earlier grade school experiences of the field trip, as most students (in adult learning) believe they have signed up (and paid good money) for some guarantee of comfort within hermetically sealed safety with measurable outcomes they can adhere to. Peak experiences are the realm of the immeasurable and would stymie a school system hell bent on definitive and replicable outcomes. Imagine a mythic journey (that is yours and yours alone). It could not easily be wrestled down to fit its splendid wings and long slithering tail neatly (and quietly) within a square of a marking rubric!

And other than the obvious benefits of going outside such as: exercise, roses in the cheeks, more oxygen in the bloodstream, a feeling of wellbeing, the beauty and mystery of place, the perspective one gains in seeing the larger landscapes unfold before us, etc., there

is something more powerful afoot here (pun intended). The experience of the field trip is, I have discovered no less than *mythic!*

Why? Because the trip outside contains all of the elements of an ancient rite of passage threefold pattern. The essential human journey of: separating from the safety of the norm (in this case, the classroom), moving out into the unknown threshold of experience (forest, river, even garden or lawns) and in that space having an awakening of sorts by becoming a conscious participant (in relationship with the world) which in and of itself initiates a kind of personal transformation which is only made evident upon the return (to the classroom) because just as we are somehow changed, in true reciprocity, so is the place we left behind.

The classroom is in itself a physical representation of standardized outcomes because to some degree we believe we can control what will happen (e.g. heat, light, air flow, even structure as we move furniture, create breakout spaces, etc.). We erroneously think we have a handle on what learning will look like (for the most part) if it can be contained. But, the outside world is a completely different story! Not only is there always a bit of trepidation at the threshold of a forest (even in broad daylight) because we never know what lives within (especially those unexpected animal, vegetable or mineral teachers we find everywhere), but there is also a dark layer of invisible life—an underground teeming with millions of insect industries and giant root systems that span half the globe. These mysteries are accompanied of course, by a whole host of other invisibles such as the Devas, the elementals, and the faeries to name a few depending on your belief system and cultural mythologies. There are always thresholds to cross through when we move into a new experience where the initiation can be as unique as each of our imaginations.

When we come back, we bring fresh insights through fresh eyes and enriched understandings of self and Other. And because this tripartite journey is the oldest human experience on record (both oral and written), it is quite possibly written in our DNA, is somehow perhaps wired into our neurological inheritances.

Neuroscientist Dr. Jung-Beeman, of the Department of Psychology at Northwestern University writing on the topic of *How Insight Happens: Learning from the Brain* (Jung-Beeman, Collier & Kounios, 2008), stresses that there are many different ways to achieve the alpha brain wave state (a non-ordinary state) including going for a run or walk,

working in the garden, resting quietly, taking a bath, etc. which allows the brain to quiet our visual intake and take our attentions inward toward reflection. From this contemplative stance, a sudden “burst of gamma band activity in the right temporal lobe at the moment of solution” (p. 3) carries remotely connected solution paths from the unconscious into consciousness producing sudden “aha”-moments that may be compared with what happens during peak experiences, numinous flashes, or even perhaps at threshold of initiatory moments (Maslow, 1964).

Without *thinking* about details or problems, there is instead a kind of knowing or in some cases in a “flash-of-lightning” the whole path to a solution is seen (E. Deines, personal communication, October 1, 2013). Neuroscience now knows that Archimedes “Eureka”, his “I have found it” moment likely arrived after quieting and turning his attention inward to allow remote associations of neural pathways to come to the forefront. (In his case, of course they actually *rose* to the occasion in his bath!).

Especially while writing this paper, when I have felt at an impasse, just letting the work be and trusting that what I needed would “come to me” in good time was just such an example. I would intentionally go to that resting place in the brain through relaxation. Often this would occur on a walk into the forest where I could let my mind wander as my body wandered, where in this correlation I discovered a shortcut to insight-making. In effect, I began to “day-dream” as I stopped thinking about specifics of this research and allowed my thoughts to move spontaneously in rhythm with the landscape. After a fairly short time, I often would have a sudden and surprising recognition of a new idea or extraordinary connection being made. I suddenly just knew where a certain difficult paragraph should go or how a certain line of thinking I had been following actually would tie into another section of the work entirely or better still, something I had long forgotten would surface. While I attribute the woods to the yields I receive, I know that it is the conditions created in the relationship between woods, conscious, and unconscious mind *and feeling* (intuition) that insights are best facilitated. And now, neuroscience tells us this is our birthright and comes from the relationships and insights from our ancestry (meaning from our mythologies) as well.

One of the most constant precursors to preparing the ground for insights to arise (and problems to be solved) is having a positive outlook (Jung-Beeman, et al, 2008), being

in a good mood where attention is broadened (Gaspar & Clore, 2002) and is less focused, which enables insight to flow. Walking out into nature, breathing in fresh air, seeing beauty all around—even when the grey teeth of rain take hold—can create such a buoyant outlook for me. Conversely, neuroscience explains that increased anxiety or negative moods tend to truncate brain activity and shrink the chances for insights to arise altogether (Subramaniam, et al, 2009). In effect, our tensions can strangle the life out of our dreams.

Good moods cannot, however, always be guaranteed. If we are willing to turn toward what makes us most anxious, have the courage to acknowledge and probe fears, barriers, wounds and shadow too, we may discover perspectives that can also lead to new insights and ideas. This demands not only an appreciation for the role the darker aspects our psyches play but is an evolutionary leap of faith as we learn to understand and then override biological impulses (that want to shut us down in these instances) so that we may instead access our higher order thinking (J. Walinga, personal communication, October, 2013). And let's not forget how helpful humour can be in terms of making us lighter for the leap.

I have often walked in the early hours (under a bright fingernail moon with my hound) carrying some sort of quandary or looming worry, only to be suddenly illuminated, flooded by the recognition of patterns within patterns that I had previously overlooked. A brilliant solution floods in that now seems so obvious! I can suddenly *know* something so clearly without hesitation or doubt. Insights are the creative (thinking) and the intuitive (feeling) combined through a metacognitive process. I believe that so far, science may have left off the vital contribution “feeling” makes to insight, (in the form of hunches, intuitions, inklings, etc.), likely because emotion is elusive and difficult to account for.

It can all feel a bit like magic to me—dredging something up from the deeps of my unconscious in such a way that I simply *know without knowing* and could never begin to explain how I arrived at this thought or how it found me. This renders the whole experience even more “mythical” because these amazing insights just seem to have appeared out of thin air!

In following this line of thinking, the initiatory journey may be part of our earthly genetic coding, imprinted from the earliest of times into our psyches, prompting us to reenact it over and over, again and always, our entire lives. Campbell (2008) did say it was

the oldest human story on record after all. In essence, we may have been born with the need (or deep longing?) to take these excursions to the wilds, to befriend those ones we meet there (which of course means befriending the wild in ourselves). Mythic, indeed!

And if we don't go out and beyond, if we don't take up the call of our souls (and the souls of our students) to risk, to be willing to be tested, to look *into* the nature of things (including our own deaths by accepting this inevitability), then we can still live fairly noble, (and for the most part) satisfied lives by society's standards. We will however, always be separated in some way from all that is alive, and by that, be incomplete.



**note to self.**

The afternoon before we leave our base camp, just as the last of the stories is being shared and mirrored, the darkest bruise of clouds begins to roll in. There is nowhere to hide. We all rush to batten down the hatches. My high up tarp soon transforms into a small triangular protective layer for me as I huddle inside clutching my pack, attempting to keep every inch of skin covered as the temperature drops to below freezing. Hailstones the size of hard frozen eggs steadily pelt my makeshift tent for about ten minutes, then silence, as the accumulation of ice slowly slides down the sides of my tarp to create a snow pack all around me. Seems the gods had to send us a humbling to add to all this wildness.

We choose to leave earlier than planned the next day in between another roiling bank of blackness coming in with much determination from the south. We cannot stay warm here and getting wet is a recipe for disaster because as it is we are all a bit colder than is comfortable and with not much stored body fuel to fire up our thermostats after fasting. It could get ugly if we don't make our move, now.

Bitter cold and yet bittersweet, we leave all together, slowly, slowly descending the mountain in silence. That night in the strange confines of a Best Western in Durango, I write myself a love note to help me (remember)...

*Dear Radiant Heartfire,*

*What to remember when waking...step consciously, intentionally and with celebration into deeper communion (formerly thought of by you as mere communication) with all that is alive. The Underworld—the realm of soul—is everywhere, in and out. Listen for what wants to speak through you. Go into the dark more often, introduce yourself to the stars and get better acquainted with the*

*moon in all her phases of loveliness. See accidental beauty in everything. Rest when you are tired. Make time for the small yet significant daily rituals and richly felt ceremonies that bring deeper understanding of what you are about to give away...She who brings nourishment...And that nourishment can come in surprising and unexpected ways as you stir the wild cauldron of what uniquely burbles and simmers and roils and froths and brims within you and within your brave and beautiful students. Keep the fires lit...*

*...and don't go back to sleep!*

*Remember the dark one, your animas, who turns things into other things. He has a lot to teach you. Pray for rich dreams and clear vision. Write down your dreams and let them work you. Write down your thoughts and poetry as your wild heart in concert with the wild world sings. Be the hymn! Let the earth sing through your bones and skin and teeth and hair. Walk your songlines. Listen with your feet. Keep cooking up a storm, keep offering love, kindness, hilarity, joy, grief, spaces of safe inquiry and imaginal experience. Speak softly and sacredly. Don't be afraid to die...over and over and over again. Learn to die of generosity. You know this is essential to living. Seek out the deer and apprentice yourself to him. He is also your teacher. Converse with the aspen muse, the elder fir, the generous cottonwood, the gnarled oak. Pay close attention to who shows up. Go to wander in the forest and meadows often. Remember you are a daughter of Pan, a pan-derer as much as a wanderer. Don't be afraid of the pan-archical back-loop, go dark as required, invent your own disappearances.*

*...But, don't go back to sleep!*

*Be the beauty you see, let your surrender and your own canyons of longing break your heart beautifully open again and again. Watch sunrise and sunset as the sun and earth kiss in both directions. Prepare for impending revelation.*

*...Be-loved. Be-love.*

*xo*

## All in Perspective



“In some small way, shifting our attention...reverses the world.” (Sewall, 1999, p. 136)

The world is dynamic in which things influence each other in relationship. When we participate consciously in our full senses as sentient beings, we are responding and feeling and being our most authentic selves. At the confluence of mindscape and landscape, our sensory experiences bring with them a tendency to reflect inwardly on our situation, on our embeddedness and in a wide and fluid dance that moves inside and out, and back and forth again, our senses extend in a full outward relational discourse with life. In a conversational space in between these two, real change happens.

Ecopsychologist Laura Sewall (1999) advises that first, “we must surrender ourselves – or, more precisely, our *ideas* about ourselves” (p. 137) to arrive at what purpose we have as participants in this dynamic cosmos. One good way to do that is to simply begin to see both outwardly and inwardly at once. By acknowledging our inward gifts we can begin to seek an outward delivery method for those gifts to be best offered. However, they most likely will not fit with our parents’ ideas or our earlier notions of the life we thought we “should” or might pursue, rather it is a brave step toward the life of “who” we each are. People might find this disconcerting or strange. You may have to leave home and leave your teachers and fail often in order to truly slake the thirst of your own soul.

Ironically, I had to go into dark and animated moonlit canyons of the southwestern desert to quench my passions. In that place, with wide enough vistas of red rock and blue sky to sift and sort what was my life, I was most vulnerable and exposed to the glare of a cloudless sun that burned gold from dross, that let me stalk the hypocrisy, judgment and delusions that inhibited my life, and quietly converse with the whispering wildness in and outside of me. I found my own sun-bleached bone of truth through unexpected and wild teachers all around me. Even the smallest occurrence to me was significant, threads of a personal pattern within a world pattern. I slipped down into slick rock through a portal to understanding more of the “way it is” for me, and just what it was I was supposed to do with my life. But as e.e. cummings warned, “It takes courage to grow up and turn out to be who you really are” (in Benke, 2013, p. iv). I was going to have keep my courage up.



### **false dichotomies.**

It was not in the enormity of this quest situation that I found my way, rather it was in my attention toward what was calling me with every small step. True change hangs with the small steps each one of us (as teachers and as students) can take, not the largess of governments and legislation, not something magical found in the grandeur and charisma of one leader alone. Meaningful and lasting change, I have found, comes with the small steps close to home, not unlike those of Thoreau (1862/1982) whose extensive discoveries came

from nearby not exotic locales. Small steps taken out of dualistic thinking can connect to the awe-inspiring unity of all things, where the small makes large gains.

Indeed, Thoreau was well known to have travelled extensively in his own backyard by walking, close to home, but really, in the end did that matter? His homespun nature-lab was the right-sized small step that counted toward his own particular nature, an inner journey, which was an equally important passage to make. Around Walden Pond was the right and mythic ground where he could feel his feet beneath him and embrace the extraordinary magic of ordinary life. He discovered the importance in the “intimate connection between the individual and field—between the particular and the universal, between the small and the large” (Cope, 2012, p. 45). By virtue of this small step he opened up a secret source of living large in the end.



### **the jewel point.**

Every object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object and in fact IS everything else.” (Eliot in Mumford, 2002, p. xix)

Indra, known as the fiercest God of Gods, the greatest God in the ancient Vedic pantheon, lived at the centre of the sacred mountain of Meru which was considered in the Hindu tradition as the *axis mundi* or centre of the world. He was a warring God who wanted ultimate power and control over every living thing, therefore the myth says that he cast his net far and wide over the land in all directions until it covered the whole world. Each node, each vortex held a small crystal jewel. His vast net held infinite nodes with infinite small jewels and in effect, the reflection of each small jewel contained the reflection of every other small jewel, which in turn reflected all the other jewels, and so on ad infinitum (Mumford, 2002). Within each small gem was the vast whole reflecting itself. (This is both the holon theory and quantum entanglement theory, mythologized! Or rather, this myth is the archetype of what has always been, that science has now “discovered” and named.)

“It is therefore, the sacred duty of every individual human soul to be utterly and completely itself” wrote Cope (2012) in *The Great Work of Your Life. A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling*. “To be *that* jewel at *that* time and in *that* place, and to be that jewel *utterly*” (p. 47) is the way of the true calling. To be the jewel we are meant to be and by



being that distinctive gem of ourselves, we play our small role by holding space for our own particular node in the web of life and in so doing, contribute to the holding together of the entire net in its reflection of the whole, of the small and large at once.

But in order for this net to work, we all need to shine our particularly faceted lights. Our essential natures need to hold space in each of our unique corners of the web. Each person, each action, each thought, each story is infinitely important to the whole network, the whole community. But, in a pressurized modern world, we can reach too high or too fast or worry that our little lives, our smallest actions, mean very little in the end. Not so! Thoreau (Richardson, 1986), found out for himself that “the whole is in each man” (p. 22). *The large is in the small.*

Just as Hillman (1996) reminds us that the tiny acorn holds under its small crosshatched beret, the blueprints for the mighty oak, the small holds the potential for the world. Lao Tzu in the *Tao te Ching* (trans., 1988) asked us to, “think of the small as large...and the few as the many” (p. 63). The small *always* counts. The small is what every significant human change in our history began from. There is nothing more powerful than the human spirit in its courage to make things happen. Small actions of individuals in their bravery and in their passion, became great accomplishments.<sup>54</sup>

All actions and expressions “connect us all with the soul of the world. They create the world. Small as they may appear, they have the power to uphold the essential inner order of the world” (Cope, 2012, p. 47). “True greatness is both smaller and larger than you think” offers Cope (p. 51) and requires that you find the way for yourself (even if it is near enough for you to continue to raid the cookie jar like Thoreau). Grandiosity has always been suspect in its over-inflatedness (it is physically obvious). Values cannot be measured in quantity alone because as a whole, they require some necessary qualities too.




---

<sup>54</sup> Just think of the example of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the southern United States, where a short step to the front of the bus (Rosa Parks) or walking into a “white only” restroom, restaurant, or college or a march on the Capital, regardless of whether it was accepted or had a favorable outcome at the time, each made significant enough ripples that soon enough became positive waves of change. This did not start with large government actions, rather this was led by the small acts of one or two people themselves.

### **WANTED: Gifted Teachers**

The artist (like the teacher engaged in the art of teaching) is meant to put objects of this world together in such a way that through them you will experience that light, that radiance which is the light of our consciousness and which all things both hid and, when properly looked upon, reveal. (Campbell, 2004, p. 132) (brackets mine)

My own experience as an educator tells me that teachers must be able to listen deeply and observe carefully (be trained) for what may at first may seem like “nothing” that persists on getting the attentions of the student, including what is most difficult or disturbs. Chinese spiritual sage Lao Tzu said, “To see things in the seed, that is genius” (1967, p. 83) therefore, the teacher must seek the unrealized potential of the world in the seed of the student. Ergo the genius of the teacher is to spot the genius of the student!

When everything seems lost and it seems like there is nowhere to turn, this is when new life (and all that is needed) arrives (Campbell, 1991). We must have faith (and be willing to risk) that at times, that the dark is precisely the place that holds the most potential for students and to direct study toward, not away from it. We need teachers as guides who notice the small, the seemingly insignificant aspects especially when there is no sun or moon in sight. Immersed in the “dark night of soul”, those that can make a consciousness leap will find they experience a corresponding consciousness shift.

Dewey (1929/2009) was right when he urged that in preparation for our task, teachers must have background insight into human psychological (soul) structure (including their own maturation and development). He viewed education as two sided— psychological *and* sociological — with both holding equal importance and being organically related and inextricably linked in the development of the individual and his participation in society. As teachers, I believe we need to understand the human psyche (soul) and to be confident and practiced enough to see and hear these early inklings in our students, to mine for particularities, but to not stop there because that is only half the story.

In the small and the particular of each one, we must be able to know the universal story that is unfolding, find what is extraordinary in the ordinary. We must offer a reflection of that energy back to the student so that they may also begin to track their role in the scheme of things and better find clues as to how they might fit into the order of the

world. It is sacred work to dig around for and plumb the secret source of the gifts of others, help them find and polish their jewel. This work can be the crucible of the individuation process to becoming whole humans and needs a little (heroic) guidance from someone who has a vested interest in the student's own discoveries, in their learning.

The goal of the hero trip  
 down to the jewel point  
 is to find those levels in the psyche  
 that open, open, open,  
 and finally open to the mystery  
 of your Self being  
 Buddha consciousness  
 or the Christ.  
 That is the journey.  
 (Campbell, 1991, p. 23)

For this, teachers will also need genuine training in the art of mirroring in the golden and the dark shadow aspects of our students. We must be able to identify any early projections onto us (of Wise Prophet, Good Mother, etc.) and gently, gently, turn them back toward the students because it is precisely within the shadow of that projection that some of the students' psychic energy is trapped (energy required to fuel their own gifts). If students give away their precious power, their magnificence (whether positive or negative) to a teacher that they believe is more powerful or smart or worthy (or even demonic) than themselves, then depth psychology tells us they will never be able to inhabit their own lives fully and come to full maturation.

Most of all, teachers must be able to create spaces where true reflection of self and world can take place —where each jewel-hearted student can reflect both the small of their own interiority with the largeness of the collective and transform themselves within this “both-and” capacity. The teacher is responsible for the creation of balanced places of learning where epistemologies of thinking and feeling can both be met yet still be differentiated. And the teacher's balance must be in calibration with themselves through a lifelong vision of learning in connection to their work and their own ongoing dialogic inquiry of identity, sensibility, creativity, intellect, and soul. We must practice what we teach! And we must constantly locate ourselves by asking, “What am I practicing?”

*Becoming* a teacher is very different than being one. The craft, the writing skills, the words and thoughts, the emotion, the courage, the pain, the power, and the pedagogy—everything leads up to teaching and all require different kinds of supports and education. But to me, the genius spin of teaching (and its great challenge) is really the ability to translate what we see (and discover) and turn it back around for the student, reflecting and igniting *their* brilliance.

Working from within a (re)formed education system that prepares us to know ourselves well and know others well in order to work together, is where I believe we can counterbalance the kind of schooling that has been so destructive in how it has divided us all up especially through the literal dividing up of all subjects into objectified study. Objectification allows our greatest addiction— to be the best, to be on top, to be the most powerful, to live any way we choose, and to win doing it. To be the best in the world. This is enemy making in such a subtle form, yet it is the deep legacy of Western and determines “the psychic and social patterns of our existence” (Enslar, 2013, p. 139). We need more teachers who can help us to see beyond this narrowness, help us see ourselves in all others and break these destructive patterns of power-over. We must do this work together. This means teachers must see that their “work is not a curse but a salvation” (Gatto, 1999, p. 167) despite the strong currents they must swim against at times. Those who can realize the value in a paradox of opposites, the worth of re-enchantment, and the embrace of inevitable and necessary hardships if we are to grow (especially as they show up in our students), are those individuals that know that through the fires of difficulty something new will surely be reseeded and reorganized in the (re)turn.

Those generative adult teachers who celebrate and understand seasonality and natural cycles, those who view death not as the grim reaper of life but rather a transformational companion that is required for the journey and who we ought to get to know in practiced ways so that one day we will *ultimately* be able to let go, are my true heroes. Teachers who are courageous enough to help us to see death as an ally, as life-giving as made evident by the food on our plates, as literally responsible for life rather than something we cannot speak about, are the ones who can help awaken our deepest inborn instincts and intuitions. Those who know that dwelling for a time in a place of pain is character-building and that “pain is the road to self-knowledge, that self-knowledge is the

road to trusting yourself; that without such trust, you cannot like yourself; without such self-liking, you can never dependably love another” (Gatto, 1999, p. 167).

Just as the caterpillar has imaginal cells (unbeknownst to the pupa), there are magical and healing properties to be found in solitude and the importance of disappearances, where through the dark workmanship of transformation, we can restore our wholeness, become re-enchanted with the world and take flight to become not the best-in-the-world but the best-*for*-the-world.

And teachers who are willing to not-know, to sit quietly in the cocoon of gestation (if they are to become more authentic to their profession) are likely the ones who will be courageous enough to hold the student’s feet to the fires of their own initiations and returns. And in an ethics of self-care, as teachers, we must find ways to remind ourselves that we are equally shaped by the mysteries, by the shedding of skin, the archetypal energies that are attracted to us, and the movement of the gods, as much as we are by the patterns we arrive with at birth and receive feedback on while growing up. When we work to make manifest what we perceive, what we love, and are called to teach, we are not only the teacher, but the one being taught, “not only the shaper, but the shaped” (Buhner, 2010, p. 222).



### **rendering teachers down.**

A lot of the so-called teachers these days are not fully cooked themselves. A trusted friend or teacher who has some wisdom and your best interest at heart can be a treasure. I feel that the real teacher, though, at some point will cease playing patty-cake and break you in two. (Ladinsky, 2013, p. 11)

I take that Daniel Ladinsky, a spiritual follower and translator of Hafiz’s work, is meaning that the teacher must have her fierce way of interrupting your cushy life (and thinking) and therefore, once you are broken in two, you are broken open; you are in essence (and paradoxically) no longer divided. The aim of the breaking is to become less egoistic, where the ego is made more permeable to reveal a more collective glorious and greater self. This is where the grace and mastery of servitude begins and where like the flute with the wind of the divine blowing through it, we may find ourselves being played

through from a greater force than ourselves, greater than our worldly talents (because our talents come from and belong to the world too).

When you act on behalf  
of something greater than yourself,  
you begin  
to feel it acting through you  
with a power that is greater than your own

This is grace. (J. Macy, personal communication, 2012)

“Cooked down” is where the protection of fat layers are boiled away. This is where the “genius wind” of the student, unimpeded, can begin to really blow through him, where conditions become hospitable for a central image (the one he was born to embody) to show itself. This is also where reclamation is accommodated through self-knowledge, self-realization and finally (if one persists and sacrifices enough of what they love), through self-actualization, *becomes* a gift for others. Something greater than ourselves is being made real from this rendered down, egoless place.

Teachers who ask, “*How do I bring out the best in others?*” rather than, “*What’s in it for me? What will I get from this?*” are the ones who know the plot. They can help figure out the students’ part to play by noticing what they are passionate about which often leads to where their genius (treasure or bliss) lays buried.

This study has shown that it is not just our own lives that depend on this to happen, as there are clear implications for the fate of our world that lie in our abilities to refuse old patterns created by others and consciously to take up what Young-Brown (2009) writes is the call *to cooperate rather than compete, to contribute rather than take*, in the making of a better world. Good teachers have developed the vision to see correlations (i.e. core/relations, core-relationships) between things. They know this is not just a job, but a responsibility with enormous ecological and epistemological consequences for generations to come.



### **the ecopedagogue.**

We must draw our standards from the natural world, heedless of ridicule, and reaffirm its denied validity. We must honour with the humility of the

wise the bounds that natural world and the mystery which lies beyond  
 ...admitting that there is something in the order of being which evidently  
 exceeds all our competence. (Havel, 1990, p. 149)

The ecopedagogue knows the healthy inter-relationship between time spent in the outside world and what happens inwardly, and therefore, insists on a corresponding curriculum that writes “get outside into the field” into the script each day. An essential epistemological aspect to whole person learning is tapping into the wisdom of the natural world whose “order of being” as Havel said, “exceeds all our competence” (p. 149), brings awe and perspective and serves up fresh truths.

But, writes William Gass (1985) “we have grown accustomed to the slum our consciousness has become” (p. 222) with television and speeches, movies and the internet, filled with other people’s opinions to represent what is truthful. This threatens to (re)place ourselves in a more digital rather than ecological context. “We listen for guidance everywhere, except from within” Palmer laments (2000, p. 5), and many teaching practices echo this dullness in their lack of creative reflexivity, lack of honouring the intrinsic sense of self (and knowing) that is our true nature, and a true source of wisdom.

Educator Tobin Hart (2001) writes, “For the most part, contemporary education remains geared to downloading facts and fostering compliance, [where] we seek to shape a populace for the marketplace and treat the student as a receptacle to be filled and controlled” (p. 4), granting transmission of knowledge precedence over the transformation of ideas. Students become receivers not makers. While this may prepare individuals for material success and wealth, it tends to create a habit-forming need to be constantly filled through a “never-enough” insatiable consumption that relies on the growing worth from the outside in, rather than the other way round.

The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world more habitable and humane. (Orr, 2004, p 12)

I would add to that list, *teachers* (which it could be argued can be at times a courageous embodiment all of those things at once). It fascinated me to look into the origin of *pedagogue* as it once related to the servant who stayed close by, and often walking

alongside the student on their way to learning. In some cultures, this adult was as a kind of moral (soul?) guide responsible for the upbringing of the child who engaged in informal types of learning that included conversation and experiences, rather than our modern understanding of the pedagogue as the one expert who stands up at the front of the room and tells the novice students what to think or do (Smith, 2006). We could learn a lot by remembering such a humble servitude.

Teachers compelled by the deepest parts of themselves to be taken up by this lineage to teach cannot merely be defined by accolades, titles, paystubs or tenure any longer. It asks too much of us to rest on such temporal laurels. Good teaching parlays into unabashed encouragement, requiring at times even a kind of stealth to get to the heart of things. Supporting students to take up the soul's call means we must ask them to stop what they are doing and without knowing what is to come, step outside societal confines and recast their notions about life's work. A student-centred curriculum is not only helpful for students to more creatively compete in a knowledge economy, but also fosters healthy and aesthetic tastes, healthy lifestyles, social responsibility, moral and values development, along with physical and psychological development too. It is a little like aiding and abetting a jailbreak from a quotidian ego-based reality toward a more fluid, wilder ecology.

Teachers who nourish what is best about the human spirit, what is noble in the work of those who fight for the rights of all living beings and the deep imagination, are most commonly those who know how to nourish themselves in ways of abundance and sustainability, and dodge burn-out. I have come to understand that teachers who embody compassion and caring for themselves and encourage their own learnerhood, can in effect more seamlessly activate the unconscious teacher within each student (Miller & Baldwin, 1994) in life-giving not life-taking ways.

Educator extraordinaire, Maxine Greene (2009) encourages those who teach to look upon the learner as an individual with a future quest at hand and encourage students to speak, write and resist in their own voices, to become their genuine selves (live into their own genius) and in this process become more *ourselves* as teachers as well. She understands that we must endeavor to teach to *who we are*, to help students know equally what we know, and help situate themselves with all of their flaws, biases, limitations, liabilities, talents, perspectives, to become autonomous and self-directed.



Madelaine Grumet (1995) reminds us that, “It is the work of the teacher to interrupt the familiar” (p. 16), to turn over any unexamined beliefs and biases, to check orientations and assumptions, to illuminate fears and hopes and dreams that shape us by how we perceive and emanate them. It is the work of the courageous teacher called to the task to “stir the pot” of the stew we grew up in, to help us think about and pose good and difficult questions about our lives and about what is truly important, to help us dig for that sense of aliveness, and to find that “yes” no matter the discomfort we experience in the digging or what else we might dredge up. This is can help the student access their astonishing resources or what Dewey called their “powers” (1929/2009, p. 34) to cultivate and eventually integrate these into their lives. Teachers who facilitate this type of inquiry face unknown knowledge together with the student and by observing this process through, what theorist Bill Pinar calls a necessary “pedagogy of listening” (personal communication, July 2014), help shift and reshape curriculum from the disembodied to the embodied.

To me, this is my life’s work, my “educator’s code of conduct” to help ensure the realization of the student to his potential and a healthy manifestation of confidence and positive ways of expressing personal power as it addresses and is addressed by everyday life. Otherwise, learning can become rote and no matter how cleverly devised a curriculum is, it becomes inappropriate to the dignity of the student and to the classroom as laboratory. The psychic coherence of the student depends on their ability to achieve personal growth and mastery through thinking independently, critically and creatively, to be able to make choices for themselves and live freely, and to fully understand and blend the wisdom of multiple perspectives in order to make sense of life. This represents psychic as well as behavioural preparation for a life well-lived and well-examined, instead of preparation only for economic activity and it holds far-reaching implications for the development of our humanity.

