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The Opening of Narrative Space

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume XXXII 1997

Articles

- "The Self and its Constructions: A Narrative Faith in the Postmodern World" Barbara J. Socor, PhD
- "The Story of the Self: The Self of the Story" James E. Giles, PhD
- "Adolescence: From the unstoried life to the construction of the first narrative" Kevin Barry, PhD, CFC
- "The Integrity of a Narrative Path: Circles of Possibilities" Robert Monteleone, MA, MS
- "Have You Ever Seen the Wizard? Thoughts From a School Psychologist" Anthony Bongo, MS
- "Story, Silence and Spirit: The Crisis of the First-Person Pronouns" Reggie Marra, MS
- "The Pearl in the Crab: A Personal Discovery of the Treasure in Metaphor" Noirin Foley, BS
- "Some Facts Concerning the Life of Brother Thomas Gerald Bullen" Brother Thomas Gerald Bullen, PhD, CFC

Poetry

- Excerpts from "All God's Children Are Flaky" Reverend Joe McCarthy
- Everything We Need Reggie Marra
- Creating Autumn Bluffs: Poetic Fact or Psychological Fiction Christina Barbero, MS

Book Reviews

- Domestic Tranquilities: A Review of *Thomas Moore's Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* Marc Ricciardi, PhD
- A Review of *Out of the Ashes* A.J. Lips, MS, MBA, CFC

Bibliographies

- Narrative Therapy on the Internet: An Annotated Bibliography of World Wide Web Resources Melaine Forsburg,MLS
- A Bibliography for Narrative Therapy Nataalka Sawchuk, MLS, MS

The Self and its Constructions: A Narrative Faith in the Postmodern World

by
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Introduction

"What [is] meant is continuously being reframed by what is...said" (Edward E. Sampson, 1985, p.1207).

By now it has become somewhat of a commonplace to assert that "truth is relative," that "it all depends on your point of view." This fundamental contingency may perhaps owe its initial origins to Einstein's insights into the nature of things physical, and has been a feature of what Louis Sass (1994) has referred to as the "philosophy of as-if" since the early twentieth century, but it has only more recently taken up a somewhat belated but enthusiastic intellectual residence in the social sciences, where the once certain "facts" -personal as well as historical- yield to the seeming paradox of "variable truth," of "mutable meaning." Where the self was once conceived as a permanent and consistently recognizable a priori originator of meaning it has, in its postmodern incarnation, shed any Platonic pretensions to essentialism, relinquishing authorship of ideas to become itself an idea; indeed, an idea for a story whose veridicality is not nearly so significant as its coherence. In this view, it may be said of the "truth" of the self that it is not unlike the elephant and the blind men seeking to puzzle its nature, it "all depends...."

Increasingly, the "real" has come to resemble the fictive, at least insofar as we are willing to see the same principles of construction- e.g., temporality, intention, direction- at play in the telling of our lives that we recognize in the telling of a lucid and compelling narrative tale. Self understanding and social understanding are, in this view, elaborated conceits. That such understandings -even and especially of our own being- are not taken as metaphysical facts but social, or literary, constructions is a fundamental tenet of postmodern theory which has given rise to the view that the self is neither a stable nor an intrinsic entity but is, instead, the chronicle which emerges from coherently connecting -and thus imbuing with meaning- otherwise discrete and disparate events. The very concept of an unchanging and personal self which lays claim to ontological or epistemological priority is itself a postmodern fiction, a grand and socially useful narrative tale of the individual (rugged or otherwise). Rather than granting pre-linguistic status to the self, postmodern sensibility asserts the discursive nature of personal identity, born of what Ricoeur (1984) refers to as "emplotment," whereby events -themselves more in the nature of the contingent than the idiosyncratic- become personal through narrative reflection upon them. For "to make a plot is already to make the intelligible spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or probable from the episodic" (Ricoeur, 1984, p.41).

The inherent instability of the self, and the social context which supports it, bequeathed by the postmodern deconstructions of epistemological certainty, has left its intellectual mark upon the psychotherapeutic endeavor as surely as it has upon social theory generally. One thinks of Donald Spence's (1982) influential work, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth* (but one might well consult Roy Schafer (1976) or Jerome Bruner (1986) among many others) as a fitting exemplar of the trend in analytic work toward seeing truth as possessing at least one other sense

beyond the empirical. Decidedly, with respect to the hermeneutic exercise that is the analytic hour, "truth" is more a matter of consensual creation than it is of recovering lost actualities. More the acknowledgement of a congress of discourse than the privileging of executive monologue. Indeed, in the Foreword to a later work by Spence (1987), Bruner observes that "interpretation never achieves univocal understanding, and certainly it does not discover 'causes.' Whether it is interpretation in psychoanalysis, in the law, in literature, in history, what it requires for its success is multiple perspective..." (p. xiv).

It is the purpose of this essay to explore elements of the postmodern sensibility as it has taken shape in contemporary social thought under the general rubric of social constructionist theory. We will explore how this theoretical perspective informs an understanding of the social world and the self embedded within it. Underscoring the idea of conceptual indeterminacy, we will examine its impact upon views of personal identity and endeavor to tease out some of the more salient implications of the shift from certain to uncertain and central to "decentralized" selves. Finally, we will undertake to consider what the postmodern perspective may suggest for how we can usefully and indeed, actually, "know" our constructed and fictive selves in the absence of stable and authoritative referents. I will conclude by suggesting that narrative, precisely in its paradoxical possession of the very essential and intrinsic elements that postmodernism eschews, may serve as a viable methodology of self understanding.

Rather than undertake a review of the many theoretical contributions to the constructionist position, I have selected some of the work of Kenneth Gergen (1985, 1990, 1991, 1997) as reasonably emblematic of this point of view. Doing so, I believe, offers some degree of (narrative) coherence, or "smoothing," which may artificially suggest a greater degree of uniformity among theorists than is actually the case, but it has the virtue his way is, for illustrative purposes, a favored, if somewhat circumscribed narrative.

Self-Made

"While it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 49).

Kenneth Gergen (1985, 1990, 1991 1997), whose introduction of social constructionist ideas to psychology has contributed significantly to the evolution of thinking in the field, is one of a growing number of social theorists who is exploring the constructed and social nature of psychic identity (see, for example, David Carr, 1997; George Rosenwald 1988a, 1988b; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992; Edward Sampson, 1985, 1988, 1989; Louis Sass, 1994). In what follows we shall track the broad outlines of Gergen's thought as he pursues the self into the deconstructed world of the post modern, asserting with increasing clarity not only that the self is a product of the social arrangements which support it, but that the nature of those supports themselves are increasingly multiple and fragmentary; temporary and without depth. Viewed from the perspective of the social constructionist movement even "the mind becomes a form of social myth; [and] the self-concept is removed from the head and placed within the sphere of social discourse" (Gergen, 1985, p. 271).

The idea that there is a fundamental human nature which rests in statu nascendi from the outset is precisely what Gergen (1985) undertakes to challenge. Indeed, it shall be his essential argument that the "nature" of persons is highly plastic and reliant for its distinct character upon social forces. Who we are, in this view, is not so much an epigenetic as it is a socially constituted event. Indeed, from a constructionist perspective "what is taken to be psychological process...becomes a derivative of social interchange...[and] the explanatory locus of human action shifts from the interior region of the mind to the processes and structure of human interaction" (Gergen, 1985, p. 271). But what is social constructionism, and what has it to do with the concept of self?

Broadly speaking, social constructionism is a distinct orientation toward knowledge; an epistemological model which asserts that what is known, and the manner in which discourse about the known (and the unknown) is undertaken, is an artifact -i.e., a construction- derived from dialogue conducted in the public, which is to say the social, arena. In a second, and more tightly focused sense social constructionist theory is concerned with specifying the particular psychological processes by which people are able to describe, explain, or generally to account for, their world and themselves -i.e., their selves. Indeed, the idea of self, like all other ideas when understood from a social constructionist point of view, is circumscribed by, and arises as an effect of, the particular social context within which it is elaborated.

Clearly, social constructionism represents a distinct paradigmatic challenge to more traditional modes of conceptualizing informed by the empiricist heritage. Engaged in the pursuit of knowledge through observation, this latter method of inquiry is committed to precisely what constructionism questions. That is, to the fundamental assumption that there are objective actualities in the world independent of their subjective observer which, furthermore, are discoverable if the principles of a rigorous rationality are properly applied.

Quite to the contrary, the social constructionist view holds that all things, including what it means to be human and to be a "self," are contingent. There is, from this perspective, no pre-existent human nature which shapes the world, let alone any set of objective criteria for discovering that nature. Indeed, such "explanatory" criteria themselves, the constructionist argues, are derived from, and thus explained by, the particular history and culture which shaped them. All knowledge is conditional; all selves provisional.

This is not to say that society, culture, history itself, is devoid of a certain "realness." Rather, and despite the fact that, as Max Weber (1947) observes, "both for sociology...and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning- complex of action," (p. 101, emphasis added) it remains that society does possess a (f)actual character. This defining duality -that society is a composite of subjective activities and objective facts- is, in fact, the starting point for Berger and Luckmann's seminal treatise on the social origins of knowledge, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966); a work to which, as Gergen (1985) notes, the contemporary social constructionist movement is intimately linked. In this work the authors explore the process by which subjective meanings come to possess the character of what they refer to as "objective facticity."

Habits of Mind

Briefly, and in much simplified form, Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend that "humanness is socio-culturally variable" (p. 49, emphasis added), and thus can adopt any of a number of "actual" forms, and "true" natures. And these essentially subjective entities -i.e., human beings, or selves, like other ideas and behaviors- become "facticities" by a process of "habitualization", or routinizing of behaviors and casting them into patterns. This "regularizing," Berger and Luckmann note, is a necessary precursor to institutionalizing. That is to say, making selected behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs publicly accepted verities; objective and actual.

Thus we observe that facts, indicating things which have actual existence, and which are experienced as entities or events separate from their human observers, are themselves constructed and institutionalized products. And that these reifications come to direct, to control, indeed to dictate, the "right" and "true" way to think, behave, and be, is the result of a perceived exteriority which adheres to those products of social interaction which have attained the status of "real"(ity) by virtue of a kind of preferential repetition.

Reality, the authors thus assert, is a humanly, that is, a socially and subjectively-constructed state, and regardless of how imposing and objective it may seem, it yet remains a humanly produced objectivity; the outcome of oft repeated sets of social behaviors which become accepted as institutionalized -i.e., "correct"- ways of being. And this institutional world which we recognize as reality, and our "true" selves within it, are "the externalized products of human activity...In other words, despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 60-61). We create - and recreate- ourselves along with our ever changing realities; it is distinctly human; it is what we do.

Contingency Rules

Building upon Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work, Gergen (1985), as we have suggested, undertakes to explore the processes by which the mind apprehends the world and itself; and he concludes, in the tradition of his theoretical predecessors, that "what is taken to be psychological process...[here] becomes a derivative of social interchange. The explanatory locus of human action shifts from the interior region of the mind to the processes and structure of human interaction" (p. 271). That is, the contents which constitute the idea of mind are not a collection of privately formulated thoughts, composed within some hidden but certain core of being, but rather are publicly regularized ways of understanding.

As an epistemological approach than, social constructionism, its concepts, its bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing, depend for their meaning and perceived truth value upon "communities of shared intelligibility" (Gergen, 1985 p. 273). Such communities are not frivolous intellectual fads, hawking different ideas on different days; rather, they serve as a kind of conceptual zeitgeist through which the broad normative rules that govern the shape and direction of thinking are conceived. Indeed, such communities of shared views are the foundational institutions of all stable social entities. The point of social constructionism is not that "anything goes," but rather that "everything is contingent"; not that there are no rules, but that the rules that do exist are decidedly "historically and culturally situated" (Gergen, 1985, p.

273) rather than essential verities metaphysically located, and as such are eminently prone to potentially endless revisions.

Social constructionist implications for a revised understanding of the self are, I think, both clear and radical. If concepts are reliant upon the variable constructions of diverse cultures and historical moments, than psychological conceptions of what it is to be a person, and even whether there are individual psychological persons -selves- at all is surely an open question. Gergen (1985) makes just this kind of point when he refers, for example, to the work of Philippe Aries (1960), whose exploration of the variety of concepts of the child which have existed across history illustrate, among other things, the paradox that immutable notions mutate in the crucible of time.

Granting the idea of self, the ontological origins of that self are equally challenged by this perspective, inviting us to contemplate the socially constructed sources of commonplace assumptions about identity. Here, self is a communal idea, fashioned between people, and reliant upon discourse; not an idiosyncratic invention elaborated in interiority and prefigured by innate potential. The subjectively certain and unified Cartesian self, already conceptually separated from all that is "non-self," "not-subject but object" - i.e., -all res externa- -itself becomes divided, decentered and separated from its own subjectivity by the Freudian unconscious, and is here, as a construction, fully destabilized by multiplicity; by the conceptual implication that what can be constructed can be deconstructed and reconstructed some other way. If ideas are more a matter of perspective than of permanency, than surely the idea of many selves broadly conceived can replace the idea of one self deeply felt.

It is precisely to this concept of manyness, reflected in a host of intellectual developments during the mid and latter parts of the twentieth century, including the hermeneutic and deconstructionist movements, that Gergen (1990, 1991) turns in seeking an explanation for what, in his view, is a fundamentally altered experience and understanding of the self.

Technologies and the Self

"The self...is not an organic thing that has a specific location...it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from the scene that is presented..." (Goffman, 1959, p. 253).

Modern thought, shaped by the experiences of mastery and apparent progress which typified the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was characterized by a fundamental belief in the ultimate discoverability of causes, and the associated assumption that there were distinct, singular causes "out there," awaiting disclosure.

In what Gergen (1990), among others (see, for example, Sass, 1994) refers to as the "postmodern turn," these intellectual foundations were profoundly shaken as the way in which the world was known underwent a kind of conceptual revolution. Gergen (1990, 1991) attributes this revolution, in which certainty was traded for contingency, and progress for perspective, to the "technological achievements of the past century [which] have produced a radical shift in our exposure to each other" (Gergen, 1991, p.xi). As a result of this increasing ability to reach other - and quite different- selves over vast distances by radio, telephone, television, satellite, and the

Internet we have become, Gergen (1991) contends, socially over-stimulated. We are, as it were, perpetually "online."

Multiple Personalities

It is in *The Saturated Self* that Gergen (1991) employs the social constructionist argument to what he sees as the current instance of the (social) transformation of the "modern self" into "postmodern selves."

Once, (upon a time) sociocultural variables such as small and essentially permanent communities, in which neighbors remained the same over a lifetime, and the number of "significant others" was necessarily limited by seemingly illimitable space, affirmed the view that selves had recognizable and enduring characteristics which, like the communities in which they were reared, persisted over time. And once, because the number of different points of view one was exposed to, and the number of "truths" one had to consider, was confined to the distance one could travel to the next neighbor, or even the regularity with which the local newspaper arrived carrying its own version of the world outside, who one was -or that one was- rarely became the subject of challenge. The self was knowable and largely stable, reflecting the predominant social conditions of life through perhaps the mid twentieth century. Those conditions, and the self concept supported by them, Gergen (1991) argues, have been radically altered by emerging technologies, which have brought the seemingly endless diversity of the world, and its myriad, and frequently cacophonous voices, into the homes and the consciousness of people with increasing frequency and ease.

Just as a fundamental sameness and a kind of psychic "hush" imposed by unbridgeable distances defined a self which was the same over time and deeply, even silently, interior; so now has technological capacity spanned all distance, rendering it virtually irrelevant. What was a recognizable and uniform world which encouraged an introspective contemplation and a conversation with one's own (separate) self has been quite literally transformed so that uniformity yields to diversity and silence to ceaseless colloquy. Where there was social and political individuality -and a concomitant psychological singularity of identity- there is an increasingly communal society and polity giving rise, Gergen (1991) maintains, to its psychological counterpart in identities, collective selves and a community of equally "true" voices. And where there was isolation there is ever present and immediate-although often short lived- opportunity for relationship and connection, and the notion of singular causes leading in inexorable linear fashion to identifiable effects is eroding in the wake of a technical ability to construct and deconstruct endless causes to any effect one may conceive. And of course, the idea of self is inevitably altered as people absorb the voices and even the lives, of once mysterious and unknowable "others."

Indeed, it is Gergen's (1991) essential thesis that the immediacy of so many varied voices and views has created a kind of "social saturation" of the self; a fragmenting of formerly coherent conceptions which "corresponds to a multiplicity of incoherent and disconnected relationships" (Gergen, p. 7) characterizing a postmodern world. The availability of so many "ways of being," of so many avenues to relationship, is compelling, even seductive. The (siren) call(s) of the (many) other(s) bid one "try out" some of the countless roles, and don some of the

sundry guises that are so accessible as alternative "lifestyles." This sense of playing a role, which in Gergen's view has begun to supplant an increasingly anachronistic sense of a fixed and locatable personal identity, itself yields at last to what he has referred to as a "relational self."

Gergen (1991) envisions this transformation from an essential to a relational self as a phased development in which each of three stages describes the movement from a modern to a postmodern sensibility. As Gergen fully elaborates this conversion in his own work, we shall reproduce it here only schematically, in order to suggest the manner in which he asserts that the (re)conceptualization of the self has followed the (re)conceptualization of the sociocultural world.

The Self and its Social Transformations

"Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" (M. Foucault, 1976, p. 17).

Thus, the undermining -or as the epistemology would have it, the deconstruction- of the modern formulation of self begins in what Gergen (1991) has referred to as the stage of "strategic manipulation". Here, social saturation has disrupted traditional ways of understanding oneself. As one is increasingly faced with new relationships and their attendant demands for new behavior, for new "ways of being," a steadfast sense of just who one is is shaken, particularly as formerly confirming cues from face-to-face relationships increasingly give way to impersonal and relatively short lived forms of contact. Here, individuals find themselves, with much discomfort, "playing roles to achieve social gains" (Gergen, p. 147). It is interesting to note that this initial stage is designated "manipulative" precisely because it is largely describing the "modern self-experience" in which there was -is- still a conception of the self as actual, so rendering the feeling associated with the adoption of different roles as exploitative. Thus does Gergen observe that "the sense of self as strategic manipulator derives...from the modernist context, in which real, authentic selves existed...and to act in any other way was a form of forgery or deceit" (p. 150). Over time, however, the accumulation of such "manipulations" erodes the modernist confidence in an intrinsic -an essential- self, conceding the (psychic) field to what Gergen has termed the stage of the "pastiche personality."

In this second stage "the individual experiences a form of liberation from essence" (Gergen, 1991, p. 147); a release from the constraints of singular identity which permit one to actually enjoy the varieties of self experience now available. At this juncture the implied sense of discomfort and superficiality associated with the "manipulator" are abandoned in favor of an optimism affiliated with the vast possibilities now at hand. Indeed, once the compunction to discover a "true and enduring self" is abandoned "life becomes a candy store for one's developing appetites" (Gergen, p. 150).

The Self, Inc.

In a third and final phase a fully postmodern sensibility dominates self understanding. Here, any remnants of a modernist attachment to individuality and autonomy are surrendered, as is the notion of a real, or actual, self. To paraphrase Sampson (1988a) in this regard, the self "is a sociocultural rather than a natural event" (p. 18), and (social and psychological) reality becomes a matter of relationship. Indeed, it is relationship which determines the nature of the self. As the former shifts, so too does the latter. Here, it seems apparent, rests the fundamental challenge to

traditional formulations of the self. Here, notions of autonomy, individuality, and even and especially the Cartesian axiom of the singular subject as the center of knowledge, are all placed in conceptual jeopardy.

In a relational world there is no single center of knowing; nor is there a knower, nor even a body of knowledge. The "canon" is blasted, and the fragments are free radicals playfully attaching -i.e., "relating"- in endlessly recombinant forms. And the self itself, having arrived at a postmodern incarnation, becomes the kaleidoscopic product of perpetually coalescing fragments; new relationships yielding new selves. And the selves which are thus constructed -and deconstructed and reconstructed as "other" selves- refer to no actual entity. The construction is now the thing wherein we shall glimpse -though never capture- the character of being. And because there is no (ultimate or final) referent -i.e., no core self to which we attribute veridicality -all (linguistic) signifiers are, in their Saussurian sense, set free to respeak, and thus remake, the self, such that the certain is made ambiguous and the essential irrelevant.

And finally, in a fully relational reality, the "old modern" idea of private (psychological) property is forsaken for incorporation; for a joint partnership with all others. For if there is no longer an actual self which is "mine" alone then the constructions of self and the roles fulfilled cannot be conceived of as belonging to a "me", or an "I." They are, rather, contextual creations, and the generic role of the "I" is "that of a participant in a social process that eclipses one's personal being" (Gergen, 1991, p. 156). And the nature of that participation is subject to change as the character of relationships change. The self here possesses no achieved and final identity, does not persist over time, and clearly bears no conceptual or experiential ties to the idea that "a sense of ego identity...is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others..." (Erikson, 1950, p. 261, emphases added). In a postmodern world, contingency replaces permanence and confidence is undone by context. The essence of the (idea of) self is bound to no immutable referent; no longer a potential waiting to unfold, the postmodern self is rather a role in eternal rewrite.

Perpetual Presences

"One of the schools in Tlon...reasons that the present is undefined, that the future has no other reality than as present hope, that the past is no more than present memory" (Jorge Luis Borges, p. 25).

The ease with which one may slip from role to role, character to character describes, I would suggest, something in the nature of the self as impersonator. For in adopting many roles there is the assertion that none is permanent nor fundamentally defining; that all are equally true and equally exchangeable pretensions.

Surely, if all forms of human being are possible, no singular form of being can easily claim ascendancy and the self is not constrained to be any one identifiable person, but is free to play at portrayal. Thus, impersonation replaces confirmation as a source of identity, and the self's (modern) existential anguish at the loss of personal authenticity is superseded by its (postmodern) appropriation of an impartial relativity. And as the self becomes many selves, as it

becomes "saturated" with other voices and distant times, the self may be said to be quite literally inundated by "otherness," while perhaps rendering the notion of "The Other" obsolete.

It is possible to discern in Gergen's (1991) work the implication that a postmodern self has foreclosed the Other -i.e., the stranger, the unknowable, the absent from, and other than self- and become the exclusive territory of the eternally immanent. Thus, where it is possible to argue, for example, that the romantic tradition exemplifies the mystery of the absent within human existence -expressed in such notions as the "deep interior," or the "dark unknowable," and even the "timeless unconscious"- and the modern tradition is emblematic of a "rational faith" in the ultimate discoverability of essential essence, the emerging postmodern sensibility introduces the notion of the "ever present other" in a virtually ever present now.

Lost Horizons

All that was formerly strange, unreachable, and desirable is now rather readily attainable. No thing and no one need be a mystery nor absent from knowing. There are few experiences that cannot be had and precious little that need remain exotic, for a postmodern epistemology captures the other, and the other's time; it "unpacks" the mysterious, holding it in the gaze of the familiar. The self, in the facile adoption of roles, no longer pursues the other, but can become the other. Strangeness is appropriated and the enigma of the unknown yields to the customary. What was absent is now (technologically) present, what can be, is; and just as there is essentially nothing that one cannot experience or know -only consider the emerging capabilities of "virtual reality"- there is concomitantly nothing -and no one- that one cannot be, and virtually no time and no place that cannot be reached.

Identity, conceived as an "inner sameness" over time -we think again of Erikson- constrains the concept to signify but one consistently recognizable set of characteristics attributed to one person as his or her own distinct self. What is not subsumed under that umbrella of characteristics is simply "not me," and is other. Who a person is necessarily implies who (s)he is not, and that there is a (personal) boundary which cannot be crossed. I cannot be you - i.e., the other. The "I" can pursue the "other," and desire the "other"; even wish to possess the "other," but cannot be the "other" and still be one's self. Indeed, being a self depends upon not being able to breach that boundary of otherness. For in order to recognize being it needs to be part of a gestalt in which there is nonbeing; to recognize self there needs to be a differentiated nonself- i.e., an "other."

Because a postmodern reality asserts that there is no longer any consistently identical and identifiable figure (of being) which stands out against the ground (of nonbeing); that is, that "persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction" (Gergen, 1991, p. 7); it has, in effect, splintered the psychosocial matrix which has defined individuality. Postmodernism's view that all concepts can be dismantled also dismantles the concept of a conceiver of such views. The author has been erased from the text.

