INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6” x 9” black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
Spirituality, Education, Narraturgy: From Wells of Living, Writing, Reading

by

Daniel George Scott
B.A. Glendon College, York University, 1969
M.A. University of Victoria, 1993

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Communication and Social Foundations

We accept this dissertation as conforming to the required standard

Dr. Antoinette Oberg, Supervisor (Communication & Social Foundations)

Dr. Cynthia Chambers, Departmental Member (Adjunct Professor, University of Lethbridge)

Dr. Honoré France, Outside Member (Psychological Foundations in Education)

Prof. J. P. Anglin, Outside Member (School of Child and Youth Care)

Dr. William Doll, External Examiner (Louisiana State University)

© Daniel George Scott, 1998
University of Victoria

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

Philosophical work is a critical piece of the re-thinking necessary for opening spirituality to a consideration by educators particularly as it pertains to education. I approach spirituality in such a way that neither encases it in firm structures nor expects it to offer clear explanations. I am aware that such an engagement will seem difficult, even obscure, but insist that such re-thinking is necessary if we are to have a spirituality that is human (and humane), situated in life and situated in the process of life-long learning that includes the dynamics of learning-teaching as educational praxis.

This work of re-conceptualization is written in between spaces: between spirituality and education, between theory and narrative. It includes a personal struggle of be/com/ing spiritual presented biographically with tensions between thinking and practice, between knowing and living. There are a series of parallels, imaginaries of understanding: making a text, making a life, spirituality, reading, education, inquiry, flux.

The text also tells stories and uses stories to understand my personal and a more general (re-)conceptual journey connecting spirituality and education. This text offers narratives as vessels of spirit. Spirit moves in living as it moves in narratives. I offer a way of reading and understanding the work and working of narratives that I call narraturgy. It is a way to notice the spiritual as it works in stories, as it works on us and as we work on our living through stories.
I see spirituality as a potential opportunity for education as a way of learning and teaching a radical hermeneutic sense of the possible, of the mysterious and of the flux.

Examiners:

______________________________
Dr. Antoinette Oberg, Supervisor (Communication and Social Foundations)

______________________________
Dr. Cynthia Chambers, Departmental Member (Adjunct Professor, University of Lethbridge)

______________________________
Dr. Honoré France, Outside Member (Psychological Foundations in Education)

______________________________
Prof. J. P. Anglin, Outside Member (School of Child and Youth Care)

______________________________
Dr. William Doll, External Examiner (Louisiana State University)
# Table of Contents

- Abstract  
  - ii
- Table of Contents  
  - iv
- Acknowledgments and Dedication  
  - vi
- Preface: Opening the Text  
  - 1
- Section I: In Search of the Spiritual  
  - 17
  - First Chapter Prelude  
    - 18
  - Chapter 1:  
    - A Tale of a Text—Thinking Parabolically  
      - 19
  - Second Chapter Prelude  
    - 54
  - Chapter 2:  
    - Spirituality, Spiritual, Spirit: What Do I Mean?  
      - 56
  - Third Chapter Prelude  
    - 102
  - Chapter 3:  
    - A Biography of Spirit:  
      - (Re)Tracing My Own Accounts  
        - 103
  - Fourth Chapter Prelude  
    - 145
  - Chapter 4:  
    - Spirituality Education  
      - 146
  - Fifth Chapter Prelude  
    - 175
Chapter 5:
On Be/com/ing Spiritual 176

Section II: Spirituality and Narrative 210

Sixth Chapter Prelude 211
Chapter 6:
The Work of Stories 212
Seventh Chapter Prelude 246
Chapter 7:
Story Characteristics 248
Eight Chapter Prelude 293
Chapter 8:
Further Working: Toward Opening 294
Epilogue 329
Bibliography 336
Acknowledgments and Dedication

This project has occupied me for most of three years and there have been a significant number of people along the way who have played a role in shaping me and the text during that time. Because I have been writing about spirituality and because of the personal nature of the research and the journey many of the influences I can only credit through acknowledgment.

I have had, as most doctoral students do, a complex, intense, and uneven experience during my time of research and writing. Throughout the journey I have had support, encouragement, and appropriate prodding from my supervisor Antoinette Oberg. Jim Anglin, who helped me start on this journey almost a decade ago has been a constant source of encouragement and insight as well. I am grateful for both of these people and their wisdom. I am also grateful to the other members of my committee, Cynthia Chambers and Honoré France, for reading, for feedback, for willingness, and for good questions. There have been other important academic guides and mentors along the way. I am grateful for the continued support and challenges of Jacques Daignault, for the work and study I was able to do with Ted Aoki, Laurie Baxter, and Harold Coward, and for the support of Mary-Wynne Ashford in organizing a symposium on spirituality and education. I am also grateful for the insights and guidance of Jan Zwicky and for her beautiful book Lyric Philosophy which not only inspired my thinking but provided an imaginative template for designing a text that left spaces and was respectful of more than efficiency.
There have also been other students who often provided critical words and insights in critical moments. I am grateful for Corey Blades, Amal Elyas, Peggy Faulds, Leah Fowler, Renee Fountain, Connie Frey, Marie Hoskins, Rosie Hyde, Colleen Kasting, Pat O'Riley, Pat Rasmussen, Dolores Stanley. I am sure there are others but I can trace the presence of each of these people in the text and want to acknowledge how important collegial support is in making a dissertation.

In addition to the academic network that has provided support there are those who I have relied on as sounding boards and as friends. I think of Alan Caplan and Scott Sudbeck whose personal wisdom has been sustaining in the sometimes lonely journey of writing. Although they do it differently they both seem to be able to cut through the fog and head me to ground. Thanks also to their partners, Sharon Marmorstein and Judith Reid. And also to Bob and Nancy Turner who have been supportive and encouraging of this possibility for a number of years. I think also of Henri Lock, Ruth MacIntosh and Shanti Persaud who I have worked with on a regular basis and who know my moods. I also think of students who have been open and eager in an engagement with spirituality in several settings, teaching me a great deal. I think of colleagues from my previous life who have continued as companions in the way: Bill Morrison, Lee Hamburg, Kathy and Chuck Hamilton, John and Dana Mellis, Phil and Kathy McIntyre-Paul. I am grateful for all of them. And for the many whose names I do not mention.

I have also had tremendous support and flexibility from my family. Christine has endured many shifts in her world as I have thrashed around in finding myself and my text during this work. The five: Ian, Jolanta, Darcy, Jenny, and Andrew, have been supportive and
hopeful for me on many occasions. As they make their own lives it has been part of my journey to engage them in their becoming adult to learn from their lessons of life how to be a father.

I have left until the end a group of people who I have been meeting with twice a year now for four years who are members of the Canadian contact group for a World Council of Churches sub-committee called URM Canada. We meet in a story circle and their way of telling of their lives has hugely influenced me and my understanding of narrative and its power to make community, to bridge difference and to inspire life. These people, who represent a variety of grass roots community organizations and cultures have embraced me and taught me more than I can possibly describe. Although they are at a distance I carry them with me in this work and they are in the text, in its understanding and in its concerns. So, travelling east to west, to Cecil, Bernard, Kim B, Andrea, Archie, Al, Craig, Lloyd, Karen, Joanne, Jackie, Anne, Bibiana, Beverly, Gerry, Kim S, Alice, Pat, Minnie, Valerie, Mike, Marion, Sadie, Lorelie thank you. To you and to the work of URM to build and support community development through story telling I dedicate this work. It is a deeply spiritual lesson you have taught me.
Preface
Opening the text

It is not the way that is difficult, it is the difficult that is the way.
Søren Kierkegaard

Let your head fall into your heart, Dan. It is the only way to live.
Glenn Sharpe

I offer this guide to the text to open its ways and themes, to note streams in it, and some of its difficulties and challenges. I write of spirituality from the midst of a personal, sometimes overwhelming, incomplete journey. To write of spirituality in the manner I have chosen is to offer my life (journey) as part of the study. My self-preserving instincts, the inner voices I have acquired in my education tell me that I should try another way. But I am stubborn when set to a course and have persisted in my attempt to re-conceptualize spirituality, to write sited in education, and to aim at an understanding of the spiritual that is engaged, fluid, and sourced in personal experience. The difficulty I engage in is twofold: writing a text that has some integrity, that does what it is trying to speak of, and doing what I am writing of—being and becoming (be/com/ing) spiritual—in the journey through/of writing and study.

Here are two stories: one to introduce the site of my research, one to introduce the tension of my living.
Declaring my site.

We were at an end-of-year picnic for my son's new high school band program at an ocean side park. I am not at ease in such social occasions but managed to find one other father, dad to a boy my son is getting to know, to talk to at more length. I discovered he is a paleontologist. He talked about the hikes and digs he organizes in searching for fossils on Vancouver Island. It came up that I was working on my Ph.D. in spirituality and education and he immediately queried: "So where are you doing your research? In Victoria?" I muttered something about narrative work, stories, books, and libraries. My reply was a way out of a more complex conversation. I dodged all of the questions I anticipated about site, data, and what might count as evidence. I imagined him imagining me digging somewhere. I had no heart for explanation in that moment. I let it be. So did he, and we moved on.

Later, when I told this story, I understood that he was concerned about the site of research. As a paleontologist, where one finds fossils is critical to understanding their importance. Evidence is connected to site. I did not tell him that one site of my research is my own life. I did not say that I am digging for the spiritual through accounts that unfold my own spiritual journey, that I seek the traces of living fossils, as records, in me. I did not say that site was also critical for me. Or note that I was learning from the experience within the soft tissue of life.
that does not leave hard deposits, only fleeting traces. Nor did I risk
telling him how uncertain my digging left me. I lacked confidence.

"Are you being true to your calling?"

No. I have to answer no. I did not keep faith with—\textit{con-fideo}^{1}\—me in that moment, or my calling. I let it slide. A moment of
possibility passed. Am I not digging to uncover what is buried in lives
and in the practices of living? Am I not concerned for site—for locating
spirituality in education? Am I not digging in my own life? What are
the traces of spirituality in me? In my learning? My teaching?

This moment is germane to the dilemma of my work.

I am attempting to write about spirituality in a way that will re-
conceptualize it for education. I have imagined this to be a writing
and thinking project. That has not been sufficient. I write and think
tinged with the tendencies and ideology of the culture of my origins. I
write and think in the stream of Western thought: white, rational, with
a respect for the demands of certainty and proof, charmed by ideas of
clarity and tidiness founded on what is solid, tested, and verifiable.
These thinking practices are not merely concepts in my mind but
formations: embedded shapes for understanding. I am inclined to
think through and with those shapes and forms. Forms may serve as
enclosures or openings: chains or connections. Perhaps I should dig
around these fossils, unearth those forms: disturb them.

I have imagined that I am called to write of spirituality and to
write and think of it differently, to think of it outside of those Western
formulations. To do so is to begin to step out of formation, to head

\footnote{1 All Latin derivations are from John C. Traupman (Ed.). 1966. \textit{The New
College Latin and English Dictionary}. New York, Toronto: Bantam Books.}
A call to spirituality is a call to liberation. It is a call to a way of living: a practice that enacts a different formation of thought and living. It is not merely a call to write and think differently but a coming to know who I am be/com/ing and living out that knowing.

A Sufi story of study and divided attention.

Once there was a young man, not yet eager to learn, who often heard his father praise the teacher who had taught him when he was young. The father spoke highly of the teacher's insight, wisdom, humility, and teaching skill. Young men do not always listen but when this young man came to the moment in his life when he was ready to learn, he recalled his father's words and his praise of that teacher. He went to his father and told him he had decided it was time to study and that he had chosen as teacher the same master who had instructed him. The father was delighted and assisted the young man to prepare for his long journey to the village of the teacher. It was a lengthy journey across the desert and took several seasons before the young man came to the village gates and asked the gatekeeper to direct him to the home of the teacher. "He lives there in the palace on the hill."

A doubt entered the young man's mind. He went to the door of the palace and asked again for his father's teacher. He was welcomed and led to the master of the house. He was surprised at the richness of the palace. How could this man be the one
who had taught his father? Could this wealthy man also be a wise and humble teacher? Busy with these thoughts, he was presented to the master. He explained who he was. He spoke of his father and offered his greetings. He said that he had come to study with him, as his father before him had done.

The teacher listened to the young man's story and received his greetings. But he also knew his troubled mind.

"Though you have made a long journey to become my student, there is one test that you must pass before you can study with me. Tonight, in the village, is a great festival. The feast will last all night. You are to go to the festival and join in. But you must carry on your head a full bowl of water. I am sending one of my servants with you to insure that you do not spill a drop. If you do, you cannot be my student."

The young man had no choice. He accepted the challenge and went down the hill to the festival and spent the night at the feast with a large bowl of water on his head. When morning came, he and the teacher's servant returned to the palace. They were received by the master. The young man returned the bowl, still full of water. The servant testified that not a drop had been spilled.

"Did you enjoy the festival?" asked the teacher.

"I did," replied the young man. "Although I could not completely enter in. I was distracted. I danced a few steps but reached for the bowl. I ate but always I was thinking of the water. It was a great feast but I never really took part. I kept worrying about the bowl of water."
"Yes." replied the teacher. "This is also the case with my life. I have many things around me but always I am distracted by my bowl of water. I can never forget who I am, who I serve. The spiritual work of my life is always calling my attention, even in the midst of celebration and luxury."

The young man became his student and remained with him many years before returning to his own village.

There are many riches in study that I find alluring but I am distracted by the difficulty of my bowl of water. I have danced, worried about the steps, and feasted, wondering about spirit and whether I am engaged or whether only my mind is in play. I keep reaching for the bowl. Have I lost it? Is it empty? I wonder if I have not spilled many drops in my journey of study and writing. I wonder if, in my life, my heart has been open to ground my ideas in the practice of my living. Have my soaring thoughts fallen into the embrace of living? Have I been carried away by the riches of libraries and books? Has the festival of study seduced me to forget too often the bowl and its vulnerable liquid treasure? Am I living with enough distracted attention? Has my calling gripped me?

My study initially focused on writing and thinking in terms of understanding my task. I began to work at my inquiry in spirituality and education through a practice of resistance in two ways: through writing and through study. In writing I play(ed) with form and questions of form, trying to break out of structures and enclosures through creativity. That engagement goes on in this text. It is a
writing practice that is founded on a belief that form can be opening when it is responsive to the content and the question being pursued.

There is a danger of self-deception in such work. The possibilities of writing new forms are endless. The probability of them being comprehensible is more problematic. I am not seeking novelty to be novel but to find a way to express something that seems inaccessible to an understanding framed by certainty and to do so in a way that would open it to engagement, to an exchange through uncertainty.

The thrill of the pursuit—the hunter's chase—may not be discovery. It may be only hunting and chasing. Michel Serres (1982) claims that since the time of Plato "knowledge is a hunt" (p. 28) and the consequence of such knowing is "to put to death... To know is to kill" (p. 28). Perhaps my hunting through writing will turn into murder. It may be that knowing can only conclude with capture and death. I hope otherwise. I hope it's end is freedom. Perhaps I need to pay attention, to whose death is required, to what kind of dying may be involved.

Another difficulty lies in study. In study I sought writing and ideas that were marginal, complex, even outrageous. I struggled to come to grips with ideas and concepts that might break the frames, might break open new possibilities. They might also break me open. In the struggle to meet and overcome these difficulties I came to understand another danger.

Gandhi has argued that if one must become a soldier to fight and overcome violence by using violence one has lost the war. The only way to overcome violence, in the long term, is to resist passively. I have become a student, perhaps even a scholar, in an attempt to resist
a rational engagement of spirituality. Perhaps I have only affirmed rationality in such a move, by becoming more rational. Can I learn a way of study and thinking that is not formed by the tradition in which I am embedded? I long to think and work differently at the question of spirituality. I seek ways of understanding that are thoughtful, yet transgress the borders that confine thinking to ratio-logical explanation. I have studied to do so. Have I learned to resist non-violently in the face of formulations that are powerful and overwhelming? I hope my passivity is a form of resistance and not acquiescence.

Gandhi (Jack, 1994, p. 310) argues that violent resistance is highly visible but of short duration. Its effects do not last. Non-violence, he claims, is mostly invisible and of much longer duration. Its process is slower but more powerful because it does not become what it resists. It remains different. Have I discovered in study a way of resistance that will last? Have I found a way to embody non-violent study or merely think about it, speak about it? "Non-violence," says Gandhi, "cannot be preached. It must be practiced" (p. 311).

I write as an act of resistance. As I write the question remains: am I becoming what I am resisting in order to resist? I live in this difficulty: seeking a way that is not be/com/ing the same kind of soldier/student/ writer/thinker that I question and doubting myself: being uncertain and cautious in the process. I have set out on a journey, attempting to leave a certain kind of thinking. I carry some of its forms steeped into my bones, into the very frames that hold the lenses of my eyes, my ideas. How am I to shed these frames? By letting them go? By leaving them behind? Yet I meet them along the way.
They arise in me, in the language. They remain in the struggle of making this text and in the text itself.

But my inquiry is not only about writing and thinking. It is about the journey itself: how I journey, how I practice my life, my spirituality. The spiritual work, the spiritual practice of shedding those frames is on-going. I am in a liminal transitional space. I cannot claim to have arrived at a new land, a place of liberation. I resist and struggle, even now, close to the end of writing the text. I wonder if my journey is only to be in this in-between space: to dwell there and not arrive, not cross the second threshold to a new founding. The middle space is uncertain, ambiguous. I am still in it.

For me, the in-between space is not solid ground. It is fluid and transient. To live, think and write in and from that space is to do those things from instability. I cannot build on solid ground as I do not experience the ground I am on as solid. The temptation is to build over the ground that moves, that flows, to make it disappear, become forgotten. But writing, thinking, and living from the moving ground is insecure. It is also difficult and demanding. I find it hard to stay there. I find it difficult not to reach for what appears fixed and solid in the hope of clinging to it. I have discovered that the spiritual is more possible, more likely, closer in the moveable than it has ever been for me in the stable. When I work and live in that space, I be/come responsive, attentive, energized. But to translate that responsiveness to writing, to study has proved more difficult than I imagined.

In the face of questions about clarity and definition, about site and data—questions of solidity—I have been passive. The learned cultural voices arising in me meet the strong voices from outside and
become stronger, leaving me surprised, helpless. Can I respond to such feelings? Can I write and think in the face of those internalized voices? Can I be freed from their quest for solidify, approval, and certainty? I wonder what study and writing as passive, non-violent resistance might be? These questions remain in process in my work.

One stream of my text is a record of this awkward and incomplete journey. Another is my attempt to address these difficulties by writing imaginatively, by offering thinking about spirituality that is the beginning of re-conceptualization. I seek thinking that rings true, that resonates (Zwicky, 1992). I seek a creativity that will liberate study and education through understanding the spiritual as already at play but not enclosed, as something on-going and elusive: fluid.

Another stream is my exploration and use of an approach to narrative that I call narraturgy (see Section II). Narraturgy becomes a way of considering the spiritual, a way of understanding stories as vessels of spirit, a means of examining how stories work on us, through us and how we work on stories. I have begun that practice in this preface. The two stories have been working on me, teaching me how to live, teaching me that I have further to go in be/com/ing attentive, in knowing how to speak (and write) of my inquiry, its site, its mobility, its uncertainty.

The text that follows includes theoretical explorations of spirituality and possible meanings (see Chapter 2). It includes accounts of my own spiritual struggle framed as a biography of spirit (see Chapter 3). There are attempts to form theory, to offer ways to think that may lead to other openings, sometimes indirectly expressed
in stories and sometimes expressed in argument form. Both bear traces of my lineage. Both bear traces of my calling. They are mixed together in the present: wheat and tares.

I had hoped that by now that I would have a text that was clear. Instead, I have a record of the struggle toward clarity. I have traces of insight, moments of knowing. I have confusion and difficulty mixed in. These are the marks of my in-between space and in-between journey. They are also the spiritual understanding I can offer. It will, I hope, contribute to including spirituality in the discourses of education.

The text includes stories and poems, my own and other's to bring the text to the ground of a life and life experience. The text includes interruptions in its flow to expand or note a particular question or difficulty. They occur in various forms, including asides which are also used to clarify words and concepts. There are fragments and traces that arise from journals kept before and during the process of the making of this text and the study surrounding it. There are unanswered questions that are openings to what remain incomplete in this study. I repeat passages and treat each repetition as a way of opening or unfolding a thought or concept in another way. This is an attempt at clarification in a non-linear fashion.

I understand my own text as assemblage. It is composed of pieces that I have drawn together. I assemble fragments because I am in the world and the world, as I experience it day-to-day, is fragmented. Perhaps my interest in spirituality, and the swelling of that interest in contemporary culture, is a search for links and connections, an attempt to move away from fragmentation. To offer an assemblage is to suggest that somehow, even in brokenness and disassembly there is gathering.
Somehow it is possible to come together, broken, fragile, marred and make life together. I hope this text is an act of making life for the reader. It has been an act of life-making and re-making in the writing.

One of the problematics at work in my writing, and in coming to understand the spiritual, is discovering and acknowledging the place of what is not visible, perhaps even not accessible. To ask for a re-conceptualization is to ask for an understanding that begins to notice and to learn from what is usually discounted, ignored, excluded or occluded. This too is a task of some danger.

I want to introduce a third story, an ancient story that troubles me. It serves as parable for me, raising questions about making things visible. It makes me wonder about learning and the consequence of discovery. It makes me wonder about the community of education and how it is sustained. I cite a version told by Michel de Certeau (1992) in *The mystic fable* and include a few of his comments about it. More of my responses to the story and questions that linger from it will come later in the text.

*The excluded one makes possible an entire circulation.*

In this monastery there was a virgin who pretended to be mad, possessed by a demon. The others became so disgusted with her that no one ate with her, which she preferred. Wandering through the kitchen she would render any service. She was, as they say, the sponge of the monastery. In reality, she was accomplishing what is written: "If someone intends to be wise among us in this life, let him become a fool to become wise." She had tied a rag around her head—all the others are shaven and wear hoods—and it is in that attire that she performed her duties. Of the four hundred (sisters), not one ever saw her chew
anything during the years of her life; she never sat at table; she never broke bread with others. She was happy with the crumbs she wiped up and the water from the pots and pans she scoured, without offending anyone, without murmuring, without speaking little or much, though she was beaten with blows, insulted, laden with curses, and treated with disgust.

Behold an angel appeared to the saintly man Piteroum, an anchoret who had proven himself and resided at (Mount) Porphyite. The angel said to him: "Why do you have a good opinion of yourself? Because of your religious life and the place where you live? Do you want to see a woman more religious than yourself? Go to the monastery of the Tabenneoit women and there you will find one with a scarf wrapped around her head. She is better than you. Contending with that crowd, she has never turned her heart from God, whereas you, who stay here, in thought you wander in through the cities."

He who had never gone out set forth. He asked the superiors to let him into the monastery of women. Since he was famous and already old, they did not hesitate to let him enter. Once he had entered, he asked to see them all. But she did not show herself. At last he said to them: "Bring me all of them. One is missing." They told him: "We have an idiot [sale] within, in the kitchen." It is thus that one referred to the sick. He told them: "Have her come also that I may see her." They went to call her. She refused, perhaps because she realized what was happening, or even because she had had a revelation of it. They dragged her away by force and told her: "The saintly man Piteroum wants to see you." He was greatly renowned.

When she was there, he saw the rag on her head and falling at her feet, said to her: "Bless me Mother [Amma]." Like him she also fell at his feet saying: "You bless me, Lord [Kurie]." At this point, all the women were enraptured. They said to the saintly man: Father [Abba] do not take this to be an insult: she is an idiot [salé]." Piteroum said to them all: "You are the ones who are idiots [salai], for she is the one for me and for you our
mother [Ammas]"—that is how the spiritual guides were referred to—"and I pray that I may be found worthy of her on that day of judgment." At these words they fell at the feet of the monk, confessing all manner of things: one had sprinkled her with dishwater, another had pummeled her, another had made her nose swell up. . . . In a word, they all had many abuses to confess. Having prayed for them, he went away.

A few days later, unable to bear her sisters' esteem and admiration, overwhelmed by their demands for pardon, she left the convent. Where she went, where she hid herself, how she ended her days, no one has found out. (de Certeau, 1992, p. 32-33)

De Certeau explores this story at considerable length in his text, struggling with its implications. Its mystery catches me up as well. I wonder what it might be saying to me. I wonder about making visible, about searching for more understanding. I wonder about learning how little I know. De Certeau (1992) wonders too:

. . . the idiot is totally within the unsymbolizable thing that resists meaning. She takes up herself the body's most humble functions; she loses herself in the unassertable, below the level of all language. But this 'disgusting' castaway makes possible for the other women the sharing of meals, the community of vestiary and corporeal signs indicating that they have been chosen, the communication of words. The excluded one renders possible the entire circulation. (p. 34)

I, like Piteroum, am setting out on a journey of discovery. I, like Piteroum, feel called to that journey. What excluded one will I discover? What disturbances will I cause? Who makes possible the
circulation of this work? Of education? What sustains my living and the communities in which I live? What am I to do with: "The excluded one makes possible the entire circulation?"

I live with a deep sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. I live with a fear that my attempt to write of spirituality and education will not do what it hopes to do: to open a way of considering spirituality that will allow an open-ended and on-going engagement of it in sites of education. I imagine the spiritual journey as incomplete—I do so because of the fragile state of my own journey. I imagine the spiritual journey as frequently uncharted. That seems to be how I am going, never sure where or what is next. I imagine the process to be difficult and awkward. I can only write that that is how I feel, that is how it is and has been for me. Yet, I am grateful for that as it is beginning to teach me how to listen and pay attention. It is teaching me to doubt and pull back from certainty. These are things that I think I need to learn to beCOME spiritual in my life journey. I am learning to teach others that uncertainty is a possible journey.

not having it all together

And in the middle of writing this page, a student, phoning to ask for an essay extension, said thanks for suggesting that being in-process and incomplete was acceptable. She told me how sceptical she had been registering in a course on spirituality (Spirituality in the Care of Children and Youth) but how, through the process of the course, it had engaged her; how it had liberated her to not feel she had to have it all together. It was one of only two courses in her university study that had
engaged her whole life. She was relieved that she did not have to get somewhere else to be spiritual, to be other than who she was. Now she could go on without having to have it together. She was on her way and she could live there, not judging it to be wrong because it was broken and difficult. Her phone call encouraged me.

I know that in the context of teaching, in the responsive interaction of personal encounter, I can live in a way that opens spirituality to engagement, to understanding and hope. I can respond (re spondere: promise back, return the vow). It is possible in those human moments to be attuned to readiness and reaching. The challenge of this text is to open a textual space of study and research that is also responsive. To make living space—in writing, in study, in inquiry, in education—for spirituality.
Section I

In Search of the Spiritual

Philosophy was a method of spiritual progress which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being. Thus, philosophy was a way of life, both in its exercise and effort to achieve wisdom, and in its goal, wisdom itself. For real wisdom does not merely cause us to know: it makes us "be" in a different way. Both the grandeur and the paradox of ancient philosophy are that it was, at one and the same time, conscious of the fact that wisdom is inaccessible, and convinced of pursuing spiritual progress. . . . The ancients knew that they would never be able to realize wisdom within themselves as a stable, definitive state, but at least they hoped to accede to it in certain privileged moments, and wisdom was the transcendent norm which guided their action.

Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life
First Chapter Prelude

Every journey begins with a single step: being underway often includes stumbling. I keep beginning: a series of stutter steps, hesitant, reaching. I am trying to find the best step forward: right or left? Which way to go, to move? I am trying to find a textual residence, a dwelling place for spirituality. I embrace narrative as host. Narrative becomes a way to tell my journey and a way to carry spirit. Narrative becomes an opening that stays open for stumbling, for reaching, for movement forward.

In beginning to tell the story of my text I become aware of duration: of how long a journey this is, of its indeterminate beginning, of the pliability of time. I become aware of delicate questions of space: of inner space, of narratives making space, and of narratives being held within: in memories, in minds, in people. I become aware of parable—stories and their connections—and many possible parallel flows: education, writing, inquiry, reading, living.

If narrative is host and the story is of my journey and if the text is my writing, what message is being voiced? What/whose voices are arising in the story that will make the spiritual known? What/whose demands may limit the knowing? What illusions may lead me astray?

In beginning by telling the tale of the text, the trembling of my own journey, the questions and disturbances of my course begin to surface, begin to be known. The written journey begins and the lived journey becomes resource, comes into play.
Chapter 1

A Tale of a Text—Thinking Parabolically

All of us make up our lives out of the cracks in the walls of our past memories and the unicorn footprints of our futures. The making of a life is similar to the making of a text. We live by reading our own stories. We read by recall and imagination. A sacred text is made by making up what is felt to be already there, like a life. A sacred text is an impression in stone or imagination filling up the maker of the space.

Lynda Sexson, *Ordinarily Sacred*

**Beginning: in the midst of.**

*Beginning (again)*

We were walking on the streets of Toronto. It was a warm summer evening. I was crying. "I'm tired of starting over. It feels like, no matter what I do, it gets wiped out and I am left with nothing and have to begin again. I want to be able to build something. To have it left. I can't keep starting again."

I don't remember him saying much in return, just walking, keeping me company, helping me think it might be possible.

I don't know that it hasn't always been true: that I am always, in some way, starting over. That building is always beginning (again). That living is not about monuments left behind but about what is here, now: the present action, the current passage.

Giving birth to a text is a deliberate labor: a long and delicate process. Here, near the end of the process of making this text, I am
writing a beginning, aware of the tensions and difficulties that exist in a writing journey. To tell the tale of a text is to adopt narrative as the host (Latin, hospes

-itis (m) host, entertainer). Narrative provides a hospitable space to explore spirituality, to consider education, to entertain thoughts and ideas that link the two. Spaces inside stories. Stories as vessels: containers to hold, containers to pour out from. Stories as vessels: ships for journeys across the waters, on the waters, in the waters. Stories as vessels: vas, blood vessels that carry life blood, the vital force of lives, of people.

But as host (Latin, hospes

-itis (m) guest, visitor, friend, stranger, foreigner) narrative may come from beyond me bringing relations and difference into my life, into my midst. Narrative requires welcome, embrace; narrative is temporary, brings the difference of o(0)ther into my life.

Narrative, as host (Latin, multitudo

-inis (f) immense number) for this inquiry, provides the opportunity for diversity, for multiplicity and generativity. Narrative admits a diffusion of possibility: interpretations, re-telling, re-working. Narrative multiplies the possibilities.

Narrative, as host (Latin, hostia

-ae (f) wafer) for this inquiry, serves as a source of nourishment. It invokes mystery and links me to spiritual traditions, to imagination. Narrative is palatable, substantial. It can be chewed on, digested, pondered, reflected.

The shape of a vessel is a critical consideration in its use. In telling this tale, I am presenting the nature of this vessel (this text), in order that its lines be acknowledged. I am describing its themes and qualities—its working ability—suggesting that it will be suitable for
passage on this journey, suitable for my journey of discovery, that it will hold what it needs to hold. The lines of my vessel are multiple. They are blended and linked. The process of writing, the nature of inquiry, the practice of spirituality become aligned, parallel, parabolic (from the Greek, *para* beside): lines moving, streams in a similar flow.

The work of my inquiry is to form a text that explores spirituality, re-conceptualizes spirituality. By telling my own story, by explicating the movement of the spiritual in the spaces of my life, I offer my experience as text—a story within this story—open to a reading that includes spirituality. The ordering of this text, its structure and movement, assumes that making a text and making a life are parabolic. Living and writing are inter-nested. There is a degree of self-consciousness, an attention to the qualities that shape (in-form) both writing and living.

Yet, there is no clear first moment in writing, in inquiry. Nor can I mark the beginning of the spiritual journey that lead me to this inquiry. I am telling a story with an indeterminate beginning, picking up the story in the middle.

*In the sand*

I was standing on a beach knowing my life had to move on. I decided it was time to do so. With my toe, I carved a line in front of me, a small trench in the sand, and stepped over. I walked a few steps with a sense of release. I had made the choice. It was a new start. I had begun. I was moving on. Then I turned and looked behind and saw the steps, my footprints, that led up to the line I had just crossed. I saw the
deeper marks of standing: my weight marked on the earth. I realized that I could not see where I had come down onto the beach. I thought of other walks on this shore: tides erasing my passage.

I might claim a moment of choice but I could not forget the longer journey of coming to the choice. It was nested, as I was, in a larger movement of life.

I heard the waves breaking as the tide began to climb the shore:
Bay of Fundy beaches disappear quickly. I moved away.

A text has a beginning: the first part of an arrangement of writing in a form ordered and structured, with numbered pages, and a considered progression of ideas, understanding, and insight. But the beginning of a text is a moment nested in a longer flow, formed in the midst of writing. The process of writing is unlike the product. The process of writing and the text produced have different rhythms, different sensibilities. The work of writing is uneven, untidy, irregular, stretched across days and weeks. A text lies on the page(s), structured, delineated, composed. "The making of a life is similar to the making of a text," says Lynda Sexson (in Moore, 1996, p. 54). Living is a spiritual journey. The spiritual journey draws closer to the process of writing than to the text produced. The challenge at hand is to make the text tell of the journey.

Of the current of time: a first consideration

Consider the current of time in writing. The process of writing involves one flow of time, the written text displays another. A written
text displays an ordered time that is not the experience of time in its assemblage. The structure of time in a written text is almost linear—beginning, middle, end—not reversible, though perhaps cyclical. The process of writing moves through different experiences of time: chaotic, non-linear, reversible, cyclical. Time fluctuates. Things—ideas, themes, insights, connections, events—return: recur. Moments coincide, adhere, and coalesce. Things break in, fall away, dissolve, appear uninvited. Through time, a text is assembled, (re)ordered, and edited into a finished form.

During the process of writing, the text remains incomplete. As a life. I cannot imagine it as finished. It will have a "final" form: at some point I will stop (re)writing, stop editing, stop. But even then, the text is not closed. In hermeneutics, the text is always open to another reading, another interpretation. The finished, written text remains open. In post-modern tradition (already it is historic) the text is beyond the control of the author, subject to influences beyond itself, and embedded with messages that are not deliberate. I am also describing my life: subject to influences beyond me, beyond my control; embedded with messages, with signs that are not deliberate; and open to be read by others. Living remains open, current. "We live by reading our own stories."

Time is a factor in understanding the spiritual. The spiritual is also not a linear process. One thing does not always follow another. Sometimes what arises later is from before. I discover traces in my own poetry and journals of ideas and insights that were there before I knew them. I discover that I have companions in thought and idea from other times who become closer to me than much of the present, of
present ideas and theories. I discover that the world of spirit and mind (a single word: esprit in French) is a place of flow, of fluctuations. I wonder if what is beyond me is not drawing me, calling me to this task? Am I caught up in a current that compels me to go this way? Is the journey of my life preparation for writing, for what is now be/com/ing?

Writing—like a spiritual practice—is a way of paying attention, of noticing. Writing is acknowledging the traces, letting them have a place. It is seeking the company of voices, from across time(s), to speak to an inquiry, to a journey. Writing illustrates a truer spiritual parabolic in its process than it offers in its product. Understanding may appear, at the end, to be settled, solid but in the process of living, of developing a spirituality, of writing, shift and change are the operative qualities. In the middle of the journey what was so near at the beginning seems far away. Things—ideas, insights, connections, events—move, appear, and disappear. Things break into thinking and imagination to become words on a page, lived experiences in a life. As in writing, so it is with spirit: there are irruptions that mark a life, out-of-control amendments that change the course of be/com/ing, that become inscribed in a life.

The parabolic: a second consideration

To understand the parabolic nature of writing, living and spirituality, I pause to consider: If making a text and making a life are similar (parabolic), then perhaps a graph may illustrate their relation. The making of a text—writing—must intersect with the reading of a text, the text written. At some point they are in common. Therefore, the making of a text becomes one axis and the reading of a text serves as
the other axes for the line: making a life. The line scribed is a parabola of living that never reaches either the making or the reading of text: only drawing close.

A Parabolic of Living on the Axes of Reading and Making a Text.

I wonder, however, about the movement of lines in the graph. Does the line of living fall toward reading having begun near making? Does it rise from making toward reading? Or does life arise from reading to move toward making? Which way does a life move? Does life begin in the middle, at the furthest point from either reading or making and flow toward both?

If the making of a life is similar to the making of text, and also, hermeneutically, to the reading of a text, perhaps both the axes, making
and reading, apparent as straight lines in the graph, are actually parabolas on other axes infinitely extended so that they appear here as intersecting straight lines. Perhaps they are sets of inter-linked parabolic curves on a variety of axes. Perhaps the spin of dimension and axes make a visualization impossible. Perhaps to understand the form of the similarity of making a text (writing), reading hermeneutically, and making a life (be/com/ing), the visual image should be:

Parabolic Parallels: Writing, Reading, Living . . .

I am drawing lines: parabola (Greek *parabole*, a placing alongside, comparison, parabola)—writing, reading, living. In so doing, I offer my story, my version of journey, my account of considering spirituality. I add a fourth curve in the set: the spiritual journey as another parabola, another similar movement.
I risk my own story of journey as parable (Greek *parabolos*, venturesome, exposing oneself). Perhaps it is not clear. Perhaps it is insufficient for the task. Perhaps my journey, my account is too slight, too short to notice the curve, the coming close. Perhaps my living has not the grace of a simple curve but is a muddled erratic line. Yet it serves as source for this inquiry. I add a fifth curve.

The work of inquiry, of seeking becomes another parabola. I write of the spiritual through my own experience, my journey. I am holding to the claims of my assumptions—ones yet to be made in this order of the written text (see Chapter 3)—that the spiritual is imminent, inherent, that it arises in the midst of life. I am the site of this inquiry. I explore the spiritual through my own journey of writing, through making a text, through making my life. My inquiry is located in my interest (*inter esse*: being in the midst of). I tell of my own journey, risking exposure through parable, noting inquiry, offering my spiritual journey in writing, for/as learning.

Coda to a struggle

After a poem has burst
onto a page
and formed its life
there, boldly,
it scares me.
It seems bigger stronger
rawer than I wanted,
saying too much:
leaving me uncovered.
I imagine a laminar flow: inquiry, writing, spirit, life, reading, education. The layers move together, mingling, blending as currents, as parallels. My inquiry is also located in education. Another line. Its provoking questions now seem simplistic: What does spirituality have to do with education? What does education have to do with spirituality? Is there a connection between spirituality and education? How is spirituality human and what does its humanness have to do with education?

Writing has become a method of inquiry, demonstrating in its process a practice of understanding that models a spiritual practice of paying attention, of noticing. The understanding that links living, writing, spirit, and education is being formed as I go along. It is in the discovery of writing that I notice the links. I am becoming aware of relations being formed: many relations, many connections. Things draw near to one another: spirit and education, education and inquiry, inquiry and writing, writing and spirit, writing and education, spirit and inquiry. They are never the same: always asymptotic: close yet retaining their difference.

They provide a way to think about mystery, drawing close but never arriving: infinitely leaving space, allowing movement and impermanence. The asymptote never arrives, "it allows us to think about infinity, although it does not represent infinity, which is not directly representable" (Kovel, 1991, p. 179). There is a way of considering a different kind of thinking: "The spiritual mind can accept some such modelling to predicate the un-predicate-able" (p. 179). A methodology of imaginaries is a way of considering that does not work through metaphors of equivalencies—this is that, this stands for that—
but a way of imagining that is parabolic, that provokes thinking in different forms, suggesting connections, similarities, blending.

I am aware that the form of this knowledge is not a landscape but a current: a flow with liquid properties. Writing has taught me this, and life, in its temporal journey. Reading has brought me companions, reassuring voices, and deeper understanding. Through reading I join voices from other cultures, other times. Before me are the connections to be explored in this inquiry. At the heart of the flow is spirit. Around it swirls life and writing, education and inquiry.

Aside: heart of the flow — flow of the heart. at the core. in the midst of the flow. spirit. i am shifting in and out of metaphorical, to literal, and back, playing with images and slippery borders. although i am not writing literally, i imagine these suggestions in substantial terms. flow in a tube with circular layers of uncertain edges. the principle of *clinamen* at work in which there is always an inclination for a flow to disturb and become turbulent so that something new happens, so that crossover and blending occur.
**Space: another consideration**

I am writing parabolically because I want to underline something of the methodology of discovery that has informed the research: the inquiry and writing of this text. In this text, in writing of spirituality, I resort to narratives and the (internal) spaces they create. Narratives serve as vessels, having spaces within them to carry messages, as containers to hold content, as blood vessels to keep things alive, circulating, and vibrant. Narratives create inner spaces in a hearer/reader as they take up residence to live and work in the imagination: irritating, confounding, provoking (see Section II). Narratives live in us in a way that we become their vessels, carrying them, passing them on. They create spaces for movement in us.

In order to engage spirituality, I propose imaginaries and parables as a means of creating space(s) for flow and movement: spaces in the narratives, spaces in thinking/for thinking. Each parable serves as a consideration, a way to wonder about spirituality, about writing, about living, about education: trying to notice linkages and connections that arise from its images. Each parable allows for a different extension of thought, a different glimpse of what is being considered.

I suggest that writing, inquiry, spirituality follow a course, a thalweg that also is the course of education. They flow similarly, down toward the sea along a channel, a river-bed. Inquiry, writing, spirituality, education flow and shape the landscape they traverse. They are currents of life, shaping space, being shaped by it. They follow a way of asking, of remaining open, of accepting what is given, of adding, of attending. They are a kind of practice of lived and living experience. There is a commonality to these qualities of flux that
connect and link writing, inquiry, education, and spirituality. They share a way: a practice that is a kind of be/com/ing.

Imagination: a fourth consideration

Imagination is necessary to understand the spiritual. I am suggesting that spirit can only be understood indirectly, through imaginaries, parables, and narratives. The spiritual is an on-going, shifting process: a practice. As is writing. As is the nature of this inquiry. An understanding of spirit is a matter of perception, a way of noticing that requires a shift in imagination, a shift in attention. It is also a practice of be/com/ing. Writing is a model. Inquiry is another. Education is another. The spiritual is entwined in each of these reachings. Spirituality is a practice of living, of human be/com/ing that remains open, that attends, that wonders—inquires and respects, that flows, fluctuates, that seeks.

My insight comes, not in discovering spirituality, nor proving it but rather through writing, through story telling. Through a gathering of voices, I am engaging in a process that is parabolic of spiritual engagement. I have chosen to let writing shape the course and process of my inquiry; to let the demands of writing be directive; and not to select a way of inquiry that produces material that must be written (up) into a final form. My inquiry is (in) journey(ing).

I am aware of a necessity to locate the spiritual in the personal, choosing to stay in the midst of experience, subject to its influences, shifts and movements. I note those movements, to trace the living experience of the spiritual. I do not imagine an objective reading of my
experience. I chose to stay entangled. I have realized, in my quest, that I must write of the spirit in and through my own story, through an inquiry rooted in me.

I write in the hope that the text will be a vessel for spirit: a place of passage and a way across. I live with a sense of the fragility of life and the uncertainty of writing. They inform my sense of the spiritual and the quality of spirituality that I will pursue throughout this text.

Aside: inform: in-form. there is shaping being done that can be understood as formation: being in-formed. as vessels, humans are shaped by what we contain: our lives and thinking are pliable, not immune to being altered. my sense of fragility, my experience of uncertainty and the insecurity that such experience fosters does shape my way and means of understanding the spiritual, how it may be expressed, and how it works in my life.

_traces from a journal_

the spirit, freedom, truth: out breaks of liberty
(some connections hiding in this triad: an inadvertent, indissoluble linkage)

it is not a call to spectacle or significance
it is (the hope) of life in the midst, wherever we are found
find ourselves: so often missing, so often lost
the gift of those brief moments of irruption
a short brief turn that may be locked out occluded
that remains, awaiting letting in.

Three Problematics

One: "I have realized in my quest that I must write of the spirit in and through my own story, through an inquiry rooted in me."

Having already made this claim, I acknowledge that it is necessary to establish a methodological tension around it. In writing of a topic, one becomes a messenger of the topic, transmitting the insights of an inquiry. I am writing of spirituality through a self-conscious act of writing (of) my own spiritual journey. I am doing this as a necessary part of my education: learning of spirituality in/through noting its work in me. In trying to re-conceptualize spirituality as educationally necessary I work from my own story and the stories I know and tell.

I have already noted that to write personally, to tell my own story is a risk. My story, my life may not be adequate to serve as example. My writing may not venture far enough in telling of spirit in my life. I write with a degree of discomfort, uncertain about the potential of such a course.

My discomfort is furthered by my reading of a section of Michel Serres' (1995c) Angels a modern myth. He argues that the messenger may get in the road of the message by becoming visible. His answer to the question: "Can we propose a code of practice for messengers: how
not to steal the thing that is transmitted?" is: ". . . that one should be prepared to fade oneself out behind the message" (p. 101). The messenger "must disappear, or write himself out of the picture, in order that the recipient hear the words of the person who sent the message and not the messenger" (p. 99). Who is sending this text? As the writer, am I merely the messenger or by foregrounding my own story, do I come to block the message? Am I the source of the message of the text?

The scholarly practice of becoming invisible through the use of the third person in written texts and through assumptions of objectivity or distance from research and the research subjects is an attempt to guard against the messenger becoming too visible. But in an odd way this textual humility has had the reverse impact and has made the slightly out-of-sight but ever-present researcher/writer the most powerful position. Objectivity, neutrality is the strongest place. Those who speak and write from it have the ultimate claim of legitimacy. The messenger is more powerful than the message, even in invisibility. The message is claimed as true because of how the messenger gets it and delivers it. Its strength is not its own but its messenger's and the messenger's method.

I am proposing a reversal in this text, hoping that it is possible, by stepping into the foreground, to become invisible and allow the text into the foreground. I do so because of several things. Serres (1995c) notes that a message has a source. I am claiming a dynamic in which the flux speaks through me (Caputo, 1987). But I am also claiming that to re-present the spiritual in a text cannot be done from a position of distance but only from in-the-midst-of. The necessity I face is to write of the spiritual as I engage it and therefore to write of it through my
own story. In the process, I risk becoming a bad messenger; I risk being too visible and blocking the message from elsewhere.

It is my hope that there is a kind of powerlessness in this process that will allow me to disappear. I hope that the loss of objectivity will not produce a kind of dominance of my story but a tentative and open uncertainty that will allow the spiritual to become evident. I hope that the parable inherent in this move will model, will suggest the vulnerability necessary to engage the spiritual, to re-conceptualize it as an opening to possibility in education. It is my hope that that becomes the impact of this research and its writing (up). I have two reasons for thinking this is possible.

i) A number of years ago I took up a personal writing project to pen a series of love poems that were grounded in the experience of love, in the whole exchange of living, including sensual and sexual experience. I was concerned, after reading a lot of love poetry, that I did not want to write poems dominated by vivid descriptions of body parts and sexual activity, but ones that edged into a fuller sense of the experience of love in living. The poems were evocative and I was asked to read them in public. My partner was quite anxious that she would be "on view" in them, even naked, as she was in the poems. It took considerable effort on my part to convince her that she would not be the focus of people's imaginations. She gave her permission to read them in public. A friend who heard the poems assured her that throughout the listening she was not imagining my partner, she was imagining herself.

There was no way to write love poetry without describing the loved-one and the dynamics of loving. It was necessary to foreground
my experience of love and therefore also, my lover. It was not a process of objectifying or abstracting. Similarly, I cannot write about spirituality without the dynamic of my own spiritual journey. I must write of it as the grounding experience of my understanding and inquiry. May I become as invisible to the reader as my lover was to the audience of my poems.

ii) John Caputo (1987, p. 288 ff.) takes on the "mystery of the person" and the quality of "withdrawal" that "shelters hidden powers" which allows "all things (to) be what and how they are." He draws on the "old word per-sona, per-sonare, the person as sounding through, resonating" as a way to explain this dynamic in which there is an "interplay between mask and voice." The term arises from the masks of the Greek theatre and Caputo uses this to acknowledge that there is a "mediation" in the space between the identity of the speaker and the words. The voice is projected and the "words are dispersed and disseminated and fall outside oneself all over the stage, while the speaker remains concealed." And so I imagine this text as the personal mask through which I am projecting words, concepts, re-conceptualizations out onto the stage of education. It is my hope that I withdraw through this process and become or remain invisible, mediated through the text, where the text becomes the messenger, reversing foreground and background so that it speaks through me and not merely I through it. And if this happens, if this succeeds, the flux may be given voice through me, through the text. The flux will be mediated through my persona and the message will be mediated through the text. The text will remain rooted in my personal experience but because it is personal there will be withdrawal and
distance. Caputo claims that "per-sona" is "the opening through which the flux resonates" (p. 290). And so I am offering a personal text to articulate the flux. I imagine the flux as a parabolic of spirit. It will speak through my personal story and if Caputo is right, I will disappear through withdrawal, and the forgetfulness of lethe, hiding in the a-letheia of truth.

traces from a journal

i have been afraid to declare the slightness of my own journey, the scale.

truth utters affirmation not judgment, he said,

weakening the voice of self abuse and critique.

truth leads to humility not triumphalism, he said,

offering smallness and slightness some grace, some viability.