Teaching for self-knowledge and self-awareness rather than only for what has already been determined to be important in standardized learning, requires the bravery to face into the fleetingness of existence, the abyss of the unknown, digging deeper into our own impermanence. Gatto (1999) writes, “the only thing that gives our time on earth any deep significance is that none of it will last” (p. 169), that we will all someday either say goodbye to everyone we love or they will say goodbye to us. On my quest, I came to know

that the flower is beautiful precisely *because* in its full bloom it is on its' way to a final and glorious perishing departure. *That* is what made it so precious. Life is fleeting, so it is vital that we determine what it is we are supposed to with its preciousness before it too fades. Part of what we must teach and learn is to keep our impending disappearance in the sight so that we compel ourselves to not sit in complacency—one more second—or believe we are physically immortal, and instead take up the call to adventure (which of course gives up its secret to those who do so and return). In this way, we who teach in this way might be called “rememberists”, those who ensure what is of value is not forgotten or lost. The initiatory journey that learning can be, in its efforts to know and engender our purpose, holds the deep structure for remembering, is a scaffolding for innovative practice, a place for the wild soul to show itself and remind us of our mysterious natures. It would serve us to ask each of our students early on this wonderful question from poet Mary Oliver (1992), “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” (p. 94), and then listen deeply for their response.

Our human purpose, independent of societal prescriptions, aligns with radical educator John Gatto's (1999) thinking, to ignite our “self-knowledge, duty, responsibility, acceptance of age and loss, preparation for death” (p. 171) through our actionable gifts. The ability to discern a gift can be carried in the ideas within “the seeds of a self-activating curriculum which gives meaning to time” (p. 171) and brings meaning to life. Building such relevant curriculum requires the teacher know herself as well as her craft, asks that she step into a heuristic and somewhat mysterious pedagogy of her own imaginative making that of course speaks to her having developed many skills and techniques over time, as well as her own interiority. It goes without saying that this necessitates that teachers have done much self-examination and introspection too. That we have an active, reflective practice enough to *forget ourselves* and act out of greater eco-centricity rather than act from the small ego-centric self. Without fear, with less investment in reductionist approaches or social implications (such as, “What will people think?”), the teacher has a newfound ability to let go of control (and fear of repercussion). and yield to the what is shaping us all into becoming more ourselves.

To train ourselves to engage in a more reflective and mythopoetic way means making (and remaking) a unique and living, ecologically-centred curriculum. In its

wholeness it has one foot of its existence firmly rooted in the realm of imagination containing true aesthetic, poetic and mythic dimensions and the other planted in rational, practical and scientific thought. Through a more fluid lyricism of language and thought we may find a potency and power of embodied pedagogies and practices that take on a luminosity not often associated with school. When we immerse ourselves in artful craft, we experience exchanges through consciousness connections that are potent and percolating, disturbing and changing, and sometimes (one would hope) enlightening. In this process we become more attuned to identify what part of the archetypal network<sup>55</sup> is calling and wants to live through us, to manifest through our teaching practice—at least for a time.

If we do this, we will teach from a deeper level, from a place of mastery-bringing phenomenon, where teaching and identity work together to shape a “yes” kind of space of learning that flows both ways, engendering co-creation. Seemingly simple, odd or trivial things gain significance in this space and are understood to be somehow connected to the larger, more complex process beyond the classroom. In this, we are the servants of the process, not the masters. We are, in a sense, transmitting through a conduit of service.

The ecopedagogue is defined through her finely held listening ear and a scouting yet compassionate eye for particular kinds of uniqueness, for signs and signifiers as seen through the “unworn sides of the eye” (Thoreau in Buhner, 2012, p. 97) which disallows any jadedness or judgment to blur what is real. In effect, she builds foundations of trust essential to a deeper dive into learning. When we fulfill our obligation to consciously teach and let what wants to be taught come through us, we are tapping into what Jung (1959) called the primordial “well” of the collective with its boundless yet universal resonance that arises when everyone knows “something just happened” that cannot however, be seen or named. In *The Living Classroom: Teaching and Collective Consciousness* (2008), Christopher Brache knows that when real breakthroughs occur they can bring a class alive if students are bringing their full selves (good mental and physical energy *and* emotional psychic energy) and are willing to fully engage. The outdoor classroom, I have found, is the best context for this to occur where there is so often, a felt sense that—*something just happened here*.

---

<sup>55</sup> The collective consciousness that existed long before us and will continue on as energy after our physical death.

The poet de Lorca called it *duende* to illustrate that unearthly feeling of energy rising up through the soles of our feet, and I imagine Palmer (1983, 1998, 2000) might call it a *return to the sacred*, or perhaps, like Macy (2012) identify the greater *presence of grace*. Jung (1965) might have said it is redolent of the “*participation mystique*” (p. 50) or perhaps he could have thought that the gods were winking through the “*numinous*” at us. He might even have suggested that the class had entered the “*temenos*” (Mayes, 2005, p. 77), a sacred and imaginal precinct. Dewey (1929/2009) on the other hand might have viewed this experience as an amplification of the “*powers*” (p. 34) of each student when all energies are alchemically combined. Sheldrake (2009) and McTaggart (2002) would call it “*a morphic field*”. I call it *mythic*. No matter what we call it, this is the establishment of soul.

Philosopher John MacMurray (in Maslow, 1954), said, “Now is the point in history at which it becomes possible for man to adopt consciously as his own purpose, the purpose which is inherent in his own nature” (p. 39) and 30 years before that Dewey (1929/2009) said much the same thing about following our natural attunements to discern our calling and true purpose in life through education. Real change will not be found in another lesson plan or school directive, in one new text over another. Lasting change will and always has come from within. It begins when the teacher, who has “the courage to teach from the most truthful places in the landscape of self and world, the courage to invite students to discover, explore, and inhabit those places in living of their own lives” (Palmer, 1998, p. 183), brings an “inner curriculum” that values the kind of people we want to become.

The most often ignored dimension in teaching seems to be, to balance the necessary output with an equal practice toward an inner life and explore the connections between the two (Palmer, 2013). If we don’t make the time, and develop practices toward our own spirit and resiliency, then where will we find the energy and vision necessary to make real and lasting changes within the system? I have come to appreciate how in teaching, one must constantly navigate between things, for example straddling the world of free play in releasing unfettered creative spirit and genius of the student while blending in the necessity of some conformities and conventions to best prepare the student for full and meaningful participation and involvement in societal life. This must be done without shrinking that surge of imagination down or dominating yet still be able to facilitate the student to excel within the current system. Tricky business.

There are enormously serious consequences to the act and art of teaching as “the educator can be the withholder as well as the giver of life” (Eiseley, 1962, p. 52) in a sense as determined by what we do and don’t teach. And I would add, by *where* we do and don’t teach as well. We are “interpreter and disseminator” (p. 39) required paradoxically to be both “the guardian of stability and the exponent of societal change” (Eiseley, 1962, p. 39).

Transformative and integrative learning practices that teach a more divergent set of qualities, related to our “capacity for personal strength, self-knowledge, integrity, compassion and cooperation” (Todesco, 2012, p. 115) attend to the student’s experience and interests as they relate to economic, civic and social responsibilities but in a more imaginative and embodied way than curriculum in service of economics alone. Teaching from the wisdom of a *whole person* perspective includes the body, mind, heart, and soul. It draws from the entire epistemological spectrum of cognitive, aesthetic, emotional and spiritual intelligences to align meaning and purpose for what is essential to each student (Hart, 2001; O’Sullivan, 2008; Palmer & Zajonc, 2011; Selby, 2002; Sterling, 2001) careful to provide a balance of creative, practical scientific competencies and artistic skills as well as environmental awareness toward the efficacy of that student.

What are we to do? The answer is as simple as it is disconcerting: we can, each of us, work to put our inner house in order. The guidance we need for this work cannot be found in science and technology, the value of which utterly depends on the ends we serve: but it can still be found in the traditional wisdom of mankind. (Schumacher, 1973, p. 250)

Teaching is still a great undeveloped and vast region that is continually evolving to meet the world with its challenges and crises as characterized by high levels of complexity and uncertainty. But it is too slow. Despite the decades one might have in the field and although there are many wonderful courses (“curricular maps”) already charted by deeply intelligent educators that have already gone ahead, these cartographies are definitely not the territory! Our responsibility runs deep to help equip our students with ecological competence, compassionate understanding and hope, with the stamina enough to build communities that can ethically challenge the status quo, and offer a more resilient and respectful relationship with the world (Orr, 1994). In effect, we must find the resources to help recalibrate the student’s inner compass so they may move confidently toward their

true north of soul, to keep seeking the truth of being fully themselves.

We all know that what will transform education is not another theory, another book, or another formula but educators who are willing to seek a transformed way of being in the world. In the midst of the familiar trappings of education – competition, intellectual combat, obsession with a narrow range of facts, credits, and credentials – what we seek is a way of working illuminated by spirit and infused with soul. (Palmer, 1999, p.15)

If we can move beyond a mechanistic reality and clear a space for the more mythic and liminal realms to be included in the discourse, then I believe it is possible to ontologize curriculum as we address the basic human need to grow and transform, to seek ever higher states of consciousness (Maslow, 1968). As we create the conditions for the seeing and feeling aspects of the sacred, of eternity, of the symbolic *in* and *through* the student (Maslow, 1954), toward a particular purpose or end, without ego or expectation, as eco-pedagogues “education becomes a redemption, a selfless offering of oneself for the wellbeing of others” (Halifax, 1999). Without the need to try to always prove what has been learned or prove what is worth learning, might we (im)prove our practices given enough time and space to hear the soul sending out its summons of deeper orders?



### **Living Disciplines**

The idea is simply that we take our senses seriously throughout education at all levels and that doing so requires immersion in particular components of the natural world—a river, mountain, a farm, a wetland, a forest, a particular animal, a lake, an island —*before* students are introduced to more advanced levels of disciplinary knowledge. (Orr, 2004, p. 96)

Soul is not something we need to add to enliven a class; it *is* the thing of it. Creating the conditions for a kind of *curriculum vitae* that is vitally alive means seeking imaginative pedagogies that connect our inner and outer worlds conveyed through ideas and ways that resonate within both our individual and collective psyches (Hillman, 1989), curricula that wakes us up from too long a dormancy. A more ensouled approach to learning means ample time and space and cannot be “facilitated” or taught in any one lesson. With enough breathing room, and patience for the confluence of the expansiveness of being outside to

mix with the unfolding of the student within, something astonishing may just arrive unexpectedly as “the happy learning that just announces itself” (Jickling, 2009, p. 172).

Schumacher (1973) addresses a need for patience in his influential work, *Small is Beautiful*, citing that in a society of affluence such as ours, it is “almost impossible to do worthwhile things without immediate payoff” (p. 84). However, “the most important step in emancipating oneself from social controls” Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) writes, is “the ability to find rewards in the events of each moment (and to) find meaning in the ongoing stream of experience, the process of living itself” (p. 19) rather than rely on outside forces (brackets mine).

Going outside, with a mindful and a sense of wonder with “soft eyes” is akin to flipping the switch of the machine to “off”. The vitality of our lives and our deep inner wisdom needs creative stirring within safe places of practice and play where attending to images and emotions is given equal honour among other types of learning and where “constructivist, active, and experiential forms of teaching and learning, marked by high levels of uncertainty, ambiguity, contradiction and paradox invite expressions of soul” (Dirkx, 1997, p. 82). When we allow for the unpredictable and messy learning that can occur when soul is foreground, it “undeniably presses in on us; beauty, time, death, the holiness of the world... the strange weave of light, shadow, flame and breath... rooted in the spontaneous creating of continuous images and ideas about the unknown continuity of things” (Cousineau, 1994, p. xxii), and we know we are in the realm of feelings, and are connecting more emotionally, more empathetically.

Examples of this would be what ecopedagogue, David Jardine (2000) calls “living disciplines” (p. 202) that in *themselves* teach. Imagine: mathematics students, after learning basic patterns and structure, are encouraged to go outside to find the “sacred geometry” of nature; a qualitative methods class listens to life speaking through each student in reflective free-writing practice; a poetry class that takes a sea kayaking trip to find inspiration from this vast source of rhythms and tides; a nursing program features the personal narratives of those working in hospice to learn firsthand of loss and suffering in palliative care; a teacher training holds focus on autobiography as a way of coming to understand diverse and rich examples of learning and plumbs for the affinity to teach; an environmental teacher asks students to imagine their own mostly watery bodies as the

“body politic”, connected to every other body of water on the planet, requiring the same kinds of consideration and protection. As unlikely as this may sound, with the soul and its unity with all living things as part of the learning equation,

Mathematics might become conceived as itself deeply interconnected, earthly phenomenon, linked to patterns of breath and bone, bearing kinships to patterns of language and song, linked, too, to symmetries etched in stone, to the spiral doings of leaves, and to the sun downarching towards *sol stasis* and returning. (Jardine, 2000, p. 10)

I more fully understand through this research, that as teachers, our main role is not to inculcate, rather it is to co-create the rich and fertile loamy conditions for the seeded self to burst open and blossom forth. It is up to us to help our students find ways to expand access to what calls each of them, what is inborn. Many have written that there are actually two journeys we all must embark on—first the journey to discover who we are and secondly, the journey to recover what was lost which leads us to what we are meant to be which is ours and ours alone to carry forth (Hillman, 1996; Hollis, 2005; Jung, 1965, etc.)

Jardine (2000) writes that as he gathers something of a place where he is learning about birds, he is “*gathering up himself*” (p. 136) and in a way, he is *becoming* someone through what he knows. Knowing the earth and ourselves in it, in this way, acts like an awakening to the mysteries that must be present in our psyches to counterbalance the hegemonic powers of an education rife with conceptual thinking and abstract knowing.

There is nothing of me that is not earth no split instant of separateness, no particle that disunites me from the surroundings. I am no less than the earth itself. The rivers run through my veins, the winds blow in and out with my breath, the soil makes my flesh, the sun’s heat smolders inside me...the life of the earth is my own life. My eyes are the earth gazing at itself. (Nelson, 1989, p. 249)

Nothing remains static, not the earth, not our worldviews because we arise from a living system in a dynamic interdependence of changing and influencing, changing and influencing. Everything acts upon the other thing. Our obligation as is to act accordingly, to act like we belong on this earth (in that we are an integral part that is just as astonishing and necessary as any other living beings). To do this, we need to keep earth embedded in



the curriculum, not a static curriculum, rather one that keep changing and influencing as well. This requires a truly emergent *currere* of learning that like the river that flows, can never be stepped into the same way twice because both river and stepper have moved on (Heraclitus in Sedley, 2003). This can sound like an exhausting proposition for an overworked teacher in an under-resourced system. However, I have found that the resources for this type of creativity do not rely on school budgets or supplies, instead they borrow from nature’s intelligence itself. Living disciplines help us to shift our consciousness to find commonality with organisms that can sustain us by teaching us to protect rather than destroy them and ourselves in the process.

So far, for most of us it seems that we have an inadequate or under-developed skill set for communication with other living beings past human language, and hence we are failing to understand the more universal rhythms and languages between each organism. Imagine learning a way to understand these secret mysterious “languages” and what great teachings they may offer us! Contemplative time in nature spent building relationships and our sense of connection to something greater than ourselves, taking time to look deeply into and listen for the kind of information that our very survival might depend upon (Stamets, 2013), is a living disciplines approach.

Water veins hidden deep in the earth match my hidden veins (and some not so hidden as I age) carrying precious fluid for my life in an *as above, so below* way of mutuality, self and world as patterns within patterns, micro and macro. Inside a drop of water from a halophile (where salt water and fresh water meet deep under the earth’s floor in watery caves) there appears under a power microscope what looks like a whole other universe. Jimi Hendrix was the guitar playing itself—one and the same in an altered consciousness in a mash-up of chaos and beauty at once. Vincent van Gogh was that untamed cursive mix, a swirl of dream, land and sky. Eco-philosopher and earth warrior, John Seed (Seed, et al, 1988) was the personification of forest protecting itself, and just as ecological poet Pattiann Rogers (2005) became “...clicking twigs, the needle leaf matrix of evergreen motion” (p. 31), I too became canyon and flower, bog and dragonfly, thrush and mud, lake and eternity in a kind of learning that flowed directly from the centre of the universe up through me.

Just imagine bringing these extraordinary experiences to life for all students. What kinds of soul-to-soul conversations (and more sensuous inquiries) could they become

fluent in? And imagine further still, what kinds of wholesale changes would ensue on behalf of the lives of others after they come back and begin to make sense of it all?



### **an ecology of learning.**

Educator and curriculum theorist, Gary Knowles (2001), writes of the glories that a “wandering pedagogy” bring as he turns to the power of place to articulate the interconnecting threads between human and other-than-human worlds. He weaves them together into a robust curriculum borne of imagination from time spent with students in experiential settings like canoeing down a river over the course of five days. He offers that the curriculum is in itself comprised of absorbing a tremendous amount of sensory information, where we can open to possibilities of self and place in a wild tangle of research and remembering that can inform our way of being, and shape our professional practice. When we literally take our ideas out for (in his case) a paddle or (in mine) a walk, and let the primacy of experience wash over us, we pay attention to the beauty of the small and the ordinary, to the ancient pull of seasonality and celestial patterns, and recognize everything has a life of its own as we make meaning of the phenomenon there. In this place, we cannot help but become more compassionate and loving of all of life. Even the toughest student seems to “tenderize” and soften, given enough time in nature.

The end result is not separate subjects or even ways of looking at non-separateness (which can be no further evolved really), rather it is actually following the real, living, connections that hold traces of ancient and new life, if we bring those findings back through *all curriculum* allowing students to make connections for themselves from what they have encountered, and help them to see similar patterns in seemingly disparate things. This requires a kind of soulful attention to intentional curriculum-making where teaching math, the geographies, the sciences, literature, writing, becomes more of a “way” than a mere course or a program. When everything relates to everything else as part of a greater system, where *both* mythos *and* logos are obvious and equally valued to bring a more fulsome and immersed perspective, we are engaged in the *ecology* of learning (*logos* from Greek means “theory or study”, Barnhardt, 1988, p. 608 and *eco* from Greek “oikos” means house or habitation, p. 313), we are studying our earthly home.

David Orr (2004) suggests learning about a river by living by one for a time, studying its habits and rhythms, the relationships it forms, its currents and patterns, the animals and fish who live there. He offers that by “listening to it, swimming in it, canoeing on it, sleeping beside it” (p. 96) what emerges is something more diverse and rich than any one of its parts. By this intimacy, a living system (as a microcosm for the world system) goes beyond any text or video (re)presentation as we are awakened and changed in relationship to it. Out here we can make up our own minds about the importance of its relationship to the rest of the planet (and in contrast get a sense of our own natural part to play).

Orr (2004) calls for ecological literacy as a national goal for schools education to become part of the curriculum in all subjects because of our inhabitedness, and our situation. He offers that all learning is contextual within the environment therefore “all education is environmental” (p. 74). Orr encourages us to avoid short term fixes but instead take a longer view of things, invite a “courtship between mind and nature” (p. 96), let ourselves fall in love with it by knowing it intimately, and then of course we will do anything to keep it safe from harm just as we would a lover or our own kin.

In *World as Lover, World as Self*, Joanna Macy (2007) writes that by seeing what were formerly resources as relatives, we shift our ecological identity from dominator to protector and side-by-side lover, and this critical shift she writes, “will be life-saving in the sociopolitical and ecological ordeals that lie before us” (p. 147). A loving relationship with the biosphere, what E.O. Wilson (Kellert & Wilson, 1993) coined “biophilia”, gives us opportunities to develop the language and intelligences needed to create and solve more inclusively. Until we recognize the inherent value of the returns of these affections, ecological learning that insists on camping out and *becoming* the river in order to study, is usually the first to be dropped when financial cuts are made. To transfer the significance from the rational and empirical avenues only we will need an overriding passion to champion a certain intellectual beauty and precision, a sensibility of elegance, harmony, simplicity, and coherence to taken as valuable and intrinsic to learning.

However, cultural mass hypnosis—designed to keep people in their place—tends to keep the enterprise going and keep us safely asleep to our deeper feelings. Opiates like television and shallow entertainments keep us in a psychic trance, and would have us

believing it is a privilege to stay home and watch a 90" TV, eat oil-based, sugary treats, in hermetically sealed homes while we shop online to buy more and more stuff to make the place comfortable and cozy so that we never want to leave. Depth psychology suspects that our fragmented selves are not able to consciously register the suffering that lies buried within our psyches from the crises of loss and devastation to the environment (Hillman, 1996; Plotkin, 2003, 2008b). But numbing down means we cannot get off this treadmill and will remain victims of our own bundles of nerves and reflexes wired to predictable behaviours and outcomes.

Without formal, initiatory opportunities that I believe have a central place in school, young people run the risk of simply becoming older adolescents who remain psycho-spiritually and socially immature, ignorant of boundaries and responsibilities beyond themselves, or become what Bill Plotkin (2003, 2008a/b) calls "patho-adolescent". Of course ceremonies and rites of passage do not guarantee an outcome, however initiation does provide the rich conditions for individuals to "experience true awakenings and revelations about themselves," and discover their unique identity (Meade 2011, p. 11) and purpose. Our society for the most part is bereft of communal ritual with the exception of those ceremonies and traditions that have in many ways devolved away from their earlier significances of threshold crossing and unfoldment to become consumptive spectator sports and hallmark holidays (e.g. marriage, graduation, anniversaries, etc.).

In the absence of initiation, an unhealthy, unrealized population of seniors for instance who have become "olders" rather than *elders*, is our norm. Those that did not have or did not seize the opportunity or guidance to finally grow up (instead of just growing old) (Hollis, 2005) and become more wholly themselves through an individuation process, are considered no longer useful past their societal prime. And a younger adult contingency that has not experienced initiation stays stuck in an egoic mindset of "me and mine" and is highly susceptible to a materialism and behaviours that create environmental degradation and violence (Meade, 2011) because they believe it is their right to take what they want without consequence rather than asking what they might give to the world instead. Adolescents who lack guidance in the ways of initiation into true adulthood will in fact try to wake themselves up and *initiate themselves to death* through gang behaviors, drugging, and drinking. Purposely putting themselves into repeated dangerous and reckless

situations, these youth taunt death (Plotkin, 2003, 2008b; Hollis, 2005; Meade, 2011) and threaten all life.

An ecological education with its initiatory patterns and practices can help to wake us up from the somnolence of this “Wasteland” (Eliot, 1922) through evoking wonder and creativity and allow for a uniqueness of expression. Through reconnection practices with our mythical domains and the earth itself, and by being witnessed in our passage across thresholds of significance, we may develop the necessary stamina and energy to push ourselves beyond the matrix, refuse to go back to sleep, and begin to define our life.

In *Sight and Sensibility*, Laura Sewall (1999) makes a good point about real threats that shatter whole experiences and connectivity. She call them “broken experiences” where parking lots and days are divided up into neat little segments, where bells mark the end of a class, and 20 minute lunch hours (with a plethora of fast foods) fill those short breaks. Add to that fragmentation, “broken conversation” through instant messaging, e-mails, voice- mail and texting, let alone the lost thread of non-verbal dialogue with the living world. We are constantly managing our lives by the sound byte.

Just visit any major Western centre today and you will see a very high number of people wearing ear “buds”. Not only is this completely anti-social behaviour, but of course constant and high volume use can threaten hearing loss. And if it isn’t headphones, then it is common to see people with heads bent low using both thumbs to text or play games. Very little eye contact happens anymore. It seems like madness to me.

And what is so alluring? A pervasive and worrisome form of socially acceptable voyeurism taking over that insists we parade our private likes and dislikes, reveal our every thought (and movement) and post photographs in public of personas we create of ourselves (egocentrically called the “selfie”) on Facebook for all the world to see. Those who can see into our goings-on are called “friends” in a catholic misuse of the term for the most part, as most would be at best acquaintances. And not least of all, we can now leave inane technological cookie-crumbs trails for people to follow us (and intrude with comments on each and every move and thought) on Twitter. Not too far a cry from the term “twit” which means “to taunt, tease, ridicule, etc., with reference to anything embarrassing”, in essence, “to blame”. In my recollection of growing up with English humour as a mainstay, it used to refer to being a complete “idiot”.

Ecopsychologist Chellis Glendinning (1994), author of *My Name is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*, offers that virtual reality is the ultimate and sure-fire escapism from real feelings and reality. Actual embodied (and felt) experiences of our world are replaced by virtual experiences (e.g. staring at screens) where technology threatens to replace human presence, is a shadowy replica of an externalization of self. Technological school curriculum in the service of today's economies Bill Pinar warns, translates to "competence as the technical description of the child's soul" (personal communication, July, 2104) without the substantiality of the body or true reflection of soul.

I too worry that an overt emphasis on technology catches us up in vicious cycle of "saving time" in answer to our accelerated need to ironically spend more time on those same devices and, in fact, is having a reverse effect. In many cases it can leave us feeling even more isolated and alone. We tune *out* to ear buds yet may fail to hear the push of spring through the unfolding of the bud of the tree. We focus on small and large screens while the real world-wide-web; the vaster intelligence of the world goes unanswered in its call to connect with us in a rich webby way through patterns and pulses, rhythms and tides, cycles and seasons. We may not know what we are doing if we fail to see the systems we are a part of with its causal and metaphoric relationships. In nature, the sentient human and the sentient other-than-human world meet and speak through the senses. Our senses are all the language we need to open up a conversation beyond words much bigger than ourselves. The one that is necessary for us to wake up to what is possible, and be able to see and hear out beyond the rat race. Or die trying.

Annie Dillard, the *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) wrote, "when I see this way I truly see" breaking and opening in a return to her senses. Thoreau (1960) exclaimed, "How much virtue there is in simply seeing!" (p. 4) because he found "there is so much rapture" (p. 4) that comes from sight. We are as much as we see. We are as much as we take in and are taken in by the world. If our sight is dangerously limited to manufactured representations on small and large screens then we get used to living within a flatland that (by its reflection of us) in effect, whittles us down to be as one dimensional and lifeless as those images we are watching.

Relational ways of seeing open us up to ecological thinking in the form of an energetic, natural yet "delicate interpenetration" (Sheppard, 1996, p. 112) because we

hold the same beauty and complexity in ourselves as we see extended in the world. This requires in itself a kind of vision that transcends imaginary boundaries, that shifts our references and attitudes without our losing the sense of humanness, and links us to place.

In *Traces of an Omnivore*, revolutionary thinker and author, Paul Sheppard (1996) reminds us that,

Ecology deals with organisms in the environment and with the processes that link organism and place. But ecology as such cannot be studied—only organisms, earth, air and sea can be studied. It is not a discipline: there is no body of thought and technique that frames an ecology of man. It must be therefore a scope or way of seeing. Such a perspective on the human situation is very old and has been part of philosophy for thousands of years. It badly needs attention and revival. (p.111)

If we don't have the faintest idea how to employ our senses, and open them up to the scope of world mystery, then dangers lie in powerful organs that can turn against us in their atrophy. Ears replaced with ear buds, eyes so attuned to pixelated screens they can no longer depict the subtle nature of one millions shades of green (although our minds could never hope to name each hue) and skin that is more adept at pushing buttons than knowing the sensuous nature of the bark of a tree touching us. It means that we may become shells of ourselves, no longer inhabiting our bodies, out of touch with our own natures and unable to respond to life. Abram (1996) warns we risk much of our humanness with these losses because we evolve in reciprocity,

Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds and shapes of an animate earth – our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with *other* eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own sense of their integrity and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human. (p. 22)

If we do not know how to locate ourselves in relationship with others, we will not only lose the body wisdom that lives at the root of our humanity and ignites our passions

and imaginative expressions, but we may forever lose a vital part of our original instruction. Without our keen and attenuated senses, we might forget how to cross over to true adulthood and forever lose our way.



### **Pedagogies and Practices**

The notion that each one of us has an original way of being human entails that each of us has to discover what it is to be ourselves. But the discovery can't be made by consulting pre-existing models, by hypothesis. So it can be made only by articulating it afresh. We discover what we have it in us to be by becoming that mode of life, by giving expression in our speech and action to what is original in us. (Taylor, 1991, p. 61)

How we choose to personify our own stories is the curriculum of our lives. Original, authentic pedagogy inspires, enlivens and encourages others and is a serious task that cannot be found in pre-existing models and frameworks if they are to pull us out from the flatland we live in and look to longer horizons. While techniques can be important for sure, finding diamond-edged words and elegant ways that precisely touch into what is precious at the core of learning takes educated practice, a well-worn capacity to feel, an excellent and canny sense of timing and the patience of experience to sometimes not get it right at all.

Knowing a true statement or sentence when you hear it fall out, knowing that the truth has many guises, knowing that the "skid" that the class has just slid toward must be turned *into* rather than *away from* (although risky as that may at first seem), and is critical for something real to happen. Knowing when it is time to move on and time to move into the body, or move to small groups from large ones, or knowing when the time has come to sit in silence for a moment or two despite any tensions or external pressures, is a subtle art form.

In my own experience, it has been equally helpful to able to identify what I can let go of (like pre-determined outcomes) and trust that the things that insist on being said are being said for a reason. If I trust enough, I may find that others needed to hear that precise thing (just as much as the student needed to say it) despite how awkward or disquieting it



may be and especially if it steers us off course in some way. If I have faith in the process of learning, then things that persist in begin examined, will surface. Elephants and truths get named. Emotions are shared openly and learning moves as people are moved. While pedagogical practices that open us up may not be therapy, they can hold actual therapeutic benefit and at times may in fact be redemptive. Students who are encouraged to become more of the essence of themselves, to let what they already hold inside, out. To let what they are most deeply called to be (first through sensing and feelings, then through their good minds) instead of buying into what they have been told they are (or need to be to be worthy) by their peers, media and culture, is freedom.

