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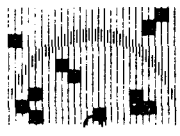

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Toward a feminist pedagogy: Relationships, experience, and liberation

Fortune, Janet Cummings, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1987

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TOWARD A FEMINIST PEDAGOGY: RELATIONSHIPS, EXPERIENCE, AND LIBERATION

by

Janet Cummings Fortune

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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Approved by

David E Rupel

Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser _____

Committee Members _____

_____

_____

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FORTUNE, JANET CUMMINGS, Ed.D. Toward a Feminist Pedagogy: Relationships, Experience, and Liberation. (1987)
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This investigation focuses on the emerging feminist consciousness of inclusion rather than a masculine consciousness of exclusivity. The emphasis is on the work of women as they search for meaning from sources which reflect and react to their needs. Three interrelated sources are used to develop a discourse of this emerging consciousness and as the basis for a hermeneutical inquiry into the dialectic between the author and this consciousness--literature, current social critiques, and stories as texts.

The lives and writings of two 19th century women writers are used as a means for emphasizing the importance of women's own stories and creative expression as descriptions of their consciousness of the world. The second source is current (analytical) writing by women which examines the situation of women sociologically, theologically, and psychoanalytically. The focus of the analysis and discourse is the discrepancies between women's lives and the patriarchal models constructed for them.

The author's own experience and stories and those of two women friends compose the third source. The emphasis is on the conversation between women and the developing discourse of a truly woman's consciousness. Through the hermeneutic of self-definition and unity based on commonality and

conversation, the history of women is explored through past writings and current descriptions of woman's present embodied existence.

The dissertation attempts to connect the use of women's lived experiences with a pedagogy based upon the dialectic between the individual, as relational being, and community, as context of authentic relationships. In this constructive pedagogy, the experiences of the learner are important resources for pedagogical source and methodology. Experience provides new epistemological concerns as it reveals the contraditions of the learner's life, the connections between present learners and their pedagogical heritage, and confirms the recognition of a need for liberative change for participants in education. There is awareness that liberative change requires constant vigilant suspicion and a vision of the place which truly liberatory education could occupy in a world based on a metaphor of mutual relationship.

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Jake, whose birth gave me that moment of recognition and reflection which I now see as the conjunction of the separation of the individual and the ties of mutuality.

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CHAPTER I

WOMEN'S STORIES AND EXPERIENCES: DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE WORLD

Introduction

Individuals are not isomorphic with any group, either biologic or cultural. Neither is the group identified by an individual member. In spite of this, we speak and act as though this equivalence were true. Simply identifying someone as American conjures up an entirely different mental picture than French or Russian. We speak of the "French mind" or "Russian peasant" and have a vision of a prototypical individual pieced together by the media, governmental diatribes, particular travels, and cultural prejudices. The term "American" is particularly insidious since we speak/think of the "typical American", completely negating the existence of citizens of other countries on the American continents. Each of these group names, which we use so carelessly and loosely, establishes quantifying and qualifying boundaries around the characteristics of the group members. We consider it un-American to speak derogatorially of democracy, of "the American way", of the democratic privilege of the American vote, and yet consider the right and responsibility of self-determination by the citizens of another country to be against our best interests.

We have forgotten that our existence on this planet is one of experimentation. Even though we feel more comfortable with the appearance of permanence, the appearance belies the nature of change and consensus. The language and the amount of communication it allows are founded on the agreement of common usage by the majority of members of a social group, and their agreement to teach it to their children. Perhaps the need for interhuman communication is innate so we generally do not mimic other species of animals well into "adulthood". But, if all our American-English vocabulary, for instance, were able to be put in some sort of container and shaken vigorously--with the simultaneous loss of identification between word and object--we may very likely be calling "pen" some entirely different name. In all likelihood this will never happen--aside from the necessity of learning a "foreign" language--so, we continue to instruct children as to the nature of our language as though its attachment to the material, theoretical, spiritual, etc. words were ironclad and permanent. By doing this, we negate the dialectic between us and language, meaning that we construct new linguistic concepts from the old and, in turn, the definitional nature of the concepts limits what we perceive as defined by the concept or outside of the concept. We negate this dialectic by collapsing the word and the object (of whatever form) into one entity; i.e., the word becomes the object and vice versa.

For some objects, the consequences of this collapse may not seem so perverse; indeed, much confusion is avoided by consensual reference to objects by particular names. When, however, the world as we know it is split conceptually into the dichotomous categories of natural and man-made so that anything not man-made is natural, Nature becomes separate from woman/man. Nature takes on the potential of being held "at arm's length"--objectified--to be used and abused at will. Implicit in this one example is the paradigm within which the language and its categorical tendencies lie. This prevailing paradigm holds the ways we view and, therefore, treat our world and ourselves. Most conspicuously and most basically this prevailing paradigm organizes our thoughts/ language into a system of dualities of opposition, e.g.:

me-you
mine-yours
Subject-Object
us-them
w/man-Nature
(or more commonly, man-Nature)
right-wrong
adult-child
old-young
inside-outside
mind-body.
(see Fox, 1979, pp. 79-87)

In the organizational structure for these dualities, we do not concentrate on the connections between--on a melding or blurring of distinctions in a concentration of the wholeness of our existence together on this planet. Much to our discredit, our paradigmatic structure operates on a judgment of

better or higher in value. One member of the duality becomes more valuable, more worthwhile than the other. Mine is more valuable than yours. Certain ways of acting/thinking/speaking are more valued than others.

The problematic of this structure is expressed in two ways: first, the system of dualities instigates and perpetuates a systematic hierarchical rationality founded on a pyramidal valuation with God as its masculine pinnacle of power. Following below God in this hierarchy, respecting the duality of God-man, is man himself who, in turn, holds dominion over woman as his helpmate. Woman, in her definition as childbearer and sustainer, wields power temporarily over the child. Temporarily, until the child becomes a man, in succession to the power of the man. The bottommost rung is inhabited by Nature, as separate from the human and created for human ab/use. The act of childbearing and nurturance, rather than being interpreted as the re-creation of the species in a defiant act of embodied hope and the ultimate act of love, is interpreted within this structure as the connection between woman and lowly Nature. Only by tearing himself away from this mother-Nature can the boy child take his "rightful" position in the image of God and second in command. The girl child cannot wrest herself away from the possibility of her connection (see Gilligan, 1982, pp. 38-51).

Second, the problematic is expressed through the linguistic categorization of these dualities. Language is not

just language. In our efforts toward understanding the world, we establish categories of inclusion and exclusion. Some objects are classified as "pens" and some aren't, depending on the characteristics of classification. Some activities are masculine, some are feminine. In the search for some sort of meaning in the world, categories can be expedient and organizationally advantageous. Situated within the dualities composing our hierarchical paradigm, some categories become "better" than others while some go unrecognized altogether. Particular activities are worthy of recognition and others are not. Some forms of recognition are more valued than others, generally monetary or political in this society. Add to this the complication of the masculine image as the supreme heighth of the hierarchy, the farther removed from this image the farther from any level of significance. As a result, mere categorization as woman or womanly becomes "of less value"; the characteristics of the child become "childish" or "juvenile".

I am called a woman and yet I am vastly different from many other women and do not exhibit many characteristics ascribed to woman as feminine. Those areas in which I vary are called "unfeminine" and are areas in which I am deviant or "uncharacteristic". I am thankful for them, both in me and wherever else they occur for they are points of contradiction where the paradigm does not hold static or true.

These contradictions allow for visions or cracks in the paradigmatic hierarchy for the entry of a new consciousness of inclusion rather than categorical exclusivity.

My purpose in this paper is an exploration of this emerging consciousness, emphasizing the work of women as they search for meaning from sources which reflect and react to their needs. I have gone to three interrelated sources. First, I have used the lives and writing of two late 19th century women writers as a way of emphasizing the importance of women's own stories and creative expression as descriptions of their consciousness of the world. I chose Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin because both maintained a keen eye for observing both the activities of humanity and the social exigencies surrounding and controlling them. Also, both these authors tell, in the writings which I have chosen, of women who--as do most women--live on the edge of the cultural norm with an overriding feeling of being decidedly out-of-place in their living situation.

My second source is current (analytical) writing by women which examines the situation of women sociologically, theologically, and psychoanalytically. The focus of the analysis and discourse is the discrepancies between women's lives and the patriarchal models constructed for them. Essentially, it is women's struggle for survival and self-realization.

The third source is my own experience and stories and those of women friends. A difficulty which is found in each of these sources becomes paramount here. I must acknowledge the unsettling and undeniable fact of the problematic of viewing these stories and experiences through eyes which are not fully able to separate the experience from the paradigmatic taken-for-granted assumptions. But, the attempt toward making the break and viewing the contradictions head-on as ways of refusing to continue imprisoned by the existing paradigm is worth the effort and the risk.

I will begin with a description of the two writers and one of their stories as a way of establishing an historical perspective on the development of a truly woman's consciousness and of building on the conversation between women about this consciousness. Our historical-mothers were not inactive and have much to say to us about the horrors of remaining silent. In this dissertation, I hope to place myself in that history through the hermeneutic of self-definition and unity based on commonality and conversation.

Section One

Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin provide portraits for this study of women's position both in their lived lives and their literary characters' created lives. Although they approached the subject of women's experience from different backgrounds and with very different intentions, Gilman's

intention being reform and Chopin's that of portrayal, they each reveal the requisite details of experience for revelation of both their positions in the world and as models for awareness of contemporary women.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's (1860-1935) early years were marked by poverty and deprivation--emotionally, educationally, and economically. Her father, Frederick Beecher Stowe (related to the famous Beecher family among whom Harriet Beecher Stowe is numbered), left the family shortly after her birth, leaving the mother with two small children and herself to support--a feat of no small trouble now and even broader complications then. The small family traveled among the homes of relatives and friends in the New England area, moving 19 times in 18 years. Gilman maintained some correspondence with her father through the years, although this was generally perfunctory and/or instructive in nature. His financial support was sporadic; he eventually sent Charlotte to the Rhode Island School of Design and her brother, Thomas, to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Other formal academic training was sporadic although Gilman was taught early in her life to read by her mother. Her mother, whom Gilman describes as a superb teacher, operated a small school for the very young in Hartford, Connecticut. Charlotte's formal schooling covered four years in seven different schools, ending when she was 15. Aside from

these formal endeavors, she counts personal experiences as being of intense educational value--she states in her autobiography that children should be accustomed to "large" feelings rather than being always among little ones. Some of her most memorable were conversations with Harriet Stowe and participation in election marches and celebrations, and encounters with the sharing of major newspaper reports with knowledgeable adults. In her autobiography, she recounts vivid childhood memories of Lincoln's assassination.

By her own account, she always doubled her educational opportunities by challenging herself to exercises of greater difficulty than those required, doing them at a faster pace than her peers, and by creating her own problems and assignments. She displayed special natural ability for literature, writing (prose and poetry), and oratory, but the laws and logic of physics also held great appeal for her. At an early age, Gilman decided her course in life was to serve humanity. At 17, having determined that such a path required knowledge of history, she began a course of study, outlined by her librarian father, which included classical learning as well as the observation of current society. Throughout her self-learning she maintained a stance of doubt and suspicion, never allowing anyone else to have the final "say"--no matter how learned or ancient. This sense of will was pervasive through all aspects of her life. In the course of her

historical study, she resolved to formulate her own theory of religion--a religion based on knowledge and sponsored by her own observations of the idiosyncrasies of human behavior. She determined that the first and foremost fact of the world is action founded in various forces, the primary one being God. The development of life progressed upwards in a hierarchical sense to this single dominant Force. The nature of this Force is good, as opposed to evil, in that it allows for the full development of any given organism. The process of religion is one of Intake--the inner contact with the Force--and Output--the fulfillment of function, an adding to the Force through the full use of individual powers. Through it all, she maintains a staunch belief in the progressive evolution of nature and society and the power of the hand of humanity in both.

Prompted by these beliefs, Gilman set herself on the path of personal development. Through force of will and determination, she chose particular characteristics for her own development and methodically outlined plans for their realization. At one point in her adolescence, she was described as being rather egotistically oriented--a description not to her liking. As part of a plan to overcome this criticism, she visited an invalid girl of an age similar to hers in order to build the habit of doing for others--an idea which she shared with the invalid girl. In a similar vein, at 15 Gilman

determine to follow her mother's directives until reaching the legal age of 21 but no further--the instigation was her mother's reluctance to have her daughter leave the home for formal education in the fear that such a separation would reduce maternal control. Gilman describes her feelings upon reaching 21 as ones of the ecstasy of freedom and individuality. Although her mother lived with Gilman intermittently until her death, Gilman never acknowledges any further compulsion to comply with her mother's strict wishes.

In January of 1882, Gilman met Charles Walter Stetson, a young, handsome painter who shortly after their first meeting proposed marriage and she promptly declined. Following a period of introspection and careful thought and analysis of which she was wont to submit all decisions, she arranged with him for them to see each other for a year and then further consider the matter. She later secured another year for further consideration of their relationship and subsequently agreed to marriage during a time which Gilman describes as sorrowful for Stetson.

The courtship was not a happy one but she was true to her word and they married. Although, according to Gilman, Stetson was happy in their marriage, she describes the time for her as one of sliding into depression. In March, 1885, their child, Katharine, was born--an "angelic" and "heavenly" baby. Despite her husband's happiness and the successful birth of

a child, Gilman lapsed into a growing melancholia, consisting of "every painful mental sensation, shame, fear, remorse, a blind oppressive confusion, utter weakness, a steady brain-ache that fills the conscious with crowding images of distress" (Gilman, 1935, p. 90). She was unable to do household duties or engage in the intellectual activities which heretofore had been the major portion of her existence. It was decided that she should visit friends in California as a period of intense rest and self-care--away from husband and child.

The depression lifted during the entirety of what was a most enjoyable, valuable, refreshing trip. But, for Gilman, the return home was devastating; the melancholia reached its full intensity immediately. In her desperation, she consulted Dr. S. W. Mitchell, a nerve specialist, who assured her that no dementia was involved--only hysteria. He prescribed a period of rest and, finding nothing physically wrong, sent her home with directions to

> Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. . . . Lie down an hour after each meal. Have but two hours' intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live. (Gilman, 1935, p. 96)

After following these directions closely for months, Gilman came quite near to losing her mind. She was reduced by the mental torture to playing with "rag baby" dolls and hiding under beds and in closets. Finally, she and Stetson resolved

in 1887 to separate and, as soon as possible, to divorce. Gilman had decided that no matter how intense the pain of a lost relationship and home, it must be less than that she already suffered and the knowledge that she was of no help to husband and child in her state of depression. The household was dissolved.

The end of the marriage did not end the mental depression into which Gilman had fallen, and indeed her depression insidiously followed her throughout the remainder of her life. Gilman describes long periods of "darkness" and excessive tiredness when she was utterly incapable of work, either physically or mentally. In comparing her capabilities before and after the breakdown, Gilman expresses consternation over lapses of memory, inability to concentrate, inability to read for long periods of time especially when engaged with difficult material, and periods of despair over the loss of her constant energy and tireless resolve to work consistently and constantly. She estimated that in comparing her rate of work to that before her collapse, she had lost a cumulative sum of 27 years to mental tiredness and incapacity resulting directly from the years of intense depression (Gilman, 1935, p. 103).

In addition to the mental incapacitation of debilitating depression, the dissolution of her marriage forced Gilman to immediately find means for financially supporting herself,

a daughter and, periodically, her mother. Once household affairs had been settled, they moved to California leaving Walter Stetson in Connecticut and the mother at Thomas Perkins' home in Utah. There, in California, Gilman launched the career of lecturing, writing, and oratorical teaching which she continued throughout her adult life, which gave her a gratifying--if not always accepting--forum for her ideas, and which also kept her life nomadic and debt-ridden. Her autobiography contains lists of debts to friends and mere acquaintances which it took her years to repay as well as accounts of the constant belief that somehow her few needs would be met.

In those times divorce from her side was impossible to achieve since she and Stetson maintained an amiable relationship as friends. Eventually, Stetson himself applied in Connecticut for the divorce settlement citing desertion as cause; Gilman expresses the opinion that such a judgment was only fair but received vehement condemnation from friends and acquaintances for the ending of a marriage apparently without sufficient cause. Stetson quickly remarried Grace Channing, a longstanding, intimate friend of Gilman's. Gilman heartily approved of the arrangement, remaining Channing's friend to the end of her life at which time the two women maintained a household together. Gilman felt that Channing provided an

excellent home for Katharine during the child's stays with the Stetsons, calling her Katharine's "other mother."

Katharine did leave mother and home in California at the age of 9, going to join Grace and Walter Stetson as they prepared to travel to Italy where Walter pursued his artistic career until his death. There appear to be two primary reasons for Katharine's leaving: Gilman's mother had died and the change in living situation required a subsequent change in locale for the family, an unbeneficial one for a young child. In addition, Gilman felt her daughter should be in an advantageous position for her childhood development. Living with Stetson provided her necessary financial support, a viable relationship with her father in a stable household, and gave Stetson the opportunity to know and live in the company of his daughter.

Heaped on top of the condemnation for her "unnecessary" divorce came layered derision and complaints of Gilman's being an unnatural mother, one who would give up the care and keeping of her child. But this act which others saw as singularly selfish caused her anguish and heartache. It was not an easy decision but one which she characteristically faced head-on, reaching a solution through her force of logic and will. Gilman made every attempt to convince Katharine of the positive nature of the move, but Gilman herself wept with sorrow and grief and would situate herself in the company of

children often as consolation for the pain of the physical distance of her daughter. The times when she and her daughter were together throughout Gilman's life were delightful for her, revelling in Katharine's and later in her son-in-law and grandchildren's company.

In 1900 Gilman married George Houghton Gilman, a cousin. Their marriage was a long and happy one, lasting until his sudden death from a cerebral hemorrhage in May, 1934. They maintained a household deliberately conducive to the well-being of two working adults and frequent visits from Katharine. During this time Gilman continued both lecturing, making speaking tours of both the United States and Europe, and writing several articles and stories.

Due to the critical, social nature of her writing, she often found publication frustratingly difficult. Feeling that there must be a market for what she had to say, Gilman founded a small monthly magazine in 1909, The Forerunner, specifically to publish her writings. She singlehandedly wrote and published The Forerunner for 7 years, an undertaking equivalent to four 36,000 word books a year. It consisted of "one installment of a novel, also of a book published serially; a short story, articles of various length; poems, verses, allegories, humor and nonsense, with book reviews and comment on current events" (Gilman, 1935, p. 305). Although she temporarily carried some advertisements and its

subscription cost was minimal, the $3,000 per year expenditure and the immense effort involved saw the magazine end in 1916. In addition to The Forerunner, Gilman had written seven books and sufficient verse for another volume during this same 7 years.

In these writings, Gilman maintained her early commitment to the betterment of humankind. She adhered consistently to the vision of God as a working power seeking the fulfillment of the divine will. She structured her theories around an emphasis on the group rather than the individual with the outlook always in the direction of social advancement. Of special concern to her was the situation of woman and child within the home. In her view the fact of childbearing was no simple guarantee of a woman's gifts for childrearing and surely not for the maintenance tasks of the home. Children deserve the care and attention of those best suited for those tasks, which does not necessarily mean the mother or a hired nurse-maid. Nor did she believe that a woman should be tied to the duties of the household, sacrificing professional desires. To Gilman, efficiency and need require the matching of home duties and child care with the professional services of those most ideally suited for their fulfillment.

As she observed society in her last years, Gilman despaired of the state of politics, citing the silencing of opposition and the low state of ethical behavior. The most

onerous behavior she observed was the lowering of moral standards in gender relations and the rise of promiscuity. The indulgence she saw indicated ignorance or rejection of notions of chastity or monogamy. However, in religion she found the questioning of dogmas and commands encouraging as indications of a willingness to submit notions of truth to active thought and investigation. The hope and strength of religion for Gilman is in the work of improving this world, not in anticipating another world.

Gilman discovered that she had inoperable breast cancer in January, 1932. When Houghton died in 1934, she moved to Pasadena, California, to be near Katharine, her grandchildren and Grace Channing (Stetson). She ended her life with the aid of chloroform on August 17, 1935. In the letter which she left, Gilman said that when all usefulness is over and death is imminent and unavoidable, it was a human right to choose a quick and easy death to a slow and painful one.

Although Gilman may have seen her critical works concerning the conditions of society as her most profound contributions, she has perhaps come to be most famous as the author of one specific short story which describes most clearly and graphically the nature of woman's experiential existence. In The Yellow Wallpaper (1892) she uses a portion of her own life as the basis for describing a woman's struggle with human existence.

The narrator of the story is a woman who pointedly remains nameless. She, her husband John, their infant child, her sister-in-law, and a female house servant are occupying a summer home while their own house is being renovated. This particular house has been chosen because of its seclusion and isolation. She has been diagnosed by her husband, in his occupational capacity as doctor, as being overcome by depression and fatigue brought on by her recent childbearing and her avocation of writing. His instructions are for her complete rest and abstinence from writing. The story is a series of surreptitiously written glimpses of her life during the summer stay.

The house and son are under the care of the sister-in-law and maid servant. Although she expresses affection for her baby, calling him a "dear child," she cannot bear to be around him. The women are operating under strict instructions that she is not to engage in activity; she will only regain her health through rest, fresh air, and long periods of inactivity. Our character disagrees with this prescription, feeling that stimulation, change, and congenial work would be highly beneficial but relinquishes her position in the face of John's opposition. He has scheduled her days under his special direction and assured family and friends that there is really nothing the matter wrong with her. So, she spends the summer under his prescription and the watchful eyes of her attendants.

