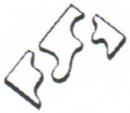

The Spoken and the Unspoken: The Story of an Educator

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I have, for many years, believed that we all act from the base of our own experience, and the only way to understand [our own or an] other's actions is to ascertain the experience base from which they arise.

Life experience consists of such a huge mass of often contradictory and sometimes disturbing material that we reveal to ourselves only segments of it. We reveal it through action and we reveal it through reflection.

Reflection sometimes produces what Lawrence called "epiphany"; the sudden burst of insight, the lyrical leap which leads to a greater understanding of self. Whereas I have always accepted that idea as applied to life in general and to literature, I am only now seeing its relationship to teaching and to my thoughts about teaching.

Tom Smith

Prologue

Tom Smith[1] was a teacher and school principal, a curly-headed, intense man who had defined his life according to these roles for most of 21 years. He was also an historian, a parent, and had been at various times a railway worker, a student activist—but that is getting ahead of the story. When we met him in 1987, he had assumed the role of graduate student of curriculum studies. The comments opening this paper are excerpts from the writing he did as part of a graduate course in curriculum foundations. These writings are the source of the story of Tom as it is told in the following pages.

In his course writing, Tom sought what was foundational to the curriculum he had experienced as both student and teacher. His process was to trace the threads of experiences back and forth through time, pausing to pick up some loose threads or tie off others, thereby reworking the tapestry of his experiences. He revisited his experiences randomly but not aimlessly. The shape

his story takes is one we gave it, as we wove together the strands of his various reflections to create a pattern that shows some intriguing features of his professional life. The warp is Tom's; the weft is our making. (Tom's words are those in quotation marks.[2])

In this paper, the story itself precedes discourse about the story, so that readers might make what they will of the presentation before we address the questions that are central to us, namely, What is this story an example of? and What is its significance?

Breaking a Silence

The story of Tom began in northern Ontario in 1966 when he first began to teach. He was what he said could be called a "committed teacher." "From the outset," he wrote, "it seemed to me that teaching was much more than instruction." As he described it, "I devoted endless 'extra' hours to after-school and after-supper activities." To what was he committed? At the time Tom himself was unsure. He spent the extra time "in order to ... well, then I doubt I could have ever articulated why I was doing these things."

Looking back on this inability to articulate why he did what he did as a teacher, Tom became a little alarmed. In his mid-semester writing, he began to calculate: "Forty-eight times sixty-three equals 3,024 hours per year multiplied by 21 years. And that comes out to 63,024 hours of teaching" (O.29: 1-2). As Tom saw it, he had spent a large part of his adult life *teaching* children and having them *learn* from him, but the numbers were *silent* about whom he taught, what he taught, and why he taught it. As he wrote,

> I too have been silent for many years ... I have encountered thousands of children and their parents and have taught dozens of subjects in several different schools. All this, I venture, without much reflection on the processs and my and my students' part in it. (O.29: 1-2)

How to break the silence, where to begin? Reading Novak's *Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove* (1971), Tom was struck by the notion that

> we are continually creating layer upon layer of experiences inter-woven with interpretation and re-interpretation; we constantly rework the fabric of our existence until the pattern becomes in-finitely complex. Only by sifting through memories and reflecting on them can we begin to see the underlying pattern. (O.7: 3-4)

Although he had never consciously looked for the underlying patterns in his own life, he had culled the life stories of others to

create a "history of the MacPaps or a study of Native experiences before the Alaska Highway came through." Quebecois, Japanese, trappers, Doukhobors, and Native Indians. Then Tom was "content to simply let them talk—into a tape recorder, or simply to me across a table in a tavern, or while riding the Metro" (O.7: 3). Afterward, he would "relisten or reread or rethink and try to create a pattern" to contribute to the history he was building. Novak's point about layers, however, taught him that "simply listening and interpreting in isolation was not all there was," but that "entering into a dialogue with the other person peeled back the layers of memory and offered far more insights for both speaker and listener" (O.7: 4).

Tom began to realize that to understand himself as a teacher he would have to initiate a similar process. "Reflection" became the key to this project. He wrote,

> "Reflection" is a term which I have run up against very frequently since beginning my studies here. At first I was somewhat perplexed as to what applicability it had to education. However, I am slowly beginning to understand the importance of reflecting on one's experience. (O.7: 1)

Why had Tom so easily written others' stories but not thought to write his own? Tom cited two biographical reasons for his lack of reflection about his profession. First, for a number of years before coming to teaching, he had worked for the railway. This work was "routine and essentially meaningless," controlled by a rigid set of rules and "a power structure comprised of CN Rail and my union." As Tom said, "Between the two, I was able to work without any reflection at all" (O.29: 3).

