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Women reclaiming ourselves : the conflict between affiliation and individuation

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and individuation**

Bartley, Jana, M.A.

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WOMEN RECLAIMING OURSELVES:
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN AFFILIATION AND INDIVIDUATION

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
JANA BARTLEY
MAY, 1990

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN RECLAIMING OURSELVES:

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN AFFILIATION AND INDIVIDUATION

BY JANA BARTLEY

The central thesis of this study is that in the recent history of the United States, through psychosociological influences--not biological or innate--women have been/are socialized in a mode of affiliation in relation to others, while men have been/are socialized in a mode of detachment or separation from others. These distinct orientations set up special challenges and conflicts for both genders. This thesis considers both orientations, as their effects are intertwined, with the key focus centered on the conflict for women.

The thesis first examines the conflict as it is described in psychosociological theories, from conventional to feminist. It then examines the conflict as it is described in literature, specifically in women's writing, both fiction and nonfiction. The primary purpose of this analysis is to increase understanding of women's distinct experiences in order to identify and reclaim women's own authentic selves.

I'm ceded--I've stopped being Theirs--
The name They dropped upon my face
With water, in the country church
Is finished using, now,
And They can put it with my Dolls,
My childhood, and the string of spools,
I've finished threading--too--

Baptized, before, without the choice,
But this time, consciously, of Grace--
Unto supremest name--
Called to my Full--The Crescent dropped
Existence's whole Arc, filled up,
With one small Diadem.

My second Rank--too small the first--
Crowned--Crowing--on my Father's breast
A half unconscious Queen--
But this time--Adequate--Erect,
With Will to choose, or to reject,
And I choose, just a Crown--

Emily Dickinson

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PREFACE

The conflict between affiliation and individuation is a universal human conflict of primal importance. It defines an individual's orientation in the world, and thus that individual's identity, reality and sanity. Consequently, it also defines the collective world identity, reality and sanity. The conflict or question is: How does an individual reconcile the need to connect with others in community with the need to exist as a distinct and unique individual?

For purposes of this thesis, affiliation is defined as connection in relationship, and individuation, which has conventionally implied separation from relationship, is reclaimed and redefined as the unique, authentic development of a human being, not apart from a relationship, but including relationship.

Historically, the affiliation/individuation conflict has been understood and interpreted as affecting human beings--both men and women--in essentially the same way. Recently, however, psychosociological theory has evolved which examines this conflict in a radically different way. This theory maintains that although both sexes experience the affiliation/individuation conflict, they do so

differently. It maintains that previous theory has included male experience, interpreting it as human experience, and excluded and/or misinterpreted female experience (according to male perceptions and criteria).

This new theory, then, begins to explore women's experience in women's own terms--not in relation to men's--for the first time giving theoretical validity to the female's personal perception of her own reality.

This new theory and its significance and implications for the lives of women and men cannot be overstated. These ideas represent revolutionary changes in people's understandings of themselves in relation to their world in their most basic connection with others. It provides an entirely different way of seeing which can and will greatly affect the quality, the authenticity, even the existence of human lives.

This is a particularly turbulent time in the world in many respects. It is a time of change, confusion, misunderstanding, and alienation. Much of the present confusion and anger comes from a basic misunderstanding and misnaming of perceptions and experiences, because women's perceptions and experiences have been interpreted by men. As these perceptions are being reinterpreted and redefined

by women themselves, some questions are answered and others are raised.

As new theory is forming, it is essential that this theory be examined and evaluated in very clear and precise ways as to how it actually applies to people's lives--how it determines the choices they make and decides their life possibilities. In working toward this clarification, this thesis will first examine the evolving psychosociological theory, comparing and contrasting it with conventional theory both from theoretical and practical standpoints. It will, then, expand and explore this theory as it applies to women's lives as expressed in women's writing, both fiction and nonfiction.

With new orientations and realities being admitted, it is necessary to understand how to live with and in these realities. Women need examples of other women who have struggled with the affiliation/individuation conflict on their own terms. This thesis will provide some of these examples. Looking specifically at the affiliation/individuation conflict according to this new theory, understanding women's reality to be radically different from past psychosociological interpretations, this work will explore how women reconcile this new perspective and their new expectations with the still prevalent patriarchal reality. It will show how women are able to live authentic

lives and still maintain the connection to others they have historically valued, demonstrating examples of reconciliation of the affiliation/individuation conflict within this new theoretical light.

Although disturbing because of the dramatic change it implies, even necessitates, this research has in it elements of great hope. Allowing both sexes their distinct experiences, realities, and selves allows for the possibility of a truer coming together in that understanding.

While the conflict between affiliation and individuation is an existential conflict existing through time, it takes on unique characteristics at this particular time--the 1990s--in this particular place--the United States. This thesis will address this conflict (or absence of) as it relates to this time and place. It will take into consideration issues of class, race, and sexual orientation. It will also consider the conflict in relation to health and illness, in fact, to survival in both individual and global terms.

It is clear that this is a pivotal point in time in regard to the conflict. However, it will continue to be a challenge for women--and men--into the future. In fact, this question is perhaps a crucial one determining the no longer melodramatic but depressingly recurrent question of

whether there will be a future. If we in the world do not begin to resolve this conflict--to better understand affiliation--we will most certainly annihilate ourselves. Women, who have historically been oriented toward affiliation, provide insight and hope.

This thesis is a psychosociological study of the factors involved in the conflict between affiliation and individuation. Within this framework, the study focuses specifically on psychological personality development, particularly in relation to underlying psychosociological dynamics within the family and the culture.¹

This study defines a dualism: that of emotional affiliation and emotional separation or detachment. This dualism describes a societal construction that is no less real for its artificiality. The reality of these emotions (or lack of) more authentically occurs on a continuum. This thesis primarily explores the construction of this dualism as well as the possibilities of redefining and living along the continuum.

The form of this thesis is more web-like² than linear. Its progression of ideas goes from one point of connection or insight to another point of insight following a thread of increased overall understanding rather than following a particular thought or idea in a more linear

progression. This way of thinking and communicating is further described in the introduction under the heading: "Women Knowing (Understanding)."

Feminist scholars who provide the main theoretical base for this study are: Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, and Jean Baker Miller.

Nancy Chodorow provides careful psychoanalytic grounding for issues raised two years earlier by Dorothy Dinnerstein in The Mermaid and the Minotaur.³ Both writers deal with the psychological implications of the fact that children are predominately raised by women. Chodorow's work is presented mainly in The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender.⁴ While Chodorow's theory is psychological, its appeal for this study is that it also includes wider sociological, anthropological, and historical understandings. Chodorow provides a broad, immaculately researched, and convincing base for ideas of how motherhood affects or initiates the affiliation/individuation conflict.

In her book In a Different Voice,⁵ Carol Gilligan deals with psychological theory in relation to human development toward moral maturity. She considers and challenges the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg, who has been considered a principal authority in the field of moral

development. Key to this development is the affiliation/individuation conflict. By analyzing existing theory and contributing data from three new studies, Gilligan generates significant new theory concerning women's--and human--development.

In Toward a New Psychology of Women⁶, Jean Baker Miller analyzes psychological theory, redefining terms and understandings from a female perspective considering women's characteristics and experience. She explores the question of connection and separation as basic to defining ourselves and others within the culture and the world.

Part I of the thesis: "Defining the Conflict," describes the conflict between affiliation and individuation by first examining the context in which the conflict occurs, in Chapter 1: "Introduction"; and second by describing the conflict, from the meaning of the problem through the terminology used to examine it, in Chapter 2: "Setting the Problem."

Part II: "The Conflict and Psychosociological Theory," examines the conventional theories of Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson; the transitional theory of Karen Horney; and the feminist theories of Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues at the Stone

Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Part III: "The Conflict and Feminism, Including Feminist/Womanist Literature," considers the conflict in terms of feminist philosophy and women's writing. Beginning with an analysis of the "masculine"⁷ orientation of emotional detachment described in Susan Griffin's book Woman and Nature,⁸ in Chapter 6: "Separation"; on to the "feminine"⁹ orientation of affiliation as it exists in feminism, in Chapter 7: "Feminism as Affiliation"; to the question of differences in feminism in terms of race and class, in Chapter 8: "Race and Class" and in Chapter 9: "Conflict: Racism in the Women's Movement"; to the conflict in terms of mother/daughter relationships, in Chapter 10: "Mothers and Daughters: Affiliation and Individuation" and in Chapter 11: "Black Mothers and Daughters as Explored in the Writings of Alice Walker."

Part IV: "Illness and Healing" considers the conflict in relation to illness and health, in Chapter 12: "Illness" and in Chapter 13: "Healing."

This thesis was written over a period of years, during which the question of the conflict between affiliation and individuation took different turns in the weaving of its "truth." For example, in Part III, "The

Conflict and Feminism, Including Feminist/Womanist Literature," as I was delineating ways in which men's orientation in the culture has been detachment from relation and women's has been connection in relation, I realized that I wasn't writing about men and women, but about white, middle-class, generally heterosexual men and women. This awareness came during the writing of Chapter 7, "Feminism as Affiliation," and is included as part of the chapter. After this, I wrote Chapters 8 and 9, "Race and Class," and "Conflict: Racism in the Women's Movement," in the section entitled "Differences Among Women" in order to further explore these issues. Chapter 10, "Mothers and Daughters," (although following the race and class analysis of chapters 8 and 9) was actually written before I began specifically to explore race and class issues. I retain the chapter as it was written as an indication of my awareness at that time. And I include Chapter 11, "Black Mothers and Daughters in the Writing of Alice Walker," in order to continue the analysis of the conflict between affiliation and individuation with more specific attention to race and class issues.

The order of the chapters may be a bit confusing in that they are grouped by subject, rather than presented in the chronological order in which they were written. Hence, "Mothers and Daughters" follows "Race and Class," although

it was written earlier. "Mothers and Daughters" is grouped with "Black Mothers and Daughters as Explored in the Writing of Alice Walker" in order to more directly compare, contrast and elaborate on the mother/daughter experience.

Thus, this thesis can be seen in its formation of ideas over time rather than as a finished, set formulation of ideas. It illustrates a process and not a product. The awareness of and communication of the process is an important part of its "truth."

NOTES

¹There is a danger of minimizing the complexity and connectedness of issues in trying to grasp a particular aspect or influence more clearly or in more depth or detail. To analyze an issue from one aspect may erroneously imply that other factors are not involved or are less important.

As a psychosociological study, this analysis does not consider other important influences in the conflict, such as broad historical and economic factors. The primary psychosociological focus, however, does not deny the critical importance of these other issues and topics.

Thus, related historical topics such as the creation of patriarchy and the sociology of the slave family are not included. Nor are economic issues, such as the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

The scope of this thesis is also not sufficient to include all differences among women--of class, race, culture, sexual preference, as well as the differences between mothers and non-mothers. The issues of class, race, and culture will be considered, and there will be distinctions made between mothers and non-mothers, although not in depth. The issue of sexual orientation is not specifically examined, but it is integrated into the analysis.

For an historical perspective on the development of patriarchy, including the subordination/affiliation of women, with a description of women first viewed as commodities or property, see Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

For information on the Industrial Revolution, see Barbara Wertheimer, We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), and Rosalyn Baxandall, et al, ed., America's Working Women: A Documentary History--1600 to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

For information on the sociology of the slave family, see Angela Y. Davis, Women, Race and Class (New York: Vintage Books, 1976) and Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White

America: A Documentary History (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

For information on sexuality issues, see Ferguson et al, ed., "The Feminist Sexuality Debates," Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society 10, no. 1 (Autumn 1984): 106-135 and Snitow et al, ed., Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983) and Carol S. Vance, ed., Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality (Boston: Routledge and K. Paul, 1984).

For information on social learning theory, see Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin, The Psychology of Sex Differences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), and, for a broader cultural perspective revolving around the thesis of male entitlement to nurturing, see Marcia Westkott, The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

²The analogy of the web occurs in a variety of feminist writing. See, for example: Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

³Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976).

⁴Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁵Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁶Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

⁷For clarification of the term "masculine" see "Other Terms" in Chapter 2.

⁸Susan Griffin, Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

⁹For clarification of the term "feminine," see "Other Terms" in Chapter 2.

PART I: DEFINING THE CONFLICT

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The [female] hero's self-direction collides with masculine civilization. Indeed, it is this collision that socializes the conflict.

Marcia Westkott¹

Searching for a way to resolve the tension they feel between responsibilities to others and self-development, they [women in Gilligan's study] all describe dilemmas that center on the conflict between personal integrity and loyalty in family relationships.

Carol Gilligan²

The choice still seemed to be between "love"--womanly, maternal love, altruistic love--a love defined and ruled by the weight of an entire culture; and egotism--a force directed by men into creation, achievement, ambition, often at the expense of others, but justifiably so. For weren't they men, and wasn't that their destiny as womanly, selfless love was ours? We know now that the alternatives are false ones--that the word "love" is itself in need of re-vision.

Adrienne Rich³

It is the position of this thesis that within contemporary Western culture that which is presented as human experience and perspective is in actuality essentially male experience and perspective. Within this

context, the experience and perception of women is derogated, with the expectation that women will adopt the dominant "masculine" perspective. Socialization of women toward affiliation in relationship and of men toward detachment in relationship serves to perpetuate what appears to be a bilateral view but which is in actuality a unilateral view, composed of male perception and interpretation of his own experience as well as male perception and interpretation of women's experience. Not to affiliate with this "masculine" reality places women in physical and psychic danger, from the implied and overt threat of battering and rape, to women's doubting of their perception of their own experience, and thus, even their sanity (although compliance does not protect women from these dangers).

The central question is: How in a very real way does a contemporary woman in Western society define herself in authentic terms given the psychosociological pressure of affiliation? "Authentic" is defined as ". . . not imaginary, false, or imitation."⁴ The authentic self would be the true self. How is this true or authentic self determined? How much of her self is authentically affiliative and how much is socialization? Or, how does a woman reconcile the conflict between affiliation and individuation?

In order to begin to answer this question, it is necessary to examine the "masculine" context within which the conflict occurs.

The Context: What Informs the Conflict

No one who survives to speak
 new language, has avoided this:
 the cutting-away of an old force that held her
 rooted to an old ground
 the pitch of utter loneliness
 where she herself and all creation
 seem equally dispersed, weightless, her being
 a cry
 to which no echo comes or can ever come.

Adrienne Rich⁵

An ideology prevails in the society of the United States that is so pervasive that it is not generally recognized as a choice--as one perspective--but is instead considered the only "legitimate" reality. This information is not new. Unfortunately, tragically for too many, the situation persists, and as long as it persists, we must persist in naming it.

This ideology has been described in various ways by women in various fields throughout the years. From psychology:

Our whole civilization is a masculine civilization. The State, the laws, morality, religion, and the sciences are the creation of men. . . . If we are clear about the extent to which all our being, thinking and doing conform to these masculine standards, we can see how difficult it is for the individual man and also for the individual woman really to shake off this mode of thought.

Karen Horney, 1926⁶

Until recently, "mankind's" understandings have been the only understandings generally available to us.

Jean Baker Miller, 1986⁷

to Literature:

You [men] make the worlds wherein you move. . . .
Our world (alas you make that too!) . . . shut in
four blank walls . . . we act our parts.

A Woman's Poem of 1859⁸

Inevitably we look upon society so kind to you
[men], so harsh to us [women], as an ill-fitting
form that distorts the truth; deforms the mind;
fetters the will.

Virginia Woolf, 1938⁹

Until recently this female anger and this furious
awareness of the man's power over her were not
available materials to the female poet . . .

Adrienne Rich, 1971/1978¹⁰

This ideology has been termed a "non-conscious ideology"¹¹
by Sandra and Daryl Bem. It is described by Brigitte
Berger:

Until now a primarily masculine intellect and spirit have dominated in the interpretation of society and culture--whether this interpretation is carried out by males or females . . . fundamentally masculine assumptions have shaped our whole moral and intellectual history.¹²

And Adrienne Rich explains further:

The power of the fathers has been difficult to grasp because it permeates everything, even the language in which we try to describe it. It is diffuse and concrete; symbolic and literal; universal and expressed with local variations which obscure its universality.¹³

A non-conscious ideology; a certain energy; a mind-set; the way one gets "taken over" by something; an orientation; a brainwashing. Prisoners who are their own guards. Prisoners who are not usually aware they live in a prison, for they've never known real liberty.

This is the ideology of patriarchy. Patriarchy is defined in its broadest sense as ". . . the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women in society in general. . . ." ¹⁴ The ideology of patriarchy--pervasive and non-conscious--takes a continually large psychic toll on women and men. Whether we recognize its existence or not, it is an arena in which we move and live. Its assumptions govern the understandings, the possibilities and choices of our lives. As long as it exists, it needs to be named, in many ways, in many voices, again and again.

Women's Conflict, Women's Voices

Within this generally unnamed context, many women grow confused. While it is commonly taken for granted, assumed that women's experience is included in the culture at large, it, in fact, is not. For the most part, women's own experience is not reflected in the culture, and, conversely, the culture does not reflect women's own experience. Given this contradiction between what women experience and what we are "supposed" to experience, women doubt our own selves.¹⁵ Adrienne Rich writes:

Much of the first four decades of my life was spent in a continuous tension between the world the Fathers taught me to see, and had rewarded me for seeing, and the flashes of insight that came through the eye of the outsider. Gradually those flashes of insight, which at times could seem like brushes with madness, began to demand that I struggle to connect them with each other, to insist that I take them seriously.¹⁶

Gerda Lerner elaborates on the insidious tenacity of this ideology, even for those who see themselves as aware of the problem, when she writes:

But even those of us already defining ourselves as feminist thinkers and engaged in the process of critiquing traditional systems of ideas are still held back by unacknowledged restraints embedded deeply within our psyches.¹⁷

Within this context, women experience fear, illness and detachment. In The Words To Say It, Marie Cardinal writes:

"I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"I'm afraid of everything, afraid of death."

In truth, I didn't really know of what I was afraid . . .

I was afraid of death, but I was also afraid of life which contained death. I was afraid of the outside, but I was also afraid of the inside which is the opposite of outside. I was afraid of the others, but I was also afraid of myself who was other. I was afraid, afraid, afraid, fear, FEAR, FEAR. It was everything.¹⁸

And from my own journal:

I am afraid of intimacy. It feels like annihilation. It feels like death of self. No, not death of self, for it feels as if my self has not been born, is being born. So, then, death of the possibility of a self.¹⁹

Women's energy is depleted, spent struggling against a foreign reality, asking for our acquiescence, asking for denial of our selves. Within this context, women become physically and psychically ill. In Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar comment on illness caused by patriarchal socialization of women:

. . . any young girl, but especially a lively or imaginative one, is likely to experience her education in docility, submissiveness, selflessness as in some sense sickening. To be trained in renunciation is almost necessarily to be trained in ill health, since the human animal's first and strongest urge is to his/her own survival, pleasure, assertion.²⁰

And Nancy Mairs' vivid description of the connection between society's prescription for her and her psychic illness in Plain Text is worth quoting in full:

Indeed my life became troubled, not when individual men entered it, but when I emerged from the long undifferentiated dream of my female supported childhood into the Real/Male World, an environment defined and dominated by the masculine principles of effectiveness, power, and success, an environment containing a ready-made niche for me which happened to be the wrong size and shape. Some days I longed to smash the entire hideous alien structure, but I had no tools. Other days I wanted nothing more than to fit into my niche, even if I had to whack off my hands and my feet and my head to do so. Empty-handed, contemplating self-mutilation, of course I grew depressed. I believe now that my depression was--and still is--my response to the struggle not to go under, not to go down for the last time, sinking into acceptance of that space which crabbed and cramped me. I will not be the little woman, my depression cried, even while I was hunching and squeezing, cracking my bones and scraping my knuckles and knees. I will die first. For this reason I call it the saving of me.²¹

Within this context, women become detached from themselves. From my journal:

I am not in my body.
I am in front of my body, usually hurrying.
Or sometimes lagging behind, resisting.
Or standing beside,
observing critically.
My body, my temporal self, seems to be directed
by others, not me.²²

Within this context, women search:

She goes to poetry or fiction looking for her way of being in the world . . . she is looking eagerly for guides, maps, possibilities; and over and over in the "words' masculine persuasive force" of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men . . . precisely what she does not find is that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself . . .

Adrienne Rich²³

As Sandra Gilbert wrote in 1979:

Women as a rule, even sophisticated women writers, haven't until quite recently been brought to think of themselves as conscious subjects in the world.²⁴

And as Carol Christ wrote simply and significantly in 1980:

"Women's stories have not been told."²⁵

But sorting through books in the bookstores and library for relevant materials, she begins to feel an excitement at discovering certain works--women's words. It feels like life. For her it may indeed be a question of an examined life being the only life worth living; it may, in fact, be the only life possible.

Women Hearing Our Own Voices

Tell all the Truth--but tell it Slant--

Emily Dickinson²⁶

She drew the language out into an exacerabated thread in her determination to have her own sensibility yet protect it from those masculine presences.

Adrienne Rich on
Virginia Woolf²⁷

Prostrate as I was, withdrawn into my own universe, how to find the words which would flow between us? How to construct the bridge which would join the intense to the calm, the clear to the obscure, which could span this sewer, this river filled with decomposing matter, this treacherous current of fear, that separated the doctor and me, the others and me?

Marie Cardinal²⁸

It is not easy for women to hear our own voices. It is, in fact, crucially important to understand just how difficult it can be. Women have been socialized to listen to and hear, as well as mimic, the voices of others. The static of all these other voices often obscures or makes it impossible to discern women's own. Hearing our own voices takes much attention and determination--not just once, but on an on-going basis. There are truths that women tell that are often not spoken in loud, "important" voices, but sometimes in soft, tentative ones. These words and thoughts may be easily overlooked in a world that teaches us to attend to the obvious. We learn early that our father's words are the important ones.

Or, on the other hand, women's voices may seem harsh and loud, "excessively" emotional, accusatory, threatening. From the first words uttered in protest, feminists have been accused of "shrillness." The first wave of criticism of the modern feminist movements was largely directed at white middle-class women by white middle-class men. Subsequently, however, the second wave came from within the movements themselves, when women of color were criticized largely by white middle-class women as being harsh and accusatory toward their white "sisters."²⁹ These agitated, unquiet voices may be equally difficult to hear.

Historically, it has not been easy for women to speak out. As the epigraphs at the beginning of this section allude, women's voices have been deliberately obscured for protection from "masculine presences." This "code" makes it possible to speak, while at the same time often making it difficult to understand what is said.

Two chapters of this thesis address the question of voice: "Separation," which considers the differences in traditional "masculine" and "feminine" voices, and "Conflict: Racism in the Women's Movement," which specifically considers the voices of women of color.

A Room of One's Own

For a year now I've been spending all my days in a very sordid hotel room. It's the place where I'm happy. In fact, without it I don't exist.

"To Room Nineteen"
Doris Lessing³⁰

In order for women to hear our own voices, it may be necessary for a time to withdraw from other voices that implicitly or explicitly seek our attention. As Virginia Woolf advised "a room of one's own,"³¹ and as Emily Dickinson sought "freedom"³² in her room, in "polar privacy / A soul admitted to itself,"³³ it is important and necessary for women to claim certain time and space for ourselves. Again, this is not easy to do. Women conditioned to be sensitive to others may feel or be made to feel that it is selfish to be sensitive to ourselves. This is, however, not a selfish act. On the contrary, taking time and space to listen to one's own and other women's voices is a life-affirming act for the individual woman as it ultimately is for all women and girls, boys and men.

From my journal:

My "solution" to the pull into affiliation, and for me the accompanying feeling of loss of identity, has been to withdraw for a time from affiliations. It wasn't necessarily the people I was drawn to that I distrusted--that they would absorb (intentionally or otherwise) my identity,

but as much or more myself, my internal pull that left me aligned with another at the expense of myself. I didn't have enough and needed time and space to define that self. So that, for one thing, I was in a place to express those needs, that self--not to have that self prevail, but to negotiate a relationship of selves.

And:

Every time I go out in the world it takes me time, energy, uncertainty, unwillingness and unpredictable remembering, to "come home" again and find myself.

. . .

At the same time that I separate myself to gain understanding of my self, I lose some of my learned ability to function in society protective of that self. It is an on-going process of balance: isolation, socializing, integration.³⁴

It is an on-going process that works differently for different women, some women needing more time and space and others less, with individual needs varying at different times in different circumstances. Importantly, each woman must determine her own needs.

Women Sharing

I believe increasingly that only the willingness to share private and sometimes painful experience can enable women to create a collective description of the world which will be truly ours.³⁵

Adrienne Rich

For women to hear our own voices may require a painful sharing of experiences. Again from my journal:

This thesis, this project, necessitates my presence--the resurrection and communication of feeling, which means pain, that I have, on reflection, been numbing myself against for awhile. Writing this thesis is looking directly at my demons. It is living with them intimately in the hope that when it is over there will be less, not more, to fear.³⁶

For women to hear our own voices and define our own perspectives, we deeply need other women's voices. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explain in relation to the female writer: "Woman searches for a female 'model' unlike males who attempt to supplant."³⁷ After so many years of wading through analyses by men that have felt alien to us, telling ourselves to concentrate, think, and it would come, and also sometimes saying in frustrated defiance, "Who cares, this has no meaning for me," abandoning the effort although still in need, it is a relief at this time to find so many women speaking out with such authenticity. Although for each individual woman it can still be a difficult, often perplexing search, it is so much easier in the company of writers on a similar quest with a similar point of view. While every day women will still find and fight the doubts as to the legitimacy of our particular perspective, when in doubt we have texts to turn to, texts which will clarify and validate our experiences and

understandings, texts which will eloquently articulate our "truth." How welcome these analyses are! One gets the feeling that with a good bibliography, women can now answer almost any argument. We are very fortunate that this is a time flourishing with relevant ideas and good company.

