

An Instinctual Archetype in the Academy: Curse or Gift?

I know the number by heart. I've dialled it many times over the past five years. It's ringing. As I wait for the university voice mail to kick in, I remember the first time that I heard the recording with its unexpected closing message: "Have a good day". While I have often been oblivious to this automaton-like salutation as I exit store check-outs, I was surprised to hear it recorded as part of a colleague's professional persona. Later, I grew to understand that the world of difference was that Carita's greeting was intentional. She indeed wanted goodness to be in everyone's life and worked towards that end. This kind of caring was to be her undoing.

Within most of the academy, one should care about scholarship, in particular obtaining grants and publishing; service, participating in ways that advance networks and departmental/institutional reputation and clout; and teaching, performing satisfactorily insofar as student evaluations go. Privileging scholarship and to a lesser extent service generally results in tenure and promises escape from colleagues' evaluations of being dead wood and garners merit pay. In contrast, caring about teaching and its praxis brings few rewards. Moreover, teaching, in and for contemporary times, brings its own set of challenges that too often include unsolicited student attitude accompanied by apprehensive nods from colleagues.

Caring about Teaching

Caring about teaching used to be denoted by the thoughtful organization of selective content to be transmitted during a set time frame. If the professor delivered the goods in something more than a monotone, that was a bonus. However, new knowledge about learning has altered this singular focus of course content transmission-acquisition to include teaching for understanding and transfer to real life contexts. Adoption of this newer paradigm redistributes the emphases in learning and influences the

conceptualization and resultant design of the overall learning environment; in particular, the interrelated conditions of the knowledge-centred environment, the assessment environment, the learner-centred environment, as well as the overall sense of community in the classroom (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999).

In the knowledge-centred environment, the organization of knowledge is now expected to develop rich connections within the discipline to promote problem-solving capabilities for actual practice. Teachers are to support students in becoming more metacognitive by actively engaging them in sense-making. As a result, a significant part of that understanding is to be developed in the assessment environment. Teachers are to affirm student understanding not only by summative assessment tasks resulting in a final course grade but through ongoing formative assessment where rich and frequent teacher feedback makes student thinking visible to the student. The student is then able to reflect, revise, and refine understanding accordingly. Teachers who situate themselves in an assessment environment that includes formative evaluation perceive students as constructing their own understandings based upon previous knowledge. By doing so, teachers acknowledge and promote a learner-centered environment where students are not seen as empty vessels waiting to be filled.

In a learner-centred environment, the prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and practices that individuals bring to learning tasks are to be recognized, valued, and utilized in the construction of new understandings. Such changes, however, require envisioning, initiating, and fostering a classroom culture where norms are congruent with privileging understanding rather than knowledge retrieval. In a re-alignment of norms, grades become secondary to learning. Competition among students about rankings yields to a

sense of collaboration, cooperation, and respect. Learning is to become less individualistic and is to be lived as a socially-constructed activity within community – a community of learners.

In a community of learners, teachers are not owners of some domain specific piece of knowledge (Brown, Ash, Rutherford, Nakagawa, Gordon, & Campione, 1993). Instead, teachers model their own inquiries and learning. Students become apprentices in that activity of learning. In a culture of learning, mistakes are valued in locating thinking within a zone of proximal development where further discourse as initiated by an error, can be a scaffold to new understanding (Vygotsky, 1987). Moreover, when students are ‘situated’ in authentic activity that closely approximates practice settings, learning becomes more relevant to the learners as well as transferable (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The errors of students who are immersed in authentic activity can be used to mediate their movement from the periphery of activity where as beginners their participation can be limited, into a more central position of the practice culture where as apprentices their participation can be guided (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Essentially, these conceptualizations of the learning environment shift the professor’s role from being solely a subject area expert to that of a teacher in a particular discipline and represent a constructivist perspective on teaching and learning. Caring about teaching in contemporary times, then, demands not only what has been referred to as pedagogical content knowledge, an integrated understanding of subject matter *for teaching*, but by inference encompasses knowledge of the students’ prior learning and experiences as well as an understanding of the environmental contexts in which the learning is to be demonstrated (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993; Shulman, 1986). Nevertheless, the

teacher who cares about constructivist teaching may still be challenged to orchestrate a learning environment where pedagogical content knowledge can be responsive to students' diverse developmental levels and still relevant to the authentic contexts of practice.