Second, Tom had begun to teach in the days of "directed reading lessons, micro-lesson plans, and, above all, OBJECTIVES." It was not an atmosphere that encouraged reflection and dialogue. The assumption underlying teaching in those years was that teaching was an activity you "did," a set of behaviors that followed established rules. By way of illustration, Tom recalled a "minus-forty" day in the small northern town of Starksville, Ontario, where he had secured his first teaching job. His students were "children of trappers and railway workers." Tom was in the middle of a lesson on *Macbeth* when a school inspector, who had the power to promote or dismiss a teacher, unexpectedly appeared.

> This black-suited Torontonian took notes all period as the class and I worked on the scene in which Ross arrives to inform MacDuff that his family has been murdered by the tyrant. Deeply moving stuff. When it was over and as the kids filed out for their

next class, this man left with them, with not even a glance in my direction. A month later, I received his report; in it he had summarized the lesson and in doing so had removed any vestige of feeling in what is a highly emotional scene. (O.29: 2)

The concern of the inspector was that some of Tom's students had been "whispering" during class, and then, as if it were the most serious flaw in Tom's performance, the inspector wrote, "Mr. Smith leaned against the teacher's desk while talking to the class, and removed his jacket during the lesson."

Looking back on this episode Tom commented, "If the child is the father of the man, perhaps the novice teacher is the father of the professional. In any event, those initial incidents served to teach me an important lesson about power and the power structure." In the following pages we see how Tom negotiated his place in the structures that shaped much of his teaching career.

The Teacher as Chameleon

From the very beginning of his teaching career, as he told it, Tom had held some carefully guarded and unexplicated assumptions—for example, the belief that "teaching was much more than instruction" (O.1: 2)—that were not consistent with the dominant educational paradigm of the time. In the early '60s, educational theorists were preoccupied with controlled inputs and measurable outputs. Tom, however, had an innate distrust of this idea. He believed teaching to be more than rule-governed behaviors confined to the classroom and school. The "more" he was talking about was neither quantifiable nor predictable. As he explained,

> I discovered that my relationships with children on the playing fields or on field trips or just sitting around after school quickly became the basis for success in the classroom itself. I moved a step further; I made sure that I got to know their families, their homes, the conditions in which they lived. (O.1: 3)

This "style," as he called it, carried Tom through his first years of teaching. He was not challenging the accepted paradigm, just doing more than his colleagues thought necessary. He said, "I was satisfied to the point of smugness, yet I had not really thought about it in any complexity; it was enough just to DO" (O.1: 3).

Frustrated with small-town conservatism, Tom left Starksville, headed west, and plunged into the exuberant "late '60s scene in Vancouver" where he enrolled at Simon Fraser University to upgrade his teaching credential. He was glad to break free from

"the confinement of the railway and the structure of Ontario teaching" and eager to experience once again the excitement and anticipation he had felt a few years earlier in the "heady mid-'60s protest days at Sir George Williams" (O.29: 3).

To his surprise and dismay, he found the activities on campus disconnected from the real world of practice. He and his classmates were "theorizing in a vacuum." His hopes that six months of required practice teaching would be a time to use some of the ideas he had developed were dashed:

> the realities of working in a school and dealing with the various power structures there rendered me into a closet educational revolutionary and my theories into empty rhetoric. For, my [present] vision of myself as a student teacher is that of a relatively young apprentice so anxious for professional acceptance that he would conform to whatever the accepted attitude toward education and children happened to be. Thus, he could sit in a staff room at a large Vancouver secondary school and chortle along with others at one teacher's diatribe about kids—a monologue which was hate-filled and abusive, and a few weeks later find himself in a staff room in a Burnaby Junior Secondary earnestly agreeing with a teacher there who was castigating the "system" for its inhumanity to children. The revolutionary as chameleon. (O.29: 10)

Having completed his teacher training, Tom went to work in a small town in the interior of British Columbia. He was still idealistic enough to believe that A.S. Neil "had the answers" and he intended to take

> the little town by storm, teach in a way that would turn around all those tired old teachers with their preconceived notions and methods learned at Normal School! It was not to be. I ran up against another power structure, this time a school board which was reactionary, even for the Central Interior. I was beginning to learn! (O.29: 3)

Somewhat disheartened but not discouraged, Tom returned to the Vancouver area in the mid-'70s, seeking once again a climate in which his ideas might begin to bear fruit. He described himself at that time as a "picture of confusion and contradictions about education, rolled into a corduroy jacket and carrying the requisite briefcase." He was "filled with ideas which pointed [him] toward a 'new' perspective on education," yet much of his experience had taught him to be "cautious and tentative" (O.29: 4).