Perhaps the most important element in these writings is its authenticity. While this "authenticity" is more completely defined in the following section of definitions, it is essentially a "truth" that one woman conveys in her story that helps others better understand our own lives. The formation of women's truth or authenticity is complex. Some elements of this formation are the following:

Women Knowing (Understanding)

One can know something and still not know it with an awareness that makes the knowledge useful or complete. Information is not knowledge. For purposes of this thesis "knowledge" is defined as information and the useful understanding of that information. This knowledge involves both head and heart, both thinking and feeling, and the integration of the two. This knowledge is necessarily subjective, deliberately personal. Conventional knowledge has generally mandated "objective" information, without

feeling, without integration, and, consequently, without total truth and authenticity.

Conventional knowledge has placed thought in a linear order, focused on a point of "importance," and order of "importance"--a logical progression, a hierarchy. Women's truth and the order of this thesis is more of an interweaving of importances: as women in conversation communicate with a complex interplay of conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings from the past, present, and future, including various forms of experience, in order to make connections that clarify and complete the understanding of each other's experience. In this interchange what may be seen as "spaces" in communication are not spaces at all, but contain vital information. These "spaces" of connection, pattern, rhythm, etc. contribute to knowledge certainly as much as the more easily defined "facts."

Connections define knowledge. Connections: the interstices between, the understandings at crossings. These movements indicate points of contrast; the borders; the limits; the coming together of differences. These crossings indicate possibilities: what works, what doesn't. These crossings indicate improbabilities: the inadvisable, the dangerous. The balance between can be/is

living within, but to the maximum extent of possibilities, without shifting (for too long) into the dangerous. These connections, spaces, balances are always changing.

Patterns define knowledge. Into what patterns, connections do the works of the writers in this study arrange themselves? For the patterns do define knowledge; the emphasis defines understanding. How do we understand emphasis, importance? How do we know what is core and what is peripheral? At what connecting points is the heart and mind working at fever pitch, and then subsiding? At what precise point to indulge the senses, feed the child?--integrating always.

Rhythms define knowledge. The fast pace at which we generally live our lives, the intensity, doesn't provide the needed room for whole living, integrated living, an atmosphere, an environment in which it is possible to make choices that are healthy for our lives and ourselves. Our goals are externally determined; our rhythms are externally determined. Goal-directed, daily, hourly driven, whether at top speed or at a speed that is simply faster than one's own "natural" rhythm. Too many of us are externally and inter-nally pushed to live at the wrong speed, and consequently, are out of sync. Authenticity requires a

variety of rhythms, certainly slow as well as fast.
Integration and understanding take time.

While women's truth is certainly an interweaving, at the same time, it is also an unraveling. It is an unraveling of false assumptions and conventional linear logic. It is backing up and starting again without these strongly internalized assumptions and ideas not based on women's own experience, but on an external, abstract patriarchal "authority" of experience.

Women Naming What We Know

Paradoxically, at the same time that women have been blocked by the dominant culture from defining what we know, women have also been accused of not specifically defining or delineating what we know. One reason for women's "non-definition" may be a resistance to and protection against cultural pressure to define ourselves in a certain way which is not our own way. Women's "non-definition" may also, in part, be an attempt by women toward more authentically naming what we know--as if to define is to diminish, to necessarily exclude key elements necessary to the essence, the true knowing of something; that to define does not clarify, but names a false existence, creating in effect something different from the original. (The name of

a thing is not the thing itself--the essence of the thing--
but only a "handle" used to make the carrying
(communicating) less cumbersome; it can distort.)

Women have been apprehending, arranging and juggling
these cumbersome loads of meaning for ages. As women
throughout the third world carry water, the essence of
life, these other loads have been judged by women as
necessary to life. To diminish for convenience would be to
diminish the powers of life, the sacredness of being.

Chapter 6 of this thesis entitled "Separation" is an
in-depth exploration of this issue of women naming what we
know.

Knowing and Naming Through Different Forms of Writing

Women writers allow us to hear our own voices
reflected back to us. Rather than trying to translate,
relate to alien writing, we are beginning to read and
recognize that to which we relate (often immediately,
sometimes gleefully). At the same time, given this
recognition, we are also more readily able to recognize and
incorporate differences. Different forms of writing serve
different purposes in understanding and expressing our
authentic selves.

Journals: One way of understanding issues in the most truthful, personal, and practical way for many women is by journal writing. Looking inward, not writing for an audience, but to express our innermost thoughts and feelings, lets us get to the "heart" of the matter, the authenticity.

The journal voice is personal and can be raw. If it authentically reflects female experience in a male-dominated culture, it is sometimes filled with pain, indignation and anger. It is a voice that often stays personal, left in a journal--judged "unformed" writing by the literary world. It is a voice that many do not want to hear.

It is less threatening personally for me not to include my own journal entries/experiences in this thesis. It is also less authentic, and the knowledge that is conveyed is less complete and less true. Journal writing is an important part of women's information and an important voice. For this reason, despite its raw quality and the personal risk, some of my journal entries are included.

Fiction: Readers can often "hear" voices in fiction that cannot be easily expressed or "heard" in essays or nonfiction. Temporarily "losing ourselves" in another's

reality may allow us to recognize our similarities and our differences. Fiction can be a way for us to know on a more integrated level what we may feel in an elemental way and know in an intellectual way. Fiction is one means of integrating this knowledge so that we more deeply know it, understand and can use it.

Nonfiction: Nonfiction provides a useful structure that allows intellectual delineation and refinement. Seemingly abstract theory can actually be a very useful practical structure for defining the personal. Nonfiction can provide a form for reflection, clarification and integration of what one "feels" from fiction.

With the different advantages of different forms in mind, this thesis will interweave these forms, striving for the clearest whole understanding.

Re-vision

Re-vision--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.

Adrienne Rich³⁸

The writing of this thesis is a study of my life and the lives of other women that is both a privilege and a necessity. It is an opportunity available, even with

considerable effort, for very few. As Adrienne Rich noted in "When We Dead Awaken," it is the privileged women who are there listening to her speak while dauntless others are at home washing dishes and caring for children, as many others are washing other people's dishes and caring for other people's children. Given certain privileges, however, women must not allow guilt for the privilege or fear of the privilege to take (too much) energy from our tasks.

While surely a privilege, the writing of this thesis is also problematic and painful. It requires rethinking strongly ingrained assumptions, redefining and "re-visioning." It is a slow and ponderous process. It is also--for me--a necessary act of survival. This is a very personal thesis; it is also an intensely political thesis. Feminists continue to establish that the two are inseparable.

The Personal is Political³⁹

This thesis is organic. It is my self. It certainly does not spring, like Athena, straight from the head of Zeus. It is made of my body and experience, a woman's body and experience. It is made of blood, vomit, too few tears and someone else's semen inside me. It is made of "insanity" and silence, an inability to speak or to know. It is made of my body turned against itself into illness. It is made of a feeling of falling off the edge of the world, and these words are my attempt to stay on.

Great is the pain of the saying. I speak through pain that screeches, "Shut up!!" "Tell it slant--" advised Emily Dickinson . . . At this time--if I choose life--I have no choice but to tell it straight.

I feel alone in this telling. But I know in my head that I am not alone. I know there are women all around me who feel the same. I know there are women in the past who knew this pain, this determination to survive it, propping me up if I can only pay attention. Women who were unable and unwilling to live anything but the truth. I must remember to focus on them for strength.

I have for years lived outside my body. I have not been inhabiting my body. It is run on remote control while

I myself am tucked safely away in a soft, dark space without sights or sounds, closely resembling the womb. I am not strong enough to live outside this protected environment, this life support system I've created in my mind, sending a mock self out into the world as a decoy. Here, inflict pain on this empty shell, if you will, for no one is at home.

Well, that's what I wanted. But I have been a great failure at this. I am not getting what I want, and I am at this point ill from it. Body, soul and spirit ill. Women's illness: over the toilet bowl throwing up the world; killing ourselves instead of others.

Now--I say I refuse to die. I refuse to be crazy. I refuse to give up my self. Or my daughter, who at sixteen is one more intimate organ attacking me. No, I say, I will not let you. I will grow strong (for you, for me/for me, for you), and in allegiance with all the women around, behind and ahead of us. I owe it to us all. And so do you. This thesis is witness. Let it be useful.

Despair is the question.

Elie Wiesel⁴⁰

I have many questions. I am a woman, and these questions are directly related to being a woman in a culture in which men have held the majority of power. I am a white, born middle-class, now living lower middle-class, heterosexual woman, and my questions are directly related to this particular perspective. I am also a feminist. Although feminism has been roundly criticized concerning its white, middle-class perspective, a key reason that I have defined myself as feminist is related to the connection of my personal experience--not negating it--and the experience of other people--women most specifically. I am intensely interested in our commonalities and our differences.

I should also say that I have a twin sister. This intense relationship with another person is certainly related to the significance of the conflict between affiliation and individuation for me. Although this thesis does not consider this part of my personal equation, it is an element which undoubtedly increases my sensitivity to these issues.

Either you will
go through this door
or you will not go through

.

The door itself
makes no promises.
It is only a door.

Adrienne Rich⁴¹

NOTES

¹Marcia Westkott, The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 203.

²Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 132.

³Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision (1971)," in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, ed., The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1985), 2055.

⁴Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v. "authentic."

⁵Adrienne Rich, "Transcendental Etude," The Dream of a Common Language (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 75.

⁶Westkott, 1.

⁷Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 1.

⁸Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 18.

⁹Westkott, 204.

¹⁰Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 2046.

¹¹S. L. Bem and D. J. Bem, "Case Study of a Nonconscious Ideology: Training the Woman to Know Her Place," in Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs, ed. D. J. Bem (California: Brooks/Cole, 1970). (Revised: March, 1971).

¹²Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Intuition, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 58.

¹³Rich, Of Woman Born, 57, 58.

¹⁴Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 239. This book gives a more complex historical definition and analysis of patriarchy.

For a distinction between "patriarchy" and "masculinism" in Western culture as determined by the Industrial Revolution and the market economy, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, ed., For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1979), 7-20. Also, two clarifications here: 1) this examination of the strong "pull" of the patriarchy is not intended to present women as victims, but, on the contrary, to show the strength and resourcefulness of women in resisting the particular inauthentic and oppressive elements for women of this pull; 2) while this paper considers the pull toward affiliation as a strong force that contributes to the difficulty of women defining our own selves, this is not to say that the mode of affiliation, per se, is negative. As this analysis progresses, it will become clearer that the position of this thesis is that there are many positive aspects of the mode of affiliation for women and men.

¹⁵The tense of the thesis changes here, from third person to first person, as the thesis moves from describing an external "masculine" prescription defining women, toward the personal process of women defining our own selves.

¹⁶Adrienne Rich, Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 3.

¹⁷Lerner, 226.

¹⁸Marie Cardinal, The Words to Say It (Cambridge, Massachusettes: VanVactor and Goodheart, 1983), 13.

¹⁹From my journal.

²⁰Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, 54.

²¹Nancy Mairs, Plain Text (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1986), 141.

²²From my journal.

²³Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 2049.

²⁴Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Fine, White Flying Myth: The Life/Work of Sylvia Plath," in Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 249.

²⁵Carol P. Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980).

²⁶Emily Dickinson, "Poem 1129, " in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 862.

²⁷Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 2047.

²⁸Cardinal, 3.

²⁹For an interesting and informative response to this criticism, see: Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," in Sister Outsider (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 124.

³⁰Doris Lessing, "To Room Nineteen," in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 1905.

³¹Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929).

³²Adrienne Rich, "Vesuvius at Home," in On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979), 163.

³³Gloria Jacobs, "Voices and Visions," in Ms. Magazine, February 1988, 75.

³⁴From my journal.

³⁵Rich, Of Woman Born, 16.

³⁶From my journal.

³⁷Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, 48.

³⁸Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," in The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women, 2048.

³⁹My analysis of the issue of the conflict between affiliation and individuation has been an evolving personal process which occurred (and continues to occur) over several years. My distinctly personal ideas, feelings, and experiences related to the conflict are incorporated throughout the thesis. They are included in the general analysis within a chapter; and they are included in pages (both preceding and following the core analysis) entitled "The Personal is Political."

⁴⁰Adrienne Rich, Your Native Land Your Life: Poems (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 44.

⁴¹Adrienne Rich, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note," in Poems Selected and New, 1950-1974 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), 65, 66.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE PROBLEM

Developmental Prescriptions

In contemporary Western culture, the primary developmental task for all people has been defined as one of individuation, or the defining of oneself as a distinct human being within the culture: two united elements, a person within (connected to, in relation with) a culture. Although this has ostensibly been the goal for all human beings--both men and women--the hidden, but very real pressures and prescriptions have been different. These differences are conspicuously connected to gender, with different prescriptions for each gender.

In reality, the primary developmental task for women has not been one of individuation. It has, in fact, been one of connection or affiliation in relationship, which in Western culture has historically worked directly against defining oneself as a distinct individual within the culture. And, the developmental task for men has not been one of individuation or differentiation within relationship, but, instead, has been one of emotional detachment or separation from relationship, which has

historically worked directly against defining oneself as a distinct individual within the culture.

Thus, historically, affiliation in relation has been the developmental model for females and separation from relation has been the developmental model for males. And, the heterosexual couple, instead of being formed from two complete, authentic individuals, has essentially formed only one completely psychologically developed or individuated person, with the male realizing the individual aspect and the female realizing the community aspect.

Given this psychosocial developmental split, each gender has been blocked from true individuation. Within the Western cultural milieu of male dominance, and specifically within conventional male-dominated psychosociological developmental theory, the meaning of "individuation" has come to stand for or represent the dominant "masculine" position of emotional detachment. This chapter (as well as the thesis as a whole) will specifically define and analyze these concepts and terms with the purpose of bringing more understanding to their intended and applied meanings.

Causes of Conflict: Biological vs. Cultural

In exploring psychological characteristics and connecting them with gender, it is important to be clear that these gender connections are neither gender-exclusive or innate. The chief danger in ascribing certain psychological characteristics to men and certain characteristics to women is in inadvertently contributing to the "anatomy is destiny" or biological determinism theory. In making the gender connection of females as emotionally affiliative and males as emotionally detached, this thesis refutes the theory that these differences are biologically determined or innate. The view of this thesis is, instead, that these differences result from different experiences of males and females in the world (specifically, for purposes of this study, in Western culture), and from discrepancies of status and power. Thus, these differences are culturally determined rather than biologically determined.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to prove or present evidence for this view. The general argument has been made in such works as Evelyn Fox Keller's Reflections on Gender and Science¹ and Ruth Bleier's Science and Gender.²

There is widespread feminist fear and accusation of either purposely or inadvertently supporting the view that gender differences are innate. Every female theorist considered in this thesis can and has been accused of holding or promoting this view: Karen Horney, Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan. Nancy Chodorow accused Karen Horney: "Horney needs to show an innate wish for motherhood."³ While Catherine Keller accused Chodorow:

When Chodorow asserts that "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate," she comes dangerously close to apologizing for the very system she challenges. For if such differences are regarded as "natural," which talk of "basics" surely if unintentionally does imply, then after all men have an excuse for their need to dominate and women have no recourse but to mother.⁴

Both Horney and Chodorow specifically state that they claim cultural rather than biological causes for gender differences.⁵ In the case of Chodorow's use of the word "basic,"⁶ reading the word in context, Chodorow's meaning does not seem to imply innate or biological, but basic in the sense of: "Relating to or forming the base or essence: fundamental."⁷ What Chodorow seems to be stressing here is the extremely strong internalization of certain psychosociological experiences in forming one's concept of self in the world. She is stressing the strength of the pull and the strong internalization of the pull very

specifically as a culturally, rather than biologically, produced phenomenon.

In the case of Horney, Chodorow seems to draw her conclusion mainly from a passage she quotes from Horney on motherhood.⁸ In this passage, Horney is exulting over the possible pleasures and joys for a woman in the personal experience of motherhood. Horney's picture of motherhood as a potentially joyful and tremendously satisfying experience for a woman is certainly in contrast to many women's impersonal experience of the "institution"⁹ of motherhood, in which women's own authentic experience and knowledge as mothers is overridden by the cultural ideas, pressures, and demands of what a mother should be and do. It, however, does not follow that Horney's hope for women is the same as showing an "innate wish for motherhood."

Carol Gilligan has also been accused of advancing the cause of biological determinism.¹⁰ Gilligan does cite both cultural and biological factors as contributing to gender differences:

Clearly, these differences [in "voice" associated with men and with women] arise in a social context where factors of social status and power combine with reproductive biology to shape the experience of males and females and the relations between the sexes.¹¹

Gilligan walks a tricky line here in maintaining that the association of "voice" with a particular gender is an

empirical observation, and that the voice she describes is "characterized not by gender but theme."¹² Still, she does make the gender association. And, in including "reproductive biology," her work is in more danger of being used as evidence to restrict the "roles" of each gender.

Catherine Keller notes this danger, but concludes that this is no reason to avoid discussing differences:

Certainly Gilligan's work (like any account of gender differences) runs the risk of giving inadvertent support to the old tradition of sexual complementarity. This familiar risk is in itself no reason to avoid the issue of difference. "¹³

There are other dangers in naming these differences. It is possible to see women in two extreme positions: as victims and/or as morally superior. (Gilligan and Miller have both been accused of portraying women as morally superior.) But, to name women's oppression is not to portray women as victims, and to name women's powers is not to portray women as superior. It is, to repeat, dangerous territory. I agree with Keller that this is no reason to avoid the issue. It is, in fact, more reason to address and clarify the issue. To name differences does not mean that they are innate or inevitable. Only by naming these differences and making the true cultural connections can the possibility for more psychological latitude for each gender be realized. Only by addressing these issues and making these clarifications will we lessen our fears.

Terminology

Defining Terms

Choosing words, terms is an act of singular importance in communicating a meaning other than the conventional male-identified one. Behind most commonly used English words lies a long history of assumptions and implications that are significantly male-connected. To use these same words or to choose different words in order to change some of these assumptions is a slow and careful process of considering words, their connotations, associations, and etymology.

In choosing words there is the choice of reviewing, reworking, and reclaiming old language or inventing new language. This thesis will emphasize the reworking of conventional language in order to make new connections. This method is useful for the information it can contribute in uncovering and understanding an often overlooked history of female associations. It is sometimes surprising and heartening to find historical evidence of more female origin and inclusion than perhaps initially suspected. And while conventional terminology runs the risk of rooting the question in old terms, at the same time, this questioning necessarily effects changes in the meanings of these terms.

While emphasizing the reworking of conventional language, this thesis will, however, also consider the formulation of new terminology when that terminology is particularly instructive in expediting new understandings.

Concepts and Terminology

This thesis deals with three basic relational concepts and terms: affiliation (in relationship); separation (from relationship); and individuation (in relationship).

Affiliation: Affiliation in relationship has historically been designated as a developmental task for women in the caring for and nurturing of relationships. "Affiliate" is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

- A. Affiliated, received into intimate connection
- B. A recognized auxiliary.¹⁴

Both meanings are significant in relation to the questions of this thesis. Definition "A": "Received into intimate connection" is an important part of the meaning in connection with this analysis. And, although the term "connection" itself may be less troublesome and more immediately clear, it does not convey the entire range of meanings and associations (as well as revealing lexical history) of "affiliate" or "affiliation." Defining "connection" as: "A relation of personal intimacy (as of

family ties); a person connected with others especially by marriage, social, professional, or commercial relationship; a set of persons associated together,"¹⁵ these meanings are intended, as well as other meanings.

Also intended is the particular type of connection implied by Definition B: "auxiliary." In this meaning is the very significant and specific type of affiliation of women's historical subsidiary, subordinate status in Western culture. The OED defines "affiliation" as:

1. 'Adoption; the act of taking a son' Chambers. The establishment of sonship. 1751 Chambers CYCl. s.v., Among the ancient Gauls, "Affiliation" was a sort of adoption only practiced among the great. . . .
2. Adoption by a society, of subordinate branches; union of branches to a supreme or central organization. . . .
3. The fixing of the paternity of a child. Also "fig." The fathering of a thing upon anyone; and, the assignment of anything to its origin. . . .¹⁶

The OED definition of "affiliation" definitely places the emphasis on the "masculine," using such masculine words and concepts as "son," "sonship," "paternity," and "fathering." However, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar provide a useful contrasting and enlarging etymological analysis of the word:

Etymologically . . . the word "affiliation" derives from the gender-symmetrical Latin "filia" and "filius," words which, if not legally at least linguistically, represent an equality of inheritance.¹⁷

And, while they state that the emphasis of the definition of "affiliation" in both the American Heritage Dictionary and the OED is male-oriented, they cite the American Heritage Dictionary as tracing the word back "to the Indo-European 'dhei' meaning 'to suck,' a word etymologically connected with 'she who suckles.'"¹⁸ They deduce that although:

. . . lexical evolution may have erased (by reversing) the female origins of this word--emphasizing sonship rather than daughterhood, paternity rather than maternity--the word itself preserves matrilineal traces and specifically the idea of nurturing and nurtured female.¹⁹

Gilbert and Gubar also point out the duality of choice present in the meaning: to be adopted and to adopt; and also the possibilities of both choice and continuity:

Choice: one may consciously or not decide with whom to affiliate--align or join--oneself.
Continuity: one is thereby linked into a constructed genealogical order which has its own quasi-familial inevitability.²⁰

I have chosen to use the term "affiliation" for this rather complex range of meanings, associations and revealing lexical history.

Separation (from relationship): It is the position of this thesis that emotional separation from relationship has historically been the chief emphasis and result of the psychological developmental process termed "individuation." What may have been seen as a differentiation of the unique characteristics of an individual toward individuation or authentic development, has instead emphasized and resulted in emotional detachment and separation. This posture of emotional separation has been primarily associated with the psychological development of men. It is represented by and promoted in conventional psychological developmental theory. The dynamics of this theory is analyzed more specifically in Part II of this thesis, "The Conflict and Psychological Theory."

This analysis uses the term "separation" to mean emotional detachment from both self and others. This separation includes a "setting apart," entailing emotional isolation from others, and also an internal psychic division or separation of parts of the self. This internal division is evidenced in Sigmund Freud's tripartite psychic structure examined in the theory section of this thesis. A further elaboration of the particular aspects and meanings of "separation" within Western culture is explored in Chapter 6, "Separation," which analyzes Susan Griffin's book, Woman and Nature.

Individuation (in relationship): For purposes of this thesis, "individuation" is "reclaimed" as a term indicating authentic development of a human being, not apart from relationship, but necessarily including relationship.

The OED defines "individuation" as:

1. The action or process of individuating or rendering individual . . .
2. Undivided character or condition; oneness . . .
3. The condition of being an individual; separate and continuous existence as a single indivisible object; individuality, personal identity . . .²¹

This analysis intends to reclaim the significance of the second meaning: "Undivided character or condition; oneness," while explaining the evolution of the emphasis on the third meaning as "separate." "Undivided character or condition" implies both the integrity of individual character as well as the inclusion of connection in relation as an essential element of this undivided condition. Essentially, people exist in community, not in isolation.

Other Terms: The word "authenticity" as well as the word "integrity" are/have been used to connote this new sense of individuation of a true self connected in community. "Authentic" is certainly a useful term in conveying the meaning of ". . . not imaginary, false, or

imitation."²² One's own true person. The word "integrity" is suggested by Janice Raymond to replace the "psychologically-tainted" word "androgyny" (which, as Mary Daly observed, is rather like ". . . scotch-taping John Wayne and Bridgette Bardot together").²³ Adrienne Rich adopts the word "integrity" in her poem of that name in A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far. She defines the word from Webster as: "The quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; entirety."²⁴ As with "authentic," to use "integrity" to define one's real self is helpful in overcoming the unwanted connotations of "individuation." At the same time, "integrity" has the same meaning as the first definition of "individuation," without the broader range of meanings, both in historical and lexical terms.

So while "authentic" and "integrity" are useful, and this thesis does make use of them, for the full range of meanings and connotations and sense of history necessary to understanding the issue, the term "individuation" is more generally useful. Taking the risk of the emotionally detached connotation of "individuation," I prefer to analyze, make use of, and reformulate its associations.

In using the terms "masculine" and "feminine," "man" and "woman," "male" and "female," this thesis is referring to the general gender socialization of the two sexes in Western culture. Like the "too-pat" dualism of affiliation

and individuation, these categories are not definitive and are gender-connected rather than gender-exclusive.

I did not choose to use the term "masculinist" as it seems to connote a smaller, rather "specialized" group that seems to possess pronounced "masculine" characteristics. (In addition to the fact that the term has been used to define a particular "masculine" perspective during a particular historical period).²⁵

"Feminism," on the other hand, does connote (and rightly so) a smaller, fairly "specialized" group that I define as protesting the subordination of women, subordination that includes the cultural mandate of certain socialized "feminine" characteristics. This does not mean that feminists in general negate or deny possessing certain such characteristics, but are in the process of identifying and defining which of these characteristics are authentic to women.