So it is that in a postmodern world, it is both possible to play all roles, and feel all emotions at the same time that one understands that all roles and all emotions are themselves in perpetual jeopardy of being annulled. That all things can be made present and presently overthrown by a

change in perspective. In this way, while all others can be made fully coincident with the self, the self itself is no longer discernible, for as it becomes all others it simply cannot be its own particular self. As the things one feels and thinks can be (re)defined as other, then so has self become other. And as a container of "otherness" the self becomes a kind of totality in which all things may be present. And, finally, if all things are present then the idea of the absent is foreclosed (the singular self is no longer perceived), and psychic space implodes. In a paradox of the postmodern, the fully present self is absent. Thus we may say with Gergen (1991) that because the self is fully saturated, "the fully saturated self becomes no self at all" (p. 7).

Arcadian Conceits
“Nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent”
(Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop, W.B. Yeats).

This puzzle of "the absent" and of "the other" shadows the self in its many conceptual incarnations. Thus we have observed elsewhere (Socor, 1997), for example, that selves of representation -literally of representation- of achieved identity, or sense of self, is a matter of returning, of making present and whole again, that which was absent and separated. The self, in this view, was built upon making one's own -of privately possessing- mental images of actual others. In theories which may be subsumed under the rubric of "representation" there is an a priori assumption of veridicality assigned to the idea that the individual self did experience a pre-linguistic, "pre-historical" union with otherness which was lost upon entering the language of time and psychosocial being, and that the journey to selfhood is coincident with recovering Arcadia, reentering the Garden through the "psychic back door." To the extent that what was lost is found; what was wanting is realized; what was desired possessed -is represented- in the life of the mind; then can one claim, and psychologically experience, a solid -indeed, a full- sense of self. It is a matter of establishing a kind of eternal psychic now. The healthy self is immanent, present to itself psychologically. It overcomes what was "lost," and consequently absent, by resurrecting it in the mind. In this way do a host of theoretical positions, particularly in the American tradition (e.g., Hartmann, Jacobson, Mahler, Kernberg, Kohut), address the question of absence while conceptually retaining the authentic psychological self as an assemblage of "present" images.

Gergen's work, and constructionist concepts as they are a reflection of postmodern sensibilities more generally, also address the notion of the absent, but in a very real sense by annulling it. Whereas more traditional selves of representation sought to appropriate absence, and define the self in terms of its relative success in "filling the void," "resurrecting the dyad"; the postmodern, or "saturated" self -as an epiphenomenon of a sociocultural context in which all things are or can be made instantly (technologically) present- abolishes absence. Here, it is no longer a question of incorporating the image of the other and making it a part of one's distinct psyche; rather, the postmodern self reverses the process by itself entering the life, the mind, -the life of the mind- of the other(s). The self is only as it is an other. By interchangeably filling many equally true roles there is nothing -no thing- which cannot be self. Nothing need be absent, hermetic, nor beyond capture. Nothing need be desired nor even worshiped, for nothing is beyond being.

A seemingly apparent nihilism lurks within constructionist thought and the postmodern project generally, following in the wake of a dismantled transcendence. For if nothing is privileged as "given," and there is nothing to which the status of "prime mover" is attributed, then nothing possesses authority beyond the word, for it is with words that we speak, and so construct, the world. And even these signifiers of meaning, after deSaussure (1915), have been forever separated from the signified. How, in a postmodern world can one discern meaning? And what kind of psychological future is suggested by the radical indeterminacy and conceptual deconstruction of essentialism? In seeking to respond, we shall briefly explore the efficacy of a methodology clearly suggested by the constructionist perspective, that of narrative.

***"On With The Story..."**

"One does not acquire a state of 'true self' but a potential for communicating that such a state is possessed" (Gergen and Gergen, 1997, p.173).

The social constructionist perspective, we have seen, asserts the indeterminant nature of human "selfhood," posited as a cognitive state conceived and sustained within a web of social constructions, themselves the consensually objectified and institutionalized outcome of publicly shared subjectivities.

And this sociocognitive state of self is not a material achievement but a communicative one; not an actual entity, but an articulated one; a verbal construction subject to "a hundred visions and revisions," the "ongoingness" of which is sustained in relationship.

As a method of understanding experiences in one's life and promoting particular actions than, the linguistic linking of events in a coherent and purposeful way -i.e., constructing a reflexive self-narrative- is a symbolic undertaking both social in origin and function. It is by way of the word that we tell ourselves who we are and why we do what we do. Building coherence and purpose by employing the distinctly social tools of sign and symbol, we learn to recognize ourselves in the confirming reflection of the other. Language is a social contrivance employed to fashion "private I's. " Thus, in a variation of Parry's (1991) "hermeneutical circle," narrative fashions the self and the self fashions the narrative. And in order that the narrative be effective as a vehicle of self construction the narrator must objectify his/her own subjectivity. Thus, there is no actually private self for the narrative, as a system of linguistic symbols, is necessarily public. Consequently, the self which is embedded within the narrative -as the implied "I" telling the tale-like the narrative itself, is a social contrivance.

The narrative, Gergen and Gergen (1997) argue, is not only the vehicle for self-construction, but possesses of itself a distinct "social utility." Indeed, it is this very usefulness of narrative in advancing particular societal ends -notably its own optimal survival- that privileges a limited number of favored forms that most successfully advance these ends. For we understand that the number of constructed narrative variations is potentially legion, yet we see that in practice there is a set of identifiable and circumscribed configurations which are regularly employed to convey our stories into the public domain.

Storied Forms

Gergen and Gergen (1997) distinguish three elementary narrative designs, each of which is characterized by its capacity to advance the interests of society. These are referred to as the "stability narrative," the "progressive" narrative, and the "regressive" narrative, all of which represent an appraisal of events as they take a particular direction. That is to say, each narrative form adopts a particular orientation in time -e.g., forward, backward- with respect to events and offers an evaluation of the general "goodness" or "badness" of those events. Interestingly, this evaluative proclivity appears, even to the constructivists, as what Gergen and Gergen concede may be a "primary dimension of human experience." Let us briefly review these forms.

A "stability narrative," as the name suggests, "links incidents, images, or concepts in such a way that the individual remains essentially unchanged with respect to evaluative position" (Gergen and Gergen, 1997, p. 165). The narrating self does not get "better" or become "worse" in the course of the story, (s)he remains the same. That is not to say that there is no anticipation of future events, for indeed there is. What does not change is the individual narrator's evaluation of his or her condition as (s)he looks toward that future. Thus, as Gergen and Gergen note, phrases such as "I am still..." and "I continue to be..." suggest the stasis that characterizes this form.

When the linking of experiences are evaluated in terms of "increase" or "decrease," we have "progressive" and "regressive" narratives, respectively. In the former, the individual characterizes events and his/her role in them in terms of "welcome" or "desirable" change; whereas the tenor of regression is "decline." or "failure." So phrases such "I am learning to overcome..." clearly suggest what is commonly meant by progress, while "I can't seem to control..." are emblematic of regress (Gergen and Gergen, 1997).

These narratives are "favored" forms of self-construction because they foster the contrasting social needs of stability and change necessary to perpetuating social systems. Even the regressive narrative is functional insofar as a story about decline and worsening conditions is often the motivational prelude to a directional shift. Psychotherapeutic endeavors, for example, characteristically seek progressive change over time, which typically entails an initial and often extended regressive tale of setbacks. Indeed, it is frequently the narrator's immersion in this particular version of his/her life which serves as the impetus for undertaking the psychotherapeutic journey. Thus, stability narratives are favored by the common desire

for the social world to appear orderly and predictable; progressive narratives offer the opportunity for people to see themselves and their environments as capable of improvement; and regressive narratives...have an important motivational function in their own right" (Gergen and Gergen, 1997, p. 175).

Now, consistent with a constructed perspective Gergen and Gergen (1997) are careful to punctuate their discussion with the reminder that these narratives "are in no way to be construed as objective reflections of one's personal life," and further, "the events themselves [described by the narratives] do not contain inherent valuational properties" (p. 168). The evaluative cast of the narrative is decidedly not descriptive but attributive. That is clearly to say, events in and of themselves are value-free; they contain no inherent, or essential nature. And consequently, neither does the life it recounts. "Goodness" or "badness" is not intrinsic to any action, but rather "depends on the framework one employs for understanding..." (p. 168).

Return of the Repressed

“Neither the We nor the I is a physical reality; but they are not fictions either. In their own peculiar senses they are as real as anything we know” (Carr, 1997, p.22).

In eschewing essentialism, in abandoning allegiance to transcendent principles of explanation are we, as Parry (1991) asserts, then conceptually and humanly free to adopt, indeed to “embrace,” the “belief that the power to change is in the story and need not be looked for anywhere else...?” (p. 42) If absent any authorial claims to privilege all stories are equally privileged and in possession of “truth” from some point of view -i.e., if all vantage points produce equally valid visions, at least for the particular “envisioner”- then are we not led to conclude that not only all views, but all actions which may derive from those views, are also equally valid (at least for envisioner qua actor)? In other words, do all things become permissible in a world where social consensus can be understood as a form of oppression; as a method of constraining other points of view regarding “self” and “self-expression?” In defending against what Parry has termed the “slide into objectification,” do we risk wallowing in horizonless subjectivity? An authorless, directionless tyranny of relativity? Perhaps not.

In a postmodern paradox, the way out of the labyrinth of relativity may rest in privileging, or more closely, in acknowledging the “already always” present privilege accorded the “word” as it is actively employed by the individual speaker or writer to make some patterned sense of subjectively experienced, and seemingly disparate events. In other words, language may take the place, indeed fill the void left by the conceptual exile of transcendence. For I am suggesting that even granting a constructed sense of self, deriving from the application of language -itself a socially constructed system of publicly agreed upon meanings- to subjectivity by subjects, in order for the resultant narrative construction to be at all functional, it necessarily requires consensual confirmation. That is to say, even constructions require some degree of objectification -i.e., the auspices of others that what has been constructed is “real,” possesses a “reality” beyond the mind of the constructor. Some transforming transcendence -some attribution of actuality- must adhere to the self-constructed self; some consensual acknowledgement that what emerges from my subjectivity bears sufficient relationship to what emerges from yours that we may both agree on a shared -i.e., an objective- “realness.” Language, as the conveyor of subjectivity, carries the self into the world, and in order that it be “seen” -i.e., communally confirmed- there must be some prior agreement, some already waiting net of public meaning, that clothes unadorned -i.e., “naked”- subjectivity in the objectively recognized -i.e. shared- raiments of consensual symbolic convention. A sense of “personal realness” requires that the “I” receive the affirming embrace of the “we.” For we know that the emperor has no clothes, but saying so undresses us all. Instead, we agree -most of us, most of the time- to the “truth” that we are fully attired. And we “know” it so because we say so, at the same time that we also know that we can “unsay” and “resay.” Paradoxically, by adhering to the protocols we have ourselves promulgated, we affirm and render substantial our own otherwise insubstantial subjective creations. I am suggesting, thus, that a social constructionist theory of knowing, to sustain its relativist claim, needs to provide for some vehicle beyond singular and irremedial subjectivity in order that such subjectivity may be thought to exist at all. To sustain relativity, some concession to fixity needs to be made; to buttress the construction, a foundation is wanting. And narrative recounting, through the vehicle of language, may be that foundation. And the nature of this theoretical concession rests not so much in reasserting essential forms, but in giving ourselves over to the forms we construct. For we create our own stories and then readily concede to them a

formative power for their own in which we willingly believe. It is our peculiar form of "being-in-the-world," neither physically actual, nor entirely devoid of a certain "realness"; it is what Wallace Stevens (1957) has called the "exquisite truth," and it may well serve as the "true faith" of a postmodern epistemology.

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- *[This heading is a taken from John Barth's recent work of the same title, published by Little, Brown, 1996.]

****THE STORY OF THE SELF: THE SELF OF THE STORY**

By James E. Giles, Ph.D.

Until the eighteenth century, there was a broad consensus about the nature of the self. The view of the self around which this consensus developed was originated by Plato and redefined by Descartes. The self was regarded as an inner, nonmaterial entity, accessible only to introspective consciousness, different from the material body and the material world. Unlike the changing body and the world, the self was fixed in the permanency of an unchanging and immortal substance, i.e., in a soul.

This view of the self was challenged by the newly emerged and scientifically inspired empiricist outlook in philosophy. The locus classicus of the critique of the traditional view of the self is found in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (I,iv,6). Hume's criticism is generally recognized as a watershed in the development of the western approach to the self.

Hume raised what is still a serious objection to the view of the self as an inner entity which can be approached only through introspective consciousness. With deceptive simplicity, he points out that conscious reflection on the self reveals not a substantial and permanent inner self, but only a series of fleeting mental perceptions. At best, the self revealed by consciousness can be construed only as "a bundle of perceptions." The existence of the soul cannot be verified by introspection. Hume calls it "a fiction."

If selfhood is located in a soul which persists from moment to moment, then it is a simple matter to account for the continuity of the self. However, once the soul is regarded as a "fiction," the continuity of the self becomes problematic, i.e., Hume leaves us with the challenge of explaining how the present self is the same as the self which existed yesterday or ten years ago.

During the last two hundred years, increasingly sophisticated accounts of the self, mostly materialistic, have emerged in response to Hume's challenge. Initially, the self/soul identification was replaced by a crude self/body identification. The theory evolved into a self/brain identification which maintains that our conscious states are essentially neural firings in the brain. Any attempt to give an account of the self which treats the self as a nonphysical entity outside the sphere of the causal laws discovered by science is rejected. However, such an identification of the self with the brain shares with the traditional view the implicit assumption that the self can be reified and objectified, though it substitutes an inner material entity—the brain—for an inner nonmaterial entity—the soul.

Like the self/soul identification, the self/brain identification is open to criticism. Philosophers have invented puzzle cases to point up the paradoxical situations which can result from the self/brain identification. For example: What should we make of a person whose brain is split or divided into its two hemispheres, each operating independently of the other? Are we dealing with two selves or one?

I mention this criticism—and many others can be adduced—not as a propaedeutic to a reinstatement of the traditional view of the self, but to suggest that both views suffer from similar problems. They account, for the continuity of the self over time by implicitly treating the self as kind of thing. The reification and objectification of the self offer only a lifeless and mechanical account of the evanescence which characterizes the self.

Recently a promising alternative approach to the self has emerged which views the self not as a thing but as a narrative activity. One of the first disciplines to evince this shift is theology,

specifically what has been termed "narrative theology."

Narrative theology develops out of the recognition that religion depends upon sacred books or sacred oral traditions which contain paradigmatic stories. This historical fact about religion is quickly generalized into a characterization of the human condition. Narrative theologians maintain that all human beings are born into stories which shape how they view the world, others, and themselves, and that these stories supply narrative accounts which impose pattern on experience.

Eventually, we tell our own stories, but before we can be tellers of tales we must be listeners. We are born into the ongoing stories of our community. Just as a scientific theory makes intelligible what were before seemingly disparate facts, so these stories impose an order on events and experiences which appear unconnected when taken in isolation. These stories do not merely illustrate or symbolize the self; they embody the self; they are the self.

If the self is a story, or better, an intersection of stories, a disturbing question arises: How can the self get the necessary purchase to understand itself and to make judgments about itself? For many narrative theologians, autobiographical reflection and writing provide the best way of identifying and evaluating the stories which are the self.

A story of any kind is a literary reality and must be regarded from a literary point of view. This means that we must attend to the narrative techniques such as the use of plot devices and the manipulation of point of view as well as to the content of the stories. These techniques have exigencies of their own and allow a story to have an impact distinct from its content.

When dealing with explicitly fictional literature like novels, this is not troubling. A fictional work is supposed to be inventive and imaginative. Factual truth is not a relevant standard by which to judge the characters and events of novels. However, when we deal with nonfictional works like autobiographies, the situation is dramatically altered.

One view of autobiography sees it as a mode of historical writing. This view emphasizes the events of a person's life and gives little attention to the person's inner responses to those events. It leaves the reader the task of verifying, first, that the events related took place and, second, that they took place in the fashion that the autobiographer said they did. Such verification is often difficult and, in the case of much older autobiographies—records of events being totally lacking—often is impossible. But it is important to note that this view maintains a distinction between the self presented in the autobiography, the writing or narrating self, and the lived self, the self being written about or narrated.

A variant of this view emphasizes not so much the events of a person's life as the feelings and motives which prompted the autobiographer to act as he did. The assumption is that the author has privileged access to his inner life and is in the unique position of being able to convey it to others. While the author's account of his feelings and motives cannot be directly verified—only the autobiographer has access to his inner life—indirect verification is possible: looking to other writings of the author such as diaries, or to accounts of the author written by contemporaries.

Recently, interest in the problem of verifying the assertions of the autobiographer has faded and has been replaced by a radically altered understanding of the relationship between the writing self and the lived self which regards the self as an autobiographical invention and autobiography as synonymous with self-invention. It is only a short step from this contention to the deconstructionist conclusion that there is no self beyond the autobiographical text. Paul de Man, in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, puts the deconstructionist position clearly and succinctly: "We assume that life produces the autobiography as act produces its consequences, but can we

not suggest, with equal justice, that the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer does is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium?" As Oscar Wilde reversed the relation between art and life—life imitates art, not the other way around—de Man reverses the relation between self and text. The self does not produce the autobiography; the autobiography produces the self. For deconstructionists like de Man, the self outside the text, the lived self, disappears as an object of critical concern. The self with which the critic is concerned is identical with the autobiographical text. The author of the autobiography has no privileged access to his text or to his self. Since the self is equivalent to the text, it is open to interpretation and explication by all its readers, no one of whom possesses the definitive interpretation or explication.

For the deconstructionists, literature ceases to be a vehicle of insight into the human condition and instead becomes another mode of reifying and objectifying the self so that it becomes permanently alienated from itself, subject to the manipulation of others. The self becomes a cadaver suffering endless autopsies.

Many scholars and critics have shared the unease of the "common reader" when confronted with the extraordinary claims of the deconstructionists. These critics recognize, in however attenuated a form, an authorial self beyond the text. However, the nature of the self beyond the text apparently defies full-blooded characterization or description. These critics refer to this self as "incommunicable," "not finally knowable," "a mysterious reality."

Clearly the reason for this impasse is a reluctance to return to the language and concepts which describe the self as an inner entity. And this reluctance is easily accounted for. The criticisms of such a position still remain. If one were to return to the inner self position, one would have to confront the criticisms made of that position. The problem, as I see it, then, is to accept the insights offered by the new narrative and literary approach to the self while rejecting the extreme conclusion which deconstructionists draw. While this is a task beyond the limits of an article, I will offer some suggestions as to how this can be done which emerge from reflections on the first autobiographer, St. Augustine.

Time and change are the stuff of selfhood. They are best captured narratively rather than analytically. This is precisely what Augustine undertakes in his *Confessions*. For Augustine, the self is a reality which cannot be adequately treated in a philosophical treatise. He invents a new genre—autobiography—in order to convey not only what he tends to say about his life, but also about the self which lives that life. Augustine, like his philosophical and theological contemporaries, uses traditional "soul language"; unlike them, he tends to be somewhat uncomfortable with it. In his *Creation of the Soul*, Augustine worries about how the soul can be said to grow and develop, and how time can be said to enter into the soul. For Augustine, a timeless, remote and isolated soul as the carrier of self-identity is unrealistic.

To develop a conceptual underpinning for his autobiographical undertaking in the *Confessions*, Augustine turns to the central story of his culture—the Bible. The key biblical text he uses is Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." This text reveals human beings not only as images of God—thus representing an alternative to regarding them as essentially souls—but as creatures. Plotinus who influenced Augustine in significant ways, saw the soul or inner self as a piece of the divine, an identification which Augustine could not accept. For Augustine, the self is first of all a creature, irrevocably different in kind from its Creator. But the self also betrays the fundamental and inextinguishable relationship which existed between the human creature as an image of God and its Creator (IV,9).

The contours of the lives of individuals are shaped by their status as images. We can but image God—properly or improperly. Perhaps it is more accurate to say—following Gerard Manley Hopkins's substitution of "selving" for "self"—that we are not so much images of God as "imaging" of God. In interpreting self as an imaging of God, one makes contact with the narrative approaches to the self. The best way to depict and characterize a narrated and narrating self—which is the self of the Confessions—is as an imaging or selving. As an imaging the self takes on the characteristics of the lived self.

The lived self is relational. That is, the self is not so much an inner thing as a nexus in a field of relations: family, community, culture, God. Augustine's insistence on our being images of God establishes relating as an essential feature of the self for two reasons. First, the God imaged by the self is a Trinitarian God, that is, a God who exemplifies relating. Second, for Augustine, the self can exist and can be understood only in terms of its sustaining relationship with that which it images. By contrast, Aquinas's depiction of the self in Aristotelian substance-language allows the self to be understood as an autonomous entity which can be analyzed apart from its relationship to its creator. Augustine would have none of this. Apart from the self's relational capacity to image God properly or improperly, no judgment or analysis of it can make any sense.

The lived self is a protean reality, as Augustine recognizes (IV, 15). The self is a nexus of continually changing relationships. For Augustine, there is no untouched and immutable self standing behind the turmoil and trouble of life. The self is always becoming. Philosophical treatises using traditional soul language were inadequate in capturing this processive self. The genre of autobiography had to be invented because only autobiography is capable of portraying the becomingness of the self (X, 17).

Finally, the lived self is beyond total understanding: it is continually changing, and it is subject to the exigencies of the relationships which constitute it. One cannot know the influences which those relationships have had and will have. For Augustine, this means specifically the effects of God's grace. Another reason why final understanding of the self is not possible grows out of Augustine's anticipation of Freud. Augustine recognizes that the conscious and intending self can convey only an aspect of the total, ongoing self. It is not that there is a hidden, inner self, but that the conscious self can capture only part of the overall narrative that is the self. Because of this, self-deception is a constant danger of which Augustine is constantly aware. The proper or improper imaging which is the self can be judged only by God. That is why Augustine is continually referring to God as his audience throughout the Confessions.

But the key to understanding Augustine's approach to the self is its temporal milieu which makes possible, or, better, necessitates, its relational and changing nature and makes it prone to self-deception. Hannah Arendt, in *The Life of the Mind/Willing*, notes that, for Augustine, a human being is "a creature that does not just live in time but is essentially temporal, is, as it were, time's essence."

Augustine initiates his exploration of time in the Confessions by meditating on the problem of creation, specifically, the question often tauntingly asked by nonbelievers, "What was God doing before He created the world?" Resisting a counteraunt—creating Hell for those who ask such questions—Augustine goes on to distinguish between time and eternity, arguing that God exists in eternity and that time itself was created by God. After asking what time is, he offers the often quoted reply: "If nobody asks me, I know; but if I were desirous to explain it to one that should ask me, plainly I know not" (XI,14). Fortunately, Augustine is not easily discouraged—even by himself. He does try to answer the question.

Augustine first rejects the equation of time and motion which is given prominence by most of the illustrious Greek philosophers (XI, 24), because, he contends, motion is measured by time, not the other way around: a body standing still is measured by time as well as a body in motion. For Augustine, the key to understanding time is not to relate it to motion, but to the self. The self is distended or stretched because it is a creature of time. The self anticipates the future, attends to the present and remembers the past. Only in the self can time exist because only in the self can the passage of time be marked. Time is the very essence of the self, for the self—to be a self—must constantly change. A nonchanging self is a dead self—metaphysically as well as physically.

In emphasizing the connection between self and change or becoming, one must confront the danger of chaos. Augustine recognizes that the self is a *distentio*. It is constantly on the brink of flying apart. The self is distracted and dispersed among mortal things—one of the results of original sin for Augustine—thus imaging God improperly. This dispersal or *distentio* which is, in a sense, the self, must be brought under control. Cosmos must reign over chaos. The time that is the self must be structured and patterned so that the self can be structured and patterned. The ordering of formless matter which is at the heart of Plato's account in the *Timaeus* of how the cosmos came into being is internalized by Augustine. The real cosmic drama is the drama of the self, created in time and creature of time, heir to dispersal and distraction. By being pulled toward God, the self is pulled away from, dispersal and distraction: "[B]ut I am divided up in time, whose order I do not know, and my thoughts and the deepest places of my soul are torn with every kind of tumult until the day when I shall be purified and melted in the fire of Thy love and wholly joined to Thee" (XI, 29). The *Confessions* reveals how the patterning and structuring of Augustine's life took place, how cosmos emerged from chaos.