She occupies herself with intense observations and descriptions of the house. It is an hereditary estate; leased not due to their wealth but to its rather cheap price; with the accompanying hedges, separate little houses, and a particularly pleasing garden with arbors and box-bordered paths. Despite its stateliness, she feels a ghostly queerness about it. She and John have taken a room upstairs which John chose for its size and airyness, over her protestations in favor of a room she preferred downstairs. The room is large with windows looking in all directions with the appearance of having been formerly used as a nursery, a playroom, and then a gymnasium. There are rings in the walls, a gate at the stairs, and the windows have been barred to accommodate the presence of children. The floor is scratched and gouged and bits of plaster are missing. The wallpaper has been torn off in big patches around her bed, which is attached to the floor, and in a space across the room. Its pattern fascinates her, it is one of contradictions, uncertain curves, and confused regularity; its color runs from smouldering, dirty yellow to lurid orange to a sickly sulphur. At first they intended to repaper the room, but John decided against beginning any renovations saying one thing would lead to another until major changes would be undertaken. Besides, she should not allow her nervous fantasies to get the better of her. When she looks out of the

windows over the bay and the gardens, she imagines people roaming through them, but John says she should learn to use her will and good sense to check such fantasy.

The wallpaper begins to take on a more ominous tone as she describes a recurring spot where there are a broken neck and two bulbous eyes staring out upside down and crawling about up, down, and sideways. An unclear sub-pattern appears, a formless figure that skulks behind the predominant pattern.

The forms and shapes dwell increasingly on her mind as the bedroom becomes even more the concentration of her existence. She lies in bed staring at the paper, trying endlessly to find some form or symmetry to the pattern; trying to construct some conclusion to its pattern using knowledge of principles of design. But, the paper defies all her efforts, it persists in going off in all directions in "great slanting waves of optic horror; like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase" (Lane, 1980, p. 9). When the sun shines on a portion of the room, she can almost find some center from which the grotesque forms radiate in paths of distraction.

As time goes by, the shapes become clearer as women stooping and creeping about behind the paper, women only she knows about and can see. The figure begins to shake the pattern in the paper at night as if to get out from behind. So, she feels the wall to see if, indeed, there is a form of

perceptible dimension which she can touch. Even though she can't feel it, while she watches and follows it, it turns on itself, slapping in her face, knocking her down, and trampling on her.

Her preoccupation with the paper distracts and occupies her so much that John begins to perceive this as improvement in her physical condition. On the contrary, she carefully rests when the wallpaper is at its least active and carefully guards the hours of light and darkness when the figures begin their dance of escape. Her diligence in observation rewards her with the discovery of a long, low "smooch" (i.e., smear) near the mopboard which circles the room, going behind every piece of furniture except the bed. The women crawl around behind the pattern until it fairly shakes with movement. They rattle the bars of the pattern, getting their heads entangled until they are strangled and fall inactive in the repose of death.

The transition from perception of the woman-forms behind the wallpaper to identification or unity with the forms takes place when the woman-forms escape the confines of the paper to creep about the gardens and the bedroom. Our character does not and cannot creep at night since John is close by, she and the escaped woman-forms creep together during the day, surreptitiously, since women do not usually creep during the day.

At night she now works desperately hard to free the woman from behind the paper, especially since their stay in the country is coming to a rapid close. To this end, she locks herself in the room, tears at the paper which she has not already destroyed and watches the form carefully, waiting with a rope should she attempt to escape entirely. As she tears at the paper, the tone of the story changes; her descriptions of the woman-form become descriptions of herself. She speaks of herself as coming out of the wallpaper and wonders if the numerous women creeping around the garden escaped from there as well. The rope which was intended for the woman-form is now securely fastened around her. When John comes to the door he must search for the key which she has thrown out of the window. Upon opening it, he discovers her creeping with one shoulder pressed into the smooch which encircles the room. As she exclaims that she has finally escaped the paper and torn enough of it away that she cannot be imprisoned again, John faints so she must crawl over him in her circular journey.

Gilman makes adroit use of changes in lighting, color, and smells as they affect the consciousness of the major character in The Yellow Wallpaper. She describes the wallpaper as "smouldering unclean yellow" with a "sickly sulphur tint" in places alternating with a "dull yet lurid orange" reminiscent of sulphur (sulfur), being of a pungent nature used in

bleaching (in the state of sulfur dioxide) or of the treatment of skin diseases. Indeed, at one point in the story, John's sister touches the paper wonderingly saying that its color rubbed off on their clothes and she wishes they would be more careful in rubbing against it.

Even though the paper is yellow, the color associated with light and sun, there are patterns which can only be seen as the sunlight moves across; in different phases of the day the figures are in different modes of movement. It is only at night, when the moonlight shines through the windows, that the figures reach their full activity. She says women do not creep during the daytime. But at night, both the moonlight and the figures creep across the room. At these times, the outside pattern becomes bars behind which the women must move, reflecting the bars in the windows designed to protect the children who played there when the bedroom served as a nursery. The women are always behind an outside pattern, during the day they form the subpattern under a string of toadstools "sprouting in endless convolutions." It forms new shoots every day constantly reminding her of all the foul yellow things she can remember.

The smell has the same overwhelming quality of the paper's color. When the weather becomes damp during the summer the odor ("a yellow smell") begins to creep around the house as well. It hovers, lingering whether windows are open

or not. As if the odor were animate, it skulks, hides, and lies in wait for her in the numerous rooms of the house.

Similar to the wallpaper itself, the story creates outside and subpatterns, the outside being the wallpaper and its community of women and the subpattern being the relationships in which our character finds herself enmeshed. As with the woman-forms, she must break through the bars of these relationships in order to free herself in the only way possible, albeit into the misery of madness. For it is into this community that she releases her energies, in her creative descriptions of its qualities and in the physical efforts necessary for her membership as she rips the wallpaper from the walls. Her descriptions cannot be discounted as mere flights of fancy; rather, they are the efforts of a woman to form comradeship with other women who are experiencing the same frustrated efforts toward movement within confinement.

As was noted earlier, the narrator maintains relationships with two other women, a maid servant and sister-in-law, her husband and doctor John, and an infant. Even though she cares for the baby, expressed partly in her feeling of relief that he at least was spared being kept in that particular room, she cannot bear being around him.

In her relationships with the other two women of the household, we find extensions of the caretaking needs generally ascribed to women. The maid servant fulfills the

daily duties of physical needs for the house's members, an assumption I make based on Gilman's description of her as servant since she is most notable for her absence in the story. John's sister, Jennie, serves as mistress of the house and, since the major character is unable, as mother figure for the infant son with this station's necessary nurturant capacities. Jennie is convinced of the wisdom of John's diagnosis, we see through her actions, and watches carefully the eating, resting activities of the central character while guarding her from occupation with writing. Jennie is described as the perfect housekeeper who "hopes for no better profession" (Lane, 1980, p. 8). The separation between Jennie and the central woman indicated by this statement must be noted for it displays not only a feeling on the part of our character that there indeed are better professions than housekeeping for women but also, coupled with her actions toward discouraging writing, it shows Jennie's feelings that women should be occupied in the cares of the home to the exclusion of what may be termed extraneous pursuits.

The importance of these two caretaking women is of a dual nature. On one side, the duties of the house, while not fulfilled by the major female character, are yet completed by women therefore remaining within the female sphere of employment. And, of primary importance, is the separation or distance which is upheld between these women and the

major female character for in this distance she can find no unity of friendship or any bond whatsoever to hold them together as a community of women within the situational existence. Because the distance is separating rather than binding, the relationship is one of coolness to the point of being adversarial. The poignancy of this situation arises from the realization that these three women participate, I use the word guardedly, in a project not of their own making. While the intent may be to guard and provide for the nurturing needs of the members of the household, for although John is diligent in his attention he can in no way be said to be nurturing, these needs are circumvented by the necessity of fulfilling John's superimposed desires. In other words, the true reciprocity involved in allowing for growth and development of the individual within relationship is, here, circumvented by the adherence to the fulfillment of John's prescriptions.

Separation and distance are also the hallmarks of the relationship between the narrator and her husband, both physically (he is either working or lives in a separate room) and in the distant manner with which he treats her. The form of their relationship is that of the classic split between public and private participation. The sphere in which John operates is that of his activities outside of the home, primarily his occupation which is his connection to

the world. It is appropriate that this occupation as doctor is the same as that of S. Weir Mitchell whose "rest cure" aided the mental devastation accompanying Gilman's own collapse. Also, it is appropriate and necessary to note the prescriptive quality which this occupational attitude gives to their relationship. John has diagnosed for her that there is really nothing wrong with her, other than the rigors of childbearing and her preoccupation with writing, which distracts from her maintenance of her duties. The cure for these "mild" ailments is separation--abstinence from any writing or rigorous mental, intellectual activity; separation from all company which would in any way excite or tire her.

Section Two

Katherine O'Flaherty (Chopin) was born, in 1851, into a wealthy and aristocratic St. Louis family. Her father's family was one of "vigorous enterprise and commerce" while her mother's was of eminent Old World lineage (Rankin, 1932, p. 12). Katherine's father, Thomas O'Flaherty, was well-educated, gallant, and self-possessed enough to venture from Ireland to America when dissatisfied with his father's occupation as land agent (Rankin, 1932, p. 16). He quickly attained prominence in St. Louis business, civic, and social affairs, relying largely on his easy wit, distinctive manner, and social skills (Rankin, 1932, p. 19). In 1839, at the age of 34, he married Catherine Reilhe, who soon after died

while giving birth. Their son, George, was to become a close and devoted half-brother to Katherine. Thomas later married Eliza Faris, a young woman of barely 16 years of age, in 1844. Their son, Thomas, was born in 1848, followed by a daughter Jane (birthdate not given by Chopin's biographers) and Katherine in 1851.

Of the four O'Flaherty children, Katherine (Kate) is the only one who survived to anything resembling middle age. Jane lived only a few short years, Thomas died at 20 in a buggy accident, and George died at 23 when he contracted typhoid fever while visiting the family of a deceased Civil War compatriot. To compound the grief of the death of her siblings, Kate had to endure at the age of 4 the death of her father. Her earliest recollections were of him and a childhood preoccupation with his daily activities. Daniel Rankin, her biographer, claims that she inherited her "keen mental alertness and discernment" from her father (Rankin, 1932, p. 19). After her father's untimely death, Kate and her mother formed an intimate bond which drew them together in friendship and devotion until Eliza O'Flaherty's death some years later.

At the time of her father's death, both Kate's maternal grandmother and great-grandmother lived in the O'Flaherty home. Both women brought a religious addition to the already decidedly Catholic atmosphere of the household. Mme. Charleville, the great-grandmother, was lavishly and unabashedly

fond of Kate, taking the child's education and guidance into her own hands. She insisted that Kate always speak French to her, supervised the daily music lessons, taught her to face life squarely without embarrassment or hesitation, and rewarded achievements with lavish stories of life in St. Louis--embellished to a degree--designed to instruct in the ways of virtue. Under Mme. Charleville's dominant but never domineering tutelage Kate "learned to face all questions coolly and fearlessly and grew self-contained, calmly possessed, and an enigma to her elders. Neither vanity nor self-consciousness was a part of her (Rankin, 1932, p. 28). Oddly, enigma is a word often used to describe Kate Chopin. Mme. Charleville continued to play a major role in Kate's life until the older woman's death in 1863.

Kate's formal education began in 1860 when she enrolled as a day student at the St. Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart, from which she graduated in 1868. The curriculum of this school was grounded in a concentration on religion with the intent of preparing girls for their futures as "Christian homemakers, Catholic wives and mothers" (Seyersted, 1969, p. 21). The students were trained in domestic skills, social accomplishments (e.g., languages, music, deportment), with an emphasis on "mental discipline and intellectual vigor" (Seyersted, 1969, p. 21). Kate's talents and successes were wide ranging; she was markedly proficient at the piano with

the ability to play both from music and by ear. Music, reading, and writing became her passions. She attended the musical events of St. Louis with excitement, often returning home to reproduce by ear the parts she loved best (Seyersted, 1969, p. 24). She read voluminously, both at school and from the collections of books and magazines she found at home. Proficient in languages, she preferred to read the originals in French or German. Her reading at this period of her life included Dante, Coleridge, Goethe, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Mme. de Stael, and Cervantes (Seyersted, 1969, p. 25).

True to this era of history and the social life of St. Louis, Chopin participated in a great many amusements, attending operas, concerts, skating, and the regular receiving of callers in her home. Though she is described as being widely popular, entertaining in conversation, gracious and gifted in intellectual discussion, she regretted the enormous amounts of time and energy drained away from her beloved reading and writing. At this time, as she continued to be throughout her life, Chopin rarely spoke of herself to either her companions or her mother. She confided to her diary (as quoted by her biographer, Per Seyersted) that in those pages resided the only place where she would take the liberty of expressing herself about herself. In her diary, she confided that the true art of conversation is to lead your conversational partner to talk about himself (the pronoun used by Chopin) while you respond with appropriate facial gestures.

During the time of her formal school years, Chopin formed an intimate friendship with Kitty Garesche of 10 years' duration, ending only when they separated into different life paths. The two young girls shared their most loved pastimes, reading, music, and outdoor pleasures, with Chopin spending a great deal of time at her friend's home in the company of her vast family. Their friendship was of that rare sort that continues over long periods of time with only intermittent opportunities for renewal. It was to this friend that Chopin turned for solace when the long series of deaths which occupied her life culminated in the deaths of her husband and, later, of her mother.

In the winter of 1869, Kate met Oscar Chopin during his serendipitous retreat from New Orleans to St. Louis for the purpose of educating himself in the business world. Oscar Chopin's life had been dominated by his greedy, self-serving father to such an extent that he ran away from home, as a boy, to live with relatives. He returned only when his family planned a move to France, the place of his father's birth, in order to escape the ravages of the Civil War. The war was seen more as business interruptions rather than as those associated with any particular political stance. Oscar's family owned and operated the former Robert McAlpin plantation in Louisiana; McAlpin was, debatedly, the prototype for Simon Legree in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin

and the elder Chopin seemed wont to keep the tradition growing. Fortunately, Oscar inherited his mother's much gentler disposition and, also, a share of the estate upon his father's death in 1870.

Kate and Oscar were married on June 9, 1870, when Kate was 19. Following a honeymoon tour of Europe, they moved to New Orleans where Oscar established himself as a cotton factor, the link between the grower and the buyer. The business was successful, expanding into a cotton merchantship with accompanying moves to more spacious, elite offices in the French Quarter. These times of security were short-lived, however, and the business failed in 1880 due to extensive loans Oscar had made in years of poor cotton crops. He paid his debts and moved wife and family to one of his father's landed properties in Cloutierville, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. Oscar became a general store owner and managed some small plantations which he owned. True to his character, the needy were never turned away from the Chopin store.

Their marriage was a very happy one; the time of the wedding was calm and almost uneventful for Kate because of the certainty about their decision. Their home was congenial and catered to the needs of their six children, five boys and one, the youngest, a girl. During the 10 years they lived in New Orleans, Kate never wrote or took notes; her diary entries were "mere jottings" (Rankin, 1932, p. 92).

This was a time of observation and study of human nature as she traveled the streets of New Orleans, visited her mother frequently in St. Louis, and opened the doors of her home to friends and acquaintances. It was during their years in New Orleans that she visited Grand Isle, one of the settings of her novel, The Awakening. Rankin describes her moods as being similar to those of Edna Pontellier, the main character of this novel, as days of blissful happiness for no apparent reason and days of unhappiness whose cause was equally unknown. These rare moods of unhappiness with life made her an "enigma" to those around her, and it is in these attempts toward understanding the vagaries of existence that Rankin sees the emergence of the vivid characterizations which typified her later works.

In the midst of their wonderful years together as a family in New Orleans and Cloutierville, Oscar suddenly contracted "swamp fever" and died (in January, 1883: Seyersted; October, 1882: Rankin). Kate maintained her husband's business for over a year, then sold it, rented the properties and moved with her children to her mother's home in St. Louis. Her mother died in 1885 and at the age of 35 Kate was now alone in the world with her children and had, as yet, not written a line for publication. Lelia, her daughter, described the effects of the deaths in her early life on her mother:

> When I speak of my mother's keen sense of humor and of her habit of looking on the amusing side of everything, I don't want to give the impression of her being joyous, for she was on the contrary rather a sad nature. She was undemonstrative both in grief and happiness, but her feelings were very deep as is usual with such natures. I think the tragic death of her father early in her life, of her much loved brothers, the loss of her young husband and her mother, left a stamp of sadness on her which was never lost. (Seyersted, 1969, p. 48)

Fortunately, Chopin had a friend and admirer in St. Louis, Dr. Kolbenheyer, who had been her obstetrician and was now her family doctor. The Doctor was an ardent admirer of hers, a lively talker with an educated, active mind, and an excellent conversational partner for Chopin. Their discussions were influential on Kate's development; the Doctor was a staunch agnostic and even though he may not have been the only influence on her decision she at this time became a Catholic in name only remaining indifferent to the practices of the Catholic religion (Seyersted, 1969, p. 49). The Doctor had saved Chopin's letters from Louisiana and their correspondences in St. Louis and began reading them to her as examples of her literary talent. In 1887 she began once again to write.

The first piece to be published was a poem entitled "If It Might Be," appearing in a Chicago magazine, America, on January 10, 1889 (Seyersted, 1969, p. 50). Chopin's early attempts toward writing for publication were not entirely to her satisfaction, and she turned to the writings of de Maupassant for guidance in the development of literary

style since he best exemplified those attributes which she considered absolutely essential in story writing. I would submit that the descriptions which she used for his writings would hold true also for hers. She wrote in 1896 that de Maupassant had broken free from authority and tradition to see the world through his own eyes and wrote in his clear, precise way his impressions of what he saw (Seyersted, 1969, p. 51).

Kate Chopin was beginning a new life which extended naturally and consistently from the passions she had developed in earlier years. She had always read voraciously, written in a variety of forms, engaged in intelligent conversation, and viewed the world with a sense of humor. She had a strong need to delve into the crevices of human nature, and had the ability to note the nuances of human interaction and the essences of situations. As she now developed her skill for writing, she managed to maintain the delicate balance between introspection and revelation of self in both her writing and daily life. She never wrote of herself, except in private diaries, and even though she was a vast favorite of the St. Louis learned society and maintained several suitors, she was never dependent on either them or her friends for company. Chopin was outgoing, spontaneous, sparkling with good humor but always retiring and elusive with a distinct, unyielding secret side to her nature. As she said of de Maupassant, she was truly an individual of emotional and intellectual independence.

Following her thesis that "true art presupposes an understanding of true life" (Seyersted, 1969, p. 89), Chopin tried to maintain an openness to experience without prejudice, abhorred censorship especially against books for the young, and regarded the sensuous as not only viable topic for literary expression but also absolutely necessary for any comprehension of the world. For Chopin, humankind and nature are inextricably intertwined and it is senseless to attempt to remove the human from this context. Therefore, the whole of the human must be viewed as such--as a whole, with its foibles and miseries as well as its justices, beauty, and happiness. She was constantly irritated with moral reformers; she felt a basic selfishness in human nature prevented improvement aimed toward any perfectability. Most especially, Chopin denied that preaching as social criticism was the duty or privilege of fiction and would be, quite definitely, antithetical to the development of true art. In contrast to the social reformers of her historical era, Chopin felt that criticism was essentially useless; she believed that people would never change and held out very little hope for personal change either. Rather, she wrote to express life as realistically as possible, to express the individuality of her heroines rather than to stress their femaleness (Seyersted, 1969, p. 168), without imposing her own opinions or conclusions on the reader beyond the point of artistic, literary necessity.

Though Kate Chopin published widely in magazines, newspapers, and her own texts and in varied literary forms--book criticisms, poetry, short stories, novels--it is her novel The Awakening which may be regarded as her major work and is most suited for the realm of feminist discussion in which I am engaged.

Kate Chopin's short novel, The Awakening, is set in southern Louisiana, principally in New Orleans and Grand Isle, during the same period as The Yellow Wallpaper--the late 19th century. The story is of a young woman, Edna Pontellier, and her growing consciousness of herself as a separate being--different in desire, intent, physical existence, and mental capacity, from any of the people, male or female, who surround her.

As the story begins, Edna, her husband Leonce, and their two small sons are spending the summer on the resort Grand Isle to escape the intense heat and activity of summertime New Orleans. Edna, the boys, and their nurse-maid are full-time vacationers; Leonce, a broker, commutes on the weekends to be with the family.

The resort is the luxury home of the Lebrun family, mother and two grown sons, who inhabit the main building while leasing the surrounding cottages. The guests dine together in the Lebrun house and are given the use of oceanside cabanas for swimming equipment and use of boating supplies.

Aside from Edna Pontellier, the hosts and guests are of Creole descent, and feel the camaraderie of this community. Edna's father and two sisters maintain a Mississippi plantation; her girlhood home was the bluegrass country of Kentucky. Edna's not being of Creole descent sometimes causes her concern with the familiarities taken for granted between the other vacationers and serves to separate her from them. Her marriage to Leonce Pontellier, a Creole and a Catholic, was a source of consternation and distaste to her family.

Edna's awakening which is indicated by the title of the novel occurs gradually over the course of the story, but seems to form two discreet phases. The first occurs through her growing awareness of herself as a being separate from all others and through her experimenting with a new relationship with herself and the new confidence she experiences in her abilities. The second phase begins when she and her family return to New Orleans at the end of the summer and she must reestablish or redevelop her relationships with other people in light of the development of her new self.