"Womanist" is a term that is used by Alice Walker to define her perspective as a "feminist" woman of color. She defines the term in her preface to In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose.

Womanist 1. From womanish. (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a

woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious.

. . .

2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."

. . .

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.

. . .

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.²⁶

NOTES

¹Evelyn Fox Keller, Reflections on Gender and Science (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

²Ruth Bleier, Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984).

³Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 148.

⁴Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 136.

⁵See Chapter 4 of this thesis. See Karen Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. 1 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1939), 191; and Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1937), 285. Also, see Chodorow, 13-30.

⁶Chodorow, 169.

⁷Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v. "basic."

⁸Chodorow, 148.

⁹The distinction and contrast between the "experience" of motherhood and the "institution" of motherhood is elaborately delineated by Adrienne Rich in Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986). This is elaborated further in the introduction to the section "Mothers and Daughters," entitled "Motherhood."

¹⁰See, for example, Linda K. Kerber, "On In a Different Voice: Some Cautionary Words for Historians," Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society 11, no. 2 (Winter, 1986).

¹¹Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 2.

- ¹²Gilligan, 2.
- ¹³Keller, C., 124.
- ¹⁴Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "affiliate."
- ¹⁵Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v. "connection."
- ¹⁶Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "affiliation."
- ¹⁷Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, Vol. I: The War of the Words (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 170.
- ¹⁸Gilbert, 170.
- ¹⁹Gilbert, 171.
- ²⁰Gilbert, 171.
- ²¹Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "individuation."
- ²²Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v. "authentic."
- ²³Janice Raymond, "The Illusion of Androgyny," Quest: A Feminist Quarterly 2, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 58.
- ²⁴Adrienne Rich, "Integrity," A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1981), 8.
- ²⁵Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, ed., For Their Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1979), 7-20.
- ²⁶Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1983).

**PART II: THE CONFLICT AND
PSYCHOSOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

CHAPTER 3

CONVENTIONAL THEORY

Before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy, however, she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face both to lessen their dread of her "inconstancy" and--by identifying her with the "eternal types" they have themselves invented--to possess her more thoroughly.

Sandra Gilbert and
Susan Gubar¹

In looking at literary criticism by white academic feminists, I am often surprised at the wealth of reading cited from the works of white male critics and at how often there goes along with this a tone of defensiveness, of needing to argue with these gentlemen, of being still somewhat enmeshed in dialogues which serve to isolate the feminist as a woman rather than connect her with a larger community of women. I can feel a kind of underlying strain, too, the strain of trying to explain oneself yet again when one needs to be moving on. . . .

Adrienne Rich²

It is difficult to find the right balance living in a predominantly masculine society between wasting energy continuing to address and engage the fathers and raising and considering issues that make it possible to proceed in women's own terms.

This thesis is a study of revision, and it is not its primary intention to engage the fathers to defend or battle

for women's particular perspective. Be that as it may, I find it necessary and important for clarification to begin with a relatively brief consideration of the traditionally acknowledged history of the theory of psychological development in relation to the conflict between affiliation and individuation. That history is, of course, masculine, and the strongest and most persistent voice in regard to this issue is that of Sigmund Freud. While examining Freud is considering the history of the issue, it is also considering the present, for Freud's theory continues to pervade society in both conscious as well as unconscious ways.

In her book A Mote in Freud's Eye, Hannah Lerman gives several reasons for "[t]he historical hold that psychoanalytic theory was [is] . . . able to impose upon our consciousness" including ". . . the longevity of psychoanalysis as the reigning theory of personality. . . ." ³ Freud and his theory are certainly very much with us today in both public and professional (psychological) spheres whether we recognize it or not. His tenets of psychoanalysis form a part of the often unexamined rules of commonality and agreement in Western society; they contribute to our frequently unacknowledged and unnamed basic assumptions. As such they influence us in important ways of which we are often unaware. Given this tenacity

and impact, it is important to begin this chapter with a consideration of this theory as it relates to the conflict between affiliation and individuation.

Another significant figure in the history of the theory of psychological development is Erik Erikson. His eight stages of human development have been, and continue to be, used as a measure of psychological development and a key indicator of psychological maturity. Thus, it is important to examine the specific criteria and judgment he employs.⁴

Affiliation, Individuation, and Freud

Normally, there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of ourself, of our own ego. The ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else⁵

The psychic life of both males and females begins with the mother. The significance of this attachment is viewed as being greater, however, for the female than for the male. The girl is presumed to be so strongly attached to her mother that the remnants of this attachment remain, despite the subsequent reproaches and feelings of rivalry that arise and later alienate the girl from her mother.⁶

Sigmund Freud

In Freudian psychoanalytic personality theory, the conflict between affiliation and individuation takes place

chiefly in terms of the Oedipus complex and its resolution. Sigmund Freud viewed the Oedipus complex as a "corner-stone"⁷ of psychoanalytic theory. And Anna Freud stated that without it there would be little of psychoanalytic theory left: "The whole importance of phantasy life, conscious or unconscious phantasy"⁸ would be missing. Recently, in a 1986 essay, "Beyond the Oedipus Complex: Mothers and Daughters," Irene Stiver explains the dominant role the Oedipus complex still plays when she quotes from a member of a psychoanalysts' panel considering the theory: "To challenge its (the Oedipus complex's) centrality in the function of the neuroses, becomes an act of rebellion equivalent to patricide or its variant, fratricide."⁹ In the same essay, Stiver points out that:

Serious questions about the female Oedipus complex have been raised for a long time but the theory is still dominant in clinical circles. Moreover, the current renewed interest in psychoanalysis has led some modern feminists to accept many of its basic premises.¹⁰

And:

Still I believe it would be safe to say that psychoanalysts and other clinicians remain wedded to the centrality of the Oedipus complex for maturation and sexual development.¹¹

It is of primary significance that this theory was formulated strictly from a masculine perspective; women's experience was not initially considered. Only after the

theory was formulated was it "modified" to address the female, and these modifications are painfully obvious accommodations. While the Oedipal theory is problematic in terms of women's development, Freud's focus on this conflict for the boy child, as well as, in a different way, his modifications for the girl, are revealing for this study.

Freud explains the Oedipus complex:

In the very earliest years of childhood (approximately between the ages of two and five) a convergence of the sexual impulses occurs of which, in the case of boys, the object is the mother. This choice of an object, in conjunction with a corresponding attitude of rivalry and hostility towards the father, provides the context of what is known as the Oedipus complex. . . .¹²

Through fear of castration (Freud surmises that the boy is perhaps threatened by his attendant for masturbating and also that the boy observes the "missing" penis in girls), the boy resolves the complex by turning away from his mother and identifying with his father. Through this process the super-ego is formed.

Freud describes the Oedipus complex for the boy child as a time when pre-Oedipal feelings of love for the mother and "identification of an affectionate sort"¹³ for the father, lead in the Oedipal period to intense sexual feelings for the mother and hostility and rivalry with the

father. Resolution occurs when, through fear of castration, the boy renounces his attachment to his mother and identifies with his father.¹⁴

Taking Freud's theory as he proposes it, questions that should be asked are: What are the nature of the feelings in the resolution of the Oedipus complex? What happens to these intense feelings of sexuality, hostility and fear Freud describes? Does the boy renounce all affiliation with the mother or only the sexual? And what exactly forms the identification with the father? Is it an emotional attachment or affiliation?

First, what happens to the boy's feelings of attachment for his mother? Freud writes that:

The libidinal trends belonging to the Oedipus-complex are in part desexualized and sublimated . . . [and] . . . in part they are inhibited in their aim and changed into affectionate feelings.¹⁵

It is hard to imagine these highly charged feelings being very smoothly changed into the more docile ones of affection. Especially when Freud also writes: "In boys . . . the complex is not simply repressed, it is literally smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration."¹⁶ Literally smashed to pieces by the shock of threatened castration! These are very strong words expressing extreme fear and trauma. Fear is the motivation for the resolution

of the conflict--fear--or even more strongly--"shock"--of threatened castration. Fear is not an emotion that contributes to affiliation, but, on the contrary, to alienation. Alienation from both the (to use Freudian terminology) "object" of attachment, the mother, and the "object" of fear, the father. (Freudian terminology, e.g., "object" when referring to a person is significant in demonstrating Freud's as well as the boy child's sense of detachment.)

Freud also tells us that with the resolution of the Oedipus complex, "[a] horror of incest and an enormous sense of guilt are left over . . ."¹⁷ More strong words; more trauma; more alienation. In this cataclysm is the boy child able to distinguish his affectionate feelings from his sexual feelings, rejecting the sexual and retaining the affectionate ones? This delicate psychic surgery seems unlikely at this time of trauma. He is, in fact, more likely to excise all emotional attachment--sexual and affectionate--to the mother than to risk confusing his feelings and being left with the highly threatening (according to Freud) sexual ones. How would the boy child cope with this conflict except by detaching himself emotionally from the "object" as well as from himself?

Thus, guilt and renunciation form the basis of the superego. And what exactly is the superego? The superego is defined as:

the one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that is only partly conscious, represents internalization of parental conscience and the rules of society, and functions to reward and punish through a system of moral attitudes, conscience, and a sense of guilt.¹⁸

This "internalization of parental conscience and the rules of society" is an external standard, not a personal affiliation, or connection in relation with the personal father, but an identification with the abstract and external rules of society represented by the father. It is an identification with the detached authority of the father (who has presumably undergone the same process). Real feelings of affection, sexuality and fear (as Freud sees it) are replaced with an external abstraction--the masculine rules of society. Freud explains:

"The authority of the father or the parents is introjected into the ego and there forms the kernel of the super-ego, which takes its severity from the father . . ."¹⁹

Accordingly, Freud's task for the boy child is to give up feelings of affiliation and orient himself as detached emotionally from not only his mother, but, in any personal, central sense, also from his father, society, and self.

Karen Horney points out that with Freud's tripartite psychic structure (id, ego, superego): "The individual has lost his center of gravity in himself and shifted it to the outside world."²⁰ The separation of the psyche into three parts represents the compartmentalization and separation of the self both from itself and from others. Therefore, in the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the boy has renounced his affiliation with his mother--not only his sexual longing, but other emotional attachment due to fear and trauma--and given up his own center of gravity in himself. His reward is a partnership in an "externalized"²¹ masculine society. Although included in the club, his essential self exists necessarily separate from connection in relationship.

Despite the fact Freud admitted that ". . . in general our insight into these developmental processes in girls is unsatisfactory, incomplete and vague,"²² this did not stop him from revamping his theory for girls. For girls, Freud explained, the Oedipus complex culminates when she:

. . . gives up her wish for a penis and puts in place of it a wish for a child: and with that purpose in view [Freud's emphasis] she takes her father as a love-object. Her mother becomes the object of her jealousy. The girl has turned into a little woman.²³

But Freud gives a strangely twisted scenario of the female form of the Oedipus complex. To begin with, the major element for resolution of the Oedipus complex is missing for girls. Freud admitted the problem:

In girls the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. Castration has already had its effect, which was to force the child into the situation of the Oedipus complex.²⁴

However, Freud did not see this problem as negating his theory. Instead, he viewed it as evidence that female development is incomplete or delayed. Lacking the motivation for resolution of the Oedipus complex and formation of the superego, Freud tells us that for girls:

". . . the Oedipus complex escapes the fate which it meets with in boys: it may be slowly abandoned or dealt with by repression, or the effects may persist far in the woman's normal, mental life."²⁵

Due to this, Freud theorized that women are more influenced by feelings and ". . . show less sense of justice than men. . . ."²⁶ In this way, Freud took a male model, reversed it to "fit" the female, and when it didn't fit, labeled the female as undeveloped or immature, assuming the female, and not his theory, to be deficient.

While the focus for the boy child is on the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the focus for the girl stays on the culmination of the Oedipus complex. For Freud's analysis remains fixed at this stage of

development; he never really goes beyond it. He only vaguely suggests:

One has the impression that the Oedipus complex is . . . gradually given up because this wish (for a child by the father) is never fulfilled. The two wishes--to possess a penis and a child--remain strongly cathected in the unconscious and help to prepare the female creature [sic] for her later sexual role.²⁷

Freud's prescription for healthy personality development for a male takes the form of detachment or separation from relationship while his prescription for a female is in terms of affiliation in relationship. The boy is to align himself with the rules of a masculine society; the girl is to align herself with a masculine representative of this society. She does not renounce affiliation as does the boy, but transfers an affiliation with her mother to an affiliation with her father, and then, presumably, to a male lover. Both the boy child and the girl child identify with the father: the boy in assuming the role of the father--the little man; the girl in being a "partner" to the father--the little woman. In both stances is a repudiation of the mother.

According to Adrienne Rich, the Oedipal theory is one in which:

The fundamental assumption here is that the two person mother-child relationship is by nature regressive, circular, unproductive and that culture depends on the son-father relationship. All that the mother can do for the child is perpetuate a dependency which prevents further development.²⁸

Despite the fact the Oedipal complex is considered a basic tenet of psychoanalytic theory, Hannah Lerman tells us that ". . . practically no aspect of the Oedipal theory in its application to women has been verified by psychological research."²⁹ And Irene Stiver reports that:

In reviewing the literature I could not find any systematic studies which supported the notion that little girls turn away from their mothers and instead become intensely attached to their fathers at this stage of development. . . . Girls were noted to attach very early and positively to their fathers.³⁰

Marcia Westkott points out that Freud's Oedipus theory is based on his belief that his patients' reports of sexual exploitation by fathers was imaginary. Through this belief that his patients were reporting not real events but imaginary ones, he came to the conclusion that "all children desire sexual union with the opposite parent."³¹

Freud, in fact, first believed his women patients' reports of sexual abuse to be true and thereupon formed his seduction theory. Only later was he to change his mind, rejecting the seduction theory and replacing it with the Oedipus complex. Recent interpretations question Freud's

disbelief of his women patients. For example, Jeffrey Masson writes in The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory:

In fact, in my opinion, Freud had abandoned an important truth: the sexual, physical and emotional violence that is a real and tragic part of the lives of many children.³²

However, whether the abuse actually did or did not occur does not change what Westkott describes as ". . . the wider reality that all girls were sexualized within the middle-class family as an everyday exercise of power."³³ This sexualization and trivialization came/comes, in fact, not from within the girl herself, but is an external reality within which she lived/lives everyday, whether it is overtly exhibited or not.

Sherry Ortner offers the possibility that, even though Freud assumed that the Oedipal process takes place in a biological family, there is a more basic underlying theory of socialization which is independent of any specific society or gender roles:

It is a powerful and ultimately dialectical theory; the person evolves through a process of struggle with and . . . integration . . . of symbolic figures of love, desire and authority.³⁴

Although Freud's Oedipus theory is unsatisfactory in its explanation of personality formation due to biological or instinctive causes, it is certainly instructive as a key

or the key example of the intense cultural pressure on males toward emotional detachment or separation and also on females toward emotional attachment or affiliation. The tenacity of Freudian theory including the Oedipus complex can be seen both as reflecting that pressure as well as strongly perpetuating it.

Erik Erikson's Ages Of Man

Along with Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson is another psychologist whose personality development theory contributes to the confusion of women in understanding ourselves in our own terms. It is important to clarify this confusion as Erikson's theory of identity development continues to be used as a central developmental model. (It was used as the chief basis for a human development class I took in 1985. My questions to the instructor as to the validity of the model for women were quickly dismissed as relatively inconsequential--a matter of emphasis rather than substance.)

Erikson identifies eight developmental stages, significantly entitled: "Eight Ages of Man" [emphasis added]. These eight stages are:

1. Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust
2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt

3. Initiative vs. Guilt
4. Industry vs. Inferiority
5. Identity vs. Role Confusion
6. Intimacy vs. Isolation
7. Generativity vs. Stagnation
8. Ego Integrity vs. Despair³⁵

Erikson's stages of development emphasize independence and autonomy over relation. In Erikson's model, relation essentially occurs at particular points in development, not throughout development. The stages at which relation is emphasized are: Stage 1: Trust vs. Mistrust; Stage 6: Intimacy vs. Isolation, and Stage 7: Generativity vs. Stagnation. Only the very first stage includes relation until one arrives at the sixth stage in adulthood. In between are four developmental stages focused on autonomy. How, then, one should ask, does one almost automatically begin to incorporate relationship when it presumably becomes time, at stage six, when all other stages are focused in exactly the opposite way?

It is important to note that the stage of identity precedes the stage of intimacy. If this is the order in which the Western male is socialized, it is not so for the Western female. In his later writing, Erikson does describe a difference for the female:

. . . the stage of life crucial for the emergence of an integrated female identity is the step from youth to maturity, the stage when the young woman, whatever her work career, relinquishes the care received from the paternal family in order to commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring³⁶

Thus, Erikson describes female identity as contingent upon the achievement of intimacy with another, while the male presumably evolves an identity which is independent of that necessity.

Nevertheless, despite Erikson's observation of sex differences, his developmental model remains the same, solely reflecting his interpretation of the male experience.

It is significant that Erikson sees the female commitment to relationship as necessarily being with a man. There is not the consideration that the female may desire to form a relationship with another female. There is also the assumption that the woman will have children. It is not viewed as a choice.

Jean Baker Miller points out Erikson's emphasis on emotional detachment or separation rather than relation:

It is important to note that the aim [of Erikson's stages] is not something like development of greater capacity for emotional connection to others; or for contributing to an interchange between people; or for playing a part in the growth of others as well as one's self.³⁷

In the relatively relation-oriented first stage of trust vs. mistrust, Erikson describes a process in which the infant learns to trust. In this analysis, the feelings of the infant are considered in response to the caretaker. The caretaker is presented as a relatively static figure, who by either loving and responsive care, or non-loving and unresponsive treatment, instills trust or mistrust in the infant. At this stage, Miller sees a much more complex and interactive mode of relation in which both the infant and the caretaker's actions and feelings affect the other:

I think that the infant begins to develop an internal representation of her/himself as a kind of being that, for the moment, I'll call by a hyphenated term--a "being-in-relationship." This is the beginning of a sense of "self" which reflects what is happening between people, as known by the relation between people.³⁸

In this description, the infant affects the caretaker as well as the caretaker affecting the infant; there is a dynamic exchange, a relation.

Carol Gilligan challenges Erikson's examples of those who have achieved the highest level of self development--Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther. Gilligan charges that in both men's devotion to the larger society and abstract principles of faith and truth, they live emotionally detached lives from those closest to them. They are unable to maintain personal intimacy.

Even though Erik Erikson's emphasis on the psychosocial rather than the psychosexual aspects of human development differs from Freud, Erikson, nevertheless, joins Freud in representing and perpetuating the goal of human development as one of emotional detachment or separation, with female development presented at best as "other" and at worst as aberrant. Erikson does nothing to clarify, in fact, only confuses these important issues for women.

NOTES

¹Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 16, 17.

²Adrienne Rich, Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 88.

³Hannah Lerman, "From Freud to Feminist Personality Theory: Getting Here From There," Psychology of Women Quarterly 10 (1986): 4.

⁴It is not within the scope of this paper to specifically consider the theory of psychologist Carl Jung. However, a brief reference may be useful.

For women searching for our authentic selves, Carl Jung has seemed to come closer than other theorists to including women's experience with his exploration of the anima and the animus. However, ultimately, Jung's promise proves to be disappointing. As Adrienne Rich explains, Jung is ". . . primarily concerned with integrating the feminine into the masculine psyche. . . ." Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), 95.

And, as Jean Baker Miller clarifies:

. . . Jung's woman "hidden inside the man" is not the same as its reverse. The idea remains a fanciful notion unless we ask seriously who really runs the world and who "decides" the part of each sex that is suppressed. The notions of Jung and others deny the basic inequality and asymmetry that exists. . . .

Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 1st ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 79.

⁵Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 96.

⁶Hannah Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye: From Psychoanalysis to the Psychology of Women (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1986), 110.

⁷Sigmund Freud, "Psycho-Analysis" in Collected Papers, ed. James Strachey, vol. 5 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959), 122.

⁸Lerman, "From Freud to Feminist Personality Theory," 2.

⁹Irene P. Stiver, "Beyond the Oedipus Complex: Mothers and Daughters," Work in Progress, No. 26 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1986), 1.

¹⁰Stiver, 1.

¹¹Stiver, 2.

¹²Freud, "Psycho-Analysis," 120.

¹³Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," in Collected Papers, vol 5, 188.

¹⁴"Sublimation" as defined by Freud:

. . . here both object and aim are changed, so that what was originally a sexual instinct finds satisfaction in some achievement which is no longer sexual but has a higher social or ethical valuation.

Sigmund Freud, "The Libido Theory," in Collected Papers, vol. 5, 132.

¹⁵Sigmund Freud, "The Passing of the Oedipus-Complex," in Collected Papers, vol. 2, 273.

¹⁶Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," 196.

¹⁷Sigmund Freud, "The Resistances to Psycho-Analysis," in Collected Papers, vol. 5, 172.

¹⁸Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v., "super-ego."

¹⁹Sigmund Freud, "The Passing of the Oedipus-Complex," 273.

²⁰Marcia Westkott, The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 63.

²¹The concept of "external living" or "externalization" comes from Karen Horney: "Through what I call externalization, inner processes are experienced as going on outside the self." Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1945), 17.

²²Hannah Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1986), 102.

²³Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye, 103.

²⁴Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye, 104.

²⁵Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye, 104.

²⁶Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye, 104.

²⁷Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye, 104.

²⁸Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), 197.

²⁹Lerman, "From Freud to Feminist Theory," 2.

³⁰Stiver, 11.

³¹Westkott, 89.

³²Jeffrey Masson, The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984), 189.

³³Westkott, 111.

³⁴Rich, Of Woman Born, 200.

³⁵Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963), 265.

³⁶Erik Erikson, "Womanhood and the Innerspace," in Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1968), 265.

³⁷Jean Baker Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self," Work in Progress, No. 12 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1984), 2.

³⁸Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self," 3.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSITIONAL THEORY

Karen Horney

It is comprehensible, therefore--speaking solely from the sociological standpoint--that women who nowadays obey the impulse to the independent development of their abilities are able to do so only at the cost of a struggle against both external opposition and such resistances within themselves as are created by an intensification of the traditional ideal of the exclusively sexual function of women.¹

. . . man does not collide with his environment as inevitably as Freud assumes; if there is such a collision it is not because of his instincts but because the environment inspires fears and hostilities . . .²

It remains one of Freud's great achievements to have seen the role of rivalry in the family, as expressed in his concept of the Oedipus complex and in other hypotheses. It must be added, however, that this rivalry itself is not biologically conditioned but is a result of given cultural conditions and, furthermore, that the family situation is not the only one to stir up rivalry, but that the competitive stimuli are active from the cradle to the grave.³

Karen Horney

It is sometimes overlooked by contemporary feminists that the psychologist Karen Horney was a very early challenger of Freudian theory. First published in 1923, Horney began her work as Freud was ending his. While Horney's work was grounded in Freudian concepts, she gave

them a significantly different interpretation. As the preceding epigraphs indicate, Horney interpreted personality development as culturally rather than biologically determined. Where Freud emphasized the sexual, and separation and supremacy of the ego, Horney emphasized connection and relation: "The necessity of parental warmth and nurturing for the development of a mature, whole self."⁴

Horney did accept the Oedipus complex but with important differences. Contrary to Freud, Horney believed the Oedipus complex is not biologically determined, and, thus, is not universal. She saw it instead as a result of specific culturally conditioned situations. Horney cited certain factors--originating in the culture and passing from parents to their children--that might generate the Oedipus complex. She wrote:

. . . I know of no case in which it was not neurotic parents who by terror and tenderness forced the child into these passionate attachments, with all the implications of possessiveness and jealousy described by Freud.⁵

Specifically, Horney mentioned two conditions that could give rise to a stronger attachment to one of the parents: the first is sexual stimulation by the parents and the second is anxiety generated by the child's conflict between dependency and hostility. In this second case, the

child clings to the parent, not out of love or sexual desire, but because of anxiety. So Horney explained that what may appear to be sexual desire may be something entirely different--anxiety due to conflict. Or, if there is sexual desire, it is likely improperly stimulated by the parent. This interpretation differs significantly from Freud's concept of the desire arising from within the child.

If Freud's Oedipus complex was formulated from his belief that his women patients imagined/fantasized sexual assault which did not actually occur, this basis was likely missing for Horney; she seemed to hold the opposite belief. Marcia Westkott cites Horney:

. . . the girl's fear is neither imaginary nor the result of wishful thinking; rather it reflects the girl's "real danger" (realen Gefuhrdung) of exposure to male sexual aggression.⁶

While "real danger" does not necessarily mean that there was actual assault, Horney also writes: "These fantasies occur with conviction so often that it is a matter of real experience."⁷ The interpretation here is not completely clear. Does Horney use the word "fantasies" because that is Freud's interpretation, but is herself saying that they are not fantasies, but real experiences? Or, is she saying that these fantasies are so strong that for all intent and purpose they have the effect of real

experiences? In her statement, Horney seems to hold both views simultaneously: fantasy and real experience. One senses her unwillingness to confront Freud. Westkott interprets Horney to mean that the girl's fear is based on real experience. Taking both statements together, this does seem more likely to be her intended meaning.

Given this interpretation, Horney would lack the evidence Freud thought he had that women patients' fantasies of incest demonstrated such desire. She would thus lack significant evidence of the existence of the Oedipus complex.