Augustine's procedure in the *Confessions* also reveals that self- patterning and self-ordering are more important than self-knowledge. Augustine is convinced that attempts at self-knowledge are inevitably incomplete and unsatisfactory because of the self's relational and changing nature, the limitations of introspection, and the constant threat of self-deception. As Oscar Wilde put it, "Only shallow people know themselves." The primary task of autobiographical reflection is indirect self-knowledge, not direct introspection.

To be a selving or an imaging means that one fights chaos by replacing it with cosmos, disorder by replacing it with order. Socrates says that the unexamined life is not worth living; it can also be said that the unpatterned, disordered life is not worth examining.

Ordering and patterning are not wholly narrative activities. Narration is only one kind of ordering or patterning, a verbal ordering or patterning. In a sense, an autobiography is more than a narrative. It is not an actor (the present self who is writing the autobiography) reading another's lines (the past self who has lived the life the author is relating), but some one who performs and whose performance supplies order and pattern. As an author, the self is detached and remote; it becomes irrelevant—as the deconstructionists have concluded. An author is separable from his text and is not necessary to our understanding of it.

A performer, however, is not separable from his performance: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" The autobiographical performance, then, presents rather than relates the mode of self- ordering and self-patterning which gives coherence and significance to this life. This self-ordering and self-patterning in the autobiographical performance take into account the possibility of self-deception and the limitations of introspection. Like a Jackson Pollock painting which reveals a pattern not consciously intended, the result of an autobiography—even when the authorial consciousness

lacks total control—is never chaos or chance arrangement, but order and pattern of a certain kind.

These excursions into narrative theology, autobiographical theory, and Augustine's image doctrine have issued in results more suggestive than definitive. The approaches to the self which emerge from these disparate areas of specialization represent the beginnings of what I take to be a new consensus about the nature of human selfhood. The current dominant conceptual framework which pictures the self as an inner entity is slowly breaking up. And I am convinced that some, if not all, of the approaches to the self sketched here will form the basis for a new conceptual framework which depicts the self as an ordering and patterning over time. I admit the need for further analysis and clarification of this notion. But I am certain that the way to a view of the self which is more fruitful than one which sees the self as an inner entity is by means of such analysis and clarification.

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Adolescence: From the unstoried life to the construction of the first narrative

By Kevin Barry Ph.D., C.F.C.

"We fight for men and women whose poetry is not yet written but which will presently be as enviable and renowned as any."

His words (Emerson's) come home to me like truth. A deep man, he says, believes the evil eye can wither, the heart's blessing can heal and love can overcome all odds."

(Robert Gould Shaw in Glory)

Therapists differ on whether the self is fragmented or unified and a clinician's view held at a given time influences practice. Some classical psychotherapists use techniques based on either Freud's topographic or structural model of the self where interpretations are to be made and skill exhibits itself in knowing how deeply to go into the various layers of the onion of personality. People are reminded that they resist, how they resist and finally what they are resisting.

Others take their cue from Kohut where the self is taken as a central core bounded and autonomous with an essential nucleus or heart like an artichoke. Outer protective layers that do not relate to the central core are to be discarded in therapy and those layers that do relate to the core are to be strengthened and this leads to a greater sense of cohesion.

There is probably no better example or exhibit of the fragmented self from the perspective of the parental/adult world than the adolescent. This is often in direct contrast to the view of most adolescents who believe they have a unified self, while they may overestimate the ease of changing this self and underestimate the difficulty of moving away from the culturally sanctioned niche provided by their family tradition or local culture. Adults often see the many distinct social selves available to an adolescent as allowing for a near schizophrenic approach of oscillation from one to another. The peer group self may be buoyant and socially gregarious; the self at home can be less talkative; the school self can be more focused still.

Adolescents see the time of trial and error as discarding old coverings and trying on new ones. The overstated independent and autonomous strivings are necessary to strengthen a coherent self. The very fear of loss of self from disintegration or further fragmentation may cause in an individual such anxiety that the self often has to be seen by the troubled owner as unified.

The question of whether an adolescent has a coherent or fragmented self can stake out positions for an intergenerational battle and can give the therapist working with the family of an adolescent the option of hoping for neutrality or abandoning neutrality (and all hope once he entered here) by becoming an advocate for the adolescent position. The latter posture can lead to sessions characterized with the therapist being the chief adolescent in the room.

There is another stance however. Elkind's fascination with the adolescent's reflexive ability to think about thinking led to a view of the adolescent "being on stage" delivering a "personal fable" to an "imaginary audience" and can be seen as a point of departure for a theory of adolescent narrative whereby the different senses of "me" joins the sense of "I." (Elkind, 1980) The adolescent "I" is defined in contrast to the field of different family selves from which the adolescent wishes to disembody. The process of determining who the "I" is involves claiming and

disowning disparate experiences as a subject. While adolescents are best understood as a part of a family system they are still individually struggling with their own center of initiative and responsibility and their changing personal experience.

A colleague of mine has a hobby of visiting university campuses. On a recent New England trip he was enjoying the land of milk and honey and noticed on the second day of the tour that his son, who accompanied him, was wearing a sweatshirt with a message. The inscription on it was "School Sucks." My friend happened to notice the inscription more fully as they walked through Harvard Square on their way to visit the university campus. In finding the right sweatshirt the adolescent finds a voice and begins to take charge of a life. Parents are admonished to teach their children well. What matters so often is what their children experienced. Old beliefs get shattered; experiences are honored as the person's own voice. Each person's story is inescapably connected to stories of others and to larger stories. We control the character in ours; we are one of many in others. A couple's then later a family's story emerges with individual stories respectfully left intact. A family story that does not respect individual stories by including them cannot develop or undergo necessary revisions.

The sense of "I-ness" represents a coherent version of a self in process - the current best guess of the relevant aspects now ascendant that comprise the "me list." These aspects often take the form of roles: the gas station attendant, the reluctant classroom speaker, the avowed non-athlete. The internalized story connects the aspects from the me list to a somewhat coherent I. Erikson's notion of the conscious side of identity is a completion of the statement "I am... ." Aspects of group affiliation, gender roles, aesthetic interest, anticipation of the future, an understanding of drives, endowments and opportunities help round out the story. Whatever form the story takes is integrating yet it remains only one version. My "letter to the world" has the one primary reader - the self.

The evolving self in process can be developed by a narrative stance. The partially storied, constructed, created and revised self fits a continuous narrative where meaning and coherence is imposed by the narrator. Fragments are incorporated into larger wholes. Revisited fragments are modified each time and are more likely to fit the over-all plot or meaning. Counselors need to step back to hear the various story lines. The independent objective self is influenced by culture, myths, values, and television. The story leads to one of several identities. To paraphrase one of Shakespeare's characters, *Beware of the stories you tell yourself for you will surely be lived by them*. Adolescents easily describe a previous self as distant--the way they used to be but are not that way any longer. The cohesive story fits yet it is not what the author wants to become. Metaphors are used to describe the self but to a certain extent they shape the self. Self-description can lead to self awareness based on personal theories. An adolescent once told me she was tired of being "cigarette burned by her mother's ranting and ravings." To the extent a person believes in a cohesive self there is a higher self or a better self in process. Gestalists integrate warring selves within the same person by suggesting a conversation utilizing an empty chair technique or some other device to complete the self by some incorporation of its opposite.

Young people are not completely storied. They sometimes take the role of a protagonist. In a few of their stories the parent is the narrator or the audience. Their stories are reactive. Often, their story is the only one possible with the set of characters in their lives (parents, an evil teacher, a former boy/girl friend, etc.) which lead to a list of mitigating circumstances. Attributions of motive and intent are often given the supporting characters. Part of what parents and others say though vehemently opposed usually is incorporated. A seventeen-year-old shows a clever creative writing assignment to parents but can be met with the response "so how's your

personal statement for your college applications coming along?” A sixteen year old who skipped a glee club dress rehearsal needs to explain, “I had to be with my friend, she needed me.” Both adolescents may see their parents as critical and uncaring. Each party presents a totalizing view of the other. Parents see the seventeen year old as scattered, or procrastinator and the sixteen year old is labeled irresponsible.

An adolescent who describes herself as different uses intent to explain why she is not deviant. A list of mitigating circumstances justifies behavior by what is attributed to these circumstances and her response was the only response. It's necessary to separate self from the totalizing view. In the dance that ensues rebelling generates pushing from the parents and demanding ones own space causes parents to over specify the future. Each party is a definite post modernist and justifies any response by pointing out what the other is doing.

The rebellious adolescent needs to become an author to start writing a future scenario for self involving his endowments, drives and opportunities, to self monitor and test and evaluate possible eventualities. Both sides of the family need to write future stories that the offending party has for them and both stories get deconstructed then later revised, each incorporating the other and thereby constructing more fluid stories.

Adolescent girls can be helped not to lose their voice and to continue to know what they know as they write their stories. (Gilligan, 1990) Parents do not have to contribute to subjugating stories for their daughters by having a concept of feminine with too narrow a bandwidth. The adolescent girl needs to feel that defiance is only one voice and it represents not fitting into a partially pre-arranged definition. She can later submit or she can continue to define herself. She needs to appreciate the concern her parents have of her not fitting into society. Her parental story may also not be consonant with society's story for her. Her preferred story will leave both versions in the dust.

An adolescent girl played in the school orchestra with her black hair, her black gown and a black cello. Her only option was to dye the front wisp of her hair pink much to the chagrin of her celebrity parents. “What else was I to do? I had to be noticed.”

The story is invented to explain a person's worldview with her place in it. Events and lives become mythic. One adolescent told me his mother was “the East Coast Distributor of Guilt.” Stories are unique, cultural versions influenced by television and the movies connected with the present snapshot a person has of his or her identity. Stories are never congruent with facts, and may even be unknown to the person. Power and love (similar to Freud's love and work) are often central elements. Narratives are structures of meaning and power and tell us what is the data or topic for study.

When the life story goes mad the term psychopathology can fit; broken stories might be repaired in treatment or as is so often the case the repair comes from further experience during or maybe because of the treatment.

Writing about a painful experience after a trauma or bad patch leads to distance which leads to objectivity as the emotional experience is translated into a more cognitive rendering for an anticipated future audience. Stories need not always deal on a fantasy level with the future--an oft cited criticism is that present “reality” is denied. One's past involves introjection of significant others even the classical notion of identification with the aggressor. Narrations may transcend the past by envisioning new possibilities the “former I” becomes a self becoming. Beginning to talk and write I become a narrator and how I reverse experiences and processes in time I transcend the self; I understand and reorganize experiences. Over time the event becomes smaller and better connected to the rest of my experience and less isolated; my life events

become more fluid with larger pieces leading to integration.

Adolescents cannot always distance from their experience because of the emotional intensity of their feelings and their lack of coping strategies. Narration involves fragmenting the self and allows some of the sense of self to be seen as past with alarming frequency in adolescence. The past may include distance between the adolescent and a problem. Every story is a form of censorship. Events to recount are selected; the ending is proposed. Old beliefs are shattered. Experiences are honored as the person's own voice with an unique view or explanation of the situation. Personal history is like group history; it is the way it had to be. The psyche is a story subject to revision. We don't perceive the world but we interpret it by supplying relative weights to experiences. When a therapist spots omissions in their stories, clients often recover forgotten strengths.

A dominant theory or story created a view of adolescence up until recently that muted differences across the species and hid essential conflicts in viewing adolescents. Through multiple lenses, the expert view of adolescence--inevitable storm and stress, a predictable generation gap across the board, the centrality of sexuality led to a dominant story that seemed to be objective describing a reality not actually empirically derived but imposed. To understand a particular adolescent well it may be necessary to let the story of how the person separates from the dominant or totalizing story that is constitutive of his or her life. Their own experience and their own possibilities contradict or go beyond their stories and go further than an objectified developmental view of adolescence.

The experience of treatment is decisive and the struggle to be understood rather than disbelieved or disliked and rarely appreciated leads to an adolescent less interested in courting a favorable impression who can begin the healing process. People are generally better convinced by reasons that they themselves have reached. Interpretations that are self discovered are more lasting than those imposed. Self insight follows a question to be answered. Why one question becomes important to the exclusion of other questions depends on the client's unique experience of conflict. We therapists impose theories on the people who come to see us. There are always feelings and lived experience not included in the dominant story. The client's story has shortcomings as does the therapist's version of the client's story and the therapists understanding of the client. The therapist's culture highlights certain aspects of the client's tale and questions and accents certain aspects led by the theory of the client's life. It is impossible to respond to every aspect of a story. One's theoretical orientation decides which aspects are salient and significant.

Psychological theories are lenses if not mere social constructions. If differing perspectives are maintained a conversation about adolescence is likely to develop. Dialog leads to a view that this is a process rather than a finding or suggesting a truth. Adolescents once definitively pathologized by a theoretical approach with access to the truth are few and not representative of their group. A therapist may view through different lenses that focus one aspect at a time and draw conclusions from changing stories and self-descriptions. Ever since Freud's case studies, therapists offer a narrative highlighting success stories from their professional theoretical stances as they make the story their own. In the copying that originates the copying "provides the point of entry from which a new journey can be undertaken that the story about therapy is not the journey itself" (White, 1989/90 p.33).

A conflicted adolescent sees a disturbing aspect of his family and makes it the dominant feature. Certain parents find a narrow point of contact for relating to their adolescent. Totalizing may occur on both sides. An adolescent who returns home late will recount how she was able to

help her friend. A parent may ask too soon, “Is your homework done yet?” A set of parents may be described by adolescents as “totally retarded.” The attacking and defending in a pain dominated relationship needs to be externalized. Adolescent depression follows when an adolescent’s “innocent behavior” (her experience and her definition) provokes criticism when they never accept her point of view.

A good adolescent therapist is able to find loopholes in a story and can challenge positions once adopted. The exceptions where they acted differently from their scripts can be pointed out as at least one example of how the usual predictable outcome was at least on this one occasion changed. Therapists can help adolescents rewrite their stories and show the contrasts in a story written to an employer, a future employee, a future mate and a psychotherapist. The various audiences would add a sense of distance or perspectives on each pole of conflict.

Often the adult story has too many details and timetables, although it may frame the problem somewhat accurately. Parents may see a child who rejects their story for him or her as growing up selfish, argumentative, unrealistically stubborn or in terms of the modal category for the troubled adolescent “oppositional.”

Externalizing the problem, re-authoring the story, developing a text of narrative analogy, and detecting the meanings a problem has for a person demonstrates the power of narrative approaches.

Resurrecting the subjugated sub-text by externalizing the conversations included in stories leads to the prevailing knowledge people have entertained about themselves.

In a family context the therapist can be curious about the reflections of family members and can ask questions about the questions they ask each other. Therapists can help the narrator revise the story with a few clarifying questions:

--What does the label scattered or procrastinating tell you about what your parents want from you?

--How do you approach your own plans?

--How should a 16-yr. old prepare for an important event or deadline?

--What stories do your parents have for you apart from the problem story?

--How does the problem relate to the larger story?

--How does your story for yourself differ from theirs for you?

The adolescent therapist needs to honor a theory of change, proposed by the adolescent. A question, “what did you hope would be different as a result of coming here?” or “What did you want to change would help?” Resolution of a problem implies a change will happen.

The danger of positing multiple selves was once captured by an adolescent client who asked: “when you talk to yourself, who talks and who listens?” Throughout development negotiation between various selves can be used in a narrative stance to reach a compromise. A story is a tale that makes the reader want to find out what happens next. Not only curiosity but interests and expectations are aroused as an appetite is engaged. Stories protect us from chaos by giving us a unit of knowledge, or foundations of memory and help us make sense of our stories--every picture tells a story whether the picture is at the beginning, the middle or at the end. As adolescence may be the prototypical model for change throughout development, any stage or crisis (mid-life, empty nest, etc.) is a revision of the adolescent narrative. All theories including narrative approaches are lenses. Having more than one lens avoids problems associated with

trying to use one lens to view a family or a person. Multiple perspectives follow from the lens in use. Young people look forward: the old look back; the middle aged look around.

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The Integrity of a Narrative Path: Circles of Possibilities

Robert Monteleone MA, MS

...The experience of being a “self” is fundamentally outside the domain of language, and theories represent verbal incursions into the realm of the unspoken. Such incursions seek to specify the indeterminate, and to formulate the ineffable, by effecting an expressive capture, within the contextual confines of the word, of that entity which, in being defined, eludes its meaning, and which cannot be found without also and immediately being lost. For words are imperfect and inherently static tools which can only approximate the dynamic experience of being. Words represent, and seek in their effect, to literally represent and make present again, that which is fundamentally absent--or else it would not require representing. In this way, to speak of the self is always to say what is not; to engage in incantatory conjuring of what is absent (Socor, 1997, p. xiii).

For the purpose of this essay and a better understanding of an alternative way of seeing a therapeutic relationship, at times I will use “storyteller or narrator” in place of client, and “co-narrator” in place of therapist.

How inclusive can therapy be? and inclusive of what? What goes on in a session is so highly intimate and at the same time so strangely universal, encompassing both therapist and client(s) working through very intimate entanglements, conflicts, estrangement to some point of balance, peace or acceptance. Both participants move towards some goal but can not escape being affected by the collective context of our times. Therapy can be so intimately delicate yet so caught in the generalities of living. So throbs an ever present dialectical pulse between the unique and the common-- what is concealed and unconcealed. That is, for every character, plot and theme there exists secondary characters, sub-plots and minor counter-themes. In this vein, I find a narrative framework the best possible way of understanding what I do as a therapist. There arises the defined, chiseled-out individual story and the relationship that story shares with a larger more collective story. A narrative approach creates space to hear the larger story and support in order to bring to bear what can be considered “the unconcealed” in every story.

There are many who would argue Narrative therapy as a way of doing therapy, complete with techniques, unique strategies and solution-focused agendas; while others would see Narrative as a stance, a philosophical structure or disposition, at the least, a mere type of posturing. For me, a narrative focus is a way of coming to some understanding concerning another’s reality; it is more a way of seeing and less a way of doing. I would even venture to say that a Narrative understanding acts as another way of knowing and helps the therapist conceive a client’s world in a respectful, humble and encompassing manner. A Narrative structure seeks to rely less on psychological jargon and apparatus, and more on clients’ own ways of using language in order to clarify and explore their worlds. Within this structure the therapist focuses less on remaining objective, somehow distant from the client, but works to collaborate with client to find solutions. Therapists leave the expert position, freeing themselves from thinking that they must have the answers and feeling guilty if they can not supply authoritative advice and

wisdom. The narrator and co-narrator work to reach a place of shared meaning: this construction depends on an active, self-determining narrator to supply a story, while the co-narrator supports and encourages these narrators telling their stories.

As therapists, whether Modern or Post-Modern in our thinking, we all come armed with some theory, as a way of conceiving or structuring a problem. But like any theory, it is as limiting as it is helpful. The theories we find most helpful are the ones in which we can comprehend, identify with, converse from, and readily apply in a therapeutic relationship. It seems, however, that the days of the grand theories are over; what prevails on the landscape is the language and velocity of “postmodernism” tangled with a pre-millennium fever of sorts. In many ways, a narrative approach to therapy stems from the distinct tones of postmodernism and, strangely enough something more ancient, mysterious and propelling--a horizon shaped by the present but formed otherwise. A well defined and intricately researched Narrative theoretical position may or may not be worked out; but as soon as it is, it too will be transcended, replaced by something other, lurking on the horizon. The Post-Modern Condition leaves us ripe for the picking. But, for the moment, working in the light of a Narrative approach helps me to understand what I try to accomplish in my work, entering a bold new way into relationship with clients.

A Structure that Breathes

I find that a therapeutic encounter operates within three levels of theoretical consideration: the inner circle of events, circumscribed by a sense of everydayness; the outer circle of motion, defined by past, present and future consciousness or energy; and the over-arching circle of transcendent possibilities, revealed in its own unique way at its own opportunity, within or without therapy. It is within these three levels that I hear a client’s story: working and reworking dread and hope, anger and joy, and despair and meaning. These three constructs are valuable in helping to structure a client’s story.

If considered visually, the inner circle would be smallest, representing the everyday movement of events, the content or material of one’s life, most easily expressed through language. The second circle, revolving around the inner circle, is characterized by motion. This circle is more difficult to penetrate with language; in fact, language fails to fully articulate the motion of this circle. The third circle surrounds the other two circles and is the largest circle. This circle exists because of and not apart from the first two circles. If considered as a whole, these three circles spiral upwards with energy, moving from outer circle to inner circle, and conversely, from inner circle to over arching circle.

the inner circle of events

Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold (Gergen, 1991, p. 7).

To begin with, in part, the inner circle of events consists of the presentation of the problem; that is, what the client/storyteller first brings to the therapist’s attention. The storyteller gives an account of what difficulties he or she is facing at the present moment. These difficulties are

related in fragments of facts, ideas, events, situations, characterizations of others and sometimes a reflective analysis of self, including hopes, dreams and intuitions. Often, I hear the presenting problems phrased in the same way, a number of times, leaving me with a sense of circular motion in which “the center fails to hold.” Within this sense of “the circular” I seek to “wonder, sense and feel”(WSF) with the storyteller, relying on repetition of the story to deepen the therapeutic relationship. In this circle, language is our central medium of exchange: we rely on our storyteller’s use of language to give us an accurate account of events. Within this circle, listening for metaphors, cliches, truisms, and how the client uses the complexities and mechanisms of the language to relate his/her story may give the listener a deeper level of the story to contend with.

I first heard the expression “*wonder, sense and feel*” from my former teacher and supervisor, Mr. Pat Tufano. Immediately drawn to it for its simplicity and profundity, it has stayed with me as a cornerstone for what I hope to achieve with a client. Basically, (WSF) operates in three different ways: within the narrator, within the co-narrator and between the narrator and the co-narrator. So, as therapists we were to, first, motivate clients to wonder, sense and feel their own stories; second, be aware of our own wonder, sensing and feeling in regard to how these stories strike our own chords; and thirdly, be cognizant of the (WSF) between therapist and client (the emerging story between client/therapist, narrator/co-narrator.) In other terms, the therapist continuously processes three systems: awareness of the narrator’s experience, of how that experience meets the co-narrator’s experience and the shared experience together--what happens among and between therapist/client. This kind of thinking and posturing underscore the importance of perhaps working in a more collaborative way with clients. We tend not to see the therapist in terms of remaining as objective as possible, measuring resistance, projection and transference; but, rather working and opening narrative space, creating a place for a special happening, listening to the unique unfolding of a significant story, hearing how the single story continually beckons for an audience and a place in a perhaps more collective and larger story.

Within this collaborative space, there must always be a sense of wonderment: an open, healthy curiosity as a way of providing a foreground for the storytellers to tell their stories. If we look for answers to solve with, we fall prey to the fears of the silence beneath every story, perhaps the danger of filling the absent inherent in the therapeutic relationship. So we tune into the “inner circle of events” with a sense of wonderment, resisting the temptation of labeling or reducing storytellers’ life events and facts into some neat, tidy theory that might readily explain their behavior, or worst yet, their lives.

“encountering Harriet”

Working in a community outreach center, in my third year placement, I walked Harriet. She regularly frequented the center and was known for her sometimes “outrageous” behavior. “So you’re the counselor here?” were the first words to me as she puffed a soiled cigarette. I explained my student status and offered her some details that would assure her that I might be of little consequence in her life. But, regardless of my version of the story, she urged me forward anyway. She was the type of person who would approach anyone regarding anything. I often heard her talking to the others at the Center about the most intimate details of her life. Not

stopping there, she would inquire about those same type of details of whomever she was conversing with at the time. Thus, began an experience that will stay with me for a long time. Harriet challenged every text book notion that I consumed as a student.

Establishing the meeting schedule of twice a week, we entered into her sense of “everydayness”. She lived with her husband, who was periodically abusive; fought with her only daughter, who resented her mother for the kind of life she lived; moved from apartment to apartment, being thrown out for either not paying her rent or fighting with her husband. The first task she wanted to accomplish in therapy was help in writing a letter to her husband who was in jail. The “inner circle of events” were bleak and her story overwhelmed if not frightened me. Over the first six weeks, she filled in much detail, and I wondered what I would accomplish with her, if anything. For the moment, the inner-circle of her story would be in the foreground, and my theories, assessments, diagnosis and treatment plans would remain a possible sub-plot.

the outer circle of motion

The wound and the eye are one and the same. From the psyche’s viewpoint, pathology and insight are not opposites--as if we hurt because we have no insight and when we gain insight we shall no longer hurt. No. Pathologizing is itself a way of seeing; the eye of the complex gives the peculiar twist called “psychological insight.” We become psychologists because we see from the psychological viewpoint, which means by benefit our complexes and their pathologizings (Hillman, 1989 149-150).