He accepted the challenge of a junior secondary school position and began to teach at North Sound Secondary. It was indeed a challenge. How could he build the personal relationships with students he found so valuable in this place which was a "proverbial educational factory—crowded, authoritarian, devoid of any real feeling of humanity" (O.29: 5)? He put aside his aspirations and concentrated on succeeding at the task he was given. One of the requirements for his job was that he teach parts of a unit on English literature. Every three weeks he would confront a "seething mass of Grade 9 students in the auditorium in order to 'teach' them" (O.29: 6). Looking back he wrote,

> I recognize how bored, how resentful, those students were as they were herded into my presence and then herded out again. I have a clear picture of myself standing proudly in front of this group, enunciating whatever I was dealing with, firmly convinced that I was "teaching" and they were "learning" ... I cringe to think, in the present, of the assumptions which I presume I made about the process that I was involved in at the time. (O.29: 6)

In the evenings Tom and his friends would gather over beer to discuss their respective visions of "the *imminent* collapse of an antiquated and repressive school system." The next morning, though, the realities of teaching returned and Tom "would enter [the classroom], distribute books or paper and settle down to another day of stultifying routine" (O.29: 7). He commented:

> I guess I was the classic Tylerian teacher; my previews were detailed and comprehensive, my objectives beautifully laid out. I gave huge examinations and kept a tight daybook. My Superintendent and Principal were both very pleased. I was not. (O.29: 7)

The reason Tom gave for the existence of his daytime, Tylerian self was the natural human need to "fit in" and "get along," to have "financial as well as psychic security." The more radical tendencies to which he gave voice only in the evening hours were subordinated to "previously established patterns" and an "existing power structure" which made it easier and "less disruptive to take the low road" (O.29: 16). Tom became adept at "masking" those early "dramatic incidents" that had given him "glimpses of education-as-it-should-be, tantalizing hints which should have been a foundation for growth." The result was a "gap between appearance and reality" which Tom had "sensed in [his] practice for many years, but [had] chosen to ignore." It was to be ignored no longer. Tom began to examine the nature and significance of some of the tensions which characterized his practice.

Striking Chords

With the reappraisal of his past experience, Tom began to probe what more there was to teaching that just doing. For many years, as he tells the story, Tom had been convinced that good teaching was primarily a matter of technique, that with the right methods he could orchestrate children's learning and keep his classes under control. After all, discipline and order were the marks of "effective teaching." Accordingly, he threw himself wholeheartedly into a variety of training programs, "the STET (Systematic Training for Effective Teaching) program ... the ITIP (Instructional Theory into Practice) scheme and Project Teach sessions, the BCTF (British Columbia Teachers' Federation) Workshops," among others. Looking back, Tom disparagingly characterized these techniques as "ways of ensuring that children were, if not motivated, at least momentarily interested."

Tom depicted himself during this time as an "enlightened despot, a teacher who is able to use a great deal of experience to smooth the classroom process and incidentally, to get 'results.'" His record on the grade 12 government examinations was "uniformly good," parents were "happy," and "various principals wrote complimentary reports." Tom had developed a subtle yet "highly efficient method of controlling children in the classroom." All this proved his "worth as a teacher."

Yet Tom had nagging doubts. There were some days when he would have "cheerfully left school, jumped into the vehicle and not stopped until I crossed into Mexico." What prevented him from leaving were those days when "teaching seemed the most worthwhile enterprise on the globe," days when the class goes "more than well; the students are WITH you all the way and you finally leave the room feeling as though you would work for half the salary, for nothing, if every day could be like this!"

In reflecting on these contrasts in his day-to-day classroom experiences, Tom realized what had happened on those days when teaching went particularly well:

> What had happened, of course, was that invariably I had left my self-conscious role of "teacher" and had participated in a process of real, exciting learning, almost as a partner with my students. They were happy and excited and so was I and, after all, isn't this what education is really supposed to be? ... the fact that I had to move from my "role" as teacher to make it happen is instructive. (O.29: 12)

Tom pursued this idea as he recalled a model parliament in which his class had participated. For the first few days, Tom had imposed his authority as teacher in order to structure the activity. Gradually, as Tom released his grip on the class, the students began to take a more active role. Of that time, he wrote:

> much of the activity was created from the students' own ideas ... the students decided who they would be, what political role they would take; the students wrote their own scripts, their own speeches. (O.29: 13)

And, most significantly for Tom, the students "were engaged in an enjoyable and challenging activity taking place in a positive and caring environment."