*I cannot start teaching until I know what I am doing and yet I don't know what I am doing until I start teaching! A paradox. I resist the false security of hard and fast lesson plans and thinking I need to know as much as possible in advance and simply get out of my own way.*

*My preparations consist of intention-setting, which can sometimes even sound like prayers for each student, for us as a group learning together and the world we inhabit. Then, I listen to the field (the students and their energies, the way the light falls, ambient sounds, the tone of my own intuition, I even notice the influence of the outside weather systems) —the many conspiring aspects that weave together to create this classroom space in the present moment—and something invisible happens, a deep intuitive sensing, a keen feeling perception that guides where we must go, carves a clear path out of inklings and guesses. I have come to trust this form of inspiration; it has never failed me yet.*

*In the end, as everything falls out (usually much better than I alone could have conceived it), I don't feel clever, rather I feel humbly grateful and even sometimes like I am being taught through....and always I feel blessed.*

Within an artful, emergent and budding curriculum, (sometimes never before tried on humans!) where rigor is defined by how deeply one can attend to the moment, how deeply one's self-awareness can go in simply noticing what they notice of the nature of spiders, songbirds, bats or wind...anything is blooming possible! A pedagogy that puts ecological selfhood and soul in a kind of celebratory place in the front row of the class, is a Dionysian celebration of the *who* each person is at their core before any focus is placed on *what* they might do. For example, ceremonies embedded into learning, designed to arouse (and tend to) our connections with Others (in both their luminous and shadowy guises) connect us more fully to ourselves too. Students flourish in this rich environment because it

shifts the learning loci away from a single teacher, model or body of knowledge and places trust in a larger and more ancient design. Pedagogy as ceremony (as initiations of learning) asks us to wake-up to the vividness of life and the intelligences found there. In this liminal space and deep time together, teachers charged with lovingly watering the “good seeds” each student carries, help spur on an inner flowering that brings with it a necessary beauty for the entire world. To me, this is the epitome of a *pedagogy of love*.

I often have wondered about common attributes shared by those rare, well-loved teachers most of us had the good fortune of experiencing maybe only once, or if we were lucky, twice. It seemed they were making a life out of teaching by living their truth and we knew it. And somehow, at least in my experience, they were courageously stepping outside of normal school boundaries to show us more about the way things are. In my case, they used artful and mixed genre approaches that often included drawing and making, reflective practice and writing, small and large group discussions and activities, sometimes movies, theatre and music, and of course, there was the central component of going outside (where in essence their *how* became their *what* through experiential demonstration).

In addition, my favourite teachers shared a genuine interest in what we were trying to say, in who we each were as we offered our confusions and discoveries. My two best teacher experiences occurred 27 years apart, yet these were true inaugurations for me in coming to know I wanted to teach and helped me consider *how* to go about it if I were to do it well. No matter the content, in both cases, what counted most was their whole-hearted engagement and presence that engendered real kindness and caring and allowed us to safely stretch and discover for ourselves, to not be afraid try things out. This sacred form of tending, this love of theirs made all the difference in the world.



### **a walking pedagogy.**

*How* we attend to students, *how* we listen for the clues of what is calling them is definitely worth considering. A walking pedagogy, as I have mentioned in previous parts of this research, is my preferred *modus operandi*. It takes steps toward a more mythic experience and takes us out to the field beyond walls that exist within edifices of power where we can attend to things in a fresh and relational way.

Solo wandering out on the land, the habit of site sitting or place bonding in nearby nature as a daily or even weekly practice, mirroring and reflective writing to observe universal patterns and behaviours through field notes and sketches, all can provide clues to what is unfolding at the edge of learning and rekindle a shift in consciousness toward a more “participating consciousness” (Berman, 1984, p. 84).

Other specific walks I offer students to help them set aside judgments and suspend disbelief and step into the realm of mythos are: a) taking a walk with an ancestor (trusting the imaginal for whomever may show up), b) walking with a certain question in mind (Thoreau-style) or with unfinished emotional business, c) walking out in gratitude praising what you find (the world needs to be acknowledged and loved by us as much as we need it), d) walking to court the mysteries (and be lovingly taken up by them), e) walking to seek guidance on a particular issue (knowing the answer may not come right away), or f) walking out your personal myth story (in order to enlarge it), or g) walking in mindfulness.

I always welcome walking practice as quiet nourishment for what is really essential on the human journey. It is also imperative I continue to walk right alongside those courageous, vulnerable students out developing themselves in the woods therefore, I always partake, embodying a more ancient archetypal presence of the pedagogue who learns with the student.

Whenever someone inevitably rolls their eyes at the suggestion of, say “a walk with an ancestor” (*How could that even be possible?*, they may ask), it is usually that same person who returns hours later with an incredible story to tell. No one in my experience has ever said, “nothing happened out there”. When given the right instruction, enough space and time to wander to let something happen, it does. And while some might argue that it must simply be our own conscious minds telling us what to think, and while that may begin the process, with enough quietude to allow the strategic mind to surrender its claims paired with the repetitive motions of one foot in front of the other, arms moving, argon molecules being exchanged, something deeper and unconscious (the collective consciousness? *animas mundi?*), begins to have a conversation with us. It is amazing just what or who shows up! I have found that this kind of genius of dialect offers an elemental footing that summons us to more fully inhabit *and feel into* all of the arrivals and departures of our own lives— past, present and future.



### **the learning journal.**

We place ourselves between experiences of our past and the possibilities of the future, and we do this in an active way. We do not construct a merely intellectual perspective of our life. We do not analyze our life as though we were an outsider to it. But we enter the inner movement of our whole life history and connect ourselves to it from within. In that way we extend our life in harmony with the inner principle that is trying to unfold through it. (Progoff, 1975, p. 13)

Before we take up our pens to journal—if at all possible—first we walk. Often in silence. As I invite students to wander out into the living world, journals in hand, the walking/writing process opens up a spacious place for nomadic thought, deep curiosity and spontaneity.

A private journal space allows complete freedom of expression, a necessary refuge from literary expectation and restrictions so often associated with educational essays and writing for work (Rainer, 1978) and from the relentless bombardment of a technologically inclined world. It is informal and allows us to write how we think and feel without editing or concern for how it might look or sound. Free-writing practice is akin to Freud’s free-association practices and allow what wants to come, to come. Unmitigated, and without filters or the sublimation of control, raw data burbles up from the unconscious bringing important clues and cues and with it, much more aliveness for the writer. This encourages more authentic writing overall as it loosens our tight grip on “getting it right” and simply “gets it down” first.

The journal—the perfect traveling companion—is one way to access our core and listen to what wants to write itself *through* us as we make connections with ourselves, the world and the larger implications of our lives made evident as we listen for and value our own feelings. It allows us the interior space to discover what is most alive for us, to imagine what might be and allow feelings to come through that other types of writing cannot evoke. On journal pages, we open to new depths of understanding, open to our truths and a process—in reflection—that can be healing and liberating.

After the walk, we write. What at first can be a mere chronicle of events, with enough writing time or even time later for reflection, what surfaces are significances, signs, symbols, and patterns of perception, where new connections form and are found at the edges between the inner and outer worlds we have wandered. In T.C. McLuhan’s (1994)

*The Way of the Earth: Encounters with Nature in Ancient and Contemporary Thought* philosopher and art historian, Soetsu Yanagi finds that, “A good pattern is but an enhancement of what is true. Pattern is the transmitter of beauty” (p. 20).

One thing always leads to another in this mode of writing inquiry as the unlimited creativity of patterns reaches out past linear thought and causalities landing aesthetically on the page. In attending to what we see in the inbetweenesses of things (e.g. the lacey spaces in between leaves rather than just the leaves themselves for example), we see what perches on the interdisciplinary edges, noticing more and more of the whole spectrum of patterns that make up the world as revealed in rare and fleeting beauty. There are no generalizations to be found out here; rather the world is full with particularity and at the same time symmetries, differentiated and yet holistic patterns of relationship. Pairings become symbolic through an articular form of patterning —the metaphor. Where like knows like, it is more easily obvious once we write things down that they remind us of others things. For example, pinecones and irises share whorls, thunderstorms and brain synapsis both become lightning-makers, skin and land stretch out to protect in the same way, veins and rivers flow freely bringing life-giving nourishment as everything displays its sacred pattern, declaring itself part of the larger story. A hermetic banquet of correspondences and relatedness.

Soul’s language *is* metaphor connecting us to the divine. When we utter our first words, sound is the transformation of our breath. Words then, might be thought of as “the breath of God” or of the divine. If we forget metaphorical language, we then risk forgetting how to be human, souful. The mountain is solid and shows strength of presence. The tree stands tall and reaches out to branch toward others. The moss is a soft bed in its comforting embrace, and the stream is like the current of our consciousness, flowing, flooding, swirling, back eddying, stilling, deepening, reflecting and always moving. When we let the world speak through the writer, *she* becomes a more living expression of world captured in feelings and words, as she writes *to know and be known*. Far from a monologue, there are moments when, if we take the time and suspend judgment, something will show itself to us fully and begin a dialogic relationship in our journal. If we resist analysis, taxonomies, hermeneutics and overt metaphor, we may be lucky enough to glimpse more of its (and in effect, more of our own) true nature.

There are many kinds of journals one can keep and in recent years, the dream journal has become quite popular. The key here is of course to resist interpretation, rather record dreams as another way for the world to speak through us in rich images, symbols and the kind of wildness made only for our own eyes to glimpse, only for our own particular minds to make any “sense” from or not. And while dreaming is typically something we do at night— away from school—it is another way we can tap into our consciousness and gather other forms of intelligence during daylight hours when we are learning in a self-directed way about ourselves and the world.

Just before he died in 1961, Jung in a letter to art critic Sir Herbert Reid ([www.depthinsights.com/ezine](http://www.depthinsights.com/ezine)) wrote about the creative work arising from the unconscious depths when he gave this advice about the hidden creative powers of dreams and what they might reveal about our fate:

We have simply got to listen to what the psyche spontaneously says to us.

What the dream, which is not manufactured by us, says is just so. . . . It is the great dream which has always spoken through the artist as a mouthpiece. . . .

What is the great Dream? It consists of the many small dreams and the many acts of humility and submission to their hints. It is the future and the picture of the new world, which we do not understand yet. We cannot know better than the unconscious and its intimations. There is a fair chance of finding what we seek in vain in our conscious world. Where else could it be? (n.p.)

Jungian biographer Meredith Sabini allows that “dreaming itself is a natural resource, abundant and self-renewing” particularly in a world where she says busyness (ergo chronic tiredness) is the symptom of denial of a cultural neurosis (the realization and anguish of our and other species’ pending extinctions) which manifests through “creating defenses that keep us preoccupied and certain we are doing crucially important things, yet in fact we are in effect contributing to the danger of extinction ourselves” ([www.depthinsights.com/ezine](http://www.depthinsights.com/ezine)). This elevates the notion of dreaming, either day and night, out of the realm of the useless and time-wasting, to put it squarely on the books as required practice (and study) for a more resilient and responsively real society.

By directing the analytical mind through journaling toward a more intuitive form of sensing and relating, we notice more, notice what vastness lies within the minutiae. Here

we may more strongly develop our perceptions, intuitions and imaginations (where the soul stores its truth). If we let our writing immerse in the mythic living story of the world (somewhere deeper than the conscious mind), part of the dreaming world more fundamental than our psychological selves *dreams us* into existence from a much deeper and older structure (perhaps the earth's own imaginative consciousness). Jung (1961) used his dream journal in this way to develop his theory of the collective conscious through self-directed study as he recorded, observed, had conversations with, and drew emotional and artful images of his dreams that led to his profound understandings of the psyche and which he completely attributed to his later-in-life accomplishments in the field. His journal became a primary data source and inspiration for his astonishing mandala art (Shamdasani, 2009).

If it is not possible for us all to walk out due to inclement weather or context, then I always begin class with a timed free writing session as a pre-requisite to other curriculum. In this way students have the permission and the space to outpour any anxieties, worries, overwhelm, thoughts, dreams, etc., anything that might hinder or block their learning. They are in effect (in private and safety) seeing and hearing themselves, bearing witness to their own lives unfolding. This simple five-minute process (that I often provide a prompt for) "lands" the student through provisions made of their inner resources. Writing in this way brings them more solidly into the "here and now" as they become more open to receive and freed up to participate. Unencumbered stream of consciousness writing (even with a prompt) comes closest to reproducing how we think (Goldberg, 1986; Rainer 1978). It can feel like a clearing away of mind clutter or a safe rehearsal space to try out a thought or write a letter we never intend to send or simply meander with thoughts and memories for a time, making room for something else entirely to come.

It gives more meaning to life to record it in this way. Aside from the journal becoming a research asset, a reflective meta-cognitive device that can be used as an actual data source for the lived experience for the autoethnography or autobiography (Grumet, 1981; Stein, 1937/1973), it allows us a helpful and necessary "space to make apparent our own biases, values, judgments, perspectives" (M. McLaren, personal communication July, 21, 2010). Writing in this way connects the more reticent student to his subject, and

definitely is a help to ease out the difficulties of where to begin an essay when so much raw material already exists on the page.

Journal writing can be a wonderful way to dig into life, to deepen into some of those beautiful imaginative questions that are large enough to live into and are required for the adult journey, or as Goldberg (1986) put it in *Writing Down the Bones*, “to do writing practice is to deal ultimately with your whole life” (p. 3). I often say to my students that if you really want to receive the news, don’t tune into radio or read papers, rather wander out to the edge of what is *really* happening (and has been happening all along), wander out into the world and tune into *news from the universe* (Bly, 1983), broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is unbiased, unmanufactured and without agenda. Guaranteed to “blow your mind”. It will provide a more accurate forecast of what “weather” may come (both outside and inside of ourselves) as it is part of the larger system and is first to glimpse new territory, spy what is living out at the frontier of existence that will eventually move in and affect us all.

With the ability to paint a textually vivid (re)presentation of our lived experiences, journaling can provide a more direct sentient engagement with the world—one that embraces uneven landscapes by finding a natural rhythm of words (and illustrations) to match. Like drawing maps of consciousness, the journal literally lets our streams of thought direct where our learning will go. While some moments we experience may stay in the journal forever, never to be considered again, some will want to be carried on to be lived into on some other day. A colleague mentions to me that when she has written something in her journal it is like “hitting the save button in her mind” (T. Wixted, personal communication, October 1, 2013) and it does not require her to refer back to her notes as the information—or whatever aspect she needs from it—is now mostly etched in her mind by virtue of etching it onto the page. In terms of her learning style, the pages can become a kind of surrogate mindspace.

More often though, it can be when we look back over our hand-written pages that as we review and reflect, we may realize our thinking has changed, making obvious an invisible but real transformation. We can make new connections to the present by looking back, where insights announce themselves that could not have arrived for us when we first wrote the entry. It may be here on the page written weeks ago that those surprisingly



potent, heuristic aha! moments occur when we dare look back with fresh but older eyes.

“The soul”, writes Palmer (2000) “does not want to be fixed, it simply wants to be seen and heard” (p. 151). Entry points and opportunities for seeing and hearing such as the journal, require that we create a space where truth is practiced and where we can be witness to our own lives. There is tremendous therapeutic benefit<sup>56</sup> in paying this kind of close attention to our journeys. Inviting a living relationship between ourselves and the world signals to the wild soul to show itself, to come and join us for a time to help us remember who we are, what we are meant to become. The natural world around us is an exquisitely inviting and metaphoric context for this truthful relating to find its footing and the journal is the perfect landing pad for this relationship to draw itself out on.

Using water from a puddle to activate my watercolour pencil, I bring treasured traces of a place back with me on the page. I try to match a feeling to this place, then write about it. When I return to the classroom, I am more open, refreshed and grounded. I can provide a richer loam for learning on all levels when this occurs. My own journey to wholeness (and awakens!) depends on a continued examination of my own practices, beliefs and experiences as they relate to curriculum-making. If I am to ask others to *write the world*, then I too must be willing to let my writing come alive and include myself in the learning process because an emergent curriculum demands nothing less. I require this beautiful writing practice as much as my students do.

Macy reminds that if we fail to create the necessary “psychic elbow room” (Macy, personal communication, August 11, 2012) required for deep listening, self-reflexive practices with ample open spaces for vision and reciprocal relationships to mingle and form and invite conscious awareness, then we will not strengthen our “moral imaginations” adequately (befriend the mythos), and we may miss our chance for change, for sustaining life altogether. How precious and rare is human life that we can make change! Self-reflexive practices remind us we live in fluid impermanence but with cognition, we have “the joyful ability to live at the frontier of our own lives, at the frontier of our genius” (D. Whyte, personal communication May 2011) if we so choose. The journal lets our consciousness have the psychic room it needs to stir and sift through the powerful visions,

---

<sup>56</sup> *Therapeia* comes from Greek meaning “to listen” (Hillman, 1989, 1996).

relationships and transformations (or even implications for change) that happen along the heuristic journey of our lives, gives us glimpses into what genius we are seeded to bring.

With time to listen to the earth and its stories too, as well as to tap into our own inner landscapes, the journal provides us with a safe place to hold those narratives with time later to reflect back on what we have written in order to make meaning for ourselves, and uncover more of our inner destiny. Depth psychologist David Richo (2009) posits that for the non-heroes among us, the journal is one way to help personify the inner image of ourselves in words in order to activate the wholeness that was in us all along. If we struggle for the right words, the journal page allows passion before elegance and the freedom to either write or draw what moves us in the moment. It invites a transformative creative space meant to coax out “the dearest freshness deep down-things” (Manley Hopkins, 1918/1988, p. 128) of us. Journals are like perennial story-catchers of the human quest for meaning, beginning in the here and now, finding life through the voice of ideas, places, dreams and encounters, and through struggles and further insights, always returns us home with the gift of what we wrote.

I have found that journal writing can best distill a more gem-like essence of our experiences. In that way it allows for what wants to emerge to arrive in fewer words and when shared, to be more easily understood by all. It can be a place to mine for “inner gold” without trying to make sense of it all. Here there are clues to who or what needs airspace in our lives and to honour that (even if at first it seems disagreeable). In this process, each person has the opportunity to tap into their own wise counsel (or Muse) because here we take notes on what we ourselves say as the single author(ity) of our lives, rather than just taking notes on what the teacher or other clever people might say (Palmer, 2000). This can lead to trusting our own wisdom more and eventually help us to find, (re)claim and polish, our “jewel point” (Campbell, 1991, p. 23).

My experience teaching journal writing continues to be inspired by those who dare to go forth in to the natural world on a regular basis, to listen and converse, record, draw, take dictation and field notes. In my mind, these ones may in fact inherit the earth as they

will be so beautifully equipped to let their moral imaginations wander widely (and wildly) enough to dream into the (im)possible.<sup>57</sup>



### **a circle pedagogy.**

“There is nothing so wise as a circle” (Rilke cited in Benke, 2013, p. 51).

The more experience I have with talking circles, the more I am convinced that the *way of council* (Zimmerman & Coyle, 2009) also widely known as the *circle way* (Baldwin, 1994; Baldwin & Linnea, 2010), might just *be* the way we will change this world. Through intentionally convening circular spaces, we listen and learn from each other’s stories and feelings. In circle where speaking and listening from the heart allows for deep identification with others, we can begin to feel more compassion because we are able to see ourselves as more similar than different in all of our humanness.

This ancient form of communication practice comes from across many cultures, and examples of council circles are found throughout human history. Many indigenous tribes have performed ceremonies and gathered around cooking and warming fires for millennia, Arthur called his noble Knights together at a famous round table, and today many city councils convene in modern circular chambers (a metaphor for democracy).

In circle practice, there is room for everyone’s voice to be heard (even if that means honouring their silence), where everyone takes a turn to speak from their heart in a spontaneous yet gem-like and concise way. And in turn listens from their core. In this non-hierarchical setting, where only one voice can be heard at one time, learning unfolds in a more personal and emotionally close way aided by the fact that within the circle we can look into each other’s eyes as we share. Due to its egalitarian and contained nature learning in the circle way can feel safe and is therefore, is often readily accepted, easily adapted as a practice.

The circle is the archetype of wholeness. Emerson (1836/2009) knew this when he

---

<sup>57</sup> A recent article from the Harvard Business School entitled *Reflecting on Work Improves Job Performance*, shows there are links being made between reflective practices and productivity at work. Has yoga come off the mat and into the boardroom? Perhaps a stamp of approval from business on the virtues of time spent in reflection is just what is required to advance the importance of scheduling work time for contemplative practices to have time enough do their beneficial work. (Retrieved May 5, 2014 from <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/7509.html>). If we can trace it to the measurable of our economy, then it might stand a chance. Imagine boards that literally walked their talk, taking meetings outside!

wrote “St. Augustine described the nature of God as a circle whose centre was everywhere” (p. 123). The circle represents the endlessness of the nature of nature, with no beginning, no end, always fluid, always moving, just like the journey of life itself. This is a first form of shapes that is as familiar to us as our own eyes (circles) are to seeing. Circles are patterns within patterns within patterns. “The whole universe is based on rhythms. Everything happens in circles, in spirals” (Hartford in Benke, 2013, p. 49). When we sit in circle we are, in effect, also sitting within the circle of the self (Foster & Little, 1998) and not least of all, just like the initiatory journey itself, council circles are complete only when we complete a full round and come back to where we started.

As we move around in a spiral shaped conversation deepening our sharing, mirroring, crying, laughing, and modeling in a subjective exploration of all of life, we deepen our trust with each other (Shinoda Bolen, 1999) and therefore, the process itself expands and intensifies while our potential deepens for inner reconciliation and wholeness too. Strong communities of discovery and support (and even some wild adventures) can grow out from the wisdom of the circle. Gandalf (Tolkien, 1954) the great wizard, called for a council before the hobbits, elves, dwarves and night riders could set out to destroy the ring of dark power. They can often act as mysteriously potent way-finding devices but do not easily divulge their secrets, rather they require a devotion to practice and need time. From what I have witnessed in facilitating hundreds of council settings (including when I teach students to facilitate and call councils of their own), is that this process may be just what is needed to move us forward in a simple and wise way toward a very different peace filled and just future for all beings.

We dance round in a ring and suppose,  
But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.  
(Frost, 1916/1969, p. 362)

On the Burlington campus of the Camino Nuevo situated in the MacArthur Park area of Los Angeles, council is exceptionally helpful when integrated within a “trauma sensitive” environment due to the extraordinary challenges of poverty and strife that face every one of its students. In the Ojai Foundation’s<sup>58</sup>*Final Report of Council in Schools* (Provisor, &

---

<sup>58</sup> Based in Ojai, California, the foundation’s mission is “to foster practices that awaken connection with self, other and the natural world...through the practice of speaking and listening from the heart.”(Retrieved from <http://www.ojaifoundation.org/about-us>, January 2014).

Chinlund, September 23, 2013), the Dean of Culture, Jesse Melgares reports,

It is impossible to divorce students from the challenges that they face in their lives outside of school. As educators, we have a responsibility to meet the academic needs of a child, of course, but we also have a responsibility for their social-emotional well-being. Council has been, and will continue to be, a key part of building connections between students to build a safe social-emotional and learning environment for our children. (p. 6)

For many years, council practice has been cited as playing a large part for the unprecedented success in the Palm Elementary School system for all ages. A reduction in violence, drop out levels, and low test scores, is met by an increase of positive engagement of all varieties when council is systemic within school (Provisor & Chinlund, 2013). Through a curriculum of intentionality that accommodates the necessary space and time for productively non-violent conflict to occur, needs get aired, what needs to be said gets said respectfully and as a result, critical foundations of trust are built.

Freire (1970) also knew that the world would be transformed by the kind of dialogue that does not separate words and thinking from action (praxis) but instead bears witness to reality. When we can hold the kinds of critical and complicated conversations that unify and reflect, that cannot be reduced but instead enlarge and help to “name the world” (p.149) as we honour each voice, we find our way together, students and teachers alike.

In a rejection of the prevailing more mechanistic discourse that teaches we must fill shortcomings and gaps, and correct errors and imperfections toward efficiencies, a discourse of this nature allows the room for what is personal instead—the flaws, humanness, senses, feelings, wildness, hope, confusion, trust, joy and spirit—as alternative ways of being we can draw on to make meaning in our “struggle against objectness”, against “the orthodoxies of our present moment” (Greene, 2007, p. 1). Council practices can lead us toward becoming more fully human in our freedom to choose rather than be shackled into compliance.

Councils provide extraordinary ways to open our hearts and minds, to build trust and communication skills in community, and to discover what is possible when we speak and listen from the intelligence of the heart. Particularly, in the case of the

ecopsychologically based, “Council of All Beings” (Seed, Fleming, Macy, Naess, 1988; Macy & Brown, 1998), the identity (voice and story) of another being is represented (by a human). I have found this to always be extremely moving and powerful, where an astonishing shift of perspective can take place through the shape-shifting of consciousness. Something of the eternal innocence and wisdom of all life is evoked and embodied in this most sacred of settings, the circle. It is a beautiful emergent place to learn.

I have been circling for thousands of years  
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,  
a storm, or a great song?  
(Rilke, 1996, p. 48)



### **roots and wings.**

Ten times a day something happened to me like this – some strengthening throb of amazement – some good sweet empathic ping and swell. This is the first the wildest and the wisest thing I know: that the soul exists and is built entirely out of attentiveness (Oliver cited in Pipher, 2006, p. 189).

Of course there many, many other good practices that encourage students to show up, attend, listen, and learn. Practices that invite students to take root and sprout wings for themselves are too vast in number to all be mentioned here and will have to be a story for another time. For now, here is a partial list of some integral activities I have found to be incredibly useful in attending to the expressions of the soul:

- Write an eco-biography as a kind of map to where your myth lies,
- Make art in nature using natural elements to create a transitory installation,
- Use deep and active imagination to draw, paint, write,
- Use guided imagery to evoke non-ordinary states, connections and insights,
- Create a self-designed ceremony or ritual (allow yourself to be witnessed),
- Slow down, breathe mindfully, contemplate (meditate) in silence, write, meditate some more, then write again
- Learn to track animals in nature (follow it by seeing, hearing, sensing, noticing, experiencing, feeling, until you catch a glimpse, a hint, a whiff on the wind, then follow it home and in so doing, learn what is following you!),

- Move and play with your own shadow in the sunlight (powerful insights arrive through embodiment),
- Be mirrored by nature (or another person). Then reciprocate,
- Allow all senses to function and flourish together in an overlapping and blending of synaesthesia —literally wake up by seeing sounds, hearing colours, tasting emotions, etc. and write about it,
- Make wild poetry (and/or art) from found objects,
- Engage in cross-species dialogue (recorded or not),
- Apprentice to a non-human being and seek wisdom there,
- Engage in wild play and biomimicry (copy the behaviours of other species such as the murmuration of sparrows, the leap of frog, the wind in the trees, and so on).

Holistic educator and Aikido master, Richard Strozzi Heckler (1997) wrote that, “when we are embodied, we become learners” (p. 63), because our astonishing bodies are sites of possibility, are the deep structures that contain and afford our growth, change and transformation. When we bring our students in direct contact with the energy of their lived experiences through thoughts, images, sensations, and memories, as they experience and make sense of these living energies through their bodies (and minds), they become more enlivened, more energetic overall. By engaging in deep, unencumbered play for instance, we are summoning a force that drives us to write, paint, dance, sing, and wander without too many questions crowding in. Relationships form and from there, synchronicities can happen. Our bodies are the loci of these change processes, the place our minds, hearts, and souls come alive and really live in. Here, living energies form part of the weave of the fabric of who we are, who we are becoming. When we strengthen the student’s ability to simply (and with ease), notice what they notice of their experiences (by *feeling* this in their bodies), they develop what Bly (1980) calls a “truth receiver” (p. 82) and in this efficacy of discernment, begin to find the particular way of life to best fit them.

I can also see there would be benefits for us to hang out and learn from older people in our communities, learn to tinker more, learn how to repair things by learning how things actually work. “The way to learn about nature is to follow the old people around and see what they do” advises an Alaskan Yupik woman (in Elder, 2013, p. 13). Older people who have lived in less opulent times have a different appreciation for the small and know things

like how to make rope, sew, grow vegetables, bake and cook from scratch, recycle and reuse (and refuse the new and improved), fix things, and make soap. Some older people are still attuned to natural patterns of seasonality especially if they still live close to the land they grew up on. They know to watch birds, trees, sky and weather, to read the soils to receive news from away and to watch for patterns of what is to come. Knowledge like this is precious because it teaches us to make and do rather than shop and have, and is precisely what we may lose in favour of modern conveniences if we do not care. Building community culture into curriculum benefits from relationships forged through intergenerationality.

And finally, we might best view (and design) pedagogies not simply as isolated occasions, but as part of a larger open system—each a system within a system really. Following the principles of living systems as laid out in Stone & Barlow (2005), we see all learning is networked and interconnected with other learning, each curriculum is nested in multi-levels of learning with flows and cycles that require constant energy and resources for throughputs and development. Conceivably, when we create learning experiences, it would be fitting for us to apply the most beautiful patterns available to us—from the living earth herself.



### **Education to Evolution**

Obviously, this advice runs counter to current trends in education to become more technologically and economically “efficient” in the name of global competitiveness. In fact, we may have gotten worse at educating in the name of progress. Now is the time to reimagine not just conventional fundamental education theories but the entire established hierarchal schema of academia in relationship to the rest of the world. In my opinion, we’re going to need to get messy, to lighten up, listen more deeply, indulge in the beauty of nature, to feel more, become more conscious and self-aware, compassionate and open, and to teach all this. It is time to educate toward the multiple intelligences found in the psyche, heart, body and mind. And it might even take the deaths of certain modernists, certain intellectual authorities incapable of a paradigm shift in order for great shifts that are happening in the evolution of human life, to occur at all. A more formative and emancipating education is in my mind, one that builds capacity and compassion by



empowering students to pose more beautiful and difficult questions, to decide for themselves, and act for democracy in a global society. Educating for a complete person means this person will get a job because the world needs people who are adaptive to ongoing change, and who employ fluid faculties of thought, feeling, and imagination by using rigorous critical thought and profound creativity in an effort to contribute to society at large, as true “citizens of the world” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 7). Our future hangs on this.

