As noted by Maxine Greene in her Foreword to the remarkable book *Stories Lives tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education* (Witherell and Noddings, 1991), from which the title of this chapter is taken, we can hear “the sounds of storytelling... everywhere today. Narratives of many kinds are being opened and explored. Journal keeping goes on apace on all levels of learning: people write autobiographies, shape family histories, become authors of their own lives” (p. ix). Relating narratives specifically to “women’s ways of knowing” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), Greene situates them in classrooms and counseling centers alike.

It is whenever the gap between cognitive, moral and emotional dimensions in education is bridged that learning becomes associated with the holistic “sense of seeking, struggling to name, striving to find language for what was repressed and suppressed over the years... [and giving] shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, p. x). To bridge this gap means to release one’s imagination (Greene, 2000). For Green, imagination is intimately connected with the healing arts; the release of imagination is equivalent to releasing the power of empathy; but also to breaking with something that we habitually take for granted, thus breaking into possibilities that may lie ahead. Imagination pushes the Ego from its position in the center of the personality where it can comfortably focus on “self-regard [and] into a space where we can come face to face with others” (Greene, 2000, p. 31).

This coming face to face with Other takes place during Tarot hermeneutic that unfolds real-life stories of human experiences embodied in symbols and images. It is a story that unites a teacher in a classroom with a “counselor or analyst... in the therapeutic dialogue, and the pastor, priest, or rabbi, in narratives of faith and loss” (Witherell and Noddings, 1991, p. 1). Tarot images talk to us “in a different voice” that brings forth the subtleties of Carol Gilligan’s views on moral development and Nel Noddings’ relational ethics (Noddings, 2002). Noddings (1993a) argues that our modern liberal education, devoid of feeling and caring dimensions, does not enrich the human mind and spirit but tends to narrow its scope.

Presenting feminist spirituality as an alternative to traditional patriarchal religion, Noddings acknowledges that women have long suffered inferiority under the prevailing theological and philosophical theories. She suggests that students should be exposed to both the story of the Fall and to its feminist critique with an emphasis on the Goddess religions, in which the biblical serpent is not evil but instead educates humans in Gnosis and brings healing. Such Gnostic knowledge that, as I argued in the preceding chapters, embodies the ancient Socratic “Know Thyself” dictum is available to us by means of the Tarot hermeneutic method when, in the course of Tarot readings, the images and symbols become narrated and interpreted, thereby
articulating the individual and collective experiences in the school of life as many of humanity’s ethical, intellectual, and spiritual lessons.

In chapter 2 I addressed the bricolage of Tarot in the context of my study as a mix-method of phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative knowledge; also assisted by methodologies within projective psychology, as per chapter 7. To satisfy Pacific Oaks College’s requirements of collecting behavioral data via human subjects I proceeded with performing readings for the self-selected sample of participants. Each participant signed a consent form in agreement with research ethics guidelines. Each session was of fifty minutes duration, similar to a standard counseling session. In lieu of free readings my participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (as per Appendix) on which they indicated the area of their concern or “presenting problem” as it is usually called in the intake form during conventional counseling and therapy sessions; and they also indicated the purpose of the reading analogous to the usual counseling practice of asking clients during the very first session what are this person’s expectations from her therapy.

The reason that I selected only fifteen cases for detailed description in my research is a simple one. I simply stopped collecting data because those fifteen sessions when described almost verbatim amounted to a number of pages exceeding the requirements of my research. The sample happened to cover a diverse adult population of males and females across different ethnic groups. No more specific questions in the form of how they usually appear in conventional intake forms, concerning past history, family members, etc., were asked. All relevant information was assumed to will have been projected (as per chapter 7) into the participants’ respective layouts. However I anticipated that a situation might arise when, due to sheer curiosity or the opportunity to get a free reading, I would have encountered someone who under other circumstances would not even considered counseling. Irrespectively, their layouts would still contain significant material to work with, as we will indeed see in some cases further below.

The narratives as described below derived from the audio tapes and copies of the layouts I made during each reading; each individual case reflecting the unique personality of a particular research participant while retaining the universality of the archetypal dynamics actualized in the here-and-now of each reading. It is the archetypal meanings rising from the depth of the unconscious that provoke our “wide-awakeness…imaginative action, and…renewed consciousness of possibility” (Greene, 2000, p. 43) which is becoming actuality as a particular story unfolds. All participants have signed a consent form allowing me to publish this material for educational and research purposes. All names have been changed.

CASE 1. MICHAEL

Michael, a white professional man in his early forties, stated a relationship problem as his main reason for this reading. He specified it in the questionnaire as a hope for a romantic relationship, free of past obstacles. The purpose of this reading for him was to gain insight into future and significant others; to interpret behavior and to focus on solutions. Michael’s layout is shown in Figure 8.1.