As he tried to discern what made the good days good, Tom pondered his own career as a student. His dominant memory was of "all pervasive boredom." He "hated school and anything connected to it," "repeated two grades," and ended up completing high school at night. He saw his 1950s education as "utterly without purpose." In spite of these largely negative experiences, Tom recollected "highlights" and "flashes of inspiration" which occurred when his interest was piqued, or when subjects acquired "life" and he was filled with desire to discover and to learn. He recalled that the teachers who affected him the most, aside from those who were "cruel and abusive," were the ones who

> possessed a self-concept which allowed them to transcend "instruction" and relate to us on all sorts of other levels. They were emphatically not the teachers who tried to trade geniality and permissiveness for acceptance, but those who somehow struck a chord within their students. Only when that chord has been struck, I now believe, can real learning take place. (O.29: 15)

As Tom examined the "rush" he experienced when his lessons went well, he ruminated:

> Possibly it is because I as a teacher am experiencing real learning. My students, my interaction with my students, are striking a chord in me, are teaching me. For too long, I let that lesson go unheeded. (O.29: 15-16)

Tom's memory of this resonance with students prodded him to reexamine his notion of leadership, which had always been a key to his role as principal as well as to his role as teacher.

Becoming the Parent, Becoming the School

By 1984, when he opened the brand new Pilot Mountain School as principal, Tom, as he described himself,

> was determined to put into practice those leadership ideas I had held for so long; we would move to the Whole Language approach, we would work out an Integrated Day, we would develop the body as well as the mind with daily P.E. And so on ... The result would be the best damned school in the North Country, with the hardest working staff and students anywhere! (O.29: 5)

Times had changed since Tom had first started teaching, and more participatory forms of education were in vogue. Tom no longer had to keep his educational preferences in the closet.

His style continued to be "outworking everyone else." The two premises which guided his practice as principal were to "lead by example" and to "work hard." If difficulties arose, the solution was to "work harder" and if that failed, to work the "hardest" of anyone. His days started in his office at 6:30 a.m. and often extended into the late evenings. He assumed that the teachers and students in his school "worked (or should work) the same way." As he later learned, he was sadly mistaken. The occasion for his realization was his reflection on his experiences with Raymond.

Raymond was one of Tom's students at Pilot Mountain School. "By dint of his behaviour, [Raymond] stood out as a daily reminder" to Tom that he (Tom) was not as successful as he might have been.

> Raymond was (and is) a difficult child. He was small and wiry, with a way of walking around as though he were ready to explode (although "implode" might be a better word). Tremendous energy, tightly contained. Looking for trouble. I was warned by the entire staff, many of the parents and some of the students: watch out! (O.29: 4)

Tom attempted the "usual techniques" as Raymond's behavior began to disrupt the classroom and to take up more and more of Tom's 40% administrative time. He invoked

> the School Rules, Glasser's Ten Steps, Consequences, Carrot and Stick, Positive and Negative Reinforcement, agonizing (for both of us) counselling sessions featuring plenty of rhetorical questions on my part, long silences on his ... I alternately counselled and ranted. The impact was nil. (O.1: 6)

Looking back, Tom recognized that what he had done was to set up a "parent-child relationship, with all the joy and pain that that involves" with Raymond.

> Raymond's failures were mine, a reflection on my worth as a father, even as his successes in hockey, or in math, or in climbing the Chilkoot were my successes as well. And perhaps if I was too severe, as many fathers are, he was reacting as many sons do, with proud defiance. (O.1: 10-11)

Armed with his "proprietal interest" and "parental regard," Tom was determined to "rescue" Raymond,

> to snatch him away from the inevitable abyss of the North—the bar, the fighting, the hopelessness. He had seen his brothers and sisters die, parents drunk and vicious, a side of life that my children would never have to experience. I would right his life for him and, in the process, the only real blemish on my school would disappear. (O.1: 9-10)

As he continued to think about his experiences with Raymond, Tom realized that he could no more change Raymond than he "could hope to move Mount Edziza." Raymond was "his own person." Tom saw that many of the assumptions he had made about Raymond were wrong, based on his perception of Raymond "as a personality who could be shaped into something else, no matter what." Change for Raymond could come about only in his own time and in his own way.

If good will, hard work, and proven technique were insufficient, what hope was there for a child like Raymond? The answer came as Tom recalled one of his last memories of Raymond. There was a knock on the front door of Tom's house.