During the stay on Grand Isle and her period of emergence as a separate being, certain incidents stand out as being of vital importance. First, it is important to realize the nature of her relationship with her two sons and her husband, Leonce. Chopin emphasizes that Edna's maternal and wifely roles are both positions she fell into during the

course of her young life rather than being straight, conscious decisions. As Chopin states, "Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman" (Chopin, 1981, p. 181). She could just as easily respond with relative indifference to their childish plights as respond with caresses and reassurances. "It (their absences during visits away from home) seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her" (p. 198). Leonce felt the need to express to her his own dissatisfaction about her fulfillment of her duty toward her children. It was his feeling that his duty was to provide a living for his family and the mother's to care for and look after the children (p. 178). Leonce was absolutely devoted to Edna, regarding her as the "sole object of his existence" (p. 177). Their marriage had taken place during a period of Edna's infatuation with a series of seemingly dignified, unattainable young men. Leonce had fallen deeply in love with her, she was impressed by his sincerity and by a level of common interest which during their married life proved to be more illusory than real. They had achieved a certain devotion for one another and that level of closeness which results in the understanding of unspoken communication.

Throughout their summer in Grand Isle, Edna experiences both the exhilaration of the discovery of the new and the pain of a recognition of the distance between the familiar of

the known and the unfamiliar of the unknown. She has reached a point of indecision as she realizes the ability to guide and decide for herself. This ability affects even the mundane as she encounters contradicting inclinations. As Chopin says, "A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her--the light which, showing the way, forbids it" (Chopin, 1981, p. 189). In essence, the beginnings of the emergence of her new relations with the world had thrown both chaos and self-reflection into Edna's life. She was no longer yielding unthinkingly to the minute decisions of life nor rejecting the new impulse.

Chopin describes this period of Edna's life as being filled with a "vague anguish" (p. 179) and, yet, feeling freed from one's anchorage or chains--feeling "like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul" (p. 219). Whether or not Edna could or wanted to reflect on the implications for the future of her newly-developing self, she was encountering the world much like one would imagine an inquisitive child or stranger in a foreign land. Edna had tried the entire summer to learn to swim, taking daily lessons with nearly all the guests, most especially Robert Lebrun. It was not until one evening when she was ready to express her own power that she was comfortable and skillful in the water. Earlier in the evening she had accompanied

the other families to the Lebrun house for an evening of impromptu entertainment and celebration. Mademoiselle Reisz was summoned from her cottage to play on the piano; she had taken a fancy to Edna and agreed to play what she would request. Even though Edna enjoyed and was acquainted with music, she declined the option for a request, leaving the choice to Mademoiselle Reisz. As the older woman played, Edna experienced the music in a way she had never known before. Rather than mental images or illusions elicited by the music, "the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul" (p. 210). Because of her emerging sense of self, the ways she encountered and experienced the world were necessarily different. "Perhaps it was the first time she was ready, perhaps the first time her being was tempered to take an impress of the abiding truth" (p. 209). Following Mademoiselle Reisz's performance, the attending crowd adjourned to the beach where Edna discovered her new power and control over the exercises of her body. For the remainder of the summer, Edna swam as often and as long as possible.

In addition to Edna's new experiences are the relationships begun in Grand Isle and continued through the return to New Orleans. Robert Lebrun, spending his summer vacation with his mother in Grand Isle as he generally did, fostered a warm friendship with Edna in the same fashion in which he usually found a widowed or married female friend to entertain

during the vacation stay. He and Edna spent most of their time together, developing a warm, close companionship. It was Robert who strove to teach Edna to swim and with whom she went on excursions around the resort and between the islands. Leonce Pontellier did not consider their relationship to be cause for alarm; it was good that Edna was not lonely or bored during his absence. However, the picture changes over the summer as they recognize "the first-felt throbbings of desire" (p. 217). When Robert leaves on a long-anticipated but not-expected trip to Mexico, Edna is disappointed and depressed both by his leaving and by his secrecy about the move. She felt "she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded" (p. 241). At this time in her relationship with Robert, she recognized the old infatuations which had occupied her as a child, a teen, and as a young woman just prior to her marriage to Leonce. The recognition of the similarity to the previous fascinations with distant young men did not lend any guidance to the present, however. She was not inclined to view the similarity as a hint to or indication of "instability" in the relationship (p. 240). The feelings she had for Robert were not the same as those she had for her husband, or ever expected to have between them. This emotion was private, not intended to be shared or fought over, of concern to no one but herself.

Madame Ratignolle developed and represented every maternal skill which Edna Pontellier lacked or ignored. She was the picture of feminine beauty and grace. Her children and husband were the objects of her every concern; even her musical talent was encouraged as a means for developing a suitable home environment. She had, in a previous summer, been the object of Robert's constant attention and was, therefore, aware of the nature of his intentions. It was she who recognized Edna's vulnerability and asked Robert to be more careful to guard against Edna's taking his advances seriously. His response was simply that he, Robert, should be warned against taking himself too seriously. Madame Ratignolle's candor and appeal to Edna worked to unleash the "mantle of reserve" which had always served to separate Edna's outer from her inner life. It was to Adele Ratignolle that Edna confided her conviction that her life was her own, that the power which rested within her as a separate being was hers and not to be given to or shared with anyone. In actuality, it is the only thing truly ours and the only thing worth guarding selfishly. In Edna's words, "I would give up the inessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me" (p. 244).

Shortly before the end of the summer and the departure of the Grand Isle guests, including the Pontelliers, Robert

Lebrun announced the impending fulfillment of a business venture in Mexico which he had planned throughout his youth. As would be expected from the amount of time they spent together, Edna misses his company. She inquires at the Lebrun main house for news of him or to engage in small talk about his childhood. Even in his absence, though, she continues her progressive practices and increasing skill in swimming and occupies herself with the renewed interest in sketching.

After the return of the Pontelliers to New Orleans, the differences Edna felt stirring within her become more pronounced. She immediately feels herself removed from the possessions of the household, which were nearly all concerns of her husband's anyway, and from the details of the life of a rising New Orleans entrepreneur. A very few weeks after their return, she ceases receiving callers on her traditional Tuesday reception day, much to the consternation of Leonce Pontellier's business mind, and refuses to concern herself with the manner in which the servants fulfill their duties. She is moved to disregard the activities of the home and the affected courtesies which had previously been done without thinking. When Leonce objects to her conduct, Edna becomes all the more adamant. "She has resolved never to take another step backward" (p. 259). The movement she had made was toward beginning "to do as she liked and to feel as she liked" (p. 289) and to follow the whims of her nature.

Leonce begins to wonder whether she may be becoming unbalanced mentally; his opinion is that Edna is not herself. In fact, it is just the opposite. In his concern for her lack of care for what had apparently occupied her before, for her total change of attitude toward everyone and everything he consults the family doctor. Dr. Mandelet advises that women are "moody and whimsical" and to leave her alone (p. 274). After observing her at dinner in the Pontellier home, the Doctor is described by Chopin as knowing "his fellow creatures better than most men"; he "knew that inner life which so seldom unfolds itself to unanointed eyes" (p. 281)--believes her thoughts to be occupied with another man. Edna's father, the Colonel, during a New Orleans visit in preparation for another daughter's impending wedding, tells Leonce that his handling of Edna is far "too lenient." The Colonel insists that authority and coercion are necessary: "Put your foot down good and hard; the only way to manage a wife" (p. 282). But, following the Doctor's advice, Leonce declines to exert either his influence or whatever authority he may have with Edna. He prepares to leave for an extended business trip to New York and to stop in Mississippi to make apologies for Edna's refusal to attend her sister's wedding. Shortly thereafter the children are called away to Iberville by their paternal grandmother who wishes for them to know the country as their father had as a child. Consequently, Edna finds herself alone.

With her family removed from a need for her immediate care and preoccupation, Edna's thoughts become more centered around herself and the necessities of her own life. She has long since abandoned her previous New Orleans social circle and now concentrates wholeheartedly on those friends and acquaintances who have, unknowingly, accompanied her through her time of transition--the friends of Grand Isle. Edna visits the Ratignolles both for the pleasure of the praise they lavish upon her sketches and to observe Madame Ratignolle's progress through pregnancy. She visits the Lebrun home hoping for news of Robert; she has never been able, even with the passage of time and change of venue to New Orleans, to become less obsessed with thoughts and reminiscences of Robert. She had become acquainted with Alcee Arobin, a young man of far-reaching if not always flattering reputation, with whom she spent a great deal of time. Arobin "was absolutely nothing to her" (p. 292) and, yet, he awakened in her sensual desires which she had not heretofore experienced. Mademoiselle Reisz's small apartment becomes a favorite hideaway since the Mademoiselle receives, fairly frequently, correspondence from Robert which she shares with Edna. Perhaps more importantly, Mademoiselle Reisz stirs the emerging nature of Edna--the true spirit which has been covered over by Edna's "fictitious self" (p. 260) and which now emerges amid much deliberation and turmoil. Mademoiselle

Reisz performs this feat in two ways: first, she maintains a stance of unswerving honesty with Edna and secondly, she entices the human courageousness, which Edna requires for the changes in her life, to seek expression and recognition--especially from Edna herself.

It is Mademoiselle Reisz who aids Edna in penetrating through her decision to move out of the Pontellier house into a much smaller home only a short distance away. During their conversation concerning the move, Edna discards the superficialities of "too much space" or "too many servants" and comes to realize that the same instinct, I would name it survival or self-preservation, which has led her to cast off her "allegiance" to Leonce has also "prompted her to put away her husband's bounty" (p. 295). Symbolically, she removes herself from the realm of Mr. Pontellier's "household gods" (p. 248), from his support and, therefore, from the realm of the circuitous trade-trap of nurturing support and care in exchange for monetary support and care. Emotionally, "she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself" (p. 296).

When Robert returns to New Orleans from Mexico, Edna falls into the expectation of a resumption of their former closely emotionally-bonded relationship. But, he avoids her and when he is physically close, is all but cold. Robert considers himself to be in love with her and confides that

he cannot succumb to his feelings since she belongs to another and must not allow himself to feel that she can ever be free. In his confiding, he allows her the opportunity to definitively state her positiveness about her state as a separate being, not falling categorically into a set of possessions as extensions of someone else. As Edna says, "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose" (p. 339). Tragically, neither Robert, Alcee, nor Mr. Pontellier is capable of understanding her position. Robert and Alcee consider her as attached to Mr. Pontellier as his wife. And, Mr. Pontellier, in order to protect his business arrangements, covers up her moving out of the house by having it renovated in her absence and publicizing an extended European summer trip as a sign of their unification following his business venture to New York. Never is there recognition of change in her nature.

The two Pontellier children remain always as a dilemma in Edna Pontellier's awakening process. She had told Madame Ratignolle, in Grand Isle, that she could not give up herself for her children without at that time really comprehending the consequences of what she said. During the course of her separation from her children and her intense anger at the agony brought by nature upon women in childbirth (while attending Mme. Ratignolle's childbirth), Edna finds and refuses to give up her new knowledge of the self which she

can give up to no one--including her children. Edna had discovered that the loss of the separate self far exceeds the loss of physical life. Indeed, that is Edna's resolution to the quandary of existence in a world where one finds oneself placed categorically, with one's life predetermined by the expectations of others, and confinement excluding any anticipation or hope of change.

Edna Pontellier's life situation provides a vivid example of the difficulty of resisting the constraints of society. The tradition of woman's existing to provide for the private existence of the home and family, to provide for the nurturing needs of the family members and for the continuation of the species through childbearing, requires the woman who finds herself not suited to these tasks to live ostracized from the mainstream of societal existence. As Doctor Mandelet tells Edna, "youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provison of Nature, a decoy to secure mothers for the race. And Nature takes no account of moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost" (p. 344). Edna replies that she doesn't "want anything but (her) own way" (p. 345). It is important to remember that the way must be that which is forged by the separate individual, not at the cost of desolately destroyed lives or rampant selfishness. Rather, it is the way that leads the individual to full acceptance of

separate responsibility and separate development, much as Edna began to exert her abilities for swimming, sketching, and courageous existence alone.

In this assertion of individuality, I see the moral dilemma referred to by Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice, the dilemma requiring a "reconciliation between femininity and adulthood" (p. 71). Edna is caught between a need for an adult-defined individuality and the feminine self-sacrificing image for woman. As Gilligan states, "The 'good woman' masks assertion in evasion, denying responsibility by claiming only to meet the needs of others, while the 'bad woman' foregoes or renounces the commitments that bind her in self-deception and betrayal" (p. 71). In this consideration, from Edna's standpoint, there is no resolution which does not require more than she can give.

Section Three

The major characters in these two stories are united in their search for a means of expression. The protagonist of Gilman's story has discovered an outlet for her need to release her inner being through her writing. Her husband denies both the desire and need for expression by simply ignoring them both as activities which are too physically taxing for her state of health. Her writing is the means through which she establishes the conversation of relationship; in her confinement to constant, complete rest and

solitude she is cut off from the conversation. Being with and of the "women" of the wallpaper becomes her only connection to conversation. But shutting her husband out of the room, as her last act of the story, and seeing his entering as a regrettable intrusion, she seeks to prevent him from closing her off again. Gilman speaks to the need for the active dialogue of conversation for the reciprocity of relationship and to the barrier which the masculine force has been physically against feminine dialogue and mentally against the development of a feminine discourse. It is her husband's heartiest desire that she confine herself solely to the traditional realm--maintenance of home and family--and away from the more masculine feat of manipulation of language. He displays his ignorance of women's potential and of masses of women's writing historically available--to a perceptive searcher.

Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier finds expression through the physical nature of swimming and through her painting. It's interesting that her love of music ties her to her most profound female friends but that she turns away from that mode of expression as she rejects their lifestyles. Edna is compelled to reject their uses of music since Mme. Ratignolle sees her piano playing only in the function of furthering the development of her children and Mademoiselle Reisz uses music as her means of becoming so self-sufficient that

she no longer needs other people. In both instances, the music becomes expressive of the lifestyle or role of the women, rather than expressions of the women themselves.

Edna Pontellier does not strive for perfection of form in her painting or in swimming. Both serve as sources of freedom, freedom of movement, of expression and from obligation to anyone else. Swimming and painting are means of expression and ways of releasing herself physically and emotionally from people who drain her energy and from seeking relationships which Edna does not need. The first successful experience with swimming in Grand Isle releases her from bonds of dependency; she does not require the presence of Robert Lebrun, her children, or Leonce Pontellier and is actually irritated when they interrupt her privacy. Through Edna Pontellier, Chopin is addressing the need for expressions of the self--expressions carefully nurtured and carefully reflective of the individual rather than reflecting the masses through the individual. Chopin is also stressing the need for care in choosing the relationships that occupy time and energy. It's impossible to be everything to everybody, or to expect that from someone else. That kind of abusive altruistic thinking fosters the view of women's existing to fulfill the needs of other people.

Both of these women are seeking, however unsuccessfully, to release themselves from the oppression of dependency, of allowing someone other than themselves to have control over

the composition of their experiences. They seek to have power over the place of their activities, the persons with whom they interact, the physical nature of the activity, and the ways they express their involvement both immediately and while reflecting upon their experiences. Their searching is complicated by their need for experiences beyond those traditionally described as womanly activities. The home binds them emotionally (caretaking responsibilities), physically (questioning of physical capabilities), and economically (through the dependence on the husband's occupational status--which Edna Pontellier eventually rejects thereby lowering her economic well-being). Intellectually and spiritually they are bound through these three means and the restrictions on their expressive potentials. As we have seen, these women can find release from this bondage only through releasing themselves from any connection with participation in a masculine world. As Edna Pontellier says, she cannot give up herself for her children nor, we can assume, can she or should she have to give up herself for the meager participation allowed through the historical feminine role.

Power is exemplified here in many varied manifestations. Lives are essentially bounded and defined by the dichotomy between masculine and feminine roles. Any straying from those roles is greeted as an aberration, both women characters of these stories had difficulty assuming the maternal role

although both had been automatically placed there. Similarly, women currently find themselves regarded as "token women" when they venture into the public, male world and/or conceding to the masculine role requirements common in such an environment. In any sense or scenario, the power of self-definition is lost in adherence to prescribed, definitional roles.

Since it is this masculine public sphere which is rewarded in our culture/society (we pay "lip service" to the value of the nurturant aspects of this culture/society but that's about all), the power of reward, recognition, status resides there. In any society based on a hierarchical structure, as is this one, those with status reside at the peak--both receiving rewards and doling them out. Being inclined toward narcissism, our society rewards and encourages those most like the current occupants of the hierarchical peak and, therefore, the pyramid of selective achievement is self-perpetuating. Rejecting this structure of reward and power requires stepping out of its framework--refusing to mold oneself to fit the model of success and relinquishing the desire for the rewards of hierarchical power. Some of us find this rejection prefabricated; because of class, gender, race, religion we are rejected by the structure itself and, thereby, refused its power and reward system.

Rather than working for full assimilation into the hierarchy, rejected peoples (I can speak only from a feminist

view and within that from a white, middle-class feminist view) are recognizing those valuable characteristics which they would have to lose when gaining membership and discovering that the price is too high. Women do not and must not lose those characteristics which have heretofore been, derogatorially, referred to as "feminine". Concomitantly, this "feminine nature" must be regarded as only a part of the full range of the human potential, which should be open for exploration. Careful investigation and retention of the feminine in both men and women reveals the more quiet power of nurturance, of willingness to give in relationship, of sharing between equals, and of reciprocity with the powers of Nature.

Exploring the feminine is a difficult task for two reasons; first, it requires stepping away from the structure of the society and the temptations of "power over" other individuals. It is necessary to let go of any desire to be "looked up to" and to control rather than sharing and a willingness for equality. Secondly, the influence of the hierarchy has been so complete that even the language of our daily lives adheres to and reflects this system of power and control. Even using the word "power" in conjunction with "feminine" sounds dichotomous because of the connotations of power as manipulation. Therefore, we are engaged in the development of a new way of thinking about human potential aside from predefined categories and of new ways of existing in unity with

our environment while being enmeshed in the conundrum of a conversation with a discourse of hierarchy and oppression. Trying to shift the context of human potential necessitates trying to shift the context and quality of human discourse.

This dissertation is my attempt toward these two alterations of consciousness. The form reflects my belief in the importance of the individual and the need for viewing the language of individuality in a new way--that of seeing the individual in connection to other people and to Nature. Even though we are each individuals, we are not separate from relationship and its effects (see Ruth L. Smith in Andolsen, 1985, p. 236). The language surrounding even this one concept, the individual, is unbearably complicated. I have tried to explore the changing, burgeoning feminist consciousness while balancing the importance of the individual with the necessity of conversation between individuals in the form of relationships.

A basic problematic resides in the very category "woman" and the origin and source of its meaning and interpretation. The dilemma is that of having to interpret woman's consciousness and experiences in male terms. Compounding the problem is the recognition of the wide variation of persons and experiences which we haphazardly group under the term "woman". Any blanket description of women must, necessarily, fall short of being universally true just as any definition indiscriminately applied loses all meaning when universals become

more important than particulars. The goal of an exploration of the experiences is not a search for universality of application, especially when this exploration is done within the existing epistemological-language mode. It is a project involving reviewing critically predetermined definitions, categories, presuppositions with the realization that these have served only as filters through which defining and confining conceptual frameworks have been refined.

In delving into the experiences of women, the critical concern must involve the experiences of women both singly and as a group. The context of inquiry resides in these experiences rather than in the academically delineated and separated modes or curricula of study. For women, the paradigm which these curricular/research divisions represent is basically flawed. It does no good to examine women only through the eyes of a classical Marxian analysis, or neo-Marxian contemporary analysis, or to view women only through the eyes of philosophical theories in which women have not historically participated (or been recognized as participating). The vision of women's experiences must be turned upon itself, so that women are viewing themselves and their experiences as women and using or deconstructing descriptions of existence as they find it necessary. The truth lies in the perceiver, the searcher, not in the definition since it is clear that these existing definitions have led to the

oppression of women. Women must develop their own vocabulary/ language of naming the world.

We must rid ourselves of assumptions of the uniformity of women and their experiences--at least in existing epistemological terms--and move into a recognition and honoring of their individuality and idiosyncratic natures. Surely, as cases in point, the life-stories of Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman or my own cannot in any reasonable sense be said to be those of women we all know. The value in often repeating theirs and other stories lies in the re-cognizing of their lives and the concomitant effort toward reconceptualizing our own lives as women. The reasoning here is similar to that of not equating women's experiences with those of men.

There are assumptions which I am making which must be recognized. Methodologically, I am assuming that we indeed can formulate some recognition of the intricacies of another's life, maintaining both its own context and verifiability in another context of more or less similar situation. Secondly, I am assuming, with a degree of vehemence, that such a formulation is necessary. Of the former, I am skeptical; of the latter, I am thoroughly convinced. In the investigation of a woman's life, we seek areas of confluence of realities and assumptions rather than answers to predetermined questions or laws of nature to graft onto our own, or other women's lives (Donovan, 1985).

I maintain that in order to avoid over-generalization on the one hand and idle relativism on the other, we must examine the experiences of women within the context of their own lives and with their own language. In order to understand where women are now and to formulate valid, authentic choices about where we must or should be, it is necessary, first of all, to deconstruct the past and present assumptions, motivations, behaviors (observable or recorded) as well as women's reflective reactions to their lives. In the process of deconstructing, the inquiry is conducted in two areas: first, toward uncovering the nature of women's interactions with the world. To understand women's experiences they should be examined "from the ground up," not to juxtapose them with men's experiences. The goal of this inquiry is not for comparison and contrast, it is for women to live their experiences as women, for themselves and to describe them as, and for women--as the overt expression of a long-hidden conversation. And, secondly, it is necessary to work toward a separating out of the cultural taken-for-granted world of women. The "separating out" is not synonymous with "throwing away." The taken-for-granted assumptions of women's existence have historically been the same as women's existence since the assumptions established the parameters and definitions of women's lives. The assumptions were superimposed on women's lives rather than arising organically from woman

herself. The paradox of this situation is the necessity of deconstructing to inform and disentangle in order to reconstruct the future but without negating the present and past. The compounding dilemmas are avoiding the despair of regressing into infinitely deconstructing and remaining constantly vigilant in our suspicion of reconstructing with the same oppressive language structure. There is, of course, the paradox of being in a situation where this inquiry has to be done in existing conceptual schemata.