For example, student numbers may influence the teacher's ability to uncover her/his students' prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. There may simply be too many students competing for too few opportunities for individual interpersonal interaction. An assessment environment emphasizing formative assessment can be similarly restricted. The frequency of specific and timely feedback can be correlated to the size and number of class sections as well as the length of the semester. At the same time, not all students subscribe to a constructivist view of learning and prefer a more traditional model of instruction supporting "received knowledge" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). In this orientation, knowledge is treated as a commodity. The student takes in knowledge by listening to the expert, the professor, and gives it back relatively unchanged. Classrooms and lecture halls have been designed with this learning approach in mind and support passive learning. Constructivist teachers are challenged to devise meaningful problem-solving opportunities within these limited physical settings. Consequently, students may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with certain kinds of participation and that participation may be occurring in learning environments that are disjoint from authentic activity.

While all these factors can be obstacles, the professor who cares about teaching engages in ongoing examination of her/his practices, bearing in mind such constraints. S/he plans, acts, observes, reflects, and plans again; exemplifying the reflective

practitioner (Schön, 1983). In this spiralling cycle of inquiry, mistakes or errors in judgment incurred by caring about teaching can be pivotal in a practitioner's reflexive thought and future actions. At the same time, they can be an annoyance; provoking conflict with students and resulting in fodder for negative student evaluations. Although caring about teaching is one of the espoused obligations of academia, its praxis generally depends upon the professor's place in the academy and willingness to negotiate the obstacles. Thus, caring about teaching is a professor's decision. On the other hand, caring in teaching is not a choice.

Caring In Teaching

As a species, the span of our development prior to achieving physical independence demands protection and nurturing. Responding to these needs in our young – natural caring – is hard-wired into our species and reinforced, and generalized to others through our socialization. Noddings (2002) believes that care is a fundamental need and response. She notes that all people want to be cared for and that the giving of care emerges from having been cared for. In this way, natural caring precedes what she refers to as ethical caring which is characterized by: receptivity, where the carer is open to what the cared-for is experiencing; relatedness, where the carer's motivation moves from self-interest to Other-interest; and engrossment, where the carer becomes absorbed in helping the cared-for. Ethical caring begins with the carer rationalizing as to *why she ought to care*: motive initiates and guides the care until natural caring is restored.

Within much of the academy, ethical caring begins to take form as *caring about teaching*. Why ought we to care for our students? From a pragmatic and self-interested perspective, caring about teaching is our work obligation. Caring about teaching can

enhance student learning, ease classroom management, and increase student ratings in course evaluations. Nodding sees this kind of caring, a “caring about,” as somewhat disingenuous in that attention, assent, acknowledgement, and affirmation of the Other only go so far. These markers of caring are at times bounded by student characteristics and choice but essentially the teacher decides how much of herself to commit in the end. Often that decision is guided by her own image of herself as a moral person (Goldstein, 1999).

In contrast, some teachers add yet another layer to their constructivist classrooms. They do so not because they perceive it is the right thing to do, but because an instinctual archetype compels them forth. An instinctual archetype is depicted by Estés’ Wild Woman. To describe the archetype, Estés (1995) compares Wild Woman to the wolf: “Wolves and women are relational by nature, inquiring, possessed of great endurance and strength. They are deeply intuitive, intensely concerned with their young, their mates, and their pack. They are experienced in adapting to constantly changing circumstances; they are fiercely stalwart and very brave” (p. 2). As in the wolf, the wild nature of the instinctual archetype dictates living, not circumventing, life as it really happens. In academia, teachers possessed by an instinctual archetype are driven to inculcate their students not only with the classroom culture of learning but also with the culture of their discipline, accompanied by a particular vision of their species – their humanity. This sense of humanity is often what initially called them to the discipline. Thus, they long for their ‘wild’ which in this case is a humanistic classroom.