> It was after eleven and even though the glow was still in the Northern sky, it was the middle of the night and I wasn't too receptive to my caller. There stood Raymond, eyes brimming with tears. Now, Raymond never cries—it's a point of pride with him, like playing hockey well and outfighting every boy in our school. So tears mean a great deal. (O.1: 11)

Tom asked what was wrong and Raymond, choking back the tears, blurted out that his Grandpa Tommy John had just died. No longer able to control his tears, Raymond sat down and sobbed,

> He was a friend ... He used to sit on the back steps with me and let me talk and talk and all he used to do was listen and then try to explain things to me and tell me about my family and my people. (O.1: 11)

And Tom reflected in his writing,

> Yes ... and he did it gently and lovingly and without trying to turn you into someone else. No wonder you are crying ... How many teachers like Tommy John are there in this world? (O.1: 12)

Tom's reflection on the way he exercised the authority of his position brought him face to face with the disconcerting discovery that he, like the "system" he decried, had a "tendency toward authoritarianism and a predilection toward inflexibility." He realized that the example with which he led impelled others to do things *his* way. Commenting on his role as principal and teacher, he wrote that he

> had succeeded in becoming the school itself, rather than a part of the school. This meant that I saw myself as completely responsible for all aspects of its operation—the quality of teaching, the work habits of the students, relations with the public, the functioning of the furnaces, the discipline of the children. Any failure of any of the components was taken as a personal failure. (O.1: 8)

"Becoming the parent" and "becoming the school" symbolized the two major contradictions in Tom's practice. The first was the contradiction between his ingrained desire to make his students and his school successful and his reluctant acknowledgment that meaningful change cannot be forced on anyone. The second was the contradiction between his zeal to replace the existing power structure with something more humane and flexible and his disquieting realization that his own style of teaching and administering reproduced that same distasteful structure.

Eventually, through revisiting those experiences which in retrospect caused him some disquiet, Tom came to realize that "many of the contradictions in my practice are rooted in the tensions between what I am and what I do" (O.29: 11). From that realization, he moved to seek "some sort of middle ground which would allow me to teach effectively, and with integrity, and with the caring that I now bring to the job" (O.29: 17). The question he used to guide his search was, "What is the critical relationship between the educator and the students, and how can curriculum reflect that relationship?" (N.16: 2) He addressed this question in the context of his own practice in the north country.

A Dream for the Nishine

The key ingredient in the relationship between educator and student, according to Tom, was a "teacher who cares for his or

her work and students, who brings passion (a key concept) to the classroom, and shows that caring and passion in everything that happens in the room" (O.29: 16). Such a teacher must reexamine "the power and control" which form "the basis of any relationship," eventually recognizing that "the kind of education we have now is based ... on the misunderstanding that we can take a child, with all that child's early experiences, and then reinterpret that child's world by providing different vocabulary and experiences rooted not in the child but in the mind of the teacher" (N.16: 7).

Tom resolved to do his part to change the education his students experienced, and he looked for others to join him in his quest. "Where are the renegades WITHIN our profession?" he wailed, "the classroom teachers who know in their hearts that we could be doing so much more?" (N.16: 11). He was convinced that

> the key to the classroom is the teacher ... programs come and go, academic theories blossom and then wither on the vine, new textbooks are welcomed as the (final) solution to all our problems, and then routinely ignored. (N.16: 17)

Acknowledging the value of his own accumulated experience, he affirmed to himself that his years in the classroom had helped him develop "something that passes for wisdom." He felt strongly that other teachers should recognize and believe in their own professional wisdom. They should cut through the "mind-forged manacles" which kept them victims of various "programs, textbooks, and curriculum." Instead, they should become the "real movers, the dynamic element," and the force behind educational change. "Those of us who have spent many years in the classroom can and should use that experience to criticize and offer alternatives and lead our colleagues—by example" (N.16: 12).

He began to broaden his classroom perspective on curriculum. As he looked back on his experiences, he realized that the majority of his effort to improve his practice had focused on his "daily routine, on the 'nuts and bolts' of teaching" (N.16: 3-4). He had been "too busy concentrating on the 'how' to worry about the 'why'" (N.16: 6). What he and everyone else had considered improvements in his teaching came about through the application of more and more refined classroom techniques. He had failed to acknowledge that his technical expertise was always "superimposed on a curriculum which was taken for granted, a given" (N.16: 3). Finally realizing this, he wrote:

> when I am standing in front of my 5/6/7 class and "teaching" a lesson about the structure of Roman Government, I am also (con-

currently) doing the following as well: implementing my interpretation of my school's interpretation of my district's interpretation of a program which was handed down by the Ministry and which represents its interpretation of history, filtered through a political process.