On one level, we see a client’s story as an expression of a motion of the mind; and, for the most part, we call this motion “thinking.” This motion inherent in every single story is so much more than thinking, but because language and writing are the ways we record and signify pathologies, we only get part of the client’s story when we use pathology as our central metaphor for understanding our client’s problems and difficulties. In other words, if we are not careful, it is so extremely easy to reduce their worlds to our limited understandings. What fuels this motion, and why this motion exists, is for theologians, philosophers and cognitive scientists to discuss. This motion of mind breathes in the outer circle, which may be defined as our general experience of the world. In other words, we may “wonder sense and feel” our way through experience and usually in the context of what is present, occurred in the past, or is expected in the future. Even in the use of the phrase “motion the mind” is forgetful of body and spirit, which is an easy trap to fall into when we try to conceive of what it is we do as therapists. Counseling is not only about what we think, achieving insights, but so much more. It seems to always press against defining who we are in the midst of ever changing experience; we somehow create our own experience and, at the same time, are shaped by experience. Post Modern thought creeps into a session, we can co-construct, narrator and co-narrator, in the context of freedom from authoritative, societal and cultural structural constraints; however, freedom can be a dreaded nightmare, or an opportunity for growth and positive healthy change. Will Harriet repeat the past, continuing to re-create the pain in the present, leaving out the future? In other words, will the themes which run through her story remain static while the scenes and characters change? Her story is one of non-connectiveness, the painful struggle we all face; the utter need to reach others, effect their hearts as our hearts become affected.

Past, present and future consciousness pervades all of the story. Harriet tells me what she hopes to achieve, a better relationship with her daughter, and how to better handle her husband;

in the present, how to get by day to day; and from the past, perhaps reliving moments of pain and hurt in the company of a co-narrator who may help her process that piece of the story in a different light.

In our therapeutic space we continually move from inner circle to outer circle. One poignant story, which Harriet repeated several times, involved her mother and it marked the beginning of her being institutionalized. She was seventeen, lived at home and for various reasons would always conflict with her mother, whom she described as “trying to be a good mother, but never really having the patience.” It was a spring morning and Harriet woke up late, as usual. She offered to help her mother clean the large plate glass windows in their living room. Her mother refused Harriet’s help, but the daughter insisted and the mother protested further until Harriet put herself through the plate glass windows. This event marked the beginning of many sessions with psychiatrists, psychologists and “well meaning therapists” which punctuated her life. Her pathologies evidenced through her rage episodes and thus she boasted about her labels -- “schizophrenic,” “paranoid schizophrenic,” “borderline psychotic”-- in her words, “they called me everything in the book, and I guess they were right, or at least I played the part well.”

We traveled many times to Harriet’s past, and this kind of story was typical, whether it was being repeated with her mother, sisters, husband, daughter, landlord, or individuals trying to help her, it was always similar, someone or something tapping into her rage. The ravages of rage was a story that she lived by; she was the rebel from the beginning and no one was going to change that.

My supervisor and the Director of the outreach center helped find a place for Harriet in a subsidized apartment complex, and she was already receiving disability, so that her basic everyday living situation was somewhat stabilized. She insisted that I meet her daughter, and by all means we sat together one day. I was conscious of one thing: How would Harriet set the scenario for feeling the need to break through glass again? Of course, Harriet objected to the way her daughter was raising her son, her grandson. But in her daughter’s mind, “who was this crazy women to tell me how to raise my son, when she did such a poor job raising me?”

I had a few subsequent individual sessions with her daughter. The stories she told all seemed to have the same theme, a mother who abandoned her and a father with a drug problem who had to pick up the slack. A particularly poignant moment for her daughter involved her being left in a bathtub as a small child, her mother forgetting she was there, leaving the apartment. Harriet’s daughter was highly doubtful that I or any “professional” could help her mother: “you can go home, but I have to deal with her everyday.” Apart from the hopelessness, a sense of re-living the same old story -- in this case, pain between mother and daughter, anger into rage, creative energy to destructive uses -- there were other parts of the story to be uncovered, developed and brought into the foreground; in a phrase, other possible stories to live by. Between the lines of both of their stories, I sensed there existed a hint that a different kind of relationship could be possible between the two of them.

the over arching circle of transcendent possibilities

I, your soul, always have your best interest at heart and know about everything you do. I don't make you suffer, but you make your self suffer at times, and you don't know why you do that. When your Soul speaks to you, you don't hear words, you have feelings. When you feel your

soul's presence you generally feel as if a great weight has been taken off your chest. I have lifted it. You feel as if you have expanded your awareness. I have made you aware. You know after a soul-to-self talk, you are more than you think you are and you also know whatever you think you are is always an illusion (Wolf, 1996, p. 319).

Working with Harriet was difficult but very rewarding. Although her stories revolved around being the outcast daughter, the rebel fighter, either against her husband or the world at large, there was one possibility for an opening: the love she had for her daughter and grandson. The field of counseling in general is saturated with ideas regarding change. Often in reading any counseling theory there is invariably a chapter or two regarding some theory of change: "What and how can we help motivate our clients to change?" "What are the necessary ingredients for change to occur?" and so forth. However, these notions of change are usually, to some extent, removed from reality; perhaps, shadowed by a consumerist, media-drenched society that preaches "change is good" and that feeds off our wants and not our true needs as human beings. What I thought Harriet needed was inconsequential to what would turn out to be an opening in her over-arching circle of transcendent possibilities.

The third circle operates as a "horizon of change." It represents the most elusive distance we travel towards a horizon that really can not be reached, given our limited vision. Often, this circle eludes linguistic expression and exists within the experience the individual has with the world. The use of a metaphor perhaps comes close to expressing a pattern or theme within a client's world, but using metaphorical thinking relies on a certain willingness to move beyond a pathology-orientated method of diagnosis and subsequent intervention based on such methodologies. James Hillman writes:

Psychopathology prompts sharper psychological insight than do spiritual ideals and formulae. A negative approach sheds the harshest light. The most pathologized moment in the entire incarnational story is the cry on the cross, which tells of the agony when one is encompassed only by the visible world. Enemies surrounded Jesus all through his thirty-three years, and though he was opposed and pursued, he was never so besieged as at that moment. The world of humans, of nature, and of things had become savage and hostile (Hillman, p. 111).

For some reason, the negative, or the pathological, presents itself most fully to therapeutic scrutiny and we heed that well. But as Hillman suggests, if there exists a certain fixed receptivity to mirror back that pathology, we can only remain in the world of the visible. The third circle operates within and apart from the visible. In other words, what mirrors do we hold up for the storyteller? Do we dwell within the most disturbing dimensions of the story? Are we always looking for the true "untold" story, which is usually negative? Are we reaching for the "headlines" which are invariably dark?

How are we to represent change for the storyteller? For Harriet, it was not my job to point out her lack of boundaries; at some level, the way of being for her was adaptive. There was something of Harriet's story that needed more tending, the need in her to change history, to create a better more functional relationship with her daughter, something she was not able to accomplish with her own mother. Through the course of our talking together, Harriet realized that perhaps her lack of boundaries had something to do with her daughter's very protected and rigid boundaries. She also did not want history to repeat itself, and worked hard to change that part of the story. We talked about better ways to deal with her daughter, and Harriet did very

well: a new story would emerge between the two of them.

I remember her telling me about her grandfather, a very strict orthodox Jewish rabbi, with whom she thought she had little in common with. Although the circumstances of their lives were quite different, their inner-convictions were of the same force and persistence: his force used within a synagogue and hers outside of a place of worship.

I listened to Harriet's stories for one year and learned so much about her life. For our last session, she insisted on taking me for coffee. The red flags went up: here she is again pushing the limits of the therapeutic relationship, another boundary issue. There was a part of me that hesitated going, but fortunately, I got over it and went for coffee. We followed a narrative path, allowing her to express the many corners of her life. I listened and sometimes acted within the first circle; reflected, witnessed and responded within the second circle; and for flickering moments reached and co-experienced the third circle. Since then, Harriet calls me to ask how I am and tells me how things are going with her daughter and life in general. For a moment, perhaps I helped her and she helped me: I have loosened my thinking about doing therapy, and maybe she has reconsidered some of her repeating themes that run within the emerging circles of her life.

A Narrative approach can accommodate a larger part of the story than one theory can explain the vast complexities of human behavior. Theories enable us to understand and thus validate our work. But the bigger question remains: How can theories help the client? The post-modern message beckons us to create our theories built on a more collective and universal range of human experience. If there are no more absolutes or answers, the tried and true structures no longer offer power to live by; then, where do we find truth? Where can we rest and find stability and hope? Maybe within the next story you hear. Truth emerges from within the narrative flow, not dictated from a position outside. As a therapist I look to co-narrate with a storyteller, tending the integrity of a story-- which is always worth hearing.

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Have You Ever Seen The Wizard? Thoughts From a School Psychologist

By Anthony Bongo, M.S.

Perhaps OZ is a long way from Kansas, and maybe the span we must travel to find ourselves is far. The journey to seek out what we need in this life, to become complete is complex and challenging; yet it can also be enlightening and wonderful. We must be willing to “go that distance”, “climb that mountain”, “swim that sea”, and yes, “Follow that Yellow Brick Road.” By committing to this quest, we can hope to understand what it is we have and what it is we are missing in our lives. When we accept the challenge to “take inventory” of our lives and identify what we have in our lives that makes us feel worthwhile and accepted, and what we still need to become complete, we realize our own personal strengths and weaknesses, attributes which make us special and unique; we ultimately can learn and live in our stories more fully.

Every story is different, each one just as important as another. Through the journey of self realization, “the trip down the yellow brick road”, the true riches in life, the jewels of the human existence, the actualization of completeness through the integration and balancing of a brain, a heart, courage and a home can be consummated.

As a school psychologist I have received and accepted the stories of the people I have met and worked with. I have learned to respect them and help them with their incomplete aspects of their lives. In turn, I have begun to reflect upon my own “story” and reexamine and redefine it. During this dynamic process, I have found myself rewriting my story in ways I would otherwise may never have. I have found my brain, my heart, the courage and a sense of home and family which I never quite understood. To achieve a more clear picture of the scenario presented here, a trip to see the Wizard may be in order.

In one of the most profound stories ever told, four heroes travel great measures to obtain what it is they are missing. They become aware of the need to rewrite their lives and edit in what is lacking. They believe that only one person can help them achieve this; one person can make them whole and help them to become free from the confines of their limitations-- the Wizard.

Each character in this classic story is searching for one of four essential elements in life: a Brain, a Heart, Courage and a Home. They need to decide what it is that is missing and seek what is needed to make themselves whole. They require a plan. Judith Hudson (in Mark Bennett, 1993) refers to this plan as a “script”. She claims the “...scripts are general knowledge structures, derived from real world experiences...” She also concludes “scripts include open slots that can be filled by different slot filler items in any single instantiation of the event” (Bennet, 1993). It may be then acceptable to say that a script can be made up of all or some of the events of one’s life, and yet be lacking some of the basic fundamental building blocks from the foundation of the human condition we all are experiencing.

The trek begins as our heroine realizes that she is lost and begins to feel the helplessness and fears losing her family forever. She is incomplete and needs to be made well again. This can only be done by finding her “way home”. Armed with the inner courage and some encouragement by the local village people, she moves forward and takes her first steps toward her goal. Regardless of the initial pain, frustration and isolation, she continues. Almost at her emotional end, she looks for answers to help her continue. As she stumbles forward, another individual, that may help her along, comes into view.

She meets a stranger who looks perplexed, talks in riddles, and displays the pain of “missing something”: a pain she is all too familiar with. In a world where intelligence is the barometer for success and knowledge is the key to acceptance, this stranger feels estranged. Our friend, the Scarecrow, is convinced that he cannot reason nor negotiate an idea. He is certain that anything connected to wisdom is well outside his given abilities. Thus, until his close encounter with the girl from Kansas, who we will see is also seeking what it is she is missing, he is content wasting his remaining days affixed to a cross of wood--amidst a flurry of anxious and sarcastic birds.

As the two travelers move forward in anticipation of perhaps a chance at “wholeness”, they meet another disciple in need. The Tin Man stands alone in the deep brush of the forest, confined by the rust caused by the storms in his supposedly loveless life. His need for a heart and his longing to belong leads him to petition his finders for a chance to join them in seeking what it is he is longing for. They accept. Together the trio (and, of course Toto too) move vigorously forward toward their dream.

The last companion to join this mission is a large and ferocious individual. He portrays himself as terrifying and dangerous, while only masking his minimal self-confidence and esteem. Dorothy sees through this facade and invites this gentle giant to join them. He too is welcomed to follow the path, which may lead to wholeness: sparking them to rewrite their own story by asking new questions and seeking new thoughts.

As a school psychologist in an inner city setting, I can palpably taste the reality of everyday life, witnessing those lives that are courageously struggling for completeness. I am also privileged to meet those who share their awareness of the “true” jewels of humanity. Without the glitter and shine of fashion, fortune and material frenzy that the mainstream America propagates so insidiously, I can begin to see the true essence of the human experience by listening to the stories and the struggles of the lives of these special children and adults. Society and even the school system itself refers to these children as “less fortunate”, by mainstream standards, as “poor”, “impoverished”, “unfortunate”, or “challenged”. There is a presence of pity, and a somber face or even a sad smile often used to assist any statement, which comes from someone’s mouth when describing these individuals. Pity is a word of weakness. We choose this word to label individuals so we can make them feel weak. This, in turn, makes us feel strong and in control. Feeling sympathy, the ability to understand, accept and care for others with less fortune, and empathy, the cognitive process to know what a person is experiencing when he/she is in need, are abandoned for the “more appropriate” word “pity”. We use labels to separate these individuals from mainstream America. These labels are used primarily to designate people as “deviant”, different in a negative or pejorative sense (Gans, 1995).

These labels of poverty and despair are not completely without justification as this society, which we have created, does measure happiness and success by basically monetary accomplishments. So, I guess if any particular group of people were without the “opportunity and rewards” of this American dream society would refer to them as “poor”, however I don’t agree. Gans (1995) discusses how labels create titles and classes for the poor. These classifications labels separate “them” from “us”. It protects what we have from “them” and it does not let them seek to get any of that which is “ours”. Labels are used to reduce people into categories, which makes it much easier for society to accept and reject them.

Throughout my three-year history of working in the South Bronx I have seen what aspects of life are important. I have witnessed the attributes which DO make a difference: those which make a life complete. Many of the students and parents I have had the wonderful privilege of

meeting and working with do possess these attributes. These virtues, which are at the core of the human spirit, cannot be obtained through a prestigious graduate school or an impressive financial portfolio. These characteristics are not for sale or negotiation: they are free, but they require work to own.

From a sample of the people and cases I have worked with, there emerge four qualities of individuals. These individuals have come to me for advice, answers, hope and for the chance to rewrite their lives in order to find a more meaningful existence. Ironically, what I have gained from them is far more than I have ever given. Through my working relationships, I have discovered that there are basically four “things” we need to complete our lives. These “things” or “virtues” are the ability to use our minds to understand our environment (a brain), the emotional awareness to be able to share our feelings and understand the feelings of others (a heart), the integrity to know what to do and stand up for the truth regardless of gain or loss (the courage), and the chance to really be needed and to need, as well as to belong and to grow with those around us (a home). If we are without them, we are incomplete and we need to re-evaluate. How can we do this? We have to go to see the Wizard.

Finding the wizard is not difficult. There are many people in our lives, personal and professional, who are willing to listen, learn and help; however, the problem with obtaining the big four is more complex than that. The greatest difficulty is ascertaining what it is I that I am missing, then determining and how I can rewrite my story in order to make the human puzzle complete. D.W. Winnicott (1965, 1991) refers to the process of a “journey” in our lives. The journey from dependence to independence; from incompleteness to completeness; from partial to whole. Dr. Winnicott discusses the quest of a young girl in his work “The Piggie”, where he uses psychotherapy to help the youngster find herself and rewrite a story which is incomplete. Dr. Winnicott, as a psychotherapist, worked closely with a child and her parents for a period of about two years. In that time he claimed to have her “participate in a process of growth and reparation”. He was able to help this child, and her parents, to rewrite their stories and become closer to wholeness as a person: he was their Wizard.

Like the group on their way to OZ, we are all in need the balance of a brain, a heart, courage and a home. When a person is able to find, integrate and balance these four elements of life, he or she may be considered whole. His or her story may be then complete. However, the reality of the human condition does not make this task easily obtainable. We all seem to be missing something; and, therefore we all may act in response to those things we are missing in our lives in different ways. When we feel that we are weak in the areas of a brain, heart, courage or a home, our personality may respond to that “weakness” in some manner. We may feel weak, not worthy or incompetent in some ways.

“If I only had a brain.” When an individual becomes educated he or she learns new thoughts, has new ideas and creates new goals. This is a result of the power of the brain. Developing our brain is not dependent on upper level graduate school research, nor will it shrivel up without the ability to do and understand scientific or mathematical experimentation. The brain does not require the satisfaction from “high scores” or “good grades”. (The brain is a complex entity and part of a physical, emotional and spiritual system.)

Today, youngsters are taught to be dependent on their “brain power”. Parents do whatever they can within their power to afford these youngsters the opportunity to develop “brain power”. The brain and its power is gauged or measured by the academic standards our society has decided upon. A youngster is measured by his or her grades and scores as a child, and then the list of universities who have accepted him or her as a young adult. Robert Coles (1997)

compares “general” to “moral” intelligence. According to his theory, brain power cannot be utilized to its fullest without an integration of both. I am not convinced that society and our education systems share the same philosophy.

As a school psychologist, I had the privilege of working with one particular student and his mother. The youngster had serious academic problems in school. He was unable to read and his math skills were very weak. Although a fifth grader, his academic skills were more closely associated with that of a first grader. A team, which includes myself, a social worker and an educational evaluator had to perform and evaluate the student and constantly make recommendations for his school program.

This same student was referred by his classroom teacher as being “slow”. He was characterized as being unable to perform any assignments and not able to understand concepts or ideas associated with his current grade level curriculum. Informally, the teacher referred to him as “out of it” and not being capable of passing this grade. The youngsters may have often stated the same phrase the “scarecrow” echoed as he himself felt apart from the expected norm of intellectual ability: “if I only had a brain.”

When I met with this student and his mom, we began to talk. During the screening process it was determined that he did not know how to read and his math skills were quite limited. However, his superior ability to converse with me did not fit a youngster who seemed so limited academically. He spoke with me, along with his mom, in a manner which suggested somewhat higher intellectual functioning. As I was speaking with his mother, I noticed that he was drawing an interesting picture of a bird. I commented on the nice work and his mom stated that he loves to use a pencil and paper. His mom then took out a piece of paper and showed me a series of symbols and markings he made which appeared to be in some type of organized sequence.

I asked the student about his symbols. He related that he does this when he goes food shopping for his mom. He took the paper and illustrated what it is he does. He showed me how he draws a picture of a cup filled to different levels depending on how much milk, eggs or cheese his mom requested. He also utilizes stick figured lines, of different sizes, to count and make change for money at the store. As the conversation evolved, his mom began to smile and nod her head as if to say “see, he is smart”. The youngster told me of his devised plan of communication, which he created to compensate for his “limited” ability. He told me that he makes “icons” or small “logos” to indicate what it is he needs to buy. For example, if he needed a quart of milk, he might draw a small container. If he needed a gallon, the picture would be somewhat larger. He used this same method for other regular grocery items; such as, bread, soda, eggs, etc. He also explained how he uses his “lines” to count and make change.

What was most utterly fascinating to me was that this youngster, who an elementary school considered “minimal” in brain power, was that he had created his own functional and practical language system to accomplish the task at hand. As I sat there and witnessed the pride in his face, I was struck with one thought: this young man must be a “genius”.

Often I’ve become tired of hearing how some of the more “challenged” students in an urban education setting should be considered dangerous and/or avoided. There seems to be a notion that because these youngsters are not up to the academic standards imposed, they are in some ways socially and emotionally diminished as compared to their more fortunate peers. These youngsters (because they all do have a brain) are aware of the discontent in which people have for them. They may, upon occasion, pose the questions to themselves: “am I really good?”

These youngsters are not any different from their counterparts. It is my notion that we, as a society, consciously or unconsciously (it may happen most in the latter which is interestingly

more dangerous than the former when societal prejudices and stereo-types are concerned) give these youngsters the impression that they are “bad”. This is not because of the acts they do or don’t do; but, instead it is based on what they have or do not have. If society would de-emphasize all the tangible goods which mask the true inner spirit, the heart, of a youngster (i.e. fancy clothing, electronics, money, and all the material things associated with success and the middle class), we may be able to get a clearer picture of the beauty that exists in all youngsters, regardless of social-economic status or geographic location.

When a group of students at an elementary school wanted to pay tribute and give support to the victims and families of the Oklahoma City bombing, they realized they had no money to collect, no resources to send them, and no computer to send an “internet” message. Instead, they gathered together as a group (fourth and fifth graders) and organized a private vigil in the park nearby. They only elicited the support of one teacher to supervise them (as mandated for safety reasons). This was their tribute and it was from the heart. To witness this expression of love and support to others half a country away was moving. According to Milton Mayeroff (1971), “the process rather than the product is primary in caring.” Society sometimes equates caring in a quantitative sense: “how much” or “how often”. The love and concern expressed by these students can only be measured by the quality of their gift and the sincerity of which it was presented.

When a sixth grader unexpectedly passed away during the school year, the children of this elementary school did not attract any media coverage, nor did they receive an out pour of support from surrounding communities; instead, they bonded together and offered love and consolation to each other, the family and even the teachers and staff. To watch these youngsters put aside their pain and offer whatever they had to anyone in need was moving. The capacity of “heart” in these youngsters in the school was as clear and powerful as the rising of the sun on a clear July morning. The genuine love and compassion exhibited by these sensitive and aware students, reflects the depth and true breath of “heart”. Sigmund Freud (1900) spoke of love as a measure for success and worthiness in society. He confirmed his view of the value of being loved in society as a crucial element for existence. In the same way the Tin man coined life’s success upon love’s presence when he stated: “it is not only how much you love others, but how much you are loved by others.”

I have realized that having a heart (and soul) is not contingent upon social class, level of education, nor popularity. It seems to me that many youngsters feel as though they are not worthy of the experience of feeling love and being loved. Much like the “Tin Man”, these youngsters are seriously misled to think that they are not fortunate enough to experience the warmth and beauty of a “heart”. I have also accepted the fact that as I seek to better my life and rewrite my story, I can take much from these youngsters: the abilities to feel their heart and expose my own. In this instance, the students were the wizards, revealing themselves as those wonderful rulers of OZ.

Courage is most often associated with heroic feats of great accomplishment in the face of adversity. It is also considered an attribute which is possessed by the powerful and strong; however, when I think of courage, I see the parent who comes into our office and openly shares the “story” of their lives. I also see the student, as described by Jonathan Kozol (1967), who comes to school with old clothes, somewhat poor in hygiene and is treated harshly by the teachers and staff because of who he or she is. This child, who willingly accepts the subtle and direct “attacks” on him for the remote chance of an appropriate education, personifies courage. One particular woman was especially moving; she shared her “story” with my team. She

explained how she had her children at a young age and nearly lost them while struggling with multiple forms of addiction. Her courage is not so much the fact that she overcame her addictions and got her life back in order (although that is truly a feat of pride and accomplishment); instead, the greater courage is in the way she was able to divulge her story with honesty and sincerity.

I have met very few people in my life that can look you in the eye and proudly claim that they made a mistake, and had the courage to correct it. This woman did not care about the response from or the assumptions made by those of us in the room. She told it like it is and we respected her courage. Currently, she has completed her high school equivalency and is beginning college courses. Her children are living with her in her own apartment: they are going to school and doing well.

When the human spirit is most in need, it seems to me that courage comes forth. We do not need to often call on this virtue in our lives, particularly people who have basic societal security and fortune. However, when confronted with the depths of despair in her addictions, she reached down into her soul and found the courage necessary for survival. This woman did just that; she not only survived, she prospered--a lesson we can all respect and learn from.