"What is truth?"—the question of abstraction, crippling the meeting dance, shutting out the paradox of the small containing the large; of the still holding the moving; denying the strength of the weak.

forgetting, he said, that now is not yet

and what is to come is already here.

forgetting that the negative is

so transient: a temporary resistance against the voice of hope:

All will be well. All will be well.
Two: "I write in the hope that the text will remain in motion, on edge; that its story will prove to be a vessel for spirit: a place of passage and a way across."

The second problematic that is already present arises through an assumption about form and content and their critical interplay. I assume that there is a critical link between the nature of a text, that is, its form, and the content it is offering, that is, what it is able to say. In other words, particular content can be expressed in a variety of forms. Some of those forms are restrictive of the content, limiting its comprehension and expression. Other forms may provide "better" expression and presentation of the content being explored. I am claiming a link between the nature of the inquiry and its presentational form and the demands of the topic of the inquiry.

In this case, I am writing about spirituality and education. I am invoking mystery, flux, uncertainty and asking that they remain in play. In order to do so, I have imagined that it is necessary to construct a text that demonstrates or embodies the necessity of remaining open to mystery, uncertainty, and is fluid. To approach the spiritual—in part, an expression of mystery—and to do so as a piece of academic research, is to establish a dynamic tension between the need to come to resolution: answering the questions of what does spirituality have to do with education and why it should be located in education, set against a necessity arising from the topic itself that demands that questions remain unresolved, that openness be included.
traces from a journal

perhaps i have lost my way because journeys of the spirit and toward the spiritual have a necessity of being lost. perhaps i am right where i should be at this stage of the journey. perhaps my sense of immobility is precisely the exact and true telling of where i am and how i am and that is all i have now and even this writing cannot free me from the excess of these conundrums.

joy for me is when the writing is fresh and creative. when it feels like movement is happening. editing is hard and slow, slow motion. the more i read and re-read the less sense what i have written makes. why am i saying all this? what is it for? can the spiritual be so obscure and distant?

I write to create a text that remains in motion, that stays open, becoming a vessel for spirit. i suggest that narrative provides the kind of openness and space for spirit to stay in motion, as flux, within its form. so i write a text that is in part, a narrative. i keep telling its story: the story of writing it and my story of spiritual journey and the process of discovering what links spirituality to education. i choose a form for this writing that contributes to its remaining open. i begin with a tale of a text told from the middle (in time) of writing the text. i am attempting to disturb the beginning, middle, end sense of the reader, of the text: to keep it open, to shift the focus to the process of writing, of be/com/ing; to indicate that the spiritual is not centered on conclusion but on quest and journey.
I choose a form that is a verbal collage or assemblage in which there are spaces and gaps in the text. I opt for interruptions, asides, influxes, stories, poems, dialogues, all of which are intended to leave space in the text, to include uncertainty and unanswered questions. I am describing the text: telling its story so that its character and qualities are understood as process; as an attempt to hold it open in a self-conscious way. I am trying to compound the layers of the flow: my story, the story of the text, an exploration of stories, the search for spirituality, the contemplation of the site of education.

In the simplest of ways, it becomes an exercise of kindergarten: show and tell. The text attempts to show what it is telling. It plays, as child in the garden, with whatever comes up, comes next. It assumes, as a child, that everything is possible, that everything can be tried and like the play of kindergarten it is serious formative work. It assumes that something can be made: a life, a text, an understanding of spirituality.

traces from a journal
should i write of movement and not be and feel swept away?
should i write of mystery and not feel lost and afraid?
should i write of turbulence and provocation and not feel confused and unsure?

My text, therefore, is not intended as conclusive but rather as suggestive. It is positing possibilities and openings to understand differently. It works through a radical hermeneutic model, keeping "the play in play" (Caputo, 1987, p. 283), discovering a form through the
process of writing rather than selecting a form and filling it with content. Because it attempts to own up "to the elusiveness which envelops us all" (p. 283) there will remain a degree of uncertainty about the text, its methods and its suggestions. Although its inquiry is serious business, there is (I hope) a degree of playfulness befitting an inquiry into matters of spirituality and education. In working this way I hope that the process of inquiry will lead to a re-conceptualization of spirituality that will open it to consideration in and for education.

I imagine the text as a vessel, itself in passage from one place to another. It is not anchored to a particular form, a particular mode of inquiry, a particular school of thought. It is moving from one to the other, from here to there. It is a form of inquiry that is quest. I hope it manages to carry the reader to a place where spirituality and education can be understood to include and accompany one another.

traces from a journal
i was thinking:

letting the flux in is the difficulty. escaping through the back door is a way out of difficulty. but it is keeping the flux out of life that is our great skill: the back door is seldom needed because there are so few ways into life.

sometimes writing is a letting in, a letting be
we admit the spirit in by the letting be, letting in, by staying open for just

that fragment: the flux irrupts into right now just that way:
why is it through words that spirit comes in?
Three: "I am aware of a necessity to locate the spiritual in the personal, choosing to stay in the midst of experience, subject to its influences, shifts and movements. I note those movements, to trace the living experience of the spiritual."

Not only a biography can be touched by an archetypal figure. There are archetypal styles of theory as well. Any theory that is affected by the *puer* will show dashing execution, an appeal to the extraordinary, and a show-off aestheticism. It will claim timelessness and universal validity, but forego the labors of proof. It will have that *puer* dance in it, will imagine ambitiously and rebel against convention. A *puer*-inspired theory will also limp among the facts, even collapse when met with the questioning inquiries of so-called reality, which is the position taken by the *puer*'s classical opponent, the gray-faced king or Saturn figure, old hardnose, hardass, hardhat. He wants statistics, studies, not images, visions, stories. Knowing about these constellations and how they affect what we read and how we react to what we read helps readers find where they are on the archetypal map—at one moment entranced by the revolution in ideas, at another thoroughly skeptical of the bullshit... (B)ecause theories are merely cooked up in the head or induced from cold data, they represent the dramas of myth in conceptual terms, and the drama is played out in arguments over paradigm shifts. (Hillman, 1996, p. 283)

*a trace from a journal*

write from the adolescent in me, she suggested.

Perhaps I am and that is the challenge of the theory that I am forming. Perhaps it is a youthful vision I have been following: a call to dance and play, a call to question, to stories and images. This is clearly
the kind of theory that has seized my soul and that seems to ring true, that is, resonates with me (Zwicky, 1992). This is where I find difficulty—a problematic—as I confront the task of the older, grayer ruler who wants more substance in the proving, who wants the theory grounded in solidity. Oh, how I resist this move, how I struggle to stay with the dance and movement, with the images and flow. The question becomes, in this dynamic and dilemma: Can I have both? Can I locate the voice of the gray-faced king in me and let that voice also speak? Am I to ignore this troubled and troubling voice that is also me? And when I meet this voice in the body of older, grayer academic men or women who seek a grave serious expression of things, why do I balk? What am I protecting in my voice of youth, in my dance?

traces from a journal and a dictionary
what an odd combination lies in the word Saturn—cold and gloomy and leaden but also associations with an orgy of merriment and reversed roles.
what play lingers in this confusion of metaphors: why does the gloomy and the riotously merry go together? why the cold mid-winter and the golden age of that is pure, simple and merry: Saturn—god of agriculture, of earth and earthiness?

I come to understand my theoretical place and play more clearly through this reflection and thinking. Writing leads me to a different place. My voice is puer—in the sense that Hillman uses it—generative, playful, imagistic, visionary. My challenge is to grow down into the
earth, to have site and location, to notice the spiritual in the ground, 
ground the notice of the spiritual, to ground the spirit of the noticing.

My story is not apart from knowing and being in this knowing. 
Always the serious gray business of living into practice, out of the sky, 
out of the lofty into the ground. Going down and in, staying down and 
in: not in a depressed state but in a grounded one. Digging: being 
situated. The traces are in my story. My journey, the record from my 
journals, poems, notes gives me a course to ground, to flow down.

Perhaps there is a challenge of aging in this, maturing to the 
earth. Perhaps the call is this way because the earth has been lost in 
rationalism and abstraction. Now the need is to go the other way, 
without losing the thinking and understanding that soaring has 
produced. In order to re-conceptualize spirituality as opening for 
education, it is toward a spirituality of attached living and grounded 
thinking; toward a spirituality of connection and not detachment that 
I must go. This will not be to dismiss detachment as a way of learning 
and connecting but to recognize coming down as part of the cycle of 
life.

_The teacher's flower_

She taught in an elementary school and was wanting to 
demonstrate their method of evaluation that was, to her 
thinking, so life-giving and affirmative. She stepped up the 
chalk-board and drew a series of five sketches. The first was a 
flower bulb with a stem just breaking through the ground. The 
second was the bulb with a long stem beginning to bud. Then
followed a full bud, then a partially open flower and then a fully open blossom.

She was triumphant: "It is so important to affirm growth and life. The children always have a sense of being recognized for growth and change."

"Well," I said, "What about the other half of the cycle? The dying? What about the petals falling away and the seed being dropped? What about the wilting in the cold? What about the dormancy of winter when nothing happens, when nothing is visible and the waiting for spring? Do children ever get rewarded for loss, for dying, for waiting? Are they praised for being inactive in the midst of necessary moratoria? Growth and blossoming include dying and being invisible?"

We spent a long hour discussing models of evaluation and the metaphors of approval that shape our children, that exclude half the process, the dark hidden times, the quiet lonely struggle, the invisible and necessary work of getting ready.

Perhaps the Saturn voice irritates me because it is the right inclination but the wrong way down to earth. It is a call to substantiate through measuring and certainty, to make a ground that is solid and can be managed. What I am seeking is a ground that is inspired and shifting: the ground of flow, of flux; the moving earth and the uncertain solid. I am looking for a way to ground the spiritual that is in keeping with the call that moves me. I have not found a way to still the inner voices that demand solidity to the point where winter (Saturn of another kind) can have play and let dormancy be, where
much can remain hidden and out of sight as a kind of necessity. I am hopeful of a spirituality that can let there be the Divine and mystery and transcendence but is in the midst of living, not far away, that is connected to the earth and to living practice, that is also practicable.

I resist Hillman's old-gray king who wants to make sense in terms of certainties, through existing in-place frames. I do not doubt their significance but I think their fixed and determined quality is a violation of the dance that has called me, that stirs my sense of the spiritual as fleeting, temporary, persistent, critical, elusive; as powerful but weak; as passive but ever engaging and acting. I am concerned to understand the spiritual as known-in-process through readiness and acceptance, through recognizing that the spirit cannot be commanded and ordered, structured into place but arises, irrupts, calls, beckons, engages, moves.

I seek the tangle of voices in me: different sayings, different traditions, different understanding of theory and practice. I project the voices of my conflict so that other people come to embody these voices as difficulty and challenge for me. I am drawn to what troubles me and resist what I am attracted to. I do not have a singular voice: my own voice is multiple and even confused: perhaps confusing because it is multiple. (The lines are curved and return, multiply and disperse.)

i am falling prey

i am falling, prey:
ensnared in the delicate designs
that take my feet and leave me falling
incapable of my own journey.
the floor is marked: dance this way.
step here: it commands.
this way to success, legitimacy
approval.
pray i am falling
pray not to loose my footing, my course
pray not to become prey.

approval is so sweet: so wonderfully calming
a seducer of souls and minds with honeyed lips
soft voices and degrees all wrapped in ribbons:
give up your difficulty.
this way. this way is sure.
certainty and embrace. lie here.
i am falling.
pray.
i long for approval
i have become encultured
to disbelieve myself, to needing acceptance
by institutions.
the cost is small: originality must
look like this, sound this way, fit in here.
it takes pruning, severance.
i am losing my warts and awkward wings.

pray. i am falling prey
my wings have lost their fluidity, their flap
i spiral down in the soft downy warmth
of normalcy.
no flight only feet and ground
proscribed steps
levels, daises.
i will be able to climb on solid ground
rooted in tradition.

i used to fly over these solid mounds filled
with the bones of scholars
and never notice the runes and markings
that told me of their significance.
they were only mounds and i could say
how odd i found them
or why they blocked the flow
or changed the wind
or provided temporary landing and shelter.

now they are marked with pathways
arrows and directions: from here to there.
do this first. colour within the lines.
read me first.
touch here. reveal that.
then you will know officially.
i used to laugh and come to these things from
elsewhere, from a loose flight and wind shift.
now i'm falling, falling
prey. pray.

i do not know if wings regenerate
when cut close.
i do not dance well as i am so clumsy
on the ground,
but have soared over ridges and seen the world
from there; seen the openings and tumbling
waterfall from the crest of the spray;
treetops from above;
ridden languid currents
along the spines of history
and teased a vortex
to get a further flight.

soon i will have earned my degree
pray, i am falling prey.
I write with hesitancy in the midst of the conflict of voices: *puer* and Saturn. I acknowledge a degree of uncertainty which I am convinced must remain in place in the inquiry underway. It forces me to be supple and fluid. It requires a degree of confidence: faith keeping with my call. It requires that I find the fluid ground from and in which I can move and feel as ground, not as falling, even if it is flight, lines of flight (Deleuze, 1993b). I am aware of a slowing down for focus and clarification.

*Walbran whisper*

We had hiked through the woods after crossing the bridge that was the end of the road. We had driven for a long time over the clear-cut landscape, past shaved mountains and hillsides. The woods swallowed us into their quiet as we wound our way along the river. We passed between two forest giants, still and rough barked, dripping and scented. The stream entered a pool with verdant ferns and mosses, with mist and the soft hiss of the nearby falls. Yet here in this place with the quiet, soft voices of friends, with the deep colours of green and the winter rain and snow beginning to fall, the pool is almost still and so clear that you can see the bottom, and small trout, rocks, pebbles, water plants. This is a sacred place by its being and it will fall soon to the mechanics of logging. This living-stream organism will be muddied.
I am writing about spirituality so that not all these spaces will be soiled, so that there will be verdant pools for us to see the bottom in us, to slow down the race to sea level, to find pause and connection in mid-winter. I was transported by the beauty of that moment and felt somehow connected to that space and time and to the call from it to live in so many ways, not one.

traces from a journal

why should i not feel helpless in trying to write of the spiritual

if i accept even some of Caputo's sense of the flux being abyssal;

if i accept the sense of loss of footing and the shift to movement

that i keep claiming?

there are moments when the accounts of Christ make sense: no home, no nest, temporary, on the go, excluded. not an appealing circumstance when weighed against the power of security and stability but it may be the way of life; a truthful encounter with the resistances to the flux and mystery breaking in.

right now it seems possible to think and live like that. to work at translating it into a practice: a praxis.
i hesitate to even think it:
Julian of Norwich: All will be well. All will be well.
to live in trust of that kind of gesture of grace: to accept difficulty and turbulence as being well: to not let the sinking feeling in my chest be the bottom of action but only an opening to listening better.

A further difficulty.

In becoming more aware of the vocational quality of my work and having a sense of being beckoned I have been alarmed by a reading from James Hillman's *The soul's code*. He tells a story, a little Scandinavian myth about a woodsman being lured out into the deeper woods by a beautiful and attractive figure. He pursues her until suddenly she turns around and her back is invisible and he cannot find her and is lost, far from food and familiar trails and he dies.

Hillman plays with the story as a myth about the pursuit of the invisible. He reads it as a myth about seeking what is alluring and may never be found. It chills me to think of finding myself out there and having no reference points, no way home, no way back. I seek to express or at least draw near the ineffable. I seek to articulate spirituality so that we may have some engagement, some relations that are spiritual, that include o(O)ther and m(M)ystery and what is divinity—that it might break in on us. Hillman points out that the task is not to try and reach it but to build a way, a bridge that it may come to us. I think the bridge he suggests is the narrative form. It may serve as bridge and opening. But I cannot certify this. I work with a sense that I can see something, then it turns around, I glance away and
it is gone and I am alone trying to make sense of what I had already seen.

The echoes in these lines make me anxious. Perhaps I am pursing a shimmering figure that will lead me only deeper into the woods. Perhaps I am trying to reach "it" when "it" has already come to me and will only withdraw as I pursue "it" (her?). Perhaps I have to think about accepting her (its) motion and movement and be still or at least, patient and waiting: attending as Simone Weil (1977) writes of it: open, ready and able to notice what is already there. Is it possible to write of this: to get it down? Perhaps I am chasing a dream across the woods and I need to retreat to safety, to claiming that it may be seen and known, but only in passing.

I have not been able to get a firm grip on anything. Perhaps I need to pay attention to that, to learn to stay at ease in the elusive encounter: here, but not held here. Passing and present, withdrawing and absent, nearby and coming, already gone and returning.

Perhaps my sense that the more I think of this, the more it becomes an endless chain of paradoxes, or my sense that movement and turbulence are gifts of understanding and I cannot be more secure or sure than that movement and turbulence are as close as I will come.

I am dangling out over an edge: falling because there does not seem to be enough ground beneath my feet. My falling seems to be a stumble off the academic high ground. Is it failure or flight? What can I say of the invisible back: that once I saw . . . that it is gone? Perhaps the myth is telling me something, trying to help me pay attention to the traces of loss in my journey. Perhaps the more I try to insure solidity and certainty, the emptier I will become. This seems to come
from the myth. The woodsman leaves his food to pursue the shimmering figure. I move away from sustenance in the quest to follow the figure I have glimpsed as she (it) withdraws. Perhaps emptiness is a necessary place. Perhaps a death: what am I supposed to do?

*traces from a journal*

so many years ago in that little play called "Gap" the answer to the question: what am I supposed to do? was another question: am I supposed to die? that is the question that never gets answered. no supposition can offer that answer: yes. no. maybe. whatever is necessary. whatever is best. whatever will help. whatever comes. whatever.

The text itself is calling me forward. As I write it opens up. It becomes eternal: that is unfinished and unfinishable. There is always more and never enough. Is this an inclination of the spirit? Perhaps spirit demands a different intensity: not so sure, not so confident, not so dogmatic. Openness may be the mark of whatever spirit brings. I wonder how certain my claims of uncertainty are? I recall a similar irony as Serres (1995c, p. 230) speaking of heaven and the Last Judgment says: "Love excludes exclusion. A contradiction in terms." Grace is welcome of all except those who live from exclusivity. My only certainty is uncertainty. My conclusion is opening. My text has begun.
Second Chapter Prelude

There are two actions of writing underway in this text. One is writing of my journey, the story of my be/com/ing-spiritual struggle. The other is the writing of my thinking: my study of spirituality. There is tension between these actions. I imagined that they would be the same. They are not. I am discovering that writing well of spirituality is difficult, more difficult than I expected. I always thought living well spiritually was the harder challenge. It is, but I am aware of its difficulties, through familiarity, as a life journey. Writing is newer in my life. It has different seductions, different complexities. It draws me in.

I have imagined the goal of my research to be a re-conceptualization of spirituality in and for education. I imagined this to be a task of study, re-thinking, and writing. I imagined that my own life would provide me one source of material for my study. I imagined that working with narratives would be another. I did not imagine that writing my own text would become the ground of some of the digging, some of the difficulty; that some of the spiritual struggle would be the work of writing—my relationship to writing and to making a text about spirituality. To write of spirituality and to write spiritually may be separate acts. I knew this. I hoped to do both. I did not imagine that it would be so easy to become lost in writing. I am drawn to writing and to thinking. I become fascinated with the process of idea and argument. I disappear into the ideas. Thinking becomes a place of disappearance. I disappear.
This chapter moves toward writing and thinking. Re-conceptualization is a task of writing and thinking. In this chapter I (re)-consider the assumptions that frame spirituality, spiritual, and spirit. What are these words? How do I mean them? I begin with deferral and stay with an ambiguity of meaning, noting the benefits. I am exploring possible meanings to re-conceive them as ways of opening spirituality as resource in and for education. I enter thinking to explore spirituality in search of clarity, in search of wisdom.

I am trying to find a way to open spirituality that includes thinking, that is thoughtful. There are constraints on understanding spirituality because of how it is now framed. I imagined that entering those frames was a way to loosen them: to play with concepts, to play with words in writing, to open spirituality to be understood differently.

But the danger is that writing may only produce another concept held within the frames? How can spirituality be set free from rationality? I work at the loosening: thinking becomes an act of study, a form of searching.
Chapter 2

Spirituality, Spiritual, Spirit: What Do I Mean?

Methodology: as in a certain style of sketching, one draws a line again and again, layering over previous attempts. No one of the lines alone is either sufficient or accurate. If one is lucky the shape will emerge from the accumulation of flawed attempts. (Although it may not be the shape one had thought it would be, had hoped for.)

Jan Zwicky, Lyric Philosophy

They always say, "But where is he?" The question assumes the philosopher must define at the outset a grounding, a base, a principle, that he must remain fixed on a foundation. The words *substance* or *substantive* or *statute* neatly sum up these presuppositions. In fact he must always be there, in the same place. But, as soon as you use the keys that are appropriate for the object in question, the places necessarily differ. So I wander. I let myself be led by fluctuations. I follow the relations and will soon regroup them, just as language regroups them with prepositions.

Michel Serres, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*

Openings, definitions, and deferral

During the course of my inquiry, I have trusted an inclination to defer definitional statements about spirituality, not wanting to enclose spirituality in the fixed space of a definition, preferring to hold it open. I hoped that a difference in understanding spirituality might emerge: one that would assist a re-conceptualization of spirituality. I discovered, links to Derrida's sense of deferral as part of understanding *différance*. Deferral keeps difference open. Difference remains unresolved, as difference. For me the practice of deferral was a
necessary act of resistance. Wen-Song Hwu suggested at the Curriculum Visions symposium (July 1997, University of Victoria) that: "Definitions distort—maybe to define is to distort." I was resisting a distortion that I perceived would narrow or enclose spirituality, restricting its possibilities.

To refuse to declare a certain position or approach, was not to avoid precision, but was intended to keep spirituality open, in motion—a way of staying open to mystery; a way of struggling with uncertainty. It led to an understanding of the spiritual not as defined ground but as fluid or flux. In the space that deferral allowed, my understanding was shifting, remaining in difference, thinking differently about spirituality, about education, about research. My inquiry was affected by being held open, by remaining uncertain.

Through my experience of discomfort and uncertainty, I came to a different understanding of research. To defer was to invoke a quality of mystery and stay with/in the unknown. I realized that educational research—all research—is driven by unknowns and not by knowns. The known can be repeated and catalogued, itemized and analyzed. An unknown is a source for inquiry. An unknown provides impetus to ask questions, to be perplexed, to seek understanding, response, and even answers. Spirituality became an engagement with the unknown that is not set on concluding, enclosing, or verifying. It became that which remains unfinished, moveable, and open to transitions.

I realized that I had a level of anxiety, perhaps a learned response, that spoke as internal voices, saturnine voices, demanding certainty. I felt the weight of a particular vision of knowledge, of education that had taught me to value rational clarity, good order and
authorial (or perhaps authoritative) control. To write of spirituality as I felt was necessary—uncertainly, open-endedly—left me in tension with my learned experience of knowledge. Could I retain the openness that spirituality was offering as a working space and as a potential way of (re)thinking and respond to my learned voices?

Something was going on around me. Spirituality itself, as topic, as consideration, was (and is) moving from the margins of cultural discourse to a more evident place in contemporary thinking. Popular media now reflect an increase of spiritual interest as stories of angels, religious beliefs, and mystic phenomena become more common. The religious and new age sections of book stores are expanding rapidly. Major cultural events invoke spirit. Most notable in Victoria was the "Spirit of '94" theme of the 1994 Commonwealth Games. Transit buses bear left-over slogans so I can still ride to the University of Victoria campus on the "Spirit of Barbados" or the "Spirit of Malawi." Another "spirit" appeared in the campus newspaper The Ring which featured photographs of a science Open House with a banner "Science spirit high at Open House" and a claim that the photographer had been sent "to capture the spirit of the event" (1997, October 31, p.1). Spirituality is also beginning to be expressed, cautiously, in academic settings, doctoral defenses, public forums, and classrooms. What do these words: spirituality, spiritual, spirit mean?

My reading of spirituality, spiritual, and spirit follows. I engage each of these terms separately, teasing them apart for consideration, attempting to open them to a re-engagement through re-thinking, conscious of the diversity and complexity of the post-modern. I do not imagine them as distinct but entangled, overlapping, blended. I write
with deferral in mind, to hold open a degree of uncertainty. I do so in order that spirituality retains a degree of difference in how it is understood, neither disappearing through occlusion nor becoming an entirely separate discourse isolated from relations and connections in the midst of living and learning. I hope to provoke a conversation about spirituality that will bring the spiritual into play in educational discourses and practices, including institutional practice. To re-order relations for education and spirituality I will be drawing these terms over and over, seeking a shape that allows for movement, for play.

The spiritual as human: changing assumptions

I consider humans as beings whose character includes a spiritual quality and practice that is in parallel to physical, intellectual, and emotional qualities and practices of being human. Each human quality may take different forms in different individuals depending on personal history: that is, life experiences, social context, and personal practice. I do not classify the spiritual, as tradition names it, a higher form of experience, but rather, a parallel form. Being emotional, being physical, being intellectual, being spiritual are ways of human be/com/ing in the world; are engagements with the world that are also ways of making sense of the world. None of these qualities is ever in isolation. Each is an element of personal character, articulated in what a person does or can do. A person is emotional and acts emotionally, is physical and acts physically, and is spiritual and acts spiritually.

Aside: questions of identity and self linger in these considerations. does it
make a difference to say: I consider humans as beings whose nature—rather than character—includes a spiritual quality? In accepting the post-modern claim that the self is a construct there is some discomfort in considering a formative or an already-in-place human character that is inherent and particular to each person. We accept that genetics combines with environment to produce a particular body but when it comes to personality or character we hesitate to assume that there may be the equivalent of an already-in-place qualitative form or shape—a genetic spiritual form (or code: see Hillman, 1997)—that, like a body, develops and grows depending on life experience and choices. I opted for "character" rather than "nature" to imply that the spiritual is "in-built," that it is part of human beingness. Becoming is also an issue. Humans adapt, grow and alter through the process of living. We live contextually and are engaged in social constructs of self, institutions, and culture. If there were not examples that we name as human inhumanity to other
humans we would not have to struggle with the implications of becoming. there are no guaranteed human results; no certain way to live well or to even define what living well is. humans call behaviour that animals do not do to one another as animal when humans do them to one another. animals do not kill for pleasure. humans do. animals have not resorted to mass torture or mass killing. humans have. what we become and how we become that is significant. becoming is played out throughout life. quality is involved in the nature of becoming. there is a double consideration: being—a quality of character that may have some originary aspect—and becoming—the on-going formation of the personality and character. be/com/ing indicates this multiple sense.

What shape does the spiritual take in the practice of living? If it is natural, inherent, why is it so invisible? What might bring it into focus, making it notable?
An analogy for consideration:

Imagine what school life would be like in a culture where it was assumed that students were not physical beings, that physicality was not significant. Although not sensible, assume that a culture accepts this philosophical turn. Therefore, no attention could be paid to physical exercise, physical fitness, nutrition, and health in a publicly funded school setting. The visible, active pieces of school curriculum and life pertaining to physical development and awareness would disappear. School—a purely intellectual activity—would be separated from physical activity and interest in things physical would be designated as an outside-of-education, personal concern that should take place under the care of the family, in the privacy of the home, or in "Gymnasia," special clubs, or other locations. Interest in physical development would be isolated to private external-to-public-education practice, that is, not available in schools.

There would not only be a direct loss of physical activity in school settings but also a significant change in the deeply held attitude to humans as physical beings. The range of experience of students in such a setting would begin to narrow. Their collective understanding of themselves as physical would atrophy. They might well experience a wide range of physical disorders that would go ignored, precisely because they were physical and the physical was not to be considered. There might be some members of a school community who continued to be physically active but their concern for fitness might be seen as extreme if it included concerns for diet, sex education, and nutrition breaks. Their
concerns would have no place in the common intellectual forum of school and their understanding of human life as physical would be marginalized, restricted, perhaps excluded, and even penalized. What form physical activity or exercise might take in their personal lives would and could not be shared or affirmed by the school culture under such an assumption. The attitude that physical activity was unacceptable or, if being practiced personally, was unimportant, would shape far more than school policy but the very lives and bodies of the students in that culture. Students whose families were not interested in physicality might never be given appropriate physical care and activity. Under such an assumption, it would not be the school's responsibility to attend to the physical.

What is assumed to be vital? How is it valued? How did it come to be valued or de-valued? Humans are aware and knowledgeable about what they assume is important and necessary. Their assumptions influence structures and attitudes. We explore and and develop what we acknowledge as important. Intellectual life is connected to thinking, to ideas, rationality and understanding, and must be developed. Physical life is connected to the body, to the corporeal nature of being alive, and must be cared for. Emotional life is expressive of feeling responses, and must be nurtured. What about the spiritual? How is it to be attended? What are its links in the practice of living?

No human qualities exist or are expressed in isolation. To express feelings or thoughts requires the body. Feelings happen in/through
bodies and between people. Thoughts occur in the midst of physical, emotional, and spiritual contexts, and are expressed in common forms of communication. "Thinking" as Heraclitus ambiguously states, "is shared by all" (43: XXXI, Kahn, 1979). Human thoughts, feelings, and bodies exist in the context of and in exchange with others.

**Assumptions for (re) thinking:**

How are we to understand the spiritual? Is it connected to physical, emotional, intellectual life? Does the spiritual link us together? Is it a response? To what? The framing assumptions about spirituality are critical in any re-conceptualization. I hope to open a way of thinking about the spiritual that is not enclosed by the following assumptions, ones that are currently common:

1: That the spiritual is expressed only in specific religious understandings or positions.

1.1: That all expressions of the spiritual are, de facto, religious expressions.

1.2: That all religious expressions are, de facto, spiritual.

2: That the spiritual is insubstantial and ungrounded.

3: That the spiritual always leads to a "ga-ga" factor in which incredible claims and interpretations are respected and treated as acceptable because they are designated as "spiritual" and cannot be questioned because they are so designated.

3.1: That any expressions of the spiritual in a public forum must be curtailed because they cause discomfort and embarrassment, and, they prevent thinking.
3.2: That the discomfort caused by the spiritual is an indication of its inappropriateness for public discourse.

4: That the spiritual will, of necessity, have or depend on a metaphysical leap to resolve some of the questions it implies.

4.1 That a metaphysical solution is an escape from present realities.

5: That the spiritual assumes and accepts transcendence as its definitive reality with an "ultimate" reality that is beyond the human present.

5.1 That transcendence is always part of a metaphysical move away from present reality.

I offer some alternate assumptions as possibilities for (re)thinking the spiritual, to re-open it for re-consideration:

1: That the spiritual is a generative impetus, immanent and inherent in life.

1.1: That the generative impetus is not dominant but dependent on opening and letting be for expression.

1.2: That it acts as a call or beckoning in seeking openings for expression.

1.3: That it is a form of turbulence or agitation: stirring up (to) life.

1.4: That it has a variety of expressed forms including that of physical, intelligent, and sentient forms.

2: That the spiritual, as implicate in life, is a matter of connections beyond the self (relations).

2.1: That these links beyond the self have a qualitative value which may be identified as "spirit."
2.2: That "spirit" may be an expression of personal, communal, or o(O)ther qualities.

   Aside: by o(O)ther i indicate a range of possibilities from what is not self, through stranger to outsider, to completely other—including the divine as Other. i may express a personal spirituality, as well as a community's spirituality. i may also express a spirituality that is a relation to o(O)ther, whomever, whatever that may be, in my living.

3: That the spiritual may take us to limits of thinking or understanding.

   3.1: That to acknowledge limits to understanding is not an escape from difficulty and present reality: that is, it is not a metaphysical leap.

   3.2: That which surpasses our comprehension is not temporary ignorance but an acknowledgment of an unencompassable that remains always as unencompassed.

4: That the spiritual is integrated with a whole range of other human qualities.

5: That the spiritual is grounded in human experience and is an expression of human response to life, and to questions of mystery and meaning.
6: That the spiritual is lived out and expressed in the practices, thinking and attention given by people as they live.

These assumptions lead to implications that affect how to think of the spiritual in the context of cultural and personal expressions in lived practice and in institutional forms. These include the following:

A: That religious constructs, beliefs and practices are attempts to exemplify, structure and consider the "call to life" inherent in be/com/ing human in particular cultural and historical contexts.

A.1: Some attempts to exemplify and consider the "call to life" may not take shape as religious beliefs or practices and remain personal and unstructured.

B: That there may be transcendent possibilities the nature of which, as transcendent, makes them incomprehensible. They "surpass the expressible" (Serres, 1997, p. 72). Attempts at expression are limiting, metaphoric by necessity, incomplete, and perhaps incoherent.

C: That attention to the spiritual is part of human be/com/ing and that such attention requires a range of experience, practice, and consideration.

D: That such attention has been common in human culture and is necessary for engaging life and life's difficulties.

E: That each era has expressed and seeks to express the spiritual in its thinking and understanding.

E.1: Our era is no exception: neither immune to the difficulties nor to the necessity of the spiritual being expressed.

These assumptions and implications suggest a sense of the spiritual which does not arise out there—beyond—but rather irrupts in the midst of daily experience, in the relations and exchanges that are the fabric
and texture of human life. The spiritual breaks out into life as it is being lived. To understand the spiritual is a process of opening to a multiplicity of possibilities, contradictions, and paradoxes.

What was will be again; what has been done will be done again; and there is nothing new under the sun.

_Ecclesiastes 1:9._ (Jerusalem Bible)

There is a challenge for understanding spirituality in the Ecclesiastical claim: to find a way that respects other/older wisdoms and their understanding, while forming expressions of the spiritual that respect contemporary discoveries, claims, and attitudes. The work is to move past the limitations of the first set of assumptions that insist on moving the spiritual out of the immediacy of human life experience into ethereal realities toward a re-conceptualization that is engaging, that leads to openings and possibilities for the inclusion of the spiritual in thinking, in reflection on life, and in the practice of living. The spiritual as praxis has been separated from its ideational, theoretical, and theological expositions. This has fostered the occlusion of the spiritual from the process of living and from the public work of education.

Such a separation has not always been part of Western tradition. There are and have been cultures that do not isolate or ignore spiritual practice and understanding in daily life. Pierre Hadot (1995) claims that early Greek philosophies were forms of spiritual exercises whose purpose was to assist the philosophers to live attentively, responsively, in the moment and to be disciplined in physics, logics, and ethics. The challenge was that of persistent transformation. Engaging the physical
world (physics), the world of thought (logics), and the world of relationships (ethics) required a disciplined spiritual practice. Spiritual life was not isolated to particular ethical-religious concerns but permeated all forms of understanding and engagement and required detachment, self-denial, and a disciplined thoughtful focus. The work of science (physics) and of rationality (logics) in considering the world were, according to Hadot's analysis, spiritual practices that demanded the same disciplines and attention as relational and ethical concerns (ethics). Spiritual life (philosophy) occurs in the midst of living, where the difficulties of paying attention, of being aware, and of being able to respond (response-able) to the immediacy of life are taken up in daily meditation, reflection, and spiritual practice. He traces spiritual practice from "Socrates to Foucault" arguing that spiritual exercises are, and have always been, integral to philosophy.

The spiritual is and needs to be entangled with living experience. Spiritual practice affects all of thought and living. Hadot argues that the mathematical and scientific successes of Greek culture were fostered by spiritual disciplines that liberated thinking to be imaginative and creative, going beyond the borders and limits of immediate understanding. The insights of Greek science and philosophy were the result of spiritual practices that opened thinking in physics and logics to new ways of comprehending the world.

Hadot traces the shifts that have occurred since that time in which the spiritual quality of philosophy was lost, moving it from a practice of a living, personal discipline to the realm of thought and idea, separate from a way of life. Philosophy becomes merely a matter of mind. Religion, separated from philosophy, takes up theology as its
ideational formulation and retains some link to spiritual practice through acknowledged spiritual disciplines. Modern culture inherits the perception, consequently, that the spiritual is limited to and structured primarily through religious beliefs.

To question that limitation—and accept the second set of assumptions—is to accept that the spiritual is manifest in acts of living; arises in the on-going process of life and struggle; and is evident in the difficulties and celebrations of living: in sorrow, death, and disease; through happiness, laughter, and joy. The spiritual becomes (again) part of the daily practice of living, as it is lived.

Yet, the spiritual often goes unnoticed in contemporary living. The call or beckoning to(ward) life is a slight and subtle ripple in the flux of living. I suggest that the spiritual is not solid but persistent, not dominant but slight. It may (apparently) not be there. The spiritual is, as a call to life, only that: an indication or gesture, a hint, an invitation. It is, in one sense, a provocation (pro-vocare: where the calling voice disturbs or agitates). The assumption that the spiritual is a creative, generative impetus in living, a form of turbulence or agitation that stirs up (to) life, is a critical piece of re-thinking the spiritual. As flow or flux the spiritual is already active and already in motion. I think of the spiritual as a flow within the flux of life, perhaps a current, but not separated and independent of the rest of the movement of living.

Aside: note: the spiritual as already-in-the-midst; the spiritual understood parabolically as flux and turbulence; the
spiritual being connected and mixed into life as lived and experienced; the spiritual as tentative, even gentle; the spiritual as potential intrusion, as unexpected irruption in the normal flow of life; the spiritual as easily ignored. Note also the paradoxical understandings that are as important: the spiritual as potentially overwhelming, demanding; as hard work requiring attention and discipline; the spiritual as occluded and excluded. It is not possible to "get" the spiritual down and clear in writing. As a flux, as o(0)ther, there is something impossible in a container of thinking. I am trying to indicate a dynamic, interactive, suggestive, shifting, relational, moving complex and follow it in a series of textual lines. It keeps getting away. Questions arise: sometimes as waves rushing up and over, sometimes in traces drifting off towards the horizons, sometimes as holes of every scale, and sometimes as silences, emptiness, and impossibility.

Being stubborn, I cling to this textual vessel to ride out this storm, to return to
If the spiritual is imperceptible and blended in, there are implications for life and how it is lived. The human tendency is to work at solidifying processes, experiences, and institutions in attempts to secure ourselves and our ways of life. Caputo (1987) explores this seduction away from difficulty toward solidification through the texts of contemporary philosophy. He offers a call to remain open to mystery and original difficulty, aware of and attentive to the disruptions of the flux. I read his text as generating a reconceptualization of the spiritual: to stay open to mystery is to engage the spiritual. The solidities of cultural ideas and institutions are resistances to an awkward regular engagement with difficulty, with flux and transformation. Consequently it is in the margins, on the edges, between solidities that the spiritual comes into play. Although immanent, the spiritual is not always evident, but is noticeable in the discontinuities and discomforts that disturb the smoothness of our flux management. The slightness of the spiritual in the regular flow of life, in the smoothness that we work so hard to achieve, may render it inconsequential and insubstantial for ordinary living. It is difficult to imagine a weak yet persistent provocation that is strengthened and included actively only when noticed, attended, and worked: in disturbance.
Aside: perhaps the noise of the flux is very loud but there is so much static, so much interference, such a din in the world that it appears relatively quiet. That kind of deafness makes it hard to hear anything, let alone a calling so deeply woven in. What kind of perception would be needed in order to hear calling? What sorts of filters do the noises of modernity provide? Is it possible to listen and not hear? To know and not understand?

The flux may go unnoticed beneath the weight of habit(s) and comfortable (and soothing) practices.

Aside: in attempts to stabilize ourselves against the uncertainty of mystery and the difficulty of turbulence do we humans not construct a variety of forms to contend with every possible irruption? We work at containing the erratic nature of flow/turbulence at the personal level through the construct of self, building over the flux of human living structures of the self, as solid as we can make them. At the communal level we build endless
institutions and forms to regulate and order relationships, movement, practice, and possibility. such inscriptions on the flux (Caputo's term) are always temporary but can appear permanent and stable. i wonder if a third building has not been the structures/strictures of religions that work to contain outbreaks or irruptions of the spiritual, moving the disturbance of the spiritual out to metaphysical distance away from the immediacy of living. such complete systems are management tools just like institutions and constructed selves. their goals are the same: security, stability, certainty, comfort, ease, and some guarantee of regularity (ever the goal of bodily functions!).

**Spirit: boundaries and relations**

Let me turn now to the word: spirit. In *History and Spirit*, Joel Kovel (1991) outlines a working framework for an understanding of spirit drawing on the work of Freud, Marx, Heidegger, and others. He offers his way of understanding spiritual, spirituality and spirit and claims that his book (italics in the original) is:
about the ‘spirit’ of its title; that is, what happens to us as the boundaries of the self give way. Or we could say that it is about the 'soul,' by which we shall mean the form of 'being' taken by the spiritual self. And it is about ‘spirituality,’ which we may define as the ways people seek to realize spirit and soul in their lives. (p. 1-2)

Kovel is convinced "that there is a quality, best called spiritual, which characterizes human beings and cannot be explained away psychologically" (p. 13). He constructs his view of the spiritual as a "basic, even original human condition" (p. 19) using "etymological and archaeological approaches" (p. 20).

... no single meaning of the word spiritual is logically prior to all the others, but they are all indicative of what spirit is about, as shards from a dig give clues to a lost civilization. . . . Spirit is not a substance or a place, but a kind of relationship which happens at certain points of human existence. We do not have a spirit; rather, we are spirit to the extent we achieve a certain kind of being. If body-mind is a unity, then spirit can be read as the coming-to-be of that unity. And this coming-to-be depends on the way we act and on our relationship to the world. . . . We find spirit refracted through language in five principal ways. . . (that) overlap to provide a kind of five-dimensional plenum within which the various meanings of the term may nest. The dimensions all interact and mutually determine each other, so that our distinction is actually quite artificial and no more than heuristic. In any case, it seems most useful to consider spirit from the standpoint of the following five significations:

◊ a vital force
◊ an occult or hidden being
◊ the authentic principle of a thing
◊ some relation to flesh, i.e., sexuality, or desire; the relation often being antagonistic
Kovel's claim that the spirit is not a possession of the self—"we do not have a spirit; rather, we are spirit"—renders spirit a quality of be/coming. Because it is qualitative and not a possessed object of the self, spirit is "a kind of relationship." Spirit is (in) relations.

I want to mark a pause at this point: a caesura, an interruption and not slide past this claim. Relations—all the links and connections beyond our selves—are complex, although they can be so simply stated. Relations include an entire range of connections and exchanges, each of which may have spiritual aspects, as expressions of the nature and quality of a person's spiritual timbre. Human relations cover a range from the intimacies of family life to the distance of occasional encounters, to interactions with strangers and unknown others. There are relations to other living things, plant, animal, and so on. There are relations to the earth, to the fabric of nature. There are relations to objects. There is relation to m(M)ystery and to what is unseen, including the Divine. Humans live in a current of relations, ever shifting and moving. The way we live those relations are expressions of spirit: our spirit.

I am not making an individualist claim of spirit here. The boundaries of spirit are not clear. Is the identity "me" as spirit a blending of the spirit of my family, my community, and the way of cultural life in which I find myself? Or, is the converse statement more accurate: that the spirit of community, family and way of life blends "me" in? It is possible that I am a site of their expression and not the site that includes them. Perhaps I am an extension/expression of the
genetic, physic, and spiritual impetus of my lineage, tradition, and circumstances. This is an unsettling way to articulate a sense of larger inclusion as the individual ceases to be the primary reference point. Perhaps it is a better and more honest understanding of spirit and the relations that are formed spiritually. I am working from within a culture that wants me to think of myself as original, unique, and independent. These may be cultural illusions or mythologies to sustain a way of life. To reflect on spirit and the relations that spirit engenders may shift how identity and independence are understood. To begin to think from an already-included threatens the assumptions of independence that are so dominant in North American culture. To admit that relations may originate beyond me; that they enfold me is to re-consider the structure and locus of relations and identity. David Bohm's (1987) idea of implicate order is one way to understand the mutual enfolding: every act of opening or unfolding is simultaneously an act of enfolding or covering of something else. There is no apart or outside of some relatedness. Humans are caught up in/by life. What is at stake here is the entangled nature of our residence in time and circumstance. We do not and cannot live without relations and connections.

When we think of spirit at the communal level, as being mixed into our lives, we need to recall that history is full of crowds and collectives that act singularly, moved by a common force, occasionally for the good of others, sometimes to the detriment of others and the world. Concentration camps are collective activities for both the victims and the perpetrators. Dr. Robert Krell, who works with Holocaust survivors in the Vancouver area and is himself a survivor and
a child of Holocaust survivors, when asked at the Victoria Hospice Conference ("Spiritual Care of the Dying," February, 1996) how he thought it was possible for human beings to have perpetrated the evil of the Holocaust on other humans, stated that the difference between victims and perpetrators is a matter of circumstance. All of us are immersed in and formed by contexts, making choices from them. We are not isolated or solitary in the inescapable current of relations. We are in the current and part of the current, as well as being separate from it and able to act in it.

If we consider spirit as a life-force then there is need to think beyond the individual, perhaps as far as acknowledging a divine life-force. These life-forces may be arising in us. John Caputo (1987) articulates some of the complexity of such a recognition drawing from Meister Eckhart's term *Gelassenheit*: "living without why" blended with "the modern idea of liberation."

The idea is to honor the divine spark within us all, or the law, or whatever superstructure one wants to invoke, in order to name the life which flows in and through others and us, to let all of us be the being which we are, to release all of us from manipulation and control and treat 'the beings which we are ourselves' with respect. (p. 266)

Acknowledgment of that which is beyond ourselves arising in us and shaping us is not an escape from difficulty but rather a plunging into living in the flux and with the challenge that:

We want to think *Gelassenheit* toward others, the sense of respect or reverence the other commands, which arises from the fact that
we know we are dealing here with deep waters. Other persons are places in the flux where the waters whirl about in a particularly bewildering way, where the woods are particularly dark and deep, where the cloud formations are mysterious, perplexing, inviting, even frightening. (p. 267)

Living with a sense that life may "flow in and through others and us" creates not a way out but a way into the responsibilities of relations. Each of us is a site of flux and a site in flux. We are resident in the flux and the flux is resident in us. Our relations make evident our character and quality. To respect others, to respect life, becomes a demand on our living. The etymology of relations provides some insights into the workings of that respect, as well as focusing attention on some of the links and themes of my work. What follows are Latin meanings of both nouns and verbs from which we get the complex verb "relate" and the nouns "relation/s, relationship/s":

relatio-onis (f) report, repetition  
relatus (m) official report, narration  
refero, referre, rettiuli, relatus (v.tr) to bring back, carry back; to give back, return, restore, to pay back, repay, to (re) echo......; to renew, revive, repeat, to direct, focus, turn (attention), to present again, represent, to say in turn, to reply, to announce, report, relate, tell, to note down enter . . . record, to consider, regard, to confer, attribute, ascribe; to bring up, vomit, spit out.

Relations are active and mobile, involving movement and exchange. The Latin verb form includes repetition, response, restoration, and an important recognition of telling, recording, and repeating. Relations are connected to narrative, to narrative process,
and to an exchange of stories. The sensate focus is aural/oral and has strong links to breath. In some traditions, particularly those influencing Western thought, breath and spirit originate in common words: *pneuma* in Greek and *ruach* in Hebrew, linking the life-force strongly to language and word (Word) and therefore, to telling, recounting, and stories. Relations are also those who share a common story, who repeat and echo the lives of one another. Relations are those who return, restore, revive.