The humanistic classroom is intent on promoting the development of the whole person in addition to the professional one. While students are to be immersed in the

authentic contexts of learning for their discipline, teachers are to be similarly immersed in the community of learners, living and modelling the culture of the practice discipline for the students. In what is referred to as the ‘caring professions,’ caring is central to the notion of humanism and is the framework of the teaching. The instinctual archetype presents as *caring in* teaching.

Caring in teaching means an instinctual rather than cognitive lens focuses the view of the swampland that is created by caring about teaching. Schön (1983) notes that professional practice has a high, hard ground where theory and technical expertise can be employed to problem-solve. There is also swampy lowland where situations are messy and have no simple technical solutions. The problems occurring in the swamps are the most challenging and of greatest human concern, though. When contemplating caring, the continuum ranges from an ethical caring related to self-interest and personal conceptualizations of morality – a *caring about* – to an altruistic, instinctual, natural caring – a *caring in*. The instinctual archetype of caring in teaching urges teachers to traverse the swamps without regard for self. Consequently, caring in teaching may be far more hazardous to the individual than caring about teaching. This study examines the course of the perilous stance of caring in teaching.

Bricolage as Dramaturgy

The study is assembled as a bricolage, an emergent construction of rich empirical and aesthetic pieces fitted to the specifics of a complex situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). My bricolage borrows from the forms of autoethnography where my personal

narrative draws upon observations made within the context of relationships in the academy, research findings, and the interrogation of the lived experience text of others.

The participants in this study are both present and distant. Besides me, they include Carita who was introduced in the opening narrative, other faculty voices from across academia, and our students. Carita is a faculty member from one of the ‘caring professions’. The other faculty voices belong to quantitative researchers and qualitative researchers. Most of the latter group are women who have written and published about their experiences in academia. They have made their vulnerabilities public so others may glean kernels of personal truth from their stories. As autoethnographies, their narratives anticipate and invite co-participation in their lives (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The students are undergraduates and graduates enrolled in a ‘caring profession’ department or in Education. The two students from the caring profession department have been given pseudonyms for ease of reference.

The overall presentation of my bricolage stands as a play. It radiates from the narrative opening this work and embeds expected aspects of scholarship with drama conventions and structures. In this play, Carita and I speak for ourselves. To enhance the flow of dialogue, the other voices from the academy are reported as belonging to the “Maven” collective rather than as individual responses. The Mavens’ role parallels that of the Greek chorus. Their voices reveal their experiences while acknowledging, grounding, and affirming the dialogue of the other participants. Although the students in this study have their own agency, their primary contribution is to the rising action. Consequently, their participation is framed as reported action.

The Curse of the Instinctual Archetype

Characters

CARITA, *faculty from 'caring profession' department*

MARY, *faculty from Education, also the narrator*

MAVEN, *voices from the academy*

Judith, a grad student from Carita's department

Nia, an undergrad from Carita's department

Prologue

MARY: Carita and I are alike in that our paths to the academy are similar; each following a circuitous route taking in a career of practice in our respective fields before obtaining doctorates, and then sampling different institutions before settling. Carita is five years my senior and has that much more experience in the academy. We enjoy the privilege afforded by freedom from concerns about tenure and merit. My relationship with Carita has evolved from one of an acquaintance, to that of an informal mentor who explained the ropes of academia, to that of a "critical friend" who asked those provocative questions needed for me to better critique my own work (Costa & Kallick, 1993), to that of a "growth-fostering relationship" where mutuality in spirit and action thrives (Miller, 1986). These scenes from over the years are indicative of how I came to understand her story-my story about caring in teaching.

Five years earlier. Carita and Mary meet at an orientation for faculty new to the institution. Although Carita is not new, she's there to gather institutional info that she may have missed by arriving midway the previous year. Carita and Mary talk.

MARY. I'm wondering why you left your previous institution.

CARITA. I was looking for a home for my work.

MARY (*aside*). She holds a huge grant. She must be referring to her research.

MAVEN. "I use the notion of 'homelessness' . . . I have a physical home. My quest, since I started teaching . . . is for an intellectual home. . . . I still seek a space in the university where my Mohawk self is safe" (Monture-Angus, 1994, p. 169).

Year 1: Spring Semester begins. Carita calls Mary's office. They talk.