This story is not an isolated case. I have often felt privileged and honored working with many parents and students who also personify the true meaning of courage. I can only sit back in awe and respect their stories, and only hope that I too can be so courageous if my life ever required me to do so. I think that when the human condition rids itself of the "protective glitter" of cars, high priced homes, designer clothes and jewelry, it blossoms more fully into a spiritual entity which can combat anything which comes its way.

The need to belong and the need to be in family are also necessary elements to feel a sense of wholeness as a person. It is assumed by society in general that "family" and "home" take a specific definition. There are many governmental, church, and community based systems which attempt to define the meaning of family. This country has determined what that definition is and offers a general framework for the "American Family."

It is perhaps ironic that despite the diligent effort by society to outline and model "family values" and the "American home", most people do not feel this sense of "family" or "home" in their lives. Yes, they need to see the Wizard.

Working in the South Bronx has allowed me to gain a more poignant definition of the word "home". In a community that may be considered "less fortunate" or "in need of a value system", I have seen the beacon of light known as family and home shine brighter than in most areas I have ever visited or lived.

I see home less geographically and more a place where individuals come together and grow. These individuals collectively create a greater whole. This process of joining leads to sharing and creates a common bond. In turn, it becomes a positive force which naturally evolves into love. Love is the power which exists within all those individuals who live in this "home". That power, by its nature, is creative and promotes growth, concern and responsibility for and among those in that home. Home can be created on many levels. It can be the family of parents, grandparents, children and other relatives, or the six people who live together and share their lives. Home is good. It welcomes and it nurtures those who are in it. It exists in pure form within the community I work in and among the people I see.

Making one feel welcome and at ease is the true gift of Home, a gift which the Wizard does offer; and does through the lives of the people I work with. I have the privilege of working with parents who have a great sense of family, community and home.

Home takes on a completely different meaning when you remove the house, car, yard, lawn, flowers, and picket fence. When there is no fireplace to sit around and no oak dining room table to feast around, nor any T.V set to gather around; there can still exist a home.

As a society, we have accepted a picture of “home”. Unfortunately, this picture is painted by some who consider it applicable for all. We aspire to have a big beautiful home, or a place we can be proud of. However, many of us, like Dorothy, feel incomplete. We think we have a home or we know what it is to be “at home”, but we still need to see the wizard to truly understand the beauty, the nurturance and the wholeness a home brings to our lives; and without it, the void it produces. The people I work with do not have that void. They do not have the material aspects associated with home, but they do not need to seek out the wizard for the true spirit of home. They know “our very survival seems to depend upon our relationships”. Buscaglia states that people are “fearful that others may invade their world”, and thus they flee homes and communities (Buscaglia, 1984). This does not seem to be untrue in society today. We abandon our homes and communities for “safer” grounds. We let go of the very relationships which are vital to our emotional stability. The families I work with do not have the opportunity to do so, and some pity them for that. However, in return they are receiving one of the finest gift life offers; their homes and the interaction with the people who are special in their lives.

I tell this story because as a human being (not as a professional school psychologist) I am constantly in search for what may be missing in my life. I am always examining (or over-examining) what I may be missing in my story. I have searched long and hard and believe that the great tale of Oz offers a reasonable outline. I have come to accept that the four gifts of the mind, the soul, courage and a place called home, may help complete the story in most lives. However, as much as we may deny the fact, we do not have them all; at least not in their true sense. For this, yes, we must call on the Wizard.

What is most fascinating to me, as I sit in my spacious office, behind a large desk, and have all the paperwork I need, is I am the Wizard, helping the wonderful children and adults who have come through my office. Yet, in a manner of significant irony, I have found the Wizard in them. I have learned, in a true sense, what the four elements as wholes mean. These elements, have not only been defined, they have been put into practice. I have gone to the Wizard’s through the people I see here at my job. I have been able to re-examine my own life, my own story, through participating in their lives. I have also been able to be shown, in a raw and natural way, what those aspects I am searching for really look like.

I have seen the power of true knowledge, not the fabrication of an anxious and technological society. I have seen true heart felt love and dedication of individual souls toward one another. The true meaning of courage has made itself known to me on many occasions; and it is, at times, more powerful here than our history books reflect. I have witnessed what it is to be “at home” and to see what families and communities do to exist in the purest form; without those availabilities which give us comfort from the storm and a cushion against displeasure.

I have learned valuable lessons during my short tenure in my district. I am still trying to re-examine and fulfill my own personal story, always asking new questions and trying to fill in my missing pieces, one at a time. I hope to understand fully one day the true spirit of knowledge, heart/soul, courage and home as manifested in who I am and what I hope to do with the individuals and families I work with.

We all need help some times. When we cannot understand what it is we need or what it is we are missing, we can go to the Wizard. This is a complex world and to “go it alone” is not

necessary. I am fortunate enough to have come upon my Wizard(s) accidentally. I have become “more whole” by listening, interacting, and sharing the life stories of the wonderful individuals I have been designated to “help”: those who may consider me the Wizard.

The world is an interesting place, and fate can sometimes deal cards which are confusing. What I wrote about here confused me initially. I had to take a step back to understand the marvelous dynamics that were taking place here in the south Bronx for me. There may be no Yellow Brick Roads where I work, and the buildings are not lined with emeralds. However, if one is willing to seek and share, he/she may be lucky enough to find the Wizard. The Wizard may be who you least expect and may come at a time or place when you are least prepared to receive him/her; yet to ignore this overwhelming experience would be to cheat yourself out of the true riches of life.

I deeply value my role as a school psychologist. I have gotten back far more than I have given to these families whom I have had the privilege of working with. I have learned new things and made changes in my own life’s script. I have grown and become more whole because of these people I see daily. Where once I was considered the Wizard; someone who the students and parents in my district could come to for help, I have found myself seeking the Wizard in my own right. Ironically, I have found spirit of the Wizard in those I have described here.

I have come to realize more of the valuable aspects of life, and made more aware of the simplest essentials within the human condition. I have seen the power of the “brain”, the strength of the “heart”, the stamina of “courage” and the truth about family and “home”. I have witnessed individuals who have found a way to balance these virtues and complete their stories. I have been inspired by them and challenged by their simple strength and energy to do the same in my own life.

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Story, Silence and Spirit: The Crisis of the First-Person Pronouns

By Reggie Marra, M.S.

"Listen to me!" This familiar command has fallen from the mouths of parents, teachers, and other authority figures for years. "Please, listen to me!" This plea has likewise been uttered (or acted out) by children, students, and other subordinate (or desperate) figures. Although the former seems to be a command, it is as much a plea as the latter--a request for recognition--a desire for an opportunity to tell "my" story, to demonstrate that "I" count--that "I" am important. Both parent and teacher are saying, "I count. I have lived more years than you. What I have learned can help you. Please take advantage of what I have to offer you." The story offered--the advice or the lesson--may or may not help the child, but the offering itself--the opportunity to tell one's story--inevitably validates the adult who tells it.

Children, students, and other "subordinates," on the other hand, all have their reasons for not listening. Inherent in listening to the stories of others is the danger that these stories may ring true, that they may challenge our current beliefs, our own stories, and the realization that our particular stories have some flaws or even that other stories exist that are equally valid, can be a threatening experience. We are suddenly faced with choosing between committing ourselves to do the often painful work of discovery and change or consciously continuing to embrace that which we know is false, or at least not completely true. Because we are all authority figures and subordinates at various times and places, we all feel both this need to tell our stories and the inclination to resist the stories of others.

Neither this need to tell nor this inclination to resist relies at all on whether the story is sound or the lesson is worthwhile. The validation lies in the telling of the story--in the opportunity to be recognized by the self and by another as one who counts, who matters, whose life means something. Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man*, argues for an understanding of history that transcends purely economic causes and that embraces the "struggle for recognition" as a powerful human motivator. While he focuses on Hegel's treatment of recognition, and more specifically, on Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, Fukuyama acknowledges that [t]he concept underlying "recognition". . . . is as old as Western political philosophy itself, and refers to a thoroughly familiar part of the human personality. Over the millennia, there has been no consistent word used to refer to the psychological phenomenon of the "desire for recognition": Plato spoke of thymos, or "spiritedness," Machiavelli of man's desire for glory, Hobbes of his pride or vainglory, Rousseau of his amour-propre, Alexander Hamilton of the love of fame and James Madison of ambition, Hegel of recognition, and Nietzsche of man as the "beast with red cheeks." (162)

We hunger for recognition. "Listen to me--listen to my story--I have something to share, to tell you." Our stories pass down from parent and grandparent to child and grandchild. They survive in folk tales and fairy tales among our diverse cultures. They are preserved in the fiction, nonfiction and poetry of our writers and poets. Corporate publishing's bottom line provides us with hardcover and paperback editions of tabloid biographies and autobiographies of our sports stars, actors, musicians, politicians, convicted criminals, acquitted defendants, defense attorneys and prosecutors--anyone whose story might make a profit.

Television and radio talk shows allow us to tell our stories, the stranger, the better, "on the air," so we can see, hear and recognize, so we can know again, ourselves. We hear again and again from ordinary folks, "Someday I'll write a book about it," which only becomes a problem if "write a book" is really subconscious shorthand for "publish a best seller and make millions of dollars." We tell our stories to the police officer who pulls us over, the judge in court, our colleagues at lunch, the person who cuts our hair, to virtually anyone who will stand still long enough to listen. While our conversations with the two civil servants may have specific, immediate and pragmatic purposes, they still embrace the plea for recognition in which the other conversations consist: "But, officer, I know I was speeding, but I was late, the kids were fighting, my spouse and I are having problems, and I just found out that my cholesterol is way too high. With all due respect, going twelve miles per hour over the limit isn't even a blip on my life's radar screen." Later, we will share the story of either the victory (a warning, but no ticket), or the defeat (a warning and a ticket) at lunch, during the haircut, and wherever someone will listen. Note that we will not tell this story only at lunch, but also during the haircut and wherever someone will listen. We will tell the story until the telling has accomplished for us whatever it is we need on a conscious or subconscious level. It comes as no surprise then, that in recent years, "narrative therapy" is finding more and more supporters, among both therapists and clients. If telling our respective stories to those who will listen outside the therapeutic relationship provides recognition and validation, how much more awaits us when, within the therapeutic relationship, we tell our stories to trained, professional listeners? If we find that talking with the person who is trained to cut hair is helpful, imagine how helpful it will be to talk to someone who is trained to listen and help, even when these professionals bring a variety of trainings, theories, tactics and beliefs to the consultation. When we move from the barber to the therapist, however, several things change. No longer paying for a haircut and engaging in conversation as a bonus, we are now paying for "help," and at the outset, we probably do not know exactly what type of help we need. This variety of therapeutic approaches can be confusing, so just as with cars, houses, and, yes, haircuts, we may have to shop around. Having done our shopping, how do we know that the therapist, who has access to this variety of theories and strategies, will choose the right path in order to help us?

Carlos E. Sluzki, in "Transformations: A Blueprint for Narrative Changes in Therapy," addresses this issue of different approaches and strategies when he examines a hypothetical family consultation from four different therapeutic perspectives (family life cycle, loss and mourning, family systems, and cultural issues), each of which leads to some progress among the family members; Sluzki then questions the process. How is it that families and therapists can seriously engage the different themes to which each perspective leads? How is it that each approach can generate a plausible story that addresses the nature of the problem? How is it that change may come about through such a variety of approaches?

Sluzki suggests that the answer to all three questions may lie in the common process that characterized each perspective: "in each case, a plausible, alternative story was built conjointly by therapist and family, using elements of one or more of the stories with which the family came." In essence, the interpretations of characters, roles, themes, plots, motives, causes and effects of the original story or stories are transformed; "the original story . . . loses its dominance; the problem is redefined; it becomes a non-problem or even a blessing in disguise. The presenting problem is now amenable to solutions or it loses focus . . . The consultation has accomplished its goals" (p. 218). The particular problem that brought the family into therapy becomes less important, while the larger family story, which inevitably has caused or at least

nurtured the particular problem, becomes more significant. Perspectives change, understanding is enhanced, a "bigger picture," or at least a different picture, is recognized and embraced. This process, of course, is not new.

Mary Catherine Bateson, in "Composing a Life," writes that [t]here are advantages to having access to multiple versions of your life story. I am not referring to a true version versus a false version . . . I am referring to the freedom that comes not only from owning your memory and your life story but also from knowing that you make creative choices in how you look at your life. (41) Depending on how much we have invested in our current story, an attempt to reframe the past, to give new meaning to old events, may be incredibly difficult. The freedom about which Bateson writes, which comes from "owning" our memory and life story and from knowing that we can make creative choices, can be as valuable as the new story or new interpretation itself. Our belief that such ownership and knowledge are possible is an important and powerful first step toward such creativity. Bateson suggests that most of us already create multiple versions of our lives, but because we do it so often, we might not recognize the process.

How do we choose to describe ourselves in a casual conversation on a train, plane or bus; to our new next-door neighbors, our new staff (or boss) at work, our children as we (and they) age, our oldest friend, ourselves? How do our stories change with time? Bateson, again, stresses that it's not that one story is true and another is not, but rather, "[i]t's a matter of emphasis and of context" (42). Her focus in this essay, and in her book of the same name, is on discontinuity--on how people whose lives have been disrupted, in whatever way, are able to interpret such disruption or discontinuity in an empowering, positive way, especially in a society that tends to prefer (despite their rarity among honest people) continuous, or smooth or linear stories. She suggests that one strategy is the ability to view change or interruption as continuity, a notion that is very close to the Buddhist concept of impermanence--the very nature of existence is change; accept this--learn to embrace both the continuity and the discontinuity--and adjustments to what is beyond our control become easier. We accept change as a natural part of our story.

One of Bateson's simplest statements is also one of the most significant in the essay: "The choice you make affects what you can do next. Often people use the choice of emphasizing either continuity or discontinuity as a way of preparing for the next step. They interpret the present in a way that helps them construct a particular future" (43). Of course, we know this already. Sluzki's hypothetical family (and many real families) enter the therapeutic relationship when they are stuck in the mud of their interpretative choices--choices which have limited what they can do next. With the therapist's assistance, the family can transform the narrative--choose a different version of their story--which will help them get unstuck. So, along with the recognition that telling our stories can provide, we realize further that the particular version of our story that we choose to tell can limit us or empower us.

Dr. Aaron Antonovsky's work, as cited in Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living*, studies people who have survived extreme stress and concludes that "being healthy involves an ability to continually restore balance in response to its continual disruption." More specifically, according to Kabat-Zinn, Antonovsky found that these extreme stress survivors have an "inherent sense of coherence about the world and themselves," which is to say that they feel they can comprehend, manage, and find meaning in their lives (204).

Antonovsky, Bateson, Sluzki and Fukuyama, each within his or her discipline, whether speaking of a need for a sense of coherence, for a sense of continuity and empowerment, for narrative transformation, or for recognition, is addressing the power of story. At the risk of being blasphemous, we are speaking here about that which bartenders, barbers and beauticians

have been practicing on a far less theoretical basis for a long time. Telling our stories helps us to feel better, maybe superficially and temporarily and for a wide variety of reasons, but better nonetheless.

The stories in the Bible continue to be told and honored; Homer wrote down what others had been saying and gave us *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, both of which continue to be told and retold and adapted; Boethius awaited death and gave us *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which played a role in the gifts of story from Dante and Chaucer; Shakespeare borrowed from Boccaccio; everyone borrowed from Shakespeare (the essence of much of the advice we can find in our bookstores' self-help sections is available in *The Canterbury Tales* and Shakespeare's tragedies, among other works--but that's another story). As time passes, cultural values and life styles change and we find new ways to tell the old stories, and when necessary, we create new stories, which, very often, are only "new" because we have ignored them, or we have been deprived of them, for so long.

Alan Parry's "A Universe of Stories," addresses this last point well. Stories that do not fit in with the traditional Western, white, heterosexual, patriarchal story, can now be told, and more than ever before, will be listened to. Some, however, are still denied, ignored and minimized--Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991) and *Amazing Grace* (1995) depict in detailed and personal terms America's continuing denial of the stories of poor urban children of color. The former book contrasts the spending, physical conditions and consequent atmospheres of suburban and inner-city public schools in six specific American cities: East St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Camden, Washington, D.C. and San Antonio. The latter brings us into the homes and lives of the people of the South Bronx, the nation's poorest congressional district, with whom Kozol visited, corresponded, walked, talked and shared meals.

Despite both books having spent time on the New York Times Best Seller List, and despite *Publisher's Weekly* dedicating four pages, including a front-cover open letter to President Bush, upon the publication of *Savage Inequalities*, our nation, states, cities, neighborhoods and citizens continue to ignore the plight of our inner-city children. The inclusive "not only this, but also this" story that slowly continues to replace the "either this or that" perspective among those who are trying to awaken has not yet reached the poor. The voices and stories of these children serve to remind us of the fears and flaws in our own stories, so we ignore or suppress them. This suppression of "others" stories still has its proponents in positions of great power; its opponents are more difficult to intimidate and silence, however, than they once were. Still, since actions are the best interpreters of our thoughts and beliefs, despite giving much lip service to worldcentric and global perspectives, most Americans still hold an extraordinarily ethnocentric worldview.

Perhaps no one has more eloquently and more passionately addressed the inherent danger in silence and the suppression of stories than the late poet, teacher and activist, Audre Lorde. Through her experiences as a woman of color, a mother, a lesbian, a cancer survivor and, finally, cancer victim, Lorde lived a wealth of stories before her death in 1993--stories which were neither common among nor embraced by males, whites, and heterosexuals in America. What Lorde discovered also was that many black heterosexual women and many white lesbians were also unable to embrace her story. Only among the patients in the cancer wards did it seem that color, gender and sexual orientation lost their significance. In "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," Lorde wrote:

“ . . . what I most regretted were my silences.
Of what had I ever been afraid?
To question or to speak as I believed could have meant pain,
or death . . . and
pain will either change or end.
Death, on the other hand, is the final silence.
And that might be coming quickly, now,
without regard for whether I had ever
spoken what needed to be said,
or had only betrayed myself into small silences,
while I planned someday to speak,
or waited for someone else's words.
I was going to die, if not sooner then later,
whether or not I had ever spoken
myself. My silences had not protected me.
Your silence will not protect you.
And of course I'm afraid,
because the transformation of silence into language
and action is an act of self-revelation,
and that always seems fraught with danger.
But my daughter, when I told her of our topic
and our difficulty with it, said,
"Tell them about how you're never really
a whole person if you remain silent,
because there's always that one little piece
inside you that wants to be spoken out,
and if you keep ignoring it,
it gets madder and madder and hotter and hotter,
and if you don't speak it out,
one day it will just up and punch you in the mouth from
the inside."
. . . . it is not difference which immobilizes us,
but silence. (40-44)

Whether it is among family members or among different cultures, colors, sexual orientations, or genders, the involuntary silencing of stories serves no one, and harms both those who are denied the opportunity to speak and those who miss the chance to listen and learn. Although we know this truth, the fear of which Lorde speaks still prevents us from living it, and allowing others to live it, completely. Imagine a scenario in which we feel moved to share a difficult story with someone, and the difficulty lies not in our anxiety about how the story will be received, or how we will be perceived in the telling, but only in the inherent difficulty that characterized the actual experience upon which the story is based. Imagine knowing that we will not be judged or condemned because of our experiences or interpretations of them, that the listener is tolerant of and open to our story no matter how strange or different or new it might be. Imagine sharing a difficult story with the confidence that beyond genuine listening, the listener would offer support, nurturing, assistance, a new interpretation or whatever was

appropriate in the specific context. Imagine, now, what might have happened had Christ or Gandhi, or King, or Romero spoken in such a receptive atmosphere.

What tolerance of and openness to the stories of others helps us to do is move from a worldview that embraces only the self, to one that also embraces the other, to one that embraces all others, to one that embraces all, or, more accurately, All--God, Spirit, Awareness. [For an up-to-date, brilliant, lucid, fun and thorough perspective on the evolution of human consciousness, see Ken Wilber's A Brief History of Everything]. With each story to which we open up, we are better able to embrace another piece of existence, we are better able to move toward stories that balance our physical, cognitive, moral and spiritual evolution.

One of the great, long-lasting and often tragic fear-based dichotomies among stories is that between stories of faith and stories of reason. Allegedly reasonable men in many cultures have slaughtered those who had faith. Men of alleged faith in many traditions have slaughtered those who embraced reason. Some of us today still insist that evolution (reason) and creation (faith) are incompatible (we are afraid of what it might mean if one or the other were true). In America, while our historically-based fear of and constitutionally-stated opposition to having a faith forced upon us has led us to a fear of teaching our children about the various faiths that exist, we still swear to be a nation "under God," and we print "In God we trust" on our money. It is toward this dichotomy that all of our various cultural, religious, national, racial and personal stories ultimately lead us. We humans take our stories and our fears seriously.

Each individual tells, retells, edits and adapts his or her story in an attempt to evolve (or resist evolving) as a human being. Every family does the same, as does every culture, and all of them--individuals, families and cultures--evolve (or dissolve) through various levels of consciousness and competence. Each individual both shapes and is shaped by the family and the culture that embrace it; each family shapes and is shaped by individuals and culture; each culture shapes and is shaped by individuals and families; and, of course, religion both shapes and is shaped by individuals, families and cultures. Each individual then chooses to identify (or not) with these various shaping forces.

We choose that with which we identify. While we cannot choose the color, race, culture, sex, religion or place of our birth, we can, as we evolve, choose to what extent we identify with these factors. Which stories do we choose to embrace? More specifically, which stories do I choose to embrace? Thomas Merton, in "The Inner Experience," would have me be sure I know who I am:

This means that you have to bring back together the fragments of your distracted existence so that when you say "I" there is really someone present to support the pronoun you have uttered. Reflect, sometimes, on the disquieting fact that most of your statements of opinions, tastes, deeds, desires, hopes, and fears are statements about someone who is not really present. When you say "I think" it is often not you who think, but "they"--it is the anonymous authority of the collectivity speaking through your

mask. When you say "I want",
you are sometimes simply making an automatic
gesture of accepting, and paying for,
what has been forced upon you. That is to
say, you reach out for what you
have been made to want. (296-97)

This, then, if we continue to interpret and reframe and edit our stories with a sense of truthfulness and consciousness and integrity, is the question to which our stories ultimately lead us. Who is it, really, behind the first-person-singular pronoun--beyond the given name? Who is it really, beyond the family and the job and the house and the car and the clothes and the wealth and the poverty? Who is it really, beyond the political ideology and the cultural conditioning and the religious beliefs? Who am I really?

It is only after we discover and work through all of these products of human thought and effort that we can come to this essential question. Our written and spoken narratives help us to do this work. As we listen to our own stories and those of others, as we improve our abilities to both listen and tell, as we learn to pay attention, to be mindful from moment to moment, we grow gradually better able to see and to feel what is authentic, timeless, unchanging--beyond both the gifts and the burdens of our families, cultures, nations and religions. We are able to see what we are--what we always have been, the True Self.

Beyond recognition, beyond the ability to reinterpret, beyond the sum total of how we choose to tell our stories, is true identity--Awareness--God--Spirit--choose the word you like. It is through story that we can slowly evolve and learn to separate that which has been imposed upon us from that which we truly are. Wilber, in *A Brief History of Everything*, describes evolution as "Spirit in action" (10), as a process that "transcends and includes" (30). We move beyond where we are while we acknowledge and embrace where we have been. Our stories both permit us and help us to do this.

Please, listen to me, so I might discover who I am.

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The Pearl in the Crab: A Personal Discovery of the Treasure in Metaphor

By Noirin Foley

Each one of us has a deep and intricate story. The unique pattern of our individual story separates us, while the sharing of our experiences reveals our similarities and draws us together. The use of story can facilitate this sharing and lead us to a greater understanding of ourselves as well as each other -- whether one chooses metaphor or myth is up to the individual. I have found the use of metaphor to be an invaluable source of enlightenment in my search for awareness and self-understanding.