Aside: i am shifting meaning through my use of relations. i am adapting the term from the First Nations tradition of closing a story or speech with "All my relations." as well as marking an ending, this also acknowledges the vastness of the audience, the connections and links beyond the immediate gathering, and is a gesture of respect. relations, in my use, are not only the blood family connections (relatives) but include the whole array of those to whom we are spiritually connected, especially through common stories: those living and otherwise that are respected through the telling.
Relations are a kind of work that recognizes the need for an endless process of maintenance, implying both that relations can be and are persistently interrupted, fragmented and, therefore, require a process of continuing return to restore and revitalize them. Repetition is a requirement of respect and relations. Relations—the word itself—links telling, re-telling to a sense of connection and return. There is exchange going on, with implications of restoration, repayment, and renewal of connections. Repetition, as a form of care, as a movement to sustain relations, to keep life moving, becomes a spiritual practice. This care includes the spitting out of the dis-ease of connections. Relations involve telling all of the stories, including those of illness, of rupture and difficulty. I am paying attention to the word itself, to its origins, to what it can tell us of relations, of relating.

The work of maintaining relations is played out in the strong images we have of family and family connections. Relations may include extended family and communities formed by bonds or linkages other than blood ties. Relations are about the human connections among us that can be noted in a shared and repeated telling. Relations have an additional vital quality that is reflected in the Latin origins of our words: necessary and necessity. The Latin words: *necessarius-a-um* (adj), *necessit-as-atis* (f) and *necessitud-o-inis* (f) carry the expected meanings of needful, necessary, requisite; necessity, inevitability, requirement, but also carry a second unexpected set of meanings. These include: relationship, connection, friendship, relatives, bond, connected by blood or friendship, related.

When Caputo invokes an understanding of the flux as relations that demand respect and connectedness and that such relations have a
kind of necessity inherent in their vitality he is including the overtones that are in the etymological origins of the words.

Repetition is in the admixture of relations. Respect and mystery have a connection. Narration and relations are entangled. Spirit is in relations, in the movement and repetition that is necessary to sustain, renew, and enliven relations. If relations are also linked to narrative, to telling and relating then spirit may move in and through narrative and it may be possible to trace its movement as part of the exchange of relations that happen through narrative exchange. (See Section II.)

Kovel (1991) speaks of the spirit as: "what happens to us as the boundaries of the self give way" (p. 2). Relations may be expressed as bonding—individuals meeting and connecting—but they also include being blended into family, community, and culture: losing clear boundaries. The edges may not always be clear, in spite of our attempts to forge identity as distinct and individual. Gerald May (1982) suggests that there is a significant difference between a spiritual engagement of life that accepts the willing surrender of the borders of the self as an expression of willingness and a psychological engagement that depends on the protection of the identity and borders of the self, expressed as willfulness.

Willingness implies a surrendering of one's self-separateness, as entering into, an immersion in the deepest processes of life itself. It is the realization that one already is a part of some ultimate cosmic process and it is a commitment to participation in that process. In contrast, willfulness is the setting of oneself apart from the fundamental essence of life in an attempt to master, direct, control, or otherwise manipulate existence. More simply, willingness is saying yes to the mystery of being alive in each
moment. Willfulness is saying no, or perhaps more commonly, "yes, but..." (p. 6)

Aside: I would be happier if "the fundamental essence of life" was not in the sentence on willfulness. To set oneself apart in an attempt to gain control is always to attempt to step out of the flux. I have no idea what a fundamental essence is. Perhaps May does and is making reference to what he knows.

To consider spirit is to transgress borders of certainty, including those that are marked as identity. Part of Western culture's difficulty with a consideration of spirit is precisely because we have such a huge investment in the clarity of borders and living with certainty. That there may be a way of thinking that questions borders and admits that they are porous, moveable and often illusory is difficult and awkward work for us. Kovel (1991) points out the lengthy tradition of spirit as occult or hidden beings. The implication that there may be beings of another kind who may not respect our borders of identity—or other ones we devise or insist on—is particularly difficult for a culture so rooted in materialism, solidity, and certainty. I think it is possible to begin to think about the spiritual as a human question, as part of human experience without becoming distracted by the difficult question of occult beings. There are other ways of thinking. It is
possible to engage the spiritual in the midst of human experience and practice.

However, it is impossible to consider spirit an expression of relations and a transgressor of borders, that which leads to the borders of the self giving way, without acknowledging that a relation that is implied in such a consideration is one with the Divine. Whether we use "divine spark...law, or whatever superstructure one wants to invoke" as Caputo (1987, p. 266) does, we are working towards respecting a human response to flux, and to a life-force. How m(M)ystery or o(O)ther is named becomes a second level question, following acknowledgment that a loss of borders for the self is also a connection to the unknown and its expression in us—"the life which flows in and through us." The same identity question as occurs with family, community and culture lingers in a consideration of the human-m(M)ystery, or human-o(O)ther relation. Am I an extension of the Divine expressed as a particular form or does my human beingness include an inherent quality of spirit that is an expression of divinity? This question also works at a second level and accepts that such a relation is extant and now needs delineation. To raise the possibility of spirit and to note implications for understanding relations are as far as I am going in this consideration.

Aside: yet there are leanings and mine is towards an understanding of spirit as immanent: spirit as always already in our living and in the midst of our experience. to work from an assumption
of the spiritual as immanent means that we can work from our lived and living experience, understanding, and perceptions to notice what is already there rather than trying to discover something beyond or outside ourselves. The spiritual is not beyond human experience and learning but already in the midst of it: a suitable place to work from in education.

I want to hold open the question of spirit, thinking of spirit, spiritual and spirituality as human experience and practice, as possibilities for education, understanding, and reflection. Spirit is about relations that include connections or links to what we can know and see and to what we cannot see or know. To acknowledge spirit is to recognize that relations include our connections to o(O)ther and m(M)ystery. To acknowledge such inclusion is not to define or to categorize those relations. The challenge of considering spirit is, in part, to remain with the human and not to take a concern for spirit as a way out of human difficulty and struggle. A concern for spirit is not an automatic escape from living. The webs and flow of relations continue and need to be continued in the process of understanding and engagement.

My hesitation regarding transcendence is the easy move it offers as an escape from the engagement of the flux of life as it occurs. Life is lived in the present of time and that is where spirit is expressed and
can be engaged. To understand present as gift is not to escape to elsewhere but to be responsive in the face of the giving of life. (Remembering that in German gift is also poison: there are no guarantees of ease. Difficulty is part of the engagement of living and certainly part of living spiritually.)

Kovel's (1991) image of a plenum that draws together (and disperses) the flow of a variety of concepts and perceptions is an effective way to understand the complexity of spirit. He notes that there is no single meaning that escapes the overtones of any of the other meanings. This is an important acknowledgment in a consideration of spirit. It is not tidy. Complexity and ambiguity are part of the potency and difficulty of the spiritual as a consideration in and for education. Because of the commonplace cultural assumption that the spiritual is an expression of a particular religious stance, it has not been possible to think about spirit as a consideration in and for learning and teaching. Excluding religion from public education has meant the exclusion of the spiritual as well. To consider the spiritual may offer a way to engage ambiguity, multiplicity and complexity educationally.

But Kovel's plenum has another implication for me. Spirit serves as a coalescence of character. The quality and nature of a person is a blend of the personal, communal, and divine spark. Spirit is the integrator of these elements into character and expression. The life lived is the enactment of the coalescence; the expression of the character and nature that the spark has ignited.
Aside: i have an image of the various elements of family, community, and person as providing a site of burning: a place for the life-force spark to catch and blaze, as if we are fuel for living, as if the divine spark needs material for its fruition and that we may, willingly or unwillingly be that material. we may also put out the spark in us.

Spirituality: remaining open

This brings me to the third term: spirituality. Spirituality is a slippery term, described by religious education scholar, Randolph Crump Miller (1985), as a "weasel word" (in Lee, 1985, p. 66). As well as having a pejorative, elusive, sneaky quality "weasel" is a term of movement and playfulness that catches up, in its embrace, a multiplicity of possibilities. What do I mean in using the term spirituality? It has evolved significantly in recent years, currently being used to describe an interest in and pursuit of "inner" quests and concerns. Christian religious tradition uses the term to describe a particular practice of spiritual discipline or a rule of life, such as, Franciscan spirituality or Benedictine spirituality or, more recently, women's spirituality or new age spirituality. The implication of a living practice is useful to retain in considering what spirituality might mean. In their preface to The study of spirituality, editors Jones, Wainwright, and Yarnold (1986) offer that although spirituality is "a vague word" they "can think of no better single word to describe (their) subject" (p.
They claim their understanding of spirituality is "concerned with the individual prayer and communion with God"; is "personal, intimate and temperamental" but is in danger of confusion "by so many varied and sometimes contradictory approaches." They give two justifications:

1. the individual's search for his or her own spirituality need not be, often cannot be, a purely internal quest; through reading other spiritual writers he or she can chance on a 'glove which fits', the external eliciting or corroborating the internal; or by trial and error many guides may contribute to the unique individual's development . . . :

2. spiritual counsellors above all need to be aware of, and have knowledge of spiritualities other than their own in order to detect and guide the needs of countless differing individuals who consult them. (p. xxii)

Their hope for their book is:

that, by its avoidance of sentimentality and indifference, it may go some way towards assuring skeptics that Spirituality, at least in its historical manifestations, is capable of study on an academic level, along with all other sciences of human experience. (p. xxiii)

In an extensive note they trace some of the history of term in English noting that the term, spirituality, has come to "express what was sought" for people who were looking to name "religious practice (lex orandi) that would be autonomous and independent of the vicissitudes
of the *lex credendi*" (p. xxv) or regulated belief. They describe spirituality in their text as being without:

systematic attempts to define it, except through off-the-cuff paraphrases, not all coherent: 'the forms and structures of the life of prayer'; 'the spiritual life *is* life' (pp. 16,19); 'some kind of wholeness'; 'spirituality means a search for meaning by contemplation and reflection on the totality of human experiences in relation to the whole world which is experienced and also to the life which is lived and may mature as that search proceeds' (p. 61). (p. xxv-xxvi)

They add two citations, the first from Gordon Wakefield's (1983):

*A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality:*

And spirituality concerns the way in which prayer influences conduct, our behaviour and manner of life, our attitudes to other people. (p. xxvi)

and then from a *Le Monde* article by Jacques Madaule in October 1980:

What then is spirituality . . .? It is by no means to be confused with theology, which is chiefly an elaboration of concepts. It is a life. All human existence has a spiritual aspect. . . .To exhibit the spirituality of human reality is to embrace this reality to its full extent, and such a quest does not interest just a few specialists. (p. xxvi)

A complexity and uncertainty of meaning seems to be part of understanding spirituality. Spirituality is not a set piece, with a perspective that clarifies a set of assumptions, establishing them as
certain or final. The mobility of the word (and its meaning(s)) is an appropriate parabolic to what it indicates as engagement. In spite of being known as a quest for wholeness, reality, and totality, spirituality remains incomplete and inconclusive. To remain "open to the mystery" (Caputo, 1987) is not to reach conclusions or certainty. The difficulty of the term is actually a benefit to understanding, particularly to understanding engagement with the world as something that is incomplete, that needs to remain open and stays in flux throughout life. Spirituality is not a settling but an unsettling, an opening to relations which remain indeterminate and fluid. Spirituality, as I mean it, is a deferral of closure and conclusion. I am keen to hold the term itself in a state of deferral, loaded with the implications of inner quests, relations, personal discipline, and practice. If spirit is an expression of o(O)ther and m(M)ystery, then its expression in human lives has the potential for infinite variety, multiplicity of form, and a degree of unpredictability.

At the end of an interesting essay entitled "Science and Reflection"—Besinung means a kind of meditative reflectiveness—Heidegger spoke of what he called the "unencompassable" (das Unumgängliche), the thing (no-thing?) we cannot quite get around, both in the sense of something we cannot avoid running into somewhere along the way and in the sense of something we cannot surround, circumscribe or encompass with our concepts. It is what is left over, the radical hermeneutical residuum which conceptual thinking and planning can never exhaust, include, assimilate. (Caputo, 1987, p. 270)
Spirituality is the human and personal engagement/relation with the "unencompassable." It retains a degree of mystery and inexpressibility. It is an encounter that is inevitable but something that will remain incomplete and unenclosed. It is not surprising that an engagement with the spiritual seems awkward and difficult. There are streams that go off in a variety of directions.

The plenum that draws together, blending meanings, can be seen in reverse as indicating the multiplicity of sources and directions that one can take from any point in this consideration of spirituality, spiritual, and spirit. To understand the spiritual as a confluence point is also to acknowledge its potential as a dispersal point. The flow may run in several directions. There may be scattering and gathering.

**Noting connections**

I have tried to indicate some of what I mean by spirituality, spiritual and spirit. They are not exact definitions. My working understanding of these terms is formative, in process, and critical in my understanding of spirituality as a consideration in and for education. If spirituality is, as I am claiming, an inherent human quality and part of be/com/ing human, then spirituality is "something we cannot avoid running into somewhere along the way." If we are as spiritual as we are physical then a consideration of the nature of our spirituality, its care, education, and practice would seem to be human activity necessary for health, for relations with others and o(O)ther, however we understand and express that in our living. Spirituality does not arise out there—beyond—but rather is in the midst of daily experience in the relations and exchanges that are the fabric and texture of human life.
Spirituality is not an escape through transcendence out of the flux of life.

Spirituality, understood as a quality of human be/com/ing expressed; understood as a relational way of engaging the world, knowing the world and being in the world, leads to a question: what is that we are relating to, knowing, experiencing that is named distinctly as spiritual? I suggest spirituality is a human engagement with or expression of "mystery"—of that which cannot be finally determined or known. Spirituality carries humans into difficulty, reaching beyond the limits of reason—being pulled beyond?—yet trying to express, articulately and reasonably those encounters with mystery in the midst of living, making those relations comprehensible.

John Caputo (1987, p. 224) drawing on Heidegger, describes it as "the 'leap' from the ground," from that which is solid, known, and reasonable. "We take a leap off the stability of the ground, the solidity of presence—terra firma—and we land in the flux!" This move into instability is a description of spiritual life. It requires a shift in experience and perception but one that remains located in the world as a way of knowing, as human process, as part of be/com/ing human. It is a relational exchange. It is relations in flux and with the flux as "mystery." It is not leaving the world.

It includes relations with o(0)ther, as beyond-the-self, as an expression of mystery, as immanent, and also as imminent (impending, even threatening). But, in the multiplication of possibilities indicative of post-modernism, o(0)ther also includes some sense of transcendence, where there are relations that are both here, as in immanent, but not here—elsewhere. Geographical language only increases the difficulty of
comprehension. Mystery retains its own edge of impossibility. The relations remain, transcendent as other-than but not as distant-from. The relation is not either immanent or transcendent: it is not a question of a dualism of reason, of either/or. Any reasonable description is a temporary fiction to describe structurally and solidly that which is flux: in fluctuation, in movement and in flow. Mystery is not fixable but withdraws into concealment.

Aside: I long to change a word by one letter: transcendence. To take the sense of movement—over and back—and turn it into a dance, an interchange of motion and intimacy, an exchange of affection and energy: engaging, even passionate.

Living spiritually is living in and towards o(O)ther, acknowledging that o(O)ther matters, that m(M)ystery is influential both irrupting and erupting in living and understanding. Consequently o(O)ther is affective (relational) and sometimes effective (as cause) and can be considered as multiplicity and as singularity, where, as in astrophysics, a singularity is both threshold and boundless.

Aside: this is not an oppositional one-against-many or merely one or merely many. multiplicity includes the singular and the multiple. a physical singularity is a limit to perception. there is no way
to measure inside or beyond a black hole, we merely guess at the limit.

It is not possible to manage m(M)ystery into tidy comprehension: nor o(O)ther. The challenge is to admit this difficulty of comprehension into our understanding without closure and without exclusion, leaving a gap or opening that must remain, perhaps as wound, or discomfort. It is holding open understanding, deferring closure or conclusion.

The mystery is what withdraws beneath, behind, beyond the grip of concepts, the range of historical meanings and conceptualities. The mystery is what eludes the cunning of rationality, of technology, ontology, theology (and even eschatology). (Caputo, 1987, p. 204)

A movement occurs that catches up human life. It is articulated differently in different eras and each articulation is an attempt to give some shape, voice, and clarity to the impinging, withdrawing m(M)ystery.

We learn above all that we are part of a movement which we did not initiate, that we depend on forces which we do not dominate, that we draw our life from powers we do not fathom. We learn openness—which means at once graciousness, for one knows that has always to do with gifts and giving—and we learn a sense of transiency, for one knows the power of withdrawal. Someone, something, the Lord or not, always giveth and taketh away. There is always giving and taking again. . . .We learn to come to grips with kinesis, with coming to be and passing away, and with the
mysterious powers which govern that movement. (Caputo, 1987, p. 206)

Caputo's "radical hermeneutic" attempts to stay open to the flux, to mystery and works to live with the difficulty of a flux that disturbs, and interrupts without trying to still it through metaphysics or closure of another kind. I am working to extend his understanding of a relation to the flux in terms of spirituality. Caputo, drawing on Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Husserl, and Derrida, offers a post-metaphysical reading of hermeneutics that leaves us open to the shaking and trembling of life's difficulty, that leads us not to a conclusion that gives comfort but to a thunderstorm, not a closure but a dis-closure, an openness to what cannot be encompassed, where we lose our breath and are stopped in our tracks, at least momentarily, for it always belongs to our condition to remain on the way. (p. 214)

The engagement with m(M)ystery and o(O)ther becomes "a repetition which alters, a creative productive repeating" (p. 219). The spiritual as flux becomes an exemplar of mystery, movement, ambiguity. Spirituality becomes a site of openness, transformation and difficulty as it is an attempt, limited and localized, to include o(O)ther in the immediacy of living. It is be/com/ing in a relation with the flux, with the indeterminate, the kinesis. It admits that this relation is a necessary and natural element of human be/com/ing. A capacity for an encounter with o(O)ther is already part of humanness. In agreeing to pay attention to the flux, we are groping towards the unknown as an
active gesture, offering ourselves to the possibility of difficulty and influence, being open.

The openness that this way of living requires is an openness that attends, that waits in a kind of receptive gesture, or that responds in "tones of humility, silence, simplicity, of a certain profound taking stock of our mortality" (Caputo, 1987, p. 204). There is a mutuality in the relations of o(O)ther/m(M)ystery and humans. It is an exchange that involves a way of knowing, of understanding, a way of living.

Spirituality may be expressed through a disciplined, and thoughtful practice of living. Hadot has pointed out that Greek philosophies were a way of life: spiritual exercises that philosophers practiced to discipline themselves to live attentively, thoughtfully in the present moment. Regardless of doctrinal differences, the lived practices of the various philosophies were remarkably similar. Thus, an unconsidered life was not unspiritual, although it may be described as such; it was undisciplined and negligent, caught up either in the past or future and not being lived in the present.

It can be said then, that a life that is being lived without attention is not being lived at all, as it is not located in the present—with the present being the only place life can be lived. A practice of spirituality, as a discipline of relating and living, becomes a way of attending to life in the present. It becomes a way of engaging, in/through the present, the possible relations to others and Other.

In understanding spirituality as practice, a sense of flux is in play. The present is always passing, temporally, and always there experientially. A life discipline (a spirituality) keeps the philosopher attuned to the living moment and its temporal quality. The moment,
is fleeting and must be lived (in) intensely: savoured, tasted, engaged. The moment requires response and attunement while at the same time needs to be lived with detachment, a certain letting go. If I become attached to a particular moment, to its experience, I may find that I am living more and more in the shadow of its memory and in anticipation of its re-creation. Living in the moment is a form of repetition forward (as both Caputo and Kierkegaard point out). There is a simultaneous sense of fullness—the now is here and being lived as fully as possible—and a sense of incompleteness, of inadequacy in the struggle to live fully in the moment. The practice of attentive careful living must be repeated into the next moment—moving forward temporally and spiritually. There is a letting go and gathering up that are co-incident in a spiritual life practice. Learning is always necessary and present in the thoughtful examination that accompanies a process of living that is disciplined, attentive, and aware. Each moment is a moment of educational potential.

To live spiritually is also to recognize a vocational quality to life. A calling to live attentively is to pay attention to what is in the repetition forward that arises in our midst, drawing us on. Life is in the current (of time, of flux) and therefore has qualities of directedness and momentum. We do not live dis-attached lives—that is, unconnected, distant—but are caught up in the movements of culture and times. To live attentively is to live with an awareness of and respect for the significance of those influences. The flux, as Caputo points out, can be covered over and suppressed. To live spiritually is to work at uncovering and discovering the movement of life. It is to acknowledge and respond to a sense and practice of vocation.
Aside: nearby is another vocabulary: the language of religious practice—devotion, and faith. I am not writing with that language. I am trying to write without it, with its echoes and linkages. Perhaps if faith were a verb and not a noun it might be workable, I might use it. To have faith seems to me to be a kind of objectification, to be not a relational engagement. Devotion also carries many links from its origins (in Latin), including self-sacrifice, outlawing, and bewitching, that make me wary. I am trying to write of the spiritual without resorting to religious vocabulary and its automatic religious connections.

We come to live as if life acts on us as we also act on life. Life intrudes on us as m(M)ystery and as o(O)ther and the human challenge is to respond to the intrusions as they come, in the moment of meeting them. There is a kind of readiness and opportunism that such an understanding requires: a stance of being aware not only of the teachable moment but also the learnable moment. Learning is constant and life long: ever-present, in the present when we live in the present. What is this moment teaching me? Where do I move from here? What can I learn from this difficulty? This challenge? This opportunity?
To live with this kind of edge means having a sense of the irregularity of time: in the midst of learning time is not linear but synchronous. Connections are made when understandings coincide. Attention, availability, and openness are necessary. In the midst of learning, time is fluid and variable. One learner may take only a few clock seconds to begin a life-long discovery. Another learner may require weeks of clock time to process a similar understanding. A sensitivity to the diffusion of time in learning challenges a sense of linear efficiencies and accomplishment; admits the communal quality of understanding and knowledge; pays attention to timing as synchronicity, to movements that arise in the current of an epoch.

As the spiritual is about relations, ties and connections beyond ourselves, issues of community life will be included in the processes of learning and understanding. What does this knowledge signify? Who does it benefit? Who is included in? Who is excluded? What are its dangers and limitations? What are the alternatives? Spirituality offers an opportunity to foster and develop an attuned attention.

Caputo (1987) claims that Heidegger has a particularly strong reading of the historical process of truth/understanding emerging in different times through his hyphenated use of the Greek word for truth: *aletheia*.

*A-leteheia* means the ongoing, historical, epochal process by which things emerge from concealment into unconcealment, in various shapes and various ways, in which configurations and historical stampings, without *a-leteheia* itself bearing one of those stamps. It is not peculiar to, not locatable in, any one of those epochs. . . . Epochs are effects of it, and it is the process by which the epochs
spring up or happen. . . . It is not any particular secret or hidden truth, except that it is disconcertingly close to us that we keep missing it, so inconspicuous by its nearness, which I suggest is a nearness that has nothing to do with the metaphysics of presence. (p. 177)

I suggest that what is emerging now is an articulation and understanding of *a-letheia* through spirituality. That which is and has been disconcertingly close and causal is the spiritual. It is immanent and as Caputo suggests, it is also imminent. There is a quality of disturbance, storm, turbulence near at hand. The spirit, as flux, makes itself present through us, in the present, when we are attentive, open, and willing.

If the spiritual is to be part of living well, of acquiring skills of attention, of living in the immediacy of relations, maintaining life, repeating forward, engaging the unknown and the uncertain, then spirituality becomes necessary for learning and teaching. If spirituality is part of maintaining relations, it may already be in the midst of education that is concerned for relations, for movement, and for staying open to the mystery. How are we to acknowledge and work with this possibility in a deliberate way in the midst of institutional educational practice? What different lessons might a spiritualized education (Moffett, 1994, p. 19) teach us about ways of engaging the world, ways of living with respect, ways of living with the incomplete, the uncertain and all the fragilities that that implies?

Living spiritually is parabola to the primary form of educational exchange in which teaching is an act of reaching toward and learning is an offering of readiness in return—another kind of reaching, as teaching
is another kind of readiness. In being open to the unknown, to o(O)ther and m(M)ystery, living spiritually is a learner's posture offering attentiveness, readiness, reaching and groping for understanding and knowing. In this sense spirituality and education are entangled. Spirituality, as living toward the flux, is already and always a way of living that is educational, that assumes learning and the movement of transformation are on-going necessities.

As a way of relating, spirituality is linked to repetition, to narrative, to renewal, and to attention. It becomes a way of telling of the connections that extend (and are extensive) out from one person to another: the web or matrix of their lives. But the web is not solid; rather, it is a flux that requires repetition to be sustained. The connections/relations are maintained through attention, through a discipline that knows the present to be fragile and temporary; that knows that o(O)ther and m(M)ystery are near, and noticeable through attention; that acknowledge that this kind of attention and concern is a necessary part of living in the world and understanding the world.

I understand that there is and has always been a close link between the questions of philosophy that have considered this intrusive nearness and questions of education. How can we think we learn if we are not attentive to the qualities that are giving rise to our epoch and understanding? How can we extend our understanding if we ignore that which is so close in favour of that which is either ahead or behind us? How can we teach or learn anywhere but in a present that is attentive to the mysteries and irruption of the flux, that is relational, repeating, and telling in order to sustain the vitality and current of living?
Third Chapter Prelude

This gathering of pieces in an act of portraiture to pursue further my spiritual journey as example, as evidence. It is a return to the telling of my story and journey in the flow of the text. It is my spiritual biography. I am aware of a multiplicity of voices that have shaped it but choose to list these influences as endnote to the chapter and not to cite sources. This has a quality of personal journal. The focus is experiential, not scholarly. I acknowledge the voices but want them blended in and invisible.

The assembled text is collected as an exploration of spirit and spirituality, re-written through return and amendment. The pieces (re)present movement(s) in my understanding and experience of my spirit and spirituality, tracing learning and discovery through thinking/writing, through personal history, and through events.

A portrait is temporary, fleeting, and from a limited vantage, out of date and out of time. I offer no sense of when each piece was written in place: before or after the piece it is before or after. To note this dissemblance of time is to (re-)draw attention to a quality of spirit that is similarly out of time: neither linear nor circular but momentary, immediate, with an ability to re-arrange past and future through present process, through fractures, openings, and re-consideration.

The tension between the allure of mind and the experience of being and becoming spiritual are the dynamic of this chapter.
Chapter 3
A Biography of Spirit: (Re)Tracing My Own Accounts

Before you can paint a bamboo, the bamboo must have grown deep inside you. It is then that, brush in hand gazing intently, you will see the vision rise up before you. Capture the vision at once by the strokes of your brush, for it may vanish as suddenly as a hare at the approach of the hunter.

Su Dongpo

As a way of proceeding with writing of spirituality, I am impelled to consider the traces that mark my spiritual origins; as if I am to write myself into existence through a biography of spirit.

[why can i not think of it as autobiography: me telling my own story? is the story telling me into form, into existence? Perhaps i do not know the shape i am in until the telling structures it. i am not looking back, recollecting, reminiscing, but rather moving forward by repeating what is immediately arising before me. Spirit opens the way. i am being drawn in this portrait by the text itself.

i work with a degree of intuition: These words belong. Yes, this must go next. Trust this fragment into the picture. It is not an unconsidered matter of this or that, here or there. The text is deliberate. The layers accruing on the textual canvas lead to a density of form. The text becomes. It is rhizomatic: growing in the middle, as it is ready, when it is possible. Soon, i will stop amending and inserting. But still it will remain open for reading, for my own re-thinking, for interpretation. As narrative it will remain as passage and in passage.]
/ fracture /

perhaps i can only tell a story of spirit that includes me, that
catches me up. perhaps i am caught in a story that it is not
merely my story or even only me in the telling. perhaps i am so
detached that i cannot tell this as self-telling (auto-biography).
perhaps i write of spirit precisely because i am broken and
fragmented: this annotation of traces is not singular. it is
multiple. i am not singular nor can i write singularly. nor can i
write it only once but must work to re-tell it, re-work it: be caught
in the eddy and flow. perhaps i am part of a flux that is carrying
me and can write only in and from that flow—tumultuously,
chaotically.

\ fracture \n
i write of spirit that is me is not me.
i write as container, ship, vas.
Spirit as more than me, o(O)ther than me
while still found in through
who i am how i live.

(i return to the text many times, taking it
up, adjusting: it is unfinished business.
my biography of spirit is incomplete: a
work in process, mirroring my spiritual
journey.)

I write along the edge of poetry intending to trace my heritage and
sources. I write of the wells of my spirituality: its sources. I write of the
leanings of my own heart, my soul. Who am I becoming? How is this fragility my living? Its fragmentary quality has always troubled me. My hands are full of pieces: shattered glass. Perhaps the red in my hands is blood from the cuts of wounding. Perhaps I am removing a stain of shame from my face.

In the midst of a re-writing, the text changes feel for me: the awkward red of embarrassment becomes a thicker flood. The text begins to have beauty and acceptance in its redness.

The Crystal Egg

Oh Mona, Mona,
your hands are bleeding.
In your dry cracked fingers
you cradle a fragment of crystal egg.

My heart is broken, Lyle.

She tilts her idiot face,
blue lunar eyes cloud
as she gnaws her tongue.

The crystal egg warms,
her blood oozing over it,
darkening, fluorescent in the heat.

My womb is empty, Lyle.

The neighbourhood boys pull
at her tattered pants to peak
into her emptiness and pain.

It wanted to grow, Lyle.
She cradles the remains of the crystal soul, rescued from the night. It sparkles in her grasp, the marks of fertilization luminescent in her eyes.

I have to turn away from the strength of her silence, from the claws of her scarred gaze from the enchantment of her crystal egg.

I love you, Lyle.

I run away.

She stands still, watching with her sideways stare.
The boys tug at her clothes
Her pale hands close over the shattered crystal egg.

[A poem, from 1983, returns with its voices of brokenness, isolation, love, and fear. I wonder if, in a dream-like way, I am all the characters in it. I wonder if her name is not Luna. It haunts me: it has never been in my control. It says things I do not understand. I can trace its origins but it is not the sum of its beginnings. It has always seemed a poem about heart, soul, spirit: a story of fragility and fear. Each reading of it makes me Lyle running away; makes me Mona, wounded and ready. I am the writer and now also the reader, seeking understanding. It is always gift, trying to teach me of my spirit: my broken soul.]
A recurring metaphor in my life has been broken glass: it has some special power. I remember repairing windows. Shards of glass always make me tremble. It is the cutting, the blood, the jaggedness, the crisp, knife-edged clarity—i cannot explain.

inquiries along a fracture:
what has taught me that i cannot write of myself?
are these attempts to write of spirituality a sign of me as broken?
of me seeking healing? of me being healed?
of me as the result of modernity: fragmented, dissociated, chaotic?
am i noticing my own condition and trying to understand it as human?
perhaps my self is not the place where i shall find spirit?
perhaps spirit is not in that managed, constructed form, but elsewhere and falling away? withdrawing? protected?

I write from an uncertainty which has become germane to my spirituality. The stance of my heart is often hesitant. I am unsure of my inclination. I am uncomfortable with ultimate claims of spirit. I am beginning to be comforted by fragmentation, by brokenness (com fortis: with courage, strength—given strength). Perhaps the holes leave me open: holey—with spaces for flow and movement. Perhaps I am making peace with pieces and learning to live collage. Perhaps my (w)holeness will only ever be a gathering of pieces.
maybe i cannot claim ultimates. maybe i have been crippled by too many ultimates. maybe i hope that ultimates will disappear if i invoke uncertainty and ambiguity. maybe i find ultimates a kind of insanity and am afraid of the insanity of disclaiming ultimates? to say no ultimates allows no alternatives.

For me—

—the mysterious remains [always] slightly unknown and uncertain.
[i feel like i am repeating myself.] [i return to questions again and again.] [am i moving forward? am i spinning round?]

to engage the spirit is not to engage what is known, strong, certain, secure but rather that which is temporary, fragile, fleeting.

It is not to become solid but to remain fluid.

Tomorrow I may crave solidity again.

in contradiction

i insist spirit is continuous, vulnerable, uneven;
weak, fragile, persistent; readily lost always returning;
easily crushed, /squeezed out; constant,
inclined to openness, waiting for attention and notice, re-turning,
an almost present withdrawing: leaving space.

inquiries along a fracture:

what does it mean to insist on uncertainty?
how can i think in contradictions?
why is it so important for me that weakness is notable?
necessary? desirable?
what necessity makes me want to write of spirituality—as if
to re-conceptualize it? to say something else?

why thinking? why is it the ground? why is it a difficulty?

I ask: where does this come (from) in my life?—being in the midst of be/com/ing a person who seeks the spiritual? What makes me, what makes anyone a seeker?

what may i notice about my life,
my course of spirituality? —
that i often slip away, lose track
of motion and direction,
become settled, solidified;
that i seldom sustain spiritual focus.

can i speak of being lost
in my own wanderings?
how do i tell of the intensity of body and sense
that also occupies me: my imagination?
what of earth and ground?
where is home for me?
There are moments that return—re-memories—markers of what has shaped my understanding: the spiritual as difficult, awkward; the spiritual as vague and uncertain; the spiritual as that which must remain held, guarded, hidden.

(i recall)

**straining against the contexts of my shaping**

for two or three summers, i worked in a camp operated by a Christian family centre in south-eastern Ontario. i did kitchen and maintenance work, cleaned washrooms, cabins, and so on. one of the tasks that summer staff were pressed into was to give their "testimony" to campers about the wonders of Christian life. the testimonies were often similar, talking about how wonderful the Christian life was, how good, how pleasant, how it solved problems, made life better, easier. i managed to avoid this chore until my last summer there. i remember avoiding it. i remember climbing the hill to the site of evening campfires, desperately not wanting to lie or pretend and being quite anxious about what i might say that was true for me—what could i say about me? i had a strong sense of needing to speak some truth about my living, about my sense of difficulty. i stood in front of the campers beside the fire and said that i did not find Christian life easy or fun, but difficult, even impossible. i told the campers it was the hardest thing i did and that i was not very good at it. the fervent camp leader thanked me for my "interesting" words. afterwards, my girlfriend of the summer
clung to me and wept profusely on my shoulder saying something about how true what i had said was. she was so warm and i could feel too much of her body against me: she usually held back. i was sixteen: awkward, uncomfortable. i did not want to take advantage of her, to trespass her vulnerability with touch. i was unable to follow her into whatever [space] had opened for her through my words. i had said what i could say and was unable to understand how it may have exploded her journey. i was no comfort to her and our summer romance trickled away after that.

For as long as I can remember I have been immersed in a life context that included religious beliefs and practices, choosing to return to those settings, involved with Christians of different practices and beliefs; with the fringes of other beliefs; with endless questions of my own and always, with uncertainties about them, about me, about the ways of belief. I have been seeking a way to understand something in my own life: living in tension—drawn to a way of understanding the world, resistant to being swallowed by it—living a double life, noticing incongruencies.

/ fracture /

noticing inconsistencies that became difficulties, noting difficulties that came to dominate what i knew and saw as religious life. perhaps the disparities of word and action kept me from being at home, from belonging, from settling in. i was there but not there.
And learning from an early age to guard the fragile nature of my spirit: against domination, against capture. Hoping to discover a way of spirituality that would give me space to live openly and staying hidden to insure survival.

inquiring along a fracture:
what pattern of practice lies in such noticing: in and not of;
hesitation and uncertainty? living so cautiously? am i
seeking an integrity, a trueness of line that seems not to be? i
wonder if i am (still) looking for a quality of truth tainted by
claims of purity? hoping for something untainted which can
never be?

am i losing my innocence in this search through time for traces of vocation, in search of voices that have resonated along my strings?
am i now be/com/ing an opening for a song of spirit, for a wash of flux to be expressed, incarnated in my living experience? am i
attuning to beyond-me so that it can sing in my bones, my body, my life?
is it possible because these questions are taking up residence in me,
lingering with me? perhaps all these holes in my life are not losses:
they are openings for the wind: echo chambers. cracks, fissures,
fractures: signs of life; signs of movement, of slow geological shifting over the length of living.
am i learning to laugh and enjoy, to savor even these awkward
stories that are my heritage and the path just ahead of me?

Thinking back to my growing up years and then beyond into adult
life, I recall my continuous discomfort with strident, ultimate claims:
exclusive claims to salvation, to truth, to having or being the only way.
I occasionally made my own versions of such claims, trying them on,
hoping to integrate them, to become enthusiastic. They never seemed
to fit—or last. Ultimate senses of election, of divine favour became a
mark of religious people that I avoided. The squabbles that such
exclusiveness produced made me uncomfortable and served to propel
me toward thinking of inclusion, of embrace as the most hopeful
markers of a life inclined to love, to freedom and toward a G-d1 that
people were claiming as loving and kind.

QUESTIONS SEEPING UP:

(i have to let out some of the queries that are troubling me
with their pressure and connection, with their lineage and
intensity.)

What does spirituality have to do with G-d?
What does G-d have to do with spirituality?

1 After thinking about this for quite some time I have opted to use the
traditional Jewish form of writing the name of G-d without a vowel. In their
tradition it is a mark of respect that prohibits the Name being said. For me it
is a mark of respect and a way of retaining a sense of the mystery about G-d: a
mark of holding open my understanding as incomplete.
Why do I think that being spiritual is some kind of acknowledgment that there is o(O)ther and that I must live in respect of that if I am to be spiritual?

How do I cope with the history of G-d in my life, with the inarticulate sense of having to contend with the question of G-d as I consider spirituality?

(i cannot avoid my story, my context. asking is necessary.)

darker turning:

The day I wrote this, was a beautiful spring day. I had a feeling of energy and new life. I was thinking of grief and loss as I had been reading of the children (and now grandchildren) of Holocaust survivors who have transposed their parents' grief into their lives to embody and enact it. In the book, (Louise Kaplan's: No Voice Is Ever Wholly Lost. 1995.) the transposition is given a psychological analysis: a theory of the movement of grief without words, without stories. It accounts for the lived experience of children psychologically. I wonder if life events that have produced such an intensity of silence—in the ways of survivors—are not capable of moving across generations to children and to grandchildren, other than psychologically. Is not a spiritual transposition possible? Is it not possible that there is something not the self: spirit that carries messages from one soul to another, from one generation to another? Are there not messengers of life and/or of grief that work without being seen and
known? Perhaps something is at work in concert with the processes that psychology recognizes, working as well as and in conjunction with psychological elements? Perhaps only the psychological is noticed because it is the cultural frame of personal experience? Why is explanation necessary? To facilitate treatment? To enact repair? To fix? What makes the presence of such pain an agony of disruption needing treatment? Perhaps the grief is not done. Perhaps it needs to live a little longer. Perhaps that war is not over as its lessons remain unlearned, so it lingers in rooms to disturb children who remain as openings for its memory and presence, whose wide open vision somehow perceives its invisible traces flashing warnings in the corner of their sensitive perceptions? Perhaps children notice the comings and goings better than adults who are trying to forget. Perhaps the children have not yet learned that forgetting is stronger than noticing. Perhaps children have not learned to filter the messages of the voices of other. The Holocaust, its violence troubles me. It feels like a disturbance across time, out of time.

I am not avoiding the questions of G-d and spirit. I am working indirectly on the way some messages come to us. I assume humans are spiritual. I also assume that spirit works toward making life for us. If there is a life-seeking/making spirit then it is not only or merely for me; it is not individual but communal—a shared and blending/connecting
factor. It may linger with its messages to a third or fourth generation. If there is a life-force, a creative, life-making urge that is expressed in us, then perhaps it is possible that messages cross the borders of minds differently from the ways described by psychological processes.

There is a danger in this—a naiveté that wants spirit to be always life affirming. There is shadow experience that may also be life: spirit that breaks life. Spirit that destroys, neglects, crushes. The Holocaust and the Bomb are also expressions of life as humans have made it. I wonder how to name this spirituality, how to not let darkness disappear. The grief that remains may be instructive of a spiritual persistence that awaits integration and acknowledgment.

I doubt the psychological explanations. They are clumsy in their explanation within the limits of mind and psyche. Hiding in the transparency of things, there lingers the working of spirit—as if, the grief of the Holocaust, producing silence in the face of extreme horror and evil, requires an embodiment that will enact its story. As if, this experience takes on a life: a spirit-life that requires lives to express it. The survivors cannot carry it on their own. Their descendants inherit the stories, the experiences and begin to embody them, re-enact them. Spirit seeks an embodied form for the agony to be re-worked and transformed.

I am writing an interruption in my biography.
I wrote that and went to edit it out. Now I wonder. Perhaps it is not an interruption. Perhaps I cannot escape struggling with the darkness of this century. My spiritual journey includes some meeting with these horrors. I do not live apart from the manufactured death and genocide of these times. There are cracks in my imagination. There are fissures in the history of this century.

\ fracture /

what am i doing in noticing spirit, offering alternate readings of texts and events? why does the Holocaust come to mind? is there some necessity for me to struggle with the deliberateness of man-made mass death as part of the life of my parent's generation and all of us since then, in the shadow of Auschwitz, in the shadow of Hiroshima, in the shadow of the Gulag, in the shadow of the death squads, in the shadows of the disappeared? i write of the spiritual. if spirituality is an urge for life, for connection, for relations and is somehow entangled with love and care, how can i make sense of what has been done? is sense possible? perhaps an ignorance of spirit is intimately linked to the structured production of death as an ultimate product of modernity? perhaps i struggle with this writing because there is no sense in the fragmented world i know and live in: that lives in me? perhaps i am being asked to give voice to this fragmentary sense as part of the breaking be/com/ing embodied?

/ fracture \
be/com/ing connected:

In May, 1983 I visited Auschwitz and spent the day there with a Polish friend, Franek. He spoke little English and I less Polish. We shared a battered Polish-English dictionary, a few sandwiches, a thermos of drink, and a whole day of quiet and grief, moments of meditation and a few stories. I wrote a poem that his wife, Jola, translated into Polish and sent to the museum where it was included in a collection of responses. I have a thank-you letter from the museum director. Franek also wrote a poem that day and Jola translated it the other way—into English. And I recalled another poem I had written about train cars and platforms as we wandered Auschwitz and Brezinka. I wondered how these images became so strong for me. I wondered about the possibility of past lives and dying there. I wondered about becoming a messenger: carrying these stories. I hear a strong voice in my biography of spirit. It calls me to acknowledge grief, unfinished, on-going: to be troubled about now and our life. Perhaps it is part of my life to be one of the residences of the stories of grief, a site for that darker spirit to seek solace and expression. Perhaps my link to those stories is not comprehensible or explainable: they have come to me.

Of Auschwitz

Now, I must tell you of Auschwitz
Because I have been there
And it is still there
Leaving its mark.
The camp, that place, is beyond
A simple telling: the madness,
Its dark disease
Outside comprehension.

Wild flowers grow there now,
And grass, and trees.
My heart tells me:
It should be barren.

We sat on the roadside
in the hot May sun
and the ants came
crawling up out of
cracks in the asphalt
carrying dust,
the dust of a generation:
ashes and dust

We stood on the steps
of Block 11,
in the Yard of Death
by the doorway
to the dungeons.
On the gray concrete
a small alabaster shell
bird's egg
lay shattered.
In the silence, the memory
will not die.

On that day in the place
where skeletons lived
and cruelty
spawned a jungle,
there, in the heat of afternoon
as we shared tea,
an owl called
over and over,
signalling a change:
a change of weather,
said my Polish companion.
Always a hope,
I sighed.

Then by foot
To Brezinka, its
Bleakness, its terminal
Platform and skeletal buildings.

Too huge and horrible.
The platform was overgrown
With flowers, daisies,
Buttercups:

We picked some
to take home -
to his home nearby
and my home
so far away.

We sat together
in deep silence
before the monument
of stone and listened
to the wind
and to a farm dog
barking
and to a cuckoo
calling.
And we watched
a girl
on a clattering
bicycle down the forlorn line
of fence, past the towers,
past the dead poplars,
and the ovens
on her way home
from work or shopping.

Neither the silence, nor the wind,
nor the cuckoo
could tell us how life
can go on;
only that it does.
It does
in cruelty
and in kindness.

Coda: We became friends
that day, bound
together by
our unspeakable thoughts.

The next poem was written before my visit to Poland. It was
already with me when I stood in the blockhouses, on the platform,
before the displays of empty suitcases and emptied shoes where I wept
uncontrollably.

Dreams I Cannot Escape

I think it was the cold
and the skiff of snow
on the long line of boxcars:
   all the colours were brown
on the field, and still, gray—
the landscape was gray,
with rocks and city
   behind the rail yard.

I don't know why it makes
   me think of Auschwitz:
Poland is a long way from
   here and out of my time,
but the lights and the platform—
the deep desolation of the rows
of barren boxcars lined up
   empty and afraid.

I could hear the awful shouting
   and the sky had plumes
of thick gray smoke curling
   out over the blind city,
perhaps I have been there—
I see photographs and its familiar:
the horror is close upon me
   and follows my thoughts.

I must be re-incarnated:
   perhaps my memory has
a frightful substance to it:
   not a sense of coming
doom in our current situation—
the ghostly passive skeletons
and the tidy proper violators
   cannot be growing in our fields.

I remember a train stopping
somewhere in a yard:
the silence under the amber lights
and the dark stillness
as we waited some unknown—
my memories blur landscapes
people and time together.

I hope
my perceptions are wrong.

And also Franek Roniker-Kosiec's poem becomes woven into this story of spirit, part of that day of silence, meditation and being open(ed).

Emptiness

Empty space
Empty corridors
Ring their silence relentlessly.
And yet there used to be life once—
Life that equalled death
Life full of disgust
Life without nourishment
Without hope
And even without air.

It is hard to comprehend
This sterilized space
But we must force ourselves to do it
For fate has allowed us to leave Anus Mundi
As normally as we entered.
QUESTIONS SEEPING UP:

what now is normal? what now is wholeness or health? the machinery of genocide has not ceased. it visits other continents, other countries. it practices new machineries of efficiency. it has not been stopped. how can a spiritual life be lived in this enduring context? how can brokenness be contained in life? what embrace can surround horror? is darkness now part of the unencompassable?—added to the impossible-to-gather by the darkness of human ways? i cannot imagine these questions going away.

Coming home.

I have lived with questions leaking into my life for a long time. I learned very early a kind of suspicion about things seeming all right. I learned to think questions, to let them come to me. Growing up in a religious context gave me options for thinking. Learning to think differently, in different ways was a means of survival. Those doubled ways of thinking are not easy to delineate. They are also of double value. I live(d) in them; struggle(d) in and against the pressures, obligations that religion fosters. I learned that sense making and meaning making occur in different ways. Ascribed meanings may not always make sense. Making sense may transgress accepted meanings. I learned that there are consistencies and inconsistencies, congruencies and incongruencies.

As a child and adolescent, I developed a radar based on intuitive resonance. I noticed who rang true with what they claimed. I noticed who was hollow and sounded empty in their claims. I noticed passion
that claimed to be love yet seemed more like cruelty and arrogance. I noticed care and tenderness that seemed to have no reason but love itself. I saw postured humility and what, I felt, was genuine humbleness. I lived in a complex set of dynamics shaped by degrees of integrity and veracity that I tried to delineate. I developed skills of criticism and observation using both intellect and my intuitive "radar" sense. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it did not.

inquiries along a fracture:
is that what I learned—double-thinking, multiple viewpoints, critiquing skills? in the face of it, did I learn to hide so well and thoroughly that I cannot be found (find myself) easily? is such learning loss or gain? is my hesitation to declare myself except in uncertainty borne in a need of self-preservation against the pressures of religious conformity? did I learn that secrets seem stronger than openness? or that silence is safer than words?

What came to matter was surviving. This was not an issue of physical needs but an issue of integrity, of spirit. Living in a context where there were demands for public performance and sometimes public self-disclosure and declaration, I learned a skill of hiding. I learned to dissemble; to tell the truth as indirectly as possible. It does not, I realize now, matter what the ideology of the public arena is—religious belief, esoteric practices, academic rigor, financial prowess—if the consequence of presentation is a breaking up of the congruity of living. If I speak, write, sing, dance, portray any knowledge, any truth
that has lost touch with me, that I cannot live in, it is not truthful, even if it is right, approved, accepted and praised as true. Such a course is a breaking of spirit, a fragmentation of my humanity.

Perhaps in resisting, in hiding my voice, my claims have become what I resisted: fragmented, discontinuous?

I learned to hide, in order to protect myself from exposure, from being presented in a way I could not endure or survive. I found ways not to be quite in the "correct" acceptable position, but also ways not to disclose my actual place—losing some freedom to speak, to move, especially in the face of agreed authorities and approved ways. It seemed a small loss at the time.

Pray. I have fallen prey.