A teaching certificate or degree is a means not any kind of end. Our truer credentials come from being real with our students (which is being authentic to ourselves too). We must never give up on the soul of the student, rather lift them up and encourage them on their life’s path, despite the inevitable challenges. Yet, the rub can be that regardless of what may happen in one classroom, the challenge always lies in the kind of curriculum happening in the next room that sees nature in board feet and gross national product contribution, blindly accepts growth as natural, and all development as inherently good. Orr (2004) writes, “we suffer a kind of cultural immune deficiency amnesia” in education that posits that “human domination over nature is good, that the growth of the economy is natural; that all knowledge, regardless of its consequences, is equally valuable; and that material progress is our right” (p. 32) and I would add, worship the market as God—with constant reinforcement that evolving technology always be looked upon as a good thing due to the misguided notion that it legitimately serves to connect us more. And there are those that would have us believe that there is only one correct way to do everything including writing academically. We simply know better.

Out in the field, learning is mostly experiential where we can, through presence and a shift in awareness, “lift the veil from its fascinating secrets” and cultivate “a love for the mysteries of nature” (Montessori, 2009, p.25) engaging both the heart and the mind of the student toward an attitude of interest and care in natural phenomena. Outdoor learning contributes to an ethical way of being in the world as it inspires a deeper compassion and responsibility that can lead to environmental stewardship and action. Poet Mary Oliver (2004) lends this advice to teachers,

Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them upstream, rejoice as they

learn to love this green space they live in, its sticks and leaves and then the silent beautiful blossoms.... Attention is the beginning of devotion. (pp. 55–56)

It is also imperative that we hold a certain respect and kindness for all students in the knowledge that within them they carry an enormous and brilliant potential despite any well-crafted defense systems or personas that indicate something to the contrary (and it is a good idea to pay attention to these defenses just enough to understand what has been important about their function in order to help the student transcend and look beyond). Helping students wake up to the vividness of their own souls by cultivating and embodying their inherent human wholeness, ties not only to the student's own fate and particular genius, but holds evolutionary implications for the fate and genius of the world as well. Contributing authentic energy in co-creation with the world not only feels good but does good as well. Behaviours of more aliveness in service of higher purpose are our evolutionary birthright. The higher our energy and participation gets, the more brilliant the world becomes too.

*When I am willing to relinquish my habits of absolutism and bring my two eyes into one focus, patterns help make coherence through recognition. The dulled eyes of the one who quickly overlooks things in her busyness, may miss what is truly there and mistakenly categorize something as merely "tree" or "bush" or "bird" rather than arbutus, hydrangea or bushtit.*

*When I exchange my hurriedness for slower more considered stretches of time, I am inviting alterations to occur in my thinking, asking for structural rearrangements to take place in my brain regarding the attributes and activities of things. Names shift to deep thick descriptive honourings of what I see and am seen by.*

*Arbutus transforms into long smooth cinnamon girl limbs stretching luxuriously, hydrangea becomes pink petalled woodland pom-pom, and bushtit can only be spoken of as the invisible gossamer weaver. All of these speak about relationship and the inner life of each thing. Girl reaches out, bushtit weaves the world, and waving flowerheads let out a crimson cheer. New neural pathways are created as I attend and perceive, as I stretch my attention into the tender nature of things. In becoming accustomed to seeing patterns I move beyond presumptions of This or That dualism and begin instead to see webs and spirals, things gathered up and woven together, enmeshed, constellated and clustered. I recognize relationships that are founded in communities and see glimpses into the ancient instruction manual that came with this place showing us what is deeply familiar to us and what has been calling out in bloom and die cycles, the rise and fall of tides, the*

*shift of seasons, risings and settings of sun and moon for about two million years give or take 500 thousand years or so. It is time to act our age.*



**outcomes/non-outcomes.**

The creative act is  
Not hanging on, but yielding  
To new creative movement  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 262).

If we are to offer sufficiently rich and inspiring learning opportunities, then our methods must be equally creative, our pedagogies discovery-based, with outcomes unique to the individual, and impossible to be set beforehand. In this way, some outcomes will be unverifiable in their non-science, and often validities must be asserted through the seriousness of experience over predetermined thinking. If we are willing to search for more sophisticated ways to understand and pay attention, be involved in our student's lives, we may find we become more pedagogical, and more engaged ourselves.

Rather than adhere to a fixed demonstration of pre-determinations, aesthetic educator and curriculum theorist, Maxine Greene's (2009) notion of a "curriculum of consciousness" (p. 155) brought to bear the kind of learning that could not be divorced from human experience, which ran counterpoint to pervasive intellectualism and lent a kind of counter-culture heroine aspect to her teaching practice. Greene knew that by identifying with some "thing", by coming to know it intimately through lived experience and expression meant that students could develop important critical and reflective thinking skills to better foster their abilities to explore, dream, influence, choose, and act.

Aesthetic education seeks action, runs counterpoint to the (an)aesthetics we so often feed students (with stimulants, medications and lifeless curriculum) as it brings more of the emotional, personal, inner and imaginative realms alongside rational thinking. Far from a passive approach, Greene (2009) posits that learning ought to be active, with teachers engaging in the present, staying open to the unpredictable and the not yet known, navigating the uncharted waters of arts-based education without strict standards and without "one right way".

Greene (1988a) wrote, "if the uniqueness of the artistic-aesthetic can be reaffirmed...old either/ors may disappear. We may make possible a pluralism of visions, a multiplicity of realities" (p. 295) in a world where everyone is unutterably themselves on their quest to

becoming more human. It would follow then that we would need a pluralism of perspectives paired to a pluralism of outcomes, a multiplicity of ways to measure and match this vision. Greene describes a pedagogy of “wide-awakeness” (2009) where one reflects upon their life and choices with critical awareness and consciousness, with nothing less at stake than our human freedoms to make decisions, choose and act through the nurturance of spontaneous expression and natural curiosity. She reminds us that we need to be curious, awake, fully alive and sometimes even furious to what is going on around us in order to come to consciousness.

In a similar vein to wakefulness, Buddhist teacher and author Jon Kabat-Zinn (2002) defines mindfulness (which has happily become more and more popular in contemporary work and life) this way:

Mindfulness comes from systemically paying attention on purpose in the present moment and non-judgmentally, to what is closest to home in your experience; namely this very moment in which you are alive, how it is for you—pleasant, difficult, or not even on the radar screen—and the body sensations, thoughts and feelings that you may be experiencing in any moment. (p. 1)

Mindfulness, self-reflexivity, the use of multi-genre arts-based methods, dialogic inquiry, and necessary risk-taking, all create the conditions for authenticity of expression and mysterious outcomes. A curriculum that privileges the great powers of imagination might include teachings from disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, art, literature, film, history, spirituality, social justice, and theatre all woven together in a web of emergent learning. This creates space enough for the student to insert his own perceptions into the lived world, reflect, discern and act from praxis in preparation for the immediate, not just some future day. In response, we need to find ways that articulate immediacy, tap into perceptions, and ignite the spark of meaning-making without in any way parsing this brilliance through reductionist assessments.

By its very nature, active, experiential and integral learning implies more interest in beginnings rather than endings (Greene, 1995) which leaves us with something vital and yet incomplete, where we are always learning and *becoming*...different, more fully human, more ourselves in the process. Greene (2009) suggests that the learner is on her own quest to make meaning and become more authentic even as we situate and continually shape our unfinished identities in relationship to the phenomena of the present moment. Her thinking aligns perfectly with nature-based and reflective pedagogies that seek out

imaginative and soulful ways of coming to know our true natures through relationship, expression, interaction and interpretation of the lived experience and that cannot never be really finished or complete....*always* becoming more.

However, making meaning and measuring what meaning has been made are not at all alike. We know it is quite impossible for example to whittle awakesness down to fit in a nice square box for marking. We also know that what we cannot easily measure or put a value on what is often not considered *valuable* or worth measuring at all within the current myopic system. What is elusive to measurement is often ignored, and ends up (dis)counted in the end.

Journal writing for instance, as part of a recognized and essential component to a student's success, ought to never be marked. It is a mistake to think we can set a grade point on the subjective experience of another, especially once the space of inquiry (in this case, the journal) has already been defined as a kind of sanctuary from the types of conventions so much associated with correctness and school. Grammar, spelling and sentence structure are just not relevant in the journal world. Marking is so often done as a comparison against an abstract standard or programmatic norm, therefore when it comes to such free and creative writing, we must push beyond comparisons and competitiveness and instead celebrate the true uniqueness of each person. We must learn to give ourselves permission to simply trust the process. I often ask to read select pages that the student feels they can openly share without the need for any red pen commentary (making sure they can prepare what they want me to see in advance). In this way, we can instead create the necessary space for encouragement as journal entries may give clues as to challenges and worries, loves and hopes, an indicator toward what the student is reaching for. Journals ought to be sacrosanct, exempt from judgment, yet not necessarily wholly exempt from placing a *value on the practice itself* as a participatory form of learning that each student will arrive at in a different way. How we treat the practice of reflective writing and non-codified learning in general can deeply shape the epistemological perceptions of students about what constitutes knowledge (e.g. to value lived phenomenal experience, personal wisdom and insight, hermeneutics, heuristic analysis, etc. as grown from within). It also reveals biases to the student (and to ourselves) as to what the academy understands to be learning-worthy as well, in spite at times, what we may teach.

If we are lucky enough to glimpse into the lives of our students, to have the privilege to witness those who begin to feel responsibility toward their places and peers, and start to see their relatedness more clearly and empathetically, we will begin to see sure signs of emotional and ethical maturity. And of course we don't have any instrument to effectively measure maturity nor do we even likely want to try! Isn't maturity in and of itself its own measure after all? Opening up that emotional can of worms without long and hard considerations through intelligent debate could do more damage than good.

Sir Ken Robinson (2010b) impassions that instead of prescribed curriculum with pre-set examinations, we need a more divergent thinking model with its emotional capacity for there to be many possible answers and dialogue. He calls for a kind of lateral thinking that will lead to engaged learning and to educational paradigm changes with epistemological implications for changing the world. Greene (1988b) was convinced that if we awaken the spirit of the student "to explore other ways of seeing, alternative modes of being in the world" (p. 3) not only would this "effect continuities" (p.3), but it would prepare the ground for the future. Perhaps in that future, we will not be so caught on discernments and measures that never really allow us to be completely ourselves, and instead live by abstract norms and chase willful pursuits. Dewey (1929/2009) offered that real educational progress arrives with the development of "new attitudes, new interests, experience ...a continuing reconstruction of experience where the process, and goal of education, is one and the same thing" (p. 38). It would seem then that by its very nature, active experiential learning, i.e. learning by doing (and becoming at the same time), *is* both the curriculum and the outcome in and of itself despite the unfinishedness that "becoming" always is.

Listening in on discussions with friends who teach in the K-12 system, I am heartened to hear that despite being fraught by the restrictions of IRPs and teaching to tests, my colleagues are (for the most part and whenever possible) taking conscious approaches to teaching by finding leeway to create imaginative, engaging curriculum that pertains to what is most important to students and that exemplifies a respect for lived experience. This is of course a kind of subversive curriculum that runs underneath the 'real' curriculum (hidden from any sort of lesson plan). Isn't it time to 'unhide' what we know

contributes to better teaching and learning, and in essence bring a more ensouled approach to school?

I believe that we need equally divergent yet elegant ways to report back on what has taken place. When we get to know our students more closely and encourage myriad expressions of scholarship, then what we have witnessed ought to be able to be in part captured and (re)counted through qualitative reporting (just as teachers still do for the youngest learners). Reinstating the report card with its short contextual stories and anecdotes that once provided examples of strengths, preferences, challenges and other constructive comments that, while subjective of course, often provided important indicators and clues for young students and their parents to follow up on, may be one counterbalance for us to consider. Even the most difficult recommendations seemed to have been written in a spirit of encouragement. Just look back on your own kindergarten report card and most likely you will see from those comments the essence of who you were as a child (and of course what is always fascinating, if not slightly entertaining, is to notice just how much of that still holds true for the adult you have become).

One highly contested alternative measure of course is the self-assessment, where students are asked to evaluate and report on their own creativity. Boston Philharmonic conductor, Benjamin Zander (2002) gives each of his graduate music students 'A' at the beginning of the year much to their surprise and delight. Sure enough, as each student attempts to *live into* their 'A' (he very clearly states they ought to work "into" rather than "up to" the mark to avoid the pitfalls of competition and comparison) it gets more and more difficult for them with every class and every performance because we can be our own worst critics. At the end of the semester, he asks for a letter explaining from the student explaining why she believes she deserved that mark. He has found that no one takes this exercise lightly, in fact, what happens most often is that the students are actually harder on themselves in the end. Contrary to what one might suspect, no one tends to try to "get away with anything" and excellence prevails. From this experiment, now Zander knows that each student will give their full attention and presence to their learning experience and completely invest themselves in order to reach toward that A because of what it means for them. There is nothing arbitrary about his approach.

As an antidote to the constraints of outdated modules and tidy compartmentalized subjects, arts-based curriculum theorist, Eliot Eisner (2009) calls for “art-making” curriculum where student is artist (and teacher is artist too) and where objectives act more like heuristic devices that start us out toward naturally “expressive outcomes” (p. 112) that are highly creative and unique to the individual, therefore cannot be pre-established or even replicated. He believes that results “ought to be something of a surprise to both teacher and pupil” (p. 109) rather than flat prescriptions if we are to do anything meaningful at all. Open teaching styles like Robinson’s (2010a/b), Eisner’s (2009) and Greene’s (2009), require a kind of devotion to conscious education with its social, moral, and epistemological implications where, if we lend our lives to the curriculum, we in effect, quite literally *live into the curriculum of our lives*. Nothing less.

Education is a complex, multi-layered mix of formal learning and lived experience. Great teaching embodies both without a need to entertain that one is better than the other and instead identifies the necessity of offering a more holistic pedagogy. So often learning as *a work in progress*, as a crossroads rather than a finishing place or the end of the road, is the final (and best possible) outcome. This might lend more credibility to some of those overly trite convocation speeches we hear again and again that speak to beginnings rather than endings. Campbell (2008) agrees that our initiatory journeys must keep going if we really intend to mature ourselves. The threefold patterns keeps the circle of life, circling. Therefore, isn’t it crazy to insist on trying to measure learning outcomes such as these other than by simply making a mark (rather than *giving* a mark). Why not create a demarcation type of mark—a ceremony, perhaps? If we could recognize (and admit) that none of us are really ever quite “there” yet (because as we age we begin to know that there is actually no there, there), I believe we could celebrate graduations (from the Latin *gradus* meaning “to take steps” and is related, interestingly enough to the word, “grail”, [Klein, 1966, p. 673]) as they were originally intended rather than insist they represent any sort of end. Mark Twain (1917/1966) who apprenticed to a printer at age 12 and self-directed his learning through public libraries in his spare time was credited with saying something to the effect that those who are truly educated, in fact, never graduate! Freire (1997) framed it beautifully, when he wrote, “What gives me hope is the *movement* in the search rather than the *find*” (p. 6). Perhaps if we were being more accurate in our assessments, we could more



often honour the lifelong journey/process itself and grant our students something akin to *Certificates of Becoming!*

Long held values and standards of measure need to be overturned if we are asking our students to ponder the centre of the mystery and what is crucial to the human soul. Moving toward a nature-based *currere*<sup>59</sup> we can let sole outcomes and objectives fall away in order to adopt a more enduring autobiographical framework where “complicated forms of conversation with ourselves and the world” take place in an “ongoing project of understanding” (Pinar, 2009, p. 30) and meaning-making. With the imaginative use of storytelling, auto and eco-biographies, poetry, myth, dreams, and perceptive questions, we can help students discern and translate reflections of lived experience as they negotiate newfound meaning into action (Grumet, 1981). What would be a worthy measure of learning in this way might be to see what implications it held on influencing a life. Of course, that cannot be wholly known for some time to come, if at all.

Especially when we invite education back into nature, we intentionally move from singular outcomes around course objectives and standardized test scores (and the familiar trappings of the kind of education that rewards competition, obsession with the facts, grades and securing credit). Nature-based learning falls at odds with the norm, spills over the rubric and cannot be evaluated easily despite its readiness to transform. So, how can we show what happened “out there” while resisting the need to reduce the experience down to mere cause and effect?

In a first rate examination of a fourth year undergraduate environmental field course in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria, researcher Tara Todesco (2012), looked into the transformational nature of an integrative, whole person approach toward learning and sustainability through a qualitative survey of her fellow students. Her study showed the powerful, life changing effects that “an education of inner significance” with its focus on self-acceptance, hands-on learning, reflective practice and time in nature could provide for “‘bringing forth’ the inner person rather than simply ‘putting in’ information” (Hart, 2001, p. 7). By cultivating and developing the head, heart, and hands without an overt emphasis on the reductionism of overly prescribed outcomes,

---

<sup>59</sup> Curriculum theorist William Pinar (2009) proposed *currere* to be self-reflexive movement created by examining more closely individual existential experiences in curriculum-making.

Todesco's study revealed correlations and consistencies between what students came to understand and value and what they ultimately aimed to contribute to the world through their actions and future work plans. She found transformational experiences were more likely to occur when a link was made between the interiority of the student and the external world, as well as the collective and the field of which they are a part. This takes learning to a new, integral, and critical level with implications for a truly sustainable future by providing students with the knowledge, conviction, and confidence enough to make possible necessary changes in uncertain times where actions need to be aligned with meaning and purpose.

If we are to make room in academia for what happens when learning registers on a more emotional and deeply felt personal (and soulful) level and elevate the lived experience to hold equal importance to other ways of knowing, we will need well considered, well-designed, non-conventional assessment tools that reasonably weigh both the rationale and the imaginative as epistemological "eaches" necessary to the whole learning picture. What counts as truth, as valuable learning, what forms evidence and data, must include forging new categories of interpretation and representation, and new understandings of causality. Orality and oral scholarship, in the form of egalitarian councils or storytelling circles that reveal what learning has taken place, and teach us something as it is shared may, for example, be some of the ways we can discern what thresholds of experience have been crossed, what initiations have occurred, and what has become known in the process.

Somewhere at the centre of this mystery is knowing, although it cannot be verbalized, Reality lives here. Pondering this mystery is crucial to our souls and our planet at this time. (Woodman, 1982, p. 155)



### **active hope.**

"We cannot save the world *but* we can fully belong." (B. Plotkin, personal communication, 2005)

There really is no easy answer to the outcomes debate but it is worthy of full consideration and a more robust discussion. If we are serious about transgressing prescribed learning outcomes and avoiding pedagogies that truncate and hurry, then

explorations like the heuristic journey (that takes time for information to be gathered and rendered into meaning), which are longitudinal in nature and cannot be rushed to meet someone else's idea of completion, may quite possibly find a more prominent place in education.

I have come to understand that once a threshold has been crossed, one cannot unlearn what was found in that experience. When we go back, it is never in the same way we left. The initiatory crossing simply becomes *you*—metabolized learning—known from the inside out and embodied as part of who you are and what you do from then on (instead of cleverly memorized from a model of how things ought to be). It is critical that we find ways to receive what has been and encourage its full expression rather than shrink lived experience to fit a predetermined value. Instead, I hope we can provide an open-ended system that values unpredictable and surprising expressions that just announce themselves without withering potential and exceptionality. Rather than reward the one or two students who rise to the top, can we also honour the ones who create a community of abundance and offer diverse perspectives? I long for what is possible when students go beyond their assigned work and instead begin to surprise and inform us. The kind of authentic, experiential learning that is the nourishment I hope we can all feast on together.

I have learned from this journey that I deeply believe in the kind of education that does not concern itself with the treatment of the prevailing ills or lays blame. Rather it seeks out learning as an initiation to true nature and calling, and is in my opinion, the *real work*. As we reframe the natural world as unexpected teacher, co-facilitator and intimate kin, we dissolve the notion of finding or having “the” one right answer, and instead become willing to be awe-struck in possibility and a sense of wonder. This type of pedagogy brings ourselves and our students closer to the threshold of the mythic journey of transformation, divests us from the illusion of separateness, from fragmentation and discord, toward individuation and wholeness. This knowing invites the “bliss” Campbell (2008) espouses is the goal of life - not just happiness, but authentic bliss—our full and unique expression coming through us as a gift to others.

This study presents a view of how we might reconceptualize what constitutes success in all levels of education and the epistemological implications for teaching and learning that occur when we consider exceptions to conventional curricular design. This

can occur by moving outside the margins of the classroom to include both a more inward and informal type of learning (Dall’Alba and Barnacle, 2007) and through a discipline of creating connections between opposites, foster intuitive intelligence and embodied experience, and help bring soul to school.

This means to me that we must hold out for (and help establish) a more commonplace and accessible interdisciplinary education; one that abandons a dualistic mindset in favour of the kinds of third-way conversations that challenge the academy on what constitutes translogical knowledge. With an aim to “overcome disciplinary narrowness and aloofness” (Orr, 2004, p. 94) and compartmentalizations so much associated with “loyalty to the abstracts of a discipline” (p. 94), in counterbalance to prevailing fragmented factory models of separate and abstract subjects, we can instead make available those integrated and living disciplines (Jardine, 2000) chock full of their own potencies, potentials, and complexities. Without the fear of making mistakes, I have also learned that it is possible to learn and teach by making (and living) a more spontaneous *curriculum vitae*, to embrace a more ecological approach to education.

And with an ecological gradient to learning and teaching, can we now rise above old oppositions between science *or* soul? What we know is that the domain of rules for one form of evidence is not adequate or appropriate for judging the other. And it behooves us to stop doing it. A more complete view of what comprises intelligence would equip us with more confidence to work within the vaster realms of human nature where a “both-and-all” third way stance conjoins mythos and logos<sup>60</sup>. I hope that our class times can run to storytelling and myth-stories in order to deepen our understandings of our ancestries and the nature of the way things are and have always been as a complement to what learning that already takes place.

I have also come to know that the kind of psychological training that helps teachers recognize that human development is a continuum will be imperative here if we are to see the complementariness of our natures rather than bring our differences into judgment and

---

<sup>60</sup> In the old myth of Parzifal’s search for the Holy Grail, I found the etymology of his name to mean “through the middle” (Sardello, 2001, p. 60). Conjoining opposites meet in the middle. As this archetypal figure searches for his soul, he embodies his namesake to demonstrate an outrageous and wild intelligence found in the individuation of the middle way. This “third “ or “middle way’ in its new and age-old wisdom helped me better understand how the “both-and” intuition has been offered to us throughout our human history as carried in the lessons and morals brought in myths and stories.

competition. The more inward reflective-looking nature of the introvert for example is complemented by the activating energy of the extrovert, as Jung (1921, 1965) noted. And that while we come born with one proclivity stronger than the other, it is the work of the maturing adult (with the assistance of teachers and mentors) to initiate a union of dichotomies in order to reach a healthy generative adulthood and cultivate the under-developed aspects of themselves. This of course also includes being able to turn toward what one fears or finds disdainful in themselves (and others) in order to reclaim more of our potential from the shadows. Teachers, I believe, must continue to cultivate their central and executive abilities to think critically, to see past dualisms and dichotomies in order to find universal patterns and necessary pairings for a more holistic and wise pedagogy. They themselves must be on the road toward their own wholeness, their own maturation. I truly hope that we do not end up replacing old and tired frameworks with new ones, because while models can be helpful to way-find early on, they are certainly not the territory. Overt reliance even on frames that help us to remember the multiple dimensionality of all living things, can in time be confused with the thing itself if over relied upon.

I hope this work will serve as a reminder and a caution that teachers ought to be called to teach (in that they love both their work and their students). Yet we know that this is not always the case, and in fact often the opposite may be true in that not all who teach are 'good' teachers either. While many teachers may not get the sense they were ever 'called' to teach per se, if they are willing to do this work then we must find ways to encourage them to have firsthand experiences, be vulnerable, and be supported to know themselves well if they are to serve others in coming to their own personal mastery. And the caveat is that this may mean that new choices about vocation must be made in the end because the work of teaching is clearly not for everyone and everyone is not meant to teach. However, when we make explicit the valuable and necessary time and space for the psyche to show itself (in advancement of maturation and vocation), we are not only aiming to reground our student's lives, but we are making way to "recover the power of our own souls, remembering that we, too, are soul-driven, soul-animated creatures" (Palmer, 1999, p. 16) as well. This is essential to the root of genius (soul) in the teacher who in turn can then inspire the genius (soul) to blossom in others.

My hope extends to schools filled with the kinds of teachers that see the good in you, that know the benefit of the full range of emotions (grief, joy, despair, etc.), and who can spot talents and passions, mirror inner and hidden gold. I hope that many who teach will find the courage necessary to stop waiting to be asked or given permission or invited to do what they know is good about teaching and instead lead forth by pouring themselves into their work energetically, and in effect, make hope active.

The lineage of authority we carry as teachers is ancient and its truth comes from the soul of the world not from just our own cleverness, therefore it must (like any real and potent gift) be passed on because it is only on loan to us and doesn't really belong just to us. It is our obligation to keep teaching ourselves and help this same authenticity live on in the spirit of the young teachers and students coming up behind us now.

When we fight for the soul and its life, we receive as reward not fame, not wages, not friends but what is already in the soul, a freshness that no one can destroy...[This] soul truth, which young people...pick up from somewhere ...sustains them. (Bly,1986, p. 3-4)

Given my role as an educator at a university, I have had (and continue to be blessed with) the real opportunity to create the conditions where this philosophy, with its potential to contribute in some way to the craft of teaching itself, can be more widely shared through applied learning both in the degree programs and in the non-credit continuing education offerings for the public. I have found that equally important is the role of the supervisor of the thesis project where encouraging the student to find her authentic voice comes at a critical stage of her learning and can become a breakthrough in research that helps makes a world of difference. I have had the privilege of witnessing examples of this each year.

The reality of courses designed to embody a pedagogy of relatedness that offer stimulus and inspiration to others who are willing to re-embrace the lost essential dimensions of other-than-human contextualization is that they build our human capacity of reflective awareness and develop compassionate love. Learning in this way helps us get to the heart of what we believe, how we behave, what we do, what we work at and how we love amongst other critical choices in life and has us really take stock in a mindful way. Through various professional development opportunities I create within my current role, and within teachers education programs, I have the ability to provide rich dynamic spaces

for veteran and pre-service teachers to learn in this initiatory way together, to extend their own practices and capacities of perceiving, knowing and becoming, and not least of all, in many instances, to be encouraged to *go wild* by taking learning outside.

**pitfalls within the possible.**



However, it is fairly easy to imagine that there are real limitations and pitfalls to what I am proposing here, because for starters this could seem like yet another agenda being foisted on already overloaded teaching capacities. It also has the potential for seasoned teachers to view this call for radical change as a challenge to already established practices that work well enough. There can also be tremendous discomfort for many in going outside into a woods or up a mountain in terms of abilities, levels of fear and notions of safety. Our vestigial defence can kick up pretty quickly when we believe we could be eaten! While this intensity of fear can of course be helpful in amplifying the experience itself toward an initiation, when considering doing work of this nature and the risk of death that is real whenever we venture out from the confines of the classroom, it may be enough to simply scare people off<sup>61</sup>.

Without having had an experience of the circular journey of separation, threshold crossing-initiation and return, it is hard to imagine one would want to take the risk. And because outcomes – what happens for students on the trail – are heuristic in nature and cannot be pre-determined, there is a conundrum of how this learning will fit into the marking schema. How will what happened for the learner be able to be measured in a way that it counts for something significant in the end? Of course, it would also be wise to equip teachers who take field trips with basic wilderness training (including basic first aid) if they are to lead groups outside (even in nearby nature) which can pose a number of logistical and financial implications too.

John Dewey (1929/2009) wrote that in order to reach some significant depth in teaching it would be critical for teachers to have a background in psychology. I would further his notion and add we will need to lift psychology into the field of *ecopsychology* to include yet transcend the larger concerns of social pathology alone and in effect, include

---

<sup>61</sup> Of course there is no where on earth that could be considered “safe” anymore especially with the rise in violence we have seen at schools and in our cities. One might argue that wild natural spaces may in fact the safest places we can be!

the whole ecology in our knowing of self and world.

I am not daunted by these prospects (and other limitations I haven't even considered yet) because my motivation and interest in working with pre-service teachers to help them find their way, outweighs any fear. If early on in our careers, we are met with the kind of guidance that helps us forge our authenticity and engender the courage we need to be ourselves in the class, then perhaps the landscape for new teachers would become more inviting. To have the confidence to manifest the kind of content that a new teacher is curious and passionate about into creative curriculum, will ensure fluid and adaptable learning spaces that speak to what is alive and engaging for both student *and* teacher.

Given my own triadic background in education - curriculum and instruction, ecopsychology, and wilderness guiding, I believe I am well suited to help usher to conscious awareness the soul of the self who is being called to teach and help reveal to him his own treasures within an ecological context. With years of teaching experience, ample resources and divergent nature-based, embodied and reflective practices, I have taken my own work and manifest it as curriculum, allowing others the opportunity to experience, examine and understand for themselves. In this way, I hope to help illuminate the way for other new teachers and am most willing to openly share what I have learned thus far so that their resource kit is brimming when they start to teach. I believe the implications of this may mean that more teachers would start out by being *more pedagogical* from the start (certainly more conscious of and prepared to bring their own gifts), creating conditions that are enlivening and inspiring for others as they find their way. In turn, this kind of teaching engenders resilience and confidence which means a young teacher may not be so soon defeated by a system that is often isolating, competitive, reductionist and well, often brutish to the soul. Establishing early patterns of authentic teaching and learning, deep creativity, and the power of communities of practice who openly support one another and share, all could have enduring and positive effects on the entire school system. As young teachers enter into established and often difficult situations, they will need to be strong in their sense of self, compassionate to the plight of others, creative in their ideation and making, critical and articulate in their thinking, understanding of systems and necessary cycles, and be able to bring fresh insights and energy in order to fulfill their obligation to the student and to the craft. It is my passion to work alongside new teachers as they set for



themselves a more ensouled curriculum and I would begin by simply taking them for a walk.

Finally, with each of these hopes I set forth, I also bring a sobering attitude of the realities of institutional life which can be quite solitary and soulless for many. Budgetary concerns are a central, real and often delimiting factor to most innovation. Bums in seats means more students in a class therefore, creating any kind of spacious, embodied and reflective practice is nigh impossible if it means taking one hundred students out into nature safely or effectively. The notion of class sizes that outweigh the teacher's ability to keep track of process or know his students well, or be able to guide them in their particular passions in a whole person way, is more common than not. That is just one example.