Twenty years ago a friend gave me a book. She encouraged me to read it since she had enjoyed it so much. Its size alone determined that it would remain on my shelf for a long time; with two small boys to care for, it was unlikely I would have the opportunity to read an eight hundred page book in the near future. Two years later our little girl had arrived and the book still remained unread. In January 1981, my husband and I were living with our three children, in a rural part of County Wicklow, when the east coast of Ireland was paralyzed by a severe snow storm. We had no heat, electricity or water, only a coal fire to serve as heater and cooker. Melted snow became our water supply, and candles a source of light. With no deadlines or social commitments to keep, the children happily played in the snow all day. I now had time to attend to the neglected volume on my shelf. Each day during that week I escaped from my igloo in County Wicklow and visited the world of Chesapeake Bay. I traveled through the pages as James Michener described, in his inimitable way, the growth and development of this beautiful area of America. I did not realize that over the years a small extract from this book would stay with me and serve as a metaphor that would buoy me through my own growth and development.

In his book, Mr. Michener introduces a crab named Jimmy which at this time in his life is in great distress; he is in the process of shedding his shell. Unfortunately, the ecological balance of his habitat has been considerably altered by a severe storm. Jimmy takes the necessary precautions for survival, yet experiences more exposure and vulnerability than usual. The crab struggles to dispose of his shell instinctively knowing that he has outgrown it. Eventually, Jimmy discards it and his boneless, shapeless, body is tossed among the elements. Within a few hours his new shell begins to harden and he gradually returns to his full strength.

Using Jimmy's story as a metaphor for the transitions in my life has helped me understand the process and value of change. Often, over the years I too, have felt the need to shed my shell. When I have outgrown the beliefs, attitudes, and ways of knowing that have served me well for a period I know it is time for transition. Some of my moltings have involved a gradual enlightenment or insight which increases my understanding. Such a change began one day as I meditated on the parable of Lazarus (Jn 11:1-53). In this familiar story, John tells us that when Jesus came He raised Lazarus from the dead and ordered him to be "unbound". The word "unbound" stayed with me. When I finally attended to the word I asked what was I "bound" by, what needed to be "unbound" in my life? Revisiting the story of Lazarus I studied it in a new light. It occurred to me that one of the ways the metaphor of Lazarus' death could be interpreted was that he was dead to God. Could he have been "bound" by some psychological state or woundedness? Jesus' visit had saved him from death but he needed to be tended to. Lazarus

needed to be “unbound”, shown a new way to live. The experience of reframing this story gave me new insight into other stories in the Gospels. For example, I realized that often the least obvious character in a story can represent the most powerful metaphor.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the principal roles of father and son hold a valuable lesson; however, I have learned more from the minor player, the elder brother. He represents my anger, my jealousy, my rejection. His story was not heard. When he expressed his feelings of injustice to his father he was told not to be angry, “ Everything I have is yours. But this brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost and is found” (Lk.15:32). I can imagine him thinking, to use current vernacular, “Big Deal!” My empathy for the older son led me to further explore the story in an effort to discover what it was that I was identifying with. I found some answers and plenty of food for thought in the writings of the late Henri Nouwen.

Similar to a dream, a parable holds many secrets couched in metaphor. Each character, each utterance of Jesus can be found to hold a message for the individual heart hearing it. This way of interpreting Christ’s message did not result in an earth shattering change in my life, but the Gospel stories became exciting challenges as I uncovered deeper, more personal meanings behind the familiar words. No matter how well I knew a particular story I learned to approach it with openness: I was open to whatever message was relevant to me at that time in my life. This resulted in what I think of as “a spiritual calmness” because I was no longer trying to make another person’s interpretation fit my experience, but I was learning how to interpret for myself. Looking back I see this experience as a gentle, growth of understanding.

Other transitions have not been so gentle, on the contrary, I have experienced some as all encompassing, engulfing episodes. Such an episode followed my mother’s death. In 1991, my mother died after many years of illness. During her illness, she had ceased to be a mother to me and our roles had reversed completely; yet, her death affected me in a way I would never have anticipated. I felt like a “motherless child.” At the age of 40 I experienced the utter aloneness that those words evoke. Like Jimmy, my world was shattered; I was without structure, my protective shell had been torn off. I had to find a new identity that did not include having a mother. In time, I learned that while part of my life was lost in her death, part of her lived on in me. It was a painful, lonely journey at a time in my life when I had many other transitions to deal with. Even though my mother’s death was expected, my reaction to it was completely unexpected. Through it I have learned, like Jimmy or maybe from Jimmy, to trust that I can overcome stressful change in my life. Comparing my process of change to that of Jimmy’s moltings has helped me understand and develop the resources necessary to negotiate transition. These resources are: acceptance that change is necessary for growth, willingness to allow change to take place, patience, and a trust in the process of change.

I will often resist the first twinges of discomfort. It is only when the discomfort of not molting becomes more severe than that of change will I struggle to cast off the old shell and allow space for the new one to form. Just as Jimmy experiences a time of physical shapelessness without his shell, I endure a time of psychic shapelessness. I think of this as “the empty space before awareness” when I experience knowing only that I do not know. Murray Stein refers to this state as “psychological liminality, [when] a persons sense of identity is hung in suspension.” I have learned with difficulty to wait in this place for the process to proceed; to trust that this shapelessness is a valuable part of change and growth. Slowly, sometimes with great stealth the third and final stage of change, as I experience it, occurs: the hardening of my shell -- the return of harmony. But just as being alive demands growth and growth brings change, I always know that my new shell is a temporary home -- one I will eventually outgrow.

Nature is an endless source of metaphor; the course of a river, the life cycle of a plant, and one of my own favorites, a tree, any tree. On my daily walk I pass a magnificent copper beech. Over many years it has taken full advantage of the surrounding space to grow to its full potential. From a distance its shape is perfect, but on closer inspection its trunk tells the story of lost limbs and its branches reveal the ravages of inclement weather. However, these scars, or “jin” as the Japanese call them, (Meyer 13), while affecting the tree’s mature shape did not inhibit its growth and add to its ultimate beauty. I think the saddest tree of all is a bonsai tree: A tree with the potential to grow to full size which is painstakingly clipped and defoliated in an effort to stunt its growth. How deprived these ornamental trees look. They should be growing in a field, but instead are sitting in a dish with fragile roots grasping to survive. I have met people with “bonsai “ spirits who have been shaped to conform to a pattern not their own, but unlike the bonsai tree the human spirit can be rescued and achieve its full span. Ironically, Meyer tells us that “while foliage diminishes in size over the years in a pot, the fruit and flowers [of the bonsai] remain the same size.” (17)

In his article, “A Universe of Stories”, Alan Parry says that we tend to censor our stories and that “all stories are valid though not necessarily true...” (51). Recently, as a class assignment, I wrote an autobiography emphasizing my educational experiences. My story was filled with memories of humiliation and failure as I recounted my struggle with a rigid educational system in which my dyslexia was seen as laziness and stupidity. I realize now that my story is more than that of a dyslexic child. While that aspect of my experience is true, it is not the full story; therefore, it is not a valid reading of my childhood. But telling the story of those negative experiences was a healing process which cleared the way for me to recall the bigger picture leading me to a more balanced understanding of my actual experience. My own story involves many factors, including: my birth order, my parents relationship, my relationship or lack thereof with siblings, grandparents, and extended family, and my experience of loss. The list of intangible factors that contribute to the unconscious editing of my story is endless. This does not lessen the truth of my story: it is true for me.

A friend of mine recently celebrated her fiftieth birthday, unfortunately it was also the fiftieth anniversary of her mother’s death: Her mother had died in childbirth. She asked each of her seven brothers and sisters to write a memory that they had of their mother and to send it to her instead of a material gift. She was amazed at the seven stories she received and at times wondered if indeed her siblings were writing about the same person. No single story tells everything. So it is with our stories. Our experience will determine the hue in which we paint the word picture of our life. “It’s all in the way you look at it..... To me truth is a firefly – now you see it now you don’t” is how the wigmaker in the play *Rashomon* explains how several characters who witnessed a murder recount different stories of the same event.

It is important to acknowledge however that each of us has a story which is authentic to us. Recently, I found consolation in the homily given at the funeral after the untimely death of a young friend. The celebrant did not try to answer our unspoken questions; instead, he acknowledged our shared stories. He pointed out that each one of us in that packed country church had a unique story we shared with Frances, the deceased, and that our hearts were filled with sadness and questioning because that story ended so abruptly and so tragically. The ritual of a wake and funeral allowed people the time to share their individual stories. When the tales were heard one after another, a fuller picture of the person emerged. Frances was a student, friend, daughter, niece, granddaughter, woman, joker, worker, worrier, spender, saver, listener, and a lover of life. She was not all of these things to any one person but she shared, as we all do, in the

life stories of many.

When I was in boarding school occasionally a group of us would gather on one bed late at night and stories would be told. One girl in particular had the great skill of storytelling that came from a pre-television childhood of listening to her elders. It was not so much the tales that were told that caught our attention, we had heard them all several times before, but the shared ritual of hearing the stories that made these occasions memorable. The art of storytelling was a noble and respected craft in ancient societies. Before the written word was available a community's history and accumulated wisdom was held and passed on through their stories. Common metaphors are shared by most cultures.

Today we are still surrounded by sources of myth and metaphor, treasures just waiting to be discovered and explored. We need to learn again to listen to and respect, first our own story, and then each others stories in such a way that we can celebrate our similarities and understand and value our differences.

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**SOME FACTS CONCERNING THE LIFE OF
BROTHER THOMAS GERALD BULLEN
(FOR THE BENEFIT OF WHOEVER IS UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH
TO BE ASKED FOR VOLUNTEERS TO WRITE MY OBITUARY
FOR THE EDUCATIONAL RECORD!)**

By Brother Thomas Gerald Bullen

Editor's Note:

As you read the autobiography of Br. T.G. Bullen, consider if it strikes you as historical writing where events in his life are presented with little attention to his personal inner responses to these events. The distinction between the self presented in the autobiography (the narrative self) and the lived self or the self being written about is maintained. Are the events of his life presented with the feelings and motives which prompted him to write as he did? Only the author has access to his inner life.

Another view is that the writing self and the lived self interact and the self is an autobiographical invention and autobiography is self invention. Would you go so far as to say there is no self beyond the autobiographical text? These are advantages to having access to multiple versions of a life story; creative choices are owned in how you look at your life. Choices affect what you can do next. War and the decisions of superiors and governments limit choices; some remain. The next step is continuous or discontinuous depending on the choice. The present is interpreted to help construct the future.

Thomas Bullen was born on March 5, 1913, to John and Anne (nee Rawlinson) Bullen in the family farmhouse at Moss Side Farm, Melling, Nr. Liverpool, UK, the eldest son of a family of eight boys and three girls. With the expansion of the nearby State Hospital just before WWII, the farm was sold to the War Department for building purposes the farmhouse was still occupied by the family till 1962 so that the arable land not used for building could still be farmed. By 1963 no trace of the house or farm buildings was left.

He was duly baptized Thomas Gerrard in the church of St. Mary, Aughton, in which parish the farm was located, and by Easter, 1918, he was enrolled in the local parochial school which consisted of two classrooms each accommodating about 20 boys and girls from kindergarten to seventh grade. In those days "leaving age" was still 14 but the basics were well taught by two very devoted teachers who, together, totaled almost a century of service in the same school before retiring. In 1919 the district suffered a severe epidemic of measles, scarlet fever, and influenza, so he and his older sister, Marie, were sent to a suburb of Liverpool to live with a cousin, who was a nurse. They went to a private school in Waterloo, close to where the Brothers' later opened St. Mary's College, Crosby in 1920. Everest House, on the property of which St. Mary's College was built, was owned by the Hughes' Family, who operated a prosperous grocery business in Liverpool. The nurse's sister was housekeeper at Everest House and she often invited the nurse and her two young charges to have afternoon tea there. So Tom Bullen was, in a sense, the first CFC associated with Crosby!

On Corpus Christi, 1920, Tom made his first Holy Communion in St. Thomas of Canterbury Church, Waterloo, with which the private school was associated. He returned to

Aughton the following September and by 1924 he had finished the elementary level and won a county scholarship to St. Edward's College, Everton, Liverpool (now re-located in Sandfield Park, some five miles further out of town).

The original St. Edward's (known then as the Catholic Institute) was located in Hope Street, close to the city center and about midway between the two Cathedrals of which the City boasts. It was there that five of his uncles had been schooled and two of the Brothers who taught Tom had also taught some of the uncles. In 1920 the Hope Street site was exchanged for the Everton site, from which the Diocesan Seminary had been moved to a new site in Upholland, some 20 miles outside Liverpool. Among the Brothers on the staff were Dominic Forde, Sebastian Leahy, Carthage Wall, De Sales Goulding (known better as Dat Man!), Declan Woodhouse, Pancras Howlin (ex-China mission), Baptist Doyle, Finbar Greenish (Tot, who later became the Province Postulator). The four years of intensive study involving a two mile walk to the local railway station, a train ride of 10 miles, followed by a one and half mile walk up-hill every morning, six days a week, a 9 - 4 class schedule and a reverse trip back, in all kinds of weather, were well rewarded by a successful completion of the requirements for the University Matriculation Certificate.

During the last month of his senior year (1928), Brother Evangelist Delaney, then the Postulator for the newly opened Novitiate in Carlett Park, gave a senior class talk about "joining the Brothers". Though Tom had been signed up as a prospect for a banking career (by an uncle who was manager of the Westminster Bank, Liverpool) he was intrigued by the call and, after a visit by Br. Delaney to Moss Side and a talk with his parents he decided to "try out" at Carlett Park. On August 30, 1928, he took the short ferry trip across the Mersey to Eastham with his parents who said good-bye as he left on foot with Brother Swithin Forde who had arranged to meet him for the short walk to Carlett Park. At that time, Brother William Birmingham was Superior & Novice Master in a house which had postulants, novices and scholastics, all under one roof, but duly segregated as required by the prevailing Rule. Since the houses in England, at that time, were directly under the General Council (the English Province was set up only after WWII) the Superior General at the time (Brother Jerome Hennessy) decided that the six postulants should receive the habit with minimal duration of postulancy so that, after completion of the novitiate, the candidates would be able to start a new scholastic year at the normal time (September). The Novice Master conducted the formal 8-Day Retreat himself and the group was clothed on September 23, 1928, the feast of Our Lady of Ransome (in the former calendar). He was aptly given Saint Gerald as his patron, an eighth century Northumbrian native who joined an Irish monastic foundation at Lindisfarne, off the coast of Northumbria. Of the six received that day only Brother Gerald Bullen survived to Final Profession (1938).

The novitiate year passed rapidly and profitably, much of the time being spent in manual work involved in bringing the extensive grounds back to shape, learning to burn wet leaves, etc., and all the other "tricks" then in vogue in "learning how to be a Brother". We had the usual trials and humiliations which were then regarded as a necessity in the life of a novice as well as the harmless fun which novitiate life engenders. Taking a meal kneeling instead of sitting at table was not an uncommon form of penance for breaking silence, etc. and the Self-Accusation of Faults (against external forum discipline) was usually a serious business. But, even there, an occasional divergence from the serious was to be expected. One novice, who was very clumsy, accused himself of breaking a plate - twice! The Novice Master, quite seriously questioned the culprit "Was it the same plate, Brother?". The ensuing hilarity cost the group their "knees" for the rest of the session.

Parallel with progress in the way of virtue by the Novices, the Scholastics were hard at work on the Matriculation course and in early July they all sat for the public exams, three hours each, 9.30-12.30 and 2 - 5, lasting for a couple of weeks and covering English Literature, English Composition, History, Latin, French, Mathematics, Advanced Mathematics, etc. The papers were examined by a board of examiners selected by the University Boards and the results published on the last Saturday of August. Some 6000 students would sit each year but less than half would ultimately succeed in making University. In those days the Brothers in Carlett Park completed their initial training in the Vincentian Teacher Training College at St. Mary's in Strawberry Hill, near London, with a two year course in education and a combination of two specialty subjects. Some of those who passed the Teacher Certificate requirements were allowed an extra year to complete the external BA degree requirements for London University. This was a very tough degree for which there were no formal lectures. You could prepare privately with correspondence courses (and some older Brothers had done this while teaching full time!) or be coached privately or in any academic situation which covered the course outlines. Success or failure was based entirely on performance in answering the batch of 3-hour exams - a very formidable process. The External BA degree from London University was a much coveted stamp of true scholarship which opened the gates to any graduate course anywhere in the world.

On September 8, 1929, the successful scholastics travelled to our Hostel at Strawberry Hill (St. Aquin's) and were formally enrolled in St. Mary's College. St. Aquin's had been opened in 1927 and, with the increased numbers, expansion was necessary. The house next door fortunately came up for sale and it was bought immediately. Before the end of the month lectures had begun and all were getting used to classes with Vincentians and lay professors. On September 24, Gerald Bullen completed the novitiate and, having already obtained his Matriculation certificate before going to Carlett Park the previous year, he was sent down to Strawberry Hill some three weeks after lectures had started. Having had a good record in sciences and mathematics, the Superior, Brother Hugh McDonald, decided to have him entered in the Science curriculum. Being only 16 (!) he was not eligible to enter the Teacher Training courses (a minimum of 17 was required by certification statutes) so he was entered as a B.Sc. candidate for the three year program with the proviso that he would start the education courses the next year.

In those days all professions of vows were made at Christmas and both first and final professions had, by Canon Law, to be preceded by a full 8-day Retreat. So, Gerald was returned to the Novitiate for the annual 8-Day Christmas Retreat and got back to Strawberry Hill on Christmas Eve, becoming the first Brother to make First Vows at Strawberry Hill. The new year opened with plenty of hard work. With lectures most of the morning and 3 hour laboratories on four afternoons a week the time for private study was quite limited. There was no hope of studying after bed-time with three or four to a room with just curtains to divide the space and provide a modicum of privacy. By the end of February Gerald had developed alopecia nervosa - a loss of hair due to stress. The doctor advised discontinuance of studies and a return to the Novitiate House where he could get fresh air and do some manual work to relax. It was a great disappointment after the chance of getting a London B.Sc. at 19! By Easter, he was back at Carlett Park and helped in keeping the grounds and doing odd jobs for the Novice Master. This, incidentally, was the second loss of hair for him, the first occurring prior to starting grade school. No satisfactory medical explanation was found for this phenomenon till some 30 years

later when he developed thyroid papillary carcinoma which was successfully operated on. But, more of this later.

By the early summer four postulants had come to Carlett Park and Gerald was asked to run informal classes in introductory French and Latin for them. This proved to be a pleasant task for a couple of hours a day and seemed to provide therapy as his hair started to grow again. By August, the scholastics in Strawberry Hill were enjoying the summer vacation in Prior Park College, Bath, and Gerald was sent to join them. All returned to Strawberry Hill for the first week of September and he was re-registered for the Teacher Training as well as B.Sc. degree courses. In the meantime, the General Chapter of 1930 had ended with the election of a new General and Council. The former, Brother Pius Noonan, decided that there were significant advantages in having the extra-Provincial scholasticate located in Marino with the students attending lectures and taking degrees in University College, Dublin. So, all the second and third year scholastics stayed in Strawberry Hill but Gerald had to pack up again and head for Dublin (with no opportunity to call in at the old homestead at Moss Side on the way!) to join the group of first year scholastics who had just completed Novitiate. He was registered in the Science Honors Program in UCD and started all over again! The regimen was very demanding and living, two to a room on the top floor of St. Mary's, right above the General Council rooms brought the new arrivals under very close scrutiny. They had a separate Community with the Bursar General as Superior, the Irish Province Scholastics being kept entirely separate - a rather strange situation as the extra-Provincial scholastics were told that they were being brought to GHQ to "imbibe the spirit of the Congregation at its fount and origin". Quite a few of them were Irish born, too, which did not seem to make much sense. Even at games they were not allowed to intermix, the reason given being that the Training Courses in Marino had been registered with the Department of Education and all trainees were to use Gaelic only!

The freshman academic year passed uneventfully and Gerald was awarded a scholarship for a B.Sc. Honors degree in Physics & Mathematics. Towards the end of the second year he was afflicted with hair loss for the third time and had to take some time out from lectures until he had been equipped with a hairpiece! The loss proved to be permanent and was a lifelong source of embarrassment to him. In September 1934 he sat for the finals and secured a double first class honors B.Sc. degree in Mathematics and Experimental Physics with a fellowship to M.Sc. level. For some reasons that never came to light, Brother Pius Noonan decided that, instead of going to St. Edmund's College, Shillong, India, his original mission, Gerald should go for the M.Sc - against the advice of his entire Council, as he told him, years later, prior to his going to Iona College in 1947. Prior to graduation, Gerald had done a minor research on a new form of oscilloscope which had been thought up by Professor Dowling who now wanted someone to research and exploit the possibilities of this new device. The opportunity was fortuitous and he started work immediately. By teaching first year University mathematics to the extra-Provincial scholastics, now housed in the new St. Joseph's Missionary College, on the Marino grounds, every morning from 9 to 9:45, he was able to start formal teaching and devote the rest of the day till 5:30 p.m. at the University and get the research going immediately. Since the device being developed turned out to be a primary module in the development of radar displays the work was eagerly monitored by Watson-Watt in England. The research went so well that by November 1935 a thesis was accepted and the M.Sc. degree awarded with a strong recommendation that the research should be continued on with a Ph.D. fellowship, made available for that purpose. Both Professors involved in the research pleaded personally with Br. Noonan to allow the work to continue. He acceded, again against the advice of his Council who justifiably argued that many

professed Brothers who had taught for 20 years or more were far more entitled to a primary degree course than a young junior professed Brother (and a foreigner, to boot!) doing a Ph.D! So the research continued with some teaching duties in Marino and a two-afternoons-a-week paid laboratory instructorship at the University thrown in. By careful use of time at least 40 hours a week were devoted to the project and developments were so successful that two articles were published on the possibilities of the device with its applications and a formal thesis was accepted by December of 1936. Gerald received his Ph.D. in January 1937 at the tender age of 23 with two more years of annual profession to go! For the rest of the academic year a few additional aspects of the research were investigated while, at the same time, the teaching duties at St. Joseph's were increased.

With the fall of 1937, Gerald's teaching was increased to full time at St. Joseph's (which included first University French, Chemistry, Mathematics, and elementary Latin! - no Physics). To keep him busy he was directed to attend lectures for the H. Dip. Ed. (the graduate teacher diploma in Education). By March of 1938 a graduate fellowship in Physics for study outside Ireland was up for competition by candidates from all the NUI Colleges and Professors Nolan and Dowling pressed Gerald to request permission to compete, at the same time making a similar request to Br. Noonan to allow it. They succeeded, again, as was revealed later, against the vote of the Council! This involved a competitive examination of six three hour written examination papers, a three day laboratory exam plus submission of a minor thesis of publishable value. Gerald completed the H.Dip.Ed courses, submission of class plans with the four three-hour written examinations successfully in June and used the rest of the summer to work up for the fellowship exams in September. In early October he got the news of his being awarded the two-year fellowship which was to be exploited in the H. H. Wills Physics Laboratory, University of Bristol, England.

Within days he was transferred to St. Brendan's College Community, Bristol, founded by the Brothers at the turn of the century. The Director of the H. H. Wills Physics Laboratory (the second in prestige after Cambridge) assigned him to work with Professor Herbert Skinner, FRS, on the experimental aspects of theoretical work headed by Professor Neville Mott, FRS. Much of the work involved vacuum and X-ray technologies - a new field for Gerald (and one by which he gained experience that proved invaluable later in his career). The days passed quickly and with the arrival of Christmas Day he made his Final Vows. The happiness of those days faded quickly for by March 1939 the war clouds were thickening. By July war seemed imminent. The vacation in Ireland, where the community spent the month of August, was cut short when all teachers in England were called to report to their schools before the last Monday in August. War was declared the next Sunday and the Wills Laboratory was immediately converted into a War Department Research Center. All civilian and academic research ceased and Gerald was assigned by the Superior General to full-time teaching duties in St. Brendan's. Fortunately, the results of the year's work had been written up for publication in the Proceedings of the Royal Society and were submitted in November but most scientific publications ceased to publish for the duration. The original paper was lost in the bombing of London but a copy had been kept in the Wills Laboratory Archives and surfaced after hostilities ceased. It was eventually published with some minor additions in 1953. As for the fellowship little could be done except report to Dublin that all research had been discontinued for the duration of the War.