Further, I am presenting a lesson which is also affected by the nature of the audience of learners, by my perception of local aspirations and wants, and by my personal biases, both theoretical and short range, both philosophical and how-do-I-feel-today? (N.16: 7-8)

Harking back to his belief that education could be changed through individual "commitment to an ideal and the practice of that ideal" (N.16: 15), he began to consider what he himself could do that would reach beyond the confines of his individual classroom and school. Having lived through the inflated rhetoric and tight structures of the '60s, the proliferation of uncritically accepted alternatives in the '70s, and the multiple attempts to point a new direction for education in the '80s, Tom knew that education was best understood not as a tidily defined and measurable product, but rather as a "continually changing process" that required an "educational dream" to inspire it and to give it new direction. His time in the north, in an environment strikingly different from that known to most educational writers and practitioners, had convinced him that his dream should express "in the widest context, what the educational aspirations are for a social or geographical unit" (N.19: 3-4). Tom described a dream for the Nishine:

We are small by anyone's standards. That in itself is not unique, but it does create a certain "manageability" which larger districts lack. What is unique, however, is the history and geography and lifestyle of the region. Imagine an area almost as big as England and Scotland, inhabited by three thousand people. Imagine as vast an area as that, peopled largely by a group that came into contact with the rest of the world only forty years ago.... Place them against a backdrop of heartbreakingly beautiful mountains and turquoise lakes on a forty-below day in February with the sun just beginning to return to the valleys and the woodsmoke rising straight up and not a sound heard but the sled dogs in the distance. That, I suggest, is a basis for an educational dream, for a curriculum which would not only be unique (and why shouldn't all curriculum be unique?), but would perhaps be used with conviction, with more than the reluctant acquiescence which so much of our programs are dealt with now.

Tom wrote about how the dream should take shape. "The development of that educational dream must be the result of collaboration between all the constituents of whatever unit is involved." By collaboration Tom meant "people speaking freely based on their own experience." To achieve the intended result—not an amalgam or even a synthesis, but "an overriding vision"—would require "critical reflection" by those involved, a questioning of their grounds, their personal and cultural assumptions and aspirations. Participation was crucial. Tom believed that "only when those involved 'own' the process can it be made to 'work'" (N.19: 4). Such a dream could then form the base for a statement of curriculum policy and eventually for a curriculum for the people of that area. As Tom pointed out,

> A policy document, to be useful, must take into account the distinctive learning requirements of the students of the District, together with parental aspirations which, without a doubt, differ from those in the less isolated, more populated areas. (N.19: 7)

He concluded, "When the process of collaboration and critical reflection happens, and only then, can we ... begin to develop the systems and strategies to implement [the dream]" (N.19: 16).

Epilogue

What is the story of Tom, as presented in the preceding pages, an example of? It is not only Tom's story, for we have had a hand in it too. We have treated Tom's writings as a set of artifacts from which we have reconstructed two intertwined stories: the story of Tom's professional life and of his reflections on it, the second serving as the vehicle for the first. Our first step was to piece together from Tom's writings the story of his professional life. This story was not separate from Tom's reflections; his reflections gave the story its particular thrust and shape. We had to discern this shape in order to preserve it in our presentation of Tom's story. Thus the story is Tom's interpretation of his experiences as we have understood (and inevitably interpreted) it.

Tom's story is not a life history, nor an autobiography, nor a genealogy. It is simply the result of Tom's response to an invitation to reflect on the grounds of his educational practice. His writings were his reflections on his past from his present perspective. They are the writings of someone who looked at his past experience with the intent not simply to recall past practices, but to search out that which was, at the time of writing, significant to him as educator. Tom's writings were stories constructed out of his past experience in such a way as to reveal

to himself what was significant to his understanding of his life as an educator.

Tom wrote his story not following the chronological order in which the events he recounted actually occurred. We rearranged Tom's writings to show the chronology of his past in order to highlight for ourselves the contrast Tom drew between his past self (as he came to view it at the time of writing) and his present self. In the process, we may have revealed some gaps and inconsistencies in Tom's story about himself. While such non sequiturs might present a problem of interpretation from a life history perspective, they do not for our project, which is not to understand Tom's life, but to understand his processes of reflection and what insights they revealed.

Herein lies the significance of the story of Tom for us: It is important to us for what we can learn about reflection and about teaching. The story stands on its own as an example of reflection and what it can reveal. However, we are compelled to go beyond his story for the sake of our own understanding. Inevitably we are directed in this quest by what appears significant to us as receivers of Tom's texts. We are teachers ourselves, teachers of teachers, and therefore interested in the processes through which people come to be the kinds of teachers they would like to be, processes which we believe take place on a conscious level through reflection and which can therefore be glimpsed through a teacher's reflective writing. Central to this process of becoming a teacher is the way people come to relate—to themselves, to others (especially pupils), and to their community. In working with Tom's story, therefore, we are seeking to deepen our understandings of what it means to relate pedagogically to others and of the processes of reflection through which these relationships come to be more fully appreciated.