My young voice was never sure but shaped by doubts and questions, nurtured by the incongruities I read in the publicly offered selves around me. I have learned some confidence in my voice, my knowing. I have learned that being fragmented and unsure is truer for me. That I can live from there. And I long for a be/com/ing open(ed) that does not lead to terror. I seek a way that respects a continuity of voice and person.

As a child I hid because I could not imagine having the strength to say what I knew and being able to live in it and with it. I was a child. The adults had the power and, so it seemed, ways to get people to become as they were. What I knew was often at odds with the official adult position. I was sure of it, but not sure of declaring it. I did not know or understand or believe because it was the approved way, the
approved form. But I was drawn to wanting approval and the success that seemed to accompany fitting in and voicing the acceptable words and ways.

I still respect that child-wisdom of resistance. I still seek ways of living that ring true. I resist forms that are in place and have strength because of that. I resist formations that I perceive as fracturing connections and integrity. What good is knowledge, understanding, awareness if it is not owned, held, livable and lived in? Does it matter if it is correct if it is disconnected and lifeless?

What I know now of the spiritual is its slightness and fragility. What I understand is the need for care, for attention, for space not to fit in, for permission to be incomplete, uncertain, disagreeable. My journey has taught me that.

Seeking openings: a piece of thinking.

In order to survive I learned to think: quickly, adeptly, imaginatively. It was the skill I had available. To shift frames, to think from someone else's perspective were necessary tools for me. To acquire understanding that offered space, that proposed alternate ways was part of learning to live, staying alive. Through thinking I developed ways to find openings that let me move, sometimes into view, sometimes out of sight. I recall at one point in adolescence, being aware of a multiplicity of selves that I presented as a way of living in different contexts that, to my adolescent perception, required different ways of being. The shape of the constructed self(selves) and the way of making a self for presentation became a way of retreat. But
it left a difficult set of questions: Who am I? Who am I be/coming?
Who do people know when they know me? Am I anyone? No one?

I wish to borrow John Caputo's (1987) use of the Greek theatrical term *persona* to escape the conundrum of the presented self and to engage in re-thinking identity. In presenting a self to the world there is always a step back from the constructed self. At the same time, in the pursuit of personal awareness, the self is also being sought. And so there is a self being sought and a self being presented. Two kinds of self-work: one being given out, one being sought within. But who/what seeks and presents the self if it is the self that must be rendered, discovered, learned, presented? If the self is construct, who constructs it? It becomes a process of infinite regress: each self under construction by a self that is under construction by a self that is under construction by a self. . . . The self is not identity but construct to represent identity.

Caputo approaches the question of identity using the image of the Greek theatrical mask—*persona*—that covers the actor's face. The mask serves as an amplifier: enlarging the voice. The mask is a channel for voice: an instrument of passage for a voice that Caputo leaves open as to source: G-d? World? Cosmos? Character? Mystery? Who speaks through the *persona*? But in the theatrical act of presentation, a mask is also a cover: Who would dare step onto the stage and invoke m(M)ystery, calling on the gods, expecting them to be present, and be willing to stand undisguised in a face-to-face encounter with "it" or them. The mask protects, guarding against encounters that may be unsurvivable, guarding against certainty and finality, leaving room, preserving identity. The self ceases to be the
focus. Identity remains always slightly hidden, withdrawn, held behind the mask.

Caputo describes the withdrawal, the *lethe* (also forgetting) at work in the space between the mask and the actor: the persona. He notes that in this space the flux arises because there is a gap, a space. As the persona speaks truly—*a-lethe-ia*—there is withdrawal, there is forgetting. The persona can never quite be grasped. Behind or within the mask one speaks and withdraws. The words take flight, begin passage. The words are full of potential but they are not the person. The person remains withdrawn, held back, moving into the next words, the next voicing. The person has space, is guarded through a mask and, in the movement away, is hidden.

Understanding identity as persona allows for incompleteness, for movement. Identity is not to be fixed in place. It retains a degree of mystery. Persona allows forgetting and withdrawal, movement and space for be/com/ing. A different kind of respect of person comes into play. There is not a necessary being that is to be expressed. There is an on-going and incomplete relation of discovery, of exchange that includes an interaction in which the person is also spoken through by the flux and becomes through that speaking.

I wish to take up this way of understanding identity. I wish to no longer speak of self: of my "self." I know I cannot escape the vocabulary of my culture: the concrete forms poured and set in the shapes that direct my mind. I want to acknowledge persona: the sounding and the withdrawal: the retaining of mystery. The freedom of uncertainty and movement. The necessity of questions as
questions: inquiry as a way of be/com/ing—without closure, without satisfaction.

*but does this act of thinking, of discovering a different understanding lead to living? can i think my way to freedom or must there be other work? what would it be to live as person, through the sounding of the flux, in the midst of withdrawal and mystery? what practice would it be?*

if i am really living in now—the present—i cannot know the me of that moment, as now slips away. i hope. i trust. i wait to see what i will become. for now will pass and i will begin again, hoping, trusting, waiting, listening, watching: living in a new now. repeating forward the immediacy of living only in now.

Perhaps I can stumble without being afraid or ashamed. Perhaps I can meet the fears of being located, found out and respond not as a child but as someone who can promise back. I am trying to take the skills that I have: reading, thinking, writing and use them in the making of life, in be/com/ing. I am trying to give voice to spirituality and live in it: in living and in writing.

There is a space of unknowing and it is not far away but here in me. The inconsolable, the unencompassable is not far away. Person is
the site of the flux. "It" breaks in here. In me. Irrupts in my voice, amplified and distorted in my speech. I withdraw: wondering. I withdraw in wonder. "Have I said that?" "I did not know that." "I did not know I knew that?" I too am vessel. I too am place of passage.

I struggle with my tangled roots, with the religion of my family, with my own belief and commitment. I was unable to embrace their view as it stood; as I perceived it in growing up. I tried various Christian stances and worked toward something I could be at ease with, be at home in, move in. I am not certain that I have found a secure religious home. Perhaps, if I found a secure home for my thinking it would make me uneasy; make me nervous that I was becoming too settled.

would i be comfortable in finding a secure home for my living?

being restless

i am, by nature and by nurture a restless soul. i see it in the way my father cannot sit still in conversations. i see it in my eldest son with his urge to move, to travel, to try new things.
i have a friend who dreams, who knows me often through her dreams and tells me what is going to happen in my life before it does—including telling me that we would move from New Brunswick to British Columbia before i
had a job offer here. She told me one day that although my restlessness often irritated her she had come to understand it as a gift. It was a gift, not for me, but for others. I keep things from getting too settled. I ask too many questions to allow things to slip by. She wanted me to know that she was glad I was restless, unsettled. It was a gift for her to tell me, to make my endless disquiet seem something other than trouble and difficulty.

Perhaps I am not changing but merely finding other forms for my way, my pattern, my flow: troubled waters seeking a course.

And so I write of spirituality as insecure, uncertain—attempting to move out of the confines of religion; to open space for myself to be spiritual without being contained by the certainty and exclusivity of religion as I have experienced it.

Am I one of the voices trying to re-discover something that is now called spirituality: groping, reaching, hoping?
Am I writing toward o(0)ther: hoping that love is a shaping energy.
Am I be/com/ing what I am trying to write: toward o(0)ther, attending to spirit?

**Be/Com/ing out**

Insecurity has become somewhere to live: a fluid, unstable dwelling that forces me up against questions and doubts. I have learned to live in questions and uncertainties. I am learning to live in the cracks, along the fractures and holes in structures of beliefs and claims. They
become spaces of possibility, si(gh)tes of hope for me. I can be there, moving and not be cemented into (a) place. I do not want to become a true believer, set into true and final places. Certainty frightens me in its extreme rigour, as a kind of death. May I remain tentative, fragile, uncertain, mobile.

My hope for be/com/ing human, be/com/ing spiritual:

To learn to live with integrity and consistency, faithful in practice, responsive, thoughtful, lively.

To know faithfulness as living process: on-going and tentative.

To discover a spirituality of life, of possibility in what is uncertain; in what is struggling to engage life.

To live with difficulty and unknowns.

To engage in what is willing to move and be moved.

In the practice of living, I struggle to form a livable understanding of spirit and spirituality, influenced by my Christian roots. I understand spirit as a human link to what is not known, toward what moves life into being. My spirituality acknowledges an impinging, even intrusive, quality of o(0)ther. But I hesitate to identify with an understanding of G-d as an expression of power and strength—a projection in Christian tradition of the way some humans have wanted the world to be: strong, certain, and clear. I wonder about the heldness and delicacy of the universe. Perhaps it is time to understand G-d not as strong but as weak; not only as omnipotent but also omni-impotent: fragile, vulnerable, fleeting, not dominating but reticent. Perhaps G-d is unlike the strong and more like the weak.
A spiritual relation requires me, requires humans to be/come generous, yielding, flexible, forgiving. Living spiritually acknowledges immanence: a constant flow through of flux, of spirit—as presence and absence; as here and not here, as calling and silent; as close and far away. I am caught up in the flow of spirit, swept along. I am embraced whether I notice it or not. Spiritual intimacy is an entangled mutuality. It is not fixed or stable. It is relational, changing.

I think of this pedagogically: the teacher is the one who reaches but the student is the one who offers readiness. But the teacher must be ready and the student must reach. Both the reaching and the readiness can be seen as active. Both the reaching and the readiness can be seen as passive. They depend on one another for there to be any exchange that can be called education. This how I understand spirituality: a movement between what is spirit as me and what is spirit as o(O)ther, an exchange of reaching and readiness: an exchange of learning and teaching. It is a deliberate mutuality, a deliberate confusion of certainty. It is intimacy in flow and fluctuation.

companions on the way

and when i find words in other sources, like Michel Serres, who offer similar leanings toward weakness, who ask for history to be based on movement and flow, who hope that we learn to do things differently so that we do not continue to repeat the violence, who wants science to not accumulate a death count the way religion has, who speak of the slow tectonic movement of history that follows the patterns of the history of religion, i take heart.
I am encouraged. I wonder if to write of spirituality and education is possible. I wonder: is this work of thinking and writing the way or is it a way out of the way? Am I covering over the flux with my thinking? Am I opening a way for my own life, for others?

I can pursue this course. I can keep to a schedule to write, hurry up. Read more. Read less. But can I live in this writing? Can this biography of spirit tell of me? Do I hide in thinking and theory?

I am challenged by questions that ask for me to be present. I am challenged by questions wanting clarity and structure. Which questions draw me? Which ones lead me to life? Which ones also arise in my own soul's dark corners and echo up hollow passages to my listening inner ear? Whose voices are my noise: the static of my mind? Whose voices open or close the way? Is there a thoughtful stillness that I can find, that will be a resting place for this writing? Is there a necessary quiet that I must come to to write of this? Is writing the noise a way of making quiet? Am I learning to listen?

I can trace my journey and tell of working in the Anglican Church for 12 years, becoming aware of spirituality as exclusive, as a special or elite experience, available only to those who are particularly religious. I can account for my doubts in a limited spirituality. I can tell of seeking to articulate spirituality as a human quality of all humans; as a beckoning toward o(0)ther in recognition of immanent connection to
o(O)ther, to G-d; as way of be/com/ing human; as a way of being connected to life with a compulsion for life. Is such telling sufficient?

\ fracture \n
am i m aking a declaration of my spirituality? have i uncovered my own thinking—to me and others through this writing? must i resist my instincts for invisibility? in the past, i have been told that i was transparent. perhaps others already know me, my spirituality and i am only learning it myself by trying to write a biography on paper? what about...all of the options, all of the other ways of seeing and thinking? what about all the noisy protests to closure and certainty that arise in my mind? what about my urge to step back and say maybe, maybe not? what about....

/ fracture /

breaking open
holding shut
leaking
eroding

making a place,
a stability from movement, from dispersion and shifting.
can i live and write from there?
is this an illusion: a sleight-of-hand?

noise, flow, fluctuation
turbulence and dreams
the places where
i be/come and think

Over and over:
I return to "wonder"—wonder that includes a startled amazement in response to the new, the unknown, the unexpected and wonder as the curiosity of inquiry, speculation, doubt. Mystery and inquiry. In wonder there rests a touch of terror, a touch of being overcome, overwhelmed. An uncertainty of response. Spirit is immanent: close, near-by, almost intruding. Almost and always. This is its strength, its fragility. I hope I know this well enough to write in respect of it, to be a biographer of spirit that can say that and learn to live in it, in that flow.

learning respect
he was a big man, bigger than me. aboriginal. very angry. the air in the meeting room tingled with tension. he was pouring out his rage, calling the non-aboriginals foreigners, speaking of his land, his people's home, of the betrayals, the genocide, the racism, the arrogance. he spared very few terms.
later, after we all had had our turns telling our stories, he laughed and told us how he liked to reach in and grab a hold of a person's heart and squeeze it until they were almost gone and then, he laughed again, let it go and watch them gasp for breath. he had done that to us. his
anger was working to teach us a different truth about land and people.

he had squeezed my heart. he had made fear awaken in me, and shame.

as we drew to a close, we spoke of respect. we found common voice in understanding respect as a blend of fear and love: a combination of awe—holding back, giving space—and care—love, embrace, laughter. in his wisdom he did all of those with us in those three days.

**Going further with my story**

I am being drawn closer to the necessity of story, to the relations that are enmeshed in necessity. To express the spiritual requires me to tell stories, to pay attention to how they arise. I am drawn to re-consider, to extend my biography of spirit: to be extended by it: to pay attention to the connections.

Recently, I have been teaching. Whenever I teach I find I am learning: humbled by the stories and wisdom of those who are students. If I pay attention, I begin to listen. I struggle to respond to the questions asked. The students' responses restrain and re-train my thoughts, shifting them, moving my knowing to a different angle, a different vantage.

I have discovered that "the difficult that is the way" includes the challenge of remaining open, as teacher. It requires me, as teacher, to remain uncertain and asking, always asking. I am discovering that
the spiritual is a contradictory kind of knowledge that is not found in answers. Answers are ways of escaping the difficult, of moving out of the trembling and the flux unto the solid concrete of knowledge—where it is so easy to skin my knees in a stumble or bruise my side falling off my bike when a frosty morning coats the concrete with a layer of rime.

How often I resort to writing answers, explanation, theories. Again and again. But when I teach I respond with stories, with questions. How can writing become response? Perhaps a biography of spirit requires me to write in response to me, to my questions. Perhaps I need to listen to my own story and the turns it takes. How would I teach me about spirituality? About be/com/ing? How would I invoke movement in me?

I am discovering through the re-search of my looking and looking again, wondering and wondering again that knowledge of the spiritual remains in the question. It stays in the movement of the question as the question is an opening that keeps open. Understanding is linked to the question. Living is linked to the story.

It is why I tell stories, why stories are told. It is why I tried to write a biography of spirit. Stories remain open, vivid, potential: stories as a way to life, stories as beginning.

I have been teaching and found that I am in the midst of an eternal potential: story as always. I gave a simple exercise: recall a moment
in your own life that you would identify as a spiritual moment, or experience. What made it so for you? What qualities, feelings, sensations, thoughts made it spiritual for you? List them on a piece of paper and then discuss them with two others. The students began by telling stories. They began in the inexplicable of their own experience by telling their stories. Their stories carried an account of the event but also had a living quality that passed over the lifeblood of the experience: the qualities they felt, experienced.

So I am located in these two extensions of openness: questions that keep on asking and stories that pass over life. Why have I returned to a biography of spirit? To re-writing? Are there traces here that are palpable? Is it here, in this story of my discovering and wondering, that there is the possibility of apprehending the spiritual in my writing and thinking?

Aside: apprehending: the word made me tremble. it can mean to arrest, to lay hold of as well as to be conscious of by the senses; to lay hold of by intellect; to catch the meaning of; to understand; to recognize; to consider; to look forward to especially with fear. i want to let it go again, to not hold on. my hope is to notice, to incline my ear and heart, my mind and eye, perhaps to touch and be
touched. to acknowledge the fear, the trembling and then to let it be.

I have found several voices teaching me from the o(0)ther side: not only in the encounter of face-to-face, students and teacher but in the taking of words from pages of a text trying to offer them in a class and then discovering, in what I am teaching, an understanding that I did not have. I become student between the words and facet of the text and the words and faces of the students. It is why I call it being humbled. It is why I think Caputo's persona is a truthful telling. It is always close to not working. It has a quality of risk and uncertainty. I am not sure. Let us wonder together. Here we may discover. Here we may tumble and fall in the abyss, the place of no ground. Here we may forget and discover again what we knew and did not know, remembering what we never knew. Knowing who we are and then forgetting and beginning again.

I am writing of an inclination of spirit. This is a biography of spirit: extended. Spirit as extensive and extensible. Spirit is always reaching out. A person reaches and withdraws. I understand for a moment why teaching is a spiritual task: always reaching, always working toward being ready. Always withholding from seizure and capture. Always letting go. Always withdrawing. Teaching is spiritual because it requires that I make space for living: make room.

Perhaps I can stumble without being afraid or ashamed. Perhaps I can meet the fears of being located, found out and respond not as a child
but as someone who can promise back. I am trying to take the skills that I have: reading, thinking, writing and use them in the making of life, in be/com/ing. I am trying to give voice to spirituality and live in it: in living and in writing.

There is a space of unknowing and it is not far away but here in me. The inconsolable, the unencompassable is not far away. Person is the site of the flux. "It" breaks in here. In me. Irrupts in my voice, amplified and distorted in my speech. I withdraw: wondering. I withdraw in wonder. "Have I said that?" "I did not know that." "I did not know I knew that?" I too am vessel. I too am place of passage.

The mysteriousness of spirit and spirituality is not its austerity or its sublimity. It is not far away. It is tangled in living. It is between and among. It is blended and potential. In that space offered by the mask: in the between. The mask is voice projector, and the mask is soul (sole?) protector of the human actor: in the persona is the spirit. In that dynamic space that is opening for the voice, known or unknown, to take flight through the person. The spirit speaks, tells. The story lives, comes alive. It is the opening of the life to the flow, the opening of person to spirit that gives the flow space, opportunity.
firebird

i want to know your blazing wings,
firebird,
to feel your hot jagged
feathers; to lose my breath in
a rush of flight, carried on your wings;
to taste your intensified air.

i want to be caught up,
firebird,
in the roar of your flames,
in the wind that stirs in your passage;
i long to see anew the world
from the pinnacles of your height.

i want to be lost,
firebird
in the down of our wings;
to let my tears dissolve in your warmth;
to feel the softness of your rest;
the cool healing of your scented voice.

you are a terror to me,
firebird.
you pass through me
from time to time.
i hear your singing cry
in the night wind
echoing in my bones
as you pass.
i live hoping, trembling,
firebird,
that you will take me
journeying.
Endnote:

There are echoes of many others' voices in this chapter that I wish to acknowledge. They colour ideas, and bring events to attention. The influences are varied: some from reading, some personal. Traces of Michel Serres are in my concern for time and current, in my fascination with passage, in reaching toward multiples and multiplicity and in the irony of excluding exclusion. Gilles Deleuze surfaces in multiplicity, in the sense of double meanings and directions in events, in the idea of rhizomatic growth. John Caputo is already noted in the matter of self and identity and lingers also in mystery, movement, and openness. Somehow, indirectly, Jacques Daignault's voice insinuates the process of consciousness and return that draws me to writing biographically. An old friend, Louis Capson has left his traces in the glass and blood, in the ways of tangential thinking, in the edginess about form. Antoinette Oberg's persistent questions shape the flow and the uncoverings, especially of me. Through Caputo comes Kierkegaard. And there are other voices: Walter Benjamin, Annie Dillard, Thomas Moore, William Bausch, Edith Wyschogrod, Jan Zwicky, Cynthia Chambers, James Hillman, Pierre Hadot, Gerald May. I leave the personal voices without listing. Much of my learning comes in dialogues and there are many voices who have been part of the personal conversations of discovery in writing.
Fourth Chapter Prelude

I move from my story toward the matter of education, toward the questions of being located in education: What does spirituality have to do with education? What does education have to do with spirituality? Is there a connection between education and spirituality?

It is not to leave my story completely. There are links in my life between education and spirituality. I am a learner and a teacher. I love being and doing both. They are linked to my spirituality. In trying to hold to telling and living in my story, I pay attention to my own text as a way of teaching myself, as a way of instruction. It is the links between education and spirituality that this chapter addresses.

Between education and spirituality there is a space. I am writing in and through that space, working in the "between." This chapter enters that space to discover the links pre-posed by own writing, drawing on traces from my own text and fragments from elsewhere to examine the connectives I assume and use. I treat those sources as sites to uncover the meaning of my situating spirituality in an educational circumstance. And to uncover my sense of education, learning, teaching: to bring it into focus. As a matter of spirit.

Education is one in the series of parabolic lines: writing, living, reading, inquiry, spirituality. It too moves in relation to making a life and reading a life.
Chapter 4

Spirituality Education

Education is an education, the art of educing or bringing out what is latent in a person. . . . In its deepest form, education is the art of enticing the soul to emerge from its cocoon, from its coil of potentiality and its cave of hiding. Education is not the piling on of learning, information, data, facts, skills or abilities—that's training or instructing—but is rather a making visible what is hidden as a seed.

Thomas Moore, The Education of the Heart.

A locating dialogue

Characters: Askers: an external voice
author: my voice, out loud
other: my voice too, but more internal.

Askers: You have situated yourself at a complex conjunction of ideas that include philosophic, educational, and theoretical questions in trying to write about spirituality and education. Can you explain the thinking that you used to construct or select spirituality and education as a topic of inquiry?

author: I'm not sure . . . I need to re-phrase that question because it makes me . . . uncomfortable . . . I don't think I set out to construct this task, for myself.

Askers: What are you implying—that you were called to it?

author: Called, yes, called. Invited. I had no idea where it would lead: certainly not to this. I had . . . I have a sense of being
called to a task and that is the most I can say about being here.

other: You think that's enough answer?

author: It is a point of orientation. I set out for some reason.

other: What about all the implieds—been called have we? By whom or what?

author: Called. Beckoned.

Sometimes when I write poems they come to me as if from elsewhere. I write because I am interested but I write because there is a call to a particular writing. There is some impetus in living, in writing that is other than just me. Something o(0)ther that acts on me. In me. On . . . in . . . maybe through. I . . . I . . .

other: Hesitate.

author: Yes, hesitate. I wonder—each concept, each word is a confluence point, with lines or tendrils running out in so many directions. Elsewhere, o(O)ther, called. I want to follow as many as I can all at once—there are so many tendrils, so many streams shooting out . . .

other: But you can't. You're stuck right here in the tangle: at the confluence with all the feelings, the panic, the desire to explain, the buzzing voices.

Asker: But can you be there? Can you write from the midst of that tangle?

author: I have to find a way. It's here, precisely in the unease,

other: Maybe dis-ease is better,
author: Maybe. All right. In the dis-ease that I think spirituality
comes into play, can come to attention.

other: Why shift so easily to the next suggestion? Why is it so hard to
hold to one place?

Seeking connections

Spirituality education: with a gap between them. That space
between is the attention of this chapter. What are the links that might
arise there? How does one term inform the other across the gap?
Connect to the other? Transgress the other? What does a space between
signify in writing, in thinking, in practice? I begin with between, with its
possibilities.

i. Between: the between

I recall what a moment of liberation it was for me to realize, in
the midst of a class led by Dr. Ted Aoki, that "the between" had become
a site of possibility. He was claiming that it was not in what had
settled into solid form but in the spaces between solidities that things
shifted, moved, and happened. It was along the edges, in the margins,
outside the known and familiar where change took place, where things
might happen.

I had long felt that I was in-between: not in one place or another
but always between ideas, between positions, between certainties. I
could not seem to find my way to one place. My practice was to shift
from knowing and understanding one position to embracing another,
and then shifting elsewhere or back. I spent much of my life trying to
figure out how to get out of the place, "the between," to get anchored or
rooted in one place, one idea. I had long sought the singular, the unitary. Now someone was saying: find your way to the between spaces. Discover there. Remain there. Life, new ideas, creativity are generated there. I could stop trying to leave; stop disguising that I was not in one space or the other and could live, think, write in "the between."

There is a space between education and spirituality. It is a place of movement, of tension and change. I have been writing and thinking there for some time. It may have links through it. I come to this inquiry with experiences of education and with spiritual experiences. I have origins in the traditions and understanding of both domains. I have moved in and out of both of them with varying degrees of comfort. My research is located in this between space: not fully educational, not completely spiritual. It is hybrid, cross-pollinated. It is not pure: not really one or the other, not both, not either. It is between.

Aside: "the between" is not a two sided space with opposing faces. It is not the slash that divides either/or. It is not a matter of geometry or geography. I could call it "the among" or "the midst of" to suggest it is more fluid, multiple, and variable. Very little stays in place and what appear to be solidities are amorphous, shifting forms. Delineations in a flow are zones, regions, currents. It is not so exact as lines and shapes. In the
flux it is possible to be between and not have either/or in mind.

ii. Between: as gap

There is a space between spirituality and education. They have been held apart for some time in our cultural context where it has been imagined that spirituality would somehow pollute public education or endanger it. The project of developing the mind and person was to be free of the superstitions and myths that spirituality might bring from its religious heritage. Public education was wedded to the modern project: objectivity, factuality, clarity, certainty, rationality, materiality. Spirituality would seem to betray all of the borders and enmesh thinking in subjectivity, intuition, speculation, experience, and uncertainty. There can be no mingling. It would be corruption.

The gap between education and spirituality on the page is a sign of an actuality of practice. Since mind and body have been split—physical from spiritual—this space has been certain, almost set in place as a concrete reality that cannot be moved. But it has begun to shift as all such certainties are shifting and moving from the shaking of post-modern questioning. The assumptions that have valorized objectivity, certainty, clarity, materiality have become less certain. Now, it is argued: objectivity is always entangled with subjectivity. There is no idea or point of observation that is not located in some perspective. There is no neutral place. Clarity and certainty are social constructs. Rationality is merely one kind of thinking. The material is illusory. Not all experience can be known as data or evidence. All knowing is
incomplete. The assumptions that have stabilized solidities and their arrangement no longer hold.

The gap that is between education and spirituality is shifting, becoming a lively space. Where there has been silence, there are now voices asking for re-consideration, for re-thinking. The gap is not empty, it is in flux. As a space of "the between" it is generative and lively. It is not a gap fixed which cannot be crossed. There are connections crossing over, leaving traces: contrails in a cloud chamber that appeared to be only a black, closed space. It is possible to note passage, exchange, relations, and linkages: acts of commun(ication).

iii. Between: connective traces

Being between education and spirituality, aware of the gap, working to notice connective traces that indicate linkages, I have come again and again to prepositions. But which prepositions? What small words will denote the connectives of spirituality and education? I have begun with the conjunction: 'and.' I have assumed these domains are not distinct, but entangled: joined, at least by an 'and,' that I can explore their link and open it to a different understanding.

But I carry two questions that do not go away, that keep whispering their wonder at me: Why are you doing this in education? What does this have to do with education? I remember being asked. I remember being startled that what had seemed self-evident to me was obscure to someone else. Did she think there was no connection? Did she think I was not sure of a connection? Or that it was necessary for me to articulate a connection to make it evident? There are other questions that gather around the prepositions that link education and

It is not insignificant to ponder the prepositions. Michel Serres (1995c) points to these small words and the way they connect and inflect terms, bending them. He argues that these tiny links serve as messengers— punning on the French préposé "commonly used to refer to a postman" (p. 139) and linking them to angels and Hermes—pre-positioning terms, establishing relationships, determining inclination by acting from one to another.

What relationship do I imagine for spirituality and education? I chose "In and between" as a title for my Master's thesis. I keep returning to the difficulty of this relation: what passes from spirituality to education, or from education to spirituality? How do these terms interact? Serres (1995c) claims that prepositions—small invariable terms—are what set the ponderous, set-in-place nouns and verbs into motion (p. 146). The between space is where motion arises. The nature of the motion, the spin, is the work of the prepositions. I remain unsettled about the prepositions to choose: what spin to put on the connections.

What criteria would be useful to ascertain the traces that exist? To denote them with words? The gap between education spirituality
is already alive. There are already connectives through and across linking, passing back and forth: in passage. My own writing is filled with connecting assumptions.

**Tracing the connectives**

Serres' play with prepositions leads me to re-consider the connections and linkages I have already offered. What messages have already moved through my writing, are already at play and in motion in this text? There are already a variety of connectives, parabolic lines, linkages, traces to be noted.

Aside: iv. **Between: the middle**

i am in the midst. between is a middle space. i am in the midst in of time, of writing, and the text: somewhere between the beginning and the end. i am not at the beginning of the question of connections. i do not see its end.

another parable of my spiritual journey through the process of writing. between: unable to arrive at one, at a singular place. holding the options open: deferring. the text itself—the one i have written: the one i am writing—becomes a source to understand my assumptions.
I return to my own text to note the links I have made and to other writing to gather fragments that mark the assumptions that are before me, that I have made: to note the pre-positions that I take. I have tested and tasted many prepositions: to, with, within, between, of, for, in. I have offered parables and imaginarieS. From these sources I assemble a reprise of connections, drawing together my inclinations and attempts at understanding the relation of spirituality education, to trace the linkages as I have claimed them.

An influx of learning:
Something has come up and intrudes. It is about writing and education. It is not new learning for me but it has come from a different source. Writing about a topic as discourse, as idea from the head and writing about a topic as it occurs, as it happens personally—these are not the same. I have been reading two sets of student papers, to mark. Both sets address the topic. The writing that is about the topic—call it discursive—that follows the guidelines, that comes from the head lacks something. It is not quality, or effort. It lacks—intensity? Vitality? Resonance? The writing that is personal reflection on the process and experience of the topic—call it biography or journal writing—that also follows guidelines has energy, strength, seems alive.
The same struggle is in my text. I drift up into the writing from the mind. A quality is lost. I write in a learned way, following the guidelines of writing and thinking as I
understand them, as I have learned them. The text dies in its making. It stops sounding, re-sounding. Is it a matter of education and writing? How have I learned to write one way or the other? Why is one way of writing lively and the other deadly? Is it merely a matter of skill? Is it a matter of engagement? Is it a matter of comfort: words connected and lived-in or words only thought: disconnected and processed? I write about spirituality and education: to-be-lived-in matters. It is not a matter of thinking and writing from the head. It is writing from experience.

falling in love

I don't remember how old I was that year. I think it was grade 5 or 6 so I was probably ten, eleven. At one point in the year I had been very ill with a flu virus that made me very sick. I became quite dehydrated. My mother could not keep me still. The village we lived in had no hospital. The local GP, Dr. Kinnard, wanted to send me away to a hospital in another town if I did not improve over the next 24 hours. I was restless. I was having trouble staying in bed. I was force-fed sweet tea. I still cannot drink tea. The smell repulses me. But I was kept still by books. I had never really read before and my mother went to the little school library and got me some books. The world fell open. I fell in. I think several days passed and I was getting better. I wanted to read everything.
Back at school I remembered a book I had read once before, before falling in love with reading and the worlds that opened through words. I started to prowl through the library shelves at the back of the classroom. The books were not catalogued in our three-room school, just left on the shelves in no particular order. Somewhere in the midst of my looking, the afternoon recess bell rang and everyone went outside. I did not. I had not found the book and kept looking and looking until I did. Finally I had it, said something to Mrs. MacDonald and headed out.

There was something wrong. The school yard was very quiet. There was no one on the boys side. They must have all gone to the girls side. I rounded the school. No one there. Nor behind the school, nor in the field, nor the woods nearby. I was alone. I went back inside and climbed the empty stairs to Mrs. MacDonald's room. I was nearly crying. "Where is everybody?" I had no idea what had happened.

Somehow in my looking I was not listening. There was a special meeting at the school later that day and everyone had been sent home early. I missed the announcement. I was lost in love. I could go too.

She let me leave by the back door and go down the fire escape. It was an act of kindness, a way out usually forbidden. I kept my affections quiet. I did not want
anyone to know that I had missed an early dismissal message because I wanted to read.

I remember the book. It was a story about an Iroquois boy and a longhouse. It had a brown cover and several painted sketches as illustrations.

Such love was powerful and best kept secret.

To live and write of love is a spiritual task. My love is entangled with words, with books and ideas. There are other loves in my life but this story locates me in education, in learning. It locates me in the intensity that I have for thinking, for reading, for losing myself in words. It is about school. It is about my education and a deep love that I have. It is writing from my living. It is the seed-bed of my passion for education, for spirituality and their links in me. I came to reading in a time of illness and fear. It got under my skin and all the way in. Writing followed years later in the course of another illness. I had written prior to being ill with mononucleosis but never had I written words like I did as I recuperated. I began to write poetry with words that flooded out of me like a torrent. Words that were tied to me, to my soul, to my dreams. Words that I could not stop once they started. I wanted to write a poem a day when I began. I wrote three or four or five.

Reading, writing: both became "acts of the heart" for me when they came alive and seized me. I now imagine both of these seizures as spiritual, as part of my vocation, of be/com/ing.
What traces in my writing link spirituality and education? What can a re-reading and reflection on my texts tell me? Can I translate my experiences of being caught up and swept away into a discourse that will open the links to others, to a sharing of connections?

**Text-trace 1**

"The understanding that links living, writing, spirit, and education is being formed as I go along. It is in the discovery of writing that I notice the links. I am becoming aware of relations being formed: many relations, many connections. Things draw near to one another: spirit and education, education and inquiry, inquiry and writing, writing and spirit, writing and education, spirit and inquiry. They are never the same: always asymptotic: close yet retaining their difference."

**Reflection**: And in drawing near to one another, in occupying similar space, (in occupying space similarly) spirit and education are discovered to be like one another; discovered to be on-going, in the between; in movement; requiring openness. Connections are possible, and interaction. Education and spirituality begin to inform one another. I begin with an assumption of closeness. The 'and' is small. Education and spirit are nested among a series of relations: to inquiry, to writing, to one another.

**Fragment from elsewhere**

... Spirituality is part of the fabric, the flow of assumptions that shape life and community. It is in the formation of lives that occurs
through education throughout life that spirit can be known and expressed. Education is not defined by schooling but the practice of schools exists inside of our understanding of education, its role, meaning, and practice. Education is a greater current. Spirituality is already in play, recognized or ignored.

Trying to understand learning by studying school is rather like trying to understand sex by studying bordellos. . . . (Schooling) is not the model for all learning, only one of the many byways. (Bateson, 1994, p. 196)

Text-trace 2
"Living spiritually is parabolic to the primary form of educational exchange in which teaching is an act of reaching toward and learning is an offering of readiness in return—another kind of reaching, as teaching is another kind of readiness. In being open to the unknown, to o(O)ther and m(M)ystery, living spiritually is a learner's posture offering attentiveness, readiness—reaching and groping for understanding and knowing. In this sense spirituality and education are entangled forms. Spirituality, as living toward the flux, is already and always a way of living that is educational, that assumes learning and transformation are on-going necessities."

Fragment from elsewhere
... I am seeking tools to understand and note a practice in education that includes spirit and spirituality as human and cultural realities. I am concerned that education (as schooling), which plays such a large role in our cultural practice has not actively included spiritual
discourse in the training of educators or in its theoretical formations. As Dewey notes about moral training, it is not necessarily a question of a specific spiritual instruction but deliberate, consistent attention to a concern for the inclusion of spiritual matters in education and educational settings. . . . There needs to be a workable space for spirit to be in play in education, to be an aspect of the process of human formation/development, to be included in the work of learning throughout life whether the practice of education is a part of public and political life or part of the personal and human aspects of living.

**Reflection:** I am reaching beyond connections to call for an attitude that would be a shift in the practice of education as a public activity. I think education (but perhaps not schooling) has never quite left the spiritual out of its workings. The disciplines that Hadot claims as the spiritual practice of Greek philosophers—which have left such a rich philosophical, intellectual, and scientific heritage—are not unique to Western history and have informed spiritual discipline and practice in many cultures. Perhaps there are other lessons, other riches that could be learned if the insights of other spiritually disciplined traditions were accorded the same attention as the output of Greek spiritual disciplines.

**Text-trace 3**

"I suggest that writing, inquiry, spirituality follow a course, a thalweg that also is the course of education. They flow similarly, down toward the sea along a channel, a river-bed. Inquiry, writing, spirituality, education flow and shape the landscape they traverse."
They are currents of life, shaping space, being shaped by it. They follow a way of asking, of remaining open, of accepting what is given, of adding, of attending. They are a kind of practice of lived and living experience. There is a commonality to these qualities of flux that connect and link writing, inquiry, education, and spirituality. They share a way: a practice that is a kind of be/com/ing."

*Reflection:* Spirituality education: a combination of readiness and reaching; a combination of acknowledgment and willingness. There is an acknowledgment of links and a willingness to perceive connections: to accept them. I am claiming the work and practice of spirituality as an educational stance: a way of living in the world that is attentive, willing to learn, ready to be taught, questioning, seeking. I am imaging both as movements of life in parallel, moving in a similar direction.

*Text-trace 4*

"I think of this pedagogically: the teacher is the one who reaches but the student is the one who offers readiness. But the teacher must be ready and the student must reach. Both the reaching and the readiness can be seen as active. Both the reaching and the readiness can be seen as passive. They depend on one another for there to be any exchange that can be called education. This is how I understand spirituality: a movement between what is spirit as me and what is spirit as o(O)ther in an exchange of reaching and readiness: an exchange of learning and teaching. It is a deliberate mutuality, a deliberate confusion of certainty. It is intimacy in flow and fluctuation."
"We come to live as if life acts on us, as we also act on life. Life intrudes on us as m(M)ystery and as o(O)ther and our human challenge is to respond to the intrusions as they come, in the moment of meeting them. There is a kind of readiness and opportunism that such an understanding requires: a stance of being aware not only of the teachable moment but also the learnable moment. Learning is constant and life long—ever-present—in the present when we live in the present. What is this moment teaching me? Where do I move from here? What can I learn from this difficulty? This challenge? This opportunity?

Reflection: Be/com/ing spiritual demands be/com/ing teachable. I am suggesting that spirituality as a way of living demands attentiveness and leads to learning and to teaching. I may be taught but I may also discover teaching, being willing to reach toward others. I will respond to readiness if I live with awareness and openness. But I will need to return constantly to becoming ready, to being willing to reach. I can only do so if, in my engagement with life, I live ready to be taught, if my attention includes a practice of learning, of paying attention to who I am be/com/ing through a spiritual discipline of self-reflection. What have I learned today? What lessons come from the difficulties and challenges of the day? How can reviewing this day lead to living more/better in the next one?
Fragment from elsewhere

i keep writing about this, i keep moving around edges, currents.

... that still leaves me wanting to answer some of the endless questions that arise in my own thinking and in the words of others about how i intend to link spirituality and education. i think i do not intend to link them. i think they are already linked. i hope to discover/uncover some of their bonds, their affinity.
i think education always already has a practice that can be understood spiritually. every engagement that could be called a moment of education has an exchange. in that exchange there are many qualities, many overtones as practice and theory combine. ...
i return again and again to this struggle where i am torn between the tension of writing down some deliberate statement of spirituality and feeling like the most i can possibly do is invoke for education some place, some space for mystery. ... i am asking that education include an acknowledgment: we cannot grasp it all. we cannot get it. we have to leave it and live in it as always unfinished, as in process, as nearly there. this inclination of the incomplete, of the unfinished is deeply embedded in the theologies of a variety of spiritual traditions. there is waiting for the Messiah, the one who will come. others await a Second Coming. there is reaching Nirvana, bliss, heaven. all are
always out-of-reach. there is always something to await, to expect, to hope for.

i think some of that optimism is missing in education, replaced by instrumentality, by certainty based on holding, setting, measuring, evaluating. is there waiting? withdrawal? is there holding back because it is better? is there space or time to stumble into silence and awe? no. things are kept: tight and full.

spirituality, it seems, blossoms in awkwardness, in disjoints, turbulence, irrruptions, disturbances that leave spaces, that hesitate. it is not that it is missing in the smoothness and evenness, but it is neglected, ignored, invisible. and remains hidden, occasionally felt, or noticed in the stirring up of a turbulence, in break down or break out, in a gap.

the ripple on the water. the breath of wind, a shiver. a tingle. how slight and difficult this is. how can i write and claim that this is not illusion. illusive. necessarily slipping away. i have tried to speak of this elusive quality as necessary, to speak of hiddenness as a quality of experiencing spiritually.

Text-trace 6

"Through the early stages of my work, this choice (of the deferral of definitions) led me to a different understanding of research because of the degree of discomfort and uncertainty I was
experiencing, complicated by own thinking about spirituality and its possibilities for education. To defer was to invoke a quality of mystery and to stay with/in the unknown. I realized that educational research—all research—is driven by unknowns and not by knowns. The known can be recalled and catalogued, itemized and analyzed. An unknown is a source for inquiry. An unknown provides impetus to ask questions, to be perplexed and to seek understanding, response, and even answers. Spirituality became an engagement with the unknown that is not set on concluding, enclosing or verifying. It became that which remains unfinished, moveable and open to transitions."

**Reflection:** I suggest that a practice of spirituality is actually a way of remaining open to unfinished learning and is, therefore, a way of living in education, or living educationally. It includes an attitude that acknowledges there will always remain that which has not been known and encompassed. It is a way of living that includes change and incompleteness as part of its practice. It suggests that there is not an end point, that some things will remain uncertain. It is a way in which personal practice is open to being taught, to being altered, shifted, to understand differently. Spirituality, as a practice of living, requires a constant return to openness and readiness. This is an educational posture: a leaning towards learning that is marked by being open to learn, to being taught, to taking in those questions that may cause difficulty, awkwardness, struggle, and shaking. It is being ready to be taught; a kind of expectation of learning as daily practice, as a living necessity. Taking in the questions is part of the spiritual act of
removing opening, of entering willingly into the flux, the "without why", the "abyss. . .a sphere of groundlessness" of which Caputo (1987, p. 224) writes.

Fragment from elsewhere

• educational research is caught between the need for unknowns: a driving energy to stimulate inquiry and the need for knowns: something settled and formed that can become the content of lesson planning, teaching goals and topics. this is the inherent contradiction of structured education.

• learning is like research: it only survives as inquiry and is lost as soon as it is dominated by certainty and recollection (Caputo, 1987. p. 51).

Text-trace 7

"If the spiritual is to be part of living well, of acquiring skills of attention, of learning to live in the immediacy of relations, maintaining life, repeating forward, engaging the unknown and the uncertain as part of living, then spirituality becomes necessary for learning and teaching. If spirituality is part of maintaining relations, it may already be in the midst of education that is concerned for relations, for movement, and for staying open to the mystery. How are we to acknowledge and work with this possibility in a deliberate way in the midst of educational practice? What different lessons might a spiritualized education (Moffett, 1994, p. 19) teach us about ways of engaging the world, ways of living with
respect, ways of living with the incomplete, the uncertain and all the fragilities that that implies?"

**Reflection:** There is another trace that is part of this connection:

**Text-trace 8**

"refero, referre, rettuli, relatus (v.trj to bring back, carry back; to give back, return, restore, to pay back, repay, to (re) echo.....; to renew, revive, repeat, to direct, focus, turn (attention), to present again, represent, to say in turn, to reply, to announce, report, relate, tell, to note down enter. . . record, to consider, regard, to confer, attribute, ascribe, to bring up, vomit, spit out."

A concern for relations that permeates both spirituality and education is also a concern for telling, for recording, for keeping track. School education is maintained through the texts that keep track of the stories of history, science, math, literature, art, music, languages. Those stories are constantly repeated. But it is not only the stories that the teacher and the books tell that are necessary for relations. Getting the other stories out becomes part of the relations. Wherever two or more people are gathered the room is full of stories. Sometimes the stories are difficult and need work to spit them out. Sometimes the stories are gifts that tell how communities are made, cherished, sustained. Sometimes the stories link one community to another, one person to another, one idea to another. Narratives become connective tissue in the spaces of education. Narratives are connective tissue in the spaces of spirituality. Another co-incidence, another parallel form. (See Section II.)
"A moment, like all of life, is fleeting and must be lived (in) intensely: savoured, tasted, engaged. The moment requires response and attunement while at the same time needs to be lived with a certain detachment, a certain letting go. If I become attached to a particular moment, to its experience, I may find that I am living more and more in the shadow of its memory and in anticipation of its re-creation. Living in the moment is a form of repetition forward (as both Kierkegaard and Caputo point out). There is a simultaneous sense of fullness that the now is here and being lived as fully as possible, and a sense of incompleteness, of inadequacy in the struggle to live fully in the moment and repeat the practice of attentive careful living into the next moment—moving forward temporally and spiritually. There is a letting go and gathering up that are co-incident in a spiritual life practice. Learning is always necessary and present in the thoughtful examination that accompanies a process of living that is disciplined, attentive and aware. Each moment is a moment of educational potential."

Fragment from elsewhere

- to consider education as spiritual is to ask for education to remain always on the edge of unknown and unformed possibilities. Inquiry is formative of the learning process. Learning requires participants to live with a persistent quality of approach to an unknown. It is a never-quite-arriving state. At arrival inquiry becomes information: commodity and product available for
production and marketing. It is a residual danger—to turn the discoveries of learning into objects of knowledge and leave the process of continuous discovery and letting go.

**Reflection:** I imagine a flow or movement that runs both ways. Going one way education passes through spirituality. Going the other way spirituality passes through education. In the flow they are within one another. A continuous influence passes between them or through them from each other. There is a degree of co-incidence in which both contain the other, acting in parallel, co-incidentally. Approaching the unknown remains an act of inquiry and an act of spiritual journey. The commodification of knowledge is an abandonment of both inquiry and journey. Separating the spiritual from education, across a gap, has endangered education, leaving it vulnerable to solidification, to being drawn into rigidity, out of the flow, out of a stance of openness and readiness. It is necessary to be moving out into what is not known and returning to the known to construct and offer what can be taught. But to stay in the known, or to take the known as a finality out into the groundless is not to go at all but to stay encased in the constructs of safety. Education requires the going out and the return. Spirituality facilitates going out. It is extension, reaching: an admission (letting in and acknowledging) of the unknown. Mystery remains unquenched and unencompassable.

**Text-trace 10**

"To live with this kind of edge (that education is always possible) means having a sense of the irregularity of time: in the
midst of learning time is not linear but synchronous. Connections are made when understandings coincide. Attention, availability, and openness are necessary. In the midst of learning, time is fluid and variable. One learner may take only a few clock seconds to begin a life-long discovery. Another learner may require weeks of clock time to process a similar understanding. A sensitivity to the diffusion of time in learning challenges a sense of linear efficiencies and accomplishment; admits the communal quality of understanding and knowledge; pays attention to timing as synchronicity, to movements that arise in the current of an epoch. As the spiritual is about relations, ties, and connections beyond ourselves, issues of community life will be included in the processes of learning and understanding. What does this knowledge signify? Who does it benefit? Who is included in it? Who is excluded? What are its dangers and limitations? What are the alternatives? Spirituality offers an opportunity to foster and develop an attuned attention."

Reflection: Attention as Simone Weil describes in her essay on study and attention, is close to a form of meditative prayer. The mind is held open and ready, in a state of emptiness willing to receive what the lesson may give. A spiritual practice is personal and communal work of paying attention, of being ready, of noticing implications in what goes on around us; the consequences of choices: the benefits and terrors. There are assumptions of connectedness, of relations that extend out and beyond each one of us. There are assumptions that choices, actions matter. What is known and learned may make a difference.
"It makes sense that there is and has always been a close link between the questions of philosophy that have considered this intrusive nearness (of the spiritual) and questions of education. How can we think we learn if we are not attentive to the qualities that are giving rise to our epoch and understanding? How can we extend our understanding if we ignore that which is so close in favour of that which is either ahead or behind us? How can we teach or learn anywhere but in a present that is attentive to the mysteries and beckon of the flux, that is relational, repeating and telling in order to sustain the vitality and current of living."

"I see spirituality as a potential opportunity for education as a way of learning and teaching a radical hermeneutic sense of the possible, of the mysterious and of the flux."

Reflection: Approaching learning as a spiritual practice may be instructive for education (including the public and institutional practice of education). There may be lessons to be learned about understanding the world in a way that admits mysteriousness into the present, that holds open time and understanding to what is not encompassable: leaving a gap, a generative space of another kind. Perhaps a different sense of what is possible may take shape. Perhaps thinking spiritually offers to education a way to consider connections, to note traces that go out from what is known to the world that that knowledge and the knower must live in. Perhaps spirituality is a matter at the heart of education, as connective tissue:
joining thought to life. Making a link between thinking and practice. How is this to be lived? What are its relations? To what is it critical or urgent to pay attention? How might this learning matter? Who is it for? Who does it benefit? At the heart as in keeping alive and vital.