Horney criticized Freud for his heavy sexual emphasis with the accompanying lack of attention to other important qualities she considered necessary for healthy personality development:

I am thinking of such parental attitudes as having real interest in a child, real respect for it, giving it real warmth, and of such qualities as reliability and sincerity.⁸

As mentioned previously, Horney took exception to Freud's tripartite psychic structure in which she observed the person becomes divided from him/herself and externally directed. She challenged the "managerial" aspect of the superego, describing the result:

Both love and work turn into imposed duties against which he rebels inwardly. Spontaneous positive feelings for others are choked, reasons for resentment are plenty.⁹

Horney described an anxiety of making mistakes, of "being unmasked."¹⁰ She explained that the function of the superego:

. . . leads not only to repressing "bad," antisocial, egocentric, "instinctual" drives, but also to repressing the most valuable, the most alive factors in human beings, such as spontaneous wishes, spontaneous feelings, individual judgment and the like.¹¹

She made the distinction between the externally directed superego and internally directed morals which:

. . . represent the standard of feelings or behavior which the individual himself recognizes as valuable and obligatory to him. They are not ego-alien but an integral part of the self.¹²

Horney's aim through psychoanalysis was to help the person give up the artificiality of the superego and replace it with his/her own internally determined and governed moral behavior. Her goal was to overcome the artificiality imposed by Freud's superego, contributing to the upholding of the "idealized image," and to work toward uncovering and accepting the "real self."¹³ In this way, Karen Horney was certainly an important early contributor to the goal of individuation as defined in its most authentic sense.

NOTES

¹Karen Horney, Feminine Psychology (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967), 183.

²Karen Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. 1 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1939), 191.

³Karen Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1937), 285.

⁴Marcia Westkott, The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 64.

⁵Horney, The Neurotic Personality of Our Time, 1937, 84.

⁶Westkott, 92.

⁷Westkott, 93.

⁸Karen Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. 1 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1939), 86.

⁹Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, 222.

¹⁰Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, 224.

¹¹Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, 229.

¹²Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis, 230.

¹³Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. I (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1945), 96-114.

See also Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. II (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950), 17-39.

CHAPTER 5

FEMINIST THEORY

She must learn again to speak
 Starting with I
 Starting with We
 Starting as the infant does
 with her own true hunger
 and pleasure and rage

Marge Piercy¹

Woman-reading-Neuman, woman-reading Freud,
 woman-reading-Engels or Levi-Strauss, has to
 draw on her own deep experience for strength
 and clarity in discrimination, analysis,
 criticism. She has to ask herself, not
 merely, "What does my prior intellectual
 training tell me?" but "What do my own brain,
 my own body, tell me--my memories, my
 sexuality, my dreams, my powers and energies?"

Adrienne Rich²

Hannah Lerman remarks that feminist psychological theory coming from very different viewpoints and arriving at essentially the same conclusions "is most striking, if not downright revolutionary."³ I found this to be true in reading different works from different psychosociological approaches: theoretical and experiential psychological approaches (as well as clinical); moral theory; and cognitive theory.

Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan are three feminist theorists who challenge traditional psychosocial developmental theory. All three propose that

women's psychological development, given women's distinct experience in the world, occurs differently from men's. All three make the connection between women's experience and orientation in the world as one of emotional connection or affiliation in relationship and men's experience and orientation in the world as one of emotional detachment or separation.

From a theoretical psychological approach, in The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, Nancy Chodorow writes:

. . . growing girls come to define and experience themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation.⁴

From an experiential psychological approach, in Toward a New Psychology of Women, Jean Baker Miller writes:

. . . women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of connections with others. Indeed, women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliations and relationships.⁵

From moral theory analysis, in In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Carol Gilligan writes:

Attachment and separation anchor the cycle of human life, describing the biology of human reproduction and the psychology of human development.⁶

This similarity of viewpoint is contained in other works, such as Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind,⁷ in which the authors adopt the terms "separate" and "connected" (which they attribute to Carol Gilligan) as accurate and useful in describing cognitive development.

This chapter will specifically consider the theories of Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller, Carol Gilligan, and other feminist theorists in relation to the conflict between affiliation and individuation.

Nancy Chodorow and Mothering

These assumptions of the primacy of maleness distort the Freudian view of gender and female psychological life, especially by downplaying anything associated with motherhood and refusing to recognize that desires to be a mother can develop other than as a conversion of penis envy and a girl's desire to be masculine.

Nancy Chodorow⁸

In her book The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, Nancy Chodorow has given a vitally important revision and extension of Freudian psychoanalytic personality theory. While Freud did not actually address mothering as an issue (in Freud's account the mother is primarily an "object" for the child with little recognition of individual identity or selfhood

of the mother), Chodorow's focus is specifically on mothering. Focusing on the fact that women are the primary caretakers of children, Chodorow proposes a psycho-sociological theory of female and male personality development based on this situation. Although Chodorow's analysis, like Freud's, centers on the biological family, unlike Freud, she rejects a biological basis for her theory.

Chodorow also rejects most theories of intentional role training which assume that ". . . women's mothering is a product of behavioral conformity and individual intention"⁹ as insufficient to explain personality formation. And, although she gives a brief consideration (in her introduction) to broader cultural factors historically, for the most part, she eschews these factors for a more intimate focus on the family. Chodorow's emphasis is on the intrapsychic structures: the conscious and unconscious aspects of personality and on the "ongoing interpersonal relationships"¹⁰ within the family.

Key, of course, to Chodorow's revision is that she writes from a woman's perspective. Although she still defines her perspective as "largely psychoanalytic,"¹¹ Hannah Lerman points out: "Her work does not come from the psychoanalytic mainstream. Its origins are in feminist thought."¹² And although she uses Freud's psychoanalytic

structure and tradition as a framework, Chodorow challenges its masculine bias with women's own distinct perspective.

Chodorow challenges the tradition not only in content but in style of communication and presentation. She departs from the "self-enclosed" psychoanalytic tradition in writing not solely for that community, but using language that those without a psychoanalytic background can understand. This is an important step in bridging the gap not only between this "self-enclosed" community and the public but also in bridging the gap between "masculine" and "feminine" perspectives.

Chodorow's central thesis is that (in her words):

Women's mothering . . . produces asymmetries in the relational experiences of girls and boys as they grow up, which account for crucial differences in feminine and masculine personality, and the relational capacities and modes which these entail. . . . From the retention of pre-oedipal attachments to their mother, growing girls come to define and experience themselves as continuous with others [whereas] boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct. . . . The basic¹³ feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.¹⁴

Thus, Chodorow proposes that the fact that women are the primary child caretakers results in females and males experiencing themselves in the world in different, actually opposite ways. The girl child who shares the sex/gender of the mother sees herself as like the mother and consequently

develops an orientation of emotional connection or affiliation. Conversely, the boy child who is of a different sex/gender than the mother sees himself as unlike the mother and consequently develops an orientation of emotional detachment or separation.

While Chodorow, like Freud, sees the Oedipal period as ". . . a nodal time of the creation of psychic reality in a child . . .," she finds the main importance of this period is:

. . . not primarily in the development of gender identity and socially appropriate heterosexual genitality [as Freud did], but [instead], in the constitution of different forms of 'relational potential' in people of different genders.¹⁵

Concerning both the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal periods, she explains that girls:

. . . neither repress nor give up so absolutely [as boys do] their pre-oedipal and oedipal attachment to their mother, nor their oedipal attachment to their father.¹⁶

Due to pre-Oedipal attachment and the Oedipus complex and its resolution, Chodorow finds women to be more complexly relational and men's relational issues to be more repressed.

Thus, Chodorow, in her revision, gives meaning and importance to the psychosocial relational aspect of this situation rather than to the psychosexual biological aspect

that Freud did. So while the end result in both analyses may be similar--with the "feminine" sense of self experienced as connected and the "masculine" sense of self experienced as detached--the contributing elements are crucially different. In Chodorow's analysis, the conflict is essentially in terms of relational issues and development of self, whereas in Freud's, the conflict is essentially in terms of sexual issues and repression of self. And, importantly, Freud's analysis considers ". . . this difference in women's development to be responsible for what he saw as women's developmental failure."¹⁷

In contrast to the Freudian view of ego and superego autonomy, Chodorow sees a "differentiation" which is ". . . not distinctness and separateness, but as a particular way of being connected to others."¹⁸ She significantly departs from the prevailing psychoanalytic developmental theory of Margaret Mahler and her followers with their view of the "separation--individuation" process, emphasizing separation (or what Chodorow calls the "me"--"not-me"¹⁹ distinction). She maintains that it is possible to be differentiated without emphasizing difference. She explains that the defining of a "true self" or "central self", while involving the "not-me" distinction, is much more (including ". . . the internalization of aspects of the primary caretaker and of the caretaking relationship . . ."),²⁰ and

that particular aspect need not be unduly emphasized. In fact, emphasizing difference demonstrates a defensive insecurity of self and the incompleteness of individuation.

Not only does Chodorow elevate the mother from an "object" to a person, she, in fact, defines the recognition of the selfhood of the caretaker by the child as an integral part of the developmental process:

. . . according the mother her own selfhood . . . is a necessary part of the developmental process, though it is also often resisted and experienced only conflictually and partially.²¹

She views both caretaker and infant as not existing unto themselves, but necessarily in relation: "two selves, two presences, two subjects."²²

The value of Chodorow's work in providing a cogent theory of female development is broadly acknowledged by feminists. Because her work is so important, it is useful to consider certain criticisms of it. A primary criticism is her base in Freudian psychology. In revising this theory, Chodorow brings much needed understanding and clarity to the issue. However, in continuing to frame the issue in the Freudian defined terms and associations of "Oedipal," "pre-Oedipal," etc., Chodorow unintentionally perpetuates Freud's psychosexual perspective and masculine biases. This problem has been pointed out by Hannah Lerman²³ as well as others.

Chodorow's claim for the universality of her theory has brought protest that what may be true for Western culture does not necessarily hold elsewhere; she is not taking into account important individual cultural and historical factors. Responding to this criticism, Chodorow acknowledged its validity, replying that she was:

. . . trying to describe a universal phenomenon--mothering by women--and describe the psychodynamics that produced it. But those psychodynamics have particular meanings and impact, depending on their social and historical contexts.²⁴

For the most part, Chodorow views mothers and mothering in a positive light (certainly as opposed to Dorothy Dinnerstein's The Mermaid and the Minotaur in which there is much mother-blame). There is, however, some evidence of such blame on Chodorow's part as in the following statement:

Sons tend to be experienced as differentiated from their mothers, and mothers push this differentiation (even while retaining, in some cases, a kind of intrusive controlling power over their sons).²⁵

Responding to criticism of this kind, Chodorow explained that while writing her book she did change in her perspective, from being ". . . very daughter-oriented to being both daughter--and mother--identified." She condemned the mother-blame aspects of society, saying, "No

one deserves the kind of resentment that mothers get from their kids!"²⁶

Chodorow has also been criticized for not accounting for women who choose not to be mothers, and for not sufficiently including lesbian experience in her work. Concerning the questioning of her heavily heterosexual perspective, she responded:

I have . . . been read as saying that people all ought to be heterosexual or in heterosexual couples. That isn't true. . . . We have to distinguish sex and adult relationships from child-care relationships. We should be working toward more male involvement in child care, toward a system in which there would be more than one, isolated, primary caretaker.²⁷

Chodorow still sounds suspiciously here as if she believes it is necessary or optimal for a child to be raised by an heterosexual couple. She does, however, go on to say that she ". . . would like to see parenting dissociated from any particular gender. You might have two men bringing up children, or two women . . .," etc. . . .²⁸

Unfortunately, she fails to address the question of the pervasiveness of male sexual abuse of children. Her prescription for more male involvement in child care, if still part of a possible solution (and I support this), is not without problems which must be acknowledged and addressed.

Regardless of these preceding difficulties, Chodorow's work remains an immensely significant contribution. It is a bridge for women and men in our evolution from the seemingly unrelenting and repressive domination of Freudian theory to a more expansive woman-identified understanding of psycho-sociological life issues.

Carol Gilligan

In example after example the conflict is between a young woman's seeking to act for herself and the obligation of the dutiful daughter.

Carol Gilligan²⁹

Freud's theory that women have less developed super-egos than men and therefore less developed moral consciences is specifically refuted by Carol Gilligan in her original analysis of moral development, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Gilligan's work calls into question the moral development theory of Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg.

In his twenty-year study of eighty-four boys, Kohlberg provides empirical evidence that could be interpreted to support Freud's theory. Based on this study, Kohlberg constructed a six-stage sequence of moral development. In his sequence of stages, women are seen as

exemplifying stage three where: ". . . morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing."³⁰ Women are not observed to "progress" to subsequent stages, where, in stage four, relationships are subordinated to rules, and, in stages five and six, where relationships are subordinated to principles of justice. Thus, remaining at stage three, in Kohlberg's analysis, women are judged to be morally deficient.

Gilligan draws attention to the paradox of this view in that:

. . . the very traits that traditionally have defined the "goodness" of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development.³¹

Pointing to the fact that Kohlberg's work is based exclusively on males, Gilligan takes issue with his conclusions. She proposes an alternative theory of moral development, with accompanying empirical evidence to support this theory.

Gilligan's theory is based on previous psycho-sociological research and theory, and on three empirical studies she conducted. It is augmented by literary analysis. Gilligan's research begins with women's experience and focuses on women. She cites the work of

Nancy Chodorow and Jean Baker Miller. She cites Janet Lever's play study in which girls, given a conflict, subordinated the continuation of the game to the continuation of relationships. (In this study play is seen as a primary activity of social development.) Also, Gilligan describes a violence study in which a correlation is shown between the suggestion of physical proximity between people and violence: the men describing violence as people are brought closer together, and the women describing violence as people are set further apart. From this evidence, as well as evidence from her three studies, Gilligan reaches the conclusion that, for women, morality is a matter of care. This morality is one concerned with responsibility and relationships, which Gilligan contrasts with what she sees as an essentially male morality of rights. To elaborate, in Gilligan's words:

In this conception, the moral problem arises from conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules.³²

Gilligan's work is an exceedingly valuable analysis which provides a new understanding of morality. She provides a framework that, for the first time, as far as I

know, includes and articulates a morality in which relationships, not rights, take on primary importance. This new analysis begins to give credit for developing according to a morality of relationships, instead of censure for not developing according to the morality of rights.

Gilligan makes a strong gender connection in these experiences, but states that these different experiences are not necessarily determined by gender, that is, they are gender-related but not gender-exclusive. She also writes that there is no reason to rank either mode as a superior stage of moral development.

However, as analyzed earlier in Chapter 2, some readers find Gilligan's disclaimers on both accounts unconvincing when weighed with her emphasis in the rest of her work. Another potential problem, as warned of by Carol B. Stack,³³ is of not being clear that this gender construction is particular to a given society, and the temptation to illustrate gender construction as the same in all societies.

Other criticism of Gilligan is methodological. Catherine G. Grenno, Eleanor E. Maccoby, Zella Luria³⁴ as well as Hannah Lerman call for more testing to back Gilligan's conclusions. As Hannah Lerman writes:

. . . the three studies that form the bases of her arguments do not provide sufficient empirical evidence to support the full weight of the theory derived from them.³⁵

Despite these qualifications, Carol Gilligan's work provides essential information and a valuable service in challenging Lawrence Kohlberg's eminent moral theory, and proposing alternative possibilities and connections. Her bold new interpretation opens and articulates a world which validates what has been felt, but not expressed by many. It provides a formative model that contributes a crucial piece for women in defining our authentic selves. There is more work to be done in order to clarify these connections.

Jean Baker Miller

Jean Baker Miller's slim book Toward a New Psychology of Women is an exceedingly important and powerful work chiefly because it begins with and is based on women's experience. Starting with women's experience, Miller interprets the influence of the masculine culture in which this experience is immersed. Like Chodorow, she examines and defines the contemporary Western cultural milieu in psychosociological terms. And, like Chodorow, Miller's central issue is women's orientation of affiliation. Miller writes:

. . . women stay with, build on, and develop in a context of attachment and affiliation. Indeed, women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain relationships.³⁶

Miller, however, brings more of a practical, clinical orientation to Chodorow's more academic, theoretical approach. And, although technically a psychoanalyst, Miller writes chiefly without reference to psychoanalytic theory. Starting in and staying with female experience, she is not so much caught in the trap of using "male-weighted" language and concepts, as is Chodorow with her Freudian Oedipal framework. Explaining that the terms "ego" and "superego" do not fit women's experience in the world, Miller rejects them outright. She explains:

Prevailing psychoanalytic theories about women's weaker ego or super-ego may well reflect the fact that women have no ego or super-ego at all as these terms are now used. Women do not come into this picture in the way men do. They do not have the right or requirement to be full-fledged representatives of the culture. Nor have they been granted the right to act and to judge their own actions in terms of the direct benefit to themselves. Both of these rights seem essential to the development of ego and super-ego as they are defined.

She goes on to talk about women's experience:

This does not mean that women do not have organizing principles or relate to "a reality" in a particular way. But women's reality is rooted in the encouragement to "form" themselves into the person who will be of benefit to others. They thus see their own actions only as these actions are mediated through others. This experience begins at birth and continues through life. Out of it, women develop a psychic structuring for which the term ego, as ordinarily used, may not apply.³⁷

Miller sees women's orientation of affiliation as the source of both women's power and pain. In fact, she writes, women's sense of self can be so tied up in relationships that a loss of relationship can come very close to seeming like a total loss of self. That loss of self is certainly exacerbated by, if not directly attributable to, the lack of recognition of women's distinct reality in Western culture. Miller does much to redefine and claim this reality in ways that acknowledge and affirm women's unique experiences.

Defining dominant and subordinate groups (male and female respectively), Miller explains how women's strengths are turned against women by a society that misnames and abuses these strengths. In a "blame-the-victim" society, women's discontent has historically been interpreted as personal failure to conform rather than a result of society's systematic devaluation and subordination of women. Miller's analysis turns the situation around. She explains that: "In the past women tended to begin by

asking what was wrong with them that they could not fit into men's need and plans." Now, however, she observes that ". . . many women now seek to explore their own needs and evaluate themselves in their own terms." And, very importantly, she points out: "This may seem simple: it was not always so."³⁸

In fact, it still isn't simple. Patterns of socialization and cultural expectation, while being named and revised, are still deeply entrenched, both externally and, most insidiously, internally--deep within our psyches. This internalization of "masculine" values is perhaps the hardest part. Because we must continually question whether and how we are unintentionally contributing to our own "imprisonment." As in the Russian short story about prisoners who unwittingly become their own guards, as women in a male-dominated society, we have been so programmed. Thus, recognizing the situation, naming it and revising it is a continual process because it runs counter to the conditioned patterns within ourselves and with those around us. It is a challenge which can be exhilarating and which is often a terrible strain. It is, however, one which must be met as we choose to live our own authentic lives.

An important practical approach for use in dealing with this challenge is Miller's concept of "open conflict," as opposed to conventional conflict which has historically

been closed. Miller makes the point that conflict is inevitable and is necessary for human development. However, within a system of inequality--such as Western culture--the existence of conflict is denied, and, given this denial, it is very difficult to engage in conflict openly. Conflict, nevertheless, does exist, and is, in fact, made more difficult because of its denial.

Generally, conflict has been inimical to women for some very real reasons such as: the threat of social isolation; the threat of physical violence; and the threat to the female concept of herself (to others as well as to herself) as a person who gets along, fulfilling the external and her own internalized definition of woman in Western culture. These threats are very real in a society in which there is inequality of power, and to displease those in power, threatens one with loss of access to that power.

Miller points out, however, that although conflict can seem to be dangerous or violent (some of this danger is certainly real), there can be more of a potential for violence to erupt through denial and suppression of conflict:

Conflict is made to look as if it always appears in the image of extremity, whereas, in fact, it is actually the lack of recognition of the need for conflict and provision of appropriate forms for it that leads to danger. This ultimate destructive

form is frightening, but it is also not conflict. it is almost the reverse; it is the end result of the attempt to avoid and suppress conflict.³⁹

Although conflict can be frightening and difficult, women must realize that for authentic development, it is inevitable. It is Miller's contention that not engaging in conflict has left women little direct means for changing and growing, as changing and growing necessarily entails conflict. In redefining conflict as necessary and open, Miller allows women to reclaim conflict as an important means to use in defining our authentic selves.

The acknowledgment and use of open conflict is seen by Miller as enhancing rather than altering women's orientation and commitment to affiliation. Miller concludes that women's orientation of affiliation is authentic and valuable. She proposes that:

. . . this psychic starting point [of affiliation] contains the possibilities for an entirely different (and more advanced) approach to living and functioning [in which] affiliation is valued as highly as, or more highly than, self-enhancement. Moreover, it allows for the emergence of the truth: that for everyone--men as well as women--individual development proceeds only by means of connection.⁴⁰

In writing directly to and for women in an obvious attempt to communicate and clarify, Miller has taken a risk. Eschewing psychoanalytic jargon and writing in direct, easy-to-understand language, she takes the risk of

not being considered serious academically. Miller takes this risk in order to present a perspective that is new, clarifying and legitimizing for women. It is an intensely meaningful and immeasurably useful work. It is, in fact, sanity and life-restoring. As one woman quietly but dramatically responded when asked if she liked Miller's book: "It saved my life."

Feminist Theory in Process

But the stubbornly entrenched presupposition of the separateness of selves militates even below consciousness against any alternative.⁴¹

Catherine Keller

Catherine Keller writes of the "separative self"⁴²; Jessica Benjamin writes of "overdifferentiation" or "false differentiation"⁴³; and Jean Baker Miller writes of "separated individuation."⁴⁴ All three are defining the historically male-connected process of "individuation" in which separation from relation is the primary goal. As this thesis explains and as Miller expresses:

Modern American workers who write on early psychological development and, indeed, on the entire life span, from Erikson (1950) to Daniel Levinson (1978), tend to see all of development as a process of separating oneself out from the matrix of others, "becoming one's own man," in Levinson's term.⁴⁵

Margaret Mahler acknowledges the problem, but she succumbs to it. Mahler writes:

We know that the drive is not toward separation per se, but the innate given is the drive toward individuation, which cannot be achieved without autonomous separation.⁴⁶

Nancy Chodorow explains that:

Following Mahler, much psychoanalytic theory has centered its account of early infant development on separation-individuation, on the creation of the separate self, on the "me"--"not me" distinction.⁴⁷

It is crucial to the question of human development to stress that there is a big difference for the developing person in identifying "me" and "not me" and in making this difference necessary for psychic survival.

In contrast to the general "masculine" experience of separation, women's experience toward individuation has been one of what Catherine Keller calls "a different concept of differentiation, beyond the culture of father as differentiator, mother as that from which one differentiates."⁴⁸ In woman's particular form of individuation, relationship has generally been included. Women are now strongly claiming/reclaiming this particular form of individuation as valid, positive and life-affirming.

What has often been defined in negative terms by the "masculine" culture is being redefined in a positive way by women theorists. Concepts such as "dependency,"

"altrusim," "nurturance," and "empathy" are being reexamined and understood in a different light.

Women's connection in relationship has too often been interpreted by society at large in a negative way as emotional "dependency." Within this view, women who are affiliated or connected in relationship are not only not rewarded for the emotional support they give, but are criticized for emotional "dependency." The assumption, again, is that a psychologically mature human being does not need relationships. What is really happening, is that women, for the most part, are fulfilling men's emotional needs, who subsequently feel as if they don't have any. As Miriam Greenspan explains:

The rock of a man, who appears to all his colleagues and to his own wife as the epitome of independence goes home, where his wife cooks his meals, massages his ego, raises his children, and cleans his house. This man builds the rock of his character on the invisible foundation of his dependence on his wife.⁴⁹

Reciprocally, however, the woman rarely gets the same attention paid to her own emotional needs, leaving many women understandably and legitimately "needy." (How well women repress this need is often the measure of how psychologically mature women are judged by society.) The activity of women fulfilling men's needs "automatically" and quietly, leaving men with few apparent needs, gives the false impression that emotional needs are an aberration.

This realization is not to blame women for recognizing and tending to these needs; on the contrary, it is to reveal the truth that all human beings have emotional needs, but one gender is, in general, not getting these needs sufficiently met.

Related to this, Marcia Westkott writes that female altruism is not the straight-forward, self-less characteristic which it is often portrayed to be. Instead, she explains it is:

. . . rooted in premature renunciation of needs, deprivation, reversal of nurturing roles, conversion of anger into compliance, of self-assertion into caring for others.⁵⁰

In fact, the "unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others,"⁵¹ while certainly partly composed of genuine caring, is also an attempt to get the woman's own needs met, perhaps by setting an example that she hopes will be duplicated on her behalf, and/or also by the rather "magical" belief that by fulfilling someone else's needs, her own needs will be vicariously met.

Expected to comply with a developmental model that does not fit her experience or needs, and often attempting to get her needs met vicariously through a man, many women lose a sense of their own real experiences and distinct selves.

Much work in redefining these concepts has been done by Jean Baker Miller's group at the Stone Center at Wellesley College. Beginning with a "self-in-relation" developmental model, Miller and colleagues explore the meaning of concepts such as "dependency," "mutuality," and "empathy." These analyses are labeled "Works in Progress" which places them as a part of an overall process of examining and redefining, juxtaposed to conventional "masculine" theory which has historically proclaimed a more definitive, fixed "Truth." Thus, the group begins with women's experience, defines concepts and theory in relation to the meaning of that experience, and does so in a way or through an on-going process that continues to explore and present new information. They are not in search of an ultimate truth, but are participating in a process of evolution of knowledge.