Whether Tom would attach the same significance to his story as we do does not matter. Tom has become who he is through his reflections. (He has said in his writings that his reflections have been significant for his understanding of himself as educator and for his educational practice.) It might even be expected that he would describe the significance of this experience differently from the way we would. We and he are different people with different interests and histories. We two authors collaborated, but we did not collaborate with Tom, in writing this paper. We have shared each draft of this paper with him and asked for his comments, but we have not queried him about his experience of reflective writing since it happened. He has liked each version of the paper, but for him what we make of his experience is largely irrelevant. The experience is his in a way that it will never be

ours. His interest in what we write is mainly academic: Like us, he is a scholar and a writer who is interested in the development of teachers. But it is not his project to write about this; it is ours. His project is to live the life he has enriched through reflecting on his past.

Our project propels us to go beyond the story of Tom and to use that text as an occasion to deepen our own understanding of processes of reflection and of pedagogical relationships. We hope that readers might be similarly stimulated by the text to engage in their own reflections and interpretations. Without intending to jeopardize that invitation, we go on to share our own interpretation and reflection on the story of Tom.

An Interpretation of the Story

There is, of course, no definitive interpretation of this story. Indeed, the power of a story lies in its perpetual openness to further interpretation. The interpretation we provide, beyond that of its original author, arises out of our particular interests, sensibilities, and experiences. We are interested in what we have come to understand about pedagogical relationships and about reflection through Tom's story. Our understanding of these rests on our interpretation of what Tom's story is about.

As Tom began to reappropriate his past, the tensions and contradictions with which he had been living began to surface. He heard the echoes of his own voice in the distant past championing freedom and decrying bureaucracy with his cronies in the beer parlor, but speaking in controlled, flat tones of everyday banalities with his colleagues in the school staff room. Where his talk of freedom and authentic relationship might have made a difference he was silent. In his classroom, on the other hand, he was quite vocal, explaining, encouraging, demanding, cajoling, saying all the words that signified his competence as a teacher. Ironically, he realized, this is where he should have been silent, so that he could hear the voices of his students—their questions, their frustrations, their initiatives.

As he came to realize the significance of these silences, Tom faced another struggle that all who reflect thoughtfully on professional practice are bound to face: the struggle to balance the tensions that are endemic to the institutionalization of educational work. Tom's story is a dramatic illustration of the tension between the established and the recreative, between the stifling prescriptions of the bureaucracy which held that better techniques alone made for better teaching, and the creative energy that was released when Tom occasionally discarded traditional definitions of his role. Tom came to understand this tension

through the painful realization that he himself was not always on the side of the recreative, that in spite of the way he had always thought of himself as despising overpowering bureaucracies and the despotic teachers they spawned and being himself the champion of autonomous and unfettered thinking, he had unwittingly been an instrument of the technocracy, amassing techniques that he thought, along with "Them," would guarantee "good teaching." The "middle ground" Tom sought was a place where past imbalances among these tensions could be redressed.

Another part of Tom's struggle involved questioning established conceptions. Tom engaged this stage of his struggle in his painful confrontation of the issue of control. Success, both professional and personal, required control of one's own and others' lives. According to Tom, and to the time and place in which he worked, being effective meant being in control. Yet, as he came to realize, the control he exerted over others was overpowering—the opposite of empowering.

Tom's recapitulation of the meeting of his life with Raymond's brought him face to face with the destructive force of his overpowering good will—the will to make things right for Raymond. In a frank and honest reappraisal of his relationship with Raymond, Tom came to the humbling realization that it is impossible to remake the life of another, and that it is much more life-enhancing to value others for what they are as well as for what they can become. He vowed to divest himself of some of the authority through which he had defined his role and to acknowledge the authority of others—students, colleagues, and the community at large—to direct their individual and communal lives.

Relationship

What does it mean to acknowledge another's authority over his or her own life? In trading his own vociferousness for students' right to speak, Tom was not necessarily trading places with his students, transferring the teacher role to students. Standing aside is not necessarily relinquishing one's role as teacher; it may be instead relinquishing the role of one responsible for students' learning. Standing alongside learners as a learner oneself constitutes recognition of the subtle difference between being responsible for others' learning and being responsible to others to create conditions under which they can become responsible for their own learning. For the teacher, it is both taking and giving responsibility—which is different from sharing responsibility.

This relationship with students is give-and-give-back, rather than give-and-take. The nature of this relationship is implicit in the term *responsibility*. The root is *spondere*: to pledge, promise. To respond, or to be response-able, is to promise in return. The teacher acknowledges learners to be responsible for their own learning (a sign of respect, not abdication); *and* students acknowledge the teacher also as one responsible for his or her own learning (not simply a conduit for knowledge which originates and remains external to the teacher and students). *Together* they are responsible. To be together in responsibility does not mean sharing responsibility; rather it means demonstrating responsibility to each other and helping each other to become more responsible. Those whose sense of responsibility is less well developed learn from those whose sense is more developed.