CARITA. I have a grad student in my office. Her name is Judith. She needs one more course to finish off her program coursework. I remember you telling me about your grad seminar course. Can Judith enrol in it even though it's in Education and she isn't? I think that it'll be a good fit for her and for you. I can highly recommend her.

MARY. I am happy to meet with her. She can come to the first class tonight and see what she thinks.

CARITA. I'd bring her over right now, if you're free, but I have somewhat of a situation to take care of. I'll catch up with you later. Thanks.

MAVEN: "They come to see Me / 'Help us Please,' / They Say / I Must Help. / I am Obligated by my Community ethics. . . . Give Back to your Community / ALWAYS Do Whatever you Can for Others. / My Mother, My Father, Role Model. / All my Life / Raised to Recognize Injustice / Speak Out about It. / and I Do" (Graveline, 1994, p. 74).

Night of that same day. Carita calls Mary's home. They talk.

CARITA. Sorry that I'm calling so late but I figured you'd be up anyways. I got tied up. Nia, one of the undergrads in our department has a family emergency. She's from out of the country and her mother is dying. Nia needs to get home. Nia has no money. Nia doesn't know how to make travel arrangements. I've been around the university departments trying to scare up some funding for Nia. I've been arranging flights and overland transfers for Nia. I've been driving to the airport and getting dinner for Nia.

MARY. You sound exhausted.

CARITA. I am tired but tell me how things went with Judith in your class tonight.

MARY (*aside*). Carita genuinely wants to know!

MAVEN: "Myths about women Women are naturally, endlessly nurturant" (Caplan, 1993, p. 57)

Year 2: Fall semester begins. Carita and Mary have not seen each other during the intervening summer months. They talk.

CARITA. Remember Judith from your grad seminar class? She's working on her thesis now. She's asked me to be her advisor.

MARY. You sound pleased. I hope that you aren't taking on too many students, especially as you have your research and so much family stuff going on with your siblings and your elderly parents.

CARITA. We're a small department and the students need faculty to support them.

MAVEN. "I guess it all depends on how much you want to put your own person in. I know some of my colleagues . . . are like 'I go, I teach, I put in my office hours, and then I go home and it's my life.' . . . I can't separate like that. I mean

my life is my teaching, and it is my research, and it is everything. And I can't separate them out. And I don't want to" (unidentified respondent cited in Burghardt & Colbeck, 2005, p. 315)

MARY. Anything else new?

CARITA. Nia has come back from overseas to the department. I've seen her twice now. Each time, I've tried to talk to her but she won't even acknowledge me. She looks right past me. I don't understand why.

MARY (*aside*). Poor Carita. She's really upset. How can Nia treat Carita like that after all she's done?

Year 3: Fall semester. When not teaching, Carita has been away from campus and out of town either caring for her family or her research. During this time, Carita and Mary have kept in touch. After one such absence, they talk.

CARITA. Judith, my grad student (*pause*), her thesis is back from external review. I thought the section that the reviewer wants revised was going to be a problem. Judith wanted to see how it was going to be received, though. Anyway, Judith has a wonderful job offer, if she can leave immediately. She's promised to do the revisions SOON. Could I extend the time frame for her completion, PLEASE? What was I going to say but yes?

Year 3: Spring semester. Judith returns to town. Carita offers her fieldwork in her research project. The project is spread out over several remote locations. Project team members must 'live and work in community' with the local residents. Carita calls Mary from one of the remote posts.

CARITA (*coughing, sounding very tired*). Hi. Good to hear your voice.

MARY. Where are you? What's wrong?

CARITA. I've just put Judith on a plane out of here.

MARY. I thought that she just got there.

CARITA. She did. She shut down. Wouldn't talk to her host family. Wouldn't do her job. Wouldn't talk to me. What was I going to do but send her home?

In spite of the poor transmission over the phone, for the next hour, they talk.

CARITA. How's your work going? Can I help?

MAVEN. "Irony, the art of dry understatement . . . is what keeps a safe distance between you and your feelings and reassures everyone you're not one of those

women who are always feeling sorry for yourself. Irony makes it possible to discuss bodies and sex and love and exclusion without being accused of indulging in ‘personal’ rather than ‘scholarly’ discourse (Lyons, 1994, p.142).