Miller's/The Stone Center's "self-in-relation" is defined by Alexandra Kaplan as:

. . . a differentiated self, a self with its own clear properties, wishes, impulses, etc.--but a self which achieves articulation through participation in and attention to the relational process. Thus the growth of the differentiated self is commensurate with the growth of one's relational capacities and relational network.⁵²

Miller explains that women who have been seen as "dependent"⁵³ and "passive" have actually been in "active participation in the development of others."⁵⁴ She defines

an active self, an interacting self, a dynamic self. She also stresses that to engage in this type of interaction is not a sacrifice. In fact, she writes, it is ". . . a source of feeling better and more gratified . . ."55

Tracing the developmental process back to the infant, Miller refutes traditional theory which sees the infant-caretaker relationship as a one-way situation in which the caretaker responds to the infant's needs. Instead, she sees more of a mutual relationship with:

. . . much more of a self inseparable from a dynamic interaction. And the central character of that interaction is one of attending to each other's mental states and emotions.⁵⁶

Countering Erikson's second stage of his "Eight Ages of Man": "autonomy vs. shame and doubt," Miller proposes a stage called "agency-in-community" in which the girl is not moving toward autonomy, but toward:

. . . a larger scope of action--but still with an inner representation of a self that is doing this in relation to other selves.⁵⁷

Also, countering Freud, Miller points out that in childhood, there is no "latency" period for girls. (This is the same period in which Erikson's fourth stage stresses "industry" as the goal. Erikson also omits girls' experience when he focuses on "industry," which he observes in his male subjects.) Miller contends that girls are not at all "latent" in their relationships at this stage,

although they may learn to hide their sexuality, especially toward their boy peers who are either not expressing interest or are being "deprecating" and "destructive"⁵⁸ toward girls. But girls' relationships, whether sexual or not, are not at all latent, especially toward those who are reciprocating--mainly peer girls. The specific characteristics and complexities of this interaction requires much further study.

Another Stone Center member--Judith Jordan--takes on Freud further when she rejects Freud's Oedipus complex as "based on a Hobbesian notion of competition, power, aggression and possession of other as objects." She posits instead a development of "a continuous evolving relational elaboration with mutual empathy at its vital core."⁵⁹

"Mutual empathy" is a concept central to Miller and company's expression of "self-in-relation." They define empathy⁶⁰ as an exceedingly complex process that stresses the interaction of self and others: the back-and-forth process of being oneself with a high sensitivity to one's own being, along with a sensing of the other by momentarily imagining oneself in the other's place; an overlapping of self and other for comparison and understanding of similarities through identification; an adjustment/accomodation of understanding of another from one's differences. This mode of empathy requires continual

readjustment, given new responses and information from others coupled with one's more complex understanding of one's own self provided with this new information. It is an on-going process requiring energy, attention, care, intelligence, and flexibility.

In her paper, "Empathy and Self Boundaries," Judith Jordan tells us that empathy requires "a high level of ego development and ego strength and, in fact, may provide a good index of both of these."⁶¹ Although Jordan uses the "masculine"-connected term "ego" here (rejected by her colleague Miller), her meaning is clear. The process of empathy is not one of "passivity" and "losing oneself" in another, but one of activity and engaging a strong sense of one's own self with another. Jordan helpfully clarifies the process by describing a specific interaction of "empathy" during a psychotherapy session in which she is the therapist:

I am engaged in a process of assimilating the patient's [sic] story into my own memories and constructions, but I am constantly alert to the places where her image and affect becomes distorted by my own associations and I adjust, or accomodate, my affect and thought to match hers more closely.⁶²

It is in this intimate process that one could get pulled into too closely identifying with another's experience especially if one is socialized (as are women in general) to value another's experience above one's own.

(Although Jordan points out that the "empathy" may not be, and is usually not, all-encompassing; it occurs in relation to one emotion or experience more than another.) But it is Jordan's position that this complex interaction of empathy is in this sense, indeed, a paradox. For, she explains:

. . . in the joining process one develops a more articulated and differentiated image of the other and hence responds in a more accurate and specific way, quite the opposite of what regressive merging would lead to.⁶³

This process is complex and confusing. It is further clarified by Jordan when she explains that the problem occurs when:

. . . one person does all the empathizing and not only does not get credit for this demanding process, but on the contrary is demeaned.⁶⁴

Yes, this is the problem. Lack of reciprocity. Doing all or most of the work of understanding and identifying with another, and not having one's own self reciprocally identified with and validated is key to women's sense of "loss of self" in relationship. The problem of "losing oneself" in another, then, lies not in the activity of affiliation/empathy itself, but in the lack of reciprocity of the activity. This is a vital distinction. (It is a similar lack of reciprocity that leads to women being considered emotionally "dependent" as previously discussed.)

Thus, follows the importance of "mutuality." It is mutual empathy that is critical to our "selves-in-relation." Getting back what one gives, and giving back what one gets. An on-going cycle of reciprocity.

After having defined mutual empathy as crucial to women's sense of authenticity and fulfillment, it still remains difficult to achieve. Catherine Keller acknowledges the pulls and forces still raging against women even if we know and carefully delineate what we are seeking:

But real empathy, a connection not based on self-deprivation and frustration, will surely be hard for a woman to sustain amidst the psychic and social forces that deny her what she needs for her own sense of worth,⁶⁵

Finding a partner or partners in this complicated, undertaking is not easy. As Miller sadly confirms:

Her [a woman's] biggest problem in a way remains: how to be the kind of self she wants to be, a being-in-relationship, now able to value the very valuable parts of herself, along with her own perceptions and desires--and to find others who will be with her in that way. She still encounters situations, particularly but not only, with men, in which she feels annihilated as a person. I think she is experiencing situations which are common to all of us.⁶⁶

Miller and colleagues' concept of "self-in-relation" is a very important clarification in the process toward what Karen Horney calls the "real self," or Marcia Westkott labels the "ordinary self,"⁶⁷ or the authentic self, or the

truly individuated self. Women who have been expected by the culture (and internalized within ourselves) to uphold an "idealized image" find it hard to relinquish this "heroine." Sometimes she is traded for another heroine figure, hence the romanticization of "feminine" qualities into the belief of "superiority" of women. Although I do not respond in general to Westkott's term "ordinary self" (all people seem extraordinary by definition), it is a useful term in conveying the sense of accepting ourselves not only in our "heroic" and conversely "non-heroic" aspects, but in accepting ourselves even in our banal aspects (which is sometimes the hardest). Accepting ourselves--our authentic, integrated, individuated selves--in all aspects of our humanity. This is hard. It is a continually challenging, painful and rewarding process that gives us all work for many another day.

NOTES

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⁵Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 83.

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⁷Belenky et al., 102.

⁸Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 147.

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¹⁰Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," in Woman, Culture and Society, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 44.

¹¹Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," 43.

¹²Hannah Lerman, A Mote in Freud's Eye: From Psychoanalysis to the Psychology of Women (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1986), 185.

¹³Chodorow's use of the word "basic" is discussed in Chapter 2 under "Causes of Conflict: Biological vs. Cultural."

¹⁴Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 169.

¹⁵Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 166.

¹⁶Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering, 168.

¹⁷Gilligan, 7.

¹⁸Nancy Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," in The Future of Difference, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 11.

¹⁹Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," 10.

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²²Chodorow, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective," 7.

²³Lerman, 9, 10, 186.

²⁴Nancy Chodorow, "Breaking the Mother-Daughter Code," Ms. Magazine, September, 1982, 138.

²⁵Chodorow, "The Reproduction of Mothering," 110.

²⁶Chodorow, "Breaking the Mother-Daughter Code," 38.

²⁷Chodorow, "Breaking the Mother-Daughter Code," 38.

²⁸Chodorow, "Breaking the Mother-Daughter Code," 38.

²⁹Gilligan, 142.

³⁰Gilligan, 18.

³¹Gilligan, 18.

³²Gilligan, 19.

³³Carol B. Stack, "The Culture of Gender: Women and Men of Color," in Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 11, no. 2 (Winter, 1986): 324.

³⁴See Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society 11, no. 2 (Winter, 1986): 310-321.

³⁵Hannah Lerman, 143.

³⁶Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 1986, 83.

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⁴²Keller, 9.

⁴³Jessica Benjamin, "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination," in The Future of Difference, 46.

⁴⁴Jean Baker Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self," Work in Progress, No. 12 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1984), 1.

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⁴⁹Miriam Greenspan, A New Approach to Women and Therapy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 297.

⁵⁰Marcia Westkott, The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 142.

⁵¹Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1983), s.v. "altruism."

⁵²Alexandra G. Kaplan, "The 'Self-in-Relation': Implications For Depression in Women," Work in Progress, No. 14 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1984), 3.

⁵³Miller usefully points out that this "dependency" is more accurately described as subordination, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self", 10.

⁵⁴Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 1986, xx.

⁵⁵Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self", 1984, 5.

⁵⁶Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self", 1984, 4.

Jessica Benjamin also reports that "there is considerable documentation of reciprocal interaction between mothers and infants." Benjamin, 46.

⁵⁷Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 1986, 6.

⁵⁸Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 1986, 7.

⁵⁹Judith V. Jordan, "Clarity in Connection: Empathic Knowing, Desire and Sexuality," Work in Progress, No. 29 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1987), 7.

⁶⁰See especially Judith Jordan, "Empathy and Self Boundaries," Work in Progress, No. 16 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1984); Judith Jordan, Janet Surrey, and Alexandra Kaplan, "Women and Empathy--Implications for Psychological Development and Psychotherapy," Work in Progress, No. 82-02 (Wellesley: Stone Center Working Paper Series, 1983; and Judith Jordan, "Clarity in Connection: Empathic Knowing, Desire and Sexuality," 1987.

⁶¹Jordan, "Empathy and Self Boundaries," 3.

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⁶⁵Keller, 135.

⁶⁶Miller, "The Development of Women's Sense of Self",
1984, 12.

⁶⁷Weskott, 211.

**PART III: THE CONFLICT AND FEMINISM,
INCLUDING FEMINIST/WOMANIST LITERATURE**

THE "MASCULINE"/"FEMININE" CONTRAST:

WOMEN DEFINING OURSELVES

In "Transcendental Etude," Adrienne Rich writes:

Vision begins to happen in such a life
 as if a woman quietly walked away
 from the argument and jargon in a room
 and sitting down in the kitchen, began turning in her
 lap
 bits of yarn, calico and velvet scraps,
 laying them out absently on the scrubbed boards
 in the lamplight, with small rainbow--colored shells
 sent in cotton-wool from somewhere far away,
 and skeins of milkweed from the nearest meadow--
 original domestic silk, the finest findingss--
 and the darkblue petal of the petunia,
 and the dry darkbrown lace of seaweed;
 not forgotten either, the shed silver
 whisker of the cat,
 the spiral of paper-wasp-nest curling
 beside the finch's yellow feather.
 Such a composition has nothing to do with eternity,
 the striving for greatness, brilliance--
 only with the musing of a mind
 one with her body, experienced fingers quietly pushing
 dark against bright, silk against roughness,
 pulling the tenets of a life together
 with no mere will to mastery,
 only care for the many-lived, unending
 forms in which she finds herself,
 becoming now the sherd of broken glass
 slicing light in a corner, dangerous
 to flesh, now the plentiful, soft leaf
 that wrapped round the throbbing finger, soothes
 the wound;
 and now the stone foundation, rockshelf further
 forming underneath everything that grows.¹

Adrienne Rich's poem "Transcendental Etude" from Dream of a Common Language outlines, evokes a woman walking away from the unsettling, jarring argument and jargon in a room--representing emotional detachment or separation--and settling into a comfortable and loving mode of connection, empathy, and affiliation. The woman, Rich tells us, is "pulling the tenets of a life together / with no mere will to mastery, / only care for the many-lived, unending / forms in which she finds herself . . ."

What does Rich's "care" mean, include? The woman's gentle musing, she writes, has nothing to do with "eternity," or "greatness," or "brilliance," or "mastery," but instead with "a mind one with her body" . . . "car[ing] for the many-lived, unending forms in which she finds herself." The woman has spent time, patience, and attention to "detail" collecting these "forms in which she finds herself," identifying with the forms, "becoming" each one--empathizing.

But empathy or affiliation by itself is not enough. Rich writes in the same poem: "No one ever told us we had to study our lives, / make of our lives a study, as if learning natural history or music. . . ." ² The study goes beyond empathy and affiliation, although that is a most important part. It also includes a consideration,

understanding and articulation of how these forms fit into a woman's/women's lives.

Defining women's lives is like the piecing together of quilts with varied designs from various times and occasions--past and recent--pieced together to form a history. Those women who have given their time, attention and energy to these "carings" and "study" have helped form a quilt of psychic comfort for other women. And (to mix metaphors), at the same time, they have been "the stone foundation, rockshelf further / forming underneath everything that grows." Both soft and strong.

The chapters in this section, "The 'Masculine'/'Feminine' Contrast" are pieces of that quilt and parts of that rock defined in feminist terms by some of these women: Adrienne Rich, Susan Griffin, Doris Lessing, Alice Walker and others. Chapter 6 begins the section with an examination of Susan Griffin's feminist analysis of the emotional detachment of males historically. It is entitled "Separation."

This chapter was written as one of my first papers in the feminist study program. The tone and intensity of it reflects my feeling and thoughts at that time. Included are: defiance, anger, defensiveness, and discovery, among others. The tone and intensity also reflect the attitudes

of Susan Griffin's in Woman and Nature, and my attempt to understand by putting myself into Griffin's thinking and feeling; echoing her as a means of my own self discovery; trying on her attitudes; adding my voice to hers as a safe way of continuing to explore and express myself. It is the beginning of finding my voice.

CHAPTER 6

SEPARATION

"He says he is not part of this world, that he was set on this world as a stranger."³ Thus begins Susan Griffin's book Woman and Nature. Throughout her book, Griffin deals with the strong pulls working in Western culture, most specifically, the "masculine" pull toward emotional detachment or separation. This chapter will focus on this separation, exploring the effects of man's⁴ "removed" position on his perspective. In what way/s does this view of himself as essentially apart from the world affect his actions in the world, specifically (as in Griffin's work) in relation to woman and nature?

As explained in the theory section of this thesis, in relation to Chodorow, male infants understand themselves to be unlike their mothers (sexually), and their identity as masculine becomes crucial. As sexual definition becomes paramount, separation or detachment from the mother seems necessary, perhaps urgent. A struggle ensues. Consequently, there evolves an orientation and existence for males that is primarily separate and primarily sexual.

The struggle that ensues may be considered a "process" in which the male seeks to insure his separation

and sexual identity. Griffin explains many ways in which he achieves this. This chapter will explore some of these areas. For purposes of examination, I will structure Griffin's integrated observations into loosely defined categories, using them in an attempt to clarify and with the hope that they do not distort Griffin's intended meaning. Beginning with **Naming** in which man defines reality, proceeding to **Organization** where he organizes his reality; **Value-Giving** where he prioritizes and gives value to what he has named; **Possession** where he owns by **Naming**; and lastly, **Oppression** where he abuses/destroys what he views as his.

The process, like the individual categories, is also not strictly defined. A progression (from one "stage" to another) may be seen. However, "stages" of the process may occur almost simultaneously. For example, **Naming** may be seen as an attempt to clarify, and simultaneously as an attempt at **Possession**. Or there may be more of a linear progression, where, for example, **Naming** seen as an attempt to clarify, may progress through the "stages" of **Organization** and **Value-Giving** to **Possession**.

In this analysis, I am interested in the ways in which man's separation contributes to the distortion and abuse of woman and of nature. This question will be

examined throughout this chapter. The question will also be examined through this process of writing. By this I mean that Griffin has presented her ideas in a complexly integrated way. In taking apart her presentation, as I am proposing, I am essentially using the same process delineated above. I am purposely mirroring man's process of separation as one method of examination. I am taking apart, separating her presentation for my purposes. I am naming and organizing the elements as I understand their importance. Am I value-giving? Do I then in some sense possess and have power over her words? Do I distort or oppress the spirit of her work? In my analysis, am I providing a clearer truth, a partial truth, or an untruth (with integration being essential to her truth)? Does it matter who does the defining? (I believe my intentions are good. I do not wish to change her meaning, a meaning with which I essentially agree).

Lastly, as a final part of the examination of this separation process, I will present a brief response from woman. This response will address the question of the necessity of this masculine process as a means of definition. Voices of women, taken from Griffin, will refute its necessity with their own similar, but significantly different process of definition.

Naming

The first stage in the process that man undertakes to insure his separation and sexual identity is **Naming**. Man begins naming, ostensibly, in order to distinguish one thing from another, to clarify:

The first step of science is to know one thing from another. This knowledge consists in their specific distinctions; but in order that it may be fixed and permanent distinct names must be given to different things and those names must be recorded and remembered.

Carolus Linnaeus (146)

A frightening implication immediately arises with Linnaeus' words "fixed and permanent." A rigidity is introduced. Man's words carved in stone. Man's words as "permanent." Describing what will be (man declares!) UNCHANGING. The ever-changing natures of woman and of nature are, by implication, declared wrong and forbidden.

Very soon man begins to perceive the power in naming⁵

And it is decided to name all the species. That in naming, man is given a glimpse into the secret cabinet of God. And so all the species are named according to their sexual parts (22).

Here, significantly, man echoes his own separation and sexual identification. Plants and animals are also separated and defined according to sexual characteristics.

Man continues to name and further perceives his power in naming. He names and re-creates what he names:

He names all that is necessary, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and these he says he can make (53).

Man's power increases. His name designates his use of what he has named. He names the forest and calls it "timber."

Fir, Cedar, Hemlock. Sequoia, ripe for the cutting (56).

And increases . . .

. . . and that he should then name the brutes and the vegetables. For there is power in words, it is said, and it is put forward that by knowing the names of natural things, man can command them, that he who calls the creatures by their names has power over them (20).

But naming goes beyond the attachment of a word to something. It also pertains to acknowledgment of the named and lack of acknowledgment for what is not named:

we are not told of the existence of the clitoris . . . No one speaks of the clitoris as existing or as not existing (89).

This lack of acknowledgement extends to whole historical movements:

We were never told of the existence of this movement. The existence of this movement was denied to us. We believed we were the first to want to act. We thought we were the first to refuse to submit (212).

Accordingly, man refuses to name and acknowledge the existence of many parts of woman (and nature). Because she is not named, she does not know her self or her feelings:

But she is mute. The rider has named her and so he must also name her feelings. He decides that she loves him (82).

Man names. In his naming and lack of naming he does no less than give or take life. To be named is to be allowed to exist. Man does not name the essence of woman and of nature. They exist only as he defines them, for his purposes. Already, in this first stage, man has denied and distorted woman and nature. By the act of naming alone he has understood power and begun to make use of it.

He continues . . .

Organization

Man now takes what he has named and arranges it. The second stage of the separation process is his **Organization**. The first element of this organization is, again, a separation or division.

They said that in order to discover truth, they must find ways to separate feeling from thought (117).

"He separates energy from matter" (123).

He also separates:

"womb	from body"
"clitoris	from vulva"
"desire	from body"
"spirit	from flesh"
"judgment from	emotion"
"clean	from unclean"
"wilderness	from city"
"wildness	from city"
eternal	from temporal
unchanging	from changing
woman	from other women
woman	from "real world"
man	from other men
man	from nature
man	from woman
"self	from self" ⁶

Man thinks, arranges in terms of oppositions,
dichotomies, dualisms. He opposes:

Activity/passivity,
Sun/moon,
Culture/Nature
Day/Night,

Father/Mother,
Head/heart,
intelligible/sensitive,
Logos/Pathos

. . .

Man
Woman⁷

Man makes these separations and many others. All of these divisions deny the reality, the nature of woman. They are alien to her integrated awareness and understanding. If they bring order to man, his order is built on her mutilation.

Things are not only divided one from another but are divided within themselves:

Space is divided: Into "ghettos." Into the "Cemetery." The "Garden." The "Zoological Garden" (96). Time is divided: By man's thoughts, his creations, his events. Self is divided into three parts: superego--ego--id. Self is divided from self. "Divide and conquer," he says.

The second element of his organization occurs when man considers, studies these divisions as groups or categories. When the individual eludes him, he uses the group to define the individual:

And it is determined that since the single electron cannot be defined, electrons will be studied as groups--that the probable behavior of a single electron can be derived from a picture of the behavior of the group, that the nature of an electron will be defined as part of a structure of electrons (43).

People are not exempt from group classification and study. Groups of human beings are call "populations." "The behavior of populations is studied" (43).

Group Patterns are apprehended. "The domestic pattern is discovered" (43). Man deduces individually unapprehended existence and activity from these patterns. He creates the probability of existence:

Waves of Probability are discovered. Bits of matter are said to have "tendencies to exist" and atomic events are said to have "tendencies to occur" (43).

Man goes further by altering what falls within a category. He reduces it:

And it is said that nature can be understood only by reduction, that only by reducing her to numbers does she become clear (11).

Man finds his categories are more convenient (for his purposes) than the millions of unwieldy individual elements that compose them:

The scientist peels away uniqueness revealing category (6).

Each unique individual is fit into a category. Inconvenient edges are whittled away, identities are blurred. In his organization, man further distorts woman and nature. He divides essence from essence. He arranges categories including only the parts he understands. He manipulates these parts. Man then attempts to discard, destroy the rest--the "waste".

He separates energy from matter . . . What is left over he calls waste . . . He discovers that this waste is dangerous to him . . . He determines to rid himself of this waste (123)

Nuclear Waste. Woman Waste.

What is included in his organization man calls "valuable." What is not, he calls "value-less" or, more often, "waste" which he perceives as dangerous (to him). Man proceeds to define the value of woman and nature. . . .

Value-Giving

In the third stage, **Value Giving**, man declares that the differences he has named are not simply differences, but that each is more or less valuable. That which is male-identified is determined to have more value, and that which is female-identified is determined to have less.

Jean Baker Miller points this out in Toward A New Psychology of Women:

What I am saying is that human experience has obviously been divided in two--not down the middle, but somewhere askew of it. One moiety has been devalued and treated almost as if it did not exist, or as only important for women to do.⁸

Of the dichotomies discussed in the **Organization** stage, one is male-identified, the other female-identified. The male-identified is determined to be more valuable.

Man defines what he calls "real" as valuable:

It is decided that which cannot be measured and reduced to number is not real (11).

What is real is outside the cave (5).

Woman, inside the cave and unmeasureable, is denied as real, as valuable, as essentially existing. Accordingly, nature's value is denied.

Man decides that the more highly evolved, the more valuable. Man says:

woman is less evolved than man. . . . That lacking in reason and morality, women are a kind of middle step between the child and the man, who is the true human being (26).

Man says that intelligence, according to his definition is valuable. He says woman lacks intelligence:

We are nature, we are told, without intelligence (29).

Man says woman's concerns are without value:

It was said of us that we had nothing of value to say. . . . That our lives were filled with gossip and trivia (213).

Man decides that the qualities valuable in woman are usefulness, youth, beauty, and silence. For man's purposes, usefulness is required in woman:

Among applicants a person with high intelligence should be sought. She should be an expert typist. A stenographer. She should be diplomatic, neat and well dressed (57).

And also in nature:

Trees growing in the forest should be useful trees. For each tree ask if it is worth the space it grows in (57).

To achieve usefulness, to achieve youth and beauty and silence, man alters nature and woman. He reshapes nature for his pleasure:

The horse is not designed for carrying weight. . . . Therefore the body of the horse must be reshaped (77,78).

He also requires reshaping of woman. Women reshape their bodies to satisfy his requirements of youth and beauty: face lifts, body lifts, breast implants. A woman is valuable to man if she looks good (again, by man's standards). She is also valuable if she remains quiet. Accordingly, man reshapes woman's mind requiring her compliance and her silence:

I am reminded that a great compliment of my childhood was: She's such a quiet girl.

Michelle Cliff (111)

Girls ought to be active and diligent; nor is that all; they should also be early subjected to restraint.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (79)

Man gives value to himself and denies it to woman and nature. He then radically changes woman and nature, physically, mentally, and spiritually, to match his values. Man now undertakes:

Possession

In the fourth stage, man decides that which he has named, organized, and given value to is under his power, is his **Possession**. Man is afraid of woman and of nature. He views knowledge (of them) not as enlightenment and understanding and appreciation of their qualities, but as a method of mastering, of possession:

By knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all other bodies that surround us, it is declared man can be masters and possessors of nature (20).

Man, afraid he will be annihilated by her powers, attacks nature:

That in order to abate his anxieties, man took up an attack upon nature forcing it to obey human will, it is written (44).

He attacks her with his power as the voice of authorities expressing his unchanging, immutable "truths" spoken in hallowed masculine tones: "It is decided," he says. "It is understood," he says. And as he names her, organizes her and gives value to her, he now possesses her. He has won his attack:

. . . he is not lost in her because she is his now: he has captured her (105).

Man now proceeds to abuse and destroy what he owns . . .

Oppression

The fifth and final stage is man's **Oppression** of what he possesses:

What he possesses, he says, is his to use and abandon (54).

Man requires display of his mastery:

The movements that the show horse executes have no use in themselves but exist as part of the show of dressage, manifesting how obedient she is, how well she keeps her balance, how complete is the mastery of her rider (79).