Returning to the questions.

I have located my inquiry in education (as institutional site). In education (as life-long learning) I am discovering links to spirituality. I am discovering similarities of form and process. The institutional site of education has kept the spiritual hidden, at a distance from engagement and acknowledgment. Spirituality has not dismissed education. To learn, to seek, to be ready remain spiritual necessities. To look forward, to repeat forward, to live in the moment, are still the work of spiritual discipline. Each day is to be lived fully in the now. It requires immediacy, urgency, attention. Today may be the day in which the spirit irrupts and transforms life.

In preparation for a day long symposium on spirituality and education we have stumbled into a startling question. What has your education had to do with your spiritual journey? We have begun to ask friends and colleagues. The answer has frequently been: "Nothing." Or, "Very little." My answer, on first asking was: "I'm not sure exactly what but I know it has had some impact." I wonder about the frames that the answers are being formed in. Is education only that which happens in institutions? If the answer is nothing, then perhaps the gap that schools and institutions have made between spirituality and education has taught a lesson: education has nothing to do with spirituality. It has said there is no connection.
I know my education fills my life and so I assume my education and therefore, also my schooling, have shaped my spiritual journey. How does education affect spirituality? Should it? I wonder if, in the institutions of learning, it is possible to learn from the practice of lifelong learning and re-open the space to spiritual reflection. There may then be many prepositions setting things in motion with many spins and turns that would enliven and loosen the flow of thought, the limits, the possibilities. There may be connections made.

Spirit and education may be very close together. Michel Serres (1997) makes a vivid link between learning and spirit in developing his understanding of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity and linking its nature to learning. He describes the Holy Spirit as extended outside of stability, in continuous unrest and motion.

It (Spirit) leaves stabilities forever. . . . It never stops being exposed. It evolves and travels. Whence its eccentrication, outside of the first two persons; whence knowledge, whence time. Whence learning.

This real time of wind and fire, of elements and climate, that of the spirit/mind, is equal to that of being brought up, of instruction, of unexpected intelligence and constant advice, of transformations with no return, of languages and sciences, of travels. . . .

Between the two stable persons in their infinite conversation, between omniscience and exposure to evil—one focus shining, the other burning—lies the chaotic time of spirit, third person.
Conversely, the third man who is born in me, in the course of learning, is spirit. (p. 53)

Learning gives birth to spirit. And spirit, in its mobility and extension, in its movement is the source of instruction, knowledge, journeying, time. Serres suggests an equivalency and mutuality of learning and spirit. I am moving in that direction. Spirit and education are interactive, often co-incident, synchronous. There is co-inspiration, co-generativity but they remain two aspects of being human. Perhaps the motion between them is invoked by an array of prepositions: in, with, by, through, for, within, as. . . . Perhaps the gap between them is filled with traces, bridges, and exchange. Perhaps there are equivalencies.
Fifth Chapter Prelude

It is not enough to merely think about being spiritual. Writing about spirituality is the task of this inquiry. Be/com/ing spiritual is a task of living—it is practice. There are two movements here: one toward reflection and one toward action. The movement to action is the work of living spiritually, of be/com/ing. The movement to reflection is making sense of living. It is a discipline of reading, of interpretation, reflective and thoughtful and of writing.

There is flow back and forth. Understanding may shape my actions but how I act may alter how I understand life and my living of it. Practice and interpretation are co-informative of one another. Be/com/ing spiritual is responsive: giving and receiving, in-motion and stilled, silent and vocal, solitary and communal.

In this chapter, I reflect on my experience and understanding of be/com/ing spiritual. The flow in several directions is guided by readings and experiences: influences on my understanding, my living, and my interpretation. This consideration is a form of hermeneutic activity, holding me open to possibilities. In moving from readings, experiences, and personal notes to understanding, I am interpreting, explaining, choosing, translating (one of the Latin meanings of interpretatio) the thoughts and actions of spirit in the midst of living. The work of moving from understanding to actions remains for my living, and remains to be written in the narratives of my journey. Here I am writing of reading, interpreting words with words.
Chapter 5
On Be/com/ing Spiritual

To take flight every day! At least for a moment, which may be brief, as long as it is intense. A "spiritual exercise" every day—either alone, or in the company of someone who also wishes to better himself (herself). Spirit exercises. Step out of duration . . . try to get rid of your own passions, vanities, and the itch for talk about your own name, which sometimes burns like a chronic disease. Avoid backbiting. Get rid of pity and hatred. Love all free human beings. Become eternal by transcending yourself.

This work on yourself is necessary; this ambition justified. Lots of people let themselves be wholly absorbed by militant politics and the preparation for social revolution. Rare, much more rare, are they who, in order to prepare for the revolution, are willing to make themselves worthy of it.

Georges Friedmann, *La Puissance et La Sagesse*.

**Introduction**

Spirit: an attitude, energy, life-force, character, or quality directed by and expressed through human action, words, thoughts, and practice: something of o(O)ther in play/at work in a person.

Spirituality: a human characteristic: a quality of be/com/ing that is inherent in humanity; a particular quality that is expressed in the life and practice of a person that is their spiritual life: having to do with relations, connections, attention and be/com/ing.

These understandings of spirit and spirituality outline the sense of meaning that I carry into writing, research, and living. They remain
in process, unsettled and unsettling. There is always more arising in them to trouble me, to provoke me to (re)think and (re)write. Writing about spirituality keeps bringing me back to the challenge of living spiritually. I wonder whether my re-conceptualization of spirituality is borne out in my own praxis; whether I am fabricating an abstraction, or whether I am living a spirituality that is close to what I think these meanings suggest?

Jacques Daignault (in private conversation) suggested that there are three possibilities in life: reading well, writing well, and living well, and that they are almost never simultaneous in a single life. Two is unusual, exceptional. Even one is rare. Neither Jesus nor Socrates, he pointed out, did all three. I remember laughing that two out of three is not bad. I accepted his words as generous, as an offering to relax my intensity to excel in all three. Perhaps his sense of grace in life is right: that it is more generous toward us than most of us are with ourselves. I heard him suggesting that I should do well what I can do and not punish myself for being unable to do it all.

I struggle toward living what I write. Does it translate into practice? Do I practice what I write? A stronger sense of humour might allow me to accept a more modest goal in living or admit that perhaps my writing needs attention or that both my living and writing need patience and practice to be "well."

Now, I turn to the third thing: reading, to interpret my own life and spirituality through texts that are shaping my understanding. I imagine this work of interpretation to be part of my process of be/com/ing spiritual, through reflection.
I recently saw a picture of an old navigational chart, the basis of which was a compass rose that illustrated twelve prevailing winds. Sailors, who used the chart, navigated by first observing the prevailing winds and wind patterns around them, then, by studying the illustrated vectors of various winds on their chart would locate themselves in their journey. We are in this location because the wind here blows this way and not that. It was a primitive but workable form of navigation for vessels at sea. It depended on paying attention to the immediate flow of wind and currents and required a certain trust in the knowledge of others and their record of those flows in previous passages of similar waters.

In the overlap of metaphors that I am using perhaps such a manner of navigation is the best I can do for a spiritual journey. It may be a better way to navigate in these seas than with the exacting work of sextant, stellar navigation, or any of modern derivatives, including satellite-based global positioning systems. I am located here in my spiritual journey because the flow around me is moving me this way. Others have come this way before me and left hints in their charts as to the patterns in this part of a spiritual journey. Perhaps the spiritual is a sea of fuzzy borders and ambiguities that cannot tolerate too exacting a location. The course is slightly uncertain by necessity and must remain uncertain or the voyage is pointless and insufficient. The dangers of the unknown are precisely the sea that must be sailed. Exact location is not critical: sailing is.

Imagine an on-going passage in which imprecision and difficulty, awkwardness and uncertainty are more necessary and important than safety, comfort, precise routes, and controlled environments. Perhaps,
in the flux of spirit, a compass rose of winds and currents is the ideal chart to guide a journey. Much is left to be solved in the moment, in the midst of an experience of difficulty and turbulence.

Aside: perhaps an error of thinking permeates our cultural heritage: a failure to understand that maps of one kind have limited value when applied to different domains. perhaps the church fathers who martyred scientific observers because they displaced the earth from the center of the physical universe failed to understand that maps of physical reality need not apply to all domains especially to a spiritual map of the universe. perhaps they held too firmly to a rule of consistency across domains: if humanity was the center of creation, earth had to be the center of the universe. their resistance to the deconstruction of the assumption of centrality that denied observed physical realities created an odd inversion in which the assumption actually being preserved was the one expecting consistency across domains. perhaps scientists and theologians still hold to
that same assumption and seek the same consistency. Perhaps inconsistency is not a problem, but merely a difficulty. There is no need for a literalism of ideas, an actualization of metaphor into physical realities.

Perhaps a map of winds drawn as a compass rose would provide a chart, a way to read a journey of spirit that is attentive to and located by winds, by shifting fluxes: occasional and prevailing. I lean toward an understanding of the spiritual that escapes literalism. I assume that the spiritual requires imagination and flexibility.

... whether by way of the so-called inanimate world of nature, or whether by way of our fellow beings, a strengthening and deepening of the faculty of imagination—or better say the activity of imagination—is the only way in which we can really begin to have to do with spirit. (Barfield, 1977, p. 149)

If imagination is opened to a re-conceptualization of the spiritual, perhaps connections that have been severed, distancing people from a spiritual practice in living, may be renewed. Imaginative play—as a potential guide to spiritual engagement—counters a solidified and material understanding that eliminates looseness in thinking. It connects living to the uncertain and fluid process of be/com/ing. The distancing of spirituality from modern understanding is not merely a reflection of specific ideas but more an expression of how thinking happens. To live in the risk and difficulty of the immediate present is
to be independent of thinking reliant on certainty and evidence, and cemented in sound theory. As Pierre Hadot (1995) suggests of the Greek and Roman schools of philosophy:

... philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory—much less in the exegesis of texts—but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate life-style, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to be more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he (or she) attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom. ... Each school (of philosophy) had its own therapeutic method, but all of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation. (p. 83)

There is a need to live in the present—"attention to the present moment is, in a sense, the key to spiritual exercises" (p. 84)—because "attention to the present moment allows us to accede to cosmic consciousness, by making us attentive to the infinite value of each instant, and causing us to accept each moment of existence from the viewpoint of the universal law of the cosmos" (p. 85). Hadot describes a series of requirements for philosophy as a way of life: a need to learn to dialogue (pp. 89-93), a need to learn to die (pp. 93-101), and a need to learn how to read well (pp. 101-109).
And yet we have forgotten how to read: how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to meditate calmly, ruminate and let the texts speak to us. This, too, is a spiritual exercise, and one of the most difficult. (p. 109)

An assemblage of voices: acts of meditation

I turn now to a practice of reading others in be/com/ing spiritual, to let texts speak to me and direct me spiritually. These voices have guided me in thinking, charting a journey for my exploration of be/com/ing spiritual. I will engage in a dialogue with their voices, responding to words that inform my sense of be/com/ing spiritual. These texts gather together for me, some of the difficulties inherent in be/com/ing spiritual at this place and time in my own journey of living.

Set One:

Me: I begin with Owen Barfield, who sets out to grapple with living in the shadow of Descartes.

. . .(T)hat it is to imagination, in the first place, that we must look for the healing of that Cartesian sword-thrust between matter and spirit.

. . . I think I would put it this way: we live in the abrupt gap between matter and spirit; we exist by virtue of it as autonomous, self-conscious individual spirits, as free beings. Often, in addition, it makes us feel lamentably isolated. But because our freedom and responsibility depend on it, any way that involves disregarding the gap, or pretending it is not there, is a way we take at our peril. (Barfield, 1977, p 149)
Me: In Descartes' shadow I am broken: spirit and matter divided.

Barfield has me living in the gap the Enlightenment has given us: a gap that has divided matter (mater, earth, humus) from spirit (wind, mind, air, breath) and needs imagination. To live in the gap is necessary for freedom, for responsibility. Is this the hole that hides in w/ hole? Is this the site where I must be to imagine? To understand that the gap is not a final reality but a perception shaped by history and assumptions? I will not risk pretending the gap is not there. I think that be/com/ing spiritual is like becoming lost, like falling into a hole. Perhaps it is this hole.

Now imagination does not disregard the gap; it depends on it. It lives in it as our very self-consciousness does. . . . The concern of imagination is neither with mere matter nor with pure spirit. . . . Spirit . . . is not what we perceive, but what we are; and experience of spirit must depend not on what we see, but on the manner in which we look. (Barfield, 1977, p. 149)

Me: Spirit as what we are—links to Kovel. Spirituality as thinking.

It seems better therefore to take the other course: so far from attempting to disregard the gap—or, if you prefer, the wound—between matter and spirit, to realize very fully that, as human beings, on earth, we can only live in it. . . . not as a creature caught in a trap, but as the rainbow that spans it. Then, within the rainbow, or spectrum, of imagination we shall find ourselves free to move sometimes in one direction and sometimes in the other. . . . free to turn either outward towards what we perceive or inward towards what we are. (Barfield, 1977, p. 150)
Me: I see the gap as opening for flux, for irruption from what we have built over, using the solidities of institutions, constructed self and religion. The gap is a between where movement is possible. Barfield's rainbow is the first of a series of metaphors of linkage or passage, like the step of Serres' procession, or Caputo and Kierkegaard's repetition offered below. It is a movement across and forward: it allows return. It is an attempt to reach what may continually recede in an offering of space, of the gap where imagination is in play, where procession may take place, where repetition can work to constantly shape anew what is already passing, re-working it in the repetition forward of be/com/ing.

Set Two:
There was a point, in short, of what (Meister) Eckhart called 'breakthrough' (Durchbruch) where one got to understand the utter intractability of God to what theologians, priests, and common sense said was 'God.' At that point, he said, we have the sense not of being flooded with light but of having fallen into an abyss (Abgrund), where all the familiar conceptions we have devised about God collapse, all the comforting reassurances we have been giving one another about what God is simply turn to dust... there is a fine point in the mind where one is brought up short, a moment of midnight reckoning where the ground gives way and one also has the distinct sense of falling into an abyss. (Caputo, 1987, p. 268)

Me: The difference between falling and flying (an airplane) in the air is attitude: the position taken. Flight, as far as we know it, involves landing. The prospect of the abyss—without ground—seems a double terror as it is falling without land, without ground to land
on. The flux that breaks in on us (on me) is not temporary: it is a persistent and relentless flow. We (and I) work to delimit the affect, temporally and in other ways. We (and I) re-construct the houses of resistance to flux as quickly as possible. We (and I) establish ground to crash into. It, at least, appears secure. The management of the divine, of G-d, into tidy categories and manageable metaphors or names is as thorough a building project over the flux as any. Meister Eckhart did not survive his establishment's resistance to the unsettling he offered. Falling, breaking through are dangerous to the stable world. Necessary for life; yet threatening to what is secured as life.

in the swirl: a prayer for unsettling

in all the swirl, the currency of time and thought of money and living
i stumble, trample, fall
down through daffodils and snow drifts crushing small vessels and cherished bowls hopes, dreams of wonderment being clumsy, being human being unsatisfied
with the turn of seasons and rumpled sheets the agonizing silences that speak of unsaid pain and fear.

the landing is always ice and knocks my breath away my hip hurts and my chest trembles at the loss. cold fingers touch me: a first caress of death. it takes me time on the bench in front of the entrance to the library to reassemble myself: i am slow at that
and often fragmentized
with jagged edges and angular turns
that never quite gather.
i put on my face again
carefully decorated
but my eyes are turned on edge
and leave my tears flowing in
not out where they might melt.
i can never quite get back the look:
a way of looking and being seen
so not too much is known.

so often i am under dressed,
even naked in the storms and changes.
i don't like how i look and clutch what covers i can to me
hoping awkwardness seems less in being seen
than in being lived.

i wonder if i see too much and that
makes the ground uneven
moving while others think it still.
i never know for sure the best place
to put down my foot.
things happen and i am in the air again
losing earth, losing ground
waiting for another landing,
another shattering to wake me up again.

There are certain breaking points, let us say, in the habits and practices, the works and days, of our mundane existence where the flux is exposed, where the whole trembles and the play irrupts. Then we know we are in trouble. The abyss, the play, the uncanny—in short, all hell—breaks loose and the card castles of everydayness come tumbling down. Something breaks through
because the constraints we impose upon things breaks down.  
(Caputo, 1987, p. 269 - 270)

Me: I have had moments of falling. I have had certainties crumble to dust. Some days seem to have more dust than anything else. Caputo has identified the difficulty that turning away from metaphysical and philosophic certainty actually produces. He is aware of how fragile our constructs are. Why are words that describe stability so often building construction language?

Radical hermeneutics cultivates an acute sense of the contingency of all social, historical, linguistic structures, an appreciation of their constituted character, their character as effects. (Caputo, 1987, p. 209)

Me: To understand the spiritual as flux, as flow, is automatically a kind of deconstruction but one that is an unloosing, to allow for blending, mixing, and flow. It is to invite flux into play on an ongoing basis. It is an invitation to destabilization as a way of living: an attitude of fall/flight that is impermanence, unstable and returns. But waves peak and trough, ebb and flow. There may be withdrawal, slack tides, periods of stillness. Flux is not singular but multiple. It is not one thing only.

We must introduce into philosophy the concept of chaos . . . despised by rationality to the point of being used nowadays only for discourses on madness . . . Chaos is open, it gapes wide, it is not a closed system . . . It is multiple, unexpected . . . Chaos is nebulous. It does not flow out with a point or a direction, or following some rule, or abiding by some law. Look
how much trouble we have seeing it. The whole of reason protests—I mean logically. Our whole classified rationality, all the coding, habits and methods, leads us to speak in externals or negations: outlaw and nonsense. But I say positive chaos...

determination is negation. Indetermination is thus positive, and yet we express it with a negative word. (Serres, 1995a, p. 98)

Me: A startling challenge to rationality that proposes that what is open and indeterminate is necessary because it is multiple and unexpected. Caputo uses different words to go a similar way.

I want to argue... for a notion of ‘reason’ which begins by acknowledging the uncircumventible futility in trying to nail things down... (S)cience, action, art, and religious belief make their way by a free and creative movement whose dynamics baffle the various discourses on method. But I do not treat that as a negative start, as a kind of despair in reason, but as the only sensible, or reasonable, view of reason. The problem with reason today is that it has become an instrument of discipline, not a mark of freedom, and that, when it is put to work, it is taken out of play. (Caputo, 1987, p. 211)

Me: And I argue that spirituality is a way to approach a different kind of thinking—reasoning—that stays in play, that is open to the indeterminate, that is not negative because it accepts fluidity and indeterminacy as necessary and vital for reasoning. Serres is not finished.

I am simply writing the positive concepts of the under-determined, the undetermined, the positive concepts of the
possible ones that aren't obvious, that are poorly defined, confused. . . . Instead of being excluded, rejected, confusion becomes an object, it enters the realm of knowledge, it enters into movement. And it is classification on the contrary, that is negative, it is coding that operates in a negative manner, it is in the concept in general, and determination, that is a negation. Our reasoning is negative as a whole, it cannot and does not know how to say yes except with a double no, conjecture and refutation, hypothesis and critique, it is given over as a whole to the work of the negative and I understand finally why death, so often, is its result, its outcome or consequence and why hatred is, so frequently, its driving force. And why rationalism comes under the heading of the sacred, why rationalists are priests, busily ruling out, cleaning up the filth, expelling people, purifying bodies or ideas. Behold the positive chaos, the casting mold, the matrix. And behold the pure possible. (Serres, 1995a, p. 98-99)

Me: To acknowledge that we can have, in our thinking—not as a negative, as a taking away, or a below zero, or as against the positive—something that is unformed, erratic, fluid, unpredictable and to acknowledge such a factor as life-giving, as originary and causative and even as necessary is a huge shift from the rationalism that Serres mocks as priestly and orderly. Caputo and Serres call for allowing the flux, for letting in and including what I understand as the spiritual: flux, flow: transient, unpredictable, and generative. It is a kind of reversal to accept the chaos, the flux as generative and stable; to let the indeterminate be understood as a positive, that is, a gain, a more than, and not as something dangerous and abhorrent until ordered and delimited. It is not necessary to order in order to have value. That which is causative may always remain turbulent
and unordered: unencompassable, surpassing the expressible. And it may not be distant or far removed but inherent and immanent in living.

Hermeneutics pits itself against the notion that human affairs can finally be formalized into explicit rules which can or should function as a decision-procedure, whether in scientific theory building or in ethics. An important part of the hermeneutics of play is to deconstruct, to undo that myth. (Caputo, 1987, p. 213)

Me: There is a significant shift in naming the rational as the sacred, the religious. Something else, something o(0)ther becomes the possibility of freedom and life. How can I imagine flux as other than life after considering them? How can I yearn for stability in the face of irruption and movement?

Rationality has taken us far from Hadot's philosophers who understood the necessity of spiritual life in practice, who laboured to be authentic and not lost in ideas and exegesis. They worked to link living and thoughtfulness, spirit/mind and practice. By Descartes' time they became detached. Now a return to crash them together, to reverse the flow, to live in the wound that detachment and disengagement has made. Somewhere along the way life has been lost.

That . . . is where hermeneutics leads us: not to a conclusion which gives comfort but to a thunderstorm, not to a closure but a dis-closure, an openness to what cannot be encompassed, where we lose our breath, and are stopped in our tracks, at least
momentarily, for it always belongs to our condition to remain on the way. (Caputo, 1987, p. 214)

Me: Led into wonder and wondering. Into difficulty. Into trying to write about spirituality and education. Into the challenge of living spiritually. Perhaps spirituality is precisely this engagement of uncertainty and difficulty in understanding, of living in the direction of unknowns and mysteries, of reaching and never concluding, and of deferring an answer to the musings of my own struggle for a unitary option. Perhaps I need to multiply my ability to accept contradictions, to live with unresolved unknowns and to stay in the shifting, moving experience of flux and turbulence rather than needing to arrive at an answer or conclusion. Perhaps movement is possible in both directions: toward multiplying possibilities and toward integration of thought and understanding. Michel Serres uses the story of Jacob's ladder with its ascending and descending angels (messengers and messages) to explore the multiple and simultaneous possibilities of unity and dispersion.

On this fluid ladder, God, the One and Only, is permanently in the process of unmaking himself into a multiplicity of gods, idols and ideas, which, in their difference, are permanently in the process of unifying themselves into one single god. The angels, the world, you and me, men and history all move within this rising and descending flow. (Serres, 1995c, p. 93)

Me: The descent from the singular, unitary idea, form, or G-d is a movement of dispersal, toward multiplicity, noise, pantheism and
activity. Actions, understandings, multiply. But the ascending action is simultaneous: the dispersed and scattered are drawn together, linked, becoming one, becoming monotheistic. Reflection is a drawing together: a collecting towards the singular. Action is dispersal and multiplication.

Perhaps it is the letting go into the flow that accepts that both dispersal and gathering are constant; that both immanence and transcendence are in the rising and falling: immanence rising toward unification and transcendence dispersing into multiplicity. Hermes hides in the scene as the one who carries messages from there to here: across, down, up, back and forth. Hermes is messenger, translator, trickster, joker. There is always the possibility of different understanding: a different way of acknowledging the movement across, down, up, back and forth. I may not get it at all, or notice what has moved, is moving. I may miss the message: be out for the call (Caputo, 1987). It is necessary to pay attention.

**Set Three:**

Kierkegaardian repetition is the first ‘post-modern’ attempt to come to grips with the flux, the first try not at denying it or ‘reconciling’ it, in the manner of metaphysics, but of staying with it, of having the ‘courage’ for the flux. Kierkegaard wants resolutely to avoid turning the world into a frozen *eidos*, stilling its movement, arresting its play, and thereby allaying our fears. He wants to stay open to the *ébranler*, the wavering and fluctuating, and to keep ready for the fear and trembling, the anxiety by which the existing individual is shaken. (Caputo, 1987, p. 12)
Me: Can I live with the shaking? Can I manage not to flee when the falling strikes my belly and I feel my courage sinking through my body into the place of abgrund? What does such living resemble? What kind of strength in living is necessary to resist stilling, freezing, arresting? The Greeks were trying to live in an eternal present that was in motion. Their labor was to live in the trembling and difficult and to live there well.

becoming undone

trying to slip away from solidity
meeting resistance in my soul's firmness
meeting myself well sat down and holding on.

thinking of the elusiveness of heart, of soul of spirit wafting through, adrift in wind dispersing at the hardness of my walls.

i cannot contain that which comes to dance in a vessel that will not move, is not mobility: passing through, i am kissed by the coolness.

there is no solidity to cling to, engagements come and go, constant courtings, flirtations edges dissolving and openings, holes arising.

disperse all surety and strength, let loose my hesitations and become undone, opened: a trembling quaking moves me to flow.

i cry at the breathlessness of yielding i long and let longing dissemble me wondering, wondering: is this life?
remain as myself in becoming other, in embracing
with all the joy of welcoming, a breath, a breeze,
a firestorm of energy unseats me.

life: i turn in the first awkward steps of dancing
spin and fall, laugh and tumble, cry and ache
more and more and more: swim, fly, float, die

moving in resonant rhythms to tunes i cannot hear
beckoned by voices, by callings i turn to answer
as the edges disappear, i feel a firm caress,
a love's embrace in swirls of tenderness
leaving me breathless, open mouthed and eager.

I reach toward what surpasses expression, toward what withdraws:
these dynamics swirl in my thinking and are played in my feelings,
in how i stumble and struggle with life. life reaches back—or G-d, or
the flux—and i imagine myself as loved, as being seduced by life. I
am drawn out—induced—drawn forward—educed. I am learning to
live differently. I am receiving an education.

Genuine repetition . . . occurs only when the individual does not
see how he can go on, when every rational human resource is
exhausted. (Caputo, 1987, p. 31)

Me: Every rational human resource exhausted: when thinking reaches a
limit. When there is no plan, no certainty. Nor explanation. Am i
setting up the spiritual as a back door into a religious metaphysics
of meaning which in turn becomes a way out: an escape from
original difficulty from the limit of exhaustion? I hope my struggle
to re-understand spirituality is genuine repetition. I hope it is
staying with the flux. I wonder: Can I be oriented to both a spirituality rooted in earth, wrapped in the current of living—the current of time and the flow of daily events, activities, and relations—and be drawn to a sense of the ineffable rooted in the Christian tradition that has formed me—with its tinges of transcendence?

Maybe transcendence is escapism when it loses connection to the current of earth, loses its connection through descent to earthiness, to dispersal and refuses or avoids the relations of present living. Perhaps I need to remain in a tension where the dispersal and humanity of immanence works in conjunction with the uncertainty of transcendent claims—moving back and forth, translating, crossing, never knowing for sure: in a cycle of return.

Repetition is *kinesis*, the way the existing individual makes his way through time, the constancy with which he confronts the withering effects of time upon character and faith. . . . Without either recollection or repetition there is nothing but the flux, nothing but a meaningless turmoil. Recollection stills the turmoil; repetition finds a way to maintain one's head in the midst of it. Recollection says that everything important has already been. Repetition says that actuality must be continually produced, brought forth anew, again and again. Identity must be established, produced. (Caputo, 1987, p. 16-17)

Me: It is easy to imagine the flux as meaningless chaos, as the negative reasoning that Serres describes. It is easy to try and bring it to order through recollection, to still it with firm ideas and established patterns. But what is it to live in repetition: keeping one's head,
moving forward in the repeating present? Acting to make life?
Be/com/ing attentive?

Repetition means the task set for the individual to persevere in time, to stay with the flux, to produce his identity as an effect. . . . Repetition is the power of the individual to forge his personality out of the chaos of events, in the midst of the flux, the power to create an identity in the face of the incessant ‘dispersal’ of the self, of the dissipating effects of the flux. There is always a ‘remainder’ no matter how much is subtracted from the individual by the taxing business of everyday existence. Repetition is the exacting task of constituting the self as a self. (Caputo, 1987, p. 20-21)

Me: Beginning (again). I don't know that it hasn't always been true: that I am always, in some way, starting over. It is a declaration of falling, of uncertainty. It is living with the frustration of feeling like today I must begin again as nothing stands: although something remains and can be drawn on. I have to remember, each day: that there is dust and that all that I build, that I am, returns to dust; that part of living spiritually is learning to die; that I must work to form my identity, always from the remainder, the germ of spirit that moves and flows; that somehow, although I cannot imagine it, life goes on, moves forward.

I am astounded by those around me who are so firm, so certain; who make claims filled with assurance and confidence. I write and think from doubt, from what falls away. Spirit disperses, extends, reaches. This is its persistent action, motion. I turn again to words from Serres, to his description of the nature of spirit: Holy Spirit.
Neither wind nor fire, nor birds in flight know rest. The third person (of the Trinity) comes from two others, it happens through procession. The last word describes a step forward, like a raised foot, which is exposed. The Holy Spirit is exposed outside of the Father and the Son without leaving their unity. No text says this procession stops, that this launched step comes to rest somewhere: whence the figures of wind and flight, which never, in volatile fluids, find definite supports. Since, definitely, the prop always gives way, one must always begin again to support oneself on what will always give way. The Holy Spirit thus proceeds, absolutely speaking: it leaves stabilities forever, including those of the balanced movement of circular history, to risk in the unstable motivity of deviations from equilibrium. That means it never stops being exposed. It evolves and travels. Whence its eccentration, outside the stabilities of the first two persons; whence knowledge, whence time. Whence learning.

This real time of wind and fire, of elements and climate, that of spirit/mind, is equal to that of being brought up, of instruction, of unexpected intelligence and constant advice, of transformations with no return, of languages and sciences, of travels, of inventions and travails, of improbable peace alongside vengeance, of prescription, of unexpected combinations, of alliances . . . Between the two stable persons in their infinite conversation, between omniscience (in God the Father) and exposure to evil (in the life of Christ)—one focus shining, the other burning (i.e. being sacrificed)—lies the chaotic time of the spirit, third person. (Serres, 1997, p. 51)

Me: In the excess of this text, there is an unleashing of a possibility to re-think spirit; to imagine a way of being out there beyond the edge, in an abyss, falling and learning to lean on what is not stable. There is a sense of the contradictory blending that a welcome of spirit, of its chaos and flux, brings. The loss of support; the reaching that is
not ever complete; the act of extension with no return: these are thoughts and thinking outside the forms and patterns that are established. They remain uncertain and incomplete themselves. There is letting be, an offering of opening. Spirit understood as instability becomes fluid, in motion, not settled or finalized but part of be/com/ing. More than that, spirit becomes generative of life. Serres claims spirit/mind (a single word in the original French text) as originary for time and learning which suggests the transformative, generative nature of spirit in life.

Spirit is always exposed. Risk is concomitant with spirit. Be/com/ing spiritual is reaching and being in risk, being exposed. And from this risk and reaching and exposure come knowledge and learning. Education returns to the middle of the spiritual, generated by it in Serres' thinking. Spirit is moving forward.

Genuine religious repetition keeps deferring itself. It is nowhere to be found in this book, or in any book. (Caputo, 1987, p. 26)

Me: So I will not be capturing it here; only suggesting, only hoping that it might be glimpsed in passages, in passing through. Though "genuine religious repetition" may not be found in a book, perhaps it may be found in living.

Now freedom's supreme interest is precisely to bring about repetition, and its only fear is that variation would have the power to disturb its eternal nature. Here emerges the issue: Is repetition possible? Freedom itself is now the repetition. . . . What freedom fears here is not repetition but variation; what it wants is not variation but repetition (Søren Kierkegaard's
Samlede Vaerker (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1901-06) IV B 117 281-82/R 302) . . . True freedom and genuine repetition converge; repetition has become inward, a matter of freedom. (Caputo, 1987, p. 28)

Me: Is repetition possible? Can I move forward? Can I live well enough to live in freedom? The Christian tradition that has informed me links spirit and freedom so I read Kierkegaard and Caputo as linking spirit and repetition through the commonality of freedom: in the convergence is the impetus for repetition, is a hint at what remains.

In sum, repetition on the ethical level is the constancy and continuity of choice by which the self constitutes itself as a self, by which it returns again and again to its own innermost resolution and establishes its moral identity. Ethical repetition means the steadiness of the unbroken vow, the enduring bond of the lasting marriage, the capacity to find new depths in the familiar and self-same. It means a recurrent cycle of growth and development by means of which the self becomes itself. . . . (E)thical repetition presses forward resolutely, makes progress, effects transcendence. But inasmuch as it calls upon nothing more than human resources, upon resolve and firmness of will, ethical repetition pushes ahead within the sphere of immanence. Repetition in its deepest registers, therefore, has to do with the exception, with the breakdown of the human, the loss of human compensation, a transformation which shatters the categories of immanence. . . . Genuine repetition, which is absolutely transcendent and effected in virtue of the absurd occurs only when the individual does not see how he can go on, when every human resource is exhausted. Then the individual gives up everything and awaits the thunderstorm. (Caputo, 1987, p. 30-31)
Me: The interplay between immanence and transcendence occurs in repetition. Caputo roots repetition strongly in immanence but moves out to the limit and into "a transformation which shatters the categories of immanence"—another kind of change takes place. The storm comes: a form of turbulence, of flux.

I recall again (see Oberg, Scott and Caplan, *JCT* 12.1, 1996, p. 34-42) that in the realm of theatre the French word for rehearsal is *répétition*. It is a movement towards a presentation which is always re-presentation. The pattern of life recurs. At the limit, a state often achieved in preparation of a play, is the basis of genuine repetition. "One more time. Try again," commands the director. And somehow, there is one more repeat of the scene and something happens in a new way. Exhaustion gives way to elation: a flat exchange of words and movements becomes a living scene. But to play this out in life, returning again and again to acts of reaching toward, freely reaching

. . . this is a different living: be/com/ing spiritual, being in the flux and turbulence. Freedom is not escape but taking up and staying with the difficulty.

Genuine repetition repeats forward and bears the responsibility to produce what it would become. Genuine repetition always operates in the element of becoming and *kinesis* and learns to make its way through the flux. (Caputo, 1987, p. 59)

Me: The stable and the unstable remain linked through human life. Somehow it is possible to repeat and maintain relations, reaching and moving while keeping the play in play, while falling in the
abyss, while extending and never returning, while awaiting the thunderstorm, while awaiting the disturbance: welcoming the flux: be/com/ing spiritual.

I hesitate to write these things. I hesitate to think them of my own life, wondering about the storms that may come. I can feel just out of reach in my chest the beginnings of trembling. I wonder in the middle of life if I have begun to have an inkling of staying with difficulty, of trembling at a limit. Escape to solidity becomes appealing.

Set Four:
The self-preoccupation of modern Americans . . . is now legendary. It is not an intellectual gesture, but a way of social being which reflects the dominion of consumer capitalism and the breakdown of community which accompanies this. That is to say, the structure of our whole society entails self-preoccupation, and the more so as society is unchallenged . . . its spirituality remains self-preoccupied, even as it attempts to get beyond the self: thus soul, whose essence is self-abandonment, is cultivated as a project of self-fulfillment. . . . The self thus produced is in reality Ego in soul's clothing. (Kovel, 1991, p. 209-210)

Me: A caution is sounded: a warning of how readily the consumptive urge may overwhelm the soul and build over the flux an exclusive and excluding new structure called spirituality: a new skin of achievement bearing the marks of mystic journey, psychic insight, and spiritual discipline. There are relations at stake; issues of justice; the difficult matters of deception, accusation, betrayal, violence. If the spiritual is a matter of relations then I am unable to
be spiritual on my own: as an act of achievement. I am stuck with and in a context: in the flow, being moved. I cannot know or be known in solo—no more than I can love alone. The spiritual is about exchange, confluence, turbulence. Here I do not only lose control, I have to let go of the mechanisms I would take up to hold, to keep, to regain myself as center, as powerful, as controller. I lose myself in order to be found but I cannot deliberately lose myself in order to be found: there is a necessary letting go. Nor can I find the "difficult that is the way" through postures of humility. Being lost is being lost. Facing the flux is facing the flux. Escape has many forms. I am accustomed to trying most of them. The difficulty is in not trying to escape and then using the not trying as another form of outage.

For a spiritual community, if it is to be really transformative, has to overcome an interlocked set of material problems arising from the persistent power of capitalism and patriarchy. It must decide how it will sustain unalienated production and reproduction, avoid gurus and other remnants of patriarchal domination, advance internal democracy and self government, and relate to the larger society, the increasingly devastated earth, and the oppressed upon it. . . . The task is to develop communalism. This is a fantastically difficult challenge, but one of the few really worth taking today. It is also a spiritual challenge—a challenge to develop practically the life of the soul. (Kovel, 1991, p. 211-212)

Me: Practically, remembering also the second meaning of practically, that of almost: I am practically there, I remain incomplete. I
remain in the struggle to ground fluidity in living, through my responses: in how I hear, in what I notice, in how I speak.

That my life should become a vessel of passage.
That my hands do not grasp
but stay willing to hold or wait,
to let go or plead,
to offer or to carry.

And I must remember that my journey remains partial and incomplete. That I will not arrive. That no book of writing contains genuine repetition. That I cannot work or play alone. That justice, community, suffering are elements of lived experience and a spiritual life needs to pay attention to them.

Is suffering violent or innocent? Does it speak with a moral or an extramoral voice? Does it summon us to resistance and protest and subversion of the powers which inflict it or to a Dionysian embrace? Is the rumble of the world-flux a purely cosmic dance, or does the voice of God call out to us obscurely in all that chaos, leading us down a labyrinthine way? Is it God calling? Or the world? Or are we just hearing things? Should we set all these acoustics aside as illusions with which we should not trouble ourselves, not while the pressing business of our quotidian lives is all around us?

What or who is speaking to us here? What signs does it send us? The tragic and religious are markers of the abyss which is always the issue for radical hermeneutics—conflicting messages from Hermes, enigmatic letters coming in a disturbing delivery service. . . .

Suffering makes the whole tremble. Suffering is not merely suffering. It bursts asunder and open us up to eternal things (eternal recurrence? an eternally loving hand touching our lives in a mysterious manner?). It transforms itself before our eyes,
metamorphoses from an intraworldly and mundane event into an opening onto the whole. It is one of the places where the grip of everyday concerns is broken, where the spell of the quotidian loses its hold. The thin surface of existence gives way, and, like Alice, we fall down a long dark well. In suffering we are provoked, solicited, and opened. (Caputo, 1987, p. 287)

Me: Opened. Falling. Trembling. These words make me nervous. I live in a mostly comfortable middle-class world. I let myself occasionally be troubled by suffering. I have had some pain in my life but I can never forget the words of a young woman I was visiting at a ward in the mental health facility, where she was being treated for anorexia, for self mutilation after years of physical and sexual abuse: "Suffering is relative. If it hurts, it hurts. It doesn't matter what other people have felt." I was trying to compare her pain to the fuss someone with much less difficulty was making over their pain. Suffering, I realized she was telling me, is what fills your life, so it does not compare to anything or anyone else's experience. It breaks other references. It is a limit state. It is work to be avoided. It is often very close in our lives, our friends, our families.

Suffering reshapes humans and their relations. Suffering tears us open and calls into question the way we hold identity. Suffering returns us to the question of identity that Kovel recognizes, that Caputo plunges into it and re-opens through the meaning of "the old word per-sona, per-sonare, the person as sounding-through, resonating" (p. 289).
This pre-Cartesian word does not name a seat of self-identity and has nothing to do with an egological metaphysics. On the contrary, it means to name a difference, to pick up the interplay between mask and voice, face and speech, look and language, *eidos* and *logos*. It means to open up and preserve the distance between the mask and the speaker and prevent their hasty identification. (Caputo, 1987, p. 289)

Me: Here is a different understanding of identity through a metaphor of the theatre where, "unlike the modern notion of the self-identical ego or self-present consciousness," this older metaphor "speaks in terms of difference and non-identity." Something is mediated through —*per*— and "nothing is immediately given or present here" (p. 289).

It is essentially the voice which does not keep silent, whose words are dispersed and disseminated and fall outside oneself, all over the stage, while the speaker remains concealed. It holds that whatever transpires on the face is echo, trace, sign, even dissemblance. . . . Unlike 'ego' and 'self,' which belong to a metaphysics of identity, *persona* is embedded in the metaphoric of the flux. Everything deep loves the mask. *Per-sona*: the depths which rush under the surface, the deep resonance and rumble—of who knows what. . . . We . . . are the place where the abyss opens up, where the whole trembles, where the ground gives was. We: *per-sona*: the opening through which the flux resonates. (Caputo, 1987, p. 290)

Me: This is not a soft place or an easy satisfying picture of living in the flux. Because he has invoked the tragic, Caputo also invokes the
"Suffering requires the mask of laughter. Laughter ennobles, strengthens, sees one through a bad time" (p. 293).

Always the abyss but always the laughter. Nothing undoes the metaphysics of presence better than laughter. Nothing is more unsettling than laughter. Nothing heals like laughter. Nothing keeps us open like laughter. (Caputo, 1987, p. 292)

Me: I begin to think that such a way of living may be livable. Being spiritual, becoming spiritual as an embrace of/by the flux is perhaps less stable, difficult and lives in difficulty but it carries a promise of living, of laughter, of love, of suffering, of healing.

All this talk of the abyss and openness to the mystery must be understood as the willingness to stay in play with the play. The question always is whether and how, hearing the movements of that play, we are able to join in it. The play is all. And what is playing in that play? Is it God? the soul? the world? Dilige, et quod vis fac. (Love and do what you like.) (Caputo, 1987, p. 293)

Me: All this work is merely work to loosen things up for play: working loose. Loving. Laughing. I am startled at these things being together as guides to a life of spirit: as inspired. Caputo leaves the question of God hanging. He does not opt for any of God, world or soul. Perhaps all three? I opt for all three. I think I shall need a long life to think it through, to work loose the connections and folds so that I can sound the play. I shall need a long life to practice the play: to repeat it in preparation for re-presentation each day. That
appeals to me as an act of freedom, of be/com/ing flux: of be/com/ing spiritual.

... (T)he virtue of a spirituality must be inherent and immediately present. It is in the Way, not the end. This Way is the actual motion of soul. (Kovel, 1991, p. 214)

... I am more convinced than before—for the labor (of writing his book) was a way of wrestling with my own questioning into spirit—that spirit and soul are valid, and indeed necessary categories of human existence, and that we abandon them at our doom. Necessary but not sufficient, and so much more is required to understand the many points on which soul alights. ... If the result may appear antiquated and too much the revival of old saws for the modern spirit, I can only say in reply that the ancient voices of soul struck notes of perennial wisdom. What seems new is too often said in defense of the ancien régime, while to realize the old truths of spirit requires us to win a new world. (Kovel, 1991, p. 237)

Me: Kovel struggles too, bringing to bear his sense of politics and psychology in an attempt to re-open the spiritual to consideration, seeking to find an articulation of spirit that will move us forward. This is the work I am engaged in: finding new voices to re-sound, to resonate in my living. And to understand that resonance, with its implication of recurrence and repetition is a move forward into life, so that the particulars of my life become instructive of the spiritual at work and in play in living.
On living: on-going

I have struggled to read, to slow myself and to look within. I offered reflections in textual form, as brief meditations on texts, trying to leave aside originality and subtlety. I offered poems and notes to show my experience: the inner struggle to be/come spiritual, the inner struggle to read well. In doing so, I have been working in the tension between thinking and living, between thinking about spirituality as a work of re-conceptualization and be/com/ing spiritual in my living.

My inquiry is one expression of my lived experience: of being between living and thinking. It is an attempt to name, and make sense of, my particular experience of being spiritual and, in doing so, to use my insight to inform a general understanding of being spiritual.

I assume that I can only draw near to what I pursue through this inquiry and study. I can only point and indicate. I am certain that I cannot encompass what I am trying to say. I can locate myself by various references, by noting the shifts around me and by trying to give a sense of direction, movement and implications to the passages I am making.

But this remains a text. I do not live in it. My work of spiritual exercising, of be/com/ing remains partial and incomplete in this format. The living-into-action of my spiritual journey goes on in the daily process of life. It is a story outside of this story. I can bring fragments into the text, but the living is on-going: even as I write, life flows around me: home life, work, study. I can slow myself and be in each of those moments, be present in them in the present. I can set aside worrying about tomorrow and next year, and income and all the
other quotidian concerns. And I am still in the midst of making of a text. And wondering about making the spiritual evident in writing.

When I listen to others, when I seek to understand their quality of spirit; to notice the turbulence and flux that arises in their lives and difficulties, I pay attention to their stories. I savor their stories. I tell them other ones. Through the words I catch glimpses. And through those glimpses becoming spiritual is momentarily evident. I have attempted to use my own stories to do the same thing: to offer glimpses of spirit at work/in play in my life, in words, in the readings, poems, dialogue: to bring the story of my life—the outside story—into the text as a way of noting spirituality. I have tried to direct my thinking through narrative, to see its potential as opening, as place of passage and passages. Narrative is a link in the between, a bridge: a way to cross over and back. It is between thinking and living. Narrative becomes the moving teacher, the indirect force, subtle, versatile, humble. Narrative becomes a messenger. I want to now attend to narrative in a more deliberate way: to understand narratives/stories as vessels of spirit. I will consider the qualities of stories, how they work on us and how we in turn work them, through reading, through interpretation, through telling.
Devoted to the search for truth, we do not always reach it; if and when we arrive, through analyses or equations, experiments or proofs, but also through experimentation, sometimes, and when experimentation doesn't get you there, let the story go there, if it can; if meditation fails, why not try narrative? Why should language always remain right-handed or male, hemiplegic and limited to a half? Aristotle said it excellently: 'The philosopher as such, tells a story as well,' but added, 'the one who tells a story, in some sense reveals himself to be a philosopher.'

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*
Sixth Chapter Prelude

My text turns now to explore narrative and spirituality. This making of my text is also formed in the tension of thinking and living. I turn to narratives to work between ideas, concepts, theories and the experiences and practice of spirituality. Yet I remain in the work of re-conceptualization. Here my searching addresses itself to the nature of theory and narrative, to perception, to concepts of event, to narrative as active agent. I propose a way of understanding narrative through narraturgy: the work/ing of narrative: working on and being worked, being shaped and shaping. I propose narrative as a fluid form appropriate to carry the fluidity of the spiritual, as a site for spirit, for its passage.

There is some irony in reaching toward narrative and doing so from thinking and understanding. I want to be closer to narrative, to the movement and space it provides as a way to note and trace the spiritual. In this section there will be more stories. The journey to re-conceptualize begins again tracking toward narrative, suggesting a way of understanding narratives that is a way of understanding spirituality. How do they work? How do they work on me? How is it that a story can change me? How is that the spiritual may affect my life?

I have been trying to write parables and to understand them as parabolic lines in parallel that inform each other and inform me of the way things happen and work. I have been suggesting relationships, and, taking a cue from the etymological connection between relations and relating, turn to narratives to explore the spiritual. I am drawing attention to relations, to how relations are told in and through stories;
to how stories link humans to one another and to the world. Narratives are human accounts of life that connect the narrator and audience to the earth, to a community and to other people.

Throughout this text I have been telling the story of its making and the struggle of making a text and living a text. I have also grappled with reading. I have been trying to understand the process of writing as a story in parallel to the process of be/com/ing spiritual. I have used an account of my own spiritual journey as a primary narrative for this inquiry.

I propose that narratives, as accounts of relations, as agents of return and repetition that sustain connections become places of passage: openings that permit movement, transformation, and exchanges. There is motion in narratives. There is a continuous process of making space: motion in the flux/motion of the flux. In and around narratives, consequently, are zones of disturbance where motion is underway and in these spaces—narrative spaces—there is being moved and moving. I am not limiting this sense of movement to emotional qualities. In the passages and in the fluctuating spaces being shaped by narrative movement spirituality may be known or intuited (noticed, recalled, heard, glimpsed, sensed, felt) through the relations. The connections between physical and spiritual, emotional and spiritual, and cognitive and spiritual are entangled in narrative passages. The qualities of narratives that contribute to their vitality, their forcefulness and movement, that make them complex and enduring, that make them work are the characteristics of narrative that I call narraturgy.
Chapter 6
The Work of Stories

Continuities and discontinuities, themes that appeared and disappeared, references, comparisons, similes and metaphors, intimations and suggestions, moods and mysteries, contours of coherence and spells of impenetrability—(William Carlos Williams) spoke of such matters as he brooded over his life as a doctor, as a writer: 'We have to pay the closest attention to what we say. What patients tell us what to think about what hurts them; and what we say tells us what is happening to us—what we are thinking, and what may be wrong with us.' A pause, then another jab at my murky mind: 'Their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.'