I have also been an open-eyed witness to the destructive nastiness of the politics and personal agendizing that can prevail inside the institution. It can be nullifying to the teacher who is more concerned with her class's advancement than her own to not play the political game. Many institutions push a research agenda on their faculty that may detract from the spirit of the one who is called to teach and not necessarily prodigiously publish. And while each are equally noble academic pursuits to be sure, there is often not the time to be really good at both and remain centered and sane. This can also fall under the category of *the tyranny of tenure*, which is a real and harrowing threat for many within that system and while the result may be final security, it can be pretty shaky ground to stand on for some time before reaching safety. This always trickles down to the students. The fault I see with tenure from a systems perspective is that it is unnatural that someone is declared permanent and 'stable' and therefore the system itself cannot go through the necessary stability, collapse and reorganization cycle it requires to keep growing and becoming resilient and adaptive. We see plenty of evidence of this happening now and it keeps everything moving very slowly. New curriculum such as I have proposed can struggle to find a programmatic homeplace within a crowded faculty holding onto an overt number of septuagenarias for instance.

As I have discussed in some depth in the outcomes section (starting on page 339), much aesthetically inclined or ambitously creative curriculum finds itself whittled down to fit within pre-established marking rubrics or else cut out entirely. We have all experienced curriculum that has lost its life through repetition and old age and requires the

intervention of resuscitation, however, there is no way of measuring our own worth if curriculum, once passed through committee approvals, doesn't ever see a review and refresh from time to time or if tenure blocks this process. I can appreciate that with each great possibility and hope I hold for education as outlined here, there are corresponding pitfalls in all of what I am proposing within the context of the institution. To me, this work of teaching is not for the feint of heart but can be lonely indeed, so perhaps more than ever we need each other's support and encouragement to create a curriculum of possibilities that manifests what we are moved to invest all of ourselves in; *heart, mind, body and soul*.

Within and throughout this exploration, I have left questions unanswered and some answers open to doubt as must be the case when something is never truly finished. I continue to examine and explicate my philosophy, ideas and beliefs in creative curricular form that acts more like a dialogue between student, teacher and world and is also never finished, always *becoming*, allowing for the unexpected surprises that learning can bring. I hope to continue to honour this work and its mysterious process by keeping this classroom 'conversation' going. And finally, I hope for wisdom and humility enough to graciously shape my teaching practice and *to be shaped by it* as my own soul continues to call me to the praxis of teaching and learning, learning and teaching, despite the odds.



### **Wild (Re)turns: Lessons from (becoming) the Field**

The warriors approach  
Is to say "yes" to life:  
"yea" to it all.  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 149)

*I had to go outrageously far out to have the opportunity to drop the veils of dualistic seeing and thinking despite what I may have secretly believed to be enlightened about myself beforehand. The vision fast required risk taking. It was the radical risk I needed to take but it is...not for everyone!*

*The entire experience remains so much in my body that when I shut my eyes at night, I can feel myself held by the earth again on the edge of that sprawling canyon flanked by meadow and oak, aspen and stream.*

*I didn't learn any of this from someone else or from a second hand experience in a book or film, this coming to consciousness was something extended to me in a non-*

*ordinary state intrinsic to (in)forming the most authentic understanding of my own nature in connection with all of nature, as I-thou.*

*With eyes closed in the darkness in my bed drifting into near sleep state I can take myself back to that place...where the stream spoke to me, where the wise old woman was an oak and a holy fool all at the same time and the earth took me back in her body and sang right through me. My teachers stood as tall as trees surrounding me with their love urging me to go on. The meadow was my gladness, the ancient canyon, home.*

*It took a sweet surrender to the incredibly human experience of being alive, to glimpse my own incredibly wild aliveness and through the deepest thread of connection to the rest of the soul of the world, receive further instructions of what to become, what to bring back. I feel like I am in some part still there and it is still in me (continuing to shape me) like we are not really separated. This mythic practice seems like good practice for my own inevitable death. It is all there, in these patterns really, everything is all there.*

*What I learned, I carry like treasure that I keep slowly being able to dole back out in insights and gratitude, in seeing connectedness and patterns in all things...and in my open-hearted teaching with a fierce, fierce energy to protect and love and care for this world (both human and other-than-human) with every small step forward.*

Here then, are the lessons I have learned in (and from) the field:

1) ***The gift is the story.*** We don't come back from a thunderous journey packing real gold per se, rather it is in making meaning from and telling our soul story that the gift begins to take shape. However, it is in the *living* of our story that any real treasure is revealed as it is shared widely.

2) ***The small is large.*** By taking necessary small steps (even just outside my door), the larger life exists. A small movement toward our core is a giant leap to our seeded selves, toward the image we were born with that illustrates our true nature and calling. The potential for a meaningful life, in essence a whole new world, is sleeping within that small seed. Merton (1961) wrote that God (the divine) is in a seed, while Hillman (1996) reminds us that the blueprint for the mighty oak lies in the tiny acorn. What they both need, just like humans, are the proper conditions to become fully realized. And not least of all, Thoreau demonstrated that even in the small steps just outside the back door in nearby nature, lie all the patterns of the larger patterns for all of the world, for a greater self to track its way

home, and live large. The patterns are all there. Upon her celebrated return from Oz where she took back her own power and found her way from within herself (that existed all along), Dorothy Gale from Kansas admitted, “Well, I learned that if you can’t find your heart’s desire in your own backyard, then you never really lost it to begin with” (Taurog, et al, 1939). She knew that great things begin (and end?) at home and do not need exotic places, yet they do need old and new friends as allies and even brooding and dark troubles in order to help us dissolve away old beliefs and fears. This kind of journey allow us to live more fully in integrity with our own souls (and our heart’s desires), after all.

3) ***Archetypes live in shadow.*** Until we have awakened to our own darkness (and brilliance) in shadow, what we find hateful about ourselves we will project on others, or what we find too magnificent in others won’t be available to us energetically. Without finding a way to befriend (love, and integrate, rather than slay) what has been repressed, we will always keep a lid on our potential glory. As the poet Robert Frost (in Zweig & Abrams, 1991) wrote, “Something we were withholding made us weak/Until we found it was ourselves” (n.p.). The treasure within awaits rescue (sometimes not so patiently) by our courageous selves but it is carefully guarded by the monsters (of us). Our gold lies in the dark chambers below to be claimed by us at last.

And not least of all, we must also become adept at spotting and tracking shadow for our students. We must encourage these greater energies, these greater stories that need to be lived (in all of us) toward a ripening of how to become our more perfectly imperfect selves, because *what* one recovers is always useful, no matter how it may at first appear.

I have happily discovered (or rather recovered the sense that), I am an hermetic soul. I strongly identify with The Hermit, the Pathmaker as I have been known to wear long cloaks, navigate my life by the stars and the seasons, greet the forest like an old friend (I feel more related to it than to my own family at times) and can often be found mumbling to myself or speaking a secret language out loud to the trees, plants or just to the thin air. I now see that this energy has pretty much courted me my whole life. I admire the way the hermit leans on her staff in order to be grounded with earth, intuition, analogy, and experience, how she feels her way in the darkness, walking, not stationary, in process. She never stays too long in one place and doesn’t give only her opinions or personal feelings rather through the light of consciousness unites intellect with things with no apparent aim

to accomplish something for herself but for the common interests that she serves, moving from quality to quality.

After seeing my own shadow crossing the field in her cape with lantern in hand on the quest, I have been able to bring this archetypal energy to light by bringing into conscious awareness and expression (first in these pages, and now, more fully into my life), more of her ethos. And while this is not explainable, it is more self-explanatory through an immediacy of knowing. I have found that an archetype cannot be spoken *about* so much as they speak *from* the energetic imagination because they live in the domain of soul consciousness and don't abide by the same rules as cognition.

I also have come to know that since my return, that I am in a kind of self-imposed exile, an edge-dweller, because I don't really see a good fit for me within much of Western society. This old figure feels to me to be more like the original interdisciplinarian, the embodiment of the both-and, as she constantly brokers between two seemingly disparate spaces. And I have begun to better understand how the hermit got such a bad rap hanging out so much of her time at the fringes of the forest, in the shadow lands in-between civilization and woods speaking what at first might have seemed to be gibberish (but might have actually been more of a complexity of alchemical synthesis). Lately, I am ever drawn to look more deeply as the light shifts and shadows lengthen. I see myself now as the one who shines her light ahead in the darkness so others may see for themselves in terms of my teaching practice overall. I don't worry much about what other might think, say or do or worry if anyone sees what is lit up and follows or not. Like the Greek philosophers, I also know "the source of light and the source of soul are one and the same" (Kerényi, 1944/1976, p. 87).

4) ***Going outside is mythic.*** Aside from the obvious physical, emotional and spiritual benefits of being in nature, I have found that quite possibly when we take our learning out of doors, we are enacting one of the oldest rituals of the *homo sapien sapien*<sup>62</sup> of separation, threshold/initiation and return. This rite may be genetically coded in our bodies, hard-wired in our neural pathways because it is something humans have likely always done and

---

<sup>62</sup> "The emergence of anatomically modern human marks the dawn of the subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens* i.e. the subspecies of *Homo sapiens* that includes all modern humans." (Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatomically\\_modern\\_humans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatomically_modern_humans), November 2013)

I believe are required to do in order to keep the largest conversations possible going between ourselves and the world and satisfy our deepest longing to belong there. It is also quite likely the oldest architecture, the deep structure underpinning all the stories that have been shared around fires ever since we began to tell (in both sound and movement). My statement *going outside is mythic* lends new perspective as to why learning outside is so much more profoundly engaging, highly transformative and almost magical. It extends the argument that this may be reason enough to make outdoor sessions inclusive throughout all disciplines rather than left to the exclusive design of select environmental, physical education or adventure type programs.

5) ***"I may not be perfect, but I am perfectly myself..."*** Rather than simply study the field, I had the joyous experience of *becoming it*. As I have come to understand that all research is in some significant way, a (re)search of self, and as I am also a part of this wild world (incarnate), as lines blurred, I was in effect studying *the field becoming more of itself through me...*no separation. It took a wild whispering wisdom from a cold mountain stream as it fell from great stony heights to find its way to the vaster ocean of possibility, to tell me this.

There is more in a human life than our theories of it allow. Sooner or later something seems to call us onto a particular path. You may remember this "something" as a signal moment in childhood when an urge out of nowhere, a fascination, a peculiar turn of events struck like an annunciation: This is what I must do, this is what I've got to have. This is who I am....If not this vivid or sure, the call may have been more like gentle pushings in the stream in which you drifted unknowingly to a particular spot on the bank. Looking back, you may have a sense that fate had a hand in it. (Hillman, 1996, p. 3)

Having time in nature, without human-made structures, conversations, or food, allowed for this quiet transmission to occur. As insignificant as it could have seemed, and as easily as it could have been relegated to clinical terminology such as positive transference, or brushed off as crazy, this short sentence in fact held seeds of enormous self-acceptance out beyond all judgment and blame that unraveled me entirely, allowed me to touch bottom and reclaim more of my true nature.

6) ***To see the world with “heart eyes”***. While I was not given one particular vision to be going on with, it was as if I was reintroduced to seeing altogether. It was as if the fingerprints on the lens of my life were making it so difficult to see clearly and finally, they were wiped clean, no longer clouding my good judgment. Seeing into the nature of things, (seeing nature as first friend) and seeing into my own nature at the same time, created a crystal clarity that has remained with me. It took a long look into (in)sight to bring out a new perception in me. *Vision* quest indeed.

Poet-philosopher, David Whyte, (1997) reminds us that the result of tired eyes is not just that they are dull and cannot find the world, but the world cannot find us either. Seeing is reciprocity, *is* relationship. In my case, the way I gather significant data is through seeing first. But my eyes can also serve as gatekeepers to learning if I am blinded by my own impatience, intolerance, ignorance or fear and refuse to take time to see everything as alive and connected in its own beautiful way. The same goes for not being able to find space enough at my centre for listening or what I refer to as using my “heart-ears” to discern the voice of wind, trees, insects, rock, and deer because everything in this living world “speaks”, telling us more of the story of this great universe.

There is astonishing wisdom to be found when we surrender the strategic mind, give judgment a rest, look into what presents itself. An oak leaf shaped squirrel (or a squirrel shaped oak?) was a great teacher for me. In her a maternal nourishment-bearing way, she held up the acorn (the symbol of the soul’s blueprint) reaffirming it as gift for all.

And of course, I cannot forget my indebtedness the one who showed himself every day at sun’s highest peak, when this oaky squirrel woman shape-shifted into the holy fool (re)minding me that in the heat of the moment, humour brings perspective and levity (to this serious business that is life) and often, great dollops of wisdom too. These two lessons are like precious gold to me, currency for my life’s journey.

7) ***It is good to stay a little bit hungry***. Without a need to stuff food, I was unable to “stuff” feelings. The clarity and awakesness that I experienced from fasting was stunning. I didn’t starve in four days and the paradox was that my time without eating was extraordinarily full, rich, sweet and completely delicious! True nourishment (soul sustenance) does come in myriad ways.

And finally, reviewing my journal over three years later, these last few “instructions received” from the transmission of the fast are not new concepts to me, yet they bear repeating here as words to be going on with;

*Show up. Be present. Tell the truth. Listen deeply. Feel. Express Yourself. Show gratitude. Pray. Laugh. Let things happen. Stop waiting to be rescued or invited...*

“We are our own dragons as well as our own heroes, and we have to rescue ourselves from ourselves.” (Robbins, 1990, p. 324)



### **what followed me home.**

You become mature  
when you become  
The authority of your own life.  
(Campbell, 1991, p. 162)

So how do the findings of this wild (re)turn track back to education? Mythically, I sense we have to keep repeating these ancient patterns (of the threefold and circular journey) because it is both ontologically and epistemologically significant and full of important implications when we (re)connect and relate.

We all start our lives in connection in our mother’s womb. We all desire healthy connection for the rest of our days, however first we must remember this by overcoming our enculturated separateness. That is why the initiatory journey can feel so much like a home-coming. The kind of consciousness that changes our perceptions and reminds us of our unity allows us to see past the appearances of eye and mind, and to see instead (with our heart eyes) a world of non-local entanglement. The heart is the primary access point to the higher, the greater self. Through everyday small acts, small compassionate steps become great movements. That is how the whole world changes. This is the practice of the longer initiation, the one that I now understand must take a lifetime.

Also, I understand that staying a little bit hungry allows us to embody and feel what we are really craving (in terms of our experience of the world) rather than cramming ourselves full of the facts and data of thinking-only. And the story, what we bring back? The story is how we listen to each other, how we listen for “author”-ity (read: the authentic voice as found within the truth of our own words). As humans, we must elect to help one another remember, to help lift the amnesiac veils that allow us to refuse the dazzling



beauty all around and instead forge deep connections with the invisible world. In this way we are not just seeking self-discovery, but feeding the whole ecology through the loving reciprocity of relationship.

It takes courage and critical thinking to know your own nature and figure out what your talents are and how they fit in this world. It takes a fierceness of heart and a considered mind to be generous, gradual, subtle and village-oriented as you bring your words, thoughts and actions into positive affect. To move from (dis)membered to (re)membered in small conscious steps and daily rituals of practice is hard to explain and holds little interest for a culture driven by consumerism, exploitation and progress. But small steps count. Everything matters because we are connected to everything. The power of each one is necessary to power the whole system. Education can be the place that provides a space for true voice, for true nature, to unfold and reveal itself, especially if we go out to let in learning from the natural world—the homeplace to our primal, original, natural and indigenous soul.

I couldn't help but become more my imperfectly-perfect self on this journey. Yes, a bit more self-aware, yet more importantly, I have gained a sense of self-actualization. I do not mean this in an egoic sense. Instead, I have found that what flows through me and presents as my beliefs and behaviours seems to do so from somewhere and something entirely greater than myself and I can no sooner stem the flow as stop running water. Nor would I want to! This *is* and *is not* me at the same time. It seems more like the wind of genius, just passing through my particular nature, (shape) playing me like some wild breath through the carved out instrument. If I have learned anything, it is to just let that come so I may give away my deepest gladness through teachership and by getting out of my own way. I have come to trust that most of all.

As this paper comes to an end, my journey is yet unfinished. It lies within a greater more progressive and evolutionary narrative that arrives from a vast primordial place and moves in the direction of expanding consciousness with implications for the fate of self and contribution to the world. This dynamic and universal pattern of existence was here long before I was born and will continue on long after I depart from my physical body. It calls for rites of passage journeys, they are needed for ongoing, metaphoric death/rebirth practices toward greater realization, actualization and transformation. This is good practice for living

I believe, and for eventually dying well. By making unconscious embedded and destructive patterns conscious, and releasing the psychic energy required for healing for individuation (Jung, 1965), we become more whole. We are all existential lifelong projects, beautiful human works in progress.

I have gazed for a time into the mysterious abyss of the centre of my soul and there I have scraped into what felt to me like “the bottom of the world” (Enslar, 2013, p. 163). I touched beyond facts and sense-making, stretched traditional academic margins toward imaginative reaches. As curriculum theorist, poet and teacher, Carl Leggo (2001) in his essay *Research as Poetic Ruminaton*, bemoaned, many are not even comfortable (himself included at one time) in connecting words like “heart” to scholarly writing because even his,

...sense of scholarly writing has been shaped by teachers and academics intent on filling the world with five paragraph theme papers that prattle with predictable and pedantic persuasiveness, teachers who fear poetry with its subversive search for the strange. (pp. 175-176)

Leggo contends that his poesis is scholarly despite how it may look or sound. I concur that precisely the kind of discourse we need (if we are educating toward the maturation of the whole person), must insist on words such as; SOUL HEART, MATURITY, MYSTERY, CONSCIOUSNESS, SHADOW, DEATH and MYTHOS and of course, LOVE.  
(Thank you, Carl.)



### **on destiny.**

In the last analysis, every life is the realization of a whole, that is, of a self, for which reason this realization can be called ‘individuation.’ All life is bound to individual carriers who realize it, and it is simply inconceivable without them. But every carrier is charged with an individual destiny and destination, and the realization of this alone makes sense of life. (Jung, 1968, p. 222)

On the other side of this journey you will be different than when you began, but you always knew that. Your journey (and you too) will assume a shape and a meaning that will only become clear afterward (if at all). Most won’t understand your journey or what you

imagine you will gain and some might find it disquieting and surely hardly anyone will encourage you to again go so far from the comforts of your life and culture. It is imperative to embrace what's arriving and yet let go of what's departing in order to move forward and not get stuck especially on the story of the journey itself. It is not the thing after all.

Once the alchemical process was finished, I found myself emerging with a different energy for my work as educator yet I understand that I must continue to unravel the koan that we are all given to live (Holstein, 1993). The *why* of being born is lifelong and mysterious human work.

Someday, somewhere - anywhere, unfailingly, you'll find yourself, and that and only that, can be the happiest or bitterest hour of your life. (Neruda, 2006, p. 59)

It took visiting dark and mysterious places, being forced to face fears and monstrosities, acquire hidden strengths and test values through crises points for me to restore and redeem the heroine of me (who had it in her all along but could not have summoned the powers she needed to go back home until she went through the fires of these trials and was then free to return). The most heroic act may in fact be to not attach to the beautiful or the terrifying contents of life, rather to celebrate the process of being alive in all its radiant messiness!

This journey of life toward our adult selves who must go off to slay (or rather, befriend and integrate) our dragons, is where most of us have to be dragged kicking and screaming rather than going willingly, at least the first time. Crossing over thresholds we find helps us make meaning, as through the process we become more (not in a high and mighty sense but in a simple and open hearted, accepting, out-past-judgments-of-right-and-wrong sense). This is the strange and loamy enchanted garden where seeds of potential in us are germinated and tended.

There will always be symbols that court us (by showing up repeatedly throughout our lives) and try to speak to us and teach us how to live out our particularities. The call for this journey is what is being whispered to us by our favourite characters from movies and books that we identify with so strongly. They represent the iconography of our lives. Until we take up the call and venture forth, our greatest selves may remain hidden. And by greater selves I mean both the witch aspects of us (dark shadow), and the potential for our

magnificence and true power as held within the “Dorothy” of us (the one who had to claim the ruby resources that she had all along just at her heels). Neither power could be accessed or mobilized (in her) until after all the tests were passed. At that moment of course, Dorothy could step into the new life by way of those bejeweled and magical slippers that she was already wearing.

We can move from an unsatisfying life to a satisfying one by facing the scariest things we can imagine and then coming back to tell our story about it. As I mentioned earlier on but bears repeating here, in my experience and that of Campbell’s (2008) too, this journey of maturation and individuation doesn’t end with just one trip. Like Parzifal (whose wounds never did heal) in his search for the treasured cup, he needed those precise difficulties, long wanderings, scary and taxing multiple adventures, and much time in the field (many trips back and forth across the threshold), before he could begin to develop the necessary empathy and understanding to uncover his own unique talents. Those disguised as woundings and shortcomings (and what is human in us all). “*Whom does the Grail serve?*” really asks, “*What or whom does soul serve?*”, questions how we are living our soul’s inheritance, how we *are* serving our people and the planet” (Plotkin, 2003, pp. 258-259).

What I learned is the difference between destiny and fate. We are all fated to die. Destiny is recognizing the radiance of the soul that, even when faced with human impossibility, loves all of life. Fate is the death we owe to Nature.

Destiny is the life we owe to soul. (Woodman, 2000, p. xvi)



### **love, love, love...**

Do what you love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still. Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life.

Aim above morality. Be not simply good -- be good for something. (Thoreau, 1906, pp. 163-164)

We are creatures of longing and longing needs union. If you find out what you long for, you will find out who you are....and ultimately find where you be-long (Hillman, 1989). The implications held within the courage to turn toward what we most long for is the turn required to fully belong to the world is how destiny shows herself to us (Meade, 2010).

Plotkin (2003, 2008a/b) was right when he offered that the give away—what are your true gifts for the world and that makes the world better in about a thousand ways —is what you most long for *yourself*. The only gift worth giving, the only treasure that comes just from the “you of you”—here, now, at this time is the soul’s call made visible. Here we get the privilege of returning all we have been given. I feel so strongly that it is our collective obligation, our human inheritance to let nothing get in our way of this, our true vocation. I have found it is a radical act of love to facilitate this gift giving of ours no matter the sacrifice (and it is likely there will be great sacrifices).

Teachers may in some ways be those most able to help with this facilitation. “How we communicate and receive the world of knowledge and the world of students is formed, informed, and re-formed through our physicality. Our body *is* pedagogy” (Schroeder, 1998, p. 132). Every movement, every gesture, every turn of the head, is “body language”, our natural fluency made visible, our soul’s gifts made more evident. In my call for the need for more embodied practices, I mean learning that by definition enfleshes our beliefs and values, makes them manifest in the erotics of everyday, in-carnate. Embodiment is a conscious shift from the abstract of thought toward soulful enactment and becoming. Within that context then, if you desire more community, then become a community. If you want more love, then love more. If you want change, then examine yourself for needed change first. If you are hungry for connection, it is good idea to start to feed others. If you have been wronged, then by taking the chance (and the risk) to make things right again is an embodiment of kindness and compassion. If you feel empty, fill by giving. If you are lonely, go and meet another’s eyes, and if you long to have a voice, listen deeply especially to the unspeakable, then sing your own song into the world.

Humility and fearlessness (in the name of love) embodied for example will not allow us behave as if we exist separately from anything else. It allows us to look into joy as easily as into sadness and insists that we stand up at all costs for the living. It will help us to push past the dichotomies of difference, lift the veils of dualistic thinking, negativity, hate and the illusion of separateness to bring on real and lasting, loving change. In *Hell and High Water, Climate, Hope and the Human Condition*, Alastair McIntosh (2008) reminds us that “We need the humility to ask the deep roots of life to provide the grace to gaze into the abysmal and yet, to hold fast and see beyond despair”(p. 199). This is in keeping with Joanna Macy’s

(2007) genius teaching in *The Work That Reconnects* that asks us that we face our despair by entering it fully with others, as a call to our spiritual growth and to foster our ability to see with new eyes (and hearts). Macy explains this is what is required of us in the *Great Turning*—“the essential adventure of our time: the shift from industrial growth society to life-sustaining civilization” (p. 27). In this way, we begin to turn our human selves toward a more conscious wholeness that include all living beings to overt disaster for this world.

But we still require more adequate skill sets. Nature, with her spontaneities, her wildness, her beauty, power and mirroring is still our greatest instructor with her “dazzling array of species and habitats” where we can develop “the kind of first-hand knowledge of nature from which real intelligence grows” (Orr, 2004, p. 52). Far from a mere backdrop or context, nature endows both teacher and student with sufficient learning resources by her inter-penetrable, mysterious, wild beauty, by her very *nature!* As we fall under “the spell of the sensuous”(Abram, 1996), an embedded intimacy between human and world situates us within our various geographies and locatednesses (out in the field) toward a deeper sense of our belonging because “how we know and what we know is always a context of who we are and where we are” (Hurren, 1993, p. 120).

In an ongoing conversation with all things, we can return to a world that recognizes our own movements and rhythms to be patterned after its own. It is such a nourishing place that offers itself to us freely through our willingness to participate and in effect, help heal some of the wounds humankind has inflicted upon it. But it requires our attendance and our resolve to share what we have learned upon our return. Oliver’s (2009) instructions for life say it best, “Pay attention, be astonished, tell about it” (p. 37). This is what is necessary if we expect to make real change happen because, “how well we do will determine the fate of our communities and the planet” (Weller, 2011, p. 3).

And in an effort to avoid a further irony of human-nature dualisms by privileging *outside* learning to *inside* the classroom learning, I offer that nature is not just a resource outside of ourselves to use, but that wherever we are, *there* is nature because as poet, naturalist and teacher, Gary Snyder (1990) writes “[o]ur bodies are wild”. He notes,

[S]ensation and perception do not exactly come from outside and the unremitting thought and image-flow are not exactly inside. The world is our consciousness, and it surrounds us....the depths of mind, the unconscious are

our inner wilderness areas, and that is where the bobcat is *right now*. I do not mean personal bobcats in personal psyches, but the bobcat that roams from dream to dream. (p.17)

While the natural world is a beginning, it is not the only point of intimate contact with the world. Snyder urges that when we return from the woods, we continue to see ourselves as ultimately natural still. He believes we must remember to evoke the mythopoetic in that “Great Brown Bear is walking with us, Salmon is swimming upstream with us, as we stroll a city street”(p. 101). In praise of (re)minding our selves of our more wild heritage, of our original and deep intimacy with the living world, taking first steps to imaginative listening and learning are found in those uncorralled steps taken outside. I concur whole-heartedly with educator Christopher Brache (2008) who writes, “nature is always the better classroom” (p. 158) because it would be strange to teach about things “out there” without the critical engagement of actually going “out there”. And the absolute mystery of it all is that time outside has never yet failed to bring with it an inward focus where surprise, wonder and insight arrive from what seems to me to be a most ancient sense of coherence that comes from being in the context of home.

My story of love had clearly changed. While I was already doing much toward the changes I wanted to see in education (e.g. teaching outside in all weather and in all seasons, honing my listening skills, disrupting normative discourse, asking more beautiful questions of myself and my students, sacrificing study for more built-in reflective time and art, creating the conditions for others to teach in that would allow students to transform themselves, etc.), I was unable to receive the message that it was enough, that *I* was (whole, perfect, good) enough. Unable to see what was right in front of me, I sought out what I most longed for myself—ensouled, heart-opening, deeply connected, re-enchanted, transformative learning. In following this “ruby slipper” line of thinking, I realize now that I wouldn’t have been after these things if I didn’t already have them (or some small trace of them) in me all along. I just didn’t yet have the necessary power and resources to fully mobilize my gifts. Not until I took that initiatory journey in Colorado. The life that wanted to live in me was waiting on the other side of the doorstep, over the other side of the stone portal. Just beyond my green tarp, across the threshold of stream, mountain, oak, aspen, deer, and moon, waiting for me to claim and take it home was true vocation—a pedagogy of

love.

The soul truth assures the young man or woman that if not rich, he or she is still in touch with truth; that his inheritance comes not from his immediate parents but from his equals thousands of generations ago; that the door to the soul is unlocked; that he does not need to please the doorkeeper, but that the door in front of him is his, intended for him, and the doorkeeper obeys when spoken to. (Bly,1986, p. 4-5)

My soul had gone ahead and thrown the image out ahead of me and I had entered into it. All the while, I was busy convincing myself that I was simply “experimenting” here, on a cool, pan-cultural journey that thousands take every year. I hadn’t really thought much would happen for me. And, happily, I was *dead wrong*.

Now, I no longer question (in the self-conscious sense) my gifts or my own particular way of embodying and enacting my truth, my sense of knowing and being in the world (although I am continually humbled by the way the world moves through me). I have so much compassion for how this all shows up for others as well. But oh, the secret comes on quietly enough and with shyness of a wild animal that’s been pacing the edges of the territory of my life for so long, waiting so patiently. When I finally gave myself enough quiet time and space, then soul came bounding up, wagging its tail.

You do not need to leave your room...Remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Do not even wait, be quite still and solitary. The world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked. It has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet. (Kafka, 1918/2006, p. 108)

When Darwin (1871) wrote about human evolution in *The Descent of Man*, he mentions the survival of the fittest thrice while he mentions love 94 times (Hartmann, 1998). When we compete, we separate and pit ourselves against each other in objectivity, in domination. We conquer at someone else’s expense. There are no winners, really. The way of nature, for the most part, is more a way of cooperation, a mutualistic symbiosis. There is evidence of this everywhere but sadly our way of educating insists on a merit system of awards and competitions, winners and losers, and honour rolls that reinforce isolation. Then of course we segue from school into work and are rewarded with money



and incentives for being the “best”, climbing to the top rung of the ladder. We are constantly driven to be better than everyone else by having the best of everything, the greatest, newest most powerful gadgets that keep promising a happier life. Bill Pinar warns that unless we commit ourselves to truth-telling and if we keep our educational focus on jobs alone, that this will sadly become the age known as *homo economicus* (personal communication , July 2014).