Within days there were air raid warnings, sirens sounding off, day and night, but the school opened anyway. Gerald was assigned the A-level mathematics, and O-level physics and

chemistry for the year ahead. Much needed to be done to rehabilitate the laboratories and to re-organize the experimental work which had been neglected because of either lack of equipment or damage to existing equipment. With the help of several senior students who volunteered their spare time the rehabilitation was tackled in earnest. The following winter months were the time of the "phoney war" and it was only after the collapse of France in 1940 that enemy aircraft penetrated to Bristol where the Filton Aeroplane Company had an extensive factory. During daylight raids all students and faculty had to descend into the spacious basement area of the school except for those enrolled in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Corps as wardens. As the flat roof of the school had an extensive view of the entire city, observers in the ARP were expected to act as "look-outs" for bombing incidents and to report same to the local HQ by messenger (often senior students of the school). Classes were frequently disrupted and the 3 hour final exams for the matriculation and other public examining bodies were a shambles.

By September 1940, when school resumed, raids came more frequently and at night as well as day. Dusk to dawn alerts were common and all ARP personnel had to spend at least one night a week on all-night watch. Bombs were falling all over the country and Bristol, with its port and aircraft factory nearby was a frequent target. Barrage balloons riding at 3000-5000 feet were used to keep enemy aircraft up where radar could find them and anti-aircraft guns could stand a chance of shooting them down. Waves of several hundred bombers would spend the entire night over the cities: damage and casualties were heavy. It was only after the German-Russian front opened that the intensity of the raids lessened. In spite of the disruption of class, lack of sleep for both students and faculty, school went on and final examinations were done in July. By this time the laboratories, which had been damaged during the air-raids, were back into shape and the A-Level courses in Physics and Chemistry started - to provide advanced placement for university entrance. With prospects of better conditions ahead, Gerald looked forward to the re-opening of class in September 1941.

On September 7, 1941, the changes were out and Gerald was summarily transferred to Stoke-on-Trent, a relatively new school (built in 1936) with modern, spacious laboratories. The science curriculum was limited to O-Level with the intention of expanding to the A-Level when the numbers were sufficient. Equipment needs were extensive but, except for the usual chemicals to be found in a school lab, the scientific supply houses were entirely out of stock and manufacturers were fully committed to the war effort. By scratching, scraping, and making do, some basics were obtained and the A-Level courses were started in 1942. Of those who completed the curriculum by 1944, one became a noted medical doctor and director of the County Hospital, Stafford, another a professor of chemistry at Birmingham University and a third succeeded his father as CEO of the Michelin Tyre Company, Stoke.

Since Stoke is located in the north-west Midlands it was relatively free of air-raids and life was more livable even though we had to maintain an ARP alert by taking turns to spend the night "on patrol". The school was expanding in enrollment and the Government financial support enjoyed by the school made it possible to spend more money on building up facilities in all academic areas. The Sixth Form (A-level students, equivalent to Junior College in USA) prospered and showed well in the public examinations, university entrance and scholarships in competition with the local public school.

It was at this time that a request was made to the Superior General by the Chancellor of the National University of Ireland, Eamonn DeValera, Prime Minister of Eire, that Gerald be allowed to return to Dublin to complete the second year of his overseas studentship, which was still being held as available! Much to the surprise of the Superior of Stoke (and to Gerald) the

General had acceded to the request and the Prime Minister had contacted the authorities in Westminster to permit Gerald to return to Ireland! The Office of Manpower regretted that no British born male of military age (up to 54!) was, by law, allowed to leave the country except as a member of the armed forces or in support thereof. So, the matter ended. It was only in August 1945, when the war was over, when the English born Brothers were able to go to Ireland on vacation that Gerald met his old friend, Vivion DeValera (the eldest son of the Chancellor) who had been a student in the Physics Department at UCD with Gerald, that the reason for this extraordinary request became clear. Professor Dowling, who had directed Gerald's research, had asked to have him as an assistant in developing a radio communication system to allow Ireland, a neutral Republic, to contact Spain and other neutral countries, independently of phone or cable systems of the United Kingdom!

In September 1946, the Superior and Headmaster of Stoke, Brother Boniface MacDonald, became ill and Gerald, already the Sub-Superior & Bursar, had to shoulder the burden of running the school and, at the same time, run his 35 (advanced) classes per week! The Province had been set up the previous Spring and there was a serious shortage of Brothers as the Novitiate had been closed during the war. In early November, the Provincial, Brother Odo MacNamara, received a letter from the Superior General, Brother Pius Noonan, informing him that Gerald was to proceed to Iona College, New Rochelle, NY, and commence teaching duties in January, 1947, on a loan for a maximum of three years. It was disclosed later that the previous week-end the English Provincial Council had met and had decided to appoint Gerald as Superior and Headmaster of Stoke because the medical condition of Brother Boniface MacDonald was deteriorating rapidly and it was unlikely he would see the New Year. He died on New Year's Day, 1947. In spite of an appeal by the Provincial, the General's decision stood and Gerald was duly informed of his change and instructed to take all necessary steps to be in New Rochelle on time! After the funeral of Boniface on January 5, Gerald read the appointment of Br. Baptist Doyle as the new Superior and Headmaster of Stoke, handed over all the keys of office and helped the new Superior for a couple of days before leaving Stoke to spend four days home before proceeding to Dublin for final instructions.

Obtaining a passport, visa, and transportation, at such short notice would normally be a lengthy process. However, the U.S. Pro-Consul in Liverpool was an ex-pupil of All Hallows and knew Brother Ambrose Kelly, the American Provincial! The visa was granted December 29, 1946, and travel via Shannon, Gander, on a TWA Lockheed Constellation "Star of Paris" was provided by the Bursar General. Brother Columba Normoyle, from the Irish Province, and Brother Hubert Barnes from Rome, met Gerald in Limerick and all three arrived at La Guardia on Sunday, January 26, 1947, to be met by Brothers Ambrose Kelly and Austin Loftus (the new President of Iona, successor of Brother Barnabas Cornelia, the College Founder). The next day found all three new arrivals busy in the classrooms supervising the fall semester final exams. The new semester opened a week later with the arrival of some two hundred freshmen, most of them GIs. Classroom space was very limited then. Cornelia Hall had seven classrooms, a single room for the Library, a physics lab and a chemistry lab with a preparation room between (the present wings were added in 1956), the basement housed the cafeteria for College, Prep, and Grammar school students. Doorley Hall was then the Prep School, Columba Hall was the Grammar School, Amend Hall the Prep Gym; the rest of the present buildings were not built till later. Two ex-Army huts had been erected in 1946 on the grass plot near the Brothers' Chapel (then a garage for two school buses!), providing two large temporary classrooms. Walsh Hall was under construction (from ex-Army barracks, originally located in Camp Shanks). Single

section classes of up to 80, 90, 100, students were not unusual in spite of double sessions (9 - 1 & 1 - 5) plus night school 7 - 10.30, Monday thru Friday. In summer there was no air-conditioning| Somehow, the wonderful student spirit prevailing in those early days brought much to the Campus in off-setting the prevailing hardships.

The Temporary Charter (5-year), granted by the Board of Regents in 1940 was extended for one year as the charter would only be made permanent after a thorough Regents inspection, which had been delayed by the War Emergency. The Permanent Charter came in 1947 after a Panel of Inspectors had spent almost a week on Campus. A preliminary inspection by the Middle States Association made the next year advised some modifications and expansions to the curriculum and facilities with the understanding that a second inspection would follow in due course. Among the changes was the division of the college into Arts, Science, Business, with a chairman for each division, all three reporting to one Dean, the College Academic Dean. Gerald was selected for the Chair of the Science Division which came into operation in September 1949. Prior to this only one degree had been awarded, the B.A., but the new arrangement allowed the B.S. and the B.B.A degrees after current students had satisfied major requirements in the appropriate Divisions.

Up to this, Mathematics had been the only science with a major, but the construction of a biology laboratory in the summer of 1947 completed the minimum of facilities to start majors in Biology, Chemistry and Physics and appropriate curriculum expansion the courses for majors in Biology, Chemistry and Physics were initiated. With the building of the first part of Ryan Library in the basement of which a temporary cafeteria was located, it was now possible to expand the laboratory facilities in Cornelia Hall by converting the basement into three chemistry laboratories, refitting the original chemistry lab for physics. Gerald spent the summer of 1948 in designing these labs, supervising the alterations, plumbing and electrical work, contracting for the extensive cabinet work. By September the facilities needed to implement the extended curriculum were ready for use and the last stage in getting the science majors going was completed. The first Physics major took his Ph.D. at Fordham (under Dr. Hess, Nobel Laureate) and became an outstanding authority in High Energy Physics at the University of Kentucky, and later at the University of Notre Dame, where he was Chairman for two separate terms, and was appointed to the Committee for the Super-Collider Project. Many other science majors followed into the academic, medical, dental, legal professions, with graduate awards, fellowships, industrial and government appointments. Chapters of the national student groups in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, were established and student participation in the national meetings was encouraged.

By 1955 Iona was blazing a trail of successes. The Prep had been re-located in what is now Hagan Hall, Doorley Hall had been turned over to the College but the need for more classrooms was as great as ever. The original plans of Cornelia Hall showed that the architects had provided a rough draft of how two wings could be added, providing twelve additional classrooms. Brother Hubert Barnes, now President, pressed forward with the expansion and ground was broken on February 2, 1956. The wings were put up and occupied in September of the same year - an extraordinary building feat by John Ryan & Company for an overall expenditure of \$330,000, only about three times the pre-war cost of the original, center part. The extension of the Library, the erection of McSpedon, Spellman Halls, the re-location of the Grammar School and Prep School to Stratton Road provided badly needed spatial requirements for the rapidly expanding College.

By this time, Gerald had been allowed to visit home (1953) but the three-year loan agreement had apparently been ignored. It was obvious that his background and Marino days were bearing fruit in a way which seemed to reflect the vision of Pius Noonan in the 1930s - to have a College in New Rochelle. While being Chair of the Science Division, he was also Chair of the expanding Physics Department with full-time teaching duties. In spite of the additional office duties he was busy fabricating equipment in the machine shop which he had set up in 1947, equipped with a variety of machine tools - largely War Surplus items - and writing articles for the Physics journals. He had also participated in a USAF research project at Fordham University, run an environmental study for Westchester County and in 1959 contracted with the US Department of the Army (weapons Division) to devise a pulsed neutron source. That project was completed successfully and the device installed at White Sands Missile Range, NM, in 1960. In due course he applied for and was granted a US Patent (#3,173,013 dated March 9, 1965) on four original principles involved in the development of the device (code named OMNITRON).

He was due to go home in the summer (1960) but in May he had to undergo surgery for thyroid cancer! The prognosis was not good and the surgeon considered a remission of only months would ensue. It was then that Gerald started a perpetual novena to the Founder and after three weeks of recuperation he was released from hospital. By the end of June, the surgeon considered him fit to travel and he spent July and August home in England. His voice, which had been weakened by the surgery, gradually returned to normal and, after getting back to New Rochelle on September 1, he was examined by the surgeon and found fit to return to class.

With the end of the research project for the U.S. Army, Gerald resumed his work on development of equipment, the writing of student procedures for more advanced laboratory work, publication of articles in the physics and science journals, in addition to full-time class and laboratory duties. With the advent of two more full-time instructors in the Physics Department the major offerings were increased and the Science Division prospered. Alumni were beginning to reach doctorates and important positions in academia and industry. With the end of the term of Brother Bonaventure Power as both President and Superior of the College Community (now numbering over forty) the dual office was divided, Brother John Glennon became Superior and Brother Gonzaga McKenna became President. This was a time of change in the Church, the Congregation, and most of all, in the attitudes of college students. The Hippie movement, campus unrest, and student revolt, came to Iona just as it did over the entire country. Student rights of protest and self expression brought many headaches to those in authority. Brother McKenna, who had served as Dean of the College as well as a member of the Mathematics Department, adroitly addressed these problems. To be able to sense the faculty and student body reactions to the changing attitudes he called for a radical change in the composition of the Administration Committee (which had aided the President since the Middle States accreditation and which had consisted of the Vice-President, the Dean of the College, the Registrar, the three Divisional Chairmen, the Dean of Admissions, the Director of the Counseling Service). A Committee of Forty giving representation to all tiers of faculty from lecturer to professor, the various administrative offices and the student government, began the process of drafting a plan for a College Senate. Much time and effort went into this process and within two years the Senate with sub-committees, bylaws for election and procedure was formed and approved of by the Board of Trustees.

Among the changes brought in by the new Senate was the process of election of Divisional and Departmental Chairmen with limitation of term of office to four years, confirmation of

appointment being at the discretion of the President. Shortly after this the Arts and Science Divisions were combined, a Dean for A & S and another Dean for the Business School were elected and they answered to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, who reported directly to the President. This new arrangement spread the responsibility for the general operation of the College (now enrolling some 5000 students) and made for more efficient operation. So, in 1967 Gerald was freed from administrative duties after a 20-year term. The relief was most welcomed as he had experienced health problems with increasing hypertension and incipient diabetes. By 1971 he had been hospitalized in the Benedictine Hospital, Kingston, while on summer vacation in the Novitiate at West Park, for observation and tests but by September he was back on the job, as usual. The following February he had to return to Kingston and undergo more extensive tests, followed by surgery for metastatic thyroid cancer. Recovery was slow but the follow-up Iodine-131 therapeutic dose for ablation of residual metastases proved successful. Voice weakness gradually cleared and close monitoring by Dr. Yao brought about an almost miraculous return to health. Gerald returned to Iona just before final exams but so radioactive after the Iodine-131 treatment that his presence in the lab was readily sensed by any Geiger counter in operating condition!

The following December he was asked to go to our mission in Chimbote, Peru, to help re-organize laboratory work shortly after the great earthquake which did enormous damage. In spite of having no knowledge of Spanish he negotiated the immigration at Lima and was picked up by the Superior, Brother Robert McDermott, a former student and science major at Iona, for the 420km drive to Chimbote. Having faced a somewhat similar situation in Bristol after a severe air-raid which damaged the school badly, he showed a small group of devoted students how to carry out experiments with the crudest equipment, made up from broken electric heaters, discarded fluorescent lamp tubes, tin cans and bottles of every sort! His experiences were written up in an article for *The Physics Teacher* under the title "Lab on a Shoestring" for reprints of which there were many requests. He returned to Iona the day before the start of the new semester in late January.

By 1974 the strain was beginning to tell and, on the recommendation of Dr. Yao, Gerald applied for a six-month study sabbatical for the fall semester of 1974. He had been repeatedly asked by some of his former colleagues in the English Province to visit and share his expertise for the benefit of the schools which had extensive science curricula. After a month with family he visited all the schools of the Province but concentrated his efforts in Bristol where the laboratories were well supported by a good machine and woodwork shop. Many of the devices that had been developed at Iona were duplicated there with all the necessary diagrams and data needed to make copies. The new location of St. Brendan's (which had been transferred in 1960 from Berkeley Square in the center of the city to its present site in the suburb of Brislington), provided large playing fields and a beautiful residence for the Brothers - a far cry from the old St. Brendan's where Gerald had taught almost 40 years before. During his visit to Stoke he was naturally delighted to find that most of the equipment he had devised during the war years was still there and in use. He was able to spend the first Christmas at home after almost 50 years and he returned to Iona in January 1975.

In August 1978 he marked the 50th anniversary of his joining the Brothers but, though he had reached the official retiring age of 65, he continued full time teaching till 1981. At that time the Statutes recommended retirement from full-time teaching and ceding full professorship to

allow promotions in the department. That fall, the Trustees awarded Gerald Emeritus Professor status to mark his "retirement". In more recent times Federal law concerning age discrimination has necessitated a change in the statutes which now allow anyone to continue in full-time service provided he/she is physically fit enough to discharge his/her departmental duties properly. Since his visit to Peru in 1972 there had been a real need for assistance of a similar kind in our Caribbean missions as well as in some other schools of the American and Canadian Provinces. The current Provincial, Brother Michael Delaney, gave permission for Gerald to go wherever he could help resulting in visits to Antigua, Dominica, Vancouver, Burnaby, Chicago, Detroit, Rochester, and some home Province schools nearer home. Being able to share the expertise gathered over so many years with so many unique opportunities was one of his greatest rewards and about 18 months were devoted, off and on, to this project.

But, nearer to home, there was another call for service. With the expansion of the computer program at Iona it became obvious that some on-the-spot maintenance service would be essential as service contracts for on-site maintenance were very expensive. Professor Anthony Halaris, who had been the prime mover in this field asked Gerald if he would be willing to join two part-time members of the Computer Department to organize a workshop for this purpose. Within days the group set up work tables and organized tools and service manuals for handling most of the repairs on site. Laboratories with 20 or more personal computers were built, networks for mainframe connection were designed and the necessary material obtained to set them going. In addition to the handling repairs, Gerald spent some time in writing step-by-step instructions for diagnosis and treatment of most of the common breakdowns. As the earlier PC-1s and PC-2s were replaced by XTs and ATs, the work became more complicated but the group kept up with the technology and saved thousands of dollars each year. He was called upon frequently to give informal talks to small groups of users on the best way to avoid the almost inevitable failures of equipment by adopting appropriate precautions. Most of the early troubles centered on the failure of disk drives and Gerald made this his special field. Service manuals and the auxiliary equipment for re-aligning troublesome drives were obtained and a standard procedure adopted whereby all drives would be serviced annually and a stock of serviced drives built up for immediate replacement of defective modules.

In addition to computer maintenance he continued to help others by running a general repair service for household appliances. Many radios, TVs, toasters, mixers, fans, etc. owed a second span of life to his efforts in this direction. Even sewing parted seams, taking up or letting out waists in trousers was on a par with soldering or welding. As he occupied the upper floor of what had been the coach house of the first private house occupied by the College Community, he had a workroom next to his bedroom where much of this work was done. He enjoyed this and often expressed the thought that being able to help others was, in itself, a great reward. For many years he had spent a month or so in the summer at West Park instead of at the shore where he helped his long-time friend, Brother Simon Barry, in running the dairy farm till its closure after its usefulness had expired. Cutting and baling hay, cropping silage, spreading manure, were second nature for him: he never forgot, that he was from a farming family. He was involved in many building projects when the farm was expanding even helping to erect a second silo. The fresh air, exercise, and change of pace from an academic environment gave him fresh vigor for the new academic year.

In 1988 he celebrated his sixtieth anniversary of entrance into the Congregation and 41 years of service at Iona. His science department colleagues, almost half of them former students

of his classes, joined with the computer department in celebrating the event with a special dinner, prior to which the original general physics laboratory was dedicated to his memory as The Bullen Memorial Laboratory with the unveiling of a plaque by the President, Brother John Driscoll, to commemorate the event. John had been the first Student Brother to major in physics at Iona and is one of the few who had all the physics courses with Gerald as teacher. The post-prandial proceedings were devoted to reminiscences of "the early days" and the formal presentation of the first volume of the newly produced laboratory manual for the freshman course - based largely on the "work sheets" which Gerald had painstakingly produced in the late 1940s. Most of the equipment used then is still in full operation, a testimony to the fact that the basics of physics don't change all that much. During the Graduation Ceremonies the following June, Gerald was awarded the D.Sc. degree, honoris causa, by his former student, John Driscoll, an honor much appreciated by both the recipient and the conferer.

Shortly after the ceremony Gerald was hospitalized for prostate surgery and it was feared that cancer had once again reared its ugly head. Biopsies fortunately did not confirm the suspicion and, in spite of a rather long term of post-operative infection, he was able to return to work in September. The following year he spent the month of July home with family and resumed duties in the computer shop during August while most of the other workers were on vacation. By September he began to experience difficulty in manipulating tools and a rapid onset of arthritis ensued. Within weeks he had to resort to a cane and was unable to go to work. The doctor diagnosed a combination of osteo and rheumatoid arthritis after ruling out the possibility of Lyme disease (induced by a tick, usually carried by deer and often picked up by walking through grass). With the coming of winter and increasing difficulty in his getting about, the Provincial suggested the possibility of spending the winter at St. Joseph's Residence, barely a quarter-mile from the Iona Campus, where nursing would be available in case of need. By November he was re-located and new medication put to use under the supervision of the House Physician. The worst of the flare-up subsided slowly and the use of a cane discontinued but by Easter it was found that the new medication was causing gastric ulcers. With the arrival of spring, Gerald was able to return to his old quarters at the College and, after consultation with a rheumatologist in New York City, a course of weekly gold injections and blood tests was initiated to replace the former treatment. This treatment is known to be very slow in showing results and the side effects can be serious. It does not repair damage already done to joints but prevents further damage and reduces inflammation. By August there had been no side effects and the benefits were being felt. However, the doctor advised against any further manual work and Gerald had, regretfully, to resign from the shop duties. He continued reading and writing, visiting the sick in St. Joseph's, and helping others by doing light odd jobs and by correspondence with the Missions. By early September, the gold treatment began to show definite benefits but the doctor detected increasing arrhythmia and recommended the implanting of a cardiac pacemaker. It was rather ironic that Gerald should then have to depend on a form of "personal computer" as a sort of reward for his care of PCs!

March 24, 1993:

On January 26, 1993, he completed 46 years at Iona, of which 44 were in fulltime service to the College; March 5 saw his celebration of his 80th birthday. The weekly gold injections for six months had brought considerable relief from the rheumatoid arthritis: reduction of most

of the swelling in the joints, improved articulation, etc. With the new year the frequency of the injections was reduced gradually to one-a-month which would be needed indefinitely to prevent relapse. However, the need for a cardiac pacemaker was becoming more imminent as arrhythmia was not being suppressed by current medication. A final decision would be made during the current year.

September 24, 1993:

Gold treatment now reduced to injection every six weeks. Slow but sure progress in reduction of swelling in joints is continuing.

Sixty-fifth Anniversaries:

Entrance into the Congregation: August 30, 1928

Reception of the Habit: September 24, 1928

Brother Bonaventure Power passed away in New Rochelle Hospital at 10.30pm. A great Monk, Superior and President, May he rest in Peace.

April 3, 1994:

In late February, during a routine bi-monthly medical check-up, several papillary adenocarcinomas were detected in the lower left neck area. X-rays and CT scans, biopsy of the largest of these tumors, plus blood work and examination of the area by an ENT specialist persuaded Dr. Yao to have further examination by Drs. Carmelo Puccio & Patrick Molt of the Westchester County Medical Center. The final outcome was to have surgical resection of the area done by Dr. Molt on Tuesday, April 5, with follow-up using I-131 scan to determine if a therapeutic iodine dose was needed or advisable. A stay in the WMC Hospital, Valhalla, where the surgery would be carried out, of 5 - 6 days was to be expected.

April 5, 1994:

Modified resection of left lower neck done by Dr. Molt, starting at 3.30pm. Came to in Recovery Room about 7pm. Was on oxygen till 8am next morning. Blood and urine tests taken and then transferred to Room 422 at mid-morning. First food by mouth at 12.30pm - had fasted for 40 hours and later found that a weight loss of 5 pounds had occurred. Blood pressure very high, taken every two hours followed each time by oral liquid Procardia capsules. Bed rest all day.

April 7, 1994

Allowed to sit up for short periods. Resident checked for possible damage to nerves controlling left arm. All appeared OK but the area cut into was still very numb. Vocalizing showed some loss of voice power and voice rest was prescribed. Difficulty in sleeping at night in spite of taking temazepam.

April 8, 1994

Dr. Molt decided to remove the dressings as the hemovac showed that drainage was almost complete. The incision had healed very rapidly. The drain incision was dressed with a waterproof dressing and I was released at midday, could shower daily, the drain dressing to be removed in three days if scab had formed.

Saw Dr. Molt on April 18. Pathology reported that several malignant nodes had been found in the debris from resection. Some permanent topical nerve damage had occurred which makes the area affected feel like a rubber skin but this should not lead to facial distortion.

An appointment to see Dr. Marshall on May 27 (the earliest available!) concerning I-131 scan and possible ablation has been made. Arrangements were made to have an I-131 scan on August 10 which turned out negative. The expected I-131 ablation and 7 - 10 days of isolation were canceled. A final CAT scan in October also proved negative and the matter was considered closed.

REPLACEMENT OF ALIEN REGISTRATION CARD: October 1993
GREEN CARD -----> PINK CARD

OCTOBER 20, 1993

A notice appeared in the papers announcing that the only acceptable proof of legal alien residence would be the new PINK CARD which would replace the current green card. As I am still a British citizen I decided to call the automated telephone number by which those concerned could apply for the required form (I-90). I called the number, gave my name, address, and current alien registration number (which, I presume, was taped at the INS Office at 26, Federal Plaza, NYC).