Robert Coles, The Call of Stories

Narraturgy: narrative as vessel

i. Narrative as living form:
All this points to the nature of every real story. It contains, openly or covertly, something useful. . . . The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time. (Benjamin, 1968, p. 86-87)

Story is more than a vehicle for information. Something else is happening in narratives: something active, useful, persistent. Benjamin attributes to narratives characteristics of focus, strength, timing, and a working ability. The potential energy of a narrative is part of its working strength. I read Benjamin as having a perception of story as an
agent itself, as having qualities and characteristics that make it useful and allow it to extend through time, to work beyond the immediate moment. Time does not delimit a "real story."

Donna Haraway (1997) comes at narratives with different intentions and assumptions: instrumentally. Narratives, she claims are:

... devices to produce certain kinds of meaning. I try to use narrative to tell what I think is the truth—a located, embodied, contingent and therefore real truth. (p. 230)

Narratives are situated; are for presentation purposes; and are very much the work of the teller/writer, producing "certain kinds of meaning," recounting "real truth" within the proviso of being "located, embodied, contingent." Neither Benjamin nor Haraway are making small claims as they come at narrative with a different sense of agency and assumptions. Benjamin seems to be claiming the story as agent while Haraway holds agency to the story maker. I want to work with both the active sense of the narrator as agent and an active sense of the story as agent (having agency, that is, some authority to cause) and combine these in narraturgy: the work(ing) of stories. "Real story" and "real truth" may have much in common in the workings of narrative.

I am trying to hold in tension Haraway's pragmatics in which story is a tool or technology that can be made to work for certain purposes—to accept this as a possible tone of story—with narrative as a body: a textual body that has some life of its own. Narratives have a kind of active intelligence or agency as Benjamin indicates.
Aside: i am moved to consider narratives as active intelligences (as well as acts of intelligence) by Michel Serres' (1995c) play with the idea that it is the ball in a game that makes the connections. the ball becomes active as a messenger, serving as a transmitter between players.

Look at those children out there, playing ball. the clumsy ones are playing with the ball as if it was an object, while the more skillful ones handle it as if it were playing with them: they move and change position according to how the ball moves and bounces. As we see it, the ball is being manipulated by human subjects; this is a mistake—the ball is creating the relationships between them. It is in following its trajectory that their team is created, knows itself, represents itself. Yes, the ball is active. It is the ball that is playing. (p. 47-48)

i see narrative as that kind of player, making relationships, actively. if a ball can be active, playing, a communicator of messages, then a narrative seems more likely to have such a capacity. it seems more sensible to think of narratives as active in making teams, communities, common purpose and understanding.
I have already designated narrative as a vessel to give it a multiple quality that connects it to liquidity. A vessel may be a container to hold liquid: a jar, a bottle. It may be a container of a different kind for a voyage in liquid: a craft, a ship. A narrative may contain that which flows or it may be in the midst of that which flows, in passage. And yet there is a third vessel: a blood vessel which is specifically for flow and passage. Blood flows through the vessel. Here the vessel is an opening, a channel for passage. I am claiming narratives have these multiple possibilities of container, transporter, expeditor (allowing movement) and place of passage. A narrative is a vessel of passage, carrying, delivering, containing, crossing with a capacity to pass on life.

ii. Origins of narraturgy:

I came to the term, narraturgy, in an attempt to understand narratives as continuous events that could carry the multiple possibilities of technology, of agency, and of vessel. The location of agency in both narratives and narrator sets up an active/passive dynamic in the workings of narratives. A story can be shaped and altered: worked on actively by the narrator but a story can work on the narrator and/or audience actively, changing them. A narrative may be cause in one circumstance and effect in another. I wanted an understanding of narrative that retained qualities of movement; that did not require narratives to become merely objects of analysis, breaking them up into structure, grammar, theme and so on. I wanted a way of working with narratives that did not remove me to a degree of abstraction that was outside the flow and influence of the narratives themselves. I combined the double question:
what is at work (going on) in narratives and what, in narratives, is working on us, to arrive at narraturgy. The blended word, narraturgy, took shape as a consideration of what is going on (at work) and on-going (working) in narrative.

It arose in parallel to liturgy and its meaning in Greek as the work of the people. Narraturgy is a recognition of narrative as people's work. Liturgy has an interactive nature. People, while doing their religious or public duty/service are, simultaneously, being shaped by the liturgy in which they participate. Victor Turner, in "The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" claims that participation in a ritual process imprints the "sacra. . .changing the inmost nature" of the participant "as a seal impresses wax" (in Mahdi, Foster & Little, 1987, p. 11). [The Greek term archetype "denotes...a master stamp or impress" (p. 17).] Humans are shaped by their participation, especially by repeated participation in ritual and cultural events. The participation does not have to be liturgical or specifically religious to have an imprinting effect. Culture impresses humans with specific shapes and forms for thinking, feeling and understanding the world. It does so through the on-going participation of people in the actions and activities of a way of life. A person is impressed, shaped or in-formed by this process.

Narratives often serve as vehicles (vessels) of repetition. Stories are re-told, repeated. This is a common practice in most processes of education where repetition is used to teach and to impress learners with a form, theme or method of problem solving. Participation in repetition is part of the work of learning and part of the way repetition works on the learner. Narraturgy became a way to think of narratives as active and at work. By folding "work" into narrative, I can consider
its active characteristics and remain in narrative and in its motion; in the space of movement and flux that narratives offer as places of passage(s).

In developing narraturgy, I knew that liturgy is a form slowly and continually being adapted to express the understanding and needs of people. Liturgy is gradually re-worked by participants as a malleable form that remains in process. Narratives, too, are subject to re-working as they are passed on. Each hearing, each reading is a re-telling. Narrative is a continuous hermeneutic: always engaged in interpretive process, always at work, working and being worked on.

"Work, working, working on, working at" are terms of multiple meaning that express an understanding of narrative as active and passive. "Work" has a range of meanings including: labour, sweat, tilling, shaping, enterprise, project, composition, achievement, giving birth (as labour), the shaping of materials in an industrial process, the way we are influenced (worked on). Work is also used psycho-analytically: the work of mourning, the work of healing. I acknowledge these multiple "working" aspects of narrative through narraturgy.

Narraturgy also has a cognate in metallurgy: having to do with the physical properties of a metal. In using the physical properties of a metal to develop and extend its use either in combinations as alloys or in innovative ways offered me another imaginative quality of working a substance for effect. "Working" becomes more vivid as narrative becomes substantial, pliable, workable material.

Narraturgy, therefore, is an interpretation of narrative as in process; as a malleable and workable dynamic. Narraturgy presents story as a dynamic form that demonstrates a double working.
Narratives are worked, shaped by the teller and narratives may be working and shaping the teller simultaneously—as well as the audience. Narratives are mobile forms moving between us, working on us and through us; shaping us as we work to shape them; full of multiple readings, interpretations and meanings. In narrative, understood as flux and as being at work in the flux, there may arise irruptions, eruptions, eddies, dispersion, standing waves, turbulence. The possibility of re-reading, of re-interpreting story, offers the potential for a multiplication of knowns and unknowns, a multiplication of perception, understanding and meaning.

Polkinghorne (1988, p. 71) points out that "the study of narrative by literary theorists has not led to the development of any single or unified theory." He suggests that "old theories" are not discarded in favour or new ones but rather that "it is a cumulative discipline where new theories are added to the older one." I do not see narraturgy as a replacement theoretical understanding of narrative but a particular way of reading narrative that opens our understanding of narrative to include spirituality as an interpretive possibility. Polkinghorne is extending Bruner's (1986, 1996) work of claiming that "narrative understanding is itself one of two basic intelligences or modes of cognitive functioning" (p. 17).

Polkinghorne draws on a wide range of voices in his exploration of narrative as an approach to coming to understand meaning in human culture. Because narrative is so pervasive filling "our cultural and social environment" (p. 14), Polkinghorne sees "narrative as one of our fundamental structures of comprehension" that "shapes the character of our existence in a particular way" (p. 15). I am making the same
assumption and shifting from his emphasis on the primacy of narrative "as a cognitive scheme" to a reading that attempts to grapple with its fluidity and invocation of what cannot quite be managed cognitively. I am arguing that narrative is not only a cognitive formation but has significance in our engagement with m(M)ystery, o(O)ther and that which is not quite contained by the cognitive. It is not only a question of cognitive understanding, of structures and systems of knowledge. There is the matter of meaning (Polkinghorne's focus) but also a matter of the uncertain, of movement and shifts, of what Caputo (1987) describes as staying open to the "ébranler, the wavering and fluctuation;" keeping ready for "the fear and trembling, the anxiety by which the existing individual is shaken" (p. 12).

I am suggesting that narrative has a particular role in response to the movement and uncertainty of the flux. Narrative has the possibility of staying in the flux, in the movement. Because we repeat narratives they have some capacity to be part of Caputo's concern for "repetition forward." Narraturgy is being suggested as a way to engage narrative as in process, in movement. Drawing on Kierkegaard, Caputo suggests:

Repetition is the power of the individual to forge his personality out of the chaos of events, in the midst of the flux, the power to create an identity in the face of incessant "dispersal of the self." (p. 21)

It is precisely this task in which narrative plays such a significant role. Its motility allows narrative to be on-going and fluctuating in the process of carrying forward human life, understanding and experience.
In what follows I will suggest that a narraturgical understanding of narrative will assist a "radical hermeneutic" reading that opens to the possibility of a spiritual sense of learning and teaching.

Stories have been used in a variety of cultures to convey the teaching, history/myths, and outlook of their traditions (including spiritual traditions), acting as the containers of traditions, vessels of discovery, teaching and means of passage. Narratives are kept alive through telling and re-telling, through interpretation and re-interpretation, through a process of hermeneutic repetition, contributing to the movement forward. Narratives are not merely "recollection," a looking backward that becomes "nostalgia for a presence lost . . . a work of recollective recovery, of the repetition which repeats backward" (Caputo, 1987, p. 59). Narraturgy understands narrative as an on-going active work/ing that embodies what Caputo calls "genuine repetition forward" which "bears the responsibility to produce what it would become" and "always operates in the element of becoming and kinesis and learns to make its way through the flux" (p. 59).

Stories have a quality of movement and vitality in their on-going process. Something is at work and in motion in stories. They are an example of flux. A story, through repeated telling and a multiplicity of interpretations, maintains itself as current, as active, but also as changing and transforming "capable of releasing its strength" as Benjamin claims.

Narraturgy is an understanding of narrative as event, as multiple and in motion that offers a possible form and means for noticing the passage and movement of spirituality. I argued earlier that spirituality
can be understood as turbulence, as an expression of flux. This is a non-dimensional and non-computational process. I am not, nor will be counting instances but attempting to notice events through narraturgy.

influx: I am influenced here by Gilles Deleuze's concept of "event" as it is developed in The Logic of Sense (1990). Deleuze is neither easy nor entirely clear but does offer a distinct sense of "event" that involves reversals, contradictions, and multiplicity. He develops his understanding from an exploration/interpretation of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass and their nonsense events. His readings of the complexity of events as forms of multiplicity are both parabolic to and suggestive of what I am attempting through narraturgy. For example, Deleuze claims that the contesting of identity, as experienced by Alice (through being continually asked who she is), determines a doubling of direction in the structure of events which in turn fragments the subject.

It is as if events enjoyed an irreality which is communicated through language to the savoir and to persons. For personal uncertainty is not a doubt foreign to what is happening, but rather an objective structure of the event itself, insofar as it moves in two directions at once, and insofar as it fragments the subject following this double direction. (p. 3)

Uncertainty/doubt becomes a structural reality setting events in motion in several directions simultaneously. The flux is not absent from life but built in. Alice becomes—larger and
smaller at the same time—through a series of transformations and crises. There are endless possibilities of becoming through irreality: multiple becomings evident through the language.

Becoming unlimited comes to be the ideational and incorporeal event, with all its characteristic reversals between future and past, active and passive, cause and effect, more and less, too much and not enough, already and not yet. The infinitely divisible event is always both at once. . . . The event, being itself impassive, allows the active and the passive to be interchanged more easily, since it is neither the one nor the other, but rather the common result (to cut—to be cut). (p. 8)

For Deleuze, an event can be infinitely fragmented but it retains its reversals and simultaneity. The reversals include the interplay of active and passive, cause and effect, qualities that I am claiming come into play through a narraturogical understanding of narrative. There is an opening to multiple possibilities. Becoming and event are "coextensive" as "everything happens at the boundaries between things and prepositions" (p. 8). The event, structured by uncertainty and having movement that is multi-directional, is a concept that informs my sense of the interchangeable active-passive quality of narrative and the reversals of time, influence and relations that I think story offers for an understanding of what the spiritual may be. There is something of multiplicity, generativity, and chaos in this concept of event.
iii. Narrative fluidity:

I am also suggesting a parabolic relation between the fluidity of narrative form and the fluidity of the spiritual. There is a natural relation between the fluidity of narrative and the fluid character of spirituality that makes narrative an appropriate site or residence for spiritual experiences. In addition, a narrative event may have the qualities of reversals and becoming, active and passive, cause and effect that Deleuze suggests because of inherent uncertainty. This is a doubling of the relations and parabolic possibilities for the spiritual in narratives. Narraturgy becomes a way of working (and understanding the work) in the flux, in the reversals and interchanges. This mutual and interactive quality is an understanding of how a story/narrative works on us, as we work on it and through it. Stories are not dormant closed texts. Every reading, every translation, every telling is a reworking, re-reading: interpretation is always in play, at work. The narrative is not a solid fixed form but full of spaces and gaps, in motion and irregular. As with Alice, there is much in doubt: a multiplicity of direction and possibility. I consider these gaps of possibility as opportunities for noticing spirituality.

The interactive, fluid events of spirituality, as part of human experience, may inhere in text, especially narrative text. As stories are records of human life—and I include fiction as a record of a human understanding of human life—then it is possible to consider stories as sources for perception of the spiritual in human experience. If spirituality is dependent on movement, is to be noticed in passage then it is important, in considering narrative texts, to maintain a sense of the vitality and in-motion qualities of story. Their process is
incomplete. Their work is on-going. The narrative is unfinished as it is always open to one more reading, one more interpretation: moving, interacting, engaging. The narrative becomes a record of events, but one whose wax remains pliable for re-printing; where an active and passive interchange proceeds; where be/com/ing includes uncertainty, on-going process at the edges and in the middle.

Narraturgy allows for the looseness and interactivity of narrative to remain at work and in play. Narratives remain as open and vivid as possible in and through re-reading, re-writing and re-thinking: repetition. Narraturgy understands story as interactive, as a player shaping the game. The narrator, narrative, and audience of a story are all being potentially active and/or passive in the event of the narrative. Each may be affected; each may be a source of effects. There is a dynamic interplay and a process of effects from and through narrative. Narraturgy is a way to think about narrative as process.

**influx:** I note another connection in the interplay of repetition, flux, and spirituality that connects to philosophy and religion.

The word "ritual" is from Latin *ritus*, from Greek *rheo*, meaning "to flow, run, rush, or stream." A "rite" is a river—*rivus*—"river or stream"; related to "rival," one who uses the same stream as another. One arrives, or, in this case derives, by approaching or leading from the river. To be in ritual, therefore is to be in the river: Jesus with John the Baptist, the Buddhist on his raft in the river. Using the word from which ritual derives, Herakleitos says:

Everything flows and nothing abides; everything
gives way and nothing stays fixed.

(Wheelright, fr.20)
everything flows: *panta rhei*. And again Herakleitos, in a familiar phrase: "You cannot step into the same river twice, for other waters are continually flowing on" (*epirrei*: "flowing on").

To be in ritual is to be in the river. One does not find baptism in the river; rather, one finds the river in baptism. It is the river one is searching for. (Moore, 1996, p. 116)

There is a link between the repetition that we imagine as static—done as ritual—because, appearing to be the same in each repetition, it seems frozen, and the flow that cannot be entered twice, because it has moved. I am linking narraturgy and liturgy etymologically and see the sense of flow in narrative as repeating the sense of flow that is being explored by Moore in this passage. Narratives, told and re-told, become forms of flow as they are in flux, as they are like rituals that repeat and move at the same time. To be in narrative is to be in the flow, in the river. It is the flux one is searching for. The work of narrative includes the force of its flow, its movement.

The use of narratives by religious traditions is some acknowledgment that there is an understanding of the linkage that includes ritual-story-transformation-spirituality-flow. There is an understanding of the instability of life and its fleeting quality. Stories may recall and allow a comprehension of the tempo and uncertainty of the flow. We end up back in the words of Caputo: without ground, trembling, moving on.
I tell stories in my own work as an educator. I am moved by stories in my life as a learner. There was and is a kind of kinetic reality in the movement that narratives bring: a movement that crosses the borders that are constructed to keep categories and qualities separate and delineated. Narratives may join emotion and thinking, understanding and feeling. Borders may be transgressed.

Aside: there is always a danger in movement that limits will be tested, even violated, that safety will be breached. to live acknowledging the flux, to live open to the m(M)ystery is to live with the possibility of transgressing limits meant to contain and order life for the security and certainty of all. the borders of containment may be as simple as categorical imperatives or as strong as cultural/racial certainties. narratives are familiar tools for undoing imperatives, making unexpected connections and opening humans to new possibilities. narratives can also be used to still and close, insuring borders, preventing transgression.

To transgress a containing border is a motion out—a dispersal—but there is also a coming together, a motion in the other direction.
The event of the story is doubled, as Deleuze has noted, as Serres points out with Jacob's ladder. New relations, new connections may be formed through narratives. There is both movement out: dispersal through the persistence of the current, as well as coming together: blending through the movement of the flow. A confluence exists in this understanding of narrative: a confluence of dispersal and gathering. Narrative provides a blending which includes the potential of spiritual events. Narraturgy includes spirituality in a study of narrative because the narrative remains active and fluid: interactive; because of the way in which relations are possible. To interpret narratives through narraturgy is to stay in them, close and involved in the reversals, uncertainty and movement, not to shift out to a thinner theoretical construct at an objective distance. It is a way of meeting the on-going dynamic of narrative, remaining in and with the complexities of narratives and their work/ings as substantial.

Narrative becomes a stream, a form of flow. It serves as a parabolic line of thought that gives space and possibility to think about, note and attend to the possibilities of spirituality. Narraturgy is an attempt to retain a form for interactivity but to recognize some of the structure of events.

Aside: there is an ironic turn in theorizing an interpretative tool for narratives that is an attempt not to leave narrative but to stay engaged and involved in the narrative as event. perhaps i should tell a story. perhaps i am attempting (or am tempted)
to remain in the flux and have a temporary foothold on solidity? perhaps it is not (theoretically) possible but i hope that it is spiritually possible to maintain relations and connections; to work with reversals and multiplicities. i am trying to claim a small, almost impossible space between theory and narrative that is a liquid between; bearing traces of both and ownership of neither. a liquid space that is shaped by movement through it. a passing narrative vessel may well set off wakes and eddies, disturbances, and echoes. all relation-ships do.

Narraturgy is a way to make explicit qualities and characteristics of spirituality in narrative, in the stories we tell of ourselves and of o(O)ther(s). The narratives remain rich with resources, qualities and characteristics. Spirituality may be found in the narratives as they are. Narraturgy offers a way to consider stories, to come along side their process: their workings and their work.

In describing my approach as narraturgy I have imitated religious (liturgy) and scientific (metallurgy) terminology to describe the way narrative works on us and in us as a maker/marker of transformation, as a shaper of feelings, beliefs, and ethics. As people work to shape their religious ritual, giving their beliefs a communal form; as technicians work to shape and manipulate metals, making them serviceable,
narrative is also worked to give us stances, sites for living; to serve as linkage to community, ethos, and traditions.

Two tensions

i: Narrative and theory:

In order to clarify my interest in the relationship of narrative and theory, let me take up Serres' (1991) claim that:

The origin of theater is not always where the theoretician says it is; it resides in the places where the narrative is recounted involuntarily. The narrative is often a complete theory, and theory often a thinned out narrative. (p. 217)

Theory, according to Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary is an explanation or system of anything: an exposition of the abstract principles of a science or art: speculation as opposed to practice. I do not wish to get that far from narrative, to leave the practice of story for explanation and principles. I am not interested in a thinning out in which the end point is an objective exposure of underlying structures. I am seeking, rather, what is alive, affective, active in the processes of narrative. I do not want to move out of narrative into theory but hope to retain a mix of the liveliness of narrative with some of the theoretical possibilities and understanding that Serres claims are already inherent in narrative. What I resist is withdrawal via theory that turns the participant in the narrative event into a spectator of the event or sets the narrative at a distance where it can be "ologized" as theoretical.
I now realize that an older doctor was trying to get a younger one to stop forcing his patients (not to mention his own mind) into a variety of theoretical constructs. He wanted me to conduct an open-ended kind of interview. He wanted me to hold off the rush to interpretation, to restrain myself from trying to get him to give his interpretation, which for me would become the definitive one, at least until the next supervisor came along. He encouraged a gentler tone, a slower pace, a different use of the mind. . . . (Dr.) Ludwig first wanted to examine with me the literal meaning of the word "theory," . . . I learned that the critical Greek thea'mi, "I behold," as in what we see when we go to the theater. We hold something visual in our minds, presumably, the theory is an enlargement of observation. All too commonly, however, some of us use theory more as a badge of membership than as a visual stimulus. (Coles, 1989, p. 14-20)

In the tension that Coles sets up between theory and story, the theoretical is offered as moving rapidly toward a definitive interpretation, as a way of categorizing. It is used as an escape from the difficulty of the client, as opposed to a form for engagement. Theory becomes a thing onto itself; in this instance, a tool of power. But accepting Serres' claim that theory is contained within narrative, structuring what has been "beheld" but not offering it as (ultimate) authoritative (expert) perspective, is a move toward this "different use of the mind." (Coles, 1989, p 14) It is an attempt to pay attention to the relations at work in the situation and not to withdraw from those connections. Restraining the move to theory is an acceptance of the lived and living experience going on in and through narrative. It is also a recognition that "complete theory" is already present in the narrative, but not necessarily exposed.
Narratives are dense, rich and powerful forms. When a narrative arises—"recounted involuntarily"—it is full bodied, corpulent, containing not only the whole of story but the whole of theory. Theory is a form thinned out of narrative in some way, out of the fullness of its body (its textual body). It resists the continuation of the story: the "nourishment" of details, of the excess of the difficulty of the client or the teller. It is a withdrawal from engagement to an occupation with explanation and speculation. A theory is an attempt to expose the skeletal structure of events: to focus understanding on underlying principles.

Coles's accounts of psychiatric practice and the willing turn to theoretical conclusion show the potentially severe nature hidden in theoretical practice. Theory may be strong, but it tends toward becoming, through its self-interest and self-concern, a destructive form. By breaking off the exchange to consider the abstractions that the engagement has suggested there is a loss of the relationship or nurture that sustains the teacher-student or client-professional encounter. Coles suggests it may be destructive of the patient (the student) through its forcefulness and control. It brings the skeleton into view: surfacing the bones.

\textit{influx}: I am toying with some of what is implied in a tension offered by Jacques Daignault (in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 480-481) when he speaks of being between "suicide and murder." Theory is not suicide. Narrative is not murder. The task is however to remain between actions that tend in those directions: to escape the violence of either
extreme: self-destruction or assault, is to not fall into nihilism, "the abandonment of any attempt to know" or into terrorism, "the reduction of difference to identity." To consider spirituality is to remain in the difficulty and the tension of implication, responsibility and being human. Knowledge and understanding remain necessary; difference cannot be overcome. I believe thinking spiritually is to resist a turn toward either murder or suicide. It is an attempt to work in the space between murder and suicide, aware that the statements of extremes are limits and that the working space of living is not so sharply defined or clear but rather more muddled and in the middle. Perhaps the space between is smaller than we know and we are always closer to degrees of murder or suicide than we are aware. How many small deaths do we die each week? How many little murders do we commit? How easy it is to be hopeless or vicious. Spirituality is a call to the difficult middle space, in motion and unsettled.

Theory is concerned for the structure, the underlying shape, for exposing it, observing it, studying it. In narrative, the bones are still there but covered. It is in death that the skeleton comes clean. Narrative is about living, about going on: it is excessive, fecund, potent, even dangerously indulgent. The turn to theory, as Robert Coles (1989) points out, disengages us in the life of the patient (the student).
What ought to be interesting, Dr. Ludwig kept insisting, is the unfolding of a lived life rather than the confirmation such a chronicle proves for some theory. . . . Let the story itself be our discovery. (p. 23)

To attend to the story itself as discovery is to step back from the categorization that theoretical readings of events produce. The dilution of a story to its theory implications is an exercise of reduction and control, the object of which is a kind of severe beauty (a false image of loveliness). In my understanding of narrative as living and active, the move to theory in surfacing the structural bones requires a shutting down of the bodily functions of the text and its living engagement that might lead to connections, relations, and reproduction.

Unmeasureables, passion, ambiguity may linger in stories, remain in the body; it is not possible to arrive at a singular knowledge, a singular explanation of what underlies a given story. In the body of the story all the excludeds remain in play—and their messiness—including passion and love, including fecundity and responsibility, including being temporary and human, awkward and spiritual.

To stay within the workings of stories as they move, to consider the workings and work of stories from within them, to acknowledge theory as included while respecting the enduring potential of the story to move, this is the practice of narraturgy. I am concerned about relations that are current; that are expressed narratively and require, for their vitality, that the narratives themselves retain a mobile, fragile quality, and stay in play.

If spirituality is an engagement that is relational then narratives, as a way of understanding the vitality of relations, necessarily require a
similar vitality. They are not merely objects of study, examples of genre or structure, lessons for grammar, sources for themes and forms but are active and engaging embodiments of relations that include spiritual knowledge and understanding. To let narrative become objectified to a theoretical limit is a form of reduction (leaness) or fragmentation. I will work to allow narrative to continue as flux and in flux.

It is necessary to remember that story involves entanglement in tradition, in viewpoint, in implication. If repetition through participation is effective at shaping humans then a narrative telling is always an act of influence and potential. It may re-shape the teller, the audience, both, or neither.

ii. Voice and site: giving, being given

To accept that there is interplay and effect among the narrator, narration and audience requires a further examination of the relationship of the narrator to the story.

(Storytelling) does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him (sic) again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the hand prints of the potter cling to a clay vessel. (Benjamin, 1968, p. 92)

Every story carries the marks of its tradition and teller. The story is made by invention, adaptation, assemblage or repetition. Benjamin's physical metaphor recognizes the story as malleable, as a thing being made. But it misses the reverse: the way in which the clay shapes the potter. The story clings to the storyteller shaping both the teller and
the stories that follow from those hands. Participation in the narrative impresses the narrative on the teller as well as on the audience. It is Serres (1991) who has pointed out most simply this influence of the story and its location on the voice of the teller.

The intense division of knowledge defines sites, the places from which to speak. From there one speaks above all of the site itself. Places impose words; they are mouthpieces. (p. 252)

Where we are speaks through us. The story of the place we occupy and tell becomes our story, becomes our speaking. The narratives we tell shape us and make us representatives of their site. The voice that we use is altered by the location we choose as the site of our address. There is an interchange in which voice takes a double role: active and passive. I am combining here something of Deleuze's sense of event and Serres' acknowledgment of the influence of site as a "division of knowledge," as a place that has a way of understanding the world embedded in it and that shapes articulation from that place, that site.

A narrative is not a neutral object and the narrator is not an independent agent. I am taking a site to mean any located and directed way or place of thinking and understanding. These points of view do more than colour our stories. They serve as agents of imprint, altering us, altering what we tell and how we tell it. We become agents of the place we represent through the narratives we offer back to the world. It is not possible to be neutral, to be outside of influence in telling a story. Narrative is always and already in motion, in play. It is not possible to escape to abstraction, to be outside of the flow and
influence of a location. The site is fluid and continues to surround the occupants, to move them, to offer them words and forcefulness for those words.

Aside: because there is no outside of the flux then a stance of abstraction is an attempt to create a space within flux that is considered out-of-flux. it is a denial of a meta-narrative that is already situated and located in the flux. this is the tip of a very complex consideration which i note as an intrusion and let pass.

The understanding that arises from any narrative is already located—"situated" (Haraway, 1997) and that localization is a critical part of its vitality, of its ability to be active, to be agent. Part of the voice that occurs in a narrative is precisely because it is localized, grounded and sustained by its location. The voice of the narrator is entangled with the voice of the site. There is a blend of influences, a confluence of effects. The site for a narrative includes the audience, the tradition that gives rise to the narrative, the narrator, and the narrative itself. Each contributes to the making of the story as it is told, written, read or heard. As each aspect of the site shapes the clay of the story so the story shapes the clay of each aspect of the site. There is a kind of mutual agency (an active voice/act of voice) and a mutual malleability (a passive voice/being acted on). This cause and effect occurs continuously in and through narrative.
What does this have to do with spirituality? I am looking for ways to notice spirituality in human life and narrative seems to be a site or location to attend to spirituality. It is important to understand spirituality as interactive and inherent and not distant and obscure. If spirituality is blended into our lives and may be discerned through our narratives then we come to a question of perception. How we might perceive the being-acted-on in the midst of our actions? If spirituality is a quality that is inherent in becoming human then it is immanent in human living and is an agent shaping human life. Do our stories of ourselves mark that in some way? Does the reverse also hold true? Does the practice of human living shape the spirituality that qualifies a human life (gives it quality)?

**Thresholds and perception**

I turn now to the question of perception. If spirituality is already in narratives, as I am claiming, what accounts for it being unnoticed? If spirituality is inherent, how can it be unknown? Gilles Deleuze (1993a) claims:

All consciousness is a matter of threshold. In each case we would probably have to state why the threshold is marked where it is. (p. 88)

This is a critical insight in the matter of spirituality. What is in question is the location of the perceptual threshold and the basis of its establishment. An interest in spirituality is a move toward a threshold, toward a consciousness that recognizes different elements of influence,
different relations of awareness that arise in the darkness, in small recognitions that sometimes come to awareness. Deleuze continues:

Yet if we take thresholds to be so many minimal units of consciousness, tiny perceptions are in each instance smaller than the virtual minimum and, in this sense, are infinitely small. The ones selected in each order are those engaged in differential relations, and hence they produce the quality that issues forth at the given threshold of consciousness. . . . Inconspicuous perceptions are thus not parts of conscious perception, but requisites or genetic elements, 'differentials of consciousness.' (p. 88)

To work, according to Deleuze, at any particular level of perception is a selection of what is to be perceived, which produces the qualities, the effects that are perceivable. But these are not ultimate limits as there may be tiny perceptions that are "infinitely small" that, if brought into play would change the "differential relations" and might cause a different perception and different relations. I am claiming that this is precisely the case for the spiritual in narratives and our perception of it.

Somewhere in the approach to a narrative those tiny perceptions remain that can and could change what is perceived, felt. By being perceived differently a narrative can shift the level of consciousness. Narratives work to establish relations, to connect us across time, across thresholds that have separated us. This active capacity of narrative is an indication of the tiny perceptions that remain below the threshold, out of consciousness. It has been my experience that seemingly disinterested listeners will become alert and attentive in the telling of a story. The story lingers in the memory or stirs emotions in its passage
from one to the other. It evokes response by moving to different thresholds of perception and consciousness. A narrative has an unknown capacity to invoke, to cause, to move. It is not predictable or even manageable how or why one story rather than another touches here rather than there, moves this person and not that one.

For clarity has to emerge out of darkness, as if through a first filter that would be followed by many other filters, for what is distinct, what is confused, and so on. In effect, the differential relations indeed fill the role of a filter - and already an infinity of filters - since they let through only minute perceptions that in each instance can furnish a relatively clear perception. But, because filters change their nature at each level, we must admit that clarity is relatively obscure and absolutely confused, just as what is distinct remains relatively confused and absolutely inadequate . . . clear perception as such is never distinct. Rather it is 'distinguished' in the sense of being remarkable or notable. (Deleuze, 1993a, p. 91)

Deleuze offers a difficult challenge to our understanding of clarity as he suggests that clarity is a process that filters out perceptions and possibilities. As such, it can blind us. Claims of clarity become "relatively obscure," even "absolutely confused" because they are processes of filtering and an elimination of perceptions. At best we can try to distinguish differences, admitting that every attempt is "absolutely inadequate" and still "relatively confused." Thus to distinguish spirituality, to draw it to attention, to shift the threshold of perception is to be left with the difficulty of what is inadequate, not clear. Spirituality remains distinct but retains a degree of confusion. The tiny perceptions that might indicate spirituality remain unnoticed
because of their slightness, because of their obscurity and disorder. Clarity covers them by eliminating them in being formed. Deleuze continues:

No differential mechanism of reciprocal determination would come to select a few of these tiny perceptions in order to extract a clear perception. They would have nothing remarkable about them. A limit-condition of this kind is present only in death; everywhere else it is merely an abstraction. . . . If life implies a soul it is because proteins already attest to an activity of perception, discrimination, and distinction - in short, 'a primary force' that physical impulsions and chemical affinities cannot explain ('derivative forces'). Thus there can be no reactions ensuing from excitations, but from outer organic reactions that in the soul are proof of an inner perceptive activity. (p. 92)

Deleuze is trying to shift the threshold by claiming perception as a "primary force" that is not explainable through other forces. Perception is an inner activity, inherent and only completely evident in a "limit-condition." It is only at a limit: death, that perception admits what has remained unnoticed. Deleuze is arguing that perception is the basis for noticing an implied soul, of attending to the tiny perceptions below the threshold of consciousness. I am suggesting that these tiny perceptions linger in stories, are noticeable in narrative.

There are a multitude of stories. They are not all the same, nor do they have the same narraturogical affect. Stories have the potential to collide us with "the inner perceptive activity," to take us momentarily to the "limit-condition" of death. They can shift the threshold to include the soul, to admit the "tiny perceptions" below the
threshold of thinness, the thousand tiny elements that make narrative full and rich with perceptivity. Death is included.

In the course of modern times dying has been pushed further and further outside of the perceptual world of the living. There used to be no house, hardly a room, in which someone had not died. . . . Today people live in rooms that have never been touched by death, dry dwellers of eternity, and when their end approaches they are stowed away in sanatoria or hospitals by their heirs. It is, however, characteristic that not only a man's (sic) knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life—and this is the stuff that stories are made of—first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death. Just as a sequence of images is set in motion inside a man as his life comes to an end—unfolding the views of himself under which he has encountered himself without being aware of it—suddenly in his expressions and looks the unforgettable emerges and imparts to everything that concerned him that authority which even the poorest wretch in dying possess for those living around him. This authority is at the very source of the story. Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He (sic) has borrowed his authority from death. (Benjamin, 1968, p. 93)

Benjamin is making a startling claim that the "authority of story" is from the "limit-condition" of death. The engagement with death, the shifted threshold of perception that such an engagement produces is the impetus for the potency of story. It produces the excess of story, its complete bodilyness (and bawdiness). I am suggesting that Deleuze's and Benjamin's ideas blend to give some understanding of the residual intensity of narratives. Death, as limit-condition, gives a momentary possibility of clear perception and story is given its impetus—"source"—from this authoritative moment. Death is not the sanctioner because
story is about ending and finality but because it is in the face of death that there is perception, momentary clarity and a storehouse of residual effects. Somehow wisdom can linger in stories, even those removed from the explicit encounter with death, because the tiny perceptions and the shifted threshold remain ever a possibility.

This has implications for education, for teaching and learning. In using narrative as a teaching technique or in using student and teacher narratives, the educational space is being (re)opened to the influence of those tiny perceptions from below the regular threshold of understanding. This may include letting concerns and inklings of soul and spirit with all their implications into the midst of educational spaces. The authority that Benjamin claims for stories and the perceptions at work at or near the limit-condition are not lost because attention is focused on structural, grammatical, or theoretical concerns; on tasks of theming, and practical matters of interpretation and application. These potencies remain in stories and remain in their ability to work.

Aside: the word author comes from a Latin word *auctor-augere, actum* to increase, to produce. the authority of a story augments it, increases it. that increase is already "in utero" in the story—a natural inherent quality. but it may be in the belly of the story, out of sight, latent temporarily: not noticed, not known, not admitted but still there.
If we ignore the shift of threshold and limit our preferences to theoretical or generalizable understandings, the clarity that filters out confusing perceptions will make invisible what may lie within narratives. The filtering out is a move to thinness that has helped us keep out of and away from the problems that death, mortality, eternity, soul, and spirit cause us. We may be cheating ourselves and our students of perceptions and meanings that are close to them, that are already resident in their narratives and in ours.

Narrative works differently and not by exclusion or through control. There is a quality of wonder in stories, in the way in which we can fall into other worlds and be carried away. Narratives may already be at work and the challenge may be to shift our perceptions to notice the potency of the on-going activity, to include it in our perceived processes by shifting our filters, our perceptions.

It is conceivable that our educational use of stories to trace structure, to be didactic about themes and meanings, morals and consequences is actually an escape out of the back door of the flux. We may be fleeing the potency of story and the intrusion of flux by not staying with stories, with their movement and ability to work on us and shift our perceptions and limits.

To see narrative as that which shifts the kind of perception that we have and admits the "tiny perceptions" into the region of possibility and consideration is to open ourselves to the flux. I believe that narrative has the potential to admit the flux into our understanding. Narrative is a moving form and as such allows for that which is also moving or in flux to be included in the process of identity formation, in the repetition forward of a radical hermeneutic of understanding of life.
and character. Spirituality, as a form of flux and turbulence, becomes included in the play of narrative. This is neither incidental nor peripheral for education: although if the threshold of perception is moved it may seem so. I am offering narraturgy as an interpretation that can notice spiritual qualities in the work and working of narrative. In the next chapter I will explore some possible characteristics and qualities of narrative that may assist in attending to the "tiny perceptions" which include perceptions of the mystery, the unknown: glimpses, glances, tremblings and shudders.
Seventh Chapter Prelude

I was dreaming. I was on campus where I lived and studied. I was running, urgent to get to the room where I lived: E-211. I entered a building at the end farthest from where I was trying to go—closest to where the dream started. It was further than I thought to the other end. I scurried along corridors and around corners, past people, classrooms, professors' offices. It was all vaguely familiar. I did not recognize anyone.

There were many different levels. They did not align, so it was up and down various flights of stairs. Finally I came to the residence section but was now several floors above the second level and E-211, or was it now E-201? I remembered, in the middle of the dream, that I had lived one year as an undergraduate in an E-House.

To my surprise I came to a food market. It was busy and well appointed. I was not sure what it was doing there on the roof level of the residence complex. I hurried through ducking between shelves of fresh fruit and vegetables. I brushed past one man in the produce section, next to mounds of lettuce. His voice followed me saying: "Wait. Stop him." People looked but no one moved from their shopping. I had not bumped him. I was not stopping.

I pushed through another door into the familiar space of the residence section which was even more of a warren of hallways and stairs. I began to descend a stairway and met a friendly security guard who was doing his rounds. "Was I in E-House?" "Yes sir you are. Right down there" He was going into a telephone booth in the wall. I went down the stairs and pushed open a door. The whole place seemed run-down. The door was covered on the back with a dull orange carpet. It was shabby looking. Everything seemed temporary and wooden. The door had padding because if you pushed it the other way it hit the stairs. That's what I thought in the dream.

I was in a hallway. I had my key out. I turned to the room that was going to be E-211 (or was I now looking for E-201?) and is was E-
106. I woke up. I had not found the floor or the room. I was very close. And not quite there.

I was dreaming about writing, about making a text, about finding my way to the critical point. I was close to getting there. I was determined to press on. The dream was not a nightmare. Perhaps it was about patience, about pacing, about listening.

I am drawing to the end of this text, both in time and in form. I wonder if I am nearly there or whether "there" will remain out of reach, elusive, disappearing.

The text I am making has many twists and turns. In search of an elusive room to which I have the key, that I think of as home, as the place to get to. I am seeing this writing as a journey. Even in my dream there is no arrival.

I have been trying to surface spirituality. I keep finding my way into twists and turns of the mind. I am getting closer to something. It keeps not being on the route I am taking. I am moving toward narrative in this chapter, claiming that to understand the spiritual potential of stories they need to be read narraturgically. I review several sets of narrative qualities that demonstrate the workings of stories and then offer an interpretation of narratives that contribute to understanding them as vessels of spirit. In recognizing that narratives become active agents in the passage of the spiritual I draw attention to their double capacity to work on us and to be worked on by us in a process of adaptation and repetition. There are stories making their way in. There is thinking and re-conceptualization.
Chapter 7
Story Characteristics

The story is a place of possibility in which we can take part in a world that enhances us, enlivens us, and offers us something with which we can identify. Through that identification, we grow. We become more than we are. We learn how to get from here to there. Though a story may challenge what we already believe about our world, ultimately, it is through stories that our spirit is nurtured.

Richard Lewis, *The Story the Child Keeps*

**Toward an understanding of story**

i. Three views of the characteristics of narrative

If narratives are to be understood as narratological, it is necessary to have some sense of how they work. There are a variety of narrative theories that have been developed to understand narrative. I will follow Polkinghorne's suggestion of being additive and cumulative and identify qualities in stories and in responses to stories that maintain narrative as dynamic and active.

In exploring the nature of stories or narratives as a way of tracing spirituality in narrative exchanges (Reid, 1992), I turn to several sets of characteristics or qualities ascribed to narrative by three different writers as descriptions of the way in which stories do work and what may be at work in them. They draw on a range of literary and non-literary traditions, theory, theology, and folk culture. In listing them in summary form as a way of opening a range of understandings, I am responding to Bruner's (1996) concern that we develop an increased sensitivity to the workings of narrative as a way of thinking and as a
way of understanding the world, especially in education. These three sets of characteristics take up some of the dynamics of narrative—suggestive of a narrature's understanding—as events with multiple possibilities, reversals, fluctuations and undecideds left in play.

**SET ONE: Scott Russell Sanders**

Sanders (1997, p. 54-57) explores why we are so taken with stories; why we continue to tell them; and what power they have to affect us.

*First:* Stories are a playground for language; a place to exercise its "extraordinary power" and "the ambiguous potency in words, for creating or destroying, for binding or setting free."

*Second:* Stories create community by linking "teller to listeners and listeners to one another." Stories, including "scared stories," may "divide the world" as well as unite it and so "there is danger in story" because they are influential and do shape us.

*Third:* "Stories help us to see the world through the eyes of other people." Sanders acknowledges Carol Bly's argument in "Six Uses of Story" that "experience of other" is the primary gift from stories. Through "leaps of imagination" we are enabled, says Sanders, to "cross boundaries . . . to reach across the rifts not only of gender and age, geography and class, even the rifts between species or between enemies."

*Fourth:* Stories have the power "to show us the consequence of our actions." Sanders argues that even without a "moral purpose" stories "cannot help but have a moral effect, for better or for worse." He cites an Apache elder from the work of Keith Basso: "Stories go to work on you like arrows. Stories make you live right. Stories make you replace
yourself." And Sanders adds: "Stories do work on us, on our minds and hearts, showing us how we might act, who we might become and why."

**Fifth:** Sanders claims that stories have the power "to educate our desires" by giving us "images for what is truly worth seeking, worth having, worth doing." Stories can "lead our desires in new directions."

**Sixth:** Stories have the power "to help us dwell in place." Here he cites storyteller Eudora Welty: "The art that speaks most clearly explicitly, directly, and passionately from its place of origin will remain the longest understood." Sanders adds: "Stories of place help us to recognize that we belong to the earth, blood and brain and bone, and that we are kin to other creatures."

**Seventh:** Stories "help us to dwell in time." Sanders suggest that this includes both the "public" time of history—"a tale of influences and events that have shaped the present"—and the "private" time of the mind—"a flow of memory and anticipation that continues, in eddies and rapids for as long as we are conscious." Stories are therefore linking "before and after within in the lives of characters and communities" by ordering events, by making connections, by indicating consequence and influence across time. "Stories gather experience into shapes that we can hold and pass on through time."

**Eighth:** Stories "help us to deal with suffering, loss, and death." The challenge of coping with loss includes the need to remember and to be reminded in order to "fend off despair" and to provide a sense that it is possible to carry on and return to happiness.

**Ninth:** "Stories teach us how to be human." Sanders claims we must "learn how to behave," and cites Ursala Le Guin: "Story is our nearest and dearest way of understanding our lives and finding our way
onward." Stories "hold a reservoir of human possibilities telling us what has work before, what has failed, where meaning and purpose and joy might be found."

**Tenth:** Stories accept and acknowledge that "we still dwell in mystery," that "we have no final answers," and that our home "creation" is a place of "wonder and mystery." Sanders offers that stories sustain a sense of living that recognizes: "The elegant infinite details of the world's unfolding, the sheer existence of hand or tree or star are more marvelous than anything we can say about them." So stories "remain open to new vision . . . are filled with awe" and "give us hope of finding meaning within the mystery."

**SET TWO: Jerome Bruner**

Bruner is considering the nature of narrative out of concern for how we construe the world and for a kind of thinking and understanding that is possible through narrative. He claims that in spite of the fact "that we live most of our lives in a world constructed according to the rules and devices of narrative" education does not provide significant "opportunities . . . for creating the metacognitive sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims" (1996, p. 149). His listing is an attempt to offer some of that sensitivity by noting "the nine universals of narrative realities" (p. 133).

1. A *structure of committed time.* (p. 133)

Bruner claims that it is the "unfolding of crucial events" that creates narrative time that "Ricouer has noted is 'humanly relevant"
time." Bruner claims that: "what underlies our grasp of narrative is a 'mental model' of its aspectual durativity—time that is bounded not simply by clocks but by the humanly relevant actions that occur within its limits."

2. Generic particularity. (p. 133-136)

In arguing that narratives "deal with (or are 'realized' in) particulars" and can be collected by genre he concludes that "genres are generative of their particulars." As "the existence of genres is universal" Bruner points out they can be "characterized as either a kind of text or as a way of construing text" and are "culturally specialized ways of both envisaging and communicating about the human condition." For Bruner, the genre is a frame of reference for the understanding and composing of narratives. Drawing on the work of Northrup Frye, Bruner claims: "We people our world with characters out of narrative genres, make sense of events by assimilating them to the shape of comedy, tragedy, irony, romance."

3. Actions have reasons. (p. 136-137)

"What people do in narratives is never by chance, nor is it strictly determined by cause and effect; it is motivated by beliefs, desires, theories, values, or other 'intentional states.' Narrative actions imply intentional states." Bruner adds the caution that "some element of freedom is always implied in narrative—some agency that can intrude on a presumed causal chain. Agency presupposes choice" because, "intentional states" are "never fully determinate." Part of the work of narrative is "the search . . . for the intentional states 'behind' actions: narrative seeks reasons not causes. Reasons can be judged, can be evaluated in the normative scheme of things."
4. *Hermeneutic composition.* (p. 137-138)

Bruner insists that "no story has a single, unique construal. Its putative meanings are in principle multiple." This requires a hermeneutic process because there is neither "a rational procedure to determine whether any particular 'reading' is necessary. . .nor an empirical method for verifying any particular reading." Texts are to be read for meaning "in keeping with the particulars that constitute it." The interplay between the "parts of a story" and "the story as a whole" is part of "irretrievably hermeneutic" process necessary for "story interpretation." Bruner says: "A story's parts and its whole must, as it were, be made to live together." Bruner notes how narrative provokes an "itch. . .to know 'why' a story is being told now under 'these' circumstances by 'this' narrator." The reader/hearer must engage in a hermeneutical process to find the "voice" of the narrator, to question the story and its point of view.

5. *Implied canonicity.* (p. 139-140)

"To be worth telling, a story must run counter to expectancy, must breach a canonical script or deviate from what Hayden White called 'legitimacy'." Bruner explores the tension between the conventional forms that we expect and know and the way narratives must deviate from them in order to be enthralling and attractive.

Narrative reality links us to what is expected, what is legitimate, and what is customary. But there is a curious twist to this linkage. For the canonical linkage of narratively construed realities risks creating boredom. So through language and literary invention, narrative seeks to hold its audience by 'making the ordinary strange again.'
And a narrator "gains extraordinary cultural power by making us consider afresh what before we took for granted."