The teacher's standing aside and being silent is thus an act of allowing space for students to come forward and to speak. Students' actions and voices are indications of their response to the promise of their own learning, signs of how responsible they are. The teacher's role is to encourage them to extend the range of their responsibility even beyond the community of the classroom, to the community of the world. The teacher does this by conversing with students about what captures their attention. Conversing implies a relationship in which the say of all parties is invited and respected. When we see a teacher acting in this way, we might say he or she is learning along with students. The teacher is participating in learning with students, but is doing so as one more learned than the students and therefore more responsible to ensure that the response-ability of all participants is enhanced and protected.

Reflection

What is reflection as we have spoken of it in this paper? A direct answer is elusive, so we will indulge our tendency as teachers to ask how before we ask what. We hope through our consideration of the form, focus, and potential of reflection to address the question of what constitutes reflection.

Is there a form or format of reflection? As we reflect on Tom's experience of reflecting over a period of three months, in writing, in the particular circumstances of the curriculum foundations course, we notice the power of particular recollected events to epitomize the dominant themes in a life story (Tom's grade 9 English lectures, the evenings in the beer parlour) or to reveal countercurrents to the mainstream themes (Tom's model parliament lesson). The apparent serendipity of the incidents recalled is striking. We have suggested they are signifi-

cant to the understanding of pedagogical relationships, but, as far as we know, Tom did not choose them with that theme in mind. Why those particular events? Why not others? The stories that come to mind tell themselves, and tell us something about ourselves if we listen carefully (see Oberg & Underwood, 1989). So there is the recollection of past events, the thoughtful reconsideration of these, the response through writing, but these steps do not sum to equal reflection.

Focusing on form is like focusing on the finger pointing to the moon and never seeing the moon. The formal qualities of reflection cannot be ignored, but they are not fixed or in any way essential. They vary with circumstance. Form does not guarantee results. This is because reflection is less a process than a way of being, a way of orienting toward professional practice and toward life. Being reflective is becoming responsive to self, responsible to self as well as to others. Thus more important than the nature of reflection, from our pedagogical point of view, is its prevalence, the degree to which it becomes natural. Its potential lies not in the theory it allows us to develop (about practice or about reflection), but in the evolution of ourselves as teachers.

We ask about the focus of such reflection, but as soon as we do we realize that, just as it is impossible to specify a form for reflection, it is impossible to specify its focus, for its focus is life. What is it about life that is appreciated through reflection? The answer belongs to each person who would become reflective. In this case, it belongs to Tom and to each thoughtful reader of this text. In our own reading of Tom's text, we see a confrontation with the tensions and contradictions through which a life is defined, and in that confrontation the possibility of defining life differently. In writing his stories, Tom called into question dimensions of his professional practice that he had taken for granted. Implicit in that questioning is the possibility of shedding old definitions and practicing differently. The transformation may be dramatic, but more often it is subtle. Changing the hue of one strand in the fabric of life changes the overall color of the cloth only slightly, but gives the cloth a different cast. During renewal, old strands remain (in Tom's case, for example, his dictum to lead by example) so that the fabric remains recognizable and strong even as it is changing. This process of evolving yet maintaining one's identity is like a continuous circumnavigation: We continually return to our place of origin, but it is not the place we left.

What reflection means for any educator's practice is, of course, impossible to tell, but perhaps not impossible to know, at least

by someone who is a wholehearted participant in the kinds of sensibilities that have been refined through the reflection. In our own teaching, when we open ourselves to our students' experiences, making room for their understanding in our understanding while still preserving the integrity of both, we come to recognize the significance of the deepened understanding of such pedagogical relationships we have achieved through reflection. Yet the exact nature of the relationship between reflection and practice remains unspoken, in the silence that is beyond words.

Much of what we seek to understand about reflection, and about ourselves through reflection, cannot be spoken because it is in the realm of the unspeakable. The sensibilities which enable us to be the kinds of teachers we are, to relate to students the way we do, to weave the threads of our life fabric into the patterns that define who we are, cannot be analyzed, but can only be exhibited. We have attempted to act in accordance with this realization, not bemoaning that which is beyond our analytic grasp, but rather being particularly attentive to the silences.

Notes

1. Tom's name, as well as most of the other proper names in this paper, are fictitious, not to protect Tom, for he and we would be proud to declare his real name, but to protect those people who would be identifiable through him and whose permission to be included could not obtained.
2. As course assignments, Tom produced six pieces of writing, some of them journal entries and some of them more formal papers. Reference is made to each piece by date and page, so that, for example, O.29: 6 refers to page six of the October 29 writing. All quotations are taken from Tom's texts.

References

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