Deconstructing is not discarding or destroying, it is the emergence of a dual-dialectic (see Macdonald, 1978) between, on one side, the experiences of the past and their influence on those of the future; and, on the other side, between the language which constructs our world and the emerging discourse which is necessary for and concomitant with any altered sense of the world revealing both the language of oppression and making possible the emergence of liberating language.

Chopin and Gilman's work deals with the awareness of what it means to be a woman historically placed, the relationship of being a woman to being an individual, separate being. Both of these women chose to write bluntly and openly from the perspective of women, to use the experiences of their own individual lives as grounding for their writing (while not being totally autobiographical), and both chose to live independent existences exemplary of the subject matter of which they wrote.

The orientations of Gilman and Chopin differ. Gilman's purpose in writing and speaking was to persuade and educate her audience concerning the nature of women's oppression, reasons for its existence, and, most importantly, alterations in society which would provide for women's full participation. One of her major contributions to twentieth century feminist theory (of what has been called "first wave feminism" by J. Donovan in Feminist Theory, 1985, and elsewhere) was her analysis of the home and the work which traditionally has taken place there. Gilman saw the repetition of housework from home to home as exorbitantly redundant and tying at least one woman in each home to the repetition of such work as violently oppressive. She proposed that such work be the responsibility of only those most suited by talent and inclination. In her novel, Herland, all the maintenance tasks of the community are done by women with appropriate capabilities and inclinations.

Chopin aimed not so much to alter as to describe. She sought to fully grasp and convey the exigencies of the human condition as she saw them rather than to formulate a utopian vision as to how they should be. Within this description of the human condition, Chopin placed her view of woman's situation not so much to emphasize it over the male existence as to set it in the perspective of all human existence.

Gilman and Chopin, however profound and important for the development of a feminist consciousness, are but two

examples of the diverse lives of women. They offer us through their lives and writings the opportunity to lay bare their and our experiences as women for investigation both of the nature of their experiential grounding and of the gifts they gave us in the form of the uses to which they put their observational and academic knowledge.

Using the writings and lives of Gilman and Chopin as guides, I want to examine the contemporary consciousness which has been and is rising from the relationships which women are now forming with the world as they strive to make it their own. Women's work in reexamining these relationships currently takes many forms; some take the form of political action, some is done in the context of research, some find artistic expression, and much is in day-to-day living--I want to examine this emerging daily consciousness.

I shall examine two additional groups of women's writing, the first of which represents an analysis and awareness of the roles and purposes of women's situation in relationship to social demands. I turn to such scholars as Juliet Mitchell who provides, in Women's Estate, an organizational framework from which I draw endlessly. Secondly, I rely on Simone de Beauvoir whose work, The Second Sex, provides an explanation for the alienation which is represented in the inclusionary and exclusionary images inherent in the societal spheres of production, reproduction, social relations, and the opportunities for women of expression in these areas.

The other group of women writers concerns itself with the spirituality of the female. These women situate the feminine in the wholeness of the spirit of the world and give to me knowledge of the contributions of women to theology and of the intricacies of the alterations of consciousness enacted by the operative paradigm of an established institution and its attendant idolatries of models and language. Specifically, Rosemary R. Ruether speaks to me of the nature of Ultimate Being, its importance for the consciousness of women, and the vision necessary for hope of placement in time as transcendence with the work of the present rather than as escape from the present. Mary Daly brings the challenge of awareness of living on the edge and the dangers and possibilities of taking one's existence into one's own hands for true development of the Self. In Metaphorical Theology, Sallie McFague establishes the nature of the discourse for the dialectic both between the feminist theologians and between their writings and my own.

Keeping the conversation centered around other women's lives also keeps me from true participation in this discussion of women's existence. I have extended the conversation to include me and two women who have been through the education graduate program with me. In a series of interviews/ conversations we explored the interstructuring of our lives: our educational careers, work goals, families, individual

feelings, and desires for community. Through these conversations, I have tried to tie together the lives of the women writers, my individual self, and my immediate community of women into a level of awareness of both our commonalities and particularities as women.

As an educator, I am aware of the complex nature of the issues of all these fields and the care which must be used in addressing them. On the other hand, a mode of analysis which is grounded in women's experiences and the mutuality of relationship can serve as the feminist contextual analysis of these fields and education as well. While not wholly transferable, the language of the contextual analysis of fields other than education models the development of analytical discourse which is and must arise from women involved in the field of pedagogy. The struggle of developing a new language exemplifies the struggles of all women who seek to revitalize their views of themselves. In addition, as women develop epistemological concerns which eminate from their own reflections of their own experiences, there must necessarily be a concomitant freedom in the development of divisions along disciplinary lines.

CHAPTER II

RELATIONSHIPS: THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW IMAGES OF INDIVIDUALITY AND RECIPROCITY

Both Edna Pontellier of The Awakening and the woman of The Yellow Wallpaper were undergoing the process of separation from the established roles of womanhood and rules of femininity. This process begins from the woman's position of unknowing or unrealized concession to the preestablished mandates of existence which together constitute the "common sense"* definitions of her life. The separation continues with the search for changing models of being and for a different position in society. The different position may entail living on-the-edge of society or a total stepping-outside of the unconsciousness of the traditions and history which bind society together in its continuousness. The common sense definitions of woman define her as the nurturer, the homemaker, the primary caretaker for children, the socializer of children. These definitions allow the assumption of woman's natural destiny in a position of permanence and unification "into a monolithic whole, mother and child" which remains the same worldwide, throughout time (Mitchell, 1973, p. 100).

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*I use "common sense" as does Bertel Ollman: "Common sense is all that strikes us as being obviously true, such that to deny any part of it appears, at first sight, to involve us in speaking nonsense. . . . I shall use 'common sense' as well to refer to that body of generally unquestioned knowledge and the equally unquestioned approach to knowledge which is common to the vast majority of scholars and laymen in Western capitalist societies" (Ollman, 1976, p. 5).

The monolith, in Mitchell's analysis, is the institutionalized form of intersexual and intergenerational relationships (Mitchell, 1973, p. 151). Within this monolith the definitions of men and women are formed, reproduced through means of socialization and perpetuated through means of ideology (Mitchell, 1973, pp. 82-84)--both the subtle pressures of economic capabilities and the psychological pressure of the desire for group participation. In the case of woman, her primary reason for existence becomes her duty toward and unification with the child. A key to this concept of the monolith is the view of woman's participation in reproduction as the "spiritual 'complement' of men's role in production" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 106) with the result of the exclusion of women from the production (public) sphere and the aura of the "naturalness" of women's role in reproduction becoming a predetermining factor for the nature of her life's activities. Children do require consistent, high-quality care; however, not necessarily from the biological mother--"suitability is not inevitability" (Mitchell, 1973, pp. 115, 119). Release from the monolithic composite of mother and child requires release from our singular view of the family as the sole site for the socialization of children and the institutionalized form of intersexual relationships. The effect, here, would be to release both men and women into other environments in which they may define their own existences rather than stepping into predefined roles.

Woman must accept the dawning realization that she is somehow out-of-sync with these mandates which curtail her existence and accept the self-consciousness of that realization which forces her to examine her formerly taken-for-granted world. This point of self-consciousness is the beginning of the phenomenon of hope since it is the simultaneous break of pre-determined existence and the initiation of the process of becoming an individual, it is the instigation of an opposition between product as the pre-determined end and process as the development of a separate self.

As Juliet Mitchell says in describing the phenomenon of feminist consciousness-raising, "The first symptom of oppression is the repression of words; the state of suffering is so total and so assumed that it is not known to be there" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 62). In the step away from this state of total oppression comes the scarcely less uncomfortable work of speaking of one's oppression, of contemplating what was formerly not even known to exist. One of the most important aspects of this birthing process is the escape from the isolation and loneliness of competition, of the home's private world, and of the silence of wordlessness into the overwhelming awareness of commonality of experience as women talk to each other and express their knowledge of isolation.

Beyond the extension of woman's awareness of her situation in the world into awareness of common experiences with other women is the danger of what Juliet Mitchell calls "the

fate of the whirlpool" (Mitchell, 1973, p. 63) in reference to consciousness-raising groups. The danger is that of women's seeking the liberating company of other women only to return once more to the loneliness of an isolated existence. In my view, as we move from the familiar to the unfamiliar in participating in the construction of a transformational metaphor for existence we must vigilantly carry forward the history of the familiar to avoid its répetition.

As Mitchell states, "Revolutionary politics is linear--it must move from the individual, to the small group, to the whole society" (1973, p. 63). The consciousness of oppression spreads from individual to groups of individuals united by experiences and realizations of oppression to the consciousness of oppression by the broad spectrum of society. Concomitant with this widening awareness is the similar spreading of awareness of areas of analysis. In other words, the individual woman must be conscious of the aspects of her life which overtly or tacitly form the constricting boundaries which prevent her full development as a separate (but not isolated) being. Similarly, the groups of women who together comprise the female population must understand and contemplate their coinciding oppressions as well as the areas in which they diverge. Women must also be bluntly honest enough to guard against ways in which these groups may oppress and continue to oppress each other. As Sharon Welch has so wisely

stated in Communities of Resistance and Solidarity, we cannot deny our status as both oppressor and oppressed. I return to the importance of maintaining the history of the familiar, in this context, the history of the silence of the oppressed.

In the broader societal context, it is necessary for women to see their placement as both individuals and groups and the ties which bind both these relationships to men and to the institutions which perpetuate the spirit and reality of confinement. This last task becomes seemingly impossible or unbearably complicated when one realizes the necessity for both advancing and retreating simultaneously. For instance, it is not enough to liberate women's sexual expression without at the same time coming to grips with the concern for reasonable birth control and care for children. Nor is the vote a guarantee of women's viable participation in the institution of government or access to the right of an education a guarantee of inclusion into academia of the history or thought of women.

> Even when the context of coursework includes issues of concern to women, strategies of teaching and methods of evaluation are rarely examined by faculty to see if they are compatible with women's preferred styles of learning. Usually faculty assume that pedagogical techniques appropriate for men are suitable for women. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 5)

And, most emphatically, the liberation of some women cannot come at the price of the exclusion of others. True authentic existence for women cannot come with such a high price for

we cannot bring life into the world and then confine its participation.

To further complicate the matter, women are now of necessity asking themselves to create a vision for the future. As it becomes apparent that society as it exists will not accommodate the true changes required for the inclusion of women, women must forge the vision of society and their participation in it for themselves.

This is the importance of the self-reflection and contemplation which women must employ at the emergence of an awareness of existence as an individual person. Hence, also, the importance of an analysis of woman's placement in society. In the first instance, the woman is searching for the setting of her own life, the relationships between its various parts, and the meaning or significance attached to both the parts and the whole. In the second instance, the woman must establish herself historically in society as a part enmeshed in the whole--enmeshed in the taken-for-granted, historically inherited language, institutions, and structural societal framework.

The images or vision for construction of a future arises (not as easily as this implies) from the intersection of these two arenas of analysis, the totality of the woman's existence and the totality of the society's existence and perpetuation. I find the model of the dual dialectic helpful here when considered as the dialectic of the woman and her

existence as a woman paired with the dialectic of the woman and her situation in society. This is the area of dynamic interchange when viewed as the intersection of analyses which form critical consciousness, viable possibility, and the suspicious awareness necessary to avoid the stagnation of static models of existence which limit or impede further movement.

The model of the dual dialectic is helpful, also, in remembering that the awakening consciousness of women, seen in its wholeness, is too complex and includes far too many parts to be considered strictly linearly. For, while I agree with Juliet Mitchell that revolutionary politics proceeds in a linear way from the individual to the society as a whole--at each step there must be that hermeneutical mediation which allows for the complex of the whole and the points of emphasis in analysis to emerge. The combined texts of the woman's experiences provide the basis for what she can bring to the dialectic for interpretation, analysis, and alteration. True to the complexity of delving into the awakening of woman's consciousness, we find ourselves turning to the individual as she discovers herself and re-turning as she searches for new images of herself in a community which both responds to her and is constructed by her.

I place heavy emphasis on the power and importance of the individual in observing, recording, and analyzing women's emerging consciousness. I acknowledge that a major source

of strength of the movement toward women's liberation has been the discovery of commonalities in experience and the structural unity of analysis which comes from the recognition of all women as an oppressed majority group. Even so, each woman is both a part of the unity of women and, yet, apart or separate from other women in her uniqueness and wonder and, historically, apart from true participation in society and its appending culture. Each of us, as woman, finds a source of power and energy in the unification of the struggle with other women against oppression. Each of us, as woman, also brings a separate being to the struggle with separate talents and situations of oppression which the individual must rectify. Janice Raymond speaks to this necessity of self-orientation:

> Female friendship begins with the companionship of the Self. Aristotle maintained that "the friend is another self." Until the Self is another friend, however, women can easily lose their selves in the company of others. (Raymond, 1986, p. 6)

Therefore, though as women we join together in the powerful relationship of community and communion with women as sisters we also face our lives too often as selfless beings. I emphasize the harmony, peace, strife, and strength which come from recognizing one's requirement to occupy a position in the whole in order to fulfill and complete that whole. I also emphasize the necessity for woman to be able to stand alone and genuinely occupy her space in the world. "Taking part in each other presupposes and creates differentiated

selves in which to take part!" (Keller, 1985, p. 262). Following logically from the beginning of an awareness of separate existence melded with the emphasis on the importance of the individual's self, I would like to begin at this point, move to the woman's connections with others, and on to her connections, and lack of connections, with broader society. Adhering to the thesis that a feminist epistemology is based in the experiences of women, my descriptions are the confluence of my own experiences and the analyses of women writers who both share their experiential frameworks and shed theoretical cognizance to my own.

In the consideration of woman as an individual self, I turn to Simone de Beauvoir who speaks of woman's attempts to develop that separate being. DeBeauvoir uses the language of the Subject-Object dualism to describe woman's situation in the world. In The Second Sex, she describes the drama of woman as the conflict between the realization of self as a free and autonomous being like all human creatures and being cast as a static Other without hope of transcendence. She is cast as being materially of the world rather than, in my terms, able to conjoin with the unity of participants in the world. Woman becomes a part of the metaphor of Nature, of which Susan Griffin and Carolyn Merchant speak, which does not envision the natural world as the bountiful setting of one's life but, rather, as the opposing end of a user-used

dichotomy. The conflict, according to de Beauvoir, is between the Subject who regards the self as essential and the compulsions of the situation in which she is the inessential. In Raymond's words,

> It is important to understand that the norms of heteroreality have intended woman for man and not man for woman. . . . For man-made destiny and desire are consumed by his voracious appetite. Her essence and existence depend on her being always in relation to him. As Nancy Arnold has phrased it, woman becomes the "essential non-essential." (Raymond, 1986, p. 10)

For me, it is the dilemma of being an Other or a project in relation to another's Subject.

De Beauvoir contends that women wish to be accorded the "abstract rights and concrete possibilities" without which liberty is only a mockery (De Beauvoir, 1952, p. 149). A woman, as with a man, must not be defined according to her capabilities which limit her to what she is now or has been, nor to what others perceive that it is necessary for her to be. She is not to be seen as completed in her capabilities; she should rather be seen as a nature which is in process or in a state of "becoming" through her possibilities (De Beauvoir, 1952, p. 38). It is the possibilities which are defined, not the prescribed being into which she must fit. An important distinction, for me, is that possibilities aim toward the future while the nature of capabilities places them in the present and, therefore, in the past. Further, the capable is defined and confined within the possible as the realized possibility. The difficulty for woman lies in the

choice-making of possibility, for she finds it necessary to not choose the prescripted feminine options of passivity and receptivity, deciding instead to opt for vibrant liberty. Put more eloquently by Luce Irigaray, "The 'desideratum' is that as women become subjects, mothers and daughters become women, subjects, and protagonists of their own reality rather than objects and antagonists in the Father's drama" (Wenzel, cited in Donovan, 1985, p. 116). The establishment of possibility within the context of another's reality is the frustration of the projects of life (stagnation) through force resulting in alienation and oppression (De Beauvoir, 1952, p. xxxiii).

There are two major difficulties, which I have noted in observation and women's writings, that women have in regard to the full realization of the potentialities of their lives. First, is an assumption of narcissism or self-centeredness (used in its "common sense" negative definition) which undercuts the desire to explore and, necessarily, be alone and--to put this as gently as possible--unencumbered with and by oneself. The words expressing this conundrum have found expression through Adrienne Rich who speaks of the intense love for children complicated by the "common sense" (societal, tacit) assumptions of a romantic, sentimental view of motherhood which raises the spectre of the ever-vigilant, ever-compassionate mother before a woman's eyes (Rich, 1976, p. 3). The only possible result when striving for perfection

is the perception of failure. The woman denies her needs--the basic needs: time away and alone, other projects for life's potentialities, the recognition that children are a part of you but not all of you--and carries a burden of guilt for not giving, or being, or having, or whatever, quite enough. Mary Daly describes guilt as one of the "plastic passions" which are not only not real or genuine passions but also

> cause those whom they infect/infest to feel deprived of purpose, end, final causality. . . . Plastic passions are restored passions, which have been converted from verbs into things. . . . Since they have no perceivable causes, they function to serve the mechanisms of "blaming the victim." (Daly, 1984, p. 201)

I want to emphasize that children in this instance are to be seen symbolically; that is, the symbol of children stands for whatever it is which causes a woman to either be so preoccupied with matters outside herself that she has no time for development of her self and/or functions to limit her vision of the possibilities of her own self development. In the first instance, one example is the double duties of motherhood and career which currently serve to limit a woman's space for herself as do worries concerning adequate, worthwhile child care which meets the physical and emotional needs of her children. Compounding this is the reluctance of society, all areas of society, to enlist fully in the provision of care for children, leaving this duty primarily in the hands of women. In the second instance, that of limiting

a woman's vision of the possibilities of her own self development, I speak of those events, persons, etc. which cause or contribute to a woman's searching outside herself for the fulfillment of her life. I am using the term "fulfillment" in the sense Mary Daly refers to when she speaks of fulfillment as "the therapeutized perversion of the passion of joy. A fulfilled woman is one who is filled full. She is a vessel, a stuffed container, her condition being comparable to that of a wild animal that has been shot and stuffed." The woman who has been fulfilled is "completed; she is finished"; the state of being fulfilled is one of non-movement and resignation (Daly, 1984, p. 204). This non-movement and resignation take the form of signing one's life over to someone else so that they may take over the responsibility for one's life; women lose the capacities for self-development, reaching for possibilities and control of the active positions of the world.

Women become separated from the world--"worldless"--without direct involvement and participation, dissociating themselves from the world so that the major portion of the meaning of their lives must come indirectly through "husbands, lovers, fathers, male bosses" effectively segregating women from the world (Raymond, 1986, p. 153). In this position of non-movement and only indirect participation in life, the only alternative for activity is the inactivity of waiting. For women, this waiting can take any one of many forms: waiting for children, driving for children, waiting for a date,

etc. More subtly women wait for the chance to date or to marry or wait until the children are clothed, or fed, or grown or simply wait until everyone's needs have been met perhaps even without realizing that they, too, have needs and possibilities which require nurturing and performance. "Waiting can be fatal . . . for it breeds a passivity and discourages risk-taking. Ultimately, it convinces women that they are not responsible for their own futures" (Raymond, 1986, p. 179).

The desire to constantly meet the needs of others may actually be counter-productive to the desire to fulfill those needs. Not only will the woman's needs not be met, if they are even recognized, but also the capacity to help others may be hindered by ignoring one's own needs and concerns. In the search for mutuality of relationship, the tendency women have developed through intense socialization toward positions of passivity reduces the potential for mutual relationship (Gudorf, 1985, pp. 190-191).

All of these considerations serve to restrict woman from having the liberty for participation in the world--from becoming a part of the viable activity of the world and coming to direct the activity of her own life. So long as woman derives meaning from someone else, therefore blindly constructing reality through someone else's eyes and continuing to accept the reified notions of the passion of motherhood as woman's only passion (both raising motherhood to be the "real" aspiration for woman and paradoxically depriving it

of any true meaning) she will be unaware of the radical notion of creating one's own world and the power of self-creation.

The first difficulty blocking women's full realization of the potentialities of their lives which I mentioned was self-centeredness used in a negative sense, referring to the notion of caring only for oneself, selfishness, the exclusion of concern for others. The second difficulty with which I am concerned involves another sense of self-centeredness. I capitalize the Self as Mary Daly does in Beyond God the Father (1973) and elsewhere to show that this sense of Self arises from the woman herself. It comes from a woman's experiences, her reflection on her experiences, and her creation of Self in a different way from the self of patriarchal society. In Self-centeredness, the woman places herself at the center of her life and she denies a negative surrendering of Self, she does not engage in sacrificing her Self for other people (Raymond, 1986, p. 162). The first aspect of my consideration of Self-centeredness is that of the difficulty in establishing and maintaining the paradox of autonomous connection. It is the difficulty of keeping oneself at the center of a woman's existence while having and being open to connections with other beings. The difficulty originates in considering the concepts of autonomy or separation or connection as static entities with mutually exclusive tendencies as in, for instance, separation referring to the isolation or insulation away from or in opposition to other people

rather than as dialectical concepts within which there is the constant interchange necessary for the movement of a fluctuating relationship with oneSelf and between one's Self and the world. The use of "fluctuating relationship" does not refer to loosely reactive changes but to the non-static nature of each person, for as people change so must their relationships. Viewed as a dialectic, separation does not entail opposition or antipathy or the framework for "separate but equal." Rather, separation is a setting-apart to avoid seeking the completion of existence by becoming attached to or living through someone else's existence. Similarly, connection is not synonymous with the aberration of existing through another person. It is the groundwork for the potential relationship of affection as described by Janice Raymond. "Affection in this sense means the state of influencing, acting upon, moving, and impressing, and of being influenced, acted upon, moved, and impressed by other women" (Raymond, 1986, p. 8). The paradox of autonomous connection becomes the effort toward Self-development necessary for relationships of genuine affection.