6. Ambiguity of reference. (p. 140-142)

Bruner notes that "what a narrative is ‘about’ is always open to some question, however much we may ‘check’ its facts." There is no escaping the way narrative "creates or constitutes its reference, the ‘reality’ to which it points," so that it becomes ambiguous in a way that the philosopher's reference does not. Bruner argues that this narrative self-referenced reality is as true in news as it is in fiction, as news stories begin to fall into expected plot lines and genres. The whole story cannot be told and "narrative chaos reigns."

7. The centrality of trouble. (p. 142-143)

"Stories pivot on breached norms." Bruner claims "trouble" is "at the hub of narrative realities. Stories worth telling and worth construing are typically born in trouble." But Bruner points out that "narrative trouble is not historically ‘once and for all.’ It expresses a time and circumstance." Narrative is "sensitive to changing norms" and displays the ability to console through "its archetypal sameness" and trouble through "its chimeral quality."

8. Inherent negotiability. (p. 143)

Stories are versions of things and there may be many variations of the telling of events demonstrating a form of "multiple narrative construals." These varied construals and accounts and our willingness to accept them may provide "the flexibility needed for the coherence of cultural life."

9. The historical extensibility of narrative. (p. 143-147)

Narratives do not stand on their own as "one self-sufficient story
after another." There are continuities through time and a compounding of "continuing stories." We work to "cobble our narratives together to assure their unlimited continuity" aware that "history is full of quirky particulars that follow each other and are seen to follow from each other." Bruner claims that: "The accrual of history...seems to be dedicated to finding some intermediate ground where large-scale, almost incomprehensible forces can be made to act through the medium of human beings playing out a continued story over time." We are at "work in common" through a "joint narrative accrual of history" in order to provide ourselves a "canonical setting for individual autobiography." Our stories become nested in larger "our" stories. Sometimes we are in conflict with the canon wondering "whether the accrual of narrative into history leaves us dominated or alienated or locked in an embrace with those who wrote the histories of the past." Narrative becomes a container for culture through time.

SET THREE: William J. Bausch.

This third list grows out of a tradition of narrative theology that has developed in a move away from systematic theology which Bausch claims (1984, p. 27) "engages the intellect," while "storytelling engages the heart and indeed the whole person." Like Bruner and Sanders, Bausch is laying claim to a different kind of thinking and understanding that can arise through and out of narrative.

Logic is one avenue to truth, however limited. Imagination as myth and story is another avenue, but one that involves, disturbs and challenges us and as such is to be preferred. (p. 27)
Bausch sees stories as "events in a life" not as "propositions" or "doctrine" that are "statements on a page" or "the materials of a text." He is interested in what he calls the characteristics of stories that make them "the stuff of life" and an "event's first voice." His book, *Storytelling, imagination and faith*, offers a series of stories to illustrate the characteristics and paradoxes he identifies.

**First Characteristic of Story: Stories provoke curiosity and compel repetition.** (p. 30-31)

Stories have an ability to "provoke" a "curiosity" that is "compelling." We want to discover how they unfold. Bausch recognizes that: "we've all caught a story at one time or another. And we've been caught by them." We want to "learn, recite, know, and share" stories and so they are "sought, bought, caught, and taught."

**Second Characteristic of Story: Stories unite us in a holistic way to nature, our common stuff of experience.** (p. 32)

Like Sanders, Bausch claims that stories link us to the land and to other creatures. He wonders if there is a link between "our story amnesia and our abuse of the environment." We have lost a sense of story that does link us to the earth.

**Third Characteristic of Story: Stories are a bridge to one's culture, one's roots.** (p. 33-34)

"Every people, nation, and community have stories and myths that preserve and prolong the traditions that give them their identity." Similarly "individuals, families, and communities also have their identifying stories that link them to who they are, to their culture." Bausch argues that "a person without a story is a person with amnesia."
A country without a story has ceased to exist. A humanity without a story has lost its soul.

**Fourth Characteristic of Story: Stories bind us to all of humankind, to the universal, human family.** (p. 34-36)

Bausch suggests that "in extremely diverse times and places" stories are remarkably alike, sharing the same "themes . . . and often the very same wording and phrasing are used," as well as "the same fundamental motifs and patterns." These commonalities of stories "reflect our common humanity and bind us to one another in a common destiny, apparently even beyond time and space." Bausch cites Harold Goddard's *The Meaning of Shakespeare*: "The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in."

**Fifth Characteristic of Story: Stories help us to remember.** (p. 36-38)

Stories recall for us "our past, our history, our glories, and our shame" and "as Henri Nouwen reminds us . . . not to plague our memories but to help us to remember and in remembering to confess and in confessing to be made whole." Bausch is claiming that remembering stories will help us find our way forward.

**Sixth Characteristic of Story: Stories use a special language.** (p. 38-39)

Following the argument of Robert Bela Wilhelm, Bausch posits three kinds of language: daytime talk, nighttime talk and storytelling talk which is "a combination of daytime talk and nighttime talk; it bridges and unites both. Storytelling is daytime talk because it makes sense. It is nighttime talk because it is rich in images that, like a
dream, can happen in a story but not in everyday life." This provides us "ways by which we indirectly face what we might not face head on." Stories which can be "entertainment. . . teaching device," or "art form" also become "thread(s) that bind our conscious and unconscious lives together and . . . intimates the presence of mystery." A story has a way of getting "inside" us taking on "a life of its own" resonating and disturbing us. We move into "story time."

\textit{Seventh Characteristic of Story: Stories restore the original power of the word.} (p. 40-43)

It is Bausch's contention that in current culture, in part through proliferation, "words have been devalued extensively." The power of words—"having something of force and thrust and compulsion" is restored through narrative. He turns to poetry and to monastic traditions to support his argument.

\textit{Eighth Characteristic of Story: Stories provide escape.} (p. 43-46)

Bausch suggests that story can provide a way out of "our immediacy and give us a chance to regroup, reform, and reenter life." Story allows us some distance on events that are hurtful, giving us time and space to reconsider them and ourselves. Story may also provide a way out of "boredom" or from circumstances that are overwhelming. "A good story can give us a break as well as pull us back to reality." Stories are "temporary detour(s)" that lead us back to life "refreshed," and proving some sense of hope and possibility.

\textit{Ninth Characteristic of Story: Stories evoke in us right-brain imagination, tenderness, and therefore, wholeness.} (p. 47-54)

Bausch suggests that stories counter the "reasonable, unemotional, in control, shrewd, analytical qualities" so much "prized"
in our culture. He sees stories as stimulating imagination, feeling, compassion, as providing ways "to come to terms with (our) feelings." They address questions outside of our conscious control giving us indirect ways to tell of that which we cannot express or quite think logically or clearly. They can lead to understanding through this distancing, through humour and laughter, through imagination and play.

*Tenth Characteristic of Story: Stories promote healing.* (p. 54-58)

Bausch points out that "psychology uses storytelling to bring healing to people, especially the healing of deep hurts and memories from the past." He notes the role of imagination and recall in bringing stories out where they can be re-thought and re-considered, making for healing, release and transformation. (See Coles, 1989.)

*Eleventh Characteristic of Story: Every story is our story.* (p. 58-60)

Here Bausch uses both the work of Joseph Campbell and Italo Calvino to argue that in linking us to "our deepest selves" we discover that: "All stories in one way or another are, or can be, our story." Stories use a variety of themes and motifs to explore human experience, particularly that of journeying—an experience he claims as common to us all. "Everyone, from the start, is on a journey. And a journey has two inseparable companions: conflict and new beginnings." He claims that regardless of degree or scale somehow each of us can find ourselves in stories.

*Twelfth Characteristic of Story: Stories provide a basis for hope and morality.* (p. 60-62)
By imagining new "possibilities and alternatives" in difficult or 
"hopeless situations" we begin to create new possibilities that "give birth 
to hope." Stories can provide the possibility of restoration and freedom 
for those in difficulty or being oppressed by awakening the imagination 
of people to the possibility of other ways and different kinds of living: 
"hope and a new foundation for moral action and life." "Possibilities in 
the future" can be imagined and can stimulate us to actions and new choices.

*Thirteenth Characteristic of Story: Stories are the basis for 
ministry.* (p. 62-63)

To end with one of Bausch's stories.

Tanzan and Ekido were once traveling together down a muddy 
road. A heavy rain was falling. Coming around a bend, they 
met a lovely girl in a silk kimono and sash, unable to cross the 
intersection.

"Come on, girl." said Tanzan at once. Lifting her in his arms he 
carried her over the mud.

Ekido did not speak again until that night when they reached a 
lodging temple. Then he could no longer restrain himself. "We 
monks don't go near females," he told Tanzan, "especially not 
young and lovely ones. It is dangerous. Why did you do that?"

"I left the girl there," said Tanzan. "Are you still carrying her?"

ii. The characteristics of narraturgy

These three sets of characteristics contain a number of common 
qualities, articulated in different ways, that I include in understanding 
stories through narraturgy. One quality is the way narratives connect 
us to life, to a particular location, to a community, and to other
individuals. Bausch claims every story has the potential to be our own story. Bruner is more concerned with the way story locates us through genre and canonicity. Time is another factor in the locational work of narratives. Stories may be particular and local but have "historical extensibility" and an ability to move in and out of time. Third, stories can be recognized for their ability to educate (draw out, open). Stories open us to new understandings of our lives, our actions, our context; to multiple meanings and interpretations; and to the possibilities of mystery and wonder. They become teachers.

Additionally stories are provocative, introducing trouble and difficulty into our midst as well as provoking memory, and re-telling. Simultaneously, stories can be a way of meeting difficulty and trouble that is already in place in our lives. They may lead to healing, forgiveness and restoration. Stories, as vessels, can take us across borders linking us relationally, imaginatively, and spiritually to what is not near at hand or familiar. Stories are multiple, variable and open to a range of readings and categorization. They (re-)present many voices.

In offering narraturgy as a way of reading stories I want to re-arrange these qualities to facilitate understanding the spiritual potential of stories. This re-arrangement stresses the complexity of stories and their double qualities, connecting them to Deleuze's sense of events and the doubling of active and passive qualities. I will also offer questions and tell stories to extend the implications of the workings of story as spiritual vessel. What makes narratives "vessels" of spirituality? What particular characteristics and qualities of narrative carry their spiritual potential? What is the potential energy (as in physics) of spirituality in narrative; that is, what spiritual energy in
narratives is ready to be released when set in motion? What are the implications for our work with narrative, particularly in education?

It is necessary to pay attention to the interaction between a story and its intended audience, whether the story is presented to an individual or to a larger audience. In attending to a story's action in/on the audience questions can be asked: How is this story affecting them—working on them—collectively or individually? Is it resonating with them? Are they being moved? How? In what way? Being aware of a story's ability to work on its receiver(s) is also a clue to selecting stories for an audience or an individual. What work might the story do? How might it change the situation? How could the story itself be adapted, for this situation, this audience, or this person? What shape must the story be given for its best work in the circumstance? It is necessary to attend to how the story is being affected by the audience. What meanings is it being given? How is it changing?

The spiritual potential of stories are carried by those qualities of narratives that give them an on-going causality and agency, that is, their ability to be active working agents. Because narratives have a capacity of activity—able to provoke, teach, heal, transgress borders, locate—they are sites of movement and flux. They display qualities of events marked by "characteristic reversals between future and past, active and passive, cause and effect, more and less, too much and not enough, already and not yet" (Deleuze, 1990, p. 8). They remain open to passage, to movement and to transformation and offer that same potential to those who engage in them.
Not so Pooh story

I had asked to tell the group of campers, all 75 of them, a collective bedtime story every night. It had become an anticipated moment in the days routine by mid-week. Late in the week, there was a crisis with one of the leaders that required him to be removed from the camp. The staff needed some time together to sort it out. I agreed that I would be all right with the 75 campers and one or two stray adults for story time. I had chosen one of the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, the one about playing Pooh sticks, to read. I began the story and made several discoveries. This audience did not know these stories or characters. This audience, being eleven to thirteen years of age had their own sense of humour. It is based on bodily functions. When Milne writes he uses Pooh's name over and over again. In the ears of this audience the name Pooh had a second and obvious meaning. They started to laugh. I started to panic. I had 75 of them for about thirty more minutes. They were hearing a different story than I thought I was reading and I knew it could get a lot worse before it got better if I did not handle it well. I tried to negotiate. "Should I read a different story?" "NO!" I tried to explain that Pooh was the character's name. "Keep going!!" I did. I decided that with all the tension in the air around the staff incident, I would. I could not imagine stopping and knowing what to do with all of them in their elevated state. I found my eyes racing ahead of my mouth to see what lines could be altered, if necessary. I kept worrying that the adults who would shortly be returning to the patio
might panic when they realized how close to being out of control this group was. I kept thinking about what was ahead in the story, wondering: "Can I really read that section?" I only changed a few lines.

In the Pooh story the characters are dropping sticks off one side of a bridge into a stream and then running across to the other side to watch them emerge in a kind of slow motion race. As the characters asked each other: "What colour is yours, Pooh?" or, "Can you see mine yet?" or, "Is yours coming out yet?" this young audience roared with laughter. Even the most modest and restrained young girls were guffawing at the double meanings. I cannot tell or write this story without laughing even now. That particular evening I was not initially laughing, but I did, later. I kept going, reading the story as clearly as I could. I let them work on me and my story. We got through it, in part because the story changed and I let it. I did not try to hold them to my reading. I ended the reading with: "Here ends the reading of the story of Winnie-the-Pooh, a remarkable reading of Pooh sticks that has never happened before and will likely never be repeated again." At the end one chubby, red-faced boy, who I am sure had never heard an A. A. Milne story in his life, a boy who had led the laughter throughout came up to me and boomed: "That is the best story I have ever heard!"

On that night, in that circumstance, it was the best. It had worked a different kind of magic because they worked on it. What I had imagined as a quiet, amusing and friendly little story had become raucous, racy and overwhelmingly funny.
The tension in the air had been changed and I stopped shaking about half an hour later.

The qualities of narrative that indicate mobility and activity point to aspects of spiritual activity or expression already present in the telling and knowing. Narratives serve as a site for intrusion—including an intrusion of m(M)ystery—to happen and for the flux to be found in the midst of living. The challenge, however, is to notice what may be slight, those tiny perceptions that are over the threshold of perception—Deleuze's "differentials of perception"—that actually are effective in working on us.

Provocations, intrusions, and movements of spirit may be almost imperceptible, lost in the myriad of other stirrings and actions arising through narrative. To attend to the characteristics of narrative that bring spirituality into play requires a different sort of consciousness. The double nature of some of the characteristics of narrative, especially the reversals and complexities that allow mystery to be present and remain mysterious, "unencompassable" (Caputo 1989, p. 270) enable that consciousness.

Narratives move between that which is known and familiar, (located or situated) to either/both that which is a human commonalty (a generalized understanding) or to that which is mysterious (ineffable). Bruner, for example, notes both the situated and particular qualities of narrative—their "humanly relevant time," "generic particularity," their way of searching for "reasons," for "the intentional states behind actions" and he points out the universal nature of genres, the ambiguity of references and the "multiple" construals that are possible
in and from narrative. Sanders and Bausch note a double sense in the linking qualities of narratives. While they connect us to one another, to particular times and places, to our roots and cultures, to humanity and the world, they also engage us, through a mysterious and compelling quality, with m(M)ystery becoming opening to unknowns, to multiplicity and possibility.

There is a kind of narrative pliability or "extensibility" that is a temporal and cumulative feature, as Bruner points out, but is also a way of moving beyond the limits and thresholds of understanding and explanation. The imaginative space of narrative is not delimited. Because it is able to transgress limits, narrative has an extensive (and extensible) inner space. In a contradictory way, it is possible for the unencompassable to have space within narrative that does not confine it, or limit it. I imagine the unencompassable as temporary, as passing through, as a guest in narratives. Their pliable "inner" space resembles the personal space for the flux—the human opening for passage—traditionally known as inner space. In an imaginative way this description of the engagement of the unencompassable and the human is a relational exchange, and narrative is a site of exchange that provides room for fluidity, extensibility and for passage. Narrative serves as this kind of vessel for us.

*Inner space: the bottom of the dark*

During a meditation I recall sinking down into a room, deep down into a small room that felt like it was the bottom to me, or perhaps, of me. It was dark and reminded me of the phrase "at the bottom of the dark" from Kay Smith's poem. I realized
an oddity to this place. It had a window and beyond the window there seemed to be a light of some kind, as if there was more beyond the bottom. I was also aware of a figure beyond the window and something was said. I do not remember what words I used in reply but they were dismissive, almost sneering. The figure beyond the window shrugged and began to leave. The light began to fade and a certain panic and horror grew in me. What had I done? I began to call and plead, to claim misunderstanding, seeking forgiveness for being careless. The bell to end the meditation rang. I recall, in reporting of this event to others in the group that I was shaken, although they seemed pleased I had had such an encounter. I was not much on the idea of inner space. It is harder now to know what it might mean.

Bausch's sense that stories use an in-between kind of language invokes another double quality of narratives and narrative potential. Story language that arises in the gap or space between the concrete world of daytime, ordinary life and the slippery, evocative, associative nighttime language of dreams gives stories some of their active and resonant quality. As Benjamin notes, we are not, in narrative, being given only information but something that endures, that remains active. Story language serves as a connector between the two worlds and allows both to be active and engaged.

Stories that do not have dream world or fantastical qualities may still act as bridges for the approach of m(M)ystery. It is possible to be moved by a simple story that acts parabolically and is suggestive of
different understandings or awareness. The tale of Tanzan and Ekido is an example of a story whose simplicity is forceful and enduring, with the potential to challenge the reader to examine his/her own responses, to ask: "What am I displaying of me in my critique of another's actions?" "What does a judgment from my lips say of me?"

A story may cause a change in thresholds of perception, especially self-perception. A small shift in perception may be a moment of spiritual as well as psychological awakening. As we enter the in-between, language connections beyond ourselves become more evident. Ordinary events and circumstances take on multiple layers of meaning. Tanzan acts with an immediate generosity, outside of the formal rules, and moves on. In doing so, he displays freedom, selflessness, and kindness. Ekido keeps the rules and falls into judgment, rage, and displays a lack of freedom and far more interest in the young woman than Tanzan who had already forgotten her. The story brings into question a number of issues with a multiplicity of possible readings, including ones that are spiritual. Who is truly a monk in the story? Who acts with spiritual freedom?

The in-between quality of story language and its ability to take us beyond ourselves and the immediacy of our circumstances is part of the spiritual potential of narratives. Similarly, a multiple quality of time as local and general, present and timeless; a similar understanding of location as specific and universal, shifts narrative out of a certain terrain into an ambiguous engagement that evokes m(M)ystery and o(O)ther. The spiritual leaves its traces in these multiple possibilities. It is not accidental that a wide variety of spiritual and cultural
traditions have used story as the vessel to pass on their understanding and knowledge.

There is some potency in stories that allow them to endure, to continue to be effective and active agents of education and perception. Bausch, in particular, is optimistic about the potential of narrative to promote healing, to offer a basis of hope, to stimulate imagination, and memory, and to be a way to manage difficulty. Sanders adds that stories offer us a sense of consequence and are moral in their impact, transforming us, "educating our desires," and help us in the face of "suffering, loss and death."

It is easy to forget that a narrative begins from the situated, from the local and particular: that it is someone's story. A narrative is an account of living, an ordering of events to make sense of experience, memory, relations that have a specific human origin. That such grounded tales are so able to move beyond themselves and their originators is part of the potency of narratives. They become vessels carrying many loads, in many directions; messengers from here to there and sometimes back again.

Promises at birth:

I have a habit—it often seems intuitive to me—of telling people stories to make a point or to shift their thinking through an illustration that shows something in terms of activity and relations. Stories arise in the midst of conversations in my imagination. I do not consciously look for them but suddenly I have an urge to tell a story. As intuitive moments, these urges are occasionally appropriate and occasionally inappropriate. I have
learned to hold a story and wait. If it keeps coming up, if it stays in place, if I tremble a bit trying to dismiss or begin it, I feel like the story itself is at work on me, pushing its way into the event. Then, I hesitate to hold it back.

I have a friend, David, who is recently a new partner in a blended family, where he has become, without preparation or much experience, a parent of several adolescent children. As I have a fair amount of parenting experience, we talk about the children as he tries to understand their behaviour, his responses and choices about what to do. One of the boys is not well, in fact, has been quite sick. Miguel is a child sage. He lives rather differently, in part because of his illness and small size but also because he has a very large soul that, in moments, is old and wise. Like most early adolescents he worries about his size, fights with his siblings, is fussy about food—a particular problem because of his illness—but unlike others, Miguel saviors stillness and observes the world. He notices and tells what he notices.

David and I were talking about some turn in the on-going family crisis about Miguel and the absent father, about the conflicts over visitation and life-style. We began to link Miguel’s illness to his anger at knowing, being a watcher, that something was wrong in his parents' marriage. He saw but had no words as a child, so his body took up the pain: his rage. In listening to David, it occurred to me that Miguel was consumed by justice, or rather by injustice. He had been abandoned by his father, at least emotionally. His mother, Rose, to whom he is quite close, has had to bear far too much of the work of the children, the burden of adult choices,
parenting and so on. As we talked a very old story came to mind and would not leave me. I knew that both David and Rose had significant religious family background and so reminded him of the story of Samuel from the Bible. I told how Samuel at the age of ten had a visitation from God as a voice in the night and how he was instructed to listen. How he lay awake all night after receiving the message. How the next morning the old priest, Eli, insisted on being told the news. How the boy told Eli what G-d's message was—Eli and his family were doomed by their unfaithfulness and would be stripped of their authority and lives. I talked about the terror of being ten and knowing more than you could say. About how hard we find it to imagine that our children could know such huge things or have such insights (or, as in the story, be given them.) We mused on Miguel and his extraordinary knowledge. We wondered what news he might have for his family. I imagined this story working on David to alter his relationship with Miguel, making him seek Miguel's knowledge, or at least giving Miguel permission to voice his sense of what had happened and its implications for the adults in the family. Maybe, in Miguel's silence and watching, G-d had come and Miguel needed an adult to open a way for him to put down his terrible burden of knowing so that it would not consume his small frail body.

One evening, I was talking to Rose on the telephone and she told me that David had told her of our conversation. I assumed she would begin to talk about Miguel's special knowledge, his pain and anger but she did not. She told me that she had some difficulty in
the late stages of his pregnancy and that Miguel had been very overdue. There was some concern that he might be in distress and so there was going to be medical intervention. Her earlier pregnancies had had similar problems. She told me that she went for a long walk in her distress and climbed a quite high hill where she could see out over the whole city. Then she hesitated in her story. "When David told me the story of Samuel that you told him, I remembered Hannah." Hannah was Samuel's mother. She had been barren and her co-wife was not. She prayed to G-d to give her a son and she promised G-d that if she was delivered of a son she would dedicate him to G-d's service. That is how Samuel ended up working in the temple for the old priest Eli. Rose told me that that day on the mountain she too had prayed to G-d and promised that if she was delivered of a son she would promise him to G-d's service. "Right then," she said, "I felt my cervix start to open. That prayer opened me right up." Miguel was born that night. I had forgotten that I did that until I heard that story of Samuel again."

I was trembling on the other end of the line. Rose sounded calm. I wanted to know if she had told David. "No." Miguel? "No." "I think you should. Soon. Both of them." I was trembling because a story was at work. She had invoked a story across time and was now living it out in her way. The story was working.

When we invoke stories in our lives, they take on uncanny power, resonating in us—perhaps as archetype. This story was alive in their family. I am not concerned about the psychology: I am about the potency of the story invited into their lives; how it had
surfaced through one conversation to work a memory loose. There is no tidy end to this story. Miguel is still sick, although recovering. The promise remains hanging in the air. I don't know if Miguel has been told. Rose admits she has always felt that Miguel has a big soul, has a difference about him.

I attribute to the story a significant life of its own. Something is going on to draw that story into place for it to work. It is precisely this irruption of the story into our lives, complete with its echoes and history that I see as the flux of the spiritual at work. It is not only because this story has a religious and spiritual history in the lives of these people, as it does, but because Rose invoked the story into her life, set up a parallel line in her living. For whatever psychological or spiritual reasons the links from Rose to Hannah had some effect on her body. Other explanations of the onset of labour are possible, including the walk up the mountain side. But the question of why I chose to tell that story to David remains. Perhaps it was serendipity or coincidence. But somehow that particular story was already in the circumstance and the spirit in it was at work seeking opening: a way back to the surface. It came through me, to David, to Rose. Connections were made, between people and across time.

Rose had invoked a story twelve years ago, invited it into her life and into Miguel's. Such invitations are openings. The relations that have been invited are one concern of narraturgy. What links and patterns are already at work, through the openings of invitation and return? The process: how it happens, the synchronicity of timing are secondary to the repetition of the story and its residual significance
across time in the lives of Rose and Miguel and now, because he lives with them, David.

My practice was merely to pay attention to the story as it arose, to open it, to give it space. Caputo claims we are "the opening through which the flux resonates" (1987, p. 290). I accepted and offered the story: served as messenger.

This story has significant resonance in Rose's memory and life. It has continued working on them now that it has returned to the foreground. It continues to provoke. At my birthday this year David showed up at the door with gifts: one from him and an envelope from Rose. She wrote a poem about the story. Here are pieces of it: it has no title.

I offered my son to G-d before he was born negotiated a deal caught between fears my belly

was too big and male doctors pursued me to stick in their needles to force him out on schedule

... Now my 12 year old son sits like one who has always sat old spirit tolerating children's' games

I'd like to take back my promise I was seduced by the gold
in the silver air perched on the ledge
of transparent golden spheres
watching You reveal Yourself

dancing I couldn't help
offering everything
if You would open
my hard desperate womb Now

I watch my son suffer
he watches children play
silly games he plods
afflicted by Your lessons

I offered my son to You
long ago now
I can never have him back

The story is still working, extending itself through lives. There is some discomfort in this: questions of psychology and meaning. But my concern centers on the story, on its return in Rose's life at this critical juncture in Miguel's life, as he came so close to dying. How is it that a story can surface in this way: being the one that comes to mind, inserting itself? I am prepared to suggest that there is an element of mystery. The flux surfaces. Spirit is at work. Neither of these are explanations. It stays as mystery.

These claims have implications that lead to other kinds of thinking and understanding. This includes the realization, in the work of the three writers, of the educational potential of narrative as a way of understanding the world, as a way of teaching and being taught, as a
way transforming and being transformed by a culture. Stories and their impact are not neutral. Stories have substantial effect.

They also can be understood narraturgically, as material. I mean this in several senses. Narratives are formed or birthed by humans and become textual material, oral or written. They are offspring of the "mater"/matter of their origins. Stories, as material, are located, arise from sites and are therefore, as Serres (1991) makes clear, marked by their site and situation. Narratives are a kind of clay: a non-material material of human formation that combines noetic, imaginative, sensate, and intangible properties. They are also a current of the flux, a moving fabric, an expression of the movement and flow of lives and living. They have text(ure) and fiber that makes them a kind of human material that expresses the flux as it is and has been engaged. A story itself is a kind of substance, pliable, malleable that takes on a variety of expressions as it is told, written, remembered or expressed.

Aside: i am disturbing the normally held sense of material as substantial or solid and working to name as material that which matters: the intangibles that take effect in our lives. i am noting connections through language: material, "mater," matter, mattering. what matters is relations. relations are the material of life: giving birth to life. their materialism is not rooted in objects, commerce, or manufacturing but in the fluid joining of
living and caring. narratives account for living and are therefore closer to this mattering material and further from the substantial of objects.

The textual form of a narrative is, in one sense, an embodiment of the story. But the story is not contained by a singular form. It may multiply through a form into other forms, even into other stories. Stories not only give birth to other stories, they may also invoke into life stories that are already there but dormant. Narrative material has a generative quality. Narrative is material-in-motion: a form of flow or flux.

It remains in motion or with the potential of motion. Narrative has a potential energy which can be released in any given narrative exchange. This includes the passing of a story from one to another or from one to many but also includes the personal and inner experience of being "hit" or moved by a story. When a particular story comes to mind in the midst of a conversation, it offers itself (actively) for the circumstance at hand.

As material, narrative is also variable: it is never the same. Like Heraclitus's river the same narrative can never be entered twice, or told twice, or read twice. Each iteration is a variation in some way. Each variation is an interpretation. The familiarity of a story is not a limitation in this regard. The ability of a story to endure repetition and to remain attractive, interesting and vital through repetition is part of its unusual material quality. It is also part of its potential energy: a story retold is part of the flow: the river. At each reading or
telling there is degree of difference in the story. Like the river it is the
same river but like the river it is never the same river.

This is critical to the spiritual implications of the working of
narrative. Spirituality requires forms or vessels that allow it to remain
alive and in motion in order to be understood or known in some way.
Narrative as a form of exchange (Reid, 1992) offers a moving space as
well as being a vessel that can serve for passage and be a container. The
in-motion materiality of narrative can include the in-motion quality of
spirituality. Narrative does not require a finalization or a fixation of
spirit in order to note spirituality or to express it. Spirituality can be in
the motion or movement of the narrative and in its potential to be in
motion again. Narrative can serve as a vessel of passage that allows
what is expressed through movement to retain that potential.
Narrative displays a vascular quality as a site of passage. There is some
capacity in narrative for a life-force to be passed on. As Benjamin
(1968) points out stories have a timeless capacity to release their
potential life-energy whenever they are heard or told. They retain, like
blood vessels, the ability to pass on their life-blood. This inner vitality
of a narrative is a spiritual potential or quality.

a set of wonderings to be explored:

◊ is narrative a construct that is built over the flux to
keep it out, to keep it hidden? or are narratives attempts to
let the flux back in, to provide it openings through the
covering already in place? is narrative, like the self, a
construct that can be used either way as block or entrance?
is the story transcendent of the form the narrative is given (which implies the story exists apart from its embodied form and merely "lives" in the vessel constructed) or is the form generative of the transience of the narrative? (in which the act of forming a narrative structure liberates the motion and passing of the story.) transcendent—transient: the story as bridge, climbing over or the story as temporary and passing, as nomad (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1986)?

is there a relationship in which, via the mathematics of physics in which we claim that matter is embodied energy as in $E = mc^2$ (where "c" is the speed of light and constant), that it is possible to consider narrative as a way of embodying spirit $S = nx.x$ (where "x" is the flux or mystery—the equivalent of the speed of light as a material reality—and "n" is the narrative—the material that solidifies spirit in a temporary form? is it possible to think of the same kind of tension of forms and relationships in which spirit is like energy held into shapes by forces and relationships that give us physical materiality and that there is also then a less substantial (in physical terms) but no less significant spiritual materiality that takes material form as narratives?

does story have a shape or form outside of expression? or is it that once expressed in a form, a narrative is in motion and is at work by being in circulation, by being part of the form-and-thought-flux that is there? perhaps narratives are a part of the substance of the flux, and once set in motion become additive to the flux as well as
articulations of the mystery and unknown of the movement of life and toward life that we live in and through, on and around?

◊ perhaps narrative becomes, as substance, a way of working on ourselves by releasing into our thinking, our imagination and our souls an irritant, a foreign substance, o(O)ther: to work at re-shaping us; to work at transformation; to unsettle and provoke our assumptions; to take Bruner's troubling into ourselves and let it have its way or at least let it collide with our resistances?

Narrative also has the facility to be modest; that is, narrative makes an offer but, in and of itself, makes no demands. Its potency, or its embrace, depends entirely on it being welcomed and received. I can hear or read a narrative, take it one way and then, on a return to it, discover it has quite a different kind of impact that was there all the time but awaited a re-vision in my perspective to let itself be known in this way. Narrative is, in this sense, neither aggressive nor forceful.

This same quality of narrative can be described as indirectness. This is, I think, an educational benefit of narrative, as well as a difficulty. Because it offers and cannot demand, narrative requires opening and response for its effectiveness. Narrative can be subtle and imply lessons, understanding, and insights that require the attention of the receiver. The difficulty is that narrative may not succeed. It provides no pedagogical certainty. The lessons inherent in one story or another may be ignored or dismissed. Narrative is a gentle and indirect way to instruct and to understand. Narrative, as a pedagogical act, is
not about the success of the pedagogical reach as much as it is about an
exchange that depends on pedagogical readiness. Reaching through
narrative requires readiness in the audience. Narraturgy is oriented to
relations and exchange and not to mastery and control.

*Being taught*

I serve on a committee for the World Council of Churches in
Canada that meets once or twice a year in support of grass roots
community organizations and activities. The committee
membership is very diverse, representing a variety of racial and
cultural groups in Canada. I have become quite fond of a First
Nation's woman who is in the process of becoming a healing
elder. She has some unusual perceptions and so I tell her
things. She responds in her own way.

I told her a long complicated dream I had had in which there
were some elephants being herded like cattle into a barn and
being penned in tiers. I remember three tiers with odd holes
in the front floor to trap the elephants' feet so they could not
leave their pens. I was there among them in a stall. One of the
herders was beside me talking, gesturing. I reached out, picked
up a gun that was lying on the ground and gave it to him.
Then I realized I had done it with my trunk. I was to be the
first elephant slaughtered. The dream ended after the shot
was fired into my head behind my ear. I felt the life draining
from me as I awoke.

She listened to my dream and then asked me a few odd
questions, including whether my neck hurt. She did not say
very much about it. I was troubled by it and several times over the next days I made some comment about the dream and asked her for an interpretation.

We were in a car being driven to meet with a group of immigrant women serving as domestics in Canadian homes who were being exploited by their employers. She was in the front seat. I was in the back and asked again about my dream. She did not answer. She then told me she had a story to tell me. I said that would be fine.

She talked about when she was younger and had had an elder appointed to teach her. She told how she would go to this man's home and wait, sometimes for days before he would say anything to her. He would work in his yard cutting wood or sharpening his tools. She would watch and wonder why she was there. She talked about waiting, about having to wait, about the elder knowing when it was best to teach her.

I was very quiet and thanked her for her story. I did not ask any more about my dream.

I had learned two lessons: one about waiting and one about how to teach. She did not tell me to be patient. She told me, showed me, what patience was like, by speaking of herself. I had to choose to hear the lesson as about me. No one had ever chided me so gently, taught me so indirectly, so powerfully.

If Bruner is right and narrative is one of the ways we construe the world, it is important to pay attention to the way it does work. Perhaps the lack of understanding acquired through the indirect potential of
narrative contributes to the hardness, that is, the severity, of ways of knowing, teaching and learning. To want "the facts" or data, to be interested in hard evidence and proofs is useful and has been successful but it does not leave much space for implication, for coming to things gradually and indirectly. Nor does it admit that this quality of narrative is critical in learning of things that can only be construed narratively, that may be inaccessible to an evidential approach, that are understood only in peripheral glances and perceptions (Bateson, 1994).

Western culture has been biased to evidentiary based understanding and learning. As Zwicky (1992) points out there may be other kinds of clarity that are not ratio-logically based, like her suggestion of resonance. Things may be true because of how they resonate: sounding in harmony. She calls such thinking lyric philosophy. Some understandings may rest on other significations. Bruner's idea of construal opens options for other kinds of thinking that he locates in narrative. I am suggesting that part of the working quality of narrative—its modest, indirect potential—offers a different kind of understanding and lead to different kinds of insights and knowledge.

Again, this seems important in understanding narrative as a site for attending to spirituality. As spirituality is a kind of exchange and connectedness dependent on relations, the tentative indirect quality of narrative offers opportunity for response that is neither forced nor dominating. Narrative offers a form and process that is parabolic of the form and process of spiritual engagement and relations. If "mystery" is to be expressed and if it represents, as Caputo suggests "original difficulty" or as Bruner posits "trouble" then part of the narrative
process is the potential for interruption and disturbance. "Staying open to the mystery" may be overwhelming but narrative offers a way for the forcefulness of mystery, trouble, and difficulty to be expressed and yet be dependent on opening, acceptance, and receptivity to become active and draw close.

The indirect and modest quality of narrative is a way of leaving space for the engagement to be taken up or left, to be embraced or resisted. Narratives offer a way of creating openings and possibilities. The spiritual depends on openings being offered.

I may hear and choose not to hear. I may be unable to accept the disturbance and what is at stake in it. Narrative is not a form of necessity or certainty in this regard. Consequently narrative offers a different kind of opportunity for education, for teaching without insistence, for teaching in a way that bears in mind some of Bausch's narrative characteristics: facing difficulty or loss, providing escape, encouraging hope, so that they become active in learning-teaching exchanges.

This indirect, open-ended understanding of the working of narrative contributes to the spiritual potential of narrative. I am suggesting again a parallel to education, to reaching and readiness that is a part of living spiritually, of being open. Narratives offer an attitudinal space that coincides with the spiritual: gentle, open, patient, ready, discreet, indirect, willing.

*a set of wonderings to be explored:*

◊ if narrative is so delicate in approach, how might its effectiveness be recognized? is the only response to the
delicacy of story another story? does the delicacy disguise a persistence and strength? am i overlapping my understanding of the qualities of narrative and my sense of spirituality? is there some connection between the delicacy and persistence of both narrative and spirituality?

◊ are there learners whose cultural or personal thinking are more open to a narrative educational process? how different is their perception and understanding if that is so? what is it like to think of the world from narrative and account and not from evidence and fact?

◊ would a narrative-based education produce a different kind of culture? what kind? what advantages and disadvantages would it have?

◊ is there a problem of "presence" lingering in this way of thinking? is this a turn towards a metaphysical reading of spirituality in narrative as a presence or at least as on-going present? am i also treating mystery as a metaphysical presence? how can i contend with the currency of flux without always being slightly entangled in something persistent and present? when does something become someone if spirituality is relational?

I want to return to a quality that contributes to narrative's double ability to work on and to be worked: its temporal fluidity. Sanders, Bruner and Bausch each have some suggestions about temporality in their lists. Sanders suggests that stories help us "to dwell in time." He is clear about stories moving across time, about how
stories order events and memory. Bruner makes a similar point about "humanly relevant actions that are not clock bound." Bausch speaks of the language of stories in terms of daytime-nighttime differences. Stories, rooted in the specifics of place and time, are elastic or extensive reaching out of their own time and place to speak. The time within stories, based on dream space language, allows possibilities of non-linear time and experience. Time escapes regimentation and fluctuates to the extent of the event. A few seconds of clock time may be narratively immense and rich: long and full.

The elasticity of time is a liberation from the necessity of order and measurement and approximates something of experienced time. Linear time continues to be the physical reality of living but narrative or story-time has different qualities and properties. There is an elusive quality of time that is important for our way of experiencing that which is unknown, overwhelming, or different. This quality of time, however, grows out of being attached and rooted in a time and place. Time, in narrative takes a double, even multiple quality. The past can be present and so can the future in narrative imagination and text. What is outside of time can be temporarily expressed within time's limits. This temporal extensibility is also a quality that allows narrative to be worked and shaped, to endure and remain active. As well, this quality of time gives us access to thinking and understanding that measurement may prevent us from noticing.

Narrative time can change not only how we see the world but can change the duration of that seeing. Time stretches or shrinks. We can move in and out of time: being out-of-step or being without any necessity of being in-step with the measured flow of time.
The implications of non-linear and flexible time frames are significant for a consideration of spirituality. The multiple nature of time as cyclical, linear, reversible, non-reversible is a matter of some discourse (see Griffin, 1986) and has some bearing on our ability to think of m(M)ystery, o(O)therness and the spiritual. Understandings of the eternal that have arisen in a number of spiritual/religious traditions suggests that an extensive non-time possibility is one response to the framing by time.

The pliability of narrative and narrative time is one way of playing with the possibilities of other times (o(O)ther time). Narrative is one place where time can be engaged in imaginative, speculative, and open-ended ways. The concepts that we use to understand the current of time can be troubled. Before and after become interpretive rather than definitive. In the space opened in time it is possible for influence to go in both directions. Perhaps the current necessity of a circumstance or outcome required certain conditions and choices in the past, rather than the past choices determining the current circumstance or outcome. The future has a way of catching up the past and changing its meaning as it returns it to the present different than it has been and perhaps different than it will be.

Cynthia Chambers (in press) in her paper "Love Medicine" gives an account of the work of narrative as a healing journey in which re-writing is a form of re-visioning both the text and her own life. She claims in the abstract that the paper "attempts to root out, and point the way towards, a more transformative pedagogy through writing and facing the stories which shape us, and with which we shape ourselves." This is a description of narraturgical practice which is developed in her
paper. Her understanding of her own life is transformed as she writes and rewrites a story called "Hunting." She finds herself "breeding a tale worth telling from a memoir worth forgetting. . .tending to them in a way which would create something new and bearable from what was remembered, in both mind and body, as old and unbearable." The story does not remain set and locked in the past but is re-worked and transformed. She calls this "love medicine"—a spiritual practice through narrative.

The act of re-remembering and re-creating memories as text can be a love medicine which compels us to create ourselves anew, to move beyond the limits of our own stories and poems, and to be bound together with the words and lives of others. . .It can be a powerful love medicine for myself, for students, teachers, and colleagues; a medicine badly needed to heal the "wounding of the spirit" (Locust, 1988) from which we seem to be suffering as cultures, families and individuals.

The pliability that is offered to us through this re-working of time, expressed in re-written and re-understood memories is a form of liberation. It is not an abandonment of time. We remain rooted in linear time-based experience. Narrative offers openings into other kinds of construals and perceptions. A window out-of-time is one opening that narrative may work for us, allowing us occasion and room to re-think and revise. That time takes on an elusive quality is the significance of this aspect of narrative materiality.

In order for human understanding to consider mystery and the difficulty of the flux it is helpful to have, as in narrative, a place of conceptual play. It is as if the pliability of narrative material is a form
for trying out impossible ideas and giving them structure or conversely removing the structures that would ordinarily contain us. Serres (1995c) uses the idea of a hanging mobile structure to illustrate how events and people who come from very different places in time may actually, when a certain breeze blows, be very close to one another, with something to say to one another, something to teach and something to learn. Narrative facilitates ancients and moderns being together and relating to one another. Narrative facilitates a re-thinking of our lives and the connections through them, to memories, experiences, and to others. The aboriginal custom of concluding a story by saying: "All my relations" illustrates a sense of narrative across time. The story is told to an audience that includes all the story-teller's relations, across the generations, and it is also told in respect of all the connections that the teller has to the world.

Such de-structuring of time, within an imaginative but ordered form and repeatable through telling, reading, and remembering does offer an opening for consideration of difficulty, ambiguity, and m(M)ystery. This is a further extension of the pliable, flexible nature of narrative materiality that allows for what is normally outside of consideration to be within the realm of possibility. As Bausch (1984) notes narrative gives us either a way out of difficulty through escape or a way to meet the impossible through the distancing of narrative and through identifying with characters in difficulty (also Coles, 1989). Narrative space is open to m(M)ystery, to ambiguity and passion. Here the forbiddens can be offered, considered, faced, avoided, engaged, delayed, embraced. Narrative provides a space for testing limits, for
considering options and for thinking through actions, implications and
difficulty (Fowler, 1997).

The geography of narrative space is as pliable as the time
signatures and formulations are. There are no unknown landscapes or
unexpressed terrains. What can be imagined can be expressed in
narrative format. There are no limits to the rules that can be broken to
make the dead live, characters transform and become other creatures.
Landscapes open and close. The world of thought can become a solid
terrain while the solid can evaporate under imaginative conditions.

Because of this degree of openness—because of the gaps, the
alternate passages, the endless possibilities that narratives provides in
time and space—they become sites for the elusive and difficult
engagement with spirituality. Although it sounds odd and even
illogical, it is possible to say that narratives provide spaces of residence
pliable and open enough for the unencompassable—but not to keep it
or contain it (in the sense of holding). The unencompassable can pass
through. A narrative becomes a vessel of passage in the third sense of
being a blood vessel. The spiritual may take passage in narrative, may
be in narrative passages. A narrative is susceptible to m(M)ystery and
to an irruption of the flux through the skin. It has the capability to
admit into our midst what is normally occluded. It does so discretely,
indirectly. Its form and process are unobtrusive. Its manner is
inclusive and generous. All of the fixed elements of the physical
material world are pliable and alterable in the narrative process and
therefore can admit what the material normally covers and occludes.
Time loses its mastery of ordering. Details and events are offered in the
order that makes the story's own sensibility. Landscapes can be sites of
sacred encounters as easily as sites of weather or mundane events. Animals may speak. Spirits may become visible as angels have been in stories. The border between the sensible world of awake and the uncertain world of dreams may lose its clarity. Similarly, the border between the sensible material world of logic and the uncertain world of the spiritual may also lose its hard edges; things may cross over, become confused. There are passages and possible border crossings.

These are the openings and options that make narrative a potential place of residence for spirituality; that allow for the movement in and out, the discrete and subtle coming and going of the spiritual; that give the flux a possible way to intrude and not be cornered, encased and sealed.

*a set of wonderings to be explored:*

◊ are there degrees of spiritual inclusion in a narrative?—a more or less spiritual? a not spiritual-at-all story?

◊ how does a narrative with spiritual potential read or act differently than a narrative that is not spiritually informed?

◊ i have worked to locate spirituality in narrative—what is the working of spirituality through narrative? how is this played out?

◊ what work does the spiritual do through story that also leaves traces or demonstrates qualities?

I conclude this chapter aware that I have raised a number of questions that are important for my work and for understanding the interplay of spirituality, narrative and humans. I have concentrated
my attention here on considering narrative as a site for tracing and engaging spirituality; as a possible temporary residence for spirituality, especially spirituality understood as flux, as lively and moving. I am claiming that narrative has a facility and space for spiritual events; that its narraturgical qualities make it susceptible and suitable for an educational engagement with the spiritual. Narrative is not only a pliable material (passive, willing, receptive, discreet) but it also works on us (as active agent, as source of motion and e-motion). I turn to further working on stories, to their work on me and through me.
Eighth Chapter Prelude

I stay now with the work of stories, coming to an end in making this text. I am reluctant to conclude and continue to suggest, to posit, to reach toward the unknowing in my life, in the midst of my learning. I am moving toward be/com/ing that is a way of life.

The task of re-conceptualization goes on, as does the work of philosophy, of loving to learn and reaching to understand. I am seeking to hear through the stories and their telling my own story, my own journey: asking that it be teacher, that I be student. I remain hopeful of learning but realistic of difficulty, of the shadow and darkness that is also the place of learning, the site of education. Learning, living, writing, reading, inquiry go in the midst of difficulty and darkness, in the midst of understanding, discovery, and possibility. Spirituality occurs where life is, as does education. Stories arise from the midst of living. There are questions remaining. There is more to be learned.
Chapter 8
Further Working: Toward Opening

This book is an illusion. It pretends to have a definite beginning and a distinct conclusion to show the way from one to the other. It claims to be able to steer its way through the flux, which is why Heidegger preferred to speak of detours, dead ends, and forest trails. This book has aimed at de-limiting pretentions. And so it can claim here only to end, not to conclude. We do not aim at a conclusion but an opening. We do not seek a closure but an opening up.

John D. Caputo, Radical Hermeneutics

The more I know of myself, the more I recognize that nothing human is foreign to me. In the depth of each man's biography lies the story of all men (sic).

Sam Keen. To a Dancing God

The way that we become re-worked by life or by stories is not always a result of our own action or our own strength. Transformation often requires a reversal of our assumptions about how to achieve. The action that determines a process of transformation may arise beyond me. To accept that action requires an openness of response.

To assume that stories have a working potential is to credit them with an active force. If stories have a potential for movement—to cause to happen, to move me—their movement may be toward me. A story may act on me and the challenge, for me, is to be responsive, to let it in, to provide an opening or a way for the story that approaches to deliver its message.

To be responsive requires a different kind of work and practice. To be willing, open, and attentive to stories—receiving them, offering
them—is work that is like the spiritual in its form and in its practice, requiring an attitude of willingness, hospitality, and attentiveness. The work of stories is not through mastery or strength. The work is to stop working: to allow the coming in.

The work that a story does occurs in different ways and takes on several forms. Stories serve to make links that extend across time and between people, forming friendships, community, and commonality. Stories are messengers or circuits carrying messages that re-organize bodies and their environment, making connections, breaking them. Stories set things in motion by being active, being part of transformation, making links. They give us a way of being in dialogue with ourselves and with others. Stories are a way of struggling with ourselves, of coming to know who we are through hearing a dialogue that includes our own story: a story that, when heard, may set us free, may be transformative.

But stories are also a means of philosophy. As Serres (1997) points out: "Aristotle said it excellently: 'The philosopher as such, tells a story as well,' but added, 'the one who tells a story, in some sense reveals himself to be a philosopher'" (p. 166).