MARY (*laughing*). Of course, you can. You’ve got your research project, your family stuff, your students. Sure, you can take on my stuff, too.

(*Aside*) There have been too many Judith’s, too many Nia’s, too many needs taken on. You’re sounding very weary. BUT, why is your office usually filled with so many students wanting to talk to you?

MAVEN. “The turning point for me in the midst of my doctoral studies was precisely my fortunate encounter with several professors who really strove to engage students as authors of their own learning. This marked a critical shift in my education from which, without even knowing it, I had been disengaged. Until then, an education was something that had to be acquired – it was ‘outside in’ rather than what it needed to be, ‘inside out.’ The unceasing efforts of these professors fostered a climate in which students, feeling visible and validated, could be fully present, ready, and able to learn. My commitment to creating an enabling teaching environment for students, a place where they can retrieve their lived experience and use it as a context for learning, and critical inquiry, is rooted in my own history” (Litner, 1994, pp. 130-131).

MARY (*aside*). Why are students not wanting to talk to me in the same way that they do with Carita?

MAVEN. “Women are expected to do more of the ‘support services.’ Women should care more about teaching and spending more time with and be more supportive of students. Women are expected to fulfill the role of student advisor because students feel comfortable with this” (Mather, 1994, pp. 147-148).

Year 4: Fall semester begins. Carita has returned from another difficult session of field research. She has had pneumonia and is not yet fully recovered. Carita and Mary are driving around town. Carita is buying dry goods to ship back to the host families in the research communities. Mary is amazed at the long and detailed list of requests. They talk.

MARY. I don’t have your comfort with being with people, especially in close quarters. I think that’s why I relate to my students differently than you do.

CARITA. How would you categorize your approach to teaching?

MARY. Although they are Education students headed towards becoming teachers, I want them to be more than procedural knowers. I want them to be critical thinkers and connected knowers who “seek to understand other people’s ideas in the other people’s terms rather than in their own terms” (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 124). In that way, they can know with their heads and hearts.

CARITA. Connected learning is difficult to produce. It best happens when people meet over long periods of time so they get to know each other well.

MARY. Typically, my in-class time with students spans a single semester. Sometimes, I teach them again the following year. I don't see the same students as much as you do. My relationships with students are accelerated works in progress.

MAVEN. "Connected knowers begin with an interest in the facts of other people's lives, but they gradually shift the focus to other people's ways of thinking. . . . Connected knowers learn through empathy. Both learn to get out from behind their own eyes and use a different lens, in one case the lens of a discipline, in the other the lens of the another person (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 115).

MARY. I know that students engage in conversation with faculty for a variety of purposes. They are motivated to communicate for functional reasons (requesting course information), for participation purposes (demonstrating understanding), for excuse making (explaining why something incomplete or late), and for sycophancy (garnering favour) (Myers, Martin & Mottet, 2002). I know that the teacher's socio-communication influences factor student-teacher communication; especially, student perceptions about teacher assertiveness and responsiveness. The assertive individual insists that her/his rights be respected whereas a responsive individual recognizes the rights and needs of another person. I know that responsiveness is a significant predictor of teacher-student interaction outside of the classroom (Aylor & Oppliger, 2003). Yes, I know all these things but knowing is different from feeling. I can't help but feel that some assertive students have cast me as a pushover.

MAVEN. "Myths about women Women are bottomless pits of emotional neediness" (Caplan, 1993, p. 57).

CARITA. What do you mean? You're no pushover. You're grounded and strong as they come.

MAVEN. ". . . unusualness in females is almost always sensed in sexual terms. She's hot for me or hot for us. Where there is no sexual interest, her unusualness signals that she is not a 'real' woman at all. She's a dyke or an 'ice queen,' a Margaret Thatcher" (Turner, 1994, p. 233).

MARY. Some students don't get me. I don't fit some professorial image of 'sage on the stage.'

CARITA. So . . . ?

MARY. So, it comes down to perceptions of authority. I've given an assignment that is really open and given the same assignment with very detailed instructions, right down to

font size. For those who don't get the mark that they want in the former instance, the perception is it's because I didn't tell them that I wanted some specific detail. In the latter case, it's because I was too authoritarian and they couldn't perform under those constraints. In either case, there are always students who will ask, "What do YOU want?" We begin the conversation with what they should want.