The second aspect of Self-centeredness stems from my emphasis on the individual and her relationships with other individuals. Emphasizing the individual development of Self is not meant to be a retreat into a sollipsistic orientation toward the world. Rather, this emphasis is intended to be a recognition of the necessity for a reconstruction of woman's

relationship with herself as well as the reconstruction of her relationship(s) with the world. As de Beauvoir says, the tragedy of human consciousness is the establishment by each separate being as the lone sovereign Subject. In this separation, the realization that each of us seeks transcendence through the projects of life can be seen as tearing myself out of my immanence and conflicting with my liberty (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 158). The situation she describes is inherently conflictual since it sets beings in opposition to each other, believing that the full existence of another somehow reduces the full existence of mySelf. The search for commonality and relationship is exacerbated by this search for some uniqueness which can only be achieved through the apparent reduction of another. But, also, it seems that any establishment of uniqueness which must usurp another person's "individualness" cannot possibly allow each of us to explore the possibilities of our own reality or even to conceive of the concepts of a reality of one's own or of the importance of the individual to the constitution of the whole. True relationship requires the presence of each person in and for herself; true otherness "is that of a consciousness separate from mine and substantially identical with mine" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 158).

In describing women's relationships I use two models for purposes of illustration. The first describes what true relationship cannot be; the second describes the positive

nature of what true relationship can be, should be, and is. My first model (Figure 1) is that of the hierarchically established pyramid which exemplifies dominion over other beings and what would in the model be considered as lower forms of life. It entails a dichotomous split between the higher forms and Nature itself with the implication of transcendence by the higher forms over the materialism of the lower. Within this transcendence is the assumption of the lower rungs being provided for the convenience of those maintaining positions on the progressively higher steps. Accepting the dualism of transcending the earthly or natural or material and woman as a member of these categories puts her in the position of a stranger of purely impersonal opposition or passive submission to another's will.

As Carolyn Merchant (in The Death of Nature, 1980) explains, women have been subsumed under the category of nature and nature fell prey to the prying of rational, scientific (technological) thought which held the natural to be ultimately explainable and to be a resource for use by systematized society. Merchant examines ecological concerns and feminist critiques concerning visions and stereotypes of woman as current problems whose roots extend throughout the history of human thought. She contends that "Through dialectical interaction science and culture develop as an organic whole, fragmenting and reintegrating out of both social and intellectual tensions and tendencies" (Merchant, 1980,

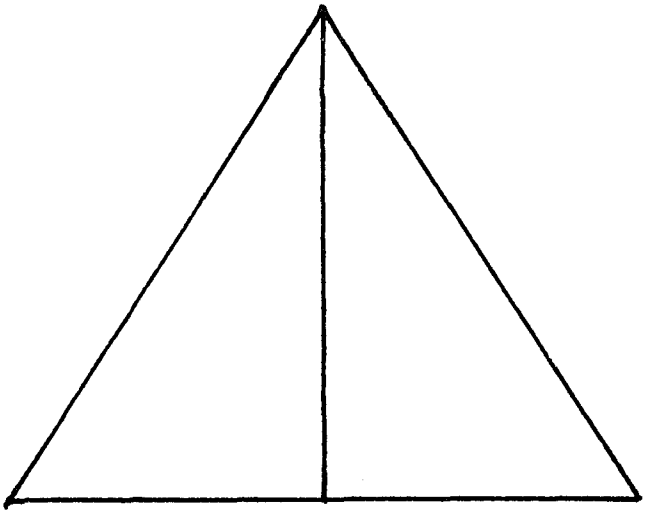

Figure 1. My first model is that of the hierarchically established pyramid which exemplifies dominion over other beings and what would in the model be considered as lower forms of life.

p. xviii). Her emphasis rests on the shift in dominant metaphor from viewing the world as an organism to viewing the world as machine. In both metaphors woman has occupied a less than favorable position. For while women are bonded with the earth as the nurturer, the womb for the reproduction of the human species or of natural elements, and the passive recipient of the energy of vital activity, she maintains no agency of her own. While she, as woman or earth, may be revered for sustaining and maintaining forms of life, she is still passive, awaiting the creative energy of rational, inspired (male) thought and action. In the shift of thought toward viewing the world as machine, the earth became immanently describable and usable, a means for improving the condition of life. The use of and dominion over the earth and its "infinite" resources became the prerogative and duty of participation in the rising scientific revolution. Both these views are "double-edged," for while a view of world as organism reverenced earth (female) as caretaker and provided for her being taken care of, she was relegated to the secondary position of irrational thought and activity. The new value of world as machine and earth (female) as contributor also allowed for exploration and abuse of her resources, jeopardizing her ecological stability and reinforcing a position of domination.

> Sanctioning mining sanctioned the rape or commercial exploration of the earth--a clear illustration of how constraints can change to sanctions through the demise of frameworks and their associated values as the needs, wants, and purposes of society change. (Merchant, 1980, p. 41)

My concern here is not to outline in all its complexities the nature of the change in dominant metaphors but, rather, to emphasize the dualism between activity and passivity which the two dominating world-views have held steady for "Mother Earth" and the female in her identification with the earth and passive nature. I do not believe that a view of dualistic separation is static or inherent in relationship between man and woman, self and the world, passive earth and masculine heavens. But two points are displayed through this model of relationship which hold true in our world of technological rationality. First, in this model, relationship is dichotomous, separation becomes isolation, difference contains a value judgment--a delineation of better or worse. As in the dialectic between the scientific and cultural which Merchant describes "theoretical and cultural assumptions (undergird) the leap from differences to inequalities, new fields and new scientific studies continue to generate 'evidence' to maintain outdated assumptions about the male-female hierarchy" (Merchant, 1980, p. 163).

For the second point, I need to draw a model within a model--an intersection of a horizontal axis with a vertical axis within the hierarchical pyramid. The vertical axis must run from the upper angle of the pyramid to a point of intersection with the bottommost level. The horizontal axis must be able to move through each level so that it eventually (or simultaneously) intersects with them all. If I label

the vertical axis as relationship between super- and subordinates and the horizontal axis as the representation of the potential for the reciprocity of true relationship, the model becomes for me a description of the types of relationship available within this framework. Relationship along the vertical becomes unequal with those at the higher level holding sway over those below; as man over woman, nature, children; woman over children; human over non-human. The area for the cultivation of reciprocal, mutual relationship becomes confined within the levels of similarity, as in man with man, woman with woman, non-human with non-human (Figure 2). Let me emphasize emphatically that I do not regard the promulgation of these intralevel relationships as negative in any sense. It is the limitation or bounding within the levels which concerns me here. For, the greater the distance, the more stringent the categories defining difference, the less likely is any potential for existence in any sort of unity. The implications are clear. Relationship is viewed in terms of ascending and descending, over and above, below and beneath. The ascendancy is cemented through dominion over, expressed through oppression (pressing-on) of, and legitimated through definitions of difference as unequal and dependent. The tyranny of this inequality and connotations of better as one theoretically (since it is impossible literally) ascends the pyramid finds its expression in many ways. Two of the most

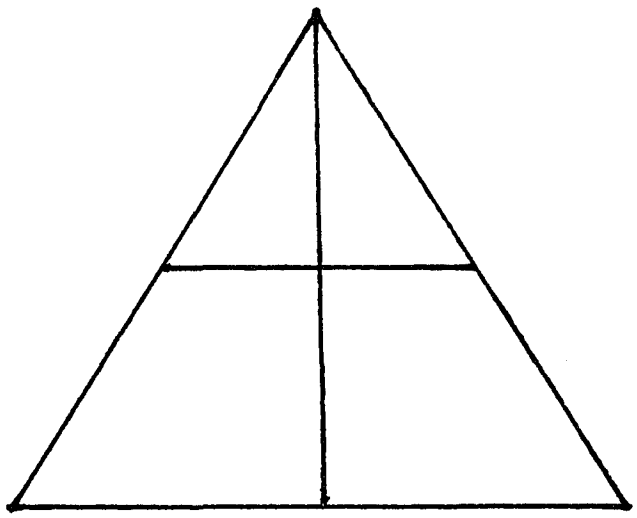

Figure 2. Relationship along the vertical becomes unequal with those at the higher level holding sway over those below: as man over woman, nature, children; woman over children; human over non-human.

insidious for women are given by Janice Raymond. In the man-woman relationship (the "normal hetero-relation") the man holds dominance over the woman in their defined inequality, the relationship centers around him and finds its definition through him as representative of the patriarchal culture. She finds herself, in a duality spoken of previously, as the Other whose participation and position are defined by some other person. The dominance is solidified as she identifies herself through him and her relationship to him, assumes the "benefits" of the arrangement, and loses her powers of Self-definition (Raymond, 1986, pp. 13, 151). Even women who see the discrepancies and oppressiveness of this relationship may not always be immune to its influence.

> Hetero-relations have also affected theories and realities of feminism by defining feminism as the equality of women with men rather than the autonomy, independence, and love of the female Self in affinity with others like her Self--her sisters. (Raymond, 1986, p. 13)

In composing a model for relationship, I need to draw upon the circle imagery of Starhawk and Matthew Fox who speak of replacing the hierarchical model with the mutuality of the circle in which each member is equidistant from the center, interdependent with every other member of the circle, and energy is equally distributed (Starhawk, 1982, p. 115). But, I want to use this circle imagery to represent the individual both because of the necessity of having a friend relationship with oneSelf and the neglect by women of the

development of this necessary beginning. Also, because of the need to emphasize the relationship between the individuals of the circle within the context of the community--the community is composed of individuals and their relationships. The community of the circle is not static (Starhawk, 1982, p. 128); it responds to the changing needs of its members (reflecting the emergence of power-within the individual and her relationship to the whole rather than power-within the structure of the whole), in order to respond, the nature of the members and their needs must be known.

My model is evolutionary and composed of two figures. In both figures the basic form is a circle with the individual at its center, the circle being the context of the individual, however, not in a confining sense. Rather, it is the space necessary for the extension of the individual into the outer world and for a reflective pulling back from the world into a state of aloneness or all-oneness necessary for a constituting or reconstituting of the individual. This is the space for the imagination to develop and reformulate the images of the Self and its participation in the world. Since it is my contention that the individual is the origin of the relationship, this is the space for the unity of the individual with the whole as a part of the whole.

However, this potential for full participation is not always necessarily realized. In this first figure of this

model the energy of relationship flows only in one direction--from the individual out to the world. In woman, this is expressed in her Selfless existence as the constant source of nurturing who builds the foundation of the comfort of the home to which others turn for a source of relaxation, sympathy, and sustenance (Figure 3). In this situation of constant giving, she has nowhere to go for the activity of life which would allow her to develop a sense of Self, of individuality. She is defined through the purposes she serves for others and finds her only happiness in the fulfillment of those she serves. Her existence consists of selflessness and self-abnegation.

In the final figure, one allowing for the potential of full participation in relationship, the energy (power) of the relationship both flows in to the individual woman and out from her in the effort toward relationship with others (Figure 4). The movement from one concept of relationship, which I represent with my models, is one of different forms of transformation. The transformation is from the abstraction of constantly giving and participating in the world through the interpretations of another to the passion of an interchange of energy. With the passion of participation in relationships with others, the woman moves from considerations of selflessness (excessive giving) and selfishness (concern with not having more of the self to give) to both the potential for mutual relationship and the responsibility this brings with it. "Once

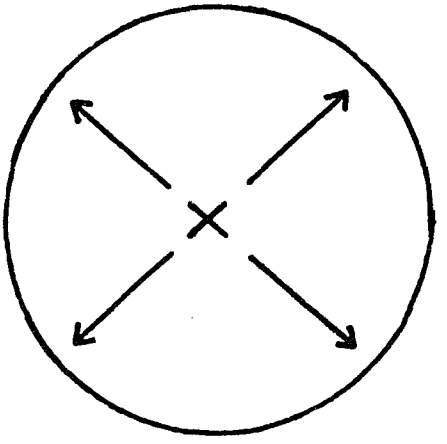

Figure 3. In woman, this is expressed in her selfless existence as the constant source of nurturing who builds the foundation of the comfort of the home to which others turn for a source of relaxation, sympathy, and sustenance.

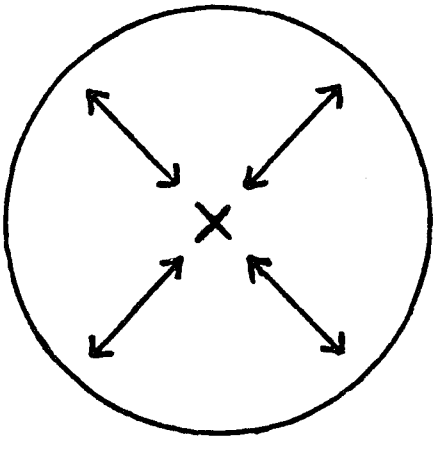

Figure 4. In the final figure, one allowing for the potential of full participation in relationship, the energy (power) of the relationship both flows in to the individual woman and out from her in the effort toward relationship with others.

obligation extends to include the self as well as others, the disparity between selfishness and responsibility dissolves" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 94). Rather than feeling one is required to sacrifice always for the sake of another, one becomes responsible for interactions with others and with oneSelf. As Gilligan goes on to say, "When assertion no longer seems dangerous, the concept of relationships changes from a bond of continuing dependence to a dynamic of interdependence" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 149).

In this "dynamic of interdependence" is the potential for woman's own creation of her reality, her potential for being an "original." In Janice Raymond's words, the original woman is Self-created--

> the woman who searches for and claims her relational origins with her vital Self and other vital women. She is not the creation of men since she does not proceed from their conceit. She is not "the other" of de Beauvoir's Second Sex who is man-made. She is not the relative being who has been sired to think of herself always in intercourse with men. . . . She is her Self. She is an original woman, who belongs to her Self, who is neither copied, reproduced, nor translated from man's image of her. (Raymond, 1986, p. 5)

This woman is not immanent in the feminine creations of a taken-for-granted world; she finds both her immanence and transcendence in activities, labors, and relationships of her own creation.

CHAPTER III

LIBERATION AS PROCESS: PARTICIPATION, VISION, SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Both The Awakening and The Yellow Wallpaper provide vivid pictures of failed relationships, pictures of pre-structured relationships, and emerging mutual relationships which, due to a lack of nurturing environment, end in tragedy. In The Yellow Wallpaper, the central female character realizes her inability to perform maternal duties in the form in which they are prescribed. She feels the intense weight of the oppressive restrictions put on her by her doctor-husband and the discomfort of the watchful eye of her sister-in-law. Her experiences provide "the entry point in terms of individual consciousness [which] is the disjuncture between received versions of reality and lived contradictions" (Lather, 1984, p. 56) But, she has no community of relationships based on mutuality in which she can establish her sense of Self-centeredness. She cannot establish a knowledge of the primacy of the individual that would enable her to know the strength of relationship between equals. As is evident at the story's end, the "naturalness" of woman's simultaneously adhering to the wishes of others and sacrificing her own needs and sense of Self is too overbearing for her to defeat. She can neither reject this maternal, "constant giving"

ideology nor formulate any alternative, viable sense of reality. In other words, she falls in between the constructed, imposed reality which she cannot fully disclaim and an alternate conception of reality which she cannot fully construct for herself.

Edna Pontellier of The Awakening finds herself emerging from the consciousness of woman-as-mother-and-wife and searching for new images for a way of being in the world for women. She must reject her present situation and make some move toward its change; the strength and satisfaction she has found in her individual achievements are too powerful to be contained by the prescribed, singular role. Edna finds and subsequently rejects two other models of womanhood. Madame Ratignolle provides her with a model of absolute maternity, the wife and mother whose every effort is toward the creation and maintenance of tranquil home and family. Mademoiselle Reisz is representative of the woman who totally separates herself from society, rejecting the jobs associated with home and family, dedicating herself to a specific endeavor (Christ, 1980, pp. 27-28). It is impossible for her to choose between the two, a choice which no one should ever feel the necessity of making. So, she must begin to formulate some vision of womanhood for herself; she searches for a more comfortable (sense of) being as woman separate from the roles which she has seen and rejected. As Carol Christ notes, her search would

have been more bearable with the added strength of the sisterhood of female friends (Christ, 1980, p. 141).

In both of these instances, the women lack any real relationship of reciprocity with the world around them. Edna Pontellier returns to the sea where she had discovered her inner energy, strength, and ability; in The Yellow Wallpaper, the protagonist pulls away from encounter with the world entirely. Both of these women experienced the dual, interrelated problems of, first, developing a sense of Self when that development is necessarily--due to the hostility or indifference of circumstances--done in isolation. Secondly, they faced the difficulty of experimenting with trying to exist in the world as a Self-defined individual when others refuse to relinquish pre-existing metaphors for women, i.e., mother, wife, nurturer.

The critical difference between Self-centeredness and Self-sacrifice assumes a dynamic importance at this point. Self-sacrifice, as demanded of both women in the stories which I have discussed, requires relinquishing the power of controlling one's own existence in favor of the dominant ideology. This ideology has already answered the question of what it means to be a woman, ontologically and spiritually. Carried still further, Self-sacrifice requires relinquishing the power to ask whether the dualism of woman/man is a fully necessary starting point in considering existence or one in

a series of dualities which function to categorize and contain--dualities which are "the ultimate alienation, the ultimate rending of the truth of ourselves, the ultimate sin" (Fox, 1979, p. 80). Simone de Beauvoir speaks to this relinquishing when she speaks of psychoanalysis and identifying oneself with mother or father. To identify with one of these models is to "alienate oneself" within that model and to give up "the spontaneous manifestation of one's own existence" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 57). The Self-sacrifice of which I speak finds two forms in alienation for de Beauvoir: first, frustration in any attempt toward playing "at being a man," and, secondly, delusion in the attempt "to play at being a woman" since she is required to give up a self-definition of woman in her position as the object, the Other (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 57).

Neither de Beauvoir (p. 56) nor I see Self-sacrifice as woman's destiny. Self-centeredness does not require either relinquishing the power of self-definition or a solipsistic withdrawal away from any interaction with other people. My conception of Self-centeredness in women coincides with Mary Daly's definition of spinster:

> A woman whose occupaton is to spin participates in the whirling movement of creation. She who has chosen her Self, who defines her Self, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men, who is Self-identified, is a Spinster, a whirling dervish, spinning in a new time/space. (Daly, 1978, pp. 3-4)

Key to this concept are the two factors of choosing and defining oneSelf and participation in the "movement of creation." Mutuality consists of and exists in this realization of Self and equal participation in relationship with others.

In the context of women's experiences with the struggle against oppression and for liberation, there is "implicit . . . a radically relational understanding of justice as rightly ordered relationships of mutuality within the total web of our social relationships" (Harrison, 1985, p. 253). Harrison speaks to the need in the struggle for liberation of subjecting actions to the moral dialectic between those actions and the moral norms which serve as "conceptual formulations of envisioned values" and as "criteria of self-evaluation" (Harrison, 1985, p. 253). The mutuality of relationship as an expression of justice maintains a vision for a liberative concept of existence. Concurrently, it is the model for present expressions of relationships and the norm against which these expressions are tested. Both are necessary in the praxis of justice--the vision of transcending current forms of oppression embodied in refusal to participate in them and the moral norm against which alternative activity can be measured.

The concept of woman as Self-centered and as the prime motivator in her own re-creation requires her to reconstitute the world to allow for expression of her created, primary

personhood. This re-constitution cannot emerge simply from a point-by-point rejection and reaction to a masculine, hierarchically organized society. Women's creation of this new sense of reality comes from two sources. First, rather than discarding everything, women create and mold from the remnants of society which speak to them; i.e., spaces where women have found community and freedom of expression. Secondly, these remnants are joined with the confluence of ways women have found of maintaining their Self-dignity in a world of hierarchy and the development of new ways of living in harmony with other Selves and Nature. Feminist thought and practice are not simply knee-jerk reactions to the oppressiveness of unrelated situations. Reconstituting the world in accord with women's needs is no small process, but it is just that, a process of action and vision which combines the politics of relationship with the politics of institutions and both of these with the ethics of mutuality. The process is eminently historical in two senses. First, it is not removed from the immediacy of women's lives leaving them with a false utopic connection with theory while lying immersed in the inertia of daily oppression. Secondly, the process is historical in its activity of recognizing and emphasizing the work of women of the past, its potential effect upon the situation of present-day women, and its potential for tempering the destructive anger of impatience.

Reconstituting the world is the process of the dialectic between the analysis of the sources/causes of oppression (the negative) and the creation/discovery of expressions of liberation (the positive). I use the process of dialectic because it involves the participation of the individual (person, group, community of liberatory persons); the emergence of a discourse for the dialectic which includes the language of both the state of oppression and of liberatory capability; and because the dialectical process implies an unceasing interchange between its components which is absolutely necessary to avoid confusing basic emancipation with what is actually only a momentary breath of fresh air. Both the "to liberation" and "from oppression" components of the dialectic entail visions. Engaging in this process implies distancing oneself far enough from one's own situation to have some recognition of and analytical basis for the very personal forms of oppression and their relationship with broader, societal forms. This vision serves to both personalize the struggle by focusing on those manifestations of crises of oppression which only the individual can alter and to focus those struggles which provide the basis for comradeship between individuals who find themselves in similar circumstances. The recognition of these similarities is simultaneously a turning away from and rejection of the alienation of feeling oneself alone and estranged from participation in community. Paradoxically,

one must provide the distance from the situation in order to draw closer: to recognize the theory in one's own life, to develop the themes of comparison and contrast.