Philosophy, as Hadot has noted, is a form of spiritual exercise. The work is transformative and difficult:

... for the same thing happens in every spiritual exercise: we must let ourselves be changed in our point of view, attitudes, and convictions. This means that we must dialogue with ourselves and hence we must do battle with ourselves. (Hadot, 1995, p. 91)
Stories become a form of spiritual exercise, a way of opening us to changes in attitude, point of view, and convictions. It may be that to tell stories well, to work at them and to let them work on us is a way to do the work of spiritual exercises. It is to be working at change through attentiveness, through willingness, through facing death, through being connected. Hadot notes the deliberate work of the ancient philosophers in their labor of transformation through daily practice. To acknowledge the potential of stories to be at work in us and through us is to link the two traditions, to claim story-work as spiritual practice: as philosophy.

Such an understanding may restore a consciousness of the spiritual in everyday practice. Storytelling would become one way, in the work of living, of being spiritual. To engage in the work and working of stories may already be a form of spiritual practice, of letting in, of being attentive, open, willing.

To tell stories and to engage in their working, as narraturgy becomes a way of doing philosophy—as a way of life. I am, in this work becoming a philosopher, becoming spiritual in another way. I turn to a story about hearing my own story

**On hearing your own story**

This story comes from Beldan Lane, via William Bausch (1984). I write my own version of it because it has been working on me and has changed for me and changed me. It has come up several times in my life. I have told versions of it to several groups and once to a friend who is on a life-time spiritual quest and beginning to return to the stories of his own heritage. I remember listening to him talk and
having this story come to mind. I recall trying to hold it back, not wanting to be intrusive and concerned that it was not appropriate for me to talk, but more appropriate to listen. The story had it's way with me in the end and I told it. It has had echoes for both of us.

*The Baal Shem Tov's Disciple*

In an old Jewish community, a famous teacher and rabbi, Baal Shem Tov, is dying. His students and disciples are gathered around him as he dies. He is handing out all of the tasks of his work to members of his community so that his work can be carried on in his name. The last one in line comes in and is disappointed in the job he is given. His mission is to wander around Europe to tell the stories he had heard from the Master. This does not seem important. But the Baal Shem Tov makes him a promise: "One day your job will be finished. You will know when you are done and no longer have to tell the stories. Then you can make whatever fortune you can with your time and energy and live out your life in ease."

So he sets about his duty to the Master, a bit reluctantly, telling Baal Shem Tov stories to those who will listen. He survives as he wanders with the stories. But always he is wondering if the time is up. The weeks become months, which in turn become years. One day he hears something. A nobleman in Italy is seeking those who knew the Baal Shem Tov. He wants to hear Baal Shem Tov's stories. The duke will pay one gold ducat for every story he hears. The poor disciple is delighted at his good fortune. All these stories in his head are now worth something. He will be a rich man.
He sets out for Italy at once and makes his way to the Duke's home. He is warmly welcomed and the Duke insists that before he tells his first story he should eat and rest for the night. The disciple agrees and enjoys a fine meal, fine linen, and a good rest. In the morning he sits with the Duke and to his horror he cannot remember a single story. They are gone. His head is empty. He is mortified but the Duke is kind, offering excuses of a long journey and asks him to stay another day.

On the third morning the disciple is deeply ashamed. He had come full of stories and cannot remember a single one. He can no longer accept the Duke's hospitality. He apologizes as he prepares to leave. He is afraid the duke will think him an impostor. And then he remembers one story, one event that will show that he was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov. He turns to the Duke and tells this story.

Many years before the Baal Shem Tov had come to me in a great rush and ordered me to get the horses ready—I worked in the stables then. We were to ride to Constantinople that very day. I was horrified. It was the Christians' Easter festival. It was not safe for Jews in the city during Christian Holy Week. The Christians there had processions at Easter, shouting "Christ killer" at passing Jews. Every year they killed one Jew in reparation for Christ's death. The Baal Shem Tov was determined. We went and rode into the city and right through to the Jewish quarter. I was very nervous. The houses in the quarter were all closed and shuttered. The shops were shut. All
the Jews were huddled inside waiting for the festival to end and safety to return. The Baal Shem Tov rode up to a house, went in and ordered all the windows opened. He stood in full view overlooking the street. The Christian procession, lead by the bishop arrayed like a prince in all his gold vestments, wearing his great silver miter and carrying his bejeweled staff, approached. Baal Shem Tov ordered me to go to the bishop and say: "The Baal Shem Tov wants to see you."

Was he out of his mind? Did he want one of us to die? I pleaded not to be sent out.

"Go."

I went and approached the bishop. When I told him the Baal Shem Tov would speak with him, he turned quite pale. He seemed frightened. He followed me to the house and spent some hours alone with the Baal Shem Tov. As soon as they emerged I was ordered to ready the horses and we left. Immediately.

The disciple was now ready to leave, relieved he had remembered one story. He was about to apologize for its unimportance when he noticed to his great surprise that the Duke was weeping. His story had had some powerful impact.

"Oh good disciple, your story has just saved my soul. You see, I was there that day. I was that bishop. I had come from a long line of great rabbi's and in the midst of the time of persecution I converted to Christianity, and, giving up my faith, I took up theirs. They were glad to welcome me and promoted me from one office to
another until I was made bishop and clothed in the finery you saw. I even went along with the annual killing of one Jew. But the night before that festival procession I had a terrible dream of the Day of Judgment and the danger to my soul. So when you came the very next day and said the Baal Shem Tov wanted to speak with me, I had to go with you. I knew I did.

"We talked for those three hours and he told me that there still might be some hope for my soul. He told me to sell my goods and retire on what was left. He urged me to lead a life of good deeds and holiness. There might still be some hope. His last words to me were this: 'When a man comes to you and tells you your own story you will know your sins are forgiven.'

"So for years I have been seeking stories from the Baal Shem Tov. I recognized you immediately when you came to my door and I was so glad to see you. But when I realized all your stories had been taken from you, I thought it was G-d's judgment. That is why I wanted you to stay. I kept hoping you would have a story for me. And then you did. You remembered the one story I longed to hear. My story. I know now that the Baal Shem Tov has interceded on my behalf and that G-d has forgiven my sins. Thank you."

And the disciple left to begin his life of ease.

In this story and in the story within the story, there are many things for me. I am taken by the way in which there is one story that must be told and that all the others are lost. Part of the work with stories is coming to the right story, to the one that must be told. The
poor disciple sees his bank of stories turning into money and they are
gone: all of them. And when he has given up on them, only one comes
back and not one he has told before. He tells a story that is also his
own story and so one story frees two men. The one who tells his own
story is freed of his task of telling stories. The one who hears his own
story is freed of his guilt and shame and is restored by the healing the
story brings. He is relieved through forgiveness, through hearing his
own story. But he could not ask for his own story. He had to wait for it
to come to him. The story that would bring him healing could not
come out of his own demands, his own making, only out of his
willingness and waiting. For a story to have a healing capacity it has to
have a different kind of strength in its fiber.

Stories, particularly healing stories, depend on the amount of the
self—the gristle, blood, and bone—that the story teller is willing to
put into them. Not all story is medicine. Generally a story is not
medicine unless it has caused the teller to laugh or weep. It is
not medicine unless it causes the teller to feel suddenly stabbed
or invigorated with some odd fiery notion, unless it forces from
them a spontaneous roar of recognition, or a long cry of angst. It
is not medicine unless it causes the teller to feel the familiar
thump of a set of words, sounds or images dropping down into or
piercing his or her own psychic trove, and thereby watering or
flooding or satiating in a way she or he has been yearning for.
(Estés, in Simpkinson & Simpkinson, 1993, p. 80)

But also the healing story must cause the hearer to laugh or weep,
to feel stabbed or anguished. The story must satiate the hearer to heal
them. Both the teller and the hearer must be yearning. And the Duke
depends for his healing on the labour of the teller. The poor disciple
can only tell a healing story when he is bereft of all other stories, only when he himself is at risk, trembling, awkward. The story that comes in the critical moment is not a story of ease or distraction.

When I told this story to my friend I felt I was telling him a version of his own story. He too had wandered. He too was yearning. He was returning to a place, to a site of origins with a need for an opening, for being embraced. The story, as a story of return, of forgiveness, provided an example for him: a way in, a freedom to return.

Let me turn the story another way. As stories work on us, they have a way of nesting in us the way they nest one inside the other, extending themselves through connections by being one inside another. I tell the story of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciple who is telling stories, who tells a story to a man who is waiting to hear his own story told. I tell this story to a man who is beginning a journey towards his own story, the stories of his tradition and culture. I tell the story because it comes to me to be told. The disciple tells the story to the Duke because it comes to him as the only story to be told.

I cannot explain the generative quality that selects a story in this way. I treat it as a kind of knowing that is a mystery for me. Yes, I know the story. I can describe why it seemed appropriate. But I cannot understand why this story, of the many that I know, came to me in that moment. Its potency for my friend was not clear to me until I was in the middle of it—and then afterwards—aware of the links it might have. The disciple is also oblivious to the ideal quality of the story that he tells. The story itself has some say in its telling, in its appearing. There is some quality of spirit, of the flux which surfaces that story to
me in that moment. I become the actor in the *persona* mask giving voice to what has been given to tell. I become the wandering disciple who can only tell one story.

The disciple is set also free in telling his own story. The spirit is not singular in its influence and impact. When I told this story, it also changed me. I was not alone with my friend when I told him this story. There was a third person there who said: "This story is important for you. I hope it is going to appear in your writing." That story is also teaching me about story telling, about being attentive, about the rigorous demands of healing stories.

Being attentive to what arises is part of the discipline of a spiritual life. And so this story and the story of telling it appears. It appears because I have realized that one challenge in practicing spirituality in the midst of inquiry is the task of telling my own story: listening to what comes up and must be told. I return to 'necessity' remembering that hidden in necessity is an obligation to relations. There is a telling I must do to express the spirituality of my inquiry. This story of stories nested one inside another, of having to tell one's own story takes me beyond a certain limit.

I cannot withhold from the inquiry into spirituality and education the stories that move me, that have moved me. I acknowledge that narratives are working on me, in me and through me. I become implicated in learning to tell stories that tell of my journey. I learn to let things arise: to let the stories come up. To tell them even as they make me uncomfortable. I edge away from amusement and entertainment. I become evidence of how spirit works in narrative and through narrative.
Estés (in Simpkinson and Simpkinson, 1993) describes this experience as she writes of the tradition of stories being passed on as a "mysterious process," of how stories are planted as "seeds" and come to life, come to the surface through the teller.

Story as medicine is different from story told for amusement only. Story as medicine drums itself up through the teller's bones. It comes fluttering through the dark unbidden. . . . Storytelling is bringing up, hauling up; it is not an idle practice.(p. 79)

The stories arise: the stories must be dredged up. It appears to be contradictory. This is not customary logic. It is the doubling that Deleuze (1990) identifies in his reading of Alice in Wonderland. It is the active-passive movement of the event. As a story teller there are two tasks. Letting go by opening is one. This is the work of be/com/ing ready, of being willing, of trusting the voice that arises and pushes in. The other is working to give the story space, to render it as it needs to be given; working to offer oneself through the story: exposed and at risk. It is working to make connections, relations. It is the work of insuring a degree of integrity in the story, in its time and moment. It is acknowledging that stories cause change.

But there is a third matter. Relating: refero . . . relatus includes to spit up, to vomit, to bring up. Stories may force themselves up from beneath, as purging, as release of discomfort, as evidence of dis-ease. This too is work: a different work.

Robert Coles (1989) tells of treating a patient he did not like and discovering that they shared an interest in Tolstoy stories. Sharing those stories forced Coles, the professional, to be transformed by
learning to establish a relation with a man he did not like, who knew his doctor did not like him and who dared to reach across and offer himself to Coles. Coles admits:

Hadn't the time come, I asked myself at last, for me to give this one "difficult" patient the benefit of the doubt, and thus spare myself any further acts of callousness, any further self-inflicted humiliation. (p. 173)

Coles writes a note to his patient, marking his own transformation of attitude, losing his belligerence:

"Please . . . know that I admire your courage as you take on the rehabilitation [which had just begun in earnest] and if I can be of any help, anytime, let me know." Then I'd added (our bond): "I love Tolstoy, and I love seeing you read his stories." (p. 173)

The two men are linked by Tolstoy's stories in a growing friendship, making a new relation. The patient's departing gift to Coles is a biography of Tolstoy. Here is another spiritual quality in story: making relations. But for educators, including doctors, the challenge of the relation making potential of stories is that they do not provide one-way actions. The stories may change the educator, the teacher, the doctor, the researcher. A story may work on me. I can, as I have done with the Baal Shem Tov story, re-work it. I can tell it so that it can work on others. But, the third voice remains: this story is important for me. It is rooted in my blood and bones. It is telling me something: healing comes in hearing your own story. To be/come a story-teller is to live with the risk of telling one's own story and to hear it at the same
time. To risk healing may seem another contradiction but healing is a form of change, a process of transformation. It is not always easy. There is no immunity in narrative. The spiritual potential of story may work it’s own "magic." It may cause the teller to be changed.

Stories provide a spiritual space: a space for spiritual energy to be released. They provide a medium that can carry spirit. Stories are fluxes with a capacity to carry spiritual knowledge, energy, insight, and thoughtfulness within them. They are vessels in all the senses that I have used the word. Most critically, for me, they are blood vessels, able to pass on some of the spiritual lifeblood of people, of communities and of traditions. They remain pliable, workable and vital. Stories do not fix the spirit in place in their passage(s). The spiritual can stay mobile and vital in the narrative vessel. Spirit is not subject to exactness, to precision, to being cut off or measured in narratives. It retains its potential and extensibility because narratives are of a like form: potential and extensible.

I have come, in narraturgy, to understand the spiritual potential of narrative, its work of relations, of being connective; its transformative qualities; its extension across time and space; its way of being potential, of holding back, of being ready. But these are not qualities out there, beyond me. They are also actions that catch me up in the stories. These potentials are immanent and inherent in stories in me. As the spiritual is inherent and immanent in me. The coincidence of narrative and spiritual qualities is significant.
Pieces left

There are several tasks to accomplish before the text can be halted. One is to pay some attention to implications: to wonder about spirituality as practice, as educational possibility. Another is to wonder about what I have done and become through this process. Another is to remember the difficulties that will not disappear.

Being a creature of contradictory inclinations, being in the midst of a journey of inquiry, I live, think, feel, and play with a degree of wonder: endless questions, constant amazement but also with a degree of ambiguity: many doubts, many uncertainties.

Educational possibility

_traces from a journal_

_on teaching/learning_

many things come together,

woven in traces, threads and streams

making a flowing chord (cord)

—movement and flow as sounding and resonance.

it echoes past into presence

it rings the future close to now

as the shape of the way forward: the next step.

to celebrate the mystery of hospitable space
to acknowledge the giving

within the opening made
to receive the grace of stories offered,

stories from close to the bottom of the dark
words of home drifting
through these lines: dreams of familiar spaces
woven in
to the opening that is life.
a vision of home
when home is given intensely
for a time: a compact season of engagement
all seasons: summers of fullness
winters of death
times of shedding, falling, letting go
days of blossoms being born
in the hot buzz of spring days
squeezed into a few days.
there is hoping
to become new, working
towards listening, towards be/coming
makers of hospitable space.

I imagine that education occurs and is spiritual in quality in
such a space. I imagine that learning and teaching is an exchange in
which the generosity of space given becomes a place where stories can
be told, where they are heard and cherished. I imagine that education
occurs and is spiritual when the intensity of exchange allows for the
whole range of human possibility. It is necessary not to omit difficulty
and pain. It is necessary to include laughter and play. Birth and
death are welcome. No history, no journey, no struggle is excluded or
occluded. I imagine that education is spiritual when those working
together know that these moments are temporary, that they will pass, that they are to be let go, that they require responses: thankfulness, care, humility, patience.

I imagine that education is happening and is spiritual when the learning and teaching are formed by an exchange of reaching and readiness in a work of mutual respect. Both the teacher and the learner can come to their own narrative in such a way as to welcome it as it is, as they are in it and thus find that they are welcomed as they are. The narratives that are being lived become generous enough to include those narratives that have not been livable. Each story can be heard in a way that allows it to become present and be part of moving forward: repeating forward in the making of life, into the next moment.

I imagine that education occurs and is spiritual when it is possible to welcome and accompany one another in and through difficulty, in and through celebration, in and through difference. I imagine an experience that is moving and unsettled, sometimes unsettling. I imagine education is spiritual when wonder is present in all its forms, when the space of learning and teaching is open to possibility. The space stays open for whatever needs to come in.

I am not imagining a particular curriculum but a way of teaching, a way of learning that is intentionally open, is intentional in wonder, in inquiry, in amazement. I imagine a way of teaching and learning in which the difficult work of be/com/ing is paid attention. Such a way of being recognizes that teacher and learner are in the midst of be/com/ing in the midst of learning and teaching. There will be respect for acquiring and owning of voice, personal authority. There will be acknowledgment of insight, of the work of identity. There will be care
taken to assure that the character and understanding that comes to each experience of learning and teaching is respected. Who is this person? What do they already know? What is their sense of who they are and who they are to be/come? What insight do they bring to the educational exchange? What understanding do they have of their community, its difficulties, strengths, problems?

Not forgetting the darkness

But I do not want to forget the darkness, the difficult place of darkness that is so close. It has touched me. It has surfaced in my inquiry—"fluttering through the dark unbidden"—through an inexplicable connection to the Holocaust, and in my life through relations with victims of abuses and violence. It is also present in my own struggle to write spiritually: to write in a way in which I become evident and not hidden in thinking, hidden in words.

My memory and imagination are entangled in the holocausts of our time, touched by stories of woundedness. My memory and imagination have been formed by the ways of my civilization and my education. My thinking is from inside both of these shadows: the shadow of manufactured death and violence, the shadow of words and thoughts removed from living: fragmented understanding, with mind here and spirit there. I live in the shadow of both. I write from the difficulty of both: in the gap, in the between.

How am I to understand spirituality in the face of brokenness and horrors? What sort of spirituality lives in the shadow of death, when the shadow of death is so large, so carefully constructed and managed, when violence is so pervasive, when lives are so fragmented? What
response is appropriate in a time after death has moved from a place in
the natural order of things, from the realm of fate and mythological
figures to the domain of production, to the hands of human managers
constructing mechanisms of deliberate destruction? What writing, what
acts of imagination could resonate in the spaces of fragmentation to
make connections, to sound the possible?

I do not want to leave this inquiry with unrealistic optimism. I
live with a sense that my own fragmentation and brokenness connects
me to the world. I can account for my own fragmentation, its
formation. I have been often overwhelmed by the fragmentation I have
met in others. Broken spirits, scattered identities. I am part of that
(w)hole. Wholeness is not something that is mine alone: a thing for me
to gain or win. My brokenness is not my own either.

I have begun to wonder about wholeness, whether it is a mirage?
Does it shimmer in the distance, drawing me into the wilderness that is
now the home, the habitat for humanity: the places of manufactured
death, personal violence, abuse, broken families and broken peoples,
and fragmented living. Who can be/come whole there?

In this inquiry I have been re-conceptualizing spirituality. I want
to be realistic about it. I struggle to live a spirituality that is practical
and realistic, that is livable in this time of history. I do not imagine an
ideal spirituality. It is not an ideal time. Perhaps being broken is as
realistic an understanding as is possible. Perhaps wholeness is no longer
understandable as unity and completeness, as personal or communal
perfection. Perhaps, because so many are broken, all of us are broken.
And perhaps to gather fragments is making (w)hol(e)y.
I have argued that the spiritual is a matter of relations, connections. To be in relations is to be connected to others who are broken, fragmented, to a world that is in the shadow. I am not deluded that I am fine or that I can arrive and be apart from that reality. I am in the difficult that is the way. It goes on as difficult. That is common human experience—being wounded, being broken, and being in difficulty.

Life is not impossible. I have had moments of wonder and sensed a larger belonging: relations and connections beyond me, my perceptions tumbling open. Those moments refresh me but do not make me whole. They link me to life. And I become attentive to the world. It is fragile and in danger. I am also linked to the broken around me, to the broken world. I imagine wholeness is only possible in an embrace of brokenness.

If learning and teaching, if education are to go on in that reality, in the midst of darkness, then learning and teaching must include an embrace of brokenness that goes beyond that of repair and fixing. The journey of learning, of teaching may involve living and working in the meantime, staying in and with the brokenness of people and the world, living hopefully in the midst of that difficulty. I cannot imagine the darkness going away. I cannot imagine that woundedness is going to diminish. I am concerned that education, especially an education that is spiritual, is realistic and can work in the shadow of darkness, be a site of possibility, welcome, and embrace.
Leaving min(e)d fields: another difficulty

This work has traced a struggle, located in its making, in its writing of the seduction of thinking as a way out of living, out of difficulty. It is part of my own struggle of learning, of be/com/ing spiritual. I invoked Gandhi and non-violent resistance as a model for study, for thinking. I wondered what form of thinking, of study would resist violence, would resist the shadow. I have wandered through and played with theories of many min(e)d fields in search of livable theory, adaptable thinking.

I have been challenged to write myself into the text, meeting the struggle of spirit here: to be responsive, let the flux in, have the ground give way. I have struggled to meet my own terrors, the fear of falling, being known. I have struggled not to hide in thinking. Nor to become lost there. It is dangerous ground: shadowy and fragmenting. Making me into pieces: mind here, spirit there.

I have discovered how subtle seduction is, how readily learning turns me away from me, away from my own voice. I wonder about education, about the way I have been educated. How common is the way of learning that I have known? Is it adding to or diminishing brokenness? Has learning fragmented me? Integrated me? Have I stumbled into a war zone? Into mine(d) fields and been wounded? Did I come wounded to learning? In learning have I begun a journey toward wholeness? Will wholeness be a dazzling dream with an invisible back?

As the questions multiply a word comes to me. It has been lingering on the margins of my thinking, trying to get in and into this text. Mindful: bearing in mind: taking thought or care: attentive: observant. Mindfulness. Not mindedness. Not thinking on its own, but
thinking that is full of care, of attention. Thinking that stays with something or carries weight. Perhaps I am finding a different way to think. A way that is mindful, that is thinking be/com/ing spiritual.

In my understanding of spiritual as present and attentive, as fleeting, as flow I have not stopped to understand it as thoughtful, as bearing in mind. Gandhi talks about the invisibility of non-violent resistance, about its duration. He also notes that it is a deliberate practice. Mindfulness is deliberate, attentive. To act with attention includes a way of thinking. Hadot's re-understanding of Greek philosophy is a way of understanding thinking as practice. It involves imagination, attention, and care. It was the movement of philosophy from practice to mind only that created the divide, that broke the connections: severing relations, severing body from mind.

The difficulty is now to return: to return to mindfulness, to philosophy as a way of life. My own struggle to do so in a study of spirituality demonstrates the challenge and difficulty for educational practice. To stay with relations, with being connected, with extending connections, to attend to brokenness, to learn attentiveness to what is m(M)ystery and o(O)ther in our midst, to be/com/ing open are not merely theoretical concerns. It is not a thinking into place. It is not head work. It is life work.

It is allowing be/com/ing to occupy study and writing so that their concern becomes living thoughtfully, mindfully. It is to re-connect thinking, imagination and mind to living. It is resisting fragmentation that begins at the neck and celebrates the head. It requires—if Gandhi is right about non-violent resistance—a thoughtful, mindful, and active practice that does not become what it opposes, that does not practice
the violence of fragmentation and dominance to overcome fragmentation and dominance. I hope I have learned this lesson.

**Wondering what I have done: repenting in return**

Under an ominous title I want to question what I have done in calling attention to spirituality and asking that education be a site in which we are alert to the spiritual. To raise these questions I return to a story, to its work on me, to the questions it has raised and the connections it has made for me.

In telling stories and in proposing to understand stories through narraturgy, I suggested that there is a persistent interplay, an exchange of activity and passivity through narrative. I understand this narrative process to be educational. I also understand it to be exemplary of a spiritual process. The capacity of stories to penetrate imagination and to "move in" and live in consciousness, with occasional reminders of their presence and activity is part of their effectiveness as vessels of spirit. Spirit—some expression of flux, of m(M)ystery, o(O)ther that comes with a story—similarly takes up long term residence as a provocateur.

Throughout this text stories have been used. I have, in some instances, offered a story and hoped that it would do its own work on the reader. I have no way of assuring that its work contributed to understanding the text. At other times I have tried to direct the work of a story, to point out how it has worked on me and what I think its implications have been for me, and therefore, for my inquiry and this text.
I return now to the story of Piteroum and the salé, to its work on me, to its troubling images of service, discovery and disappearance. I ask the reader to return to the Preface (p. 12) and to re-read the story of Piteroum and the salé, to bring it back to mind, to recall her life of invisible service, her role as the excluded that makes the whole circulation possible.

In the beginning of making my text I hesitated to include this story, fearing that it might undermine me. Now it is here, doubly attended. In trying to face difficulty, I have trusted the voices of several stories to assist questions in surfacing, bringing me with them. I have trusted this story to do the same. I cannot ignore its implications.

This story frightens me. I have been trying to make the spiritual noticeable, to bring her to everyone's attention, to make spirituality a consideration in education. I am claiming to be doing story work: reading stories as working on me. The story and Michel de Certeau's (1992) comment that: "the excluded one renders possible the entire circulation," has unsettled me. What if spirit has been circulating in education as an invisible madwoman, an idiot, a soiled one (salé) making the whole circulation possible? What if spirit has been at work in education invisibly facilitating the whole circulation of learning and teaching, unnamed and unknown? What might it mean to expose her invisibility? What kind of presumption is it to intrude on a community and change the relations by re-naming the characters?

Perhaps to read the story this way is egocentric, identifying too much of myself in the story, but I am wondering if I am not acting as the pious and wandering-minded anchoret. I have gone out in search
of the not-known-or-recognized. I have gone so far as to claim that I have been called to this task. Piteroum was provoked by an angel. In both cases, the goal is a form of learning: personal learning but learning with other implications. The messenger brought instructions to look further, to not be so sure, to be prepared to learn and understand differently. I think there are links in these two journeys: mine and his. We end up with a similar task: to learn something new and humbling about ourselves. But to do so we call attention to what is already there and what is going on, unnoticed. In the story this clever madwoman has made herself an outcast, has made herself the subject of the violence of the community: its abuse-point. She is at the bottom of the order, but she has chosen to be there. She lives outside of the rules and is regularly excluded from the community, preferring to be alone for her nourishment. No one sees her eat. Her means of survival is a mystery. Yet, she renders possible the entire circulation. She lives as the invisible one in the community. She is the circulation that links everyone in the community to everyone else. They abuse her in common. She serves them in common. They ignore her, forget her, and depend on her services. They stay comfortably within their walls.

And I come along, like Piteroum, having received a hint that such a one is there, at work beyond me and my understanding. I come to look for her in the house of education, a contemporary community of the dedicated: religious in their zeal for learning, for teaching. I have been asking: Where is the one in your midst? Don't you notice who nurtures you? Who goes among you constantly? I am asking that something else, something o(0)ther be noticed and recognized. I am asking that what is present and hidden should be attended to, that a
way of learning and teaching that includes her notice be used. I am
calling for an awakening to spirituality.

But in the story this salé has lived unnoticed. She has drifted by
unseen; remained out of sight and I, like Piteroum, demand she be
dragged in. And she comes. And she is noticed. And cannot bear to be
noticed, to be recognized because her wisdom is not founded on
prestige, but otherwise. Her wisdom is in her invisibility, her
humbleness. And so she leaves. Disappears to unknown places and
unknown fates.

I tremble at the thought of it—of her disappearance. Piteroum
does not seem bothered. He pronounces his blessings, having made his
discovery, having been humbled and transformed to meet the servant
of servants in this madwoman. Perhaps I should do the same. Make
my declaration and go. But I have his story and hers to unsettle me.

I repent of this attempt to understand one kind of living and
knowing with another. I repent of trying to call attention to that which
works because it is excluded. I encourage us to learn from this invisible
influence, this making possible. But I repent of dragging her into the
open and asking her to be noticed. The sisters of the monastery were
made aware. They repented, confessed, apologized, and began to be
attentive, to notice, to be grateful. Then she left. Perhaps their learning
is also necessary. Perhaps learning always involves a loss, a change that
shifts perception and changes circumstances.

Perhaps I should read the story another way, to make it more
comfortable. Perhaps I should claim to be the salé, toiling away
unnoticed, being abused by a process that does not recognize something
different at work. I am not sure how the story unfolds if I take this reading. Where does Piteroum come in? How is the scene altered?

Perhaps there is another reading that will be more satisfactory. Perhaps this is another version of Lyle and Mona. Perhaps the dynamic of discovery, of learning that there is further to go, of uncovering an example of living in service, of the change that such discovery causes is a way to read the story. Perhaps I have to understand the whole thing as a dynamic of my own process. Finding and saying good-by. Being found and leaving. Learning to serve invisibly. Perhaps spirituality demands the constant discovery and the constant giving way. Perhaps I have been asked to learn and what I discover will now also disappear.

Perhaps, having made one discovery, another invisible work must begin. Perhaps to surface a consciousness of spirituality in education will mean that someone else/other becomes the invisible one in the community, providing the links, joining one to the other. The work of being the connective one in the community must find a new expression. Perhaps there is always another Piteroum coming into my life asking for the invisible to be brought to attention, into knowledge and presence so that she is known. Perhaps then she returns to invisibility. Perhaps Piteroum is, in being called to learn, the goad for all learning, forcing things to change, for relations to be altered, forcing appearances and disappearances.

The story is not a condemnation of Piteroum. He needed to learn. He was able to teach through his learning. But he does not stay in the community either. Perhaps I will not find a way to remain in this house either. Piteroum is not from that monastery, but another. I am not really from education, from this house. My mind wanders to
other places, to cities and to other lives. I am like Piteroum, a wanderer. I think we need to notice. I think, like the anchoret, that I have been asked to meet this soiled one, the idiot, and recognize her genius, her potency, her maintenance of circulation, her body and life as channel, as vessel. I think I have been asked to bring spirituality to attention.

I regret the disappearance such work will produce: the necessary vanishing. Madness, liveliness cannot be contained or managed. They cannot be recognized into submission and accrued for their power. Leaving is a mark of the salé's genius, of her freedom, of her wisdom. Leaving is necessary for survival: both hers and the community's. The pain of feeling and being known is worse than the violence and invisibility. To live forgotten, unacknowledged was better for her. To be recognized and lauded produced, for her, a greater discomfort, a threat to her freedom, her simplicity. It is not possible to understand this without being salé ourselves, without being outcast, excluded. It is completely outside of how we think things work. To disappear is a spiritual action.

Perhaps here is something for me to learn about being known, about coming out of invisibility and out of the violence of hiddenness. Perhaps disappearance will be necessary for me. Perhaps there are questions of invisibility that are not so simple. The salé cannot survive the notice, the acclamation. Piteroum, the scholar, the sage does not seem to know or care about this other difficulty of knowledge and exposure. He leaves with his learning intact. He is not exposed. He is already comfortable with his status and notoriety.
Perhaps the madwoman, the salé, is an example of the invisibility that Gandhi understands. She makes the life of the community possible because she endures their violence without violence in return. Her actions are hidden but endure because she serves without striking back and without weakness. Her work lasts. What she cannot endure is the violence of their acclamation. The story says she feels their praise more than she felt their blows and disdain. Their acclaim drives her out. Perhaps there is another message hidden in her response. The story is filled with messages, with ambiguities. It is also filled with messengers. The angel. Piteroum. The salé. By the end they have all disappeared. Perhaps this is necessary. Michel Serres (1995c) knows this when he points out:

As the bearer of the message, the messenger appears. . . . but he must also disappear, or write himself out of the picture, in order that the recipient hear the words of the person who sent the message. When the messenger takes on too much importance, he ends up diverting the channel of transmission to his own ends. (p. 99)

Piteroum had to disappear. So did the salé who could not bear to become more important than the invisible message she had been delivering. When she became visible her service, her message of service, was endangered and so she left.

Serres (1995c) understands how important this is for teaching, for philosophy. He describes the wonder of the simultaneous translator who disappears as the conversation between two people of different
languages becomes a flow through the voice of the disappeared third, the translator.

‘You look each other in the eye. You no longer really know who's talking and who's replying, because the body, voice and intonation of the interpreter disappear, suddenly merged into direct transmission. You have the impression that you are understanding the incomprehensible, that you've come close enough to touch it! This dissolving of the intermediary comes close to the mystic experience.’

‘Should the one who is doing the transporting never appear?’

‘How many moralities demand annihilation! Here's another disappearance: the body and voice of the teacher disappear in relation to the text that he's (sic) expounding in the lecture theatre. A lecture only succeeds if philosophy herself appears, in the flesh, to take the lecturer's place, and he lets her have it. Imagine it, a dazzling woman enters the hall by a secret door and despatches the teacher who had summoned her up in secret and who was speaking in her name. A miracle!’

‘On the other hand, there are scoundrels who pretend that they themselves are philosophy, and whose disciples are then obliged to speak only of them, never of her.’

‘The body of the messenger appears or vanishes. The intermediary writes himself out of the picture. He must not present himself, or dazzle, or please . . . or even appear.’ (p. 101-102)

The story that de Certeau tells is very old. But it tells the same story as the dialogue between Pia and Pantope that Serres writes. It is a story about education and learning, about the learning being more than the teacher, about the teacher and the inquirer disappearing so that the message becomes visible, actual, possible. Piteroum leaves. The salé
leaves. The messenger leaves. The teacher leaves. The stories, the
lessons, the possibilities, the space for thinking, for understanding, for
meeting the dazzling figure of philosophy remain. Relations demand
the invisibility of the translator and teacher. There is an inescapable
quality of hiddenness, of withdrawal, and of humility necessary for
learning, for education. This is also true of knowing the spirit, of
conducting inquiry, of writing a text.

It also returns me to the woods, to the woodsman and the
dazzling figure with the invisible back. Perhaps she is philosophy and
must disappear for reasons beyond my knowing. Perhaps she is the salé
and must disappear to protect herself. Perhaps she is the teacher
drawing me on into the darker, harder place before disappearing, to
leave me to the work of survival and discovery. Perhaps she is a
messenger who respects the need to go. Perhaps she represents persona
and the mediated space, the space between that allows for movement,
for circulation, withdrawal and forgetting. Perhaps she is the spirit in
procession, extending her step across another border, exposing herself to
risk, inviting me to follow. Perhaps she stands for withdrawal and
hiddenness. Perhaps her name is Aletheia. Perhaps she knows of the
need for forgetfulness and withdrawal.

But we can at least learn from all this. We can be educated—lead
out, e-ducatum—by the withdrawal, instructed in the lesson of
lethe, that the withdrawal shelters hidden powers. (Is it the power
of the world? of the soul? of God?) And in thus being educated, in
this learned unknowing, there lies the motive of a universal
letting-be, of a generalized Gelassenheit which lets be, which
releases gods and mortals, earth and sky—and let us expand this
Greco-Germanic catalogue to include male and female, Greek and
Jew, East and West, weak and strong, healthy and sick, animal and human (and whatever else we have been inclined to subordinate, hierarchize, marginalize). In this generalized *Gelassenheit*, the task is to let all things be what and how they are. We learn to "think" in some deep sense (which is not a matter of acquiring knowledge), by letting the *lethe* in things resonate. And this is what we mean by an ethics of *Gelassenheit*—which is all at once an ethics of liberation, toleration, and solidarity. (Caputo, 1989, p. 288)

The teacher disappears. The Madwoman disappears. Piteroum leaves. The simultaneous translator becomes invisible. The woodsman is lost because the shimmering figure has an invisible back and she too disappears. The good messengers disappear. It is fitting that there are all these disappearances. It is fitting to leave space and openness for possibilities, for movement; to try to understand the value of disappearance, of invisibility. It is something that needs to be pondered. Visibility/invisibility has been an issue for me in this text. It is not only an issue of theory, of understanding the work of teaching, of understanding the way of messengers. It is also a personal question.

I have told of my history of hiding, of keeping my identity hidden, my place, my claims. I told of doing so to survive. I embraced Caputo's understanding of identity as retaining mystery, as involving withdrawal. It appeals to me because it allows for hiddenness to be respected, for there to be space for shyness and distance. The *salé* is called mad, even possessed and she practices a way of living, being outcast within—a not-quite-fitting-into—the religious community. Perhaps that is why her story appeals to me. Because she finds a way to
serve and not quite fit. Perhaps I do imagine myself as her and not as Piteroum.

I chose invisibility to protect my weakness. The danger, the seduction I faced was trying to be strong in protecting myself. Becoming what I resisted. I developed skills of resistance, learned the ways of thinking, of study. But my way of studying, my way of writing made me soldier-scholar. My knowing was killing me, killing my knowing. I chose to study spirituality. I chose to study it in a site of education. And have had to learn of my own spirituality, to learn of my own fragmentation; to learn to let go knowing and fall into living; to let go of mastery and begin to discover service as a practice in living and in writing.

I bring to my study a mixed heritage of religious up-bringing from which I carry memories of shame, fear, and anxiety about declaring myself. I have a learned response that makes me resist strong declarations. I hesitate to be certain. I have not wanted to be known as religious. I have become interested in spirituality and understand it as something other than religion. I am trying to make a space for myself.

But I also have a sense, displayed by the salé, that there is a value in hiddenness. In the Christian context there is a counter-tradition, outside of the common and public practice of religious life that asks that prayer be done in secret, that charity be practiced in secret. It acknowledges a value for hiddenness. There is hiddenness that is not hiding but living without being noticed, or caring to be noticed. Just as there is resistance to violence that is not violent and philosophy that is not thinking only but a way of life.
reaching

to reach toward spirit:
  descending into earth
through layers: to reach
the hidden, covered,
  unfamiliar.

to come awake slowly to
tendrils reaching down
distractions
drawing their strength
  from other layers
roots threaded
  into underground.
  routes of dissipation that run
through thinking through daily
  practice.

now i learn harder things:
  why tradition
makes search for spirit
  toil and shadow,
  dying losing control.
  why the task
is shedding not acquiring:

what i seek buried within
what is already mine
  through deliberate labour
  a toil of digging
  to draw near to
what might know
  seeking.
  not to build
to undo, unbuild.
   a severe work.

a kind of play:
   to loosen attachments
peel away burdens of ease,
expose discomforts of movement:
   a kind of training,
a kind of preparation
   getting ready is the work.

spirit slips away
withdrawing, making space.

A poem enacts in words the presence of what we live among. It arises from the tough, delicate, heartbreaking rooting of what-is in its own nonbeing. Out of our participation in that rooting there rises an elemental movement of being—of celebration, of desire, of grief, of anger, of play, of dying. That movement is always particular, speaking of the things which are. It does not issue just from what is outside us, not just from what is inside us. A poem enacts that moving cadence of being.
To be human is to live through such movements of being. (Dennis Lee in Zwicky, 1992, p. 511)

journeying:

   in the tangle of opposites,
the turns of contradictions
wound together freedom
begins to breathe:
the repetition forward
the waiting that is movement
the journey that is reaching

the middle place of no shore
   far from solidity
no nearer any other:
   unknown sites far away
journeying that will
never arrive.

I live between these tensions: wanting to be present, wanting to stay hidden. I understand hiddenness. I am learning about being open to view, being accessible. But I am wondering about disappearance and invisibility. I wonder about the stories that have drawn me, called me, that are working on me. Piteroum and the salé, the accounts of messengers and translators, the gray Saturn King and the puer theory, the dazzling figure who appears and disappears, who makes the teacher disappear, who makes the woodsman lost. And my own stories: Auschwitz, giving my testimony, finding books, learning respect, paying attention. These stories become guides. I return to them, to their work on me as a way of coming to know the spirit at work in my life.
Epilogue

I return to my text, to re-open it for a brief moment to a further consideration, aware that it has provoked a range of responses and that its work is unfinished in readers and in me. The provocations remain at work. I remain in the flux looking back to take up a challenge offered during the course of my oral examination. I add an epilogue to consider two issues:

1. a necessary tension between openness/uncertainty and closure to insure that neither uncertainty nor openness become a totalizing discourse.

2. the implications of my approach for the design of (a) curriculum. Will it have gaps/spaces? Will it allow for response? How and where do relations exist? What are the implications for teaching? What allows for spirituality in the practice of teaching?

On openness and closure:

There seems to be two dynamics in play in this issue: that of uncertainty and certainty and that of openness and closure. How might uncertainty or openness become totalizing discourses? Might uncertainty come to dominate knowledge, displacing all certainty? Will openness tyrannize understanding making conclusion impossible? Is only uncertainty acceptable?

Let me turn first to the troubling matter of uncertainty. To live with uncertainty is not to allow uncertainty to overwhelm or master life—making it impossible—but rather to remain with a sense of incompleteness, with an acknowledgment of the unfinished and
unfinalized nature of living, understanding, and loving. To admit uncertainty is to accept that what is known is not fixed but fluid and malleable, and to acknowledge that the ground—the basis of certainty—is not solid but fluid (Serres, 1991). There remains a slow inexorable movement of knowledge, of relationships that includes change, disruption, and re-assessment.

Uncertainty is in dynamic tension with certainty. To accept uncertainty is not to eliminate certainty but to resist its totalizing influence. In this tension the certain is not permanently fixed but rather remains open to interpretation that may alter how it is understood. The certain needs to be recognized as a construct of a given time and culture, susceptible to deconstruction. It may provide a sense of stability but in a longer perspective certainty is not permanent. The place of the uncertain and incomplete are acknowledged in the dynamic. They remain in play and are not displaced or covered over by the certain.

One danger of certainty is its strength; its power to make invisible what appears weaker, to cover the uncertain. To ask for uncertainty is to ask for weakness to be allowed and to learn from the gaps it creates. Uncertainty is necessary to delimit certainty, to hold it from displacing knowledge and understanding that are tentative, incomplete.

It is possible to live with a degree of uncertainty, staying open to incompleteness. To do so is not a denial of what is known or affirmed. It is living with a sense of a limit to certainty and a denial of its ultimacy. Knowledge must include a gap for the uncertain and unknown to be included. What is known and certain, what is unknown
and uncertain may fluctuate, yet the unencompassed will remain always unencompassed (Caputo, 1987).

Perhaps there is a threat, when perceived from a place that has valorized certainty, that uncertainty will overwhelm the confidence that certainty produces. Uncertainty is not an enemy but a necessary companion, asking for limits, for modesty, for hesitation. Uncertainty does lead to questioning, to doubt, to re-thinking. It requires openness to retain uncertainty in living, in thinking.

And so I come to the question of openness and closure. My assumption is that openness includes closure. Closure is one of the possibilities that remains in openness.

To exclude exclusion (Serres, 1995c) is to assume that in some way inclusion must have the possibility of exclusion. Inclusion will exclude exclusion, and therefore, contain it in the act of excluding it. Is this inclusion a totalizing discourse? Is openness oblivious to closure? I think not.

Closure is included. There is a relation of openness to closure: an embrace in which the difficulties of ending, of severing, of loss, even of death, are always in the midst of life. Staying open to closure, being willing to conclude, to end, to let go, to leave behind, to die, is a labour of freedom and living. Hadot (1995) has pointed out that one of the tasks of philosophy as spiritual work is learning how to die. Learning how to die is a form of life discipline that requires attentiveness, immediacy, and a recognition that ending is a human reality. Staying open to life is staying open to what comes, including death. I imagine it to be incomplete spiritual work.
Openness may be overwhelming but the real danger is in closure that excludes possibilities. Exclusion excludes. It excludes openness because openness includes. It is difficult work to stay open to life and all it brings. I imagine that an insistence on closure is an attempt to avoid the difficulties of death, to resist life that includes dying, that hopes that what can be excluded is death, ending. To learn to die is part of be/com/ing spiritual, part of the daily work that calls for openness, willingness, and living in the present. Be/com/ing spiritual requires attachment to the earth and lives in relations with the earth and all that is enearthed. It allows an embrace of uncertainty.

Both uncertainty and openness are necessary for education.

**Considering curriculum, and teaching:**

For me, acts of education are relational. To write a course that leaves openings and gaps implies that the teacher will be able to work from that text with others in an educational setting. There is exchange, passage, a movement back and forth that remains active. Readiness and reaching are offered and received. To be open in teaching is allowing space for what arises, being attentive, caring, and willing to welcome what has arisen, including difficulty and pain. It is making and keeping space for all that is necessary and possible. It is to acknowledge uncertainty in learning, in teaching.

This way of education is marked by a quality of invitation that is offered. I reach toward you. I invite you forward. I ask you to reach. I request your readiness. I offer readiness to receive you. I offer a willingness to respond. I remain reaching for you. These are the gestures of teaching and learning that arise in/out of openness that
attends to relations. It is not an exchange that is a matter of equivalencies or certainties but rather a matter of generosity. It is not that I will reach only if you are ready or offer when you do so. Teaching is reaching, offering and then responding to what comes, to the responses that are given, by providing a space that is full of opportunity and possibility. This is the necessary gap or space for learning.

In such an educational exchange, in a space that offers openness—room—it becomes possible to engage the certain and the uncertain. The uncertain does not have to be covered with certainty. What is unknown and tentative can be considered thoughtfully. The context of relations and space provides safety for discovery. What is certain can be understood in a context of time and place. What is uncertain can be brought into play. Although discovery and learning may involve risk and danger, the relational context provides confidence and assurance.

It seems to me that the relational qualities are augmented by a sense of the spiritual. Acting spiritually means paying attention to the o(O)ther, however o(O)ther is represented in the space. It is also to act with the five qualities of human be/com/ing that Huebner (1998) suggested in his paper, The lure of the transcendent: consciousness, imagination, will, power, and love. It is to be aware of the potential of life and difficulty in each quality. What is imagined? What is perceived? What is desired? For what purposes? To what end? For whose benefit? There is a need to connect the personal and spiritual to the social and political. There are questions of value, ethics, responsibility, and purpose to be considered. They are difficult
questions and must be worked out as they arise and as they are engaged.

It is important to recognize that educational moments are not limited to institutions. They may occur there. Regardless of site, they always depend on relations that are lively and open to possibilities, where discovery is likely, where patience is evident, where time is allowed to be flexible, where there is responsiveness. The challenge of institutions is to foster such openness for possibility in the midst of the demands of structure, order and stated objectives.

During the oral examination there was some discussion about the nature of a syllabus. Was it map? Compass? Guide? I return to the image of the nautical chart. For me, education is always a form of journey, a passage from here to there. I no longer think of it as a journey over terrain but as a voyage in flux. A nautical chart does not lay out particular paths or have assured routes. It tries to describe the conditions and note hazards, suggesting routes for safe passage. A nautical chart is produced with an awareness that conditions may change: wind, tides, current, weather. The journey can only be shaped in the midst of passage. Timing, tempo, route: all remain to be settled as it happens. Instruments of guidance may be needed: perhaps a compass, and sextant, perhaps a chart marked with prevailing winds.

The syllabus, as a chart, can only say: we are trying to move from here, in this direction. We hope to work at these questions, to learn about these issues and concerns. The route, our actual course, will happen only once. It will be shaped by those who move together in this journey. Offered again, the same syllabus will have a different course of events, a different type of passage.
Such an approach raises questions about standardization. It suggests that teaching from a syllabus is not a guarantee of any kind. It assumes that what is exchanged in education will depend on the relations formed. There will be variety and multiplicity. It assumes that a curriculum is not a restrictive and limiting text but one that reaches toward possibilities. It assumes that education can be realized only in relations—human exchanges—that are played out in respect and care. An education that arises in relations and that assumes that qualities of human be/com/ing are in play will always be risky, edgy, open and responsive to the unexpected. These are the necessary spaces that must be acknowledged in a syllabus. These are some of the unknowns that remain in play in education, keeping learning and teaching open.

In my experience of teaching it is the responsiveness to what is given that opens learning. One of the elementary realities of communication skills is that when people feel listened to, they open to further exchange and interaction. Being heard is a way of being cared for. Teaching includes listening, being responsive. Teaching includes acknowledging that each moment begins in uncertainty. It is not a matter of certain outcomes but a relational journey that may include common understanding and discovery.

I believe that teaching and learning are spiritual acts and as spiritual require a dynamic that resists totalizing and remains open to possibility, to difficulty, to the unexpected and uncertain. A curriculum formed by such assumptions depends on the relations formed and lived. The educational journey occurs as it happens, when it happens, with those who are there.
Bibliography