DECEMBER 4, 1993

As I had not received the form by this date, I wrote to the INS and gave the data mentioned above, mentioning that the I-90 had not been received.

DECEMBER 29, 1993

The form was received, coming from BURLINGTON, VT. Postage was 29c! Could these forms be available at US Post Offices for pick-up by those needing them. Why waste taxpayers' money?

I completed the form, following the instructions very carefully, purchased a \$70 postal order, obtained the duplicate photographs (satisfying color, paper, size, 3/4 frontage aspect) and mailed the completed form, photos, xerox copy of both sides of my current GREEN CARD, retaining the latter and the \$70 MO (as instructed) to secure an appointment for personal appearance at INS, 26 Federal Plaza, NYC.

JANUARY 24, 1994

I received a notification to appear at 10.30am on JANUARY 24! That letter had arrived that morning and keeping the appointment was impossible. All the material I had submitted was included with this notice on the back of which I was instructed to explain my failure to come if I did not appear.

I stated the facts and requested that I be given a few days notice for the next appointment so that I could arrange for a car, driver, and companion to make the trip. I also explained that I am partly handicapped with arthritis, had a heart condition, and had difficulty in moving about.

All the returned documents plus the explanation of failure to appear were re-submitted with a medical certificate requesting a waiver of personal appearance as suggested by the appointment form. The \$70 MO was included, as requested.

MARCH 11, 1994

All the documents submitted were returned with a request for another pair of photographs, this time taken WITHOUT CORRECTIVE LENSES. The detailed instructions for the photos do not specify that glasses are NOT to be worn. Mine are clear glass (not tinted) and I have to use them for both driving and reading. The New York Motor Vehicle Bureau require that glasses must be worn for the license photos and ALL my passport and identification card photos show me wearing glasses.

I spent another \$8.25 and resubmitted all the documentation (and \$70 MO - which had been endorsed already but returned to me!). Am I being harassed? Also the \$70 MO - ENDORSED! - was returned! Endorsement of a check or MO is legal proof of acceptance of money due FOR SERVICES RENDERED TO THE PAYER. I have not yet got that PINK CARD.

APRIL 5, 1994

While I was in the WMC Hospital for neck surgery, I received a letter from Burlington, VT, stating that my application for the pink card to replace my current green card had been accepted. I was required to appear in person on Tuesday - Friday, 9am - 12noon, without appointment, at the Federal Building in NYC, for the purpose of establishing my identity, recording my right digit finger-print, and signature which will appear on the new card with my photograph. The green card just has the photograph. Both cards have the name, date of birth, date of first entry into USA, alien status given on the original visa, alien registration number, sex, on the other side. The appearance had to be made within 12 weeks of the notice date (May 5, 1994) or the application would lapse.

MAY 10, 1994

With the aid of Arthur Walsh as driver and Peter Duffy as "bodyguard" I finally made it to the Federal Building in NYC by 9.45am. After three mis-directions as to floor, room, queue, I finally arrived at the proper place, CPD stood in line for me (after explaining the situation to the bailiff) and after about half an hour my turn came. It took less than five minutes to finger print and sign so we were back at Iona in time for lunch. I was given another form to file with

Arlington, TX, in case I did not receive the card within three months, i.e. by August 1994. This was filed and, after three weeks, I was informed that my name did not appear on their lists!!!

October 18, 1994

With the help of CPD I contacted the regional office in Vermont and after 55 minutes on their automated phone (about 50 minutes on various levels of HOLD) I found that my application had been received but could not be processed as the original green card was issued before computers were used to record data on green cards. I could get no indications as to when the pink card would be available!!!! This whole process has cost over \$100, including the INS fee of \$70 - which was paid in April and for which nothing has been provided to show that I have complied with the law. I am unable to return to USA without the pink card and there is nothing I can do about it except wait and see.

NOTE... The INS is a department of the Department of Justice!

August 15, 1995

New alien registration card received! I made a Xerox copy of both sides to carry in my wallet, the original being kept with my passport.

Oxford Plan at Iona College:

Introduced in July 1995. As Dr. Yao was due to retire at the end of the year I opted to have Dr. Louis Caragine (of Bronxville & Lawrence Hospital) as my primary care physician. He was in my physics class as a pre-med and graduated MD from Georgetown. Subsequent events justified my choice! I had a full physical exam in August 1995 and he continued my medications prescribed by Dr. Yao.

November 1996:

I was brought to the emergency room at Lawrence for what I thought was stomach trouble. I was X-rayed and it turned out to be a collapsed left lung! I was admitted for three weeks, the lung was tapped and drained, and I opted to stay at St. Joseph's Care Center to recuperate.

January 10, 1997

While still at St. Joseph's, I suffered a transient ischemic attack early in the morning and was brought back to the emergency room at Lawrence Hospital for diagnosis and treatment. My mouth was distorted and speech badly slurred at first but by the next morning I had recovered speech but my right arm and leg were still affected. I fell out of bed the first night and got an extensive hematoma on the calf, thigh, right buttock, and right side! The heparin/cumadin blood thinning treatment had to be abandoned and, by the end of the week I had a pacemaker installed by Dr. Cayola under a local anaesthetic. It has a battery which lasts for ten years!. Four months later, Dr. Mercado re-programmed the pacemaker to secure steady beating.

I was in the hospital for the rest of January undergoing a number of tests: CTscans, X-rays,

ultrasonic testing of the carotid arteries and heart, and, finally breathing tests to check lung displacement. On January 31 I was transferred by special wheelchair ambulette to Burke Rehabilitation Center in White Plains for evaluation and therapy

January 14, 1997

The sixtieth anniversary of my receiving my Ph.D!! Though hospitalized, the event was quietly celebrated and I was congratulated by Dr. Caragine, my physician and former student!

January 26, 1997

The fiftieth anniversary of my arrival at Iona College, and, though still in hospital, it was celebrated with balloons and a visit from the Superior, Sub-Superior, and several members of the Community (Dave, Bernie et al.).

January 20, 1997

Released from Burke and got back to St. Joseph's just as the six o'clock Angelus tolled from Holy Family church - a sweet sound after six trying weeks in hospital!

February - June, 1997

Visits to the various doctors, changes of medication, and a variety of tests followed. It became clearer as the weeks

went by that my return to my old quarters would be delayed indefinitely. The nurse advised me to stay at St. Joseph's as my shower at Iona had no grab bars and the 17 outside steps would be hazardous even in summer weather. "Que sera, sera"

THIS ACCOUNT IS COMPLETE AS OF June 9, 1997.

P.S. Having a penchant for "firsts" I thought it would be an innovation to have at my wake a computer and printer with WordPerfect 5.0 and my diskette VITATGB which saved this account of THE FACTS OF MY LIFE. Anyone would be free to scan the text or print out any "bits" of this account as a supplement to the customary Memorial Card. I would also appreciate having my PACEMAKER switched off before interment at West Park! One last request: please do not use carpet tacks to fasten my wig - just burn it!! Ha, Ha, Ha

T.G.B.

Excerpted verse from ALL GOD'S CHILDREN ARE FLAKY

By Reverend Joe McCarthy

*An overview of America
From the Underground
Of where we are
Where life is love
and love is presence
And presence is salvation
In all our broken madness*

It is a man's world
We all live in.
Men were the scribes
Who wrote our scriptures
Men were the scholars
Who studies them
Men were our forefathers
Who wrote our constitution
Men were the knowers
Who knew what was known
Philosophers down through the ages
The great hall of famers
You know all their names
You have seen them so often
In musty old books
On library bookshelves
Socrates
Plato
Aristotle
Hegel
Nietzsche
Marx
Descartes
Hume
Kant
Darwin
Freud
Jung
Dewey
James
Whitehead
Kierkegaard
Camus

Sartre
Jasper
Husserl
Heidegger

The world as we know it
Is the world
According to the guys

A few speak for all

Half of the human race
Tells the other half
What is real.

We live in the land of men
Inside a male lodge
Our whole experience of life
Is masculine.

The way we are today
Took shape
Long before our time.
The glory of our human glory
Began as stories
Stories told around
Open fires
In mud walled cabins
Long ago
Where our people sat together
Late into the night
And regaled each other
With tales of heroes past.

The stories told
Were stories mostly
Of warriors and soldiers
Skilled in wars
Rulers of courage
Huge of body
Massive in strength
Men of the caliber
That jump from the pages
Of Virgil and Homer.

The human adventure
Down through the ages
Recorded only
The movement of males
The human story
Was strictly his story
Knights of chivalry
Tales of soldiery
The long horse ride
Of the male ego
Riding out
In search of glory.

Man too
Was The Renaissance man
Keen in reason
Sharp in mind
He made his mark
In arts and science.

Through the centuries
The established paths
Of man and males
Continued to be

The way the human story
Was conveyed.
The male ideal
Of our later years
Has been
Money, status
And prestige
Success in business deals.

In the long slow unfolding
Of our growing up
As human beings
Our species followed
The male route.

Down our nights
Down our days
Down through all our years
Those who came through for us

Those who were there for us
Those who looked out for us
Those who felt for us
Those are the ones
Who made love real to us

On earth
As it is in heaven
Love is made present
By presence
If you care
You'll be there
Our bodies are where our hearts belong

Presence is a better word
For love
Than any other word
We know.

Presence is
An answer to the plea -
Stand by me.

Presence is the gift
That parents give their children
And lover give their lovers
And friends offer one another.

Of all our human riches
Nothing could be greater
Than the offering of ourselves
To be there for each other.

Presence makes us all
Insiders
Inside each others' lives.

Presence is never absence
When we leave
We take one another with us
Wherever we go

Presence is the space
Between ourselves and others
Presence is the energy

Going back and forth
Between us.

Presence provides the elements
The sun, the water, the soil.
We all need
to bloom!
to flower!
to grow!

Presence is like dancing
Sometimes one leads
Sometimes one follows
But one never forces
Presence is never
controlling
owning
or using another!

Presence is the positionless position
Of no position at all
Presence is presence
Never someone over someone else
Presence is:
Being with
Being for
Being real
Being true
Being here
Being now

Presence is a reverence
For the otherness of others
Presence knows full well
How complicated
We all are
How ambiguous and contradictory
Our whole story is.

Others are in presence's eyes
Not problems to be fixed
But mysteries that live
And that love loves
For no reason at all.

Presence knows
It will take a lifetime
To say we knew
Each other well.
Each one of us is
A honest shot at life
A bid to be
A story yet untold
A story that unfolds
As presence allows

Presence is like praying
It is waiting on
Responding to
The silence of another's solitude
Like our Creator
Long ago.
Presence calls out
And waits for
The emergence of someone new
Suffering our way
Out of nothingness

On this road
From God knows where
To God knows what
This road that winds its weary way
From the known to the great unknown
Presence is our journeying on together
Each one following
The star that stood
Above our crib
On the day
That we were born
Each one of us
Bearing a destiny
That changes and touches
Everyone in the world
Around us
By our Presence.

Presence is the place
Where we get up and lie down
Go out from
And come home to

Presence are the rooms
That we live in
Where together we make life
And make love
Presences is the place
Where we are believed in
Where our spirits
 have
 spaces
To stretch
Into the veins of others
Whose love is our own.

In a world of total uncertainty
Life is blind
We walk together in the dark
No one is sure
No one is certain
There is no way
To tread safely
We live on a promise
We cannot keep
There is no hand to hold onto
Except holding on
To one another
And that is Presence.

Presence is togetherness
In the belly of reality
Knowing not
What we are
Trusting life as is.

Presence is a gentleness
With the mystery
That envelopes us
Presence is the holy
Deep down
In all of us.

Presence is
The way we are
When we are with ourselves

Presence is
The way we are
When we are with each other

Presence is
The way we are in God
When we are deep in prayer

Presence changes the way
We are in our world

Presence changes the world around us
Presence makes our world
A warm place

Presence is salvation
In all our broken madness

This book is written
To highlight presence
As the greatest value
In our human world

Everything We Need (for David Masengill)

By Reggie Marra

Twenty-five windless degrees
allowed each miraculous flake
a perpendicular freefall to a
starring role in a white Christmas
Eve, which let Lawrence leave
his third job four hours early
and thirty-six before he had to
work again.

Uneven crunch of workboot sole on
snow recalled his childhood joy at
snowflakes only visible in amber
glow then fading past the streetlamp's
jurisdiction. He stopped
and watched them fall within
the stilled boots' perfect silence,
then turned toward the bus stop.

Aboard, back seat seduction long
gone, he sat behind the driver,
imagined a car and just one job,
checked his pocket for the cash,
rested his hand where he felt it.

Eight familiar stops brought Lynn
aboard, the kids in tow, Larry bouncing,
Lisa glowing with the season: Daddy,
Daddy, Santa Claus is coming! He
smiled, hugged and kissed, felt the
tug of love and the slap of scarcity—
a full heart and a thin wallet
competing for his consciousness.

K-Mart loomed bright red as they
stepped down, wished the driver
Merry Christmas, followed the
store's beacon, its promise
of domestic perfection.

Inside, Larry and Lisa dashed
toward, Lynn's reminder lost
in the shopping sprawl: One
each—remember, only one each.
Lawrence marveled at her smile,
tried to return it through his
sense of deficit. It's okay,
she told him. It's okay with
them; it's okay with me. We
have everything we need.

Larry bounced a basketball,
the box it came from listed
thirty-five dollars; Lawrence
found one for fifteen that Larry
liked as much; Lisa hugged
a twelve-dollar doll, its skin
much darker than her own.

Lawrence and Lynn checked both toys
for cracks and blemishes, found
none, paid \$28.96; the nearsighted
cashier glimpsed the celebration of
doll hugs and ball bounces. She smiled.
I'm sure we have some white dolls left.
Yes, Lynn replied, you do, but
Lisa wants this one. The cashier
shook her head and said, Kids.
Will there be anything else?

Lawrence wished he could say yes,
felt Lynn's hand, comfortable
on his arm; gazed at Lisa and Larry,
whose eyes enveloped him in their
pure joy; mysterious tears
rolled forth and he understood
now that it was okay.
No, he said, we have
everything we need.

Poetic Fact or Psychological Fiction: Creating Autumn Bluffs

by Christina Barbero

When I wrote Autumn Bluffs, my goal was, simply, to write a poem – to create something which did not exist previously, which spoke to some truth and was aesthetically pleasing in and of itself. For this to happen, especially the truth part, there needs to be a willingness to dig down into one's psychic ruins and rummage around a bit. With enough patience and any luck, one excavates a word, a phrase, or an image which is then held up to see if it catches any light, if it contains any energy, if it moves somewhere.

The psychological truth, whether it be conscious or unconscious, might be considered the raw material, the clay with which one begins. But then the craft swiftly takes over: juxtaposing images, selecting some, discarding others and mixing metaphors until the blend is just right. More often than not, there is a match between my inner world and its outer expression, the poem. If there is a conflict, however, the poetic truth will win out over any personal truth. In the end, I care less whether it is true for me personally and more that it appeals to my imagination.

That is why I leave matters of interpretation and meaning of my poem to the individual reader. My hope is that it will draw the reader in; that it will invite a response. I tried once to explain a particular image, but I was quickly corrected, "Oh! I didn't see it that way at all!" And as I reflected on this alternate interpretation, I had to admit that I liked it better than mine.

Writing poetry can and, no doubt, does produce therapeutic by-products; likewise, writing for therapeutic reasons can yield artistic results. I simply have no inclination to analyze my own poetry for its psychological roots – I would rather invest the energy in writing more poems.

Domestic Tranquilities: A Review of Thomas Moore's Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life.

By Marc Ricciardi Ph.D.

"The great malady of the twentieth century implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially," explains Thomas Moore, "is loss of soul." And it is this very loss that Moore seeks to repair in *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Every day Life*. By encouraging us to recognize and to regain our special place in relationship to others and to the world, Moore espouses not a poetics of transcendence, but of imminence, not a departure from the world, but an immersion in it. The bane of modern existence, he maintains, is that man is fragmented and displaced, not only within himself but in how he perceives and interacts with his physical surroundings. In an age of technological accomplishment, psychological analysis, and zealous self-sufficiency, man has unfortunately repudiated his past, rejected his present, and denied his future. What we need, he insists, "is soul," the bridge between the then and now, the here and the hereafter, for it is only soul that holds together "mind and body, ideas and life, spirituality and the world."

More's premise is sound, not only in his assertion that crude materialism is responsible for the corrosion of higher values, but in his insistence that life is a creative, imaginative, process which demands not an empirical but a mythic approach to experience. In this respect, Moore is akin to many of the New Age gurus of our times. M. Scott Peck, John Bradshaw, and especially Robert Bly, have, in their own way, attempted to expose the lie of modernism, the lie of living for oneself and outside of others, by teaching us how to re-envision ourselves, how to recreate ourselves in conformity to a higher ideal. Yet Moore's background reflects his own unique concerns; having been a monk in a Catholic religious order for twelve years, Moore insists upon the importance of ritual to help us in imposing order and in making sense of our lives: "The Bible, the Koran, Buddhist writings, and ritual books of all religions move us to imagine with exceptional range and depth. They bring us into wonder about the cosmos, about the far reaches of time past and present, and about ultimate values." But although Moore insists that a "solid, palpable, and intellectually satisfying appreciation of the sacred is a sine qua non of living soulfully," Moore, regrettably, is also a victim of his times, an espouser of New Age sensibilities which unavoidably sully the theological and spiritual integrity of his work. There is undeniably a present trend in modern society to repudiate Judeo-Christian values, and Moore, ironically, the nemesis of modernity, seems also to succumb to this temptation. His use of Greek mythology to illuminate certain truths about life is part of a typological tradition that stretches as far back as Saint Augustine and the Early Church Fathers; yet whereas they sought to integrate the pagan with the Christological, thereby deepening the meaning and profundity of the Faith, Moore substitutes the pagan for the Christian, thereby weakening the primacy of a major world religion. In no way does Moore vilify Christianity, and I have no doubt that he is a lover of Christ, but by presenting Greek mythology as the guide to truth, he undermines his claim that the sacred traditions of the world are the preservers of ultimate values. His sections on *Dreams: A Royal Road to Soul* and *The Guiding Daimon*, are equally disturbing, constituting a very small but dangerous part of his spiritual vocabulary.

As a whole, however, Moore is an artist of the mind, a sensitive and thoughtful surveyor of the landscape of the spirit. His eloquent prose instills within the reader the very qualities he so highly extols—stillness and tranquility of thought. Moore, ultimately, is a Platonist at heart, since for him the pursuit of Beauty, the soul's longing to be reunited with the Highest Good, is the hallmark of the fully developed and mature personality: "The soul is nurtured by beauty.... For the soul, it is important to be taken out of the rush of practical life for the contemplation of timeless and eternal realities." Whether Buddhist, Muslim, Jew or Christian, Moore's study of the Good Life sheds some insight into how we may best cultivate and connect with just a few of those timeless and eternal realities.

About Thomas Moore

Thomas Moore is a psychotherapist and writer who has published numerous articles on archetypal and Jungian psychology, mythology, and the arts. His books include *The Planets Within*, *Rituals of the Imagination*, and *Dark Eros*. Moore lived as a monk in a Catholic religious order for twelve years. He has a Ph.D. in religious studies from Syracuse University, an M.A. in theology from the University of Windsor, an M.A. in musicology from the University of Michigan, and a B.A. in music and philosophy from DePaul University. Moore lives in New England and is a prominent lecturer in North America and Europe.

Patrick J. McDonald and Claudette M. McDonald, Out of the Ashes, New York, Paulist Press, 1997.

The McDonalds, licensed social workers, have written a book about picking up the process of one's life. Hence, the significance of the subtitle, "A Handbook for Starting Over

Throughout, they use the model of the blown-up federal building in Oklahoma City. The five processes used with that building - disintegration, sifting, reconstruction, reintegration, and transcendence - are also used in the lives of persons, especially in times of change or loss. The authors give many excellent examples from actual cases: these help to make their conjectures realistic and easier to apply to oneself.

The authors stress the importance of openness to self and others in these processes. The two chapters on "sifting" are especially good.

Spirituality, prayer exercises, trust development, and characteristics of the new self are some of the developed topics that are helpful.

The authors conclude with a fine chapter on journaling, as a method of dialogue with the self. I would recommend this book to all - we all need help and guidance through present and future changes.

**By A.J. Lips C.F.C.
Christian Brothers Community
Iona College**

Narrative Therapy on the Internet: An Annotated Bibliography of World Wide Web Resources

By Melaine Forsburg MLS

An increasing amount of psychological data/research is being published electronically and most of this information is available on the Internet, making the World Wide Web (WWW) a new medium for study. "Searching the net" for narrative therapy sites and resources can be rewarding and enjoyable.

The format for this bibliography includes: the title of the source, which is what the site is called or referred to; the organization or author, who or which institution or group responsible for this source; and the URL, the uniform resource locator, which is the address on the WWW for this source. The user must type in the exact URL in order to access the site.

Title: Narrative Psychology: An Internet Guide
Author: Vincent W. Hevern, SJ, Ph.D.
Organization: Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY
URL: <http://web.lemoyne.edu/~hevern/narpsych.html>

An award winning web site created by an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Le Moyne College in Syracuse NY. This site is a **must see** for anyone involved in Narrative Therapy or Narrative Psychology. This site also includes a link for other Internet resources.

Title: Resources in Narrative Psychology : Guide and Annotated Bibliography
Author: Vincent W. Hevern, SJ, Ph.D.
Organization: Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY
URL: http://web.lemoyne.edu/~hevern/nr_ther.html

This web site, also authored by Dr. Hevern of Le Moyne College, includes an extensive annotated bibliography of sources related to Narrative Therapy.

Title: Narrative Therapy Page
Author: Tweed Valley Mental Health Service, Queensland, Australia
Organization: Tweed Valley Mental Health Service, Queensland, Australia
URL: <http://onthenet.com.au/~pict/mentnarr.htm>

Includes definitions and history of Narrative Therapy

Title: Family Institute of Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA)
Author: Family Institute of Cambridge
Organization: Family Institute of Cambridge
URL: <http://world.std.com/~fic/>

This web site includes a list and links of programs, courses, workshops, and conferences. For more information one may email the organization.

Title: Center for Collaborative Change
Organization: Center for Collaborative Change
URL: <http://www.collaborate.org/search.html>

This site offers information about the Center for Collaborative Change. “The Center has been created to support the continued development and growth of the Narrative Therapy community of learners”. This site also includes a searchable calendar of events sponsored by the Center.

Title: A Narrative Context for Conversations with Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse
Organization: Phillips Graduate Institute, California, USA
Author: Frank Baird, MA
URL: <http://www.pgi.edu/baird.htm>

Article about the ideologies of Narrative Therapy and how it is used to promote healing, the journal “Progress: Family Systems Research and Therapy, published by the Phillips Graduate Institute.

While a variety of resources are available, one needs to be aware that not everything on the WWW can be considered scholarly. It has become increasingly necessary to evaluate each WWW source used for its level of scholarship. Keep in mind, there are no set recommendations, inclusion criteria, or ethical standards in place on the WWW; and therefore, anyone with access to the proper equipment can construct a web site. One should keep the following criteria in mind when evaluating a website:

Authority: Who is responsible for the information presented? What are the qualifications of the author or organization? Are they qualified to present this information? Are they a reliable source? Does the author or organization include a name, address, and email address? What is the credibility of the organization? Is the author well known in his or her field?

Accuracy: How accurate is the information? Are facts referred to in a bibliography? Can the facts be verified from other sources?

Objectivity: Does the author have a known or hidden bias for the subject? Has the author published anything else that contradicts or substantiates his or her views?

Currency: Does the web site include a date for when the information was compiled or last verified? When was the Web site last updated?

Coverage: Does the site cover all aspects of a subject or both sides of an issue?

Electronic information is becoming more and more popular these days with students and researchers alike. With the advent of new technology, the horizons of research are expanding and opening a new space for information to be retrieved and perhaps shared more readily among colleagues.

A Bibliography for Narrative Therapy

By Nataalka Sawchuk MLS

This bibliography is comprised of journal articles, monographs and several dissertations that discuss topics in narrative therapy and the use of the narrative in various disciplines. Searches in PsychInfo, Medline and Expanded Academic Index produced a majority of the following citations. The materials and articles listed below cover the time period 1980 to the present and by no means represent the full scope of publications that address the topic of narrative therapy. However, this collection of material does reflect the use of narrative therapy in counseling and research conducted in this field.

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