Distancing oneself, however, does not mean removing oneself from the circumstance. It is the distance of perspective which allows the perception of the embeddedness and obscure nuances of oppression which allow it to go unobserved and unchanged and to assume the character of common-sense. For example, distancing herself from her situation as family nurturer allows woman the space to contemplate her actions in this capacity as well as her true, innermost feelings related to those actions--which provides the possibility of a release of the guilt connected with doubting and questioning her ties to nurturing.

This vision of the nature of oppression is not necessarily or even advantageously undertaken alone. As I tried to demonstrate in my model of relationship, which allows for the Self-centeredness of the individual, mutuality is the key of true relationship which accommodates the participatory needs of each person. Oppression--estrangement, isolation, anonymity, silencing--expressed conceptually as alienation is explained (by Marx) as the result of the division of labor which "implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one

another" (Fromm, 1966, p. 75). The contradiction lies in the relationship between the interests of the individual (person, group) and those interests of the communal group. Rather than being one of mutuality, the relationship is one of domination and imposition. I view the "division of labor" as used by Marx in this quotation as the discrepancy between the inclusion and exclusion in participation in community, both are expressions of the means by which oppressed individuals are tied to a restrictive culture not of their own creation. Their means of inclusion in participation--or becoming a part of mass culture--are through those channels artificially imposed upon them by predetermined definitions of their existence. Janice Raymond speaks to this inclusion when referring to ways in which women deal with the world as we currently find it: "The assimilationist strives to lose her female identity, or to go beyond it, or to be regarded <u>as a person</u> in a world that grants the status of persons only to men. Realism, survival, worldliness are all acquired by assimilation to the male-dominant world on its own terms" (Raymond, 1985, p. 169). Inclusion in participation in society comes with the price of extinguishing one's realization of Self as woman and the channeling of the Self into predetermined notions of "personhood". Those activities and definitions necessary for a woman's realization of herSelf and for her achieving the mutuality of relationship are both

those which exclude her and which are excluded from consideration as part of society.

Alienation rests not only in the contradictions between the "individual or the individual family and the communal interests of all individuals." It resides between the individual and the family and between the individual and the concept of the individual. Seeing the present form of the family as the building block of society cements its position of primary importance in the ideology of maintaining the structure of society. The family is the center of private relationship, the context from which we are all presumed to come into society, and a prototype for all relationships, public and private--the organizational hierarchy. The adherence to the family as heterosexual hierarchy and its transmission into broader society leaves little room for creative existence. The strict fulfillment of the categories which are used to describe and group people forms the groundwork of the alienation between the individual and the concept of the individual. As a society, we have formulated a model of the individual which rests on the dichotomy of dependence and independence to the extent that individuality requires pure independence from other people. Independence brings with it the concepts of autonomy and separateness--as opposed to mutuality, commonality, and relatedness. Dependence maintains an aura of the parasitic rather than trusting or being

dependable. In a world of interrelatedness, as is the world in which we find ourselves, pure independence is a falsehood requiring the denial of interdependence and relationship.

This alienation, or alienness from oneSelf, is further exemplified by stepping into preexisting roles, not only without questioning but without doubt or suspicion of the suitability or necessity of those roles. Even a category as wide as "woman" contains assumptions which have become so solidified that they maintain an a priori status. Describing an individual as "woman" brings with it the categorical descriptions of nurturer, irrational, emotional, bound to Nature, woman's work. The effect of this, and ever more refined and confining categories, is the homogenization of the individuals who together comprise the group. I am not saying that some form of organization is not necessary for the establishment of a consensus which allows us to maintain some cohesion and coherence in our daily lives and thoughts. I am emphasizing the static, confining nature of predetermined categories which do not allow for the variations between and among historical beings and/or are not created or alterable by the very people whom they describe. In the context of feminist theology, Rosemary Ruether adds, "Women in patriarchal societies do not exist as themselves, but as cultural and ideological creations of male domination. Nothing can be said that is authentic to woman herself in patriarchal culture"

(Ruether, 1975, p. 148). There is a critical difference between a willing inclusion in or exclusion from membership in a group and the categorization about which I have been speaking. It lies in the difference between the imposition of definition and the creation of one's own existence.

As I mentioned previously, reconstituting the world requires vision of both the positive (toward liberation) and negative (from oppression). The struggle for reconstituting the world as one which adheres to a basis of the mutuality of relationship is grounded both in active participation towards the eradication of oppressive activities and the ideologies upon which they are based and a transcending vision toward which we can move in a spirit of hope, potential and with the temperance of suspicion. Continuing with my emphasis upon the individual and the importance of Self-determination, of finding the origins of mutuality in the primacy of the person, I must see the vision toward liberation as beginning with the initial refusal to participate in one's own oppression. The very moment when one perceives one's previous contributions to and conspiring in personal oppression is momentous. At this point of recognition, reality and the transformation of consciousness come into a new relationship with the person as a viable, mobilized Subject rather than as an Object who responds and is buffeted about by the seemingly permanent state of the world. "Becoming the subject of one's own

actions is a social and historical process key to liberation politically, socially, and psychologically so that we no longer collude in our own oppression and so that we can attempt to change conditions of life negation and alienation into conditions of affirmation and fulfillment" (Smith, 1985, p. 250). Ideology becomes a matter of construction which can be forced into responding to the needs of historical, subjective beings rather than a super-imposed set of inherited beliefs which call for the adaptation of personal lives.

Women, as must all oppressed beings, must refuse to participate in the false participation of adherence to the dominant interests of prevailing society which prevent her knowing the vital needs of her own life. As Marcuse states (1964, p. 7), liberation requires a recognition of the "consciousness of servitude" which is one's present relationship with society and its culture in order to replace it with the conception of and movement toward a relationship of mutuality. The recognition of this pervasive state of servitude is necessary for an awareness of the reduction of one's life to "one-dimensionality" which forms the groundwork for expansion into new modes and areas of creative thought.

As liberative and energizing as this process of the removal of oppressive constraints seems, it actually entails a loss of self. What is happening, in its essence, is a

letting-go of all or most of the ways through which woman has seen her very existence. The process of liberation, through her instigation and in a moment of control, throws her--and through her, those around her--into a state of the paradox of losing the self in order to construct a new Self. Marcuse calls the place for transformation the space within, of "personal freedom." It is a space for transcending historical practice (Marcuse, 1964, p. 23). I prefer to describe this "place" as the potential for thought which is the recognition of contradiction. In this place, a woman holds the emotional ties between herself and Nature, between herself and her children, between herself and her recognition of her own potential, or between herself, her stories and the stories of other women. Whatever the ties may be, they constitute a rudimentary, at least, knowledge of what true relationship through which true participation in the experiences of living is intended to be. The thought which is the recognition of contradiction maintains the tenuous balance between the knowledge of what relationship can be and the experience of what is. Therefore, what I call this place for the beginning of liberatory consciousness is not transcending historical practice. Rather, it is a full cognizance of the realities of the life of an historical person, not to establish a freedom within, but to contrast with the potential of what is possible in one's own life.

This space of contradiction is both the space for the origin of the process of consciousness-raising and the realization of both evidences of oppression and the movement toward eradication of those pieces of evidence. This point of consciousness-raising, "conscientization" as Freire has named it, is what I call the praxis of imagination and will. Imagination involves the necessary distancing to both see one's situation for what it "really" is and the use of one's own potential for developing a view for what one's life could be, alone and in conjunction with other beings. When I use the term view, I refer to both the visual image and the reflective language necessary for critical theorizing and communicating this vision with others. From a woman's perspective, she must be able to critically see her position in the family (as an example of one of the primary contributing factors of her life), the tasks which her position currently asks of her, the ways in which this position limits and/or expands her existence, and considerations of more liberative forms of existence. The current societal definition for family is so very limited and limiting that many, if not most, women find participation in it to exclude exploration in other facets of existence including facets we know as well as those of which we cannot now even conceive). As Rosemary Ruether has pointed out, woman's position in the family and any work which she may seek in the public sphere gives her a double work shift.

Not only is this "double jeopardy" mentally and physically exhausting, it limits her time for the extra time contributions and participation in network communications which form the basis for promotion in jobs. More crucially, to my way of thinking, woman's domestic position forms "a model of women's work on the job that makes men hostile to women's equality with them in the same type of work" (Ruether, 1983, p. 220). More insidious than even the concept of a woman's salary as the secondary salary of the family which is used for extravagances, this model portrays the woman in a domestic, maternal stance in every activity of her life.

Within will itself is the unity of potential, the expression of one's capabilities, and of the strength of character (or determination or the drive of one's convictions, or whatever terminology one wishes to use) which describes the feeling of the necessity of struggle. Neither a person's potential nor the strength of character can function alone; they influence each other in basic ways. Any potential will lie dormant unless the individual possesses enough "drive" to find some means for its expression. The <u>will</u> resides in their point of confluence. Rather than working in opposition to each other, it is the two components of will which together bring a vision into the realm of the possible--by adapting the vision to mesh with one's potential. And, the two components allow for the activity, the "drive" for bringing the

possible into the probable--if I desire it wholeheartedly, I will find the means for making it happen. It is this union, of potential and strength, which allows a woman to imagine herself situated differently, to see her particular potential, and to embody the transformations necessary for a new situation to emerge.

Woman participates in the emergence or development of her own praxis of liberation through the confluence of imagination and will. From imagination she derives the vision of the historical existence of women as they struggle to exist in a masculine world, a foundation (or imaging) of a utopic community, and a recognition of the contradictions between the two. These images require the commitment to the examination of one's own life--both as an individual and as a member of a group. Feminism necessitates the realization of the requirements of group membership; as, for example, membership in the middle class requires loyal adherence to basic liberal economic and social biases which would, necessarily, conflict with a feminist vision.

From the will, woman derives the activity of the embodiment of her feminist images. At the moment of realizing her own complicity in her oppression, woman must hold herself accountable for such complicitous behavior and for collaborating with other women in mutual examination and relinquishing of oppression. Through the will, the woman makes the

struggle for liberation personal as the activity becomes her own. Through both the imagination and will, women join together in a group dedicated to the expression of its members and the shedding of their personal and communal oppressions.

From the sharing of her own experiences and those of other women, woman recognizes and knows the contradictions between her life and the existence which we talk about as possible in this world using terms such as "living a full life" or "having what's important in life" or "living up to one's fullest potential." The discrepancies she finds are the discrepancies between what she knows about herSelf and her experiences and the descriptions of herSelf and her experiences through someone else's eyes. She rejects these inauthentic theories of life's possibilities as inappropriate in order to reach into the praxis between imagination and will for models of existence based upon her own experience and the strength to embody those models.

In the interchange of this praxis, experience and theory become so intertwined that they form both the process of developing daily existences and the ability to judge the progression toward a more satisfying, liberatory participation in life. The dialectic between experience and theory, between activity and contemplation, between the imagination and the will, serves the validating purpose which Sharon Welch speaks

of in relation to liberation theology. She cautions against grounding the validity of liberatory movement either in ahistorical absolutes (which would negate the presence/influence of women) or in the privilege of the perspective of the oppressed as being one of truth which should be accepted without critique or contemplation. Welch offers this option: ". . . to remain open, to understand the validity of my perspective not in terms of some a priori element of human being but in terms of practice, the actual occurrence of social and politial emancipation" (Welch, 1985, p. 27). Inherent in the dialectic is the hermeneutical reflection of theory, imagination, vision of experience which, in turn, finds embodiment in the activity of persons dedicated to their own and community liberation.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTRUCTIVE PEDAGOGY: COMMUNITY, MUTUALITY, AND EDUCATION

Section 1

One of the most disheartening aspects of The Yellow Wallpaper and The Awakening is the intense aloneness of the primary characters. The women protagonists in both stories found themselves in situations of impossible communication and unsurmountable contradictions. They had located contradictions between their lived experiences and their received versions of reality; contradictions which formed the potential entry points for a transformation of consciousness. However, neither had sufficient distance for reflective thought concerning their present conditions or the opportunity to share common experiences with other women. These crucial absences ended their search for new existences as women.

These two women, as have other women, past and present, failed to find a community which would affirm their lives and situate them in relationships of mutuality. The community these women sought lies in the intersection of the private and the public spheres so that the public provides the political space for individual expression. It is also a space where the needs of the individual are reflected in the public discourse and the individual is able to be truly included in

the activities of the public realm. The potentialities of each individual are, together with the connections between individuals, revealed in their concrete and real life processes. Community must be based on the actual and communal lives of its inclusive groups and their mutual relationships (Buber, 1958, p. 133). The dialectic between the needs/potentialities of the individual(s) and the capabilities of community itself formulates the common assumptions of consensus. Consensus is through active participation, political and discursive, rather than as consumption of inherited, unquestioned prescriptions. "Wherever genuine human society has . . . developed it has always been on this same basis of functional autonomy, mutual recognition and mutual responsibility, whether individual or collective" (Buber, 1958, p. 131).

Community is a function of the individual, the groups, and the interactions between them.

> Generally, feminist perspectives involve the claim the individual is social or relational. To say that the individual is social or relational means that the relations and groups of which we are part are in some sense constitutive of individuality itself. (Smith, 1985, p. 236).

This does not mean that the individual woman finds her meaning or reason for existence through others; rather, that individuals as relational beings cannot separate/isolate themselves from their social and historical conditions. Neither the social-historical conditions of community nor the individual can be truly understood in isolation from each other.

The interaction between the individual and the political forms the dialectic between the two. Instead of a division between the two which allows for the exclusion of individuals from the public space and for the consideration of the individual as exterior to the social-historical context, a non-consideration of the embeddedness of oppression, this larger context of relationship must also be one of mutuality. As Christine E. Gudorf characterizes one aspect of this division: "Within the discipline of ethics there is a commonly recognized division between individual and social ethics, between, in the terminology of Christian realism, love and justice" (Gudorf, 1975, p. 175). In my conception of true community, the love of individual relationships and the justice of the public sphere expand to be all-inclusive rather than dichotomous. Love in the social realm is the action of hope; individual relationships maintain the justice of mutuality. The model of relationship which I have been relying on, one of Self-centeredness with the reciprocity of give-and-take, is founded on a consciousness of love and justice.

This consciousness of love is inclusive, without limitation and restriction.

> Much love is mutual; all is directed at mutuality. . . . If we love the other, we want him/her to experience that reward (of love) to the utmost, and that includes loving us. In a more impersonal sense, we may do a deed for another we do not know well--but in the action is the hope that the deed opens the other to love, if not specifically to us as individuals, then at least to the humanity which includes us. (Gudorf, 1985, p. 185)

This love is not wishfully utopic or inclined towards sentimentality; it is the love expressed in Self-centeredness and in the mutuality of relationship. As June Jordan describes, my quest for self-love and self-respect and self-determination yields a love which is verified "in the ways that I present myself to others, and in the ways that I approach people different from myself" (p. 204). The consciousness of love approaches the world without Self-sacrifice, with Self-responsibility, with the care of suspicion, but without fear.

The consciousness of justice is founded in the dialectic between two equals, where the dialectic is based on equal receptivity and reciprocity. As Buber quotes Proudhon in considering aspects of community, "According to him (Proudhon) there are two ideas: freedom, and unity or order, and "one must make up one's mind to live with both of them by seeking a balance between them." The principle that permits this is called "justice" (Buber, 1958, p. 36). I set Proudhon's concepts of freedom and unity or order within Beverly Harrison's (1985) considerations of justice as "right relations between persons and between groups of persons and communities" (p. 128) and as the moral norm which most "adequately incorporates the structural-relational dimensions of life" (p. 300, note 21). Harrison consistently emphasizes that no issue or debate concerning the public sphere can or should be considered as separate from the ramifications which it holds for the individuals and groups who will be affected. Any proposal for social

change must be made within the context of current historical conditions, considerations of the future, and with full cognizance of the unequal power wielded by individuals and groups in positions enabling them to make such proposals (pp. 127-128, 176-177). In the light of this conceptualization of justice, the balance between freedom and unity or order requires that neither be considered as transcending historical beings and/or situations or as a balance which can be achieved or maintained without constant vigilance.

A consciousness of love and justice serves the struggle for the transformation of the situation--social, political, individual--in which we now live, which finds its expression in the dualities of oppressor-oppressed, inclusion-exclusion. In the feminist effort toward reconstituting the world, this consciousness forms both the vision of participation in true human and ecological relationships and the norm against which a critique of the present and attempts toward transformation are held.

This mutuality of love and justice holds radical potential for social change within the tension of maintaining a vision for revolutionary change and exploration of the nature of the present situation. In the movement of transformation the tension is expressed in the posing of problems which rely on an assumption of the changeability of the world. This is the difference between viewing the world as "be-ing" in a

finished, complete state and viewing the world as "becoming" a world shaped as we envision it to be. The problems arise from the contradictions between the lived-world and our descriptions of our world. Once these contradictions are realized, the problems take on two natures, first, the problem of the necessary dissolution of the contradictions of every-day life which form a boundary inhibiting human and ecological possibilities. This problem is one of a process of criticism. It is a complex process of recognizing the interrelatedness of even the seemingly smallest aspects of existence, the suspicion necessary to avoid the reinstitution of domination, and the institution of forms of discourse which arise from and respond to community. In the context of a woman's existence, an example of this process is the conundrum of a woman's work and family situation. I see one of the most difficult aspects of this situation in the concrete lack of time which accompanies a woman's double work load: home and family and work outside the home. These responsibilities subvert efforts toward reflective thought and action arising from this consideration. For some women, this situation is already one of increased domination since they are working because of financial stress, single parenthood (or both financial stress and single parenthood), and/or the desire for work which concerns activities not found in the home--although she will generally find herself doing household activities

anyway, or passing them on to another woman. These women become progressively more enmeshed in the societal structures which dominate them, unable to perceive the forms of oppression and/or unable, due to these circumstances, to remove themselves to the fringes of the institution in order to distance and critique it. Since they adapt to or assimilate themselves into the societal structures there is very little reason for any communication to be relevant to their needs and responsibilities as women or to respond to them at all. Any critique of this situation cannot stop here, however. The problem runs deeper, into her acceptance of the double work load at all--the seeming naturalness of calling housework, woman's work; the acceptance of a denigration of homemaking into something which can be easily done in spare moments without compensation; the acceptance of the hierarchical, aecological nature of public work; the acceptance of child care as a purely private concern. Each of these, and many more dimensions of this one particular situation, elicits a problem for critique and experimentation.

The contradictions which give rise to consideration of the everyday life situations also bring problems of another nature. In trying to form and maintain some vision of the way we would like to shape the world, three problems present themselves: both the vision and the process of transforming (shaping) the world must be the responsibility and the action of

those who will be directly involved and affected. As Freire says in relation to developing liberative pedagogy,

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption. (Freire, 1982, p. 39)

In the same sense, an imposed vision is far worse than no vision at all since it drains the energy and power away from people and compounds what is the third problem of forming and maintaining a vision--perceiving vision as a transcendence which will come in some manner separately from any human struggle. If the vision is not mine, I will not know how to engage in it without being told, directed, cared for. If the vision is inevitable, my daily struggles with the problems of simply maintaining an existence will be more than adequate.

Section Two

Throughout this paper I have been talking about my concept of true relationship, the primary nature of the individual, community with the necessity for vision and critique, the potential of the individual for participation in community, within the context of feminism and my experiences in the world from the perspective of being a woman. My perspective is the compilation of my experiences as a public school teacher, student, mother, and as a member of a family oriented toward the importance of education.

From these experiences, especially my teaching, I adhere to a belief in the importance of formal education within the totality of society. I do not maintain that formal education either can or even should always take place in an institutional setting, as we currently say it is. Most especially, I do not feel true educational activities can take place in an institution which both mirrors and attempts to reproduce the bondage of hierarchical structures. Nor can there be serious education where there is the destructiveness of either/or thinking fostered and sustained by dualistic reification, as reflected in answers in a classroom which either are or are not correct, the dichotomy between the teacher and the student, the exclusion of large areas of human knowledge from consideration in the curriculum (e.g., women's history). With the institutionalizing of large numbers of children in large groups at progressively younger ages, little more than housing can be done. What activity does take place varies very little from group to group or from year to year; essentially it represents prescribed activities of the curriculum guide/text given to teacher and subsequently given to student. This prescription represents the "imposition of one man's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the man prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (Freire, 1982, p. 31). Having one's choices effectively

eliminated does the same for one's potentialities; those which do not fall within the established model are cut off or labeled as undisciplined. Both ends of the constructed educational ability continuum are shuffled off as disabled/handicapped students and gifted and talented, academically gifted (or whatever nomenclature used to delineate them) leave to go to their separate/isolated programs while those children who are left are members of "regular" classrooms. Observe how closely those labeled gifted and talented resemble those involved in the process of labeling. Such a situation is hardly conducive to the development of true relationship, when everyone has been evaluated, marked with a stamp, when "special" (i.e., qualitatively different) students leave the normal classroom and those left behind wish they could go somewhere, anywhere. Education is impossible when it is reduced to evaluating and shaping students for cultural models.

Liberative transformation cannot be undertaken in a situation of dominance and competition for scarce resources/rewards. Domination and competitiveness imply that some win and some lose (another duality), winners set the rules, while both groups lead existences isolated from each other. True relationship becomes impossible since these isolating life approaches cannot exist in a relationship of mutuality and communion. Visions for a future of human participation and

ecological well-being become daydreaming in an atmosphere of evaluation, unbending disciplinary separations, and stringent curricular restrictions.