We all know that money does not buy happiness, especially after a certain level of need fulfillment has been reached. Abraham Maslow (1943) realized that we can be happy enough just by getting our basic needs met (a simple existence), especially if we have enough to eat, have access to clean water, shelter and a bed and live in community. The rest can be a trap, the slippery slope to economies of more and more, the “never-enough” syndrome which of course, will determine the fate of our world.

Love that has “nothing to do with marriage or ownership or having or consuming” (Enslar, 2013, p. 168), love that transcends romance or need and defies reason, is the love I am interested in. It does have to do with pouring ourselves into our work as teachers regardless of whether or not it is received—of loving anyway— and letting love be our guide, letting love be “enough”.

It is about showing up and not forgetting, about keeping promises, about giving everything and losing everything. No one is ‘mine’ ....that is not love. Love is something else, something rising and contagious and surprising. It isn’t aware of itself, It isn’t keeping track, It isn’t something you sign for. It’s endless and generous and enveloping. It’s in the drums, the voices, in the bodies of the wounded made suddenly whole, by the music, by each other, dancing... (Enslar, 2013, pp. 168-169)

We *are* designed to love. Scientist Candace Pert (1997) identified that endorphins—evolutionary reinforcers—bring us a sense of *elation on purpose* and that it is in our DNA to be egalitarian, to be in community and to be emotional and connected, to serve each other, which brings deep contentment and sense of joy (Shadyac, 2010). When we love, when we feel feelings of love, we literally (morphically) radiate energy out past our bodies and at the same time detect (and pick up on) other hearts that are radiating their fields toward us too.

The “field” *is* reality because we affect each other and are affected by each other as there is a psychological and physiological effect taking place between everything, all the time.

The first organ to develop in the human fetus is the heart, not the brain. It may be that this is our more primary intelligence centre after all. It certainly is our intuitive lens and a reliable access point (and inner compass) to the greater self. The heart may be the primordial cord to the well of the collective unconscious in the vast continuum of a participating universe that is interconnected and co-creative. It would make sense then that we *fall* in love, *fall* deeply toward the centre of our longing; we are falling toward the oldest and most powerful force on earth. No wonder we have so little resistance to its pull!

Commonly ignored or discouraged in teaching, love can be considered “going too far” because of its potency. It is often feared, and/or confused with sex and power. Love makes healing possible because it can provide a deep compassionate way of caring for one another that gives us access to the creative energy we need to make wholesale changes. The “lens of love” is not a rose-coloured glass rather it means that we readily move to help one another, go beyond our roles, take time to communicate and be courageous enough to say what is most important even if it is difficult, see the good in each other, have forgiveness and give the benefit of the doubt before blaming (seek harmony), trust each other, and celebrate together the relationship and work accomplished in cooperation, together.

The need to express love is fundamental in humans. If nothing else, love is made necessary by the fact that there is no such thing as an independent life. It arises from our fundamental connectedness....Denial of our need to express love is endemic to our society and is a part of the illusion of autonomy that makes us among the lonelier people of the earth. When that need is repressed in organizations, we tend to put more of our energy into our needs for power and achievement. (Harrison, 2008, p. 2)

Under the dark webby entanglement of world we find the *science of love*, the quantum of *eros* (the oldest most sensuous form of love from the Greek myths) and *agape* (the wider community aspects of love) rolling in ecstasy at the feet of interconnectivity and cooperation, holding forth the deep structure, the grand unification that underpins all of the universe. Our connections with the rest of life are innate (Wilson, 1992) therefore, “it

would be surprising indeed if several million years of evolution had resulted in no such affinity” (Orr, 2004, p. 46), no such love. But thankfully, it has!

Nature continues to manifest deep beauty that calls us to wake up and step out from the constraints of modernity, to stay connected, to see our relatedness with all other living beings. If we continue to remain indifferent and plunder, we will continue on a path to ruin. However, if we choose instead to think and act critically, responsibly, reflectively, and creatively, if we (re)solve to act *lovingly* and embody what we learn, then we will find that this most powerful and far-reaching of human activities, and the service it provides, is our way forward.

We want the world because it is beautiful, its sounds and smells, and the textures, the sensate presence of the world as body. In short, below the ecological crises lies the deeper crises of love, that our love has left the world; that the world is loveless results directly from the repression of beauty, its beauty and our sensitivity to beauty. (Hillman, 1993, p. 35)

Can a more ensouled education help us remember our place in the order of things by helping us to remember our own true natures? Can it help us learn to love the world again and ourselves in it? Can we get down, get real, descend into the deeps of the well of all of life and not only scrape the bottom for love, but bring our own loving gifts to leave there for others to find too? At bottom, where the ecstatic poets like Hafiz and Rumi danced madly in such an intoxication of love with God, the One, Om, Perfection, (whatever one’s most cherished name for the creator, the one you worship or perhaps the creative intelligence alive in the universe), this is where true love lies. “Yes” said Martin Luther King Jr. (1957), “it is love that will save our world, our civilization, love even for our enemies”(p. 37). Love is the conscious practice toward an attitude of relatedness, reverence and preservation. Love wants to live.

In the end, we may only be able to *show not tell* as something from *out there*, moves through us, bridging two worlds where there are no boundaries between self and other, no separations, no dualistic thinking, no with or without. Instead, the end is where my judgments poured out while compassion flooded in. The result *is* my obligation to reach as deeply as I can to offer the authentic gifts I have been granted in this life (my primary and wild-hearted ability to teach) as bravely and beautifully as I am able. Here and now.

*I have learned that my own destiny is tied to offering nourishment to others by seeing what shimmers in the form of the acorn image of what they might become. To remember, when at the greatest tension of something to embrace the no-nothing fool of me, to laugh from my belly with head thrown back. Bring flowers.*

*To keep walking into the woods, lie down in mosses and gather old bones, dig a hole and cry for the earth, listen and sing softly, dance, drum and rattle wildly, check up on friends from time to time, make fires, make poems, make ceremony, meditate, site-sit, cloud-watch, climb up into a cave, stand under a tree, slip through the veils of dreamtime, put my nose deep into the centre of a pollinating desert rose and just breathe.*

*Immerse to belong. Saturate to expand. Flow to receive. Love to (be)loved. Giveaway what you most desire. This is the way home.*

When systems theorist Donella Meadows and her MIT fellow scientists ran simulations of our world in 1990 based on automobile impacts, they agreed at that time we had between 30-50 years before an environmental, economic and social breakdown. This news was so devastating, that the scientists began to talk about love. She admitted, “We never talked about love before”(in Sewall, 1999, p. 273) and when it all comes down to it, love was their last holdout for hope. It may also be ours.

Lennon and McCartney (Martin, 1967) said, it perfectly —“all you need is love”— and while that may have sounded like a naïve notion in radical times of change, it ends up I believe that they had it right. My prayers are theirs: “*love, love, love.*”

(Oh yes, and for Earth’s sakes, won’t you please take it outside?)



### **soul-furthering.**

This research in its attentions to the living world through heuristic (and strange) analysis of shadow and light, archetypes and individuation, bogs and canyon lands, dreaming and wakefulness, poetry and prose, traverses the inbetweenesses and otherworldlinesses, and may inevitably be regarded warily for performing outside the norm. The business of measuring something so deeply personal such as this is a statistical nightmare. After all, where is the calculated proof of a psycho-spiritual journey except in the evidence within the individuation of a person measured over time? Outliers and edge dwellers keep pressing societal lines further and further out into the world. Therefore,

there is risk in pressing boundaries and I know that whether or not this anecdote is considered as pure foolishness or pure wisdom, it does not matter much in the larger scheme of things because what happened, what was learned cannot be invalidated or reversed, and cannot be undone or forgotten. What learning has accrued in me is too important to ignore or dismiss. The seeds of this journey now bear fruit for action that when shared, I hope will also feed others.

This initiatory journey toward my own wild, resilient and “yet exceeding shy” (Palmer, 2000, p. 7) soul brought to the surface of my consciousness many unexpected discoveries of insight and compassion. I couldn’t have rushed this finish for my life. My soul took all the time it needed despite my plans, academic timetables, and committee schedules. No straight lines to the finish here, only circuitous phenomenological stages of a heuristic dance of deepening, surfacing, deepening, and surfacing with long periods of disappearing from these long pages. Finally, a synthesized semblance of richness of feeling, language, and art-making that just simply had to be expressed (apart from approvals) and kept unfolding even up until the very end.

In a continual interweaving of world and soul, a consciousness in service to the whole—in service to the soul of the world and to the archetypal energies—belongs, as far as I can tell, to the hermetic traditions that has me in its sights. All of the embroideries of this study were coming together into a final braid wrapping itself around notions of hermetic consciousness with its primacy of thinking in terms of likenesses as seen through the depth of imagination (and heart) to perceive soul through soul. Everything in correspondence now as an entrance to new understanding and awareness. The familiar maxim of hermetic knowing, “as above, so below” accomplishes this fusion, yet must at the same time insist on retaining the particularity of each thing in terms of its unique adaptations and true nature. This analogical form of knowing, a synthesis of the inner and outer worlds acts as an entry into mythos, as antidote to the excessive fragmentation of the world. It is a highly developed way of knowing through similars (rather than our more modern way of knowing that favours dualistic opposites and effectively splits up the knower from the known) (Hauck, 1999). Robert Sardello (1992) contends, “Analogy proceeds through a conscious incorporation of the knowing into the known and of the known into the knower, resulting in ‘living thinking’ or mythical thinking” (p. 170).

According to Greek legend, Hermes is the winged heart messenger, the one who keeps us asleep and wakes us up, leads us away and brings us back in his great, potent, mysterious, regenerative ways that embody the power of the soul, the necessity of masculine-feminine, both-and, dark-light, yin-yang, the above-below for health and wholeness. Hermetic consciousness then requires a clear consciousness of the head through imaginative thought, an embodied intelligence rooted in world soul. In an archetypally appropriate back and forth fashion, hermetic consciousness transforms the world into *living images* presented through the deep imagination and enacted into being through a much needed and continual exchange of consciousness between soul and world. The result is an intertwined and ongoing synthesis of souls—personal and world soul.

The soul has mostly been a private affair. Religions reinforced that our personal souls would either go to heaven or be damned, depending on what we believed (and worshipped) and enacted in the world, but primarily, it is of the individual. A schooling of hermetic consciousness calls for us to bring the soul out into the light of day (as depth psychology upholds is necessary to wholeness), i.e., soul as soul consciousness. Soul, once freed from the individual life, can be *expressed as a responsibility of love* with a capacity to feel a part of everything. *Soul as world soul.*

It would be a grave mistake to (separate and) relegate soul to other realms rather than find ways to enact it in our everyday world—a world ensouled. Could this be the way of seeing required for the kinds of change that can turn the whole world around from its brink at this time? Can education – the activity of educating the formerly private soul of the individual to conjoin with world soul, be such a movement? I believe it is.

However, this can never be put forth into a “school of thought” because this capacity of seeing—through the invisible back and forth connections, relating one thing to another—must be earned through experience. It also requires a disciplined practice of perceptions to create connections between opposites, along with the strengthening of intuitive intelligence and development of deep listening and reflective concentration. It can never be static or finished or thought through, but it can form a *schooling of consciousness*.

I have come to know that in approaching soul we cannot theorize or describe rather, soul must be *subscribed from*. We cannot easily speak *about* soul with any real authority, however, we can *let our souls speak* from the authenticity within the immediacy of the act of

our own imaginative knowing. It seems quite impossible to interpret or explain soul, rather soul is self-explanatory through its organic encounters. The kinds of evaluations we are used to in school, those cognitive evaluations that are more imposed and practical, are lost here as the apprehension to soul is more of an activity than a discernment, a beholding rather than a fitting, that is both receptive and intuitive as both participation and observation are required. These are subtle but important shifts of consciousness that call for different criteria; one that does not hold up a finished product as the better result but is more interested in continued unfolding. Soul can only be understood as *soul-making* and *becoming* rather than the kind of witnessing that sits apart from the thing itself. Soul insists on living within the province of the third way, bridging the crises of perception of human separateness from all other things by creating a unification between experience and knowing.

Can schools become temples of initiation? Can the teacher stand for the soul of the world and shine her lantern, shine the light of her own calling (her soul's intuition) so that others may find their way? I asked early on how we might turn the whole human in order to turn the world around. I came to quickly see that it will not be another ecological, technological, political, social or educational program that rearranges what is already given to us into new patterns. And although science has been perceived as the ultimate truth for about three hundred years or more, science is a story we have been telling in order to make sense of things that revises and corrects itself constantly through its discoveries. The powerful stories we tell of a space and time that is three dimensional within a well-behaved (and for the most part) law-abiding universe, idealizes separateness. These stories tell us what we value and lay the patterns for how we behave, practice business, educate, build communities and bring up our children (McTaggart, 2002).

New science, radical science with its astonishing prescient sees our existence as a unity of utterly interdependent relationships, with all parts affecting the whole at every turn. It is high time we told this new story. It is time to create spaces to speak the truth about how "we're using up the Earth and killing off our fellow living beings in the process" (Hartmann, 1998, p. 354), so we can clearly see the need now for a world-changing story. A story with an understanding of life as held together by an invisible web that does not separate us, but instead brings us into direct connection with all other living things with

every shake of its gossamer strands. The quantum field supports evidence of the idea that a consciousness may be central in shaping our world and suggests we are in fact a part of a divine intelligence found in all things (one I believe has a healthy instinct to create community and cooperate, with compassion and love). It is only when we are brought up misshapen in sick and dysfunctional (human-made) cultures, can we do violence and bring the damage we have wrought. It is only through the myopia of polarizations of “us” and “them”, “winners” and “losers”, “thinking” and “feelings” that hatred, wars and poverty can thrive.

This new more ecological (and cosmological) and dialogic story will call us to reimagine what it means to be human and in effect, determine how we choose to live, consume, work, educate, and love. It will ask how I see “me” and how I see “not-me”, how we view and understand time and space, what we consider is “real” in terms of the visible and invisible, and what we consider our birthright, etc. It has the power to (re)turn us toward soul as it asks, “How are we going to be?” or better still, “How are we going to be, conscious(ly)?” It holds extraordinary potential for us all (and for generations of species to come).

This is story belongs to soul with its view of all life as sacred and deserving of respect and reverence. It suggests we are, at our core, sacred too, embedded in relationship with everything else. As every movement affects the whole, how much or how little we rekindle our intimacies now will ultimately determine our fate. Through small, local, Thoreau-like steps and acts, we can transform ourselves making strides toward a more possible world.

Teachers who see the beauty in the particularity of each student, and draw out those natural tendencies, are helping to make visible much needed soul-rooted talents for this time. These teachers are participating in the *soul-making* of the world. Education with this purpose in mind, may help us again feel the immediacy of experience, feel more connected to the larger mystery and universal patterns we are a part of, and help foster an interior life with its inherent responsibilities to all of life. In effect, if we can reverse the damage wrought by some current educational practices shackled to a dead form of materialism caught on externalities, we can help shape a culture that serves the living cosmos, that recognizes sacred aliveness above and below, within and without, and engenders hope.



Initiation for me is no longer found only on a private vision quest in an exotic locale or in a set of curriculum. I recognize initiation as closely involved in my life (and with others) through the repetitive practice of leaving what I know to venture out to the threshold of unknown learning and once there, listen deeply and reflect, think, write and draw in metaphors and images, and dive into the depths of imagination and dreams (the medium of soul), engage in wild conversations found in the natural world that provide an understanding beyond words *as practice*.

Many educators who work in the natural world understand that nature is not a mere backdrop but a crucial co-facilitator on this journey toward change and reorganization, therefore, I believe that time spent out in nature is *always* required for a full initiatory experiences. Taylor, Segal & Harper (2010) explain that wilderness is a key component in transformative experiences (especially within the context of adventure therapy, however, I would argue that the same applies for learning as an initiatory journey toward maturation, responsibility and wholeness). I concur with their thinking that even the challenge and risks associated with experiential approaches in nature help co-construct the initiation itself that in turn elicits real change. When the self is no longer viewed as separate but rather “a fluid coherence of perspective from which we experience...” embedded from a place where “the sense of self emerges and changes primarily in relationship” (Mahoney, 2003, p. 7), then we enter a level of communion where the greater self (soul) emerges and relates more deeply with other beings and the soul of the world. It is from this place that we integrate new awareness, meanings, views, and values as we open, relate, reorganize, adapt, and in the end, return. Conversely, human-made, artificial contexts that too easily reinforce old ego patterns, can hold us to the surface of things, distracting us from the necessary depth and amplification of a full threshold-crossing experience. And not least of all, this would thwart the threefold universal experience of going somewhere and coming back (to live) to tell about it.

However, while going to faraway and wild places and fasting for a vision can provide direct access to the inner self in nature, there are of course limits to that kind of travel for everyone, therefore I propose that experiences in relationship with nearby nature can also be quite cathartic. I have often taken my classes just outside the door of the class into the field or forest for a time where much can happen. In short wanders or ‘sits’ the importance

of intuition, strange allies and even difficulties can become clear while subtle and not so subtle changes can take shape!

Post-initiation, I have returned to the experience of living a more hermetic consciousness committed to the non-dual elements of journey and life (and its mysteries), to an embodied understanding that *soul is the way toward itself*, to an expanded sense of loving for its own sake. And the notion that the soul of the world can meet and be met by the human soul given enough natural surroundings, time, and solitude. Once the call of soul, forged from the great smelting mines of the Earth's consciousness, has come in and the invitation for the Great Self has been received through the experience of the arc of initiation, something wild this way surely comes. Something of the mystery floods in, then (if we are brave and humble enough to let it) outpours like running water, and cannot be turned off or stopped again. The vision retrieved from a quest requires movement back into community to bring the self to fullness, and to offer that ripeness in ever-widening circles of pure possibility and love, spreading toward what is more eternal than ourselves or our fleeting time here on earth. My final hope is that a day will not go by that I do not remember this magnificent inheritance on loan to me and what I am to do with it in the world, especially as I have such privilege to offer the invitation of learning as initiation toward conscious participation to my students through soul-furthering pedagogies meant to awaken their own magnificence to be lived into the world.

While I have offered some practices here, I can also offer that everyone's way will be their own in the end and they will know for themselves how this goes. If we can let go of fixing and problem-solving and pursue what we are inherently drawn to and learn to sacrifice what we must in that pursuit, then the greater story of our lives—the myth of our lives—will reveal itself in the essence of the work we are engaged in and will connect us to the rest of the world through soul. But, to turn around the world, we first need to turn toward a conscious practice of living in soul. We may then find that not only are our own souls more adept at approaching the world, but soul is already there to receive us!

If we take seriously the consequences laid out in this study and track the epistemological and ecological implications of an initiatory approach to education as the *motion* required for the ongoing unfoldment of each purposeful soul, wild possibilities greater than ourselves await us upon the (re)turn. In the end, it may well be a conscious,

ensouled pedagogy of heart, mind, body and soul that creates a force of love (involving the whole world)—a necessary evolutionary opening—to guide us all safely home.

In my experience, purpose and life are absolutely inseparable. Each of us has come into existence as human beings for a purpose....a specific purpose we each hold to the culture we live in. All these purposes are interrelated and interweave and are fundamentally one in the end because everything we do either brings us closer to our own innate purpose or takes us further away—further from life and from ourselves. (Kingsley, 2010, p. 92)

And here I am, back where I started from with my heart broken open in the intoxication of knowing that I am a pure part of everything. Neruda (1970), says it best:

...and suddenly I saw  
the heavens  
unfastened  
and open.

... planets,  
palpitating plantations,  
shadow perforated,  
riddled  
with arrows, fire and flowers,  
the winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal being,  
drunk with the great starry  
void,  
likeness, image of  
mystery,  
felt myself a pure part  
of the abyss,  
I wheeled with the stars,  
my heart broke loose on the wind. (pp. 457-459)



### **Circling Back Round**

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from... (Eliot, 1944/1972, p. 59)

**From:** Hilary Leighton // < hilaryjl@telus.net >  
**Subject:** Wild (re)turns...  
**Date:** June 07, 2011 8:22:10 PM PDT  
**To:** < fellow questers and beloved guides >

Dear fellow mad poets, wanderers of darkness, and wild-hearted ones!

Yes! It is one year today that we were perched on the edge of Mt Linneaus, on the edge of consciousness. I swear I could smell the sweet earth when I opened your email reminder. I can so easily remember wet grass Meadow, the watchful company of Aspen, Hermit Thrush, Mule Deer, and the soft trickle of sweet water Spring making her long journey of return to Ocean.

I am deeply moved by each of your re-entry stories, your unfolding insights, your prayers. I love the descriptions of time and space and pace and flow and particularly to “opening to” rather than having to let go of or rid yourselves of anything... such beautiful practices – sleeping on the land by the river, rising and falling a dozen times, being easy with yourself, telling the human story to the river. This is true nourishment for this wild human animal navigating the terrain betwixt and between the heart of the mountain and the city, between university and universe...Me, I keep calling councils and whenever we sit together, I am reminded that each of our stories and experiences in some way is all of our story and experience! I-thou....and yet we are indeed all so unique —that is what I find truly exciting. I can hardly wait for more of this story to unfold...can hardly wait to share what I have found!

I feel like I swallowed a secret long ago when I was a child (or earlier still?) yet can no longer contain it, and I no longer have to. This quest was the perfect segue for me to begin an interdisciplinary doctorate— what lies in between ecopsychology, the environment and education to track the initiatory journeys of school and soul this Fall. I knew simply writing and researching the field would not have been enough, I had to *become* field...to live like a planet in order to understand and now stand for it. To taste mountain, meadow and moon. I had to melt in the fierceness of such grand love in order to (be)love. Oh, something larger than myself is humming just below the surface, so now I must go off again and listen a long time, listen always.

I am taking a radiant stand for the other-than-human world and resolve to bring blessings to a flowering field of study which I am myself a part. The academics may not recognize the doctoral student from the trees! May their confusion throw them into paroxysms of laughter and delight at the abundant beauty of that which they study and of which they themselves are a part. Tonight, from the mossy temperate rainforests of the wild Westcoast of Oh Canada! I send you all big love and acres of wildflowers,  
 ~Love Radiant xo

In the end, I pack final remembrances home: see the beauty in everything, go into the dark more, get to know the moon in all her phases of loveliness, rest when I am tired, make time for small yet significant daily rituals and richly felt ceremony, love openly, spend more time listening to bring deeper understanding and love as the best medicine for

all our ills. I want to remember the edge-dwelling hermit as my wild borderline teacher who (re)minds me that divine laughter heralds wisdom, that the world has breadth as well as depth, seeks intimates not opposites, and craves union and wholeness.

Finally, mythologist Jean Houston beautifully articulates her understanding of the shift from the pathological to the mythological perspective, a movement from the “personal-particular to the personal-universal”, from the ego to the ‘eco’-centric in her memoir, *A Mythic Life* (1996, p. 83). She takes up Jung’s notion that archetypes are the psychical energies that mix with our life’s experience to create the conditions for our soul’s code—the ancient seed—to open forth. In this way, this universal coding, the ‘planted’ image of what we were born to fulfill, is intended to lead us to our dynamic conscious purpose, to “allow the local self to mature and deepen into its own genius within the milieu of the universal self and the universal drama carried in the myth” (p. 180). Within a cosmos that quantum science now suggests may be an informed and information-processing universe of consciousness itself, each seed then, imprinted with the divine spark of life, may be a part of a fractal wave from which everything branches, bearing the signature of totality (as early hermeticism intimated) obliging us all to participate in the co-creativity of universal life, calling us to blossom forth.

But this is not possible if we refuse the call. If we put off the human journey experience that nearly all cultures and people throughout history have endured, if we ignore the call to adventure and maturation because we don’t feel worthy or because it is uncomfortable or inconvenient (or crazy!), we may miss our true destiny, miss the immensely powerful inheritance revealed in the allegory of the soul’s fulfillment. If we cannot read the symbols, cannot identify the mythic figures and forms and the archetypal images we are presented with, if we cannot feel the primal tug of our own deeper yearnings buried underneath the detritus of ordinary life, we may not be able to see below the surface of things (including the surface persona of the self) to the self’s larger visions and comprehensions and perhaps continue to fulfill our part in the evolvment within the ecology of things. Houston writes, “An individual’s entelechy self can be liberated or activated by participation in symbolic dramas, which is why it often appears clothed in the symbolism of the mythic form or figure” (1996, p. 180), but only if we are open to receive such information (e.g. if we have been schooled in such a way as to honour the calls we

receive and not discard them for the trappings of a more consumptive existence with its promise of “the good life”). Houston embodies Aristotle’s notion of entelechy and responds to the ongoing call in her life in this way when she says:

I listen for and I am inspired to receive both the vision of these possibilities as well as the passion to act to carry them out.  
 I know that I come coded, but also have the receptors to unfold my coding, as well as to receive my new coding and directives from the source.  
 Each day I remember my source and I listen for the movement and the plan.  
 I know that I live on both cosmic and historical human levels  
 and stay vigilant to bringing these two together honoring both  
 while I integrate their realities. (2004, n.p.)

The hermetic teacher then, is one who seeks *movement rather than ‘finds’* and is inspired to receive as much as direct with an understanding that all learning can be initiatory and sacred, repeats and unfolds over a lifetime, and is part of a greater grace. I can see now that education is that motion forward, not something one “gets” or “gets to keep”. With teaching as my vocation, I pray to remember to have the courage say “yes” to the beauty and the terror of being fully alive and awake, and to have the passion and moral energy to stay open to receive and contribute within this movement.

I want to remember to trust the nourishment found in the world as it speaks in thunderstorm and hailstone, wolf yelp and oak utterance, ruby dawn and charcoal tongue, and wise laughter...and to stay hungry for this sweetness....always, as I take up the call to bring soul to light, to make passion (and genius) visible through being and teaching *for* the world, to keep emerging, and to keep walking in awe (and in love) at this mythic edge.

*I am sitting on my backyard rock in the morning light facing east and my attention is caught up on a large gleaming web. Like a fine-lined gossamer face turned upwards toward the sun, it must be comprised of about 35 concentric circles. I marvel at the amazing complexity and hard work that must have gone into this fragile and fleeting structure. Then, as I sit some more, my eye catches something lower down glinting in the sun. I begin to focus more closely, squinting a bit and I start to see an incredibly wide network of low slung webs strung from what seems like every tree and bush wildly crisscrossing the face of the entire rock as it catches up on mosses, barely tethers to a sedum outcrop then spans out back across to another small plant. An intricacy of silver webs shine and reflect the light creating an effect that the rock is liquid-like and moving, moving and shining all at once. Utterly amazing!*

*I feel like I am caught in a glimmering world that has shifted and is groundless, hangs suspended by mere silken threads where solid rock is fluid, glistening, and untethered. I notice the wind is minimal yet the movement of the thread lines seem significant. I soften my eyes to look more closely at this luminosity. I feel like I am falling, that nothing here is as it seems. This rock is not solid, nor am I! What an odd feeling! I am temporarily dizzied as well as bedazzled by this spectacle.*

*Maybe the community of spinners responsible for this showy trap had in mind something as large as a human? It reminds me of the dark underlying webbyness of the world that has now been proven by quantum physics and string theory but that isn't obvious to most of us because it is impossible to see (mostly just felt). I cannot help but wonder, have I, on other non-conscious mornings, simply plowed through these delicate but tensile lines without heed or notice? What is being made evident to me by the dark and silent workmanship of night illuminated now by this rising star that our earth revolves around? What type of creative intelligence converged here to imagine and manifest such vibrancy, to weave a large silver rock shawl from spider lace? Did every spider for miles around join in to quilt this amazement into being? What spider stories did they tell as they wove? Why do I still fear the eight-legged ones who can initiate such wonder? What other miracles might I have missed or dismissed?*

*I am deeply excited by this find. I would have never seen this if I hadn't been here this morning sitting still, looking more deeply into my own beloved backyard. I can almost hear the light pluck these soundless strings, making visible a widespread harmony of connection as they continue to undulate and catch the light. How much spinning must have gone on in the dark to create such a connected morning world? I marvel at how just one tiny movement over here affects the whole system over there, sending ripples far and wide as if this design was replicated after the archetypal pattern of Indra's own net. A myth from the ancients. Radiance at every dewy intersection, each crossover a jewel point shining, reflecting and being reflected back a million fold, the whole perfect world in each tiny drop! A humbling lesson on conscious connection from spider gleam.*

Siddhartha listened... .He had often heard all this before, all these numerous voices in the river, but today they sounded different... .They all belonged to each other: the lament of those who yearn, the laughter of the wise, the cry of indignation and the groan of the dying....all interwoven and interlocked, entwined in a thousand ways. And all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world... . When Siddhartha listened attentively to this river, to this song of a thousand voices; ...when he did not bind his soul to any one

particular voice and absorb it in his Self, but heard them all, the whole, the unity; then the great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word:

Om – perfection. (Hesse, 1951, p. 111)

*Radiantly stripped of the veils that cloud and cover over the more vital aspects of life, knowing the deep interconnectedness of all (underneath what is visible even), renders it impossible to separate things out any longer. My bell cannot be unrung. I see the world as al/one.*

*And just as the world is round, we never finish our journeys really as we are either ahead or behind, never at the end. On the map of my heart I have carved a small (nearly invisible) hatch mark to be known as 'Here'... this blessed, illustrious, transitory and mythic ground of soul, a unity of great and radiant LOVE and veneration with its beckoning horizons of impossible webby possibilities.*

The hero journey is one of the universal patterns through which that radiance shows brightly. What I think is that a good life is one hero journey after another. Over and over again, you are called to the realm of adventure; you are called to new horizons. Each time, there is the same problem, do I dare? And then if you do dare, the dangers are there, and the help also, and the fulfillment or the fiasco. There's always the possibility of a fiasco.