As master, he destroys life and exhibits his mastery in death:

And in this way, he preserved the birds of America.

[On Audubon killing, stuffing, and mounting what were living birds, (114)]

Woman feels this oppression, perhaps most in her forgetting of her self, her essence:

We do not know we keep secrets. We forget how much we deny. We say we despise knowledge. We recognize that we are dumb. We are not good at inventing names. We could not tell you what it would be to touch truth, to cut away lies (89).

Man's separation process is essentially at an end. He has achieved his purpose; he has insured his separation and sexual identity. Woman lies before man psychically (and sometimes literally) dead--named by another, not

herself, fit into categories she doesn't understand--
 devalued, possessed, oppressed, abused. Man's fear of
 being consumed by her "otherness" has been dissipated,
 annihilated. He has instead annihilated her. Her power
 exists no more to threaten him. It has been contained,
 destroyed. She is without will or self. His desire is her
 desire. Through each stage of the process, he has
 diminished her. He has diminished her though the process
 itself. She does not know at what point she really lost
 herself. Whether it was all at once (at a certain "stage")
 or whether it happened progressively (throughout the
 process). She only knows she doesn't know. There seemed
 to be an acceleration. She lost track. She can't think
 how to recover or even if there is anything to
 recover . . .

But . . .

Somewhere within her she remembers . . .

But though all traces of her vanish, we will not
 forget. In our lifetimes we will not be able to
 forget (217).

I did not have to remember these things, they have
 remembered themselves all these years.

Black Elk (133)

The earth remembers. The body remembers . . .

In the cage is the lion. She paces with her
 memories. Her body is a record of her past (105)

We open our mouths. We try to speak. We try to remember (44).

Woman unravels. . . . She unravels man's artificial ordering of her self, her essence . . .

We were the ones who held things together. . . .
And we were the ones who unraveled the patterns (189).

"What is in those diaries then?"
"They aren't diaries."
"Whatever they are."
"Chaos, that's the point." (175).

The disorder, chaos of the unraveling is not frightening to woman; it gives her a new beginning. She begins at the beginning with "naming". She understands that:

Behind naming, beneath words, is something else. An existence named and unnameable. And all this knowledge is in the souls of everything, behind naming, before speaking beneath words (190,191).

She understands the limitation of naming:

And for the creature we have tamed, the creature we keep in our house, we must make a new word. For we did not invent the blackbird, we say, we only invented her name (226).

She also understands the value of naming. She names what she knows--herself. We begin to name ourselves. What we know ourselves of ourselves.

We see naming as evoking:

We can recite the names to you of Loblolly Pine in the coastal plain of the Southeast, and in the Monongahela Woods of West Virginia we can tell you about the growing of Hemlock, Yellow Birch, Sugar Maple, Magnolia, Basswood, what color the leaves turn if they turn, and their odor and the bark smell too . . . (61).

We see naming as an empowering (of our strengths) and not an oppression. A naming to understand, not imprison. It is tricky ground. Intention defines it. Respect defines it. Woman translates man's dictum:

Divide and conquer in our world, must become define and empower.⁹

By our own describing and defining, we hope to give flight (to our understanding)--with our spirits--(of woman and of nature)--soaring together!

The red-winged blackbird flies in us, in our inner sight. We see the arc of her flight. We measure the ellipse. We predict its climax. We are moved. We fly (226).

But we understand and respect the limits of the union. We experience the blackbird, but we do not attempt to, and do not want to, completely define or confine her:

And yet the blackbird does not fly in us but is somewhere else free of our minds . . . (226).

Woman is on her way to a new naming, a new existence, empowered by self-knowledge and her own organization. She does not value her self above, but equally with others. She is not afraid of, but additionally empowered by the

powers of others. She does not wish to possess, and opposes, abhors oppression. She is on her way!!

To more specifically answer the questions with which I began this chapter: Yes, I have of course distorted Griffin's work by separating it. However, I do not believe I have presented an untruth as I do not pretend that what I write here is the same as what she has written. Perhaps this is one key. We are led to believe that the naming and arrangement by males is equal to and often actually surpassing the thing itself. We come to believe that man, outside woman, can know and define woman in a truer sense than we can know and define ourselves. We mistake the altered form for the real thing. This is the abuse.

I have necessarily presented a partial truth. In separating as I have, I have taken away the possibility of multiple meanings. I have pared down to one "basic" layer, one focused meaning. Griffin's truth is many layered, complex, with her unique associations providing more possibilities than this separation ever could. The real spirit, the real essence and complete truth of her work--"the blackbird itself"--can only be found in the work itself. Only it is what it is! No other arrangement improves upon it. It takes time, energy, and laying down of defenses to read, but her message is worth all the risks

and energy involved. Finishing her book, I do not feel separate, but wholly united with the final chorus of Griffin's voice joined by other women's voices, joined by my voice "speaking to each other of what we know" (227).

NOTES

¹Adrienne Rich, "Transcendental Etude," Dream of a Common Language (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 76, 77.

² Rich, 73.

³Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). There are numerous quotes from Woman and Nature. For convenience, references to it are listed within the text.

⁴Griffin's analysis is defined according to gender, referring to the particular perspective or voice of "man" and to the particular perspective or voice of "woman." My analysis follows Griffin's in using "man" and "woman" to indicate general "masculine" and "feminine" socialization in Western culture, without defining the very real and important individual differences within each gender. Also, Griffin's work has been read to imply that women are innately superior to men. Again, this thesis does not adhere to or intend to support that view.

⁵This and subsequent underlining is for emphasis.

⁶Examples of separations in quotes are from Griffin (95-98); others are added by me.

⁷See "Sorties" in New French Feminisms, Elaine Marks and Isabelle Courtivron, ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 90.

⁸Jean Baker Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 69.

⁹See "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master's House" in This Bridge Called My Back, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, ed. (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1981), 100.

CHAPTER 7

FEMINISM AS AFFILIATION

. . . define and empower

Andre Lorde¹

The Personal Is Political

I do not come to feminism easily. Feminism is not an external I read about, morally and intellectually agreed with, and decided to subscribe to. Feminism is, instead, a way of seeing that I have gradually come to understand--more than once having backed away from--as very accurately identifying my most intimate feelings, knowledge, pain, and perhaps, gradually, pleasure. Verifying my feelings, my information, feminism defines a reality I feel is mine. It gives me my self. It gives a structure of sorts within which to explore that self. It gives other women's feelings and ideas to validate and clarify that reality, allowing my self to exist/become supported and expanded.

Feminism is erotic in that I respond with my whole being. It is energizing and often depleting, because at times I burn so bright with the (new to me) energy of it. Primarily, it is real and through it I am beginning to feel less invisible.

Recently I've heard and read about feminism defined in what seem to me to be very narrow terms--and not only by those who do not call themselves feminists--but by those who consider themselves strong feminists, perhaps even in some sense "representative" feminists trying to communicate to others the validity and importance of feminism. This communication of the meaning and substance of the philosophy of feminism is vitally important. It means the difference between feminism being perceived and existing as an isolated, parochial issue; or alternately representing/instigating/invigorating a change in collective world consciousness from patriarchal separation--threatening eventual annihilation of people on the planet--to a feminist world consciousness of affiliation--promising the continued existence of people in a respectful, even joyful, way.

Feminism does no less than structure a philosophy and politics of world peace and value for all life. So when some women say they don't need feminism because they haven't been discriminated against or some men feel feminism is (merely) a "woman's issue", they are obviously not understanding what feminism is. Persuasions about the importance of "equal pay" or "pay equity", etc., may easily be dismissed (and are) next to "world-shaking" issues such as the survival of the planet.

Given this, feminists must be clear to ourselves and to others concerning what we are about. Feminism is a world-shaking issue. Feminism is about nothing less than the survival of the planet. Let us let that be known.

"As Alix Kates Shulman has noted, 'feminism is not a monolith; there are many different, even at times contradictory positions which may spring from good feminist motives.'"² This statement is certainly true. Feminism is many things as a feminist is many things, often contradictory. My purpose here, however, is to show that the feminist orientation is predominantly one of affiliation as opposed to the prevalent patriarchal orientation of separation. I will examine the evolution of this orientation of affiliation considering both feminist theory and practice within the period of the "new wave of feminism" beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reason for this examination is the previously stated belief that this orientation of affiliation is necessary for the survival and joyful living for the people on this planet.

If the predominant feminist orientation is one of affiliation, then feminist thought/behavior/interaction in a sense provides a laboratory for observing the dynamics of this orientation as a positive, life-saving, life-enhancing force. If a feminist philosophy of affiliation can work in

practice to accomodate, integrate, unite within this microcosm, there is some proof/possibility of this as a viable working system in the larger world. Philosophy and feedback. Ideas/Ideals in action. How do they work?

In her essay "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?"³ Sherry Ortner examines man's separation in his association of woman with nature and his own identification with culture. By separating himself and attempting to control nature, Ortner explains that man views himself as superior (to woman and nature) and woman and nature as subordinate.

And, as previously analyzed, Susan Griffin takes Ortner's thesis further in Woman and Nature,⁴ giving a powerful poetic analysis of patriarchal culture's separation and devaluation of woman and nature. Griffin elaborates a process in which male separation and domination through (patriarchal) culture essentially denigrates and destroys both woman and nature.

In contrast to the male, the female in her identification with the mother feels no urgent need to define and establish her difference. She feels intimately connected with her mother and seeks to extend her orientation of affiliation into the world. However, the female unknowingly enters a world which is formed by the

male's aggressive need to define/assert himself. In this context, the female's orientation of affiliation has historically worked against her as an individual in that she has generally not developed her own independent, individuated life.

"In a very real sense, women have not experienced their own experience."⁵ Not defining ourselves, we have had ourselves defined, and we have largely taken on those definitions as fitting, trying to ignore, rearrange, and rationalize the ill-fit. Within feminism women began to renounce these external definitions and began to claim our own experience and our own selves. Audre Lorde says "...I learned that if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other peoples' fantasies for me and eaten alive."⁶

In the late 1960s large numbers of women (largely white and middle-class), feeling frustration and lack in defining their own selves, began meeting in what were called "consciousness-raising groups". Women came to them from very isolated existences in which many felt crazy as their personal experiences and understandings of reality were not reflected in the prevalent patriarchal reality. Isolated, unsure, confused, these women met and shared their most personal feelings and found to their amazement,

relief and joy that these intimate feelings were actually shared by other women. They came to realize that their feelings, although personal, transcended the personal; that their personal experiences formed patterns that they could identify as political. One woman's truth became in a sense all [sic] women's truth; one woman's oppression became not merely her own fault but a pattern of oppression that all [sic] women shared.⁷ The times were heady; emotions ran high. Women were coming from an isolation structured into the society and forging dramatic informational and emotional connections.

From these groups, women gathered the emotional strength and intellectual clarification to begin formulating their own philosophy and politics--a woman's philosophy that differed radically in form, content and attitude from the prevalent masculine philosophy. Beginning with a basic orientation of affiliation, feminists began to structure a philosophy and politics around this orientation--one diametrically opposed to the conventional masculine orientation/philosophy of separation.

Basic to this new philosophy was the understanding of affiliation itself. Women needed to reinterpret it according to their own experiences. Seeing it not in the

negative, dependent sense of the patriarchal separatist orientation, women reclaimed affiliation as a positive strength that both women and the world needed. As analyzed in the feminist theory section, Jean Baker Miller and others spoke/speak of a:

. . . psychic starting point [which] contains the possibilities for an entirely different (and more advanced) approach to living and functioning [in which] affiliation is valued as highly as, or more highly than, self-enhancement.⁸

Perhaps in the enthusiasm of affiliation first felt through consciousness-raising, women were somehow expecting the connection to continue into a distillation, a consensus of truth. Perhaps it was felt that with enough thought and talk when all theories were proposed and defined, an ultimate woman's truth would eventually arise.

However, the principal reason these women were gathered together was to confront and refute the all-encompassing masculine perspective, passing as human perspective while omitting, altering, or minimizing women's experience and women's truth. As women's truth was felt and found to be different from men's truth, so it stood to reason that there was no one "Woman's Truth." Women's truth was seen to have common elements, but also to be individual and changing. As Dale Spender noted:

Trying to reduce the diversity of human experience and creativity of human meaning to one solitary sediment seems to me not only wasteful and time consuming, but unnecessarily stupid and denotes enormous insecurity in being unable to accept any meanings other than one's own.⁹

Women's truth was seen not to be "objective" as masculine truth, but subjective. As Liz Stanley and Sue Wise explained:

Feminism is no unitary phenomenon and within the feminist body politic there are, to put it mildly, disagreements . . . [Believing that these differences] arise from material differences in women's lives [feminists reject a positivist view which] describes social reality as 'objectivity constituted' and so insists that there is one true 'real' reality.¹⁰

Women's truth was considered as arbitrary as anything else.

Again, as Dale Spender noted:

. . . any theory or conceptualisation is drilling a sample at an arbitrary point--try again tomorrow, or in another place and you will get a different result.¹¹

Obviously, there were no easy answers. Affiliation alone was not enough. Clarification would involve a balance between affiliation and individuation: an interchange, a dialogue between the two. Feminists began to re-define, refine, criticize.

An example of the dynamics of criticism within feminist thought/theory can be seen in relation to Shulamith Firestone's book, The Dialectic of Sex.

Published in 1970 at the beginning of the new wave of feminism, The Dialectic of Sex was read, considered, appreciated, and criticized widely. Firestone expressed the view that women could not be equal until they were no longer responsible for reproduction of the species. Toward this equality, she advocated replacing biological motherhood with artificial reproduction.¹²

While acknowledging the importance of Firestone's contribution, Adrienne Rich criticized Firestone for prematurely discarding biological motherhood without understanding it within the context of a patriarchal system. Rich maintained that it was the system, not motherhood itself that was at fault.¹³

Sherry Ortner also questioned Firestone's interpretation of the biological basis of women's oppression, locating it instead in culture.¹⁴ And while finding Firestone's book "invigorating," Juliet Mitchell found fault with Firestone's "historical materialism," claiming that it was not historical, but simplistic materialism.¹⁵

Criticism here seems to be a process of acknowledgment, consideration and adjustment or alteration of proposed theory. The climate in which it occurs feels

like one of communication and connection, not competition as an "ultimate authority."

Although it is instructive to understand how feminists have commented on and criticized one another's general theories, it is perhaps even more instructive to consider "divisive issues" that have arisen within feminist thought within the feminist community. These issues include accusations of racism, classism, heterosexism, and anti-Semitism. I will examine some of these criticisms in order to understand how they exist/act/react within an existing orientation of affiliation.

Adrienne Rich criticized feminist theorists--specifically Jean Baker Miller, Nancy Chodorow, and Dorothy Dinnerstein--for their failure to treat heterosexuality as a political institution. While acknowledging their "best efforts," Rich charged that:

. . . the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the caste system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness.¹⁶

In turn, Hester Eisenstein pointed out that Rich herself could be criticized by lesbians when she defined a "lesbian continuum" as:

a range--through each woman's life and throughout history--of woman-identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman . . . [but also] many more forms of primary intensity between and among women.¹⁷

Eisenstein noted that:

Some lesbians might feel that she was minimizing or overlooking the particular requirements of courage and the specific kinds of anguish experienced by lesbian women (in cases of child custody, for example) that straight women could avoid.¹⁸

Perhaps the strongest criticism within feminism has been made in terms of color and class. In the initial enthusiasm of women's connection and also in an effort to justify gender study as a legitimate field,¹⁹ race and class issues were minimized or overlooked. Racism was also charged. Barbara Smith wrote:

Black women were a part of that early women's movement, as were working-class women of all races. However, for many reasons--including the increasing involvement of single, middle-class white women (who often had the most time to devote to political work), the divisive campaigns of the white-male media, and the movement's serious inability to deal with racism--the women's movement became largely and apparently white.²⁰

And Hester Eisenstein described a "false universalism"²¹ in which an unwarranted leap is made from the understanding of women's common experience to the assumption that this experience necessarily takes precedence over other experiences of race, class, etc.

Alison Edwards, Angela Davis and other black women writers criticized Susan Brownmiller's account of rape in Against Our Will. Edwards accused Brownmiller of racism in failing to deal with the differences in experiences between black and white women, especially with regard to differences in power. Davis pointed out the omission by white feminists of the "myth" of the black rapist. The myth, she explained, was used as a political weapon by a racist system of criminal justice against the black community. In their lack of sensitivity to the black woman's history and experience,

. . . the history of rape written by Brownmiller and others fed into racist mythology, rather than placing the struggle against sexism alongside of, and directly allied to, the struggle against racism.²²

In Sister Outsider Audre Lorde gives a particularly provocative analysis of the issue of racism within the feminist movement (I change to the present tense here because the following part was immediate to me then; I was living it and trying to understand it, whereas the preceding was more of an historical framework.) Lorde says that ". . . for Black women and white women to face each other's angers without denial or immobility of silence or guilt is in itself a heretical and generative idea."²³ She asks that we not be afraid of anger in working toward honesty. Believing that it is not our differences that

separate us, but our refusal to recognize those differences, she calls for a future in which we can allow each other's differences at the same time that we recognize each other's similarities (as women).

In a specific communication to Mary Daly, Lorde

. . . attempts to break a silence [in which] I had decided never again to speak to white women about racism [feeling] it was wasted energy because of destructive guilt and defensiveness, and because whatever I had to say might better be said by white women to one another at far less emotional cost to the speaker and probably with a better hearing. But I would like not to destroy you in my consciousness, not to have to.²⁴

In this letter, while acknowledging her debt for Daly's "strengthening and helpful"²⁵ work, Lorde criticized Daly for the absence of black women's experience in her book Gyn/Ecology, except as victims or "decorations."²⁶

In "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," Barbara Smith writes about the relationship between black and Jewish women. Smith feels that in her writing she runs the risk of alienating both groups--black and Jewish--and especially fears losing ". . . the political support and understanding of other women of color, without which [she] cannot survive."²⁷

Despite the difficulties, both Lorde and Smith reach out in a very open way, with precise and articulate

honesty. It is not an easy thing to do. Smith begins her essay, saying, "I have spent the better part of a week simply trying to figure out how to begin."²⁸ Why do these women make this difficult effort?

Later in her essay Smith speaks of affinity:

But feelings of affinity in themselves are not sufficient to bridge the culture, history, and political conditions that separate us. Only a conscious, usually politically motivated desire to work out differences, at the same time acknowledging commonalities, makes for more than superficial connection.²⁹

Although in these words Smith seems to assume affinity/affiliation, she makes it clear that it is not as simple as affinity or affiliation alone.

Smith cites reasons for reaching out such as: forming coalitions as a means to accomplish the revolution;³⁰ in order to stay alive (quoting Bernice Johnson Reagan);³¹ because of ". . . some basic level of ethics and respect [in which we] owe something very basic to ourselves;"³² and to encourage understanding.³³

Lorde and Smith both raise questions for me. I feel many things in their writing--a power (especially with Lorde), an urgency, anger, fear, as well as a desire (often qualified) for connection. There are various messages here: some clearly articulated and some silent.

They make me realize that I know little about the lives of black women and other women of color. I wonder for the first time: Does the orientation of affiliation that I argue as a basic orientation among women apply to black women and other women of color, or is it a white woman's orientation? Perhaps white women have enough of an illusion and a reality of safety within a white patriarchy that affiliation essentially overrides all else: exclusion, fear? Perhaps women of color are more "in touch" with alienation/separation, fear? Perhaps a potential orientation of affiliation in women of color is greatly diminished if not altogether obliterated by daily doses of oppression within a white racist society?

There are many questions in relation to black women and other women of color that need to be asked. White feminists must stop assuming that black women and other women of color are looking from the same perspective. I am looking at affiliation from a white woman's perspective and from the perspective of mostly white feminist theorists. There is much more information/exchange that we need in order to begin to understand our differences as well as our similarities (as women).

Often white, heterosexual feminists are criticized as not being willing to face or struggle with these issues of

racism, classism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism. White women have called these "divisive issues". I think what white women's bristling at "divisive issues" with statements such as "Can't we just be women together?"³⁴ perhaps reflects not only the discomfort and fear of facing racist, classist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic charges, but also (white) women's strong underlying assumption and orientation of affiliation--that unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, affiliation is assumed.

An orientation of affiliation could partly be a survival tactic, as those dominated learn to accommodate those in power, or as a political strategy of oppressed groups affiliating because it is their only chance of (any) impact. An orientation of affiliation could come partly from this--but--from feminist theories of affiliation (Chodorow) and from the feelings and thoughts expressed in the previous interchange of women dealing with their differences--it seems to be much more than this. There is fear: fear of a loss of privilege; fear of loss of community; fear of the unknown, but, beyond this, there is an honesty, a bravery, an integrity throughout these words that assumes affiliation and, when it is lacking, works painfully toward repairing the separation. These voices do not assume separation, and do not rejoice in their

individual egos--alone--no matter how victorious, or fearful the women may be.

Feminist theories are proposed, considered by other feminists and criticized. However, this criticism within feminist theory and within the women's movement feels to be not a criticism in the narrow sense of egos battling to establish dominion of a particular individual perspective, but instead, a true consideration and clarification.

In essence, one woman is saying: "You see this, but you are speaking from your particular experience, and you are omitting this from my experience." There is an interplay of considerations, a process of building on each other's personal truths: an elucidating, an enlarging, a refuting, an acknowledgment, an accomodation--all elements in communication and connection. It is not an attempt to establish ultimate, contained, "objective" Truth in which the prevalent consideration is the end product--the goal--the enhancement of individual ego--separation instead of connection.

While there have been and are mistakes/conflicts such as "false universalism" where it was assumed that what women had in common as women in all cases outweighed all other differences, ultimately, through the misunderstandings and miscommunications, I have the

feeling, and faith, that the primary consideration for women/feminists, the ultimate "aim," the desired atmosphere, is affiliation. That what is meaningful for us as women/feminists is connection, not power over, affiliation not separation--not an affiliation in dependency but an active, growing connection. Not only as a protection of self--what we need for survival, but survival in order to continue communication toward connection. What we want regardless.

There's a feeling of trust here--that we essentially understand the rules, and we have the common goal to communicate, to understand, to affiliate, not separate creating power bases. This seems true in all this work--that essentially we're in this together, while the "fathers" battle it out one on one: ego to ego. It feels like home.³⁵

By its nature feminist thought is "re-visioning," changing, allowing and integrating the multi-dimensionality and complexity of all women's thought with not one theory, one ultimate truth but a collective body of knowledge that approaches as much as possible the many truths of all women's lives--not merely replacing white middle-class men's truth with white middle-class women's truth.

We have actually barely begun to build a base of women's experience. While, at this time, there are many problems of racism, classism, heterosexism and anti-Semitism within feminism, significantly, there is also an awareness that these problems exist and a working toward overcoming them.

As feminists, we cannot believe that there is one answer, one truth, but it does seem that women's conditioned orientation of affiliation (even if it is "only" white women's) is a positive attribute in such a discordant and destructive world.

As relationships between people change, of course the balance between affiliation and individuation will change-- both within each sex and in each individual. With hope, this balance will eventually enable each person to exist as an unique individual with recognized and appreciated differences within a community of affiliation. I believe that the dynamics within feminism, despite conflict, including conflict, exhibits hope. To extend feminist dynamics into the world will, of course, in some sense change those dynamics; those dynamics could also, to some extent, change the world.

NOTES

¹Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (Watertown, Massachusetts: Persephony Press, 1981), 100.

²Hester Eisenstein, Contemporary Feminist Thought (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1983), xvii.

³Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in Woman, Culture and Society, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).

⁴Susan Griffin, Woman and Nature: The Roaring inside Her (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

⁵Carol P. Christ, "Spiritual Quest and Women's Experience," in Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 228.

⁶Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 137.

⁷At this time there was little to no consciousness that the "universals" being discovered by women in consciousness-raising groups might be somehow defined and limited by the race and class composition of the groups: largely white and middleclass. (This false assumption would later begin to be painfully explored.) Instead, at this time, the excitement and relief of recognition within these groups was assumed to extend to all women.

⁸Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 83.

⁹Dale Spender, "Theorising About Theorising," in Theories of Women's Studies, ed. Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 29.

¹⁰Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, "'Back Into the Personal' or: Our Attempt to Construct 'Feminist Research,'" in Theories of Women's Studies, 193.

¹¹Spender, 28.

¹²Eisenstein, 17.

¹³Eisenstein, 71.

See also: Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977), 170.

¹⁴Eisenstein, 22.

¹⁵Eisenstein, 17, 18.

¹⁶Eisenstein, 55.

¹⁷Eisenstein, 55.

¹⁸Eisenstein, 56.

¹⁹Eisenstein, 132.

²⁰Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith, "Introduction: The Politics of Black Women's Studies," in But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies, ed. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (Old Westbury: Feminist Press), xx.

²¹Eisenstein, 132.

²²Eisenstein, 33, 133, 134.

²³Lorde, 129.

²⁴Lorde, 70, 71.

²⁵Lorde, 66.

²⁶After four months Mary Daly did not respond to Lorde's letter, and Lorde opened the letter to the community of women.

²⁷Barbara Smith, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Relationships Between Black and Jewish Women," in Yours in Struggle, ed. Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith (Brooklyn: Long Haul Press, 1984), 68.

²⁸Smith, 67.

²⁹Smith, 73.

³⁰Smith, 68.

³¹Smith, 68.

³²Smith, 83.

³³Smith, 85.