My own vision for relationship and society poses two serious moral difficulties with an education oriented toward hierarchy. First, the transformation--creation and re-creation--of society is based on the potentialities of its members. The creation and re-creation is the reciprocity of a society based on its members' needs, not vice versa. Considering students as the basis and participants of their own education requires the curriculum to be their own, their movement to be at their own pace, and any evaluation to constructively involve their participation. This means education must let go of two of its most sacred cornerstones--the incredible ease of a lockstep approach toward sequential learning designed for "progressive" learning for everybody. Also, education, as we know it, must be relieved of its definitions of model student and educated being. Maintaining models for emulation by students is most basically antithetical to an education with transformation as creation at its core.

Secondly, education oriented toward hierarchy sustains the power for defining existence within the grasp of those few who are the decision-makers. In the interconnectedness of this world, these decision-makers are not necessarily

"educators"; they simply have voices loud enough to be heard and responded to. Education is not in the hands of those who are supposed to be "getting educated," they have no control over the process of education or even over what it means to be educated.

Education must represent the organic connection between the individual and the group and/or between the group and society. Organic implies responsiveness in that the society exists only through the efforts and needs of the individual/group and provides the space for participation of the individual/group. It involves the recognition of people as social beings with the need for participation and interaction. Education recognizes the complexity of society--in its relation as only one in all the aspects of society, in the complexity of relationship, and in the complexity of the individual.

Education's purpose can be described in two overlapping, interrelated ways: first, I use education as a part of the answer to the question, "Where are the places in our culture through which groups sustain bonds and history?" (Evans & Boyte, 1981, p. 65). These are the bonds which connect people to each other forming the basis of group strength and self-reliance and the history for understanding an individual placement in time. Secondly, education is public space or "free social space" (Evans & Boyte, 1982, p. 58). This space

is the arena for free expression, the interchange of ideas, dialogue. Obviously, it is antithetical to the structure of a teacher-student dichotomy, in dialogue both must be heard so that both can teach and learn mutually.

Women's history is one of being excluded from educational institutions, both as a disciplinary concern and as participants in the school setting. The content of education has not included a curriculum of women as shapers and thinkers in the world nor has it reflected the experiences of women students (Rich, 1979, pp. 240-241). It is also a history of exclusion from the credentials (diplomas, etc.) for entry into the public world (Newcomer, 1959, pp. 5-10). This history is not one void of any educational activities. Some early feminists were educated in the home by parents (primarily mothers) who were able and willing to develop a genuine attachment to their daughters, giving them examples of independence, caring, mobility, and willingness to experiment. The home instilled in these women the ability to be selective, focused, purposefully and willfully attentive, and self-directed (Lagemann, 1979, p. 150).

Women have often relied on each other to provide alternative educational space. Janice Raymond (1986) emphasizes the importance of friendships between women. Though hidden in a world of hetero-relations, Gyn/affection (the primacy of women in relationship to each other) has a long history of support for women (pp. 33-39). "The origins of female

friendship are also found where women have been 'fixed points' for other women's movement. Women have turned to female relatives or friends often at critical life moments, and found stable sources of strength" (p. 39). In the nineteenth century female friends formed groups which were the forerunners to current consciousness-raising groups and found nontraditional role models as examples for breaking through societal restrictions on womanhood. These women found a sense of community through similarities of thought, consciousness, and experience (Lagemann, 1979, pp. 147-151, 154; Showalter, 1978, p. 7). Though the private sphere separates women physically from each other into their private homes, women have found spaces for mutual education. "[The] first goal of feminism . . .is to bring women together. . . . Female friendship is the process by which this goal is achieved" (Raymond, 1986, p. 39).

My concept of the community as education follows these types of extra-institutional groupings. These communities of nurturing female friends and relatives served two primary purposes: to educate women for their present situation as homemakers and caretakers and to create a community in which women could find the commonality of thought, strength, and visions for participation in society. So, too, should education provide a context for the bonding together of groups for community with the purposefulness of meeting situational and visionary educational and social needs.

The bonding of education is the joining together of people committed to the dialectic between the embodiment of relationships of mutuality (including the concepts of dialogue, communion, praxis, critical thinking) and the exploration of the potentialities of the individuals and the groups. The mutuality of the group is expressed through dialogue and communion. Dialogue, "the encounter of men in the world in order to transform the world," is impossible "between antagonists" (Freire, 1982, p. 124). Transforming the world is done by someone not for someone, it does not respond to a hierarchical delineation of subjects, discourse, or subjective participants. Transformation takes place within the experiences and dialogue of the person herself/himself and the efforts of authentic community.

> The significance of the group in feminism is not just a theoretical proposition but is more primarily a statement of the experience of the movement as a movement. In this context the group is the unit of consciousness-raising, of hearing and speaking a new self-relation and relation to others into being. (Smith, 1985, p. 242)

The discourse of the group responds to the needs of the group and is used in dialogic communication between members. Experiences particular to individual members or shared by many members become the conversation of the group. The experiences of relationship brought by each participant become experiences to be shared in the relationship of the group.

"Hearing and speaking a new self-relation and relation to others into being" is the monumental task of finding and helping in the search for a voice in a world which had previously been stone deaf and reluctant to share any recognition of individual existence at all. This is vitally important because true relationship in the world is not undertaken alone; mutuality is mutual--between persons--and there can be no between persons when any one is isolated and alone. Not only is a being denied existence by being ignored but we are all deprived of the mutuality of that relationship. Women have been denied that voice by non-inclusion even pedagogically, blatantly by the exclusion of women's thoughts/experiences from pedagogical consideration and, more subtly, by the use of "strategies of teaching and methods of evaluation without questioning their suitability for women's preferred styles of learning" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 5). Belenky's description of "connected teaching" more closely fits a design of education to fit women's needs and, perhaps, the needs of all students. Connected teaching refers to the connections between teacher, learner, all the interstructured aspects of the curricula, overt and hidden. The emphasis is on the relational character of education--that education must be situated within the context of the learner's total life, the educator must understand the relationality of the learner to the subject matter. This means

recognizing the (woman) student as an independent learner--as a subject with varying opinions, ideas, and visions (Belenky, 1986, pp. 244-245). It means, also, using listening as a teaching tool which affirms the learner's existence, importance, and builds upon her/his knowledge and attempts rather than inflicting opinions (Belenky, 1986, pp. 222-223). Education is, in connected teaching, recognized as a creative act which incorporates, thereby institutionalizing, (women) students' language and connections in the (re)interpretation of experience. This type of teaching responds to the need for participation based on consensus and connection rather than conflict and competition and on the need for areas and time in which to speak and raise new questions (see The Mud Flower Collective, 1986, pp. 140-141, 151; Belenky, 1986, pp. 198-199).

> If the student is female, her questions may differ from the culture's questions, since women, paddling in the bywaters of the culture, have had little to do with positing the questions or designing the agendas of the disciplines. (Belenky, 1986, p. 198)

These thoughts/experiences bind women together in small and large groups as the content for the educational discourse--the dialogical discourse which pulls them into being:

> Be-ing is the verb that says the dimension of depth in all verbs, such as intuiting, reasoning, loving, imagining, making, acting, as well as the couraging, hoping, and playing that are always there when one is really living. (Mary Daly, quoted by Smith, 1985, p. 245)

Education, as sustaining bonding, history and free social space, acts in the liberative spirit of praxis. Hearing and speaking a person into being provides the possibility of liberating her from anonymity. This emergence is the beginning of an awareness of the emergence (awakening) itself, the contradictions of the situation, and of the potential for intervention (Freire, 1982, pp. 100-101). Freire has termed this "attitude of awareness" conscientizacao (p. 101); Beverly Harrison adds,

> [C]onscientization involves recognition that what we have experienced, in isolation and silence as private pain is in fact a public, structural dynamic. My life is now perceived in a new way in light of your stories. Together we slowly re-vision our reality so that what appeared, originally, to be an individual or personalized "problem" or even a human "failing" is exposed as a basic systematic pattern of injustice. (Harrison, 1985, p. 243)

As an historical being I find myself situated in a particular set of circumstances which my connections to other people (particularly women)--past and present--help to illuminate. In the recognition of contradictions--between reality and ideology, discrepancies in power relations, between ideals and potentials--I can find the space for a re-visioning of reality which enables me to see my own capacity for participation in my own existence. I see the process of education as providing the circumstance (environment, space, experience) for recognition of contradiction, of the ability of the historical being to create/re-create

the context of her experience (see Freire, 1982, pp. 55, 61, 114) in accord with her own potentialities and will, and of the power and necessity of visioning, not to engage in escapism but to avoid it through awareness of and desire for the necessity of transforming concrete, particular situations toward a liberative vision.

If I can view praxis as the perception, reflection, and action of the hermeneutic, I find both the primacy of the individual in the necessity for Self-determination and Self-centeredness for transformative consciousness and creation. As the individual interacts with community as text, she both affects and is affected by the relationship of shared experience. From the experiences of the individual and of the individual with community emerges knowledge. The hermeneutic is the continual search for knowledge within the individual. Education is the circumstances and expression of this knowledge.

Section Three

This dissertation has emerged and grown from my own experiences both in and outside of the formal educational environment, more than I have even cared or wanted to recognize. It is the product of numerous false starts, writings which were done to fulfill what I perceived as the requirements of someone else, and changes which were necessary in

my own life to relieve the contradictions between my reflections and my actions. My stumbling blocks have been those common to other women writers--writing for a traditional (male) audience, an arduous search for content relevant to my own life, finding intellectual and emotional common ground with women's writings, and placing honest value and worth on their (our) endeavors.

I have tried to engage myself in a dialogue with the writers on whose work I have relied, so that my writing would be a reflection of this dialogue rather than a dissociated explication from which I would emerge unmoved and unscathed. My own formal education has been a hindrance since I have spent many years learning what is legitimate knowledge, what marks successful evaluation, what of myself is relevant and what is irrelevant in our disembodied curriculum. I refer to the situation of which Giroux speaks in reference to literacy:

> This configuration (a specific configuration of knowledge, ideology, and power) . . . represents its conceptual structure, the meaning of which is to be found in the ideological source "that lies beneath the choice of what is considered legitimate and important or illegitimate and irrelevant in a particular instance of practical deliberation." (Giroux, 1983, p. 208; Giroux's reference is to Roger Simon, "Mysticism, Management, and Marx")

The difficulty of this writing has been the attempt to step outside this ideological source both to view it as separate and not of, by, or for me and to "stand on the edge" at

least far enough to have a view of different relevancies and sources/ways of legitimation.

As I thought about the individual and considerations of the individual as source, and Self-centeredness, my own contradictions in this area came into clearer focus. The training in my formal education had been thoroughly successful in cementing a belief that responsibility for judging my work lay in some source outside of myself. I wrote laboriously, guessing the responses of the audience, eliminating myself from any dialectic. I was willfully supplanting myself and substituting the reader as audience. This is not to diminish the importance of the reader of this or any other text. I am emphasizing the necessity and uniqueness of my response in the dialectic represented by this work. It is my responsibility to recognize the source of knowledge in myself and to put forward this knowledge in the hope of eliciting a reciprocal movement.

Similarly, I struggled with relinquishing the power of exterior expectations; i.e., the nature of correctness and appropriateness for my work. Quite a lot of time and dedication, not to mention mystification of one's accomplishments, go into the compiling of academic credentials. Breaking from the prescriptions of standards of good work seems like risky business at least, when done at the proverbial last moment of one's student career. My movement toward

developing and giving credence to my own expectations has been slow and tenuous; I live with the constant temptation to reserve a position in the academic mainstream. By beginning to accept my power of responsibility and formulation of expectations, I am acknowledging the individual woman's voice, my Self and stories as sources of knowledge, and the necessity of maintaining myself as equal partner in a dialectic with the world.

Taking responsibility requires both developing the ability to respect and respond to my own individual experiences and allowing myself to do so--as opposed to perpetuating the adherence to traditional, formal education as the inquiry into another's experience. Even now, as I write this, I find myself hesitating to write of the experiences of my life which have led to my desire to explore feminism, both as a way of life and as theoretical inquiry. There are two reasons which explain why I persist in this exploration at all. First, I believe true education is dialogue and relieving myself of the obligation of participation in dialogue renders everything else meaningless. Therefore, I must find some method of joining the conversation which I have enjoyed witnessing between the women writers and speakers who have been so influential in my development as a feminist. Secondly, thinking conceptually of education as the search for meaning through experience (one's own and the sharing

of experiences with others) makes it imperative to search through the experiences of life. I do not see that accepting the experiences and unquestioned interpretations of other women is much preferable to my unexamined acceptance of other's (male) theorizing as knowledge. In either case I remove myself and my experiential contributions from the dialogue of education and accept someone else's life as my own.

My first attempt toward using my own life experiences as the basis for my own education--the view through which I saw the written and spoken inquiries of others in their search for meaning--was to engage myself in the task of using my experiences as text. I tried to use a journal as a hermeneutical tool of inquiry, what was for me a slow, arduous, unenjoyable task. Finding something else to do became a delightful challenge; but, I wanted to keep the emphasis on experience as text. I altered the situation so that my experiences became literally stories--which I could read without the compromising of ego that I experienced when writing point-blank about my life. Even though this was a way of beginning the inquiry into experience, it did not solve the problem of placing myself as primary participant in the experience--in writing stories, I was able to remove myself into the third person rather than taking the responsibility involved in using the word "I."

One of the benefits of my discomfort with writing about my experiential background was the change it caused in my method of reading and in my choices of reading material. Working toward the discovery of new sources of knowledge and connection means reading critically for life relevance and the recognition of similarities/conjunctions in the contradictions of life situations. Writing (or speaking) as expression of these discoveries requires the writer (or speaker) to critically reflect on her experience, distancing herself from the experience so as to see it more clearly, to inquire into its nature, to place it historically into the whole of her existence. When she shares this experience and her reflections in dialogue with another writer (or speaker/listener) they find points of similarity which help them both to reflect/inquire into their experiences and lives and to envision changes necessary for the dissolution of contradictions between the actual experience(s) and the potential for more liberative experience(s). In my method of reading I began to look more closely for those points of similarity/conjunction and to seek writers who would "converse" with me about these similarities of experience, giving me new ways or re-cognizing and involving myself in my own experiences. Also, but very slowly, reading these stories makes it easier to write about and reflect on my stories "head-on," in the first person. Emily E.

Culpepper speaks to the wider benefits and ramifications of this search for women writers as sources for the development of a "train of thought":

> To have to locate our scholarship by reference to male-authored scholarship, however interesting it might be, keeps women at the starting point. It leaves us without the full construction of our own history of ideas. (Culpepper, 1986, pp. 4-5)

The point is not to completely separate or isolate women's scholarly work from that of men or from the influence of men:

> Women's ideas do, however, arise from different experiences than men's and most women's scholarship has certainly been conducted under different circumstances. Philosophia seeks to bring a new respect to the work of women, to take this work seriously as sufficiently insightful and "significant in the field" to stand on its own. (pp. 6-7)

In this dialogue between writer/reader or speaker/listener both find the public space for expression of individuality and establishment of community.

In an attempt toward bringing this dialogue closer to the particularities of my own life, I decided to engage other women in reflection on their own epistemological experiences; not, of course, confined to traditional institutional experiences, modes of research, or conceptions of knowledge. There are many reasons for my including these conversations in the research for and writing of this paper. First, is the demonstration of conversation as a viable means of research especially, but not only, for

women since through conversation women can find the means for expressing themselves as they converse with both oral and physical language. Also, conversation is the embodiment of the dialectic of learning as ideas/knowledge are exchanged and new ideas/knowledge emerge. Not the least of the considerations is the fact that women often do not have the time to seek other ways of expressing themselves which require massive expenditures of time away from homes and families (a fact which came under serious consideration in our conversations) and which often still do not allow women to express their true epistemological concerns.

Secondly, the use of these conversations allowed for the mitigation of the detached mode of the dialogue and for a process of true involvement as women (specifically the women in these conversations) became a major source of knowledge and understandings. I found that in this way I could combine my emphasis on the importance of the individual, by considering myself and the circumstances of these individual women's lives and simultaneously explore the nature of the relationships which form and hinder the development/emergence of the individual woman. And, thirdly, by viewing our conversations in the mode of consciousness-raising--pulling experiences into consciousness and giving them language--we were able to form our own community of mutuality and affirmation as we both spoke

and gave space/time for the other participant to speak. Our conversational experience was of the formation of community in which we could confirm our present and past experiences as women without requiring the partner in community to conform to some preconceived or developing notion of "rightness" of conclusion or some evaluation of "knowledge."

The two women who agreed to hold conversations with me are similar to me in educational experience, family situations, social-cultural class, and career decisions. We enrolled in the same department, Curriculum and Educational Foundations, in the same university; attended the same basic outline of courses with the same (male) professors; and maintained similar interests both pedagogically and personally. Through the sharing of these interests and backgrounds, we had often engaged in discussions of course and text content, of our situation in the university, and home conditions. Obviously, we were not intellectual or personal strangers; we were not uncomfortable with discussing topics intimate to either of us (I held conversations with each woman separately). I chose these particular women deliberately because we were so similar--our similarities formed a basis for an understanding of our experiences, a friendship and bond of trust and sharing had already been formed, our common experiences allowed us to exchange information, interpretations, building on these through our

agreements and differing perspectives. I was quite candidly more interested in conversation concerning our educational experiences and pedagogical theories than in more abstract discussion of some particular subject or text. I never presumed that our conversations would establish conclusions which would apply to any other women's situation; I was concerned with the particular experiences of these women's lives, the development of community, and the points of convergence and agreement between their individual lives, my life, and the writings of other women which I had explored in my research.

From these conversations and reflections I, in thinking about them beforehand, had hoped to gain a clearer epistemological perspective into our pedagogical searches (as women) into traditional textual (written and oral) sources combined with the nontraditional situations and conditions of our lives. I use the term nontraditional not in reference to atypical life-styles, I refer to nontraditional sources of learning, our own conversations with women, and our daily situations. In other words, nontraditional refers to a placement in time: the connections between female friends/teachers/relatives in formal and nonformal educational or social environments which carry forward through long periods of time and the historical nature of women's daily lives.

The importance of the conversations emerged from two areas which I had not previously emphasized. They were important, first, because of the dynamics surrounding them. Each conversation was a marvel in timing and placement, they were wedged in between traveling times, responsibilities for children, and timers set for long-distance phone calls. The physical settings were far removed, both literally and figuratively, from the traditional educational environment. Secondly, the formation of community between us spoke to the issues of formation of the dialectic of a community for education, the participation by members in the sharing and defining of the situation for education; full, unequivocal acceptance of the members of the community; and the confluence of all these issues into collaboration toward fuller understandings and greater learning. These conversations were biographical and autobiographical glances into the particularities of our lives as women. The experience of the conversations became the embodiment of the community of consciousness-raising as we affirmed and confirmed each other's existence. I have taken these conversations and put them in the context of my own process of consciousness-raising in an effort directed at examining those moments of clarity which have helped me to see my own capacity for creating and re-creating my world.

Two major experiences stand as predominant when I examine my life in terms of consciousness-raising. Prior to these experiences I had read and interacted with women who had already focused their energies toward the liberation of women, in education as well as in other fields. I was not unaware of the contradictions of my own life, but the solutions to them were ad hoc and done without the reflection necessary for any real change to take place. I lacked the conjunction of reflection and action necessary for the praxis of a change in my existence. Any action which I made was undertaken without the level of conscious thought necessary to make them responsive to me as a woman and mother in the construction of my own existence.

The first of these experiences I share as a major turning point with many other women (Belenky, 1986, p. 35). The birth of my son brought me into immediate connection with my own past as a child and his future as an adult. Simultaneously, he brought an awareness of my common everyday activities, since none of these fails to affect him in some way, and of any vision I might have of my future situation and relationship with him. More than even my years with children as a public school teacher, his presence brought into focus the significant consequences of seemingly benign situations. I had to consider the consequences of nonintervention for if I did nothing my son would necessarily have to respond to

conditions with which I disagreed, at least theoretically at this point, without even the points of critique and the imagination and will of action which I could help him to develop. I did not want him to use me as a model but I most assuredly did not want him to search somewhere else outside himself for a model either.

Having someone watch me as closely as he does and imitate nearly my every move led me to do the same thing to myself. My own constructed contradictions could be met and answered as long as I was the only person actually hearing the answer. But, I wasn't anymore, the discrepancies between how I wanted him (me) to live and what I showed him (me) had to be dealt with differently.

Essentially, what my son has done for me is to point out the incompleteness of the praxis of my life. I acted without the benefit of any sort of reflection or engaged in thought without the intention of activity. This is not to say that the situation is totally "fixed" and I am in total command of the visions of my life, only that movement has begun.

The second experience which I emphasize in my terms of consciousness-raising involves "bringing into language" the experiences of my life (most especially, for me, the presence and influence of my son) and the formation of the basis of community between women. Exploring the language for the

expression of our concerns gave us (as participants in conversation) the space for discovery of commonalities and for validating those concerns. The importance lies in the confluence of the environment of the conversations and the substance of the conversations themselves. The environment of the conversations necessarily caused us to concern ourselves with the particularities, the real life situations of our existences as women. Our conversations were set in the "concrete and daily praxis of who we are and what we do" (The Mud Flower Collective, 1985, pp. 93-94). I traveled to each woman's home for our discussions, not necessarily intentionally, it seemed the most "natural" thing to do. In one instance, I arranged for my trip to take place on a weekend when my son would be visiting his father and my friend would be free to talk with me for an extended period of time. We sat at her kitchen table talking and drinking coffee for an entire Saturday, breaking only for lunch and for me to meet her family and see her home. I felt that I had the privilege of seeing her in "context" and knowing her life, at least in part, during the time she was away from the university. We had had only brief periods of time to talk at the university; we had tried to talk rapidly in a few moments of families, homes, jobs, and class discussions. An entire day for a conversation seemed like a long-awaited vacation. We began by trying to finish those cryptic conversations and

only late in the day did we eventually arrive at a point for the introduction of a discussion of feminist epistemology. At least this was the point at which we stopped and said we began with a (my) conception of feminist epistemology; it would be difficult to separate our discussion from the experiences basic to the development of such a theoretical, experiential base to knowledge.