But, there is also the possibility of bliss. (Campbell, 2004, p. 133)





## Epilogue

### What to Remember When Waking

In that first hardly noticed moment in which you wake,  
coming back to this life from the other  
more secret, moveable and frighteningly honest world  
where everything began,  
there is a small opening into the new day  
which closes the moment you begin your plans.

What you can plan is too small for you to live.  
What you can live wholeheartedly will make plans enough  
for the vitality hidden in your sleep.

To be human is to become visible  
while carrying what is hidden as a gift to others.  
To remember the other world in this world  
is to live in your true inheritance.

You are not a troubled guest on this earth,  
you are not an accident amidst other accidents  
you were invited from another and greater night  
than the one from which you have just emerged.

Now, looking through the slanting light of the morning window  
toward the mountain presence of everything that can be  
what urgency calls you to your one love?  
What shape waits in the seed of you  
to grow and spread its branches  
against a future sky?

Is it waiting in the fertile sea?  
In the trees beyond the house?  
In the life you can imagine for yourself?  
In the open and lovely white page on the writing desk?  
(Whyte, 1997, p. 26)

**Whirled as One**

Fish jump, wild  
 geese have returned  
     A sky  
     so white even  
 clouds are ghosts

I am standing  
 rubberboot high  
     in eternity  
     at Elk Lake

Waves come  
 and go with  
 tidal intelligence  
     too fluid  
 for the confines  
     of a name

I breathe  
     Beauty  
 through my pores,  
     an open and  
 undulating exchange,  
     a flood  
     of pure love  
     beyond desire,  
     ripples above,  
 devotion below

Reeled in  
 by gust of wind  
     or  
 sleight of wing or  
     flash of fin?  
     I wonder  
     am I  
     in it  
     or  
     is it  
 in me?

## References

- Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous. Perception and language in a more-than-human world*. NY: Random House Vintage Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2000). D. Abram interviewed by Derrick Jensen. Retrieved May 25, 2013  
[http://www.wildethics.org/essays/interview\\_derrick\\_jensen.html](http://www.wildethics.org/essays/interview_derrick_jensen.html)
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2002). Waking our animal senses: Language and the ecology of sensory experience. In T. Butler. (Ed.). *Wild earth. Wild ideas for a world out of balance*. NY: NY Academy of Sciences.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2013). Foreward. In A. Fisher. *Radical ecopsychology. Psychology in the service of life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp. ix-xi). Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Alighieri, D. (1555/1949). *The divine comedy of Dante Alighieri. Cantica 1. Hell*. (D. Sayers, Trans.) NY: Penguin Books.
- Aizenstat, S. (2011). *Dream tending. Awakening to the healing power of your dreams*. New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal Inc.
- Allen, P. (1995). *Art as a way of knowing. A guide to self-knowledge and spiritual fulfillment through creativity*. Boston, MASS: Shambhala.
- Allport, G.W. (1942). *The use of personal documents in psychological science*. NY: Social Science Research Council.
- Aoki, T. (1986). Teaching as indwelling between two curriculum worlds. In W. Pinar & R. Irwin, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 159-165). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). Legitimizing lived curriculum: Toward a curricular landscape of multiplicity. In W. Pinar & R. Irwin (Eds.). (2005). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 199-215). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). Curriculum as narrative/narrative as curriculum. *Educational Insights* (On-line serial) 4(1). Retrieved November 2012 from  
[www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/archives/v04n01/foreword.html](http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/archives/v04n01/foreword.html).
- Aoki, T., Low, M., & Paulis, P. (2001). Re-reading metonymic moments with/in living pedagogy. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 2001. Seattle, WA.
- Archambault, R. (1964). *John Dewey on education*. NY: Random House.

- Armstrong, J. (1997/2006). Sharing one skin. *Cultural Survival Quarterly. Partnering with Indigenous People to Defend their Lands, Languages and Cultures*. Winter, (30),4.
- Bagley, C. & Cancienne, M.B. (Eds.) (2002). *Dancing the data*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Baldwin, C. (1998). *Calling the circle: The first and future culture*. NY: Bantam.
- Barnhardt, K. (Ed). (1988). *Chambers dictionary of etymology*, UK: The H. W Wilson Company.
- Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity*. NY: E.P. Dutton.
- Bateson, M.C. (1997). Understanding natural systems. In C. Zelov, & P. Cousineau, *Design outlaws on the ecological frontier*. Philadelphia, PA: Knossus Publishing.
- Benke, K. (2013). *Leap write in! Adventures in creative writing*. Boston, MA: Roost Books.
- Bennett, J. (2001). *The enchantment of modern life: Attachments, crossings and ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Berman, M. (1984). *The reenchantment of the world*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Berry, T. (1999). *The great work. Our way into the future*. NY: Bell Tower.
- Berry, W. (1970). Some thoughts I have in mind while I teach. In J. Baumbach, (Ed). *Writers as teachers, teachers as writers*. (pp. 15-22). NY: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Besserman, P. (1994). (Ed.). *Teachings of the Jewish mystics*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Bishop. P. (1990). *The greening of psychology. The vegetable world in myth, dream and healing*. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.
- Blain, J. & Wallis, R. (2007). *Sacred sites. Contested rites/rights. Pagan engagements with archaeological monuments*. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press.
- Blake, W. (1996). *William Blake: Selected poems*. UK: Orion Publishing.
- Blomhoff, R., Carlsen, M.H., Andersen, L.F., Jacobs, D.R. Jr. (2008). Health benefits of nuts: potential role of antioxidants. *Br J Nutr*. Nov. 96.
- Bly, R. (1975). *Leaping poetry. An idea with poems and translations. Chosen by Robert Bly*. Boston, MASS: Beacon Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1980). *News of the universe. Poems of twofold consciousness*. San Fran, CA: Sierra Club Books.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1986) *The winged life. The poetic voice of Henry David Thoreau*. San Fran, CA: Sierra Club Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988). *A little book on the human shadow*. San Fran, CA: Harper Collins.
- Bobbitt, F. (2009). Scientific method in curriculum-making. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader*, (3rd ed.), (pp. 15-21). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Bock, G., Hofmann, M., & Calasso, R. (Eds.) (2006). *The zurau aphorisms of Franz Kafka*. NY: Random House.
- Bortoft, H. (1996). *The wholeness of nature: Goethe's way toward a science of conscious participation in nature*. NY: Lindisfarne Press.
- Boston, T. (1996). Ecopsychology: An earth-psyche bond. In *The Trumpeter*. 13(2), n.p.
- Brache, C. (2008). *The living classroom. Teaching and collective consciousness*. NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brookfield, S. (1990). *The skillful teacher*. San. Fran., CA: Jossey-Bass.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San. Fran., CA: Jossey-Bass
- Buber, M. (1970). *I and thou*. (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). NY: Charles Scribner & Sons.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2000). *The way of man according to the teaching of Hasidism*. NY: Citadel/Kensington Press.
- Buechner, F. (1973). *Wishful thinking*. San Fran., CA: Harper Collins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1982). *The sacred journey. A memoir of early days*. San Fran., CA: Harper & Row.
- Buhner, S. H. (2010). *Ensouling language. On the art of nonfiction and the writer's life*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions.
- Bulfinch, T. (1942). *The age of fable or the beauties of mythology*. NY: The Heritage Press.
- Buytendijk, F. J. (1988). The first smile of the child. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*. 6(1),15-24.
- Caldwell, C. (1996). *Getting our bodies back. Recovery, healing and transformation through body-centered psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Campbell, J. (1949/2008). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1972). *Myths to live by. How we re-create ancient legends in our daily lives to release human potential*. NY: Bantam Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988). *The power of myth (with Bill Moyers)*. NY: Doubleday.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1991). *Reflections on the art of living. A Joseph Campbell companion*. (D. Osborn, Ed.). NY: HarperCollins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). *Pathways to bliss. Mythology and personal transformation*. CA: New World Library.
- Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life. A new scientific understanding of living systems*. NY: Anchor.
- Caputo, J. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction and the hermeneutic project*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Caputo, J. (1993). *Against ethics: Contributions to a poetics of obligation with constant reference to deconstruction*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana State University Press.
- Carroll, L. (1930). *Alice in wonderland*. Paris, FR: Black Sun Press.
- Carson, R. (1956/1965). *The sense of wonder*. NY: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Chambers, C., Hasebe-Ludt, E., Hurren, W., Leggo, C., & Oberg, A. (2008). Métissage. A research praxis. In G. Knowles, & A. Cole, (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chambers, C., Hasebe-Ludt, E., & Leggo, C., (2009). *Life writing and literary métissage as an ethos for our times*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Chatwin, B. (1987). *The songlines*. NY: Penguin.
- Chawla, L. (1994). *In the first country of places. Nature poetry and childhood memory*. NY: State University of New York Press.
- Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative Research*, 6(3), 319-340.
- Chödrön, P. (1997). *When things fall apart: Heart advice for difficult times*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2007) *Don't bite the hook. Finding freedom from anger, resentment and other destructive emotions*. [Audio recording]. Boston, MA: Shambhala Audio.

- Chomsky, N., & Herman, E. (2002). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. NY: Pantheon.
- Cixous, H. (1991). *Coming to writing and other essays*. (D. Jensen, Trans.). MA: Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1999). *The third body*. (K. Cohen, Trans.). IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Clayton, S., & Opotow, S. (2003). *Identity and the natural environment. The psychological significance of nature*. MA: The MIT Press.
- Clinebell, H. (1996). *Ecotherapy. Healing ourselves, healing the earth*. Minneapolis, MINN: Fortress Press.
- Coltman, R. (1998). *The language of hermeneutics: Gadamer and Heidegger in dialogue*. Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Cope, S. (2012). *The great work of your life. A guide for the journey to your true calling*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Cousineau, P. (1994). *Soul: An archeology*. NY: HarperCollins.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-131.
- Crosby, D., Stills, S., Nash, G., & Young, N. (1970). Almost cut my hair. On *Déjà vu*. (Record album). CA: Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. NY: HarperCollins.
- Cullina, W. (2008) *Native ferns, mosses and grasses: From emerald carpet to amber wave*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Dall'Alba, G., and Barnacle, R. (2007). An ontological turn for higher education. *Studies for Higher Education*. 32(6), 679-691.
- Daloz, L. P., Keen, C., Keen, J., & Parks, S. D. (1996). (Eds.). *Common fire: Lives of commitment in a complex world*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- de Laurence, L.W. (1918). *Illustrated key to the Tarot. The veil of divination illustrating the greater and lesser arcana*. Chicago, IL: The de Laurence Company.

- de Quincy, C. (2002). *Radical nature: Rediscovering the soul of matter*. Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities Press.
- Dea, W. (2010). *Igniting brilliance. Integral education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Tucson, AZ: Integral.
- Deardorff, D. (2011). Foreword. In M. Shaw. *A branch from the lightning tree. Ecstatic myth and the grace in wildness*. (pp.xiii-xvi). Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press.
- Deleuze, G.(1999). *Foucault*. London, UK: Continuum.
- della Porta, G. (1658/2005). *Natural magick. The works and life of Giambattista della Porta*. (Transcribed from 1658 English Edition). Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision Publishers.
- Dennis, G. (2009). Finding the centre, entering the land, the labyrinths of Jewish imagination. *Parabola*, Imagination Issue. Spring, 34(1), 20-27.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education. An introduction to the philosophy of education*. NY: The Free Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1930). *Experience and education*. NY: Touchstone.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1956). *Philosophy of education*. Ames, IA: Littlefield, Adams & Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1929/2009). My pedagogic creed. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.), (pp. 34-41). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Dillard, A. (1974) *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek. A mystical excursion into the natural world*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Dirkx, J. (1997). Nurturing soul in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. No. 74, Summer, 79-88. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Doll, M. (2000). *Like letters in running water. A mythopoetics of curriculum*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.
- Dooley, D. (1995). *Plain and ordinary things: Reading and writing women in the classroom*. NY: State University of New York Press.
- Dreyfus, H. & Dreyfus, S. (1987). From Socrates to expert systems. The limits of calculative rationality. In P. Rabinow, & W. Sullivan.(Eds.). *Interpretive social science. A second look*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Dubos, R. (1961). *The dreams of reason. Science and utopias*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Dworkin, M. S. (1967). *Dewey on education: Selections*. NY: Teachers College Press.



- Einstein, A., Podolsky B., & Rosen, N. (1935). Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete? *Physical Review*, 47(10), 777-780.
- Eiseley, L. (1962). *The mind as nature*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Eisner, E. (1991). *The enlightened eye. Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. NY: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). Educational objectives - help or hindrance? In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.), (pp.107-113). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Elder, J. (2013). The undiscovered country. John Elder on the wild places close to home. (L. Tonino, Interviewer). *The Sun*, 450, 4-15.
- Eliade, M. (1957). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion* (W. R. Trask, Trans.), London, UK: Harcourt Brace.
- Eliot, T. (1944/1972). Little gidding. In Section v. *Four quartets*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Elkins, J. (1996). *The object stares back: On the nature of seeing*. NY: Harcourt Brace & Co.
- Ellis, C. (2008). Autoethnography. In L. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 49-52). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963909.n29.
- Emerson, R. W. (1836/2009). *Nature and other essays*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Enslar, E. (2013). *In the body of the world. A memoir*. Toronto, ON: Random House.
- Entwhistle, H. (2001). The relationship between educational theory and practice. A new look. In W. Hare & W. Portelli, (Eds.) *Philosophy of education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd. (pp.19-28).
- Esbjörn-Hargens, S., & Zimmerman, M. (2009) *Integral ecology. Uniting multiple perspectives on the natural world*. Boston, MA: Integral Books.
- Evelyn-White, H. (Trans.) (1967). Theogeny (Hesiod). *The Homeric hymns and Homeric*. Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press.
- Fisher, A. (1996). Toward a more radical ecopsychology. *Alternatives Journal* 22.3, 20-26.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2006). Ecopsychology as radical praxis. In *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind*, L. Buzzell & C. Chalquist. (Eds.). (pp. 60-68). San Fran, CA: Sierra Club.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (2013a). *Radical ecopsychology. Psychology in the service of life* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2013b). Ecopsychology at the crossroads: Contesting the nature of a field. In *Ecopsychology*. 5(3), 167-176.
- Flinders, D.J. & Thornton, S.J. (2009). (Eds.). *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Flood, A. (2010). Understanding phenomenology. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(2), 7-15.
- Foster, M. & Little, S. (1998). *The four shields. The initiatory season of human nature*. Big Pine, CA: Lost Borders Press.
- Foucault, M. (1973). *The order of things*. NY: Vintage.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. NY: Continuum.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). *Pedagogy of the heart*. NY: Continuum.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2001). Reading the world and reading the word: An interview with Paulo Freire. In Hare, W. & Portelli, J. (Eds.). *Philosophy of education; Introductory Readings*. (Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)(pp.145-152). Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.
- Frost, R. (1916/1969). *The poetry of Robert Frost: The collected poems, complete and unabridged*. NY: Henry Holt & Co.
- Furey, R. (1996). *Called by name. Discovering your unique purpose in life*. NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1976). *Philosophical hermeneutics*. (D. Linge. Trans.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1983). Hermeneutics as practical philosophy. In F. G. Lawrence (Trans.) *Reason in the age of science*. (pp. 88-138). Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Gadamer, H.G., Weinsheimer, J. & Marshall, D. (2004). *Truth and method*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Gasper, K., & Clore, G.L. (2002). Attending to the big picture: Mood and global versus local processing of visual information. *Psychological Science*, 13, 34-40.
- Gass, W. (1985). *Habitations of the word*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gatto, J. (1992). *Dumbing us down. The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Press.

- Geanellos, R. (2000). Hermeneutic philosophy. Part I. *Health Research Inquiry*, 5(3), 154-163.
- Genn, R. (2013). (Retrieved from [http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth\\_search.php?authid=868](http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth_search.php?authid=868))
- Gibbons, M. (1974). Walkabout: searching for the right passage from childhood and school. *Phi Delta Kappan* (May), 596-602.
- Glendinning, C. (1994). *My name is Chellis and I am in recovery from western civilization*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Goellnicht, D. (1984). *The poet-physician: Keats and medical science*. PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Goethe, J. W. (1948) *The permanent Goethe*. T. Mann (Ed. & Trans.). NY: The Dial Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1979/1995) Goethe: Scientific studies. *The collected works*. Vol. 12. (D. Miller, Trans.). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Goldberg, N. (1986). *Writing down the bones. Freeing the writer within*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Goldman, M. (1969). *At the edge. Poems*. NY: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Greenway, R. (2009). Robert Greenway: The ecopsychology interview. *Ecopsychology*. 1(1), 47-52.
- Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988a). The artist-aesthetic and curriculum. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6(4), 283-296.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988b). *Dialectics of freedom*. NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1995). *Releasing the imagination. Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Fran, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2001). *Variations on a blue guitar*. Columbia, NY: Teachers College Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2007). *Aesthetics as research*. (Retrieved from The Maxine Green Foundation website October 21, 2011 <http://www.maxinegreene.org/articles.php>).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). Curriculum and consciousness. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.), (pp. 155-167). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Griffin, S. (1978). *Woman and nature. The roaring inside her*. NY: Harper & Row.

- Grondin, J. (1994). *Introduction to philosophical hermeneutics* (J. Weinsheimer, Trans.). New Haven, CT: Yale.
- Grumet, M. (1981). Autobiography and reconceptualization. In A. Giroux, A. Penna, & W. Pinar, (Eds.). *Curriculum and instruction: Alternatives in education*. Berkeley, CA: McCutcheon.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988). *Bitter milk: Women and teaching*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). The play of meanings in the art of teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 32(4) 204-209.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1995). The curriculum: What are the basics and are we teaching them? In J. L. Kincheloe & S.R. Steinberg (Eds.). *Thirteen questions: Reframing education's conversation*. (2nd Ed.). NY: Peter Lang.
- Hafiz (1996). *I heard God laughing. Renderings of Hafiz*. (D. Ladinsky, Trans.). Oakland, CA: Mobius Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1999). *The gift. Poems by Hafiz. The great Sufi master*. (D. Ladinsky, Trans.) NY: Penguin Putnam Group.
- Halifax, J. (1996). Learning as initiation: Not-knowing, bearing witness, and healing. In S. Glazer (Ed.), *The heart of learning. Spirituality in education*. (pp.173-181). NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Hanegraaff, W.J. (2003). How magic survived the disenchantment of the world. *Religion* 33, 357-380.
- Hargreaves, A. (2000). Four ages of professionalism and professional learning. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 6(2), 151-182.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Harrison, R. (2008). *Accessing the power of love in the workplace: An emerging theory*. Freeland, WASH: Roger Harrison.
- Hart, T. (2001). *From information to transformation: Education for the evolution of the consciousness*. NY: Peter Lang.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). Opening the contemplative mind in the classroom. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2, 28-46.

- Hartmann, T. (1998). *The last hours of ancient sunlight. The fate of the world and what we can do before it's too late*. NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Hauck, D.W. (1999). *The emerald tablet. Alchemy for personal transformation*: NY: Arkana/Penguin.
- Havel, V. (1985/1992). *Open letters. Selected writings 1965-1990*. NY: Vintage Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Living in truth*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Hawken, P. (1975). *The magic of Findhorn. An eyewitness account*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Hayward, J. (1999). Unlearning to see the sacred. In S. Glazer (Ed). *The heart of learning. Spirituality in education*. (pp. 61-76). NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Hearthmath, (2012, July). Retrieved from <http://www.heartmath.org/>.
- Heidegger, M. (1927/1962). *Being and time*. NY: Harper and Row.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1949). *Existence and being*. South Bend, WI: Gateway Editions Ltd.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1967/1998a). Plato's doctrine of truth. (T. Sheehan, Trans.). In W. McNeill (Ed.) *Pathmarks*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1971). *Poetry, language and thought*. (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). NY: Harper & Row.
- Herbert, F. (1965/1990). *Dune*. Randor, PA: Chilton Book Company.
- Hesse, H. (1920/1972) *Wandering*. (J. Wright, Trans.). NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_.(1927/2002). *Steppenwolf*. NY: First Picador.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1943/2002). *The glass bead game*. UK: Picador
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1951). *Siddhartha*. NY: MJF Books.
- Hibbard, W. (2003). Ecopsychology: A review. *The Trumpeter*. 19(2), 23-57.
- Hillman, J. (1972). *Pan and the nightmare*. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1989). *A blue fire*. NY: Harper Perennial.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). The practice of beauty. *Resurgence*. 157, 34-37.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1995). A psyche the size of the earth. A psychological foreward. In *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes & A. Kanner (Eds.). (pp. xvii-xxiii). San Fran, CA: Sierra Club Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1996). *The soul's code. In search of character and calling*. NY: Random House.
- Hoad, T.F. (Ed.). (1996). *The concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Holland, P. & Gamon, N. (2008). Watching with two eyes: The place of the mythopoetic in curriculum inquiry. In T. Leonard, & P. Willis, (Eds.). *Pedagogies of the imagination*(pp. 11-29). Netherlands: Springer.
- Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Holling, C.S. & Gunderson, L (2002). *Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Hollis, J. (1996). *Swamplands of the soul. New life in dismal places*. Toronto. ON: Inner City Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005). *Finding meaning in the second half of life: How to finally really grow up*. NY: Gotham Books.
- Holstein, A. (Trans. & Illustrator). (1993). *Pointing at the moon. 100 Zen koans from Chinese masters*. Rutland, VT: Charles Tuttle Company.
- hooks, b. (1994) *Teaching to transgress. Education as the practice of freedom*. NY: Routledge.
- Houston, J. (1996). *A mythic life. Learning to live our greater story*. NY: HarperOne.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). *The odyssey*. (J. Houston, Intro & S Butler, Trans.). Homer/Greek. *Parabola*. Imagination Issue. Spring, 34(1), 39.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2014) Living your supreme destiny. [Video file] (Retrieved from Evolving Wisdom, <http://evolvingwisdom.com/jeanhouston/supremedestiny/enroll>).
- Hurren, W. (2000). *Line dancing: An atlas of geography curriculum and poetic possibilities*. NY: Peter Lang.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2003). Auto'-geo'-carto'-graphia (A curricular collage). In E. Hasebe-Ludt & W. Hurren (Eds.), *Curriculum intertext* (pp. 111-121). NY: Peter Lang Publishing Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). The convenient portability of words: Aesthetic possibilities of words on paper/postcards/maps/etc. In M. Prendergast, C. Leggo, & P. Sameshima (Ed.),

*Poetic inquiry: Vibrant voice in the social sciences* (pp. 229-238). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

- Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas. General introduction to pure phenomenology*. NY: Collier.
- Ignatieff, M. (2012, October 6). Transforming the ivory tower. *The Globe and Mail* (F) p.4.
- Ingemark, C.A.(2006).The chronotope of enchantment. *Journal of Folklore Research* 43(1), 1-30.
- Irwin, R. (2004). Introduction. In R. Irwin & A. de Cosson. (Eds.). *A/r/tography. Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*. (pp. 27-38.) Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Irwin, R., & de Cosson, A. (Eds.). (2004). *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*. Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Jacobi, J. (1967). *The way of individuation*. NY: Harcourt Brace & World.
- Jacobs, A. (Trans). (2007). *The principal Upanishads. The essential philosophical foundation of Hinduism*. London, UK: Watkins Publishing.
- Jardine, D. (2000). *Under the tough old stars. Ecopedagogical essays*. Brandon, VT: The Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Jickling, B. (2009). Sitting on an old grey stone. In M. Mackenzie, P. Hart, H. Bai, & B. Jickling (Eds.), *Fields of green. Restorying culture, environment and education*. (pp. 163-173) Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press Inc.
- Johnson, R. (1986). *Inner work. Using dreams and active imagination for personal growth*. NY: HarperCollins
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1991). *Owning your own shadow. Understanding the dark side of psyche*. NY: HarperCollins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). *The fisher king and the handless maiden: Understanding the wounded feeling function in masculine and feminine psychology*. NY: HarperCollins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2008). *Inner gold. Understanding psychological projection*. Hawai'i: Koa Books.
- Jung, C. G. (1902-1956). *Psychiatric studies: Collected Works, Vol. 1*. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.) Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1906-1929). *Freud and psychoanalysis: Collected Works, Vol. 4*. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.), Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1917/1926/1943). *On the psychological of the unconscious. Collected works*. Vol. 7. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.), Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1921/1971). *Psychological types: Collected works*. Vol. 6. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.) Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1928). *The structure and dynamics of the psyche: On psychic energy. Collected works*. Vol. 8. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.) Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1933). *Modern man in search of a soul*. NY: Harcourt Brace Janovich.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1939). *The integration of the personality*. NY: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1945/1967). The philosophical tree (para. 335). In *Alchemical studies. Collected works*. Vol. 13. (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1953/1968). *Jung, psychology and alchemy. Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol. 12. R.F.C. Hull (Trans.). NY: Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1957). *The undiscovered self. The dilemma of the individual in modern society*. NY: New American Library/Penguin.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1959). *The archetypes of the collective conscious. Collected works*. Vol. 9.1. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.) Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1959/1978). *Anion: Researches into the phenomenology of the self. Collected works*, Vol. 9, Part 2, Edition 2. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.), Bollingen Series XX. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1961) Private letter to Sir Herbert Reid. (Retrieved October 2013 from <http://www.depthinsights.com/ezine/DepthInsights-Issue5-Fall2013.pdf>).
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1964/1981). *Man and his symbols*. NY: Dell Publishing.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1965). *Memories, dreams, reflections*. (A. Jaffe, Ed.). NY: Vintage Books, Random House.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2002). *The earth has a soul. The nature writings of C.G. Jung*. (M. Sabini, Ed). CA; North Atlantic Books.
- Jung-Beeman, M., Collier, A, & Kounios, J., (2008). How insight happens: Learning from the brain. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 1, 2-6.



- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2002). *Guided mindfulness meditation: Series I* [Audio Recording]. NY: Hyperion.
- Kaza, S. (2007). First do no harm. In *Shambhala Sun*, March. Retrieved Nov 2013, [http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3050&Itemid=244](http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3050&Itemid=244).
- Kazlev, M.A. (2009) Phase 4 – All quadrants levels (1995-2001). Retrieved from [http://www.kheper.net/topics/Wilber/Wilber\\_IV.html](http://www.kheper.net/topics/Wilber/Wilber_IV.html)
- Keats, J. (1895/2005). *The letters of John Keats: Complete revised edition*. Chestnut Hill, MA: Elibron Classics/Adamant Media Corporation.
- Kellert, S.R. & Wilson, E.O. (Eds.)(1993). *The biophilia hypothesis*. Wash., DC: Island Press.
- Kerényi, K. (1944/1976). *Hermes, guide of souls*. NY: Analytical Psychology Club of New York.
- King, Jr., M.L. (1956/1988) Love your enemies (Speech). In Carson, C., & Holloron, P. (Eds.). *A knock at midnight: Inspiration from the great sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King*. NY: Grand Central Publishing.
- Kingsley, P. (2010). Nature and purpose. *Parabola*, 35(4), 92.
- Kirk, J. (1993). *Organicism as reenchantment. Whitehead, Prigogine & Barth*. NY: Peter Lang.
- Klein, E. (Ed.). 1966. *A comprehensive etymological dictionary of the English language*. NY: Elsevier Publishing Company.
- Knowles, J. G. (2001). Writing place, wondering pedagogy. In L. Neilsen, A. Cole & J. G. Knowles (Eds.) *The art of writing inquiry*. (pp. 86-99). Halifax, NS: Backalong Books.
- Koch, T. (1995). Interpretive approaches in health research: The influence of Husserl and Heidegger. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 21, 827-836.
- Korten, D. (2006). *The great turning. From empire to earth community*. Sterling, VA: Kumerian Press.
- Korzybski, A. (1994). *Science & sanity: An introduction to non-Aristotelian systems and general semantics*. NY: Institute of General Semantics.
- Kratwohl, D.R., Bloom, B.S., & Masia, B.B. (1964) *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of education goals. Handbook II: Affective domain*. NY: David McKay.