MAVEN. "Students, believing that instructors value grades and not learning, will ask whether or not some piece of information will appear in the next test but rarely will remain after class to discuss the implications of a provocative lecture. Instructors, perceiving students to value grades and not learning, will grudgingly come to use grades to motivate their students" (Polio & Beck, 2000, p. 98).

MARY (*pausing*). AND sometimes I think they attribute my difference to being Asian without really understanding how that's connected to who I am.

MAVEN. "I used to be afraid to try different things in class, but when I heard you say you got inside the podium and lectured from there, or gathered the class together in a rope, or had small groups compare the number of slang words for 'vagina' and 'penis,' I began to have courage" (Hampton & Wilson, 1994 p. 95).

CARITA. For instance?

MARY. While you were away, this happened in my child development course. It's Hallowe'en. Some students have come to class dressed in costumes. Under my suit jacket, I've worn my green silk brocade vest with stand-up Mandarin collar and its curled frog closures. You know the one. I hadn't worn it to class before. After the usual beginning announcements and questions, I set up the day's piece about identity and diversity. The primary learning outcome for the class has to do with how identity is socially constructed.

So, I take off my jacket to more fully reveal my vest. I'm anxious. I think that it's not too late to stop. I can pretend that it's just too hot in the room. Instead, I ask, "Am I wearing a costume?" After a silence, a range of responses ensues. The general consensus is that I am not wearing a costume. I follow up with, "When is it a costume?" One student who is atypically dressed in the traditional garb of a particular ethnic group volunteers that she spent a lot of time in the homeland of that group and feels comfortable in her outfit. Cultural appropriation is not really one of topics for today. The conversation turns to being comfortable in one's clothes. I move on, putting on a hat which is marketed on the Internet as a 'Chinese skull cap with braid'. I ask, "Am I wearing a costume now?" We progress slowly. Students have the space to talk. When that place of silence is reached, I tell my story. I don't have to. They won't know that I've omitted anything from the lesson plan. But, I hurry on. The event that I've chosen to tell them about is something that happened a few years ago after my dissertation defence.

I'm on the plane headed homewards. I am in good spirits. My dissertation defence went very well; more like a conversation among colleagues. I'm elegantly dressed in a well-tailored suit and seated in the window seat. By most standards, I've made it. I am tired

after the defence and I'm coming down with something. The flight attendant offers me a meal. I decline and ask for tea. The couple seated next to me seize this opening. One of them asks, "Do you drink a lot of tea? Green tea?" I should think nothing about this but I am now on guard. Still, I respond that I am not feeling well and not hungry. They do not take the hint. They ask another question that dispels any doubts that I might have had about their orientation towards me. I am trapped. I tell the story up to this point and ask the students what they understand. I've been anxious and not told the story well, or carefully.

After class, a handful of students approached. One apologized for the unfortunate nature of such an encounter. Another one commented on the narrow-mindedness of people. The others were just incredulous that this kind of incident happened in these times. Outside of class, I received a note from a student who has been offended by my story. She perceived that I affiliated the airplane couple with a specific cultural group and had consequently made a disparaging remark about that group. I wrote this student a note; apologizing for the offence and measuring my words to clarify my purposes. It took most of the evening. A couple of days later, we met. We talked. She told me what aspect of the story triggered her and why. It had to do with her identity. I thanked her for her openness and said that I'd be more aware in my storytelling. I feel that we were OK when we parted. I knew that we are more than OK when a couple of months later, I met that same student and she went out of her way to bring her daughter over to introduce me as one of her teachers and to chat. Around this same time, the course evaluations also came in. One respondent commented that s/he "liked the Chinese vest but [I] should lose the hat."

CARITA. Stop reading those student evaluations. You know that those questions don't address what matters in teaching. You're doing what matters. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

MAVEN. "I no longer have to read comments on evaluations such as 'she wears too many beads and feathers to class' But it was not so much the evaluations themselves that I found so disturbing in law school. It was knowing that some of my students thought racist things about me as I stood at the front of the classroom on a daily basis. It saddened me deeply that even one of my students was compromised in their learning potential solely because their teacher was a Mohawk woman . . ." (Monture-Angus, 1994, p. 171).