³⁴Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Identity: Skin Blood Heart,"
in Yours in Struggle, 50.

³⁵It may feel much more like "home" to me, a middle-class white woman, than to others of different class and race.

DIFFERENCES AMONG WOMEN

I speak to you as a friend speaks or a true lover not out of friendship or love but for a clear meeting of self upon self in sight of our hearth but without fire.

Audre Lorde¹

So there's a piece of me that wants to resist wholly and a piece that wants to accept wholly, and there's some place in between where I have to find my own ground. What I can't afford is either to wipe out your perceptions or to pretend I understand you when I don't.

Adrienne Rich to Audre Lorde²

The Personal Is Political

Adrienne Rich speaks of feminism as "a politics of asking women's questions."³ I have many questions. Beginning to find some reflection of my reality in feminism, I find that feminism has been essentially not a woman's experience as I thought, but a white woman's experience. Still, I sense, I hope for an atmosphere of affiliation. Perhaps I am naive. Perhaps I feel it only because I am speaking from a white woman's protected and privileged perspective. I don't know.

I can really speak only my individual truth, and that is hard, trying not to cloud it too much with my fears or my hopes. Here's to the questions! (They are certainly my questions). Feminism is an open issue. Perhaps in this we have the hope.

The conflict between affiliation and individuation is expressed in differences among women. Things are more complex than many women wanted to or could see in the first stages of the contemporary women's movement. Now, there is more general and consistent acknowledgment that gender does not stand alone, that gender works with other important variables--race, class, sexual orientation, etc.--to form a complex and unique person.

In Common Differences⁴ Jill A. Lewis, a white feminist, writes of her interest in Nancy Chodorow's book, The Reproduction of Mothering, and her attempt to engage Gloria Joseph, a black feminist, in discussing its political importance. Joseph was reluctant and somewhat put off; she did not see the relevance of the work to her black female experience. Lewis was surprised and disappointed.

One can read into this interaction whatever level of emotions one wants, perhaps fueled by information and emotions from our own personal encounters. Each woman had a different experience, and each woman would have apparently preferred a more ready understanding and affirmation/ affiliation from the other. This understanding, however, was not immediately forthcoming. (More understanding took effort from both in reexamining

her own and the other's perspective and in their continued communication.)

This difference of experience and non-immediate identification can be and often is difficult and painful for many women of color and white women as well as women of different classes, sexual orientations, etc. This section will specifically consider these differences according to race and to class.

Chapter 8 examines the issues of race and class in general terms. Chapter 9 continues the exploration of the issue of race within the women's movement by more specifically analyzing different women's written expressions of it in the book, This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color.

CHAPTER 8

RACE AND CLASS

Race

The painful conflict in different perspectives of women of color and white women elucidates the difficult balance between affiliation and individuation. The immediate affiliation of women of color and white women assumed and hoped for (mainly by white feminists; women of color knew something was wrong) in the first stages of the contemporary women's movements failed to consider the differences in racial experience (both within the movement as well as without). White feminists were in a sense doing to women of color what men had/have been doing to women in general: defining another according to one's own experience. The fact that white feminists were essentially presuming to define the lives of women of color (at least to themselves, the white women), assuming that the experiences and lives of women of color were essentially the same as white women's (whatever the reasons), caused/causes a lot of conflict within the movement.

Some crucial differences that were not initially considered were the fundamentally different relationship dynamics with both men and women for women of color and

white women. In general, women of color have had/have a specific political relationship to men of color defined by race. Together, they form an alliance against racial oppression. And, in general, white women have had/have a different relationship to white men. Large numbers of white women have been and are living in intimacy with a representative of the group in power. They often love and have children with these men.

At the same time, relationships between women of color and white women are formed from different experiences with different variables. Where, with women of color, as with white women, there exists a certain distrust, competitiveness and low value of each other spawned by a misogynistic culture, with women of color, there is a counteracting tendency/necessity for affiliation with one another spawned by that same culture's extreme racism. Audre Lorde speaks of "a tradition of closeness and mutual care and support"⁵ between black women. At the same time, she bemoans the "reluctance to connect with each other on any but the most superficial levels."⁶ Lorde explores the complex and contradictory feelings and expressions among black women in her essay, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger."⁷

On whatever level, black women have historically formed a "female community providing a potential bulwark against breakdown."⁸ On the other hand, many (particularly urban) middle-class white women have recently been isolated from one another, living apart from female (and male) family support and friends in suburban "ghettos."

Due in large part to the misconceptions and presumptions about their experiences and lives, black women and other women of color have been, and often still are, largely suspicious and distrustful of the generally white, middle-class contemporary women's movement. Gloria Joseph writes:

Most Black women still feel a sense of distrust. They believe that the white women in the movement are largely middle-class and exhibit racist mentalities, and they are convinced that the concerns of the movement are not relevant to their material conditions.⁹

However, I believe that white women (and men) are beginning in increasing numbers to learn from the lives and literature of women of color. The unique characteristics of the experiences and lives of these women are being examined and learned from by both women of color and white women (and men). For example, Adrienne Rich writes in Blood, Bread and Poetry:

In reading a great deal more of Black women's fiction I began to perceive a different set of valences from those found in white women's fiction for the most part: a different quest for the woman hero, a different relationship to sexuality with men and to female loyalty and bonding . . .¹⁰

The different experiences, understanding and expressions of anger between black feminists and white feminists are further explored in Chapter 8, "Conflict: Racism in the Women's Movement." Chapter 11, "Black Mothers and Daughters As Explored in the Writing of Alice Walker" continues to explore relationships between black women through the writing of Alice Walker.

Class

Like race, class is another important variable which must be considered when discussing gender. First there is the question of determining class. The class of most women in Western society is determined by relationship to a man: conventionally, first her father and then her husband. In general, historically, women have not had independent economic existence apart from men. Some men may be in the working or lower class; almost all women without men--or the financial proceeds from men--are. Hence, the women's movement saying: "Most women are only one man away from welfare."

Working Class: Lillian Rubin writes in Worlds of Pain¹¹ of the working class. She points out that for working-class women there is little time for women's development in a family struggle to survive economically. She writes:

Among working-class families, tradition dies hard because life itself is harder, and it often feels as if survival depends on adherence to ways that are known.¹²

Thus, women in these families are even more trapped than middle-class women in rigid roles that work against the possibility of access to their own authentic selves. At the same time, women living apart from men, especially with children, do not experience more access to their true selves. On the contrary, struggling for economic survival on their own, they are additionally economically and emotionally burdened, and are generally left with little time or energy to think in terms of and work toward their own individual development.

Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing"¹³ is an immensely moving portrayal of the dilemmas of a working class single mother. It depicts the sadness and irony of a woman of economic, and resulting emotional, disadvantage raising children alone in a society which gives little support for this situation, which in fact blames the mother for her problems. The story is structured around the

mother's thoughts about the life of one child in particular when a request comes from the child's teacher for a meeting with the mother. The teacher writes:

I wish you would manage the time to come in and talk with me about your daughter. I'm sure you can help me understand her. She's a youngster who needs help and whom I'm deeply interested in helping (9).

The mother thinks back over all the difficult years of raising her daughter alone, during the depression, a daughter who now "needs help." She thinks of her husband who abandoned her with her daughter when she was nineteen. Economically disadvantaged, she had to leave her eight-month-old child to go to work. Day care was bad, but she had no choice. She had a low-paying job and no money for sitters, during work or after. She had other children. She had no time. She ponders:

And when is there time to remember, to sift, to weigh, to estimate, to total? I will start and there will be an interruption and I will have to gather it all together again. Or I will become engulfed with all I did or did not do, with what should have been and what cannot be helped (9).

She was a hassled, harried, and distracted mother, preoccupied and exhausted. Her daughter received "anxious, not proud, love." She mentally addresses her daughter's teacher: "You think because I am her mother I have a key . . ." But, she muses, sadly and matter-of-factly, "I will never total it all" (20).

It is the knee-jerk reaction of society as a whole, and unfortunately often internalized by the mother, that if something is "wrong" with the child, it's the mother's fault. (If something is right, credit seems paradoxically more spread around.)

Olsen's is a powerfully human and heart-breaking story of many mothers, who are not only not helped, but blamed, carrying this extra economic and emotional burden through their lives. Needy and guilty, they plod on--usually--in quiet desperation, so as not to stir up more societal anger and blame. More, they know, they could not bear. They are often left in confusion and pain when their children are said to need help: Where did they go wrong? What can they do? What power do they have? The answer is--too often--very little, trapped as they are in the economically disadvantaged, "world of pain," working class.

Middle Class: While the contemporary women's movement has highlighted middle-class women and their problems, and there has been a backlash by women of color and other classes, this fact does not minimize the legitimate problems and concerns of middle-class women. The pain, psychic and physical (women are battered in all classes), is no less real for middle-class women than for their working-class sisters. It is simply composed of

different elements. The middle-class woman's problems and pain is difficult to identify. For her material needs, for the most part, are being met.

The pain of the middle-class woman is largely a psychic pain, an obliteration of the psyche, the self. Physically, the woman is not starving, but psychically she may be dying. She may not even know or be able to admit it to herself. She may consider herself "happy": she has everything she is supposed to need. But perhaps she spends more time in bed each day. One day she just doesn't get up. Or she goes along "cheerily" on her way, until one day she hears voices and believes someone is trying to kill her and there's no one there. Or one day she's cuddling her new-born baby while her other children play animatedly around her; the next day, she pulls out the family pistol and shoots them all including herself. What happened? everyone asks. Wasn't she privileged? Didn't she have everything any woman could want?

Upper Class: On the other side of the class issue, if the pain of middle-class women has been trivialized, the problems and pain of upper-class women has been even less understood. How could "rich" women have problems? The problems of white upper-class women may in a sense be an extreme form of the psychic annihilation of white middle-

class women. There is little information on this perspective, as there are few rich women to begin with, and even fewer who are able and willing to communicate about their lives; the threatened loss of extreme privilege keeps them quiet. One of these women, Sally Bingham, writes:

Rich women have been so well rewarded by an unjust system that we have lost our voices; we are captives, as poor women are captives, of a system that deprives us of our identities.¹⁴

For rich women, the conflict between affiliation and individuation takes place in extremes. There is intense pressure to align with and nurture rich men. And the questioning and challenging of this role is threatening and dangerous. In very revealing testimony, Bingham explains this heightened dilemma for rich women:

Most women are expected to balance demands for equity with a special sensitivity to human needs. We are asked to value compassion more than fairness, understanding more than critical judgment. Since family fortunes and family businesses usually descend to male heirs, this protective duty becomes essential to the maintenance of the whole structure. If the inheriting males are revealed as vulnerable and uncertain, the whole enterprise is likely to fall. And so the role of rich women becomes, essentially, that of buttressing rich men.¹⁵

Within this system and atmosphere, there is no room for conflict. Agreement and harmony are mandated. For women especially, Bingham reveals, the result is an imposed silence and a concomitant loss of self:

But to preserve contrived peace, some people will be permanently silenced. And since the point of view of women is generally less acceptable than the point of view of men, it will be women, in rich families, who are silenced for the sake of peace.¹⁶

Class as a factor influencing peoples' lives must be considered for the particular elements and problems that are associated with each particular class. We have learned and are learning that these factors must be included and considered when studying gender (as well as other factors). Each class must be equally considered in its unique and also common characteristics as each individual within each class must be.

In her poem entitled "Hunger," Adrienne Rich writes: "Quantify suffering, you could rule the world." And, "They can rule the world while they can persuade us / our pain belongs in some order."¹⁷ Rich addresses an interesting and controversial question. She is saying that there is or should be no hierarchy of pain or oppression. The idea, I believe, is that each individual or group that is oppressed should be acknowledged. They should not compete with one another for their particular issue or oppression. Instead, the oppressed should form coalitions against all oppression.

But, as Bell Hooks writes, arguments such as this one for unity in oppression, anger (poor) black women who feel that their particular experience of oppression is different and more severe than that of white, middle-class women.

Hooks writes:

Despite the reality that white upper and middle class women in America suffer from sexist discrimination and sexist abuse, they are not as a group as oppressed as poor white, or black, or yellow women. Their unwillingness to distinguish between various degrees of discrimination or oppression caused black women to see them as enemies.¹⁸

In not distinguishing these differences, white women (and others) are not acknowledging or addressing black women's unique experiences. Hooks' point is well taken. It is necessary and challenging to address these unique experiences of different women and different groups of women. As these differences of race, class, etc. are acknowledged and communicated, there is more of a possibility of understanding oneself--individuation--and understanding others--affiliation--inclusive of these factors.

NOTES

¹Adrienne Rich, "An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich," in Sister Outsider (Trumansberg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 106.

²Audre Lorde, "Conversation in Crisis," in The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States, ed. Dexter Fisher (Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1980), 278.

³Hester Eisenstein, Contemporary Feminist Thought (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1983), 144.

⁴Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives (New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1981).

⁵Audre Lorde, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger," in Sister Outsider, 151.

⁶Lorde, 147.

⁷Lorde, 145-175.

⁸Marilyn Valom, Maternity, Morality and the Literature of Madness (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 110.

⁹Joseph and Lewis, 276.

¹⁰Adrienne Rich, Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 74.

¹¹Lillian Rubin, Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976).

¹²Lillian Rubin, Intimate Strangers: Men and Women Together (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).

¹³Tillie Olsen, "I Stand Here Ironing," Tell Me a Riddle (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1983). Page numbers are included in the text.

¹⁴Sally Bingham, "The Truth About Growing Up Rich," Ms. Magazine, June 1986, 48.

¹⁵Bingham, 49.

¹⁶Bingham, 49.

¹⁷Adrienne Rich, "Hunger," The Dream of a Common Language (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), 12.

¹⁸Bell Hooks, A'int I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 145.

CHAPTER 9

CONFLICT: RACISM IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

As previously discussed, in her book Toward A New Psychology of Women,¹ Jean Baker Miller examines the question of conflict between people. She explains that historically, for many reasons, women have avoided conflict. Key to this avoidance has been the view of conflict, as defined by the dominant male culture, as threatening and destructive. Miller makes the point that conflict actually does not have to be destructive. She explains that conflict is in fact an essential part of human life, and that women (as of course do men) need to learn to engage in respectful and "open conflict" in order to grow both individually and as part of a community and culture. In doing so, the internal conflict between individuation and affiliation may be eased.

Miller's positive view of conflict as open and potentially growth-enhancing is particularly relevant to a fundamental conflict occurring within the women's movement--the issue of racism within the movement. This question of racism within the women's movement is addressed specifically in a section of This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color² edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. This section is entitled "And

When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You: Racism in the Women's Movement."

This chapter examines racism as experienced and expressed by the women in This Bridge Called My Back, keeping in mind Miller's view of conflict as open and respectful, providing knowledge and growth to those on both "sides" of the conflict. This open communication, while difficult, ultimately provides more authenticity and affiliation among the women writers represented here and among others who read and discuss their writing.

Much confusion and anger is apparent in the writings of these women on racism. A central question in regard to the conflict is what happens with this anger? Is it expressed? How is it expressed and to whom? And what are the outcomes--both constructive and destructive--of this conflict? Recognition of anger and its expression are necessary to Miller's view of "open conflict." Old views of conflict required suppression of anger. There was no open interchange; expression of conflict was covert and nonrespectful of each party's integrity; subterfuge was employed. In adopting "open conflict," both parties must be brave--one in daring to expose and express anger and the other in daring to listen. The women who have written in This Bridge Called My Back have been brave and very

expressive. As a white woman, it is hard to hear their anger and remain open. But I believe we must for what we can learn about each other--and ourselves--from this exchange.

The anger of the women in these writings takes several forms. The first is a very volatile anger which is defined mainly by its assertion and its exclusion (of white women). This anger is heard in the writings of Chrystos and Doris Davenport, and to a lesser extent in the poems of Jo Carillo. The second is a more evenly expressed anger with an attempt at inclusion of white women. The writings of Mitsuye Yamada and Judith Moschkovich are somewhat weary, sometimes exasperated attempts to--one more time--try to educate their slow-learning white sisters about themselves as women of color. The third is an anger which also attempts to include and educate. It, however, goes beyond the doubtful, tentative tone of Yamada and Moschkovich into a strength of expectancy. The anger of Rosario Morales, and particularly Audre Lorde, is firm in its call for understanding, inclusion, and community. It is an anger which has obviously been unleashed--as the anger of Davenport and Chrystos--and then been re-harnessed as a power, working in a complexly intelligent and specific way toward alleviation of conflict.

Two poems by Jo Carillo begin the section on racism. "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You" is a poem which portrays Carillo's frustration at being seen as an object by her white, radical sisters. She feels she is treated as other-enhancing, adding "color" to the lives of her pale sisters. She does not feel valued as a woman "in the flesh"--an individual human woman--but valued as a possession for display. She describes various pictures of women of color her white "friends" love to own--the pictures capturing their smiling spirits while the flesh and blood reality is not as happy, not as simple. And in "Beyond the Cliffs of Abiquiu," Carillo again describes the exploitation of the Indian spirit. Carillo is disappointed and bitter; her tone is mocking. She suggests no solutions, but simply expresses anger at the abuse of Indian land and people for the obvious advantage and enhancement of Whites.

The anger of Carillo is carried even further by Chrystos and Doris Davenport. Theirs are painful, angry demonstrations of their exclusion by white feminists. As Chrystos says, ". . . so many bitter memories of women who disrespected me & others"(69). Being excluded, their differences ignored, they now choose to exclude themselves. Chrystos explains, "I left the women's movement utterly drained I have no interest in returning My dreams of

crossing barriers to true understanding were false . . ."
 (69). Davenport decides that black "wimmin" ". . . should
 stop wasting our time and energy [on white women] until
 these wimmin evolve" (89).

Davenport, like Chrystos, felt/feels excluded by the women's movement, and attempts to explore "why white wimmin are racist" (85). Although she says she "doesn't see the point of further cataloguing my personal grievances against white racist feminists" (85), there is, in fact, more evidence of grievance in her writing than actual delving into the whys of racism. Concluding her essay, Davenport says that "the cause of racism in white feminists is their bizarre oppression (and suppression)" (89). What does this tell us? To me, her "observation" makes things no clearer than the initial statement that white women are racist. Davenport's tone is one of disdain, even, at times, disgust for white women. She proposes, and then abandons as probably hopeless, a suggestion for black and white women to engage in consciousness-raising "conversations" together. Davenport finally recommends withdrawal and exclusion, advocating the use of black women's energy for their own purposes.

Chrystos' attitude is not as contemptuous as Davenport's. Hers is more of an expression of strong

disappointment. She admits that she is "afraid of white people," and says that ". . . bitterness distorts [her] words" (70). Chrystos feels abandoned, ending her essay with the words: "I don't understand those who turned away from me" (70).

From writing with the chief emphasis on expression of anger, we proceed to writing that not only expresses the anger, but also attempts to educate to prevent anger-causing activity. Mitsuye Yamada attempts to educate with her essay on Asian Pacific American women, as does Judith Moschkovich on Latin American women and culture. Yamada challenges the prevalent image of Asian women as non-political and invisible, saying that Asian women are speaking out, are being active, but she questions whether they are being listened to. She feels frustrated that she must say the same things over and over, as if she had never said them before. Moschkovich explains, and Yamada echoes that ". . . it is not the duty of the oppressed to educate the oppressor" (79). Yamada is tired of working so hard to educate, and still seeing the same mindsets and stereotypes persist. She says she mistrusts women in the women's movement, and feels the movement today is not receptive to issues important to Asian women. She wants white women to indicate that they want to join Asian women in their struggle because it is white women's struggle too. Despite

the prevalent tone of disappointment, Yamada does end on a note of hope when she speaks of a communal education "where we learn from each other because we want to learn from each other" (75).

Moschkovich's tone is similar to Yamada's. She is also frustrated and exasperated; there is a weariness in her writing. Moschkovich is tired of the emphasis on the negative aspects of her culture. Like Yamada, she wants to be, and does not feel she has been, listened to when speaking about her own culture. She is tired of defending herself and her culture, and yearns for "a sharing experience . . . where American women learn on their own without wanting to be spoon-fed by Latinas" (83). There exists much doubt and disillusionment in the words of both of these women.

Rosario Morales' tone is a contrast to Yamada's and Moskovich's. She immediately conveys a confidence that she knows who she is, and expects to be listened to and accepted as that person. She defines her reality and that of her culture crisply and directly. She does not convey doubt or hesitancy. Morales wants it understood that color and class do not define people or politics. Her skin is white, but she is "puertorican"; she married into the middle class, but was born into the working class. She

specifically opposes a society that divides, explaining that although only some of us are victims, all of us are sexist and racist. Morales finds hope in the unity of us all being "in the same boat" (93). We must, therefore, she prescribes, struggle together to help one another.

Audre Lorde writes two very provocative pieces on racism within the movement. The first "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," is, I feel, an excellent example of "open conflict" as Miller defines it. It is very hard and threatening for Lorde to criticize Daly, ". . . a woman whose knowledge so much matches [her] own" (95), and whose analyses she has found "strengthening and helpful" (94). Although she finds Daly's Gyn/Ecology "full of import, useful, generative, and provoking" (94), she also feels Daly's non-inclusion of black women's experience and is brave enough to explain to Daly (and others) precisely why. Lorde says that she had previously "decided never again to speak to white women about racism" (97). She has felt it was wasted energy, with too high an emotional cost for the hearing. However, Lorde once again decides to expend the energy and emotion to try to reach Daly and other women about these issues. She feels them as important enough, is brave enough, and has hope enough to try again.

Lorde ends the section on racism within the movement with an essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." This essay talks about the omission of lesbian and black women and their experiences from panels at a conference at which she was invited to participate. She speaks of difference--not as something to be tolerated, but as a positive force, ". . . a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (99). Related to conflict, or as an element of conflict, Lorde explains differences. She says that ". . . as women, we have been taught to either ignore our differences or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change" (99). She says that we must learn to make our differences strengths--to form a community of differences. Lorde and Miller are in complete agreement here, and Lorde has taken an important first step in showing "open conflict" in intelligent operation.

All of the writers mentioned are participating in "open conflict." It is interesting to listen to their expression and monitor our responses, particularly as "accused" white women. Stemming from the same problem and same basic approach, in philosophy and format, each anger is exhibited and perceived differently. Each anger affects certain results. I would like to examine these effects.

I believe the anger--rage even--displayed by Chrystos and Davenport is important and necessary to an initial recognition of injustice by these women of color. As women recognizing our oppression by men, we felt it essential to express our outrage, and to be listened to. It is the same with women of color. They deserve, and need, expression of their anger. It is hard, perhaps impossible to take further steps without it. Expression of the anger serves as a catharsis, making it possible to be clearer in deciding how to deal specifically with the conflict. For some women a certain amount of separation may also be necessary. They may need to retreat, away from energy-draining conflict in order to better understand--or perhaps even understand at all--what they really feel and what they really want. As appropriate as this anger may be, it is the experience of some that it is difficult to respond to this anger except with sadness, guilt, and perhaps corresponding anger. This intensity does, however, make one notice, wonder and examine what has caused such a response. It is provoking, and that is an important accomplishment.

Yamada and Moschkovich are more restrained in their anger. One wonders if either of these women has ever expressed herself as volatily as Davenport or Chrystos. It is possible that in attempting to control their anger,

they may hold captive attention and energy, thus preventing a clearer understanding and expression of their (and our) options. Moschkovich and Yamada provide no solutions beyond the broad one that white women need to be the ones to approach women of color, not the reverse as has previously been expected.

Audre Lorde's expression of anger is perhaps ultimately the most effective. Although Lorde is at least as angry and frustrated as Yamada and Moschkovich, her tone lacks their somewhat resigned exasperation. Instead, it is an assured challenge and expectation. Lorde evidences a stamina, a self-possession and confidence that is contagious. She maintains an expectation of understanding and alliance, although exhibiting an obvious strength to carry on either way--if necessary alone, preferably together. Lorde is very specific, presenting both well-articulated questions and, importantly, potential solutions. She is clear about what is required and she asks it, without hedging or hesitancy. She is convincing with the specific points she makes and affecting with her tone of strength and hope. Lorde makes me want to respond, and gives clear suggestions for doing so. She makes one want to feel and respond to the differences of women of color and white women as a positive force, an enrichment

forming a community of differences in which it is possible for conflict to be open.

The personal expressions of all these women in "open conflict" gives us more specific insight, adding to our understanding of the process toward individuation and affiliation. Their, and our, effort is rewarded.

NOTES

¹Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

²Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, ed., This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981). Page numbers appear in the text.

MOTHERHOOD

She was totally different before she got married and had children . . . Q: And then what happened to her? . . . I was born. And then my sister. We did it. I was the oldest and I probably did it most of all. She wasn't familiar with being a mother. She worried a lot. I was a difficult child, she always told me that. I woke up at night, I exhausted her. She never recovered.

Anonymous Personal Testimony
The Hungry Self¹

The conflict between affiliation and individuation is significantly intensified by motherhood. It is an intensification of the conflict within each individual woman as her role of woman in Western culture is restricted further by the role of wife (conventionally) and even further by the role of mother. In her book Of Woman Born, Adrienne Rich makes the very useful distinction between the "experience" of motherhood and the "institution" of motherhood. Motherhood, Rich writes, is a personal experience embedded within the institution of patriarchy. She explains:

I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that potential--and all women--shall remain under male control.²

The actual experience of motherhood is held in dire threat and duress by the institution of motherhood at all times. A woman in Western culture has to constantly fight for her own experience and understanding as a woman, but even more so as a mother. As a woman one is culturally directed to be self-less. There are or can be, however, periodic "unseen" escapes possible, especially if one is not a wife. As a mother the stakes are raised. The culture, expressed in the institution of motherhood, expects even more self-less behavior. This cultural directive of selflessness is internalized in the woman's own being and is reflected through her child.