Like many women, she had balanced the varied physical and conceptual aspects of her world in order to have the sorts of experiences she considered absolutely vital for her life. She had been married for a number of years, living in a rural section of North Carolina, before having her first child and beginning work on an undergraduate degree. As a wife, mother, and student, she learned to somehow meet the needs and requirements of all three simultaneously. Her three children learned to pay attention to her time for study (she said her children are avid readers now because of her need for quiet during those years) and she developed the ability to concentrate immediately in the time she had available. Not all of this was done without conflict; being a commuting student requires large amounts of time away from home both physically and intellectually. There are spaces with which the other family members are not involved, spaces which conflict with the notion of a constantly nurturing mother available whenever one wishes.

The delicate balancing act of this woman's existence is the embodiment of the notions of passion and abstraction, which are my way of expressing the balance between immanence and transcendence. When considering passion as real self-involvement in the activities of everyday life, the passionate individual is one truly participating in the areas of importance of her own existence. In my friend's instance, she had chosen to include herself in the communities of work, family and home, and student life. None of these areas could remain an abstraction for her since they had each to participate in the balance; as abstractions, they would have remained outside of the exigencies of scheduling, compromise, and the work of involvement. Motherhood was no abstract concept for her; it required immediate attention and participation, for the very next moment may require her participation in another area of her existence. Passion is immediate involvement and attention with the knowledge/awareness of that moment's impact on the continuing balance of the embodiment of her activities.

Many women find themselves in positions requiring the intricate balancing of all the varied aspects of their lives. My second set of interviews/conversations concerned this balance both in the substance of the discussion and the logistics of the arrangements. My friend is in the delicate position of graduate student, mother of three children, wife

of a physician, teacher at a local small college, and woman with the needs and desire for Self-expression and Self-centeredness. Our conversations also took place in her home, generally with all four of our children involved in some sort of play activity. Frequently, we talked over and around young children around the dinner table--she has that incredible capacity for carrying on conversation with at least two people in this sort of situation while preparing, replenishing, and clearing plates and never allowing anyone to feel "left out" which mothers of numerous young children often develop out of sheer need--or while watching our children chase each other on the latest version of "Hot Wheels." She had long ago demonstrated her abilities as a serious, gifted student with the requisite ability to spend long hours engaged in scholarly endeavors. After receiving her bachelor and master's degrees, she moved with her husband to the location of his residency requirement where she began teaching in the public schools. She was subsequently invited to teach at a small, private college and soon retired from public school teaching to devote full time to this level of teaching and to her children's development. When she entered the doctoral program, she added the rigors of its demands to those of her career, and the sole care of the home which is frequently required of the doctor's spouse. Since the classes which she taught and those which she attended were generally taught

during the evening hours, her attendance required the acquisition of numerous babysitters, dashes out the door after their often split-second arrival, and the heartbreak of children crying as they watched Mommy leave. Despite the rigors of these arrangements, her home was and is always a haven for the children of friends. Her babysitters were often also the caretakers for my son when she and I attended the same classes, so that he would have other children to play with during my absence.

These experiences speak to at least two aspects of the nature of women's epistemological lives and the placement of education within those lives. First, separating out parts of existence as different from the remainder is difficult, if not impossible. As can be seen in the interwoven life of this woman, the descriptive split between public and private lives becomes blurred as it is difficult to see where one ends and another begins. In this instance, her teaching career depended on the acuity with which she was able to handle arrangements for home and children. She and I often spoke of the difficulty of "tuning out" thoughts of the home in order to concentrate during class and, conversely, of finding time and space at home in which to study or write. There are always home responsibilities and duties that make concentration difficult and the necessity of keeping materials just out of the reach of little hands. After one of our

conversations, I returned home with sparse notes, three pasta recipes, and a crayon drawing done for me by her son; I kept the drawing. Education is one of the multiplicities of these experiences; any change in any area drastically alters the relationship to the pedagogical experience. Education is part of the web of the student's Being. She brings to this experience all of her Being and must weave education into its relevant position in this intricate web.

Secondly, the balance necessary for the maintenance of this web of Being is precarious, at best. As she indicated in one of our conversations, the balance keeps her from directing a major source of energy to any one endeavor, everything gets partial time, space, energy, and reflection. Nothing becomes singularly primary because everything must be primary. How could any choice be made--choosing between the relationships between herself and husband or children or herself? We both decided and knew already that at some point one's self must be given emphasis. But, even then, we are not separate from our relationships to others and the balancing seemingly remains the same. The task returns to the nature of relationship as mutuality. Asking anyone to be the constant giver or nurturer or provider is an impossible situation. The relationship of education should be one of the responsibility of mutuality as well. Learning requires responding, the giving of one's intellect and willingness to

experience; education, and especially those of us who call ourselves educators, must accept the responsibility of giving sustenance, expression, and nurturing to the learner's individual life. For women, this means the incorporation of their experiences into the educational text.

As I hope is evident, the traditional "malestream" (term used in God's Fierce Whimsy) sources of knowledge and learning have not been rejected in toto by either of these women or by me. Our sharing of experiences and conversations were not an attempt to overpower and/or diminish traditional resources. The use of our own lives and lived connections pulled us and the particularities of our existences into recognition as valuable, viable resources. Combining the knowledge of experience with traditional resources requires the construction of new models for education. Constructive pedagogy necessitates the conjoining of students' lives with a philosophy of the education of connection--between the student, her/his potential, stories, the stories of others, relationships, and the world of Nature. Constructive pedagogy displaces the model of the educated being as expert, separate from and above/beyond participation in the world and builds upon both the concepts of immanence and transcendence, toward a new model.* This combination is the education of the search

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*I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of The Mud Flower Collective for their discussion of collective theology, for their influence on my thoughts and writing and their sharing of common ground (God's Fierce Whimsy, see pp. 153-167).

for meaning in the experiences of the learner with the construction of vision to inform movement toward broader experience and reconstituting reality. Speaking as a woman, I view constructive pedagogy as truly employing the nature of women's lives as lives of intricate balance, of recognition of the importance of daily situations, and as lives in need of recognition, affirmation, and expression. In order to meet these needs, constructed pedagogy must be constructed by the learner, placing the institutional, traditional knowledge in perspective alongside the inclusiveness of pedagogy which recognizes knowledge derived from experience. For women to truly be a part of this pedagogy means that they participate in the discovery and construction of a heritage of women's writings/knowledge, participate in conversations which give expression and consciousness to their experiences and employ that expression (language) as viable and valuable knowledge. Participation is the forging of and recognition of connections between women, between all individuals and groups, in education which seeks continuously for new sources and interpretations in the communal search for meaning.

I have never experienced an example or instance of constructive pedagogy in a formal school situation. But, I do unequivocally know that it is possible, beyond my theoretical beliefs, through at least two extra-institutional

educational experiences. The first of these took place through an extraordinary piece of good luck; I had decided not to attend a workshop concerning women's spirituality (led by Margot Adler) even though it was being held not five miles away from my home--in the building where I attended classes almost every day--and I already had arrangements for my son to be with his father for the night. For some reason, I decided that my writing would proceed more smoothly if I wrote by myself, something that had never happened before and has never happened since--I rely heavily on the knowledge gained through dialogue. At the virtual last minute, I was invited and decided to attend a ritual to be held in the evening in honor of Margot Adler's workshop (I honesty think I was both called to the ritual and driven from the house by the silence of the typewriter). The ritual was small, with only about nine people participating, and was held in a very institutional School of Education building.

In spite of the surroundings and the fact that I was distantly acquainted with only two of the participants, the evening was one of the most remarkable experiences, educational or otherwise, of my life. Participation in the ritual truly meant being a "part" of the situation. Participation meant and required intimate and complete trust of every member of the group. Every action of the group was an action

of the individual members of the group, there was nothing that someone did which everyone was expected to watch and admire as to its adequacy; i.e., no one was individually in the spotlight for the evening. The situation of the ritual was created by those of us who participated. Without needing to talk about our experiences, we each brought our experiences with us in the form of whatever we felt needed to be contributed to the situation. I think each of us felt empowered to be as much a part of the ritual as we wanted or to hold back as much as we felt we needed. Even though Margot Adler was there as a participant and ritual was a part of her workshop, she only led the ritual in the sense of starting the chants, setting the mood (lighting candles, seating everyone in a circle on the floor, finding the pieces to be used as part of the ritual, providing continuity between the songs, chants, and dances of the ritual by taking "requests" from the group), and closing the ritual with just a few words about how enjoyable the whole experience had been.

I have to admit that I was more than a little nervous about the whole event since I had no real first-hand experience with this sort of thing. Only two things kept me there: it was obvious that at least three women were ready to prevent the evening from floundering as it would have done had I been "in charge" and, secondly, since we were all relative strangers, everyone else appeared to be as nervous

as I was so I figured that I had nothing to lose. Since these conditions were no secret, the ritual began with the typical name introductions and exchanges of greetings and to remove whatever ice remained, we formed a chain of movement which wound around the room snake-like and ended the beginning of the ritual with the hugging and kissing which usually mark the ending of a time of intense closeness. Before the ritual blessing of the four elements and the solemnity of the chants, we already knew each other through both physical and mental processes.

I realize that the question, "But, what did you learn in this situation?" exists and perhaps should be addressed, but it is extremely difficult to talk about learning and education in relation to this sort of circumstance if one is constrained within the confines of typical educational language. I did not "learn" in the common sense of learning to draw maps and verb tenses. This pedagogical situation did demonstrate inclusion in community with the feeling of equal participation and the affirmation of participation as we each suggested different chants and songs which became part of the creation of the ritual and each contributed some sort of music using whatever instruments were available. The essential matter and substance of the occasion emerged from the women themselves as we created our own situation unashamedly and unfearfully without even the slightest thought of criticism or shame.

The second situation was different in size and physical setting--it was a large retreat held over three days in a beautiful country setting--but the content, women's spirituality, was similar. The retreat is an annual event, each year focusing on the works of an individual woman, in this case Rosemary Radford Ruether spoke to the three general meetings and held smaller group conferences. Although the group was much larger than the Adler workshop and I found myself able to not participate as much as I wanted, the retreat was still a remarkable, constructive educational experience. There was no question as to the serious nature of the work taking place at the conference; we were there to study women's lives, experiences, and the spiritual component to those and the study was done through as many channels as there were women at the conference. I remember most clearly the high level of respect and affirmation shown by the participants as they worked to form connections and to not hide disconnections and disagreements--there was enough respect between participants to engage them in rigorous epistemological disagreements.

Although its purpose and concentration were similar to the Adler workshop ritual, this retreat was different in key ways which removed it from primary areas of importance and relevance to women's lives. Primarily, the retreat was very well planned and scheduled, but in this planning and scheduling it ran counter to the needs of women to speak for

themselves. The small group meetings, workshops, seminars were already situated when we arrived; group leaders had been chosen, even the leaders of the (large) rituals had already been designated. The musicians and songs for the evening's "group singing" had been notified in advance and been given time for practice between workshops. In other words, we grew accustomed to seeing the same faces directing each of the different events. My concern is that women are generally used to allowing leadership positions to be taken over by others and, therefore, being led. Whether the "leaders" are men or other women, large numbers are being led, not really participating themselves and I include myself in this group as historically an avid follower who has grown uneasy and unhappy in this position. I am concerned that women have both the space and opportunity for expressing their own voices, and I am equally aware of the difficulty of balancing large numbers of people with the desire for allowing everyone to participate. It may be that the importance of the social space and time for women's expression of their own voice is (or should be) the prime consideration. Any emerging model of education for women should reflect the need for each woman to be the subject of her own life and for women to be creators and transformers of their world.

Models are not easily altered or displaced, expanding to cover all exigencies (McFague, 1982, p. 147). The

operative model for education has become so solidified that discussion of educational innovation rarely pulls it into question and even more rarely does educational critique talk of the whole as a model at all. Instead, the composition of education is considered as a given with even those changes which are called "radical" taking place within this model, posing no danger to its solid structure. This structure within which we, as educators, operate has two major forms: source and methodology, which are inextricably interrelated and serving its perpetuation remarkably well.

These two forms, source and methodology of education, locate the origin of knowledge and learning as exterior to the learner and function to keep it there. Freire describes this structure of education as "banking" education (Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and elsewhere) in which knowledge is deposited in the learner with the expectation that it will be retained and given back in the same form. Teaching is, therefore, the skill of delivering bits and pieces of information with little or no regard as to the nature of the student or the situation. The emphasis is on a standard curriculum throughout the school and school system, proceeding at a lock-step pace accomplishing specific objectives. To the student, the teacher is the source of this knowledge but this is not actually accurate. "Banking" education restricts the teacher just as it does the student. In an historical reference, the teacher is handicapped by years

of participation in the same type of non-education--rarely seeing anything beyond deposit and response. Teacher preparation programs do little to remedy this situation since prospective teachers are rarely asked to probe the intricacies of the history/philosophy/sociology of education nor to explore the rigors of the disciplines which they intend to teach (even less often to question the divisions of knowledge into disciplines). In a more immediate frame, teachers are handicapped by the imposition of curriculum guides, prescribed texts, and massive doses of standardized tests. (Of course, these can be seen as ways of remedying the ills of teacher preparation.) Sending a person with this (lack of) educational background into the classroom as teacher quite nearly necessitates the use of a "banking" methodology. Teaching as dialogue and exploration requires questioning, responding, variations, constructions, tools of pedagogy which this teacher cannot know of, about, or have the freedom to use.

In this model, knowledge transcends even the classroom--arriving from some unalterable, unapproachable, unquestionable source through the medium of the teacher and the written text. The mystification of knowledge and the act of teaching serve to retain the most powerless of the situation (students) in a position of being unable to act for themselves. Teachers are in the untenable position of being both powerful

and powerless as they have neither the preparation nor the freedom to explore the nature of the search for meaning which should occupy the minds of the classroom and, yet, they maintain the power of evaluation, information-deliverance, and time management over the participants of the classroom. The teachers are separate from the administration which dictates to them and separate from the students to whom they dictate. The students are separated from both as they are mandated by law to appear in the school, are judged, are dictated to, have their time controlled and space of activity predetermined, and placed in competition with each other for grades, the teacher's time and attention, and "special" privileges. In this context, the individual becomes self-protective and self-centered in the sense of needing to protect whatever space and keep whatever sense of self one can maintain in a powerless situation. In an environment like this one, in which rewards, responses, time and space for self-expression are held stringently guarded and, paradoxically, valued beyond all else, the concept of self-centeredness is self-protection and guarding the self against the intrusion of others and grasping for whatever redeeming rewards the situation may hold. It is not the reaching out in the mutuality of relationship which is so necessary for Self-centeredness in which we, as Beings, find the true nature of ourSelves in the action of give-and-take, of

reciprocity. Rather than the blurring of the distinctions between us as individuals as we interact in true relationship, in this environment, in this model for education--this lack of true community--we find the drawing of distinct lines between separate/separating individuals and the creation/re-creation of divisiveness.

In this hierarchical model of power-over, some are included while most are excluded. The model/structure of education excludes, again, through both source and methodology. The displaced of the classroom (both learners and teachers) do not speak for themselves both literally in not being given the actual physical opportunity to speak and historically, pedagogically as the heritage of the displaced is excluded from consideration as a source of knowledge. The displaced of the classroom are denied both the conversation of the learning environment and the opportunity for conversation with their own pedagogical heritage. In considering methodology, the heritage of the displaced is not to be found among the traditional sources of knowledge. As an example, the stories, diaries, magazines, and conversations of women are sources of their learning/their differing epistemological concerns which have not been searched for or included in the traditional educational curriculum. In my own context, the stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin combined with my own and those revealed

to me in conversation with female friends have affirmed my own life, revealed the contradictions I have felt there, and guided the epistemological search for the power and knowledge inherent in those contradictions.

Such contradictions are the space for the development and vision for a new model of constructive pedagogy. In these contradictions, which both students and teachers perceive, is the discrepancy between what is learned and the actual lives of the learners-using both teachers and students as learners--and the recognition that there can be both vision and embodiment of a different pedagogy. This different pedagogy, constructive pedagogy, returns to the models of relationship as mutuality and reciprocity. The emphasis is on the importance and wonderful inescapability of relationship--between individuals and between humanity and Nature. In this pedagogy we must recognize and acknowledge that we are all searching for placement in the world and some means of making some "sense" out of our existences--none of us more than others. Therefore, I return again to the primary nature of the individual in the context of mutuality of relationship and the necessity for the recognition and celebration of the special capabilities and potentialities of the individual.

The term <u>individual</u> becomes problematic in this context because of its arrogation by a middle-class, "WASP" mentality.

Individuality need not maintain its historical connotation of isolation and separatism with the assumption that the needs of the individual and the requirements of community or group are dichotomous. Both history and individual are used contextually and consciously different here. History as "continuous over time" has not been kind to women in that the continuous flow of history without benefit of an epistemological break perpetuates women's situational oppression. In the same sense, individual does not respond to a woman's consciousness because neither can nor should be required to view themselves as totally separate beings definitionally apart from their lived situation. To respond to women's lives, history must connote the contemporaneous embodied context of women; i.e., current women as historical beings creating and constructing their own existences. In this context, the nature of individual is individuality developed and re-created through experiences and relationships, not in the transcending or negation of relationships. Both history and individual respond to the dialectic between the time/place context of woman and the desire for community of individual Beings based on mutuality and the affirmation of relation.

In wanting to describe and discuss my vision of constructive pedagogy I am faced with the paradox of the need to talk about the inclusivity of community, the empowering

capacity of the language of the displaced/misplaced, of the liberating capacity of individualism through relationship and, yet, not truly having the language for any of these. The best language I can find for this community for pedagogy is that of Rosemary Radford Ruether when she speaks of a "sense of communal personhood" (Ruether, 1972, p. 124). Ruether speaks of a new communal social ethic of inclusiveness in relationship with the abolition of rule and competitiveness (p. 125). In this "sense of communal personhood" I include the primacy of the individual, the necessity of the mutuality of relationship in the development and continuation of community, and the acknowledgment of the interrelatedness of pedagogy to all the other aspects of community--in the form of a spiral in which all aspects inform and rely on each other in ways which can only artificially be separated. Language, however, continues to be a complex issue as it both illuminates and is illuminated by the interrelated aspects of the spiral of community. As the displaced of pedagogy and community find voice in conversation (written and oral) and placement in a heritage of conversation, the language must be forced into new derivations of meaning and comprehension. At the same time, talk of the spiral of interrelatedness of pedagogy and community actually needs one to talk about all the aspects simultaneously in a reflection of the ways in which they are intertwined and the nature of their

intersections. I find myself wanting to write on many sheets of paper simultaneously and, somehow, require the reader to read them all at the same time.

In lieu of the possibility of this activity, I try to retain the model of the spiral in the same way that I think of the balance that many women must maintain in their lives--in which everything is primary because nothing is singularly primary. In a constructive pedagogy, the root metaphor is based upon the mutuality of true relationship in the context of the development of communal personhood. Holding this image in mind, I want to discuss just a part of the alteration necessary in the model of pedagogy for an inclusion of the mutuality of relationship.

Constructive pedagogy does not require or ask the total dispersion of all concepts of education or resources of traditional knowledge. Rather than being destructive of the pedagogical situation as it is found, constructive pedagogy forges an epistemological break in the structure which allows for the entry of new/different modes of thought and research and the inclusion of previous thought and research in the development of pedagogy based on true relationship. As Emily Culpepper has emphasized, constructing a female "train of thought" does not necessitate the exclusion of resources, but it does not discourage reliance on purely female resources (Culpepper, 1986, pp. 3-4). Feminist epistemology does not rely on a model of exclusivity.

A pedagogy based on relationship brings into focus the importance of language; we use language (written, oral, physical) to relate with and to each other and our world. In a constructive pedagogy, with the emphasis on experience as epistemological source, language becomes even more consequential. The point here is not to become bogged down in the difficulties of language. Rather, it is to emphasize the change in context which results from the shift to a basis of relationship. Language shifts from being situated in a model of hierarchy with its attendant concepts of power as oppression and individuality as total separation to a situation based on mutuality in which power refers to the power of transformation (power to, power with) and the primacy of the individual refers to the development of individuality in relationship with other individuals.

In constructive pedagogy the experiences of the learner are important resources for pedagogical source and methodology. Experience provides new epistemological concerns as it reveals the contradictions of the learner's life and the connections between present learners and their pedagogical heritage. As methodology, the exploration of experience is affirmation and confirmation of the learner her/himself with the concomitant valuation (not evaluation) of difference and praising of diversity, rather than conforming to concepts of equality. Further, the exploration of experience is the

methodology of praxis, for in the discussion of the experience change is enacted both in the altered consciousness of the learner concerning the nature of the experience itself but also subsequent experiences are altered in the light of new epistemological concerns and their effect upon the inter-relatedness of the entire learner's Being.

Finally, in constructive pedagogy there is the recognition of a need for liberative change for the participants in education, the recognition that most participants have not enjoyed the benefits of full inclusion in the pedagogical environment. There is awareness that liberative change requires constant vigilant suspicion and a vision of the place which truly liberatory education could occupy in a world based on a metaphor of mutual relationship. Vision occupies a place of hope for the development of pedagogy and a place as methodology. Vision as imaging is the means by which images for the future and images of the learner's present life are given language and brought into conversation. At this point, I see true participation by the learner as she/he allows the images which will guide pedagogical research to emerge from her/his own life (imagination) and become enacted in the alterations (will) resulting from a change in consciousness.

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