MARY. I know that most students are learning what I want them to learn but I always worry most about the few who don't. There are the ones that I lose before I even start because I'm not what was expected and so I try to be more of what they had in mind. I find it so draining to reveal anything of myself anyways without wondering how it will be interpreted. Then, there are those few lost en route because they don't agree with my grading. Not my written comments on their work, but the mark! That's always hard. They don't realize that I stand with them. I, too, have failed to achieve what I wanted. My student relationships seem to be forged, or broken, in conflict. It's a curse.

CARITA. No, it's our gift – our gift for them.

MAVEN. Based on my experiences, I am in awe of the few women who are able to make a life, not just a living in academia” (Facey, 1994, p. 55).

The following semester, Carita who is scheduled to begin a research leave for the remainder of the year, collapses. Her doctors diagnose exhaustion as the cause and prescribe rest and a regime of wellness activities. Carita still comes to her office but has restricted herself to seeing students only during posted office hours.

Exegesis

Some professors make a personal choice to limit their teaching to the confines of timetabled courses, the preparation required to organize the content, the assessment that the transmission of that content was successful, and scheduled office hours. Other professors position themselves as teachers *caring about* teaching. That stance is reflected in their subscription to newer connected learning paradigms and willingness to implement innovations that address an active learning environment. These teachers are concerned about pedagogical content knowledge and consider the diverse sets of experience and knowledge that students enter the classroom with. In caring about teaching, these teachers have opted for constructivist classrooms where students are engaged as a community of learners. Still, other teachers envelop caring about teaching within humanism. They respond to a wild inner call, an instinct, which compels them to create a community that is animated by the humanity implicit to their discipline and embedded in their lives. In Education and the ‘caring professions,’ that humanity is predicated on caring and conducted as *caring in* teaching.

Caring requires that one recognize need and assume responsibility for meeting it (Gilligan, 1993). In my study, Carita and I encounter and take on different needs arising from caring about teaching. But, our caring is more instinctual, or natural, rather than

being of the kind of caring that is initiated by self-interest or a rationalized ideal of morality – a *caring about*. Carita recognizes her student Judith’s need for meaningful courses and authentic work. In Nia’s case, Carita senses the urgency for Nia to get home. Carita obligates herself to fulfil the particular needs of these two students and many others. Her commitment to them is unbounded by her teacher role. It does not occur to her *why she ought, or ought not, to help*. The reason courses through her blood.

On the other hand, I am newer to academia and more timid. I work to regain an instinctual self that has been conditioned to be otherwise. The plane incident that I described and others like it have constructed an identity for me. Like most trapped wild thing, I, too, struggle to free myself. In doing so, my co-being in the world with some students creates disequilibrium. They are thrown off balance by a challenge to what they have taken-for-granted in their knowing of the world. Their needs are to resolve multiple layers of cognitive dissonance; be it about capitalizing on teacher evaluation to determine what they need to learn, Hallowe’en costumes and their impact on identity formation, or engaging others with openness and respect. Although I know that distancing me behind a professorial persona would be an easier, more familiar path, my instinctual self propels me forward in *caring in teaching*. I must respond to the student needs. That means I must unveil myself to engage them in the authentic activity of caring.

Although Lincoln (2000) understands this kind of caring to be love in teaching, she concurs about its importance. She asks, “Why are we so afraid to demonstrate that our teaching embodies our own personalities, our own professional identities, our own ‘takes’ on a subject, our own perspectives? Are we afraid that we will surrender our emotional detachment? Or, perhaps, some of our objectivity? Loving means that we

bring our *selves* to the process” (p. 254). Lincoln understands the imperative of love, or caring, in our teaching and is also right to question about fear; for there is much to be afraid of when we vest ourselves.