Thus, the conflict is intensified not only in the individual mother herself, but through her relationship/connection with her child. (This takes different forms in female and male children.) How much interaction between them is culturally directed or influenced, and how much is authentic? What is institution and what is experience?

It is even further intensified through the individual life of the child herself or himself. How does this child perceive and define her or himself in the world, contributing to the perpetuation of that particular perspective? And, of course, these three experiences--the individual mother's; the relationship between mother and child; and

the individual child's--do not have distinct boundaries and demarcations. They get all mixed up together, with the balance in continual flux.

Here lies the difficulty due to the complexity and also due to the emphasis conventional psychological theory has placed on the experience/development/individuation of the child. As Adrienne Rich testifies:

Most of the literature of infant care and psychology has assumed that the process toward individuation is essentially the child's drama, played out against and with a parent or parents who are, for better or worse, givens. Nothing could have prepared me for the realization that I was a mother, one of those givens, when I knew I was still in a state of creation myself.³

These complex, bewildering, often paradoxical elements put the woman/mother in a particularly vulnerable psychological position in relation to the culture and her own individual psychological needs. This of course occurs within an institution that essentially defines "female" characteristics as negative and "male" characteristics as positive and describes the goal of psychological development of female and male children as separating from the mother and aligning with the fathers.

The following two chapters will specifically explore the affiliation-individuation conflict in relation to motherhood, particularly in the mother-daughter

relationship. Chapters 10 and 11 elaborate on issues examined earlier in the theory part of this thesis. This elaboration occurs through the consideration of other women's writing, particularly that of Doris Lessing and Alice Walker. Chapter 10, "Mothers and Daughters," was written before the race and class analysis in Chapters 8 and 9. It is essentially concerned with the experience of white, middle-class women, without specific analysis according to race and class. Chapter 11 recognizes this omission and focuses more specifically on the experience of black mothers and daughters, as expressed in the writing of Alice Walker.

CHAPTER 10

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS:

AFFILIATION AND INDIVIDUATION

In Of Woman Born Adrienne Rich writes:

Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement.⁴

Mutuality and estrangement, identification and autonomy, affiliation and individuation. Whatever terms are used, the pull toward and the pull away from the mother, is a primary life conflict--one that continues to intensely affect every human being throughout her or his life. This conflict, as Rich evocatively expresses, takes on a particular meaning and intensity for the female child. In a relationship "resonant with charges", the female needs to come to some understanding of her attachment and her independence from her mother. Many times this understanding does not come easily or peacefully, and, too often, not at all. She does not resolve her conflict, and is left in a kind of limbo in regard to self-definition.

As examined earlier, much of the difficulty in resolution of this conflict is due to the influence of a male-defined and controlled culture--the patriarchy--on

this relationship between two females--mother and daughter existing within this culture. This chapter will more specifically explore how and how much the patriarchy influences this connection and this separation, and it will also discuss how much control and choice two females actually do have in their relationship with each other within this structure. It will observe the girl child in a more immediate and personal way as she encounters the specific elements of this conflict; the questions she asks; the confusion she feels; what this environment means to her in a personal sense in her awareness of her place and choices within it.

As delineated earlier by Chodorow and others, the girl child (as well as the boy) grows up in close connection with the mother. She grows up in a culture in which that connection is not affirmed, in which the definition of "maturity" is a separating from the mother, which does not take into consideration the girl's own female experience.

What happens to the female in her orientation of affiliation and connection when she is presented with a reality and expectation of development toward maturity that does not match her experience or needs? She is confronted with a frustrating, actually impossible job of trying to

reconcile her most intimate understandings with what is a very different external reality. Told that she must separate from her mother for mature development--to "give up" her "immature" relationship with her mother and replace it with a "mature" relationship with a man--the daughter is confused in denying what she feels is a legitimate and natural connection.

She is further confused when she learns that the culture requires her to develop in contradictory ways. As a person in the (male) society, she is expected to separate to "become her own person." Yet, as a woman in the society, she is expected to suppress her individuality and become dependent on a male. Existence as a "proper" female in the culture, therefore, excludes existence as a person. Facing the contradiction of external expectation with her internal reality, and then the double insult of contradictory external expectations, she begins to doubt and deny her own feelings. She learns not to trust herself and her experience. Painfully torn between disparate realities, she may doubt her own sanity.

What does the female do given this dilemma? Finally, in order to alleviate the extreme fragmentation she experiences in this contradiction of realities, most daughters inevitably "give up" their mother (for a man and

the reality of the patriarchy). At this point her mother no longer exists in any real way for her. The daughter, in fact, no longer exists for herself. Seen by male society as a mature woman (never a person while a woman), she has actually abandoned any real personhood and is only acting the required role. She has unwittingly been stripped of her essential self.

Female denial of the mother then becomes a release from the sanity and survival threatening contradiction of realities and allegiances of a patriarchal culture. This process of denial and release is rarely conscious.

Moreover, in denying her mother's experience (as her own as a woman), the female feels, in a more conscious way, that she has some control over her own individual experience. In a male-controlled culture, the daughter inevitably sees her mother's life as unattractive. She sees her mother as powerless--as a victim. To claim a common reality with her is threatening to the possibility of a fulfilled life for the daughter. Gloria Steinem expresses this fear in Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions when she says:

I still don't understand why so many, many years passed before I saw my mother as a person and before I understood that many of the forces in her life are patterns women share. Like a lot of daughters I suppose I couldn't afford to admit that what happened to my mother was not all personal or accidental, and therefore could happen to me.⁵

Daughters cannot afford to admit so early, if at all, that they are subject to the same destructive forces affecting their mothers.

In addition to this somewhat indirect effect of the mother's life as a negative role model for the daughter, a mother's unfulfilled life has undoubtedly directly affected her daughter's life in a negative way. A frustrated person vents (however unwillingly or unwittingly) those frustrations on those closest at hand. The daughter has no doubt been on the receiving end of those frustrations. She is ready for an escape and an answer.

In this context, "giving up" her mother seems a clear and clean-cut (she thinks) solution to a purer, stronger life for the daughter. Aligning herself with the powerful fathers seems an attractive way of saving herself. At this point she doesn't realize that she is not going into her own life but into a man's--or naively believes that her "own life" is (of course) with a man or can be had with a man. She doesn't realize she will be existing in a system

which excludes her, in which she has little control and in which her future depends on pleasing those in control. Believing she is taking control of her life from her mother, she is in actuality giving over control of her life to a man--and to the fathers.

Thus we, the daughters, deny our mothers. A complex and insightful account of this denial of the mother in the struggle of the daughter toward individuation is given in Doris Lessing's five-part series, Children of Violence. Lessing shows vividly the power of the threat of the mother both in and of herself as she represents the patriarchy through the "institution" of motherhood, and also as a picture or prophecy of what the daughter will become if she accepts or is (unknowingly) absorbed into this institutionalized motherhood role.

Lessing tells the story of one woman, Martha Quest, and her development from adolescence through old-age and death. Particularly relevant to the question of denial of the mother in the daughter's determining her own self are the first two novels in the series, Martha Quest,⁶ which deals with adolescent Martha's rebellion against her mother; and A Proper Marriage,⁷ which deals with Martha's relationship with her mother during her own pregnancy and motherhood. This analysis will also mention briefly the

last novel in the series, The Four-Gated City,⁸ for the light it sheds on the mature Martha's relationship with her mother (and, of course, her own self through her mother). It is valuable to quote somewhat extensively from these works because of Lessing's particular ability to evoke the complexity and intensity of this daughter-mother conflict.

Martha's mother, May Quest, has long since lost touch with any real personhood. (She is referred to throughout the novels as Mrs. Quest.) She is MOTHER as patriarchal society has expected and programmed her to be. At fifteen, Martha views her mother with bitter resentment:

You are loathsome, bargaining, and calculating
 . . . You are disgusting (MQ,16).

She finds her mother's life repugnant and is determined that this same life will not be her own:

. . . she would not be bitter and nagging and
 dissatisfied, like her mother (MQ,2b).

. . .

Marry young? Me? I'd die first. Tie myself down
 to babies and housekeeping . . . (MQ,23).

Martha feels her mother's presence as a spell,
 weighing her down, spiritually and physically:

Sleep, sleep, the house was saturated by it; and Mrs. Quest's voice murmured like the spells of a witch . . . the eternal mother, holding sleep and death in her twin hands like a sweet and poisonous cloud of forgetfulness--that was how Martha saw her, like a baneful figure in the nightmare in which she herself was caught (MQ,34).

. . .

Afterwards she was to think of this time as the worst in her life. What was so frightening was this feeling of being drugged, being weighted. She did not understand why she was acting against her will, her intellect, everything she believed. It was as if her body and brain were numbed (MQ,33).⁹

Martha fearfully suspects that the pattern of her life has already been formed, and that she is powerless to change it:

She could see a sequence of events, unalterable, behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future. . . . Nothing could alter the pattern (PM,354,355):

The "experts" she reads all seem to agree (although in different, often contradictory theories) that her suspicion is true:

There was the group which stated that her life was already determined when she still crouched sightless in the womb of Mrs. Quest. . . . Then there were those who said it was the birth itself which set Martha on a fated road. . . . And what of the numerous sects who agreed on only one thing, that it was the first five years of life which laid an unalterable basis for everything that followed? (MQ,19).

Yet Martha decides that perhaps she can change the pattern by not becoming a mother herself:

. . . [she] remember[ed] the swollen bodies of the pregnant women she had seen with shuddering anger as at the sight of a cage designed for herself (MQ,67).

. . .

But inside the stern web of fatality did flicker small hopeful flames . . . she had decided not to have a baby, and it was in her power to cut the cycle (PM,355).

Martha is, however, unwillingly drawn into marriage (giving in to external social pressures) and, ironically, discovers four months later that she was pregnant at the time of her marriage.

With Martha's marriage and motherhood, the ego boundaries between mother and daughter become more blurred for Mrs. Quest. At the wedding ceremony, Mrs. Quest confuses herself with her daughter, and Martha rebels:

Mrs. Quest waited anxiously immediately behind Martha's left shoulder, and at the crucial moment when the ring must be put on she grasped Martha's elbow and pushed forward her arm, so that everyone was able to see how Martha turned around and said in a loud, angry whisper. "Who's getting married, me or you?" (MQ,256)

She views Martha's house and possessions as hers . . .

Mrs. Quest had reassured herself by touching and arranging everything in the living room, and was now doing the same in the bedroom (PM,353).

Afraid that she, too, will become parasitically maternal like her mother, Martha promises her yet-to-be-born infant that:

She, Martha, the free spirit, would protect the creature from her, Martha, the maternal force; the maternal Martha, that enemy, would not be allowed to enter the picture (PM,371).

She finds that when her daughter is born that ". . . she could not relax into Caroline; that would be a disloyalty and even a danger to herself" (PM,461).

Martha continues to feel the suffocating presence and pressure of her mother, and fights to be free. She throws her mother's letters into the wastepaper basket and riles against her mother's intrusion when she is present:

I want you to try and remember what you would have felt if your mother had run your affairs the way you try to run mine. I don't think you'd have liked it, you know . . . I'm going to ask you, I think for about the fiftieth time, to stop upsetting my servants and interfering with Caroline" (PM,519).

None of Martha's protests against her mother ever take, and both mother and daughter are left frustrated and angry--feeling misunderstood and alienated.

Mrs. Quest continues to mouth the words of the patriarchy in what she requires of Martha when Martha decides on a divorce. She tells Martha that it is "a woman's role to sacrifice herself as she had done"

(PM,599). Dramatically, even when Martha goes to her mother for refuge from her abusive husband, Mrs. Quest will not take her in, saying: "Go back to him . . . it serves you right" (PM,603).

Deciding to leave her marriage and her daughter, Martha leaves Caroline feeling a "deep bond between them of sympathy and understanding" (PM, 599). She tells her daughter: "You'll be perfectly free, Caroline. I'm setting you free" (PM, 600). Martha feels so strongly that the "institutionalized maternal" Martha is overwhelming or has already overwhelmed the "free spirit" Martha that to take that threat away is the greatest gift she can give her daughter and herself. How powerful the forces of patriarchal society when she was so braced against them, and yet was overcome!

In her essay, "The Nightmare Repetition: in Doris Lessing's Children of Violence," Katherine Fishburn writes: ". . . it is, I think significant that Martha sees her mother and not her society as the enemy of her growth and individuation."¹⁰ It is true that Martha's blame is generally without excuse toward her mother. However, throughout her life, even in adolescence, Martha does show some awareness that other forces are at work and her mother

is a victim. This awareness is shown by the following quotes:

. . . the eternal mother, holding sleep and death in her twin hands . . . that was how Martha saw her, like a baneful figure in the nightmare in which she herself was caught [emphasis added] (MQ, 34).¹¹

"It's not her fault she was brought up in that society (PM, 354)." And a particularly perceptive passage:

She was looking at Mrs. Quest in a deep abstract speculation, as if neither she nor her mother had any validity as persons, but were mere pawns in the hands of an old fatality. She could see a sequence of events, unalterable, behind her, and stretching unalterably into the future. She saw her mother, a prim-faced Edwardian schoolgirl, confronting, in this case, the Victorian father, the patriarchal father, with rebellion. She saw herself sitting where her mother now sat, a woman horribly metamorphosed, entirely dependent on her children for any interest in life, resented by them and resenting them (PM.354).

But Martha's awareness that her mother is not the origin but the victim and vehicle of her oppression does not keep her from raging against her. It does not keep her from continuing to be mortified by her mother's presence even into adulthood. Awaiting a visit from her mother in The Four-Gated City, violent emotions are elicited in Martha:

One was pity, strong, searing, unbearable. The other was a wild need to run--anywhere. Under the bedclothes if there was nowhere to run. Therefore she sat and raged useless rebellion. Against what? A poor, lonely old woman whose life had never given her anything she wanted, or never for long (FGC,228,229).

Martha collapses into bed, feeling that she is having a breakdown. And, although she fears she may be subjecting herself to something psychically destructive without the power to help, in desperation, she goes to see a psychiatrist. She feels unable to face her mother without help; she needs some kind of support in order to maintain her emotional equilibrium.

During her mother's visit, the two women never do connect, both feeling their familiar frustration, ending the visit with Mrs. Quest saying: "Well, I wonder what that was all about really?" And, Martha answering: "Yes . . . So do I" (FGC,286). They exchange polite kisses, ironic looks and part. After her mother leaves, Martha goes to bed for days with her mother's visit a blank in her mind.

Mother and daughter--they are never able to reach around the powerful patriarchy and relate personally with one another. They are caught in their roles as Mother and Daughter--with Martha, the daughter only able to exist as a person apart from her mother--by denying her mother.

Women continue to be pressured in patriarchal society to deny their mothers. As a woman in patriarchal society, I also have denied my mother. I saw her as powerless, without a life and reality of her own. I internalized her powerlessness and felt as flimsy and unreal as I perceived her to be (and as I believe she perceived herself to be). Neither of us seemed to really exist. Even at her death, I denied her; neither of us was able to admit the other.

Perhaps I knew my mother was dying--there was no specific mention of it. Undefined, unreal--as our existences were. My sister and I were called home from college because my mother was ill. My grandmother--a small, quiet woman loathe to interrupt anyone or ask for anything--said it would be best if we would come home as soon as possible. It was the middle of the week, and, of course, we had classes to attend. These circumstances should have alerted me. And yet, I packed and went with no alarm. A few close family members were with my grandmother when we arrived. After a time, my sister and I were summoned to my mother's bedroom. She lay still, small, pale, and held out her hand. I vividly recall standing looking down at her, thinking how odd to be touching her; we so seldom touched. I suppose then this unusual gesture should have made it very clear--she was dying. And yet, I had no thought; I had no words. She, too, was mute. Or

was I too numb to remember that she said something, what she said. I think she may have said, "I love you." I do remember a small squeeze of her hand. I took it as a dismissal, glanced guiltily at her and left. A doctor arrived, and very soon my aunt came in to say she was "gone".

My mother was dead, and I couldn't admit she was dying. Could I now admit she was dead? She was my mother. I couldn't admit her presence and I couldn't admit her absence. Significant, I believe, to my mother's lack of reality for me (and for herself) was her (and subsequently my) omission from the patriarchal culture. They didn't recognize her as a person with perceptions in her own right, and, therefore, neither did she and neither did I. She died after her husband did, and after her children left home. Her role within the culture was finished; she was left alone with herself, and she knew no meaning for that self alone.

The dying of the mother seems a significant time in many women's lives for focusing the conflict of daughter-mother identification and individuation. Sophie Freud Loewenstein tells of her experience at her mother's dying in which the conflict was intensified:

I did not gladly hold her old hand. I could not find the words of comfort that I might have found in my heart for almost anyone else. I sat next to her bed with an icy and armored heart and waited for the day to pass to return to Boston, to my friends, family, community and work, waited until I could flee in terror lest her spirit would invade me and defeat my lifelong struggle to be separate and different.¹²

And Simone De Beauvoir trying to reconcile her relationship with her dying mother in A Very Easy Death, writes: "The sight of my mother's nakedness had jarred me. No body existed less for me. None existed more."¹³

The final physical separation of the daughter from her mother through the mother's death has the potential for bringing an added clearness to the life-long issue of connection and separation in that the threat of suffocation in the mother is essentially no longer present. Always remaining, on some level, of course, will be the associations and responses connected with the mother that have, after a time, been internalized by the daughter, with the mother's presence no longer needed to elicit them. Despite these internalizations, a mother's death allows the daughter a "safer" vantage point to consider her relationship to her mother. Contrary to the previous experiences, some daughters may be able to break through their conflict to a true communication with their mothers while they are dying. If the mother is dying, the daughter

is no longer the vulnerable one. She is given a new freedom to see her mother as separate--a person apart from herself--a person with whom she may not have another chance of understanding, communication and reconciliation.

Fortunately, some daughters may be able to connect spiritually with their mothers while they are alive and well. Alice Walker is one woman who has been able to do this. In an article in Ms. Magazine entitled "Her Mother's Gifts,"¹⁴ Walker calls her mother "a sister warrior" and tells of her mother's trust, support, and encouragement of her as a person in general, and as a writer in particular. This support was expressed symbolically, Walker felt, through three gifts her mother gave her: a sewing machine --encouraging self-sufficiency and independence; a suitcase--representing freedom; and a typewriter--symbolically saying, "Go write your ass off."

We may not all be so fortunate to have such accepting and supportive mothers. However, as women have nurtured and been "mothers" to men, we are giving that support to other women. Walker tells another story about a gift of support from another woman, June Jordan, in her book In Search of Our Mother's Gardens. Walker is part of a discussion in which in reaction to a lack of response to the increased suicide rate of women of color, she "burst

into the loudest tears I've ever shed." She explains that an amazing thing happened around her crying. Many women blamed her for crying saying, "But don't let it get to you" or "Why would you let anyone make you cry?" And since she spoke so much of her mother, one panelist told her that she thought her "problem was that [she] was trying to carry [her] mother, and the weight [was] too heavy." June Jordan, sitting beside her, put her arms around Walker and said, "But why shouldn't you carry your mother; she carried you, didn't she?"¹⁵

The support that June Jordan gives Walker is particularly pertinent here. We may need to carry our mothers (as they've carried us). We will also need to carry our daughters, ourselves, and other women. They will also need to carry us. Women supporting one another in an environment that allows our vulnerabilities and our tears--without them we do not feel and cannot continue to face painful truths. With each other's support, however, women can come to understand and acknowledge our orientation of affiliation and connection, make use of it for our own benefit (not chiefly for men's as in the past), allowing its development toward a maturity of affiliation providing for and not denying one another. Listening to other women's voices and truths, we come to understand them as our own voices and truths.

As discussed earlier, Nancy Chodorow, Jean Baker Miller and Carol Gilligan are strong and important voices in this struggle. They begin redefining the affiliation characteristics of women in positive, not negative terms. They begin to create a reality in women's own terms, beginning to make it possible to expand the primal connection we feel as infants with our mothers, not derogating it as we have historically been required to do.

Women's orientation of affiliation must be acknowledged by the culture as the positive, not negative or non-existent, contribution it is to the culture. Although presently existing within a patriarchal culture, women do have some control in redefining this culture. Women have been nurturing and supporting each other for centuries in rather clandestine ways--closed away from the (operative) culture in kitchens, making connections across fences, giving support not acknowledged within the prevailing masculine society. Now, it is time to make these supports and connections known. They need to be made public--allowing women's reality into the culture--although not simply becoming a part of the culture, but more likely, radically changing the culture with its influences of connection, affiliation, and support. Perhaps women, in our orientation of understanding and connection, have what

is necessary to stop the world in its present course of self-destruction.

Women have a great wealth of intellect, emotion and spirituality to give to ourselves and to our extended mother-daughter family of women. Chodorow, Rich, Lessing, Gilligan, Miller, Walker and others have been in a profound sense mothers to me. They have helped me clarify my personal woman-human reality. They have helped me begin to identify my essential self. Sometimes it is easier to embrace our mothers of liberation than our actual mothers. There isn't the guilt or the ambiguity--those pernicious old patterns. We are not threatened with the child we were--and still are. . . .

Yes, we all need our mothers and perhaps we all need, in some sense, to be mothers for each other. We must "re-vision" and reclaim our relationships with our mothers--both biological and spiritual. We can gain control over our own reality--creating a culture and world that has meaning for us--mothers and daughters, daughters and mothers--connected again at last..

NOTES

¹Kim Chernin, The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity (New York: Times Books, 1985), 64.

² Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 13.

³Rich, 35.

⁴Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 226.

⁵Gloria Steinem, Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), 144.

⁶Doris Lessing, Martha Quest, vol.I of Children of Violence (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964). Page numbers in text preceded by "MQ."

⁷Doris Lessing, A Proper Marriage, vol. II of Children of Violence (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964). Page numbers in text preceded by "PM."

⁸Doris Lessing, The Four-Gated City (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970). Page numbers in text preceded by "FGC."

⁹Ironically, in speaking of Martha's adolescence, Paul Schlueter, one of Lessing's chief critics, does not recognize this apparent and powerful mother-daughter conflict. Although he does explain that Martha is eager to leave her "confining home" and characterizes Mrs. Quest as "domineering, self-righteous, hypocritical, and, above all, possessive . . .," he goes on to say that the family "maintains a kind of peaceful coexistence" until Martha leaves to work in the city. Paul Schlueter, The Novels of Doris Lessing (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 23.

¹⁰Katherine Fishburn, "The Nightmare Repetition: in Doris Lessing's Children of Violence," in The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (New York: Frederick Uinger Publishing Co., 1980), 210.

¹¹In her essay, Fishburn quotes this perception of Martha's (of her mother) as proof of her statement, ". . . it is, I think, significant that Martha sees her mother and not her society as the enemy of her growth and individuation." Fishburn stops at the word, "nightmare," omitting the end of the sentence, ". . . in which she herself was caught," significantly changing Martha's awareness of her mother's situation, and qualifying (in this instance) Fishburn's judgment of it.

¹²Sophie Freud Loewenstein, Ph.D. "Mother and Daughter--An Epitaph" (1981), 3.

¹³Simone De Beauvoir, A Very Easy Death (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), 19.

¹⁴Mary Helen Washington, "Her Mother's Gifts" in Ms. Magazine, June, 1982, 38.

¹⁵Alice Walker, In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers), 317.

CHAPTER 11

BLACK MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

AS EXPLORED IN THE WRITING OF

ALICE WALKER

As I thrust my hand deeper into the swirl of this stream--history, nightmare, accountability--I feel the current angrier and more multiform than the surface shows: There is fury here, and terror, but there is also power, power not to be had without the terror and the fury. We need to go beyond rhetoric or evasion into that place in ourselves, to feel the force of all we have been trying--without success--to skim across.

Adrienne Rich¹

The Personal Is Political

I have been sick while writing this chapter. Alice Walker writes: "Illness has always been of enormous benefit to me. It might even be said that I have learned little from anything that did not in some way make me sick" (IS, 370).² I think that at least part of my illness during the reading for and writing of this chapter is directly related to the fury and terror I feel as I thrust my hand into this stream of emotion of the history of the black woman in white America. It is a painful history, and one that one is inclined to "skim across" in an attempt to avoid the pain. Luckily, I believe, I haven't been able to skim across, to stay somewhat removed and still learn what I want and need to know. I have fallen into the stream, gotten sick and am trying to sort through emotions and ideas to begin a process of looking directly and trying to see clearly, as much as possible without excessive guilt as a white woman (which serves no purpose), and also without denial of my own experience, which certainly muddies the waters.

I have read different materials on different topics concerning black women in the United States and elsewhere, and am consistently drawn back to the ideas and information concerning black mothers and daughters. I have been most touched by personal expressions of mothers and daughters,

particularly those of Alice Walker. I am hoping, like Walker, that I will learn from my illness.

I know one thing for sure and that is that the exchange and sorting out of herstories, much like our foremothers' kinship networks, are essential.³

Eleanor Johnson

Alice Walker's