- LaChapelle, D. (1988). *Sacred land, sacred sex. Rapture of the deep. Concerning deep ecology and celebrating life*. Durango, CO: Kivaki Press.
- LaCocque, A., & LaCocque, P-E. (1990) *Jonah. A psycho-religious approach to the prophet*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Ladinsky, D. (2013). Something missing in my heart. Daniel Ladinsky on the God intoxicated poetry of Hafiz. (A. Lawlor, Interviewer). *The Sun*, 454, 4-13.
- Lao Tzu. (n.d.). *Tao te ching*, (A. Bahm, Trans.). (1967). NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (n.d.). *Tao te ching*, (S. Mitchell, Trans.). (1988). NY: Harper Perennial.
- Laude, P. (2009). Imagination and the void. To be or not to be. *Parabola*, 34,(1), 12-19.
- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2(3). Retrieved from [http://ualberat.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2\\_3final/pdf/laverty.pdf](http://ualberat.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_3final/pdf/laverty.pdf)
- Lawrence, D.H. (1928/1968). *Lady Chatterley's lover*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Le Grice, K. (2010). *The archetypal cosmos. Rediscovering the gods in myths, science and astrology*. Edinburgh, UK.: Floris Books.
- Le Plante, L. (2014, January 14). Hackschooling makes me happy. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h11u3vtcpaY>.
- Lee, R. (2010). Weber, re-enchantment and social futures. *Time and Society* 19(2),180-192.
- Leggo, C. (2001). Research as poetic rumination: Twenty-six ways of listening to light. . In. L. Neilsen, A. Cole & J. G. Knowles (Eds.) *The art of writing inquiry*. (pp.173-195). Halifax, NS: Backalong Books.
- Leggo, C. & Irwin, R. (2013). Becoming pedagogical: Sustaining hearts with living credos. In *Education*, 19(1), 3.
- Lennon, J. & McCartney, P. (1967). *All you need is love*. [Vinyl recording]. G. Martin, (Producer). Germany: Parlophone, Warner Music Group.
- Leopold, A. (1966). *A Sand County almanac. With essays on conservation from Round River*. NY: Ballantine Books.
- Lester, S. (1999). *An introduction to phenomenological research*. Taunton, UK: Stan Lester Developments. Retrieved from <http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf>

- Levoy, G. (1997). *Callings. Finding and following an authentic life*. NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Lewis R. (2013). Wilderness of thought, childhood and the poetic imagination. *Orion*. July/August, 26 – 31.
- Lopez, K.A. & Willis, D.G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(4), 726-735.
- Lorde, A. (1984). The uses of the erotic: The erotic as power. *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.
- Louv, R., (2005). *Last child in the woods. Saving our children from nature- deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.
- Lovelock, J. (1976). *Gaia: A new look at life on earth*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Machado, A. (2004). *Border of a dream: Selected poems*. (W. Barnstone, Trans.). Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press.
- Macy, J. (1991). *Mutual causality in Buddhism and general systems theory*. Albany NY: State University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2007). *World as lover, world as self. Courage for global justice and ecological renewal*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Macy, J. & Young Brown, M. (1998). *Coming back to life. Practices to reconnect our lives, our world*. Gabriola Is., BC: New Society.
- Mahoney, M. (2003). *Constructive psychotherapy: A practical guide*. NY: Guilford Press.
- Manley Hopkins, G. (1918/1988). *Gerard Manley Hopkins. The major works including all poems and selected prose*. NY: Oxford University Press Inc.
- Maréchal, G. (2010) Autoethnography. In A.J. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe, (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of case study research*. (pp. 44-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Martin, J.R.. (2001). Becoming educated: A journey of alienation of integration? In W. Hare & W. Portelli, (Eds.) *Philosophy of education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd. (pp. 69-82).
- Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*. 50(4), 370-396.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1964). *Religions, values and peak experiences*. NY: Penguin Compass.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. NY: Penguin Books.
- Mayes, C. (2005). *Jung and education. Elements of an archetypal pedagogy*. MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- MacKinnon, A., Pojar, J., & Coupe, R. (1992). *Plants of Northern British Columbia*. Vancouver, BC: Lone Pine Publishing.
- MacDonald, J. (1965). Myths about instruction. *Educational Leadership*, XXII, No.7, 613-614.
- McBray, A., Keith, L., & Jensen, D. (2011). *Deep green resistance. Strategy to save the planet*. NY: Seven Stories Press.
- McIntosh, A. (2008). *Hell and high water. Climate change, hope and the human condition*. Edinburgh, UK: Birlinn Limited.
- McKay, D. (2001). *Vis-à-vis: Filed notes on poetry and wilderness*. Wolfville, NS: Gaspereau Press.
- McLoughlin, M. (2012). *Seeds of generosity. Storytelling in the classroom*. Victoria, BC: Salsbury House.
- McLuhan, T. C. (1994). *The way of the earth: Encounters with nature in ancient and contemporary thought*. NY: Simon and Schuster.
- McTaggart, L. (2002). *The field. The quest for the secret force of the universe*. NY: Harper Collins.
- Meade, M. (2010). *Fate and destiny. The two agreements of the soul*. WA: Greenfire Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2011). Your own damn life. Michael Meade on the story we're born with. (J. Malkin, Interviewer). *The Sun*, 431, 4-12.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2012). *Why the world doesn't end. Tales of renewal in times of loss*. WA: Greenfire Press.
- Melville, H. (1891/2001). *Moby dick*. NY: Penguin/Signet Classics.
- Merchant, C. (1980). *The death of nature. Women, ecology and the scientific revolution*. San Fran, CA: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. (C. Smith, Trans.) London, UK: Routledge.
- Merton, T. (1961/1972). *New seeds of contemplation*. NY: New Directions.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1964). *Raids on the unspeakable*. NY: New Directions.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1978). *No man is an island*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Metzner, R. (1991). Psychologizing deep ecology: A review essay. In *ReVision*, 13 (3), 147-152.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1999). *Green psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). The place and the story. In A. Drengsen & D. Taylor (Eds.). *Wild foresting. Practicing nature's wisdom*. (pp. 7-24). Gabriola Is., BC: New Society Publishers.
- Montessori, M. (1964). *The Montessori method*. NY: Schocken Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2009). A critical consideration of the new pedagogy in relation to modern science. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.) (pp. 22-33). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the soul: A guide for cultivating depth and sacredness in the everyday life*. NY: HarperCollins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1996). *The re-enchantment of everyday life*. NY: HarperCollins.
- Motion, A. (2001). *Keats*. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press.
- Moules, N. J. (2002). Hermeneutic inquiry: Paying heed to history and Hermes — An ancestral, substantive, and methodological tale. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(3), Article 1. Retrieved May 2013 from <http://www.ualberta.ca/~ijqm/>
- Moustakas, C. (1988). *Phenomenology, science and psychotherapy*. Cape Breton: Family Life Institute.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Muir, J. (1911/1979). *My first summer in the Sierra*. NY: Penguin Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1938). *John of the mountains. The unpublished journals of John Muir*. (L. M. Wolfe, Ed.). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mumford, D. (2002). *Indra's pearls: The vision of Felix Klein*. Cambridge, MA: University Press.
- Nabhan, G. & Trimble, S., (1994). *The geography of childhood. Why children need wild places*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Nachmanovitch, S. (1990). *Free play. Improvisation in life and art*. NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Naess, A. (1973) The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 16:1-4, 95-100.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988/1998). Self-realization: An ecological approach to being in the world. In J. Seed, J. Macy, P. Fleming & A. Naess (Eds.) (1988). *Thinking like a mountain. Toward a council of all beings*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1989). *Ecology, community and lifestyle*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2008). *The ecology of wisdom. Writings by Arne Naess* (A. Drengsen, & B. Devall, Eds.). Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.
- Nash, R. F. (1967). *Wilderness and the American mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale Press.
- Neihardt, J.G. (1932/1979). *Black Elk speaks: Being the life story of a holy man of the Oglala Sioux*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska.
- Nelson, M. (1998). A psychological impact report for the environmental movement. *ReVision*, Spring. Vol. 20(4): 37-43.
- Nelson, R. (1996). *The island within*. NY: Vintage Books.
- Neruda, P. (1970). *Pablo Neruda. Selected poems*. (A. Kerrigan, W.S. Merwin, A. Reid, & N. Tarn, Trans.). Boston, MASS: Houghton Mifflin.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2006). *Twenty love poems and a song of despair*. (W. S. Merwin, Trans.). NY: Penguin Classics.
- Neumann, E. (1954). *The origins and history of consciousness*. (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series XLII. NY: Pantheon Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1956). *Amor and psyche. The psychic development of the feminine*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1973). *Depth psychology and the new ethic*. CA: Harper & Row.
- Newman, M. (2011). Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 62 (1) 36-55. SAGE Publications.
- Noddings, N. (2001). Thinking about standards. In W. Hare & W. Portelli, (Eds.) *Philosophy of education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd. (pp. 388-399).

- Noddings, N. & Shore, P. (1998). *Awakening the inner eye. Intuition in education*. Troy, NY: Educator's International Press Inc.
- Norton, A. (1988). *Reflections on political identity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (2010). *Not for profit. Why democracy needs the humanities*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Oberg, A. (1988). Writing a good qualitative research report. Paper prepared for SSHRC-CSSE Workshop, "Surviving Manuscript Review". Hamilton, Ontario.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2003). Paying attention and not-knowing. In E. Hasebe-Ludt & W. Hurren. (Eds.). *Curriculum intertext. Place/language/pedagogy*. (pp. 123-129). NY: Peter Lang.
- Oliver, M. (1992). *Mary Oliver. New and selected poems. Volume one*. Boston, MASS: Beacon Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). *Why I wake early. New poems by Mary Oliver*. Boston, MASS: Beacon Press.
- Orr, D. (2000). Ecological literacy. In C. Hernandez & R. Mayur. (Eds.). *Pedagogy of the earth: Education for a sustainable future*. Mumbai, India: International Institute for Sustainable Future.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). *Earth in mind. On education, environment and the human prospect*. Washington, DC: First Island Press.
- O'Sullivan, E. (2008). Finding our way in the great work. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(1), 27-36.
- Palmer, P. (1983). *To know as we are known. Education as a spiritual journey*. NY: HarperCollins.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1998). *The courage to teach. Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Fran, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1999). The grace of great things: Reclaiming the sacred in knowing, teaching and learning. In S. Glazer, (Ed.). *The heart of learning: Spirituality in education*. (pp. 15-32). NY: Tarcher/Putnam.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2000). *Let your life speak. Listening for the voice of vocation*. San Fran, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2012). If only we would listen. Parker J. Palmer on what we could learn about politics, faith and each other. (A. von Stamwitz, Interviewer). *The Sun*, 443, 4-13.

- Palmer, P.J. & Zayonc, A. (2011). *The heart of higher education: A call to renewal, transforming the academy through collegial conversations*. San Fran, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Persaud, S. M. (2000). *Grace unfolding: Self-transformation as a sacred, transgressive art of listening to the inner voice – A Jungian perspective*. (unpublished dissertation). University of Victoria, Victoria, BC.
- Pert, C. (1997). *Molecules of emotion. The science behind mind-body medicine*. NY: Scribner & Sons.
- Pipher, M. (2006). *Writing to change the world*. NY: Riverhead Books.
- Perls, F., Hefferline, R.F., & Goodman, P. (1951). *Gestalt therapy*. NY: Bantam Books.
- Pinar, W. (Ed.) (1975). *Curriculum theorizing: The reconceptualists*. NY: Educator's International Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004). Foreword. In R. Irwin & A. de Cosson. *A/r/tography. Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*. (pp. 9-25). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Pinkola-Estes, C. (1992). *Women who run with the wolves. Myths and stories of the wild woman archetype*. NY: Ballantine Books.
- Plato. (1894/2000). *The republic*. (B. Jowett, Trans.). NY: Dover Publications.
- Plotkin, B. (2003). *Soulcraft. Crossing into the mysteries of nature and psyche*. CA: New World Library.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2008a). The wild human. Retrieved July 2009 <http://www.animas.org/wp-content/uploads/shift-summer-08.pdf>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2008b). *Nature and the human soul. Cultivating wholeness and community in a fragmented world*. Novato, CA: New World Library.
- Polanyi, M. (1962). *Personal knowledge*. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1964). *Science, faith and society*. Chicago, ILL: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1967/1983). *The tacit dimension*. Gloucester, UK: Peter Smith.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). Phenomenological research methods. In R.S. Valle & S. Halling,



- (Eds.). *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology*. NY: Penum.
- Popham, J. (2009). Objectives. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader*, (3rd ed.) (pp. 93-106). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Potter, B. (1902). *The tale of Peter Rabbit*. UK: Frederick Warne & Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1903). *The tale of Squirrel Nutkin*. UK: Frederick Warne & Co.
- Prechtel, M. (2001). *The disobedience of the daughter of the sun. Ecstasy and time*. Cambridge, MA: Yellow Moon Press.
- Progoff, I. (1975). *At a journal workshop. The basic text and guide for using the intensive journal® process*. NY: Dialogue House Library.
- Provisor, J., & Chinlund, M. (2013). *The Ojai foundation's council in schools. Inspiring engaged, compassionate school communities*. Final Report, 2012-2013.
- Pryor, A. (2004). Living with/in marginal spaces. Intellectual nomadism and artist/researcher/teacher praxis. In R. Irwin, & A. de Cosson, (Eds.). *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*. (pp. 198-213). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Rainer, T. (1978). *The new diary. How to use a journal for self-guidance and expanded creativity*. NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Ray, P.H., & Anderson, S.R. (2000). *The cultural creative*. NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Reeh, H., & Schlieder, S (1961). "Bemerkungen zur unitaraquivalenz von Lorentzinvarianten Feldern", *Nuovo Cimento*, 22: 1051.
- Religare. Retrieved from <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=religion>, November, 2013.
- Rich, A. (1963/1967/2002). *The fact of a doorframe: Selected poems 1950-2001 by Adrienne Rich*. NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing. A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (pp. 923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, L. & St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing. A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (pp. 959-978). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Richardson, R. T. Jr. (1986). *Henry Thoreau: A life of the mind*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Richo, D. (1999). *Shadow dance. Liberating the power and creativity of your dark side*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Ricoeur, P. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as another*. (Trans. K. Blamey). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Rilke, R.M (1934/1954) *Letters to a young poet*. (M.D. Herter Norton, Trans.). NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1996). *Rilke's book of hours. Love poems to God*. (A. Barrows, & J. Macy, Trans. & Eds.). NY: Riverhead Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005). *In praise of mortality. Selections from Rainer Maria Rilke's duino elegies and sonnets to Orpheus*. (A. Barrows, & J. Macy, Trans. & Eds.). NY: Riverhead Books.
- Robbins, T. (1990). *Still life with woodpecker*. NY: Bantam.
- Roberts, E. (1998). Place and the human spirit. *The Humanistic Psychologist*. 26, No. 1-3, 5-34.
- Robinson, K. (2006). *How schools kill creativity*. [Video file]. Retrieved July 2008 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbY>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2010a). *Changing education paradigms*. [Video file]. Retrieved November 21, 2011 from RSanimate: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcdGpL4U>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2010b). *Bring on the learning revolution!* [Video file]. Retrieved November 21, 2011 [http://ted.com/talks/lang/en/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_bring\\_on\\_the\\_revolution.html](http://ted.com/talks/lang/en/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution.html).
- Roethke, T. (1975). *The collected poems of Theodore Roethke*. NY: Random House Inc.
- Rogers, G. (2011). Learning-to-learn and learning-to-teach: The impact of disciplinary subject study on student-teachers' professional identity. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(2), 249-268.
- Rogers, P. (2005). *Firekeeper. Selected poems by Pattiann Rogers* Minneapolis, MINN: Milkweed Editions.
- Romanyshyn, R. (2007). *The wounded researcher. Research with soul in mind*. VT: Spring Journal Books.

- Rorty, R. (2001). Education with dogma: Truth, freedom and our universities. In W. Hare & W. Portelli, (Eds.) *Philosophy of education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd. (pp. 107-116).
- Rosen, K. (2009). *Saved by a poem. The transformative power of words*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House.
- Roszak T. (1994). The greening of psychology. In *The Ecopsychology Newsletter*. 1(1), 1. Retrieved from <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/102876164/Roszak>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2002). *The voice of the earth: An exploration of ecopsychology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press.
- Roszak, T., Gomes, M., & Kanner, A. (1995). *Ecopsychology. Restoring the earth, healing the mind*. Berkeley, CA: Sierra Club Books.
- Rousseau, J.J. (1959). Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire, Ve Promenade, *In Oeuvre Complètes*, Vol 1. Paris: Gallimard.
- Rowling, J.K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone*. London, UK: Bloomsbury
- Rumi, J. (2004). *The essential Rumi*. (C. Barks, Trans.). NY: HarperOne.
- Sabini, M. (n.d.) On the importance of dreaming. Retrieved October 2013 from <http://www.depthinsights.com/ezone/DepthInsights-Issue5-Fall2013.pdf>.
- Sachs, J. (2001) (Trans.). *Aristotle on the soul and on memory and recollection*. Sante Fe, NM: Green Lion Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005). Entelechy. In *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*. (December, 2005). Retrieved December, 2012 from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-mot/>.
- Sale, K. (1991). *Dwellers in the land. The bioregional vision*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Society Publishers.
- Sánchez-Villegas, A., Delgado-Rodríguez, M., Alonso, A., Schlatter, J., Lahortiga, F., Majem, L., Martínez-González, M.A. (2009). Association of the Mediterranean dietary pattern with the incidence of depression: University of Navarra follow-up (SUN) cohort. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, 66(10):1090-8.
- Sandelowski, M. (1994). The proof is in the pottery: Toward a poetics for qualitative inquiry. In J.M. Morse (Ed.). *Critical issues in qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Sardello, R. (1992). *Facing world with soul: The reimagination of modern life*. NY: Harper Perennial.

- Sarton, M. (1973). *Journal of a solitude*. NY: Norton & Company.
- Schleiermacher, F., Dilthey, W., Heidegger, M., & Gadamer, H.G. (1969). *Hermeneutics, interpretation theory*. ILL: Northwestern University Press.
- Schmidt, A.V.C., (1985). Darkness echoing: Reflections on the return of mythopoeia in some recent poems of Geoffrey Hill and Seamus Heaney. *Oxford Journals, Humanities, Review of English Studies*. Vol. XXXVI. 142. 199-225. Retrieved Feb 7, 2011 from <http://res.oxfordjournals.org/content>.
- Schutz, A. (1970). On phenomenology of social relations. In H.R. Wagner, (Ed.). *Selected writings*. Chicago, ILL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Schroeder, C. (1998). *A poetics of embodiment. Cultivating an erotics of the everyday*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from : <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp02/NQ37752.pdf>. (0-612-377-520).
- Schroll, M. A. (2000). Toward a new green earth: The call for a more integral science. In *Gatherings*, 3, Summer, 1-19.
- Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming, P., & Naess, A. (Eds.) (1988). *Thinking like a mountain. Toward a council of all beings*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society.
- Sedley, D. (2003) *Plato's cratylus*. England: Cambridge University Press.
- Selby, D. (2002). The signature of the whole: Radical interconnectedness and its implications for global and environmental education. In E. O'Sullivan, A. Morell, & M.A. O'Connor. (Eds.). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning*. (pp. 77-93). NY: Palgrave.
- Sewall, L. (1999). *Sight and sensibility. The ecopsychology of perception*. NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Shadyac, T. (Director). (2011). *I am. The shift about to hit the fan*. [Motion Picture]. USA: Flying Eye Productions.
- Shakespeare, W. (1596/1937). *A midsummer night's dream*. Toronto, ON: Longman, Green & Company.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1610/2003). *The tempest*. NY: Sterling.
- Shamdasani, S. (2009). (Ed). *The red book. C.J. Jung*. NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Shaw, M. (2011). *A branch from the lightning tree. Ecstatic myth and the grace in wildness*. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press.

- Sheldrake, R. (2009). *A new science of life*. South Paris, ME: Park Street Press.
- Shepard, O. (Ed). (1961). *The heart of Thoreau's journals*. NY: Dover.
- Sheppard, P. (1982). *Nature and madness*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1996). *Traces of an omnivore*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). *The others: How animals made us human*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Shihab Nye, N. (1995). *Words under the words*. Portland, OR: The Eighth Mountain Press.
- Shinoda Bolen, J. (1999). *The millionth circle: How to change ourselves and the world*. CA: Conari Press.
- Smith, M. J. (2006). The role of the pedagogue in Galatians (2006). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 115. Retrieved 2012, [digitalcommons.liberty.edu/sor\\_fac\\_pubs/115](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/sor_fac_pubs/115).
- Smith, D.G. (2009). Curriculum and teaching face globalization. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (3rd ed.), (pp. 368-383). NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Snowber (Schroeder), C. (1997). *Writing and the body. Cultivating listening, solitude and embodiment in writing and pedagogical practice*. Educational Insights (On-line serial) 4(1). Retrieved November, 2012 from <http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/archives/v04n01/writing.html>
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2002). Bodydance: Enfleshing soulful inquiry through improvisation. In C. Bagley & M.B. Cancienne, M.B. (Eds.) *Dancing the data*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Snyder, G. (2007). Writers and the war against nature. *Shambhala Sun*. Nov. 40-47.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1990). *Practices of the wild*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.
- Solnit, R. (2013). Mysteries of Thoreau, unsolved. On the dirtiness of laundry and the strength of sisters. *Orion Magazine* 7483, May-June, 18-23.
- Some, M.P. (1988). *The healing wisdom of Africa. Finding life purpose through nature, ritual and community*. NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.
- Stafford, W. (1977). *The way it is. New and selected poems*. Minneapolis, MINN: Graywolf Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1993). *The darkness around us is deep. Selected poems of William Stafford*. (R. Bly, Ed.) NY: HarperCollins.

- \_\_\_\_\_. (1994). *Learning to live in the world. Earth poems by William Stafford*. NY: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Stamet, P. (2013). "I believe nature is a force of good." Retrieved November, 2013 from <http://sustainabilityhub.com/tag/paul-stamets>).
- Stein, G. (1937/1973). *Everybody's autobiography*. NY: Vintage Books.
- Steindl-Rast, D. (2013). *99 blessings. An invitation to life*. NY: Image.
- Sterling, S. (2001). *Sustainable education: Re-visioning learning and change*. Bristol, UK: Green Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2008). Sustainable education: Towards a deep learning response to unsustainability. *Policy & Practice. A Development Education Review*. Vol. 6, Spring, pp. 63-68.
- Stetson, N, & Morrell, P., (Prod.). (2002). *The great story: Thomas Berry*. [VHS Recording]. Bullfrog Films.
- Stone, M. & Barlow, Z. (2005). *Ecological literacy. Educating our children for a sustainable future*. San Fran., CA: Sierra Club Books.
- Strozzi Heckler, R. (1997). *The anatomy of change. A way to move through life's transitions*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Subramaniam, K., Kounios, J., Parrish, T.B., & Jung-Beeman, M. (2009). A brain mechanism for facilitation of insight by positive affect. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, in press.
- Suppes, P., Eisner, E., Stanley, J.C., Greene, M. (1998). The vision thing: A vision for educational research and the American Educational Research Association in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Educational Researcher*, 27(9), (pp. 33-35).
- Suutarri, A. & Marten, G. (2007). How a vicious cycle can become virtuous. *EarthIsland Journal*. Retrieved from [http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/eco\\_tipping\\_points/](http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/eco_tipping_points/)
- Swimme, B. & Berry, T. (1994). *The universe story. From the primordial flaring forth to the Ecozoic age. A celebration of the unfolding cosmos*. CA: Harper Collins.
- Tafoya, T. (1995). Finding harmony: Balancing traditional values with western science in therapy. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21(supplement) 7-27.
- Tagore, R. (1961). *Rabindranath Tagore. Pioneer in education*. London, UK: John Murray.

- Tarnas, R. (2007). *Cosmos and psyche. Intimations of a new worldview*. NY: Penguin Group.
- Taylor, A. (2013). *Reconfiguring the natures of childhood*. NY: Routledge.
- Taylor, C. (1987) Interpretation and the sciences of man. In P. Rabinow & W. Sullivan, (Eds.). *Interpretive social science. A second look*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Taylor, C. (1991). *The malaise of modernity*. Concord, ONT: House of Anansi Press.
- Taylor, D., Segal, D., & Harper, N. (2010). The ecology of adventure therapy: An integral systems approach to therapeutic change. *Ecopsychology*. 2(2), (pp. 77-83).
- Taurog, N., Vidor, K., Fleming, V., LeRoy, M., & Cukor, G. (1939) (Directors). *The wizard of Oz*. [VHS recording]. Oconomowoc, WI: Metro-Goldwyn Mayer.
- Tempest Williams, T. (2012). *When women were birds. Fifty-four variations on voice*. NY: Picador.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research*. NY: Falmer Press.
- Thomas, A. (1987a). *John Dewey's theory of art, experience and nature. Horizons of feeling*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Thomashow, M. (1995). *Ecological identity. Becoming a reflective environmentalist*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Thompson, C., Locander, W., & Pollio, H. (1989). Putting consumer experiences back into consumer research. The philosophy and method of existential phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*. 16, 133-146.
- Thoreau, H.D. (1862/1982). *The great short works of Henry David Thoreau*. (W. Glick, Ed.) NY: Harper & Row.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1906/1960). *H.D. Thoreau: A Writer's Journal*. (L. Stapleton, Ed.). Toronto, ON: Dover Publications.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1906). *The writings of Henry David Thoreau. Vol. 6*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Todesco, T. (2012). *Integrative and transformative learning practices: Engaging the whole person in educating of sustainability*. (unpublished thesis). University of Victoria: Victoria, BC.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. (1954). *Lord of the rings. Part I. The fellowship of the ring*. NY: Quality Paperback Book Club.

- Trefil, J. (2013). Will we ever find the theory of everything? In *National Geographic. 100 Greatest Mysteries Revealed Special Publication*, 107. National Geographic Society Washington, DC.
- Tucker, M.E. & Grim, J. (Producers) (2012). *Journey of the universe*. [DVD]. (B. Swimme & M.E. Tucker, Writers) San Fran. CA: Northcutt Productions.
- Turner, F. W. (1985/2000). *Rediscovering America: John Muir in his time and ours*. Cambridge, MA: DA Capo Press.
- Turner, N. J. (2005). *The earth's blanket. Traditional teachings for sustainable living*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Twain, M. (1917/1959). *The autobiography of Mark Twain*. NY: Harper & Row.
- van Gennep, A. (1920/1960). *The rites of passage*. (G. Caffee, & M. Vizedom, Trans.). ILL: University of Chicago Press.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience. Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, ON: SUNY.
- von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory. Foundations, development and application*. NY: George Braziller.
- von Nettesheim, C.A. (1533/2005). *The philosophy of natural magic (De occulta philosophia of 1533)* (L.W. de Laurence Trans.) Whitefish, MO: Kessinger Publishing.
- Wagoner, D. (1999). *Traveling Light. Collected and new poems*. ILL: University of Illinois Press.
- Walker, B. (1992). *Hua Hu Ching: The unknown teachings of Lao Tzu*. San Fran., CA: Harper.
- Watkins, W.J. (1978). *The tracker. The true story of Tom Brown Jr. as told to William Jon Watkins*. NY: Berkeley Books.
- Watts, A. (1966). *The book. On the taboo against knowing who you are*. NY: Vintage Random House.
- Weber, M. (1905/2002) *The Protestant ethic and "the spirit of capitalism"* (S. Kalberg, trans.) Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Weller, F. (2012). *Entering the healing ground. Grief, ritual and the soul of the world*. CA: Wisdombridge Press.
- White Jr., L. (1967). The historical roots of our ecologic crisis. *Science (new series), Vol. 155 (3767)*, (pp. 1203-1207).



- Whitehead, A. N. (1925/1967). *Science and the modern world*. NY: The Free Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1929/1957). *The aims of education and other essays*. NY: The Free Press.
- Whitman, W. (1855/1955). *Leaves of grass*. NY: Penguin USA.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1867/1962). *Leaves of grass*. NY: New American Library.
- Whyte, D. (1997). *House of belonging*. Langley WA: Many Rivers Press.
- Winokur, J. (Ed.) (1989). *Zen to go*. Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada Limited.
- Winter, D. & Kroger, S. (2004). *The psychology of environmental problems*. NY: Psychology Press.
- Woodman, M (1982). *Addiction to perfection. The still unravished bride*. Toronto, ON: Inner City Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). *The pregnant virgin: A process of psychological transformation*. Toronto, ON: Inner City Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2000). *Bone. Dying into life*. NY: Penguin Putnam.
- Wordsworth, W. (1807). Ode to intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood. *Poems in Two Volumes, Vol. II*. London, UK: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme: Pater and Noster-Row.
- Yates, F. (1964) *Giordano Bruno and the new Hermetic traditions*. NY: Routledge.
- Young Brown, M. (2009) (Blog posting). Manipulation vs. participation. Retrieved July 2010 from <http://mollyyoungbrown.blogspot.ca/>.
- Zander, R. & Zander, B. (2002). *The art of possibility*. NY: Penguin Books.
- Zeyl, D. (Trans.) "Plato's *Timaeus*", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), Retrieved November 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/plato-timaeus/>.
- Zimmerman, J. & Coyle, G. (2009). *The way of council*. FL: Bramble Books.
- Zimmerman, M. (2009). Interiority regained: Integral ecology and environmental ethics. In D. Swearer (Ed.) *Ecology and the environment. Perspectives for the humanities*. (pp. 65-88). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Zweig, C. & Abrams, J. (Eds.) (1991). *Meeting the shadow. The hidden power of the dark side of nature*. NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam.

## Permissions

“The Journey” from *Mary Oliver. New and Selected Poems Vol. 1* by Mary Oliver copyright © 1992 Reprinted with the permission of the Sheedy Agency, NY: NY.

“The Summer Day” from *Mary Oliver. New and Selected Poems Vol. 1* by Mary Oliver copyright © 1992. Reprinted with the permission of the Sheedy Agency, NY: NY.

“Skunk Cabbage” from *Mary Oliver. New and Selected Poems Vol. 1* by Mary Oliver copyright © 1992. Reprinted with the permission of the Sheedy Agency, NY: NY.

“Just A Minute Said a Voice” from *Why I Wake Early. New Poems by Mary Oliver* by Mary Oliver copyright © 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the Sheedy Agency, NY: NY.

“Sleeping in the Forest” from *Mary Oliver. New and Selected Poems Vol. 1* by Mary Oliver copyright © 1992. Reprinted with the permission of the Sheedy Agency, NY: NY.

“In Impossible Darkness” from *Saved By A Poem. The Transformation of the Power of Words* by Kim Rosen copyright © 2009. Reprinted with permission from the author granted September 22, 2013.

“The Art of Disappearing” from *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems* by Naomi Shihab Nye, copyright © 1995. Reprinted with the permission of Far Corner Books, Portland, Oregon.

“Revelation Must Be Terrible” from *Fire in the Earth* by David Whyte copyright © 1992. Reprinted with the permission of Many Rivers Press, Langley, Washington.

“What to Remember When Waking” from *The House of Belonging* by David Whyte copyright © 1997. Reprinted with the permission of Many Rivers Press, Langley, Washington.

“A Ritual To Read To Each Other” from *The Way It Is. New and Selected Poems* by William Stafford copyright © 1977. Reprinted with the permission from the estate of William Stafford.

“The Way It Is” from *The Way It Is, New and Selected Poems* by William Stafford copyright ©1977. Reprinted with the permission from the estate of William Stafford.

“How to Regain Your Soul” from *The Darkness Around Us is Deep. Selected Poems of William Stafford.* by William Stafford copyright ©1993. Reprinted with the permission from the estate of William Stafford.

“Earth Dweller” from *Learning to Live in the World* by William Stafford copyright © 1994. Reprinted with the permission from the estate of William Stafford.

"Lost" from *Traveling Light, Collected and New Poems* by David Wagoner copyright © 1999.  
Reprinted with the permission of University of Illinois Press, Chicago, Illinois

"Prospective Immigrants Please Note" is reprinted from *The fact of a doorway: Selected poems 1950-2001* by Adrienne Rich, by permission of W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.  
Copyright © 2002, 1967, 1963 by Adrienne Rich.