For myself, there are the middle of the night awake moments of self-recrimination that I feel for the few students whom I have lost along the way. They are the ones who become silent or angry after a conflict, usually over a mark. They refuse to talk with me except from that position of self. In spite of my efforts to engage them in dialogue, I cannot get them back. I re-play again and again what I could have said or done better to have kept them participating. Depending upon the situation and if there is still opportunity, I may select from common responses to incidents causing student-teacher discord; adjusting materials and methods to meet student requests, clarifying assignment requirements, praising more, and increasing authoritativeness (Frankel & Swanson, 2002). Sometimes these strategies work: sometimes they don't. When all has failed, instinct takes over and I grieve. I grieve for how I have fallen short of addressing the student need and to have the student understand caring. I grieve for those students' future students who may not know, then, what it is to be cared for. My grief is silent and hidden. I have had many years of practice in concealing my losses. Carita is not so experienced.

Carita is wounded and recovering. Her loss of relationship with students, like Nia and Judith, has cut her. The boundaries that other faculty place in their *caring about* teaching increase the burden of Carita's expectations for herself in teaching. Her body has broken under the strain and the zest in her work is flickering.

Until recently, I have been mistaken about what Carita's work is. When she said that she moved to her present institution because she was looking for a "home" for her work, I understood her work to mean her research when in truth, research is only a part of her work. Her work is caring and the relationships of caring are her life. Osborne (2001) explains that "one way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by a feeling that you belong to that place. It's a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because a part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (p. 42). Who Carita is, her identity, is by virtue of her caring relationships.

Carita extends her home beyond a physical place and by her natural caring welcomes everyone into it. Her being challenges the notion that women are not "endlessly nurturant." As seen in her relationships with students, she does not have expectations about reciprocity, that there will be mutuality in caring. Her engrossment with them is a total devotion. Yet, in the position of being the one 'cared-for,' she responds with caring. When Carita shops for goods to send to her research community host families, she spares no effort in getting them exactly what they asked for. It is their need as they have identified that she is responding to just as they responded to her need for community engagement in her work. Thus, Carita has laboured to appoint her home with caring and now falters from work-related injuries.

In spite of the obstacles, pain, loss, and grief accompanying *caring in teaching*, an instinctual archetype compels us onwards. As Estés (1995) observes about the wild nature "when wolves are badgered, they don't say, 'Oh no! Not *again!*' They bound, pounce, run, dive, scramble, play dead, go for the throat, whatever needs to be done" (p. 261). So it will be for us.

The Instinctual Archetype as a Gift

My experience suggests that two conditions are essential: to teach with caring in teaching; to follow the call of the instinctual self; and to survive and thrive in the academy. The first is for a colleague, if not real friend, who can assume the role of “critical friend” acting as a mirror by which you can see your actions but from a different perspective. Sometimes, the critical friend acts as a teaching consultant; advising about pedagogy. The critical friend can also serve as a protector who tries to save you from yourself in your zeal to care for more than you are able, or should.

The second condition asks that the wild self attend to another instinct, an “instinct of communion”. According to Friedman (2002), Buber describes communion as a mode of being in which the teacher uses her own intentional actions and attitudes to integrate the student into a particular stance. This integration requires no mediation as it is most effective when the teacher ‘is simply there’ engaged and without conscious striving for effectiveness. Awakening the instinct of communion confirms the presence of the teacher’s natural self in and out of the classroom and shares the responsibility for learning.

Epilogue

The voice mail clicks on. I leave my message. “Carita, I didn’t want to disturb you at home in case you were resting. I’m reading papers from the specialist diploma course for teachers and thought that you’d appreciate this one. One teacher’s inquiry is into how to ‘collect’ students. She’s been reading Neufeld (n.d.). His tagline is ‘collecting children before directing them.’ Anyway, this novice teacher writes, ‘I know that a large part about making connections with students is opening myself up to them first and sometimes this is difficult and it is something I am still working on I have to give something first before they will hold on and form a connection with me. I find it difficult to figure out how I am

received but I have to get past this and be open, within reason, with the students so they can be comfortable accepting me.' Shall I tell her about what she's in for?"

“ . . . stories provide understandings which sharpen our sight so that we can pick out and pick up the path left by the wildish nature. The instruction found in story reassures us that the path has not run out, but still leads women deeper, and more deeply still, into their own knowing. The tracks we all are following are those of the wild and innate instinctual Self” (Estés, 1995, pp. 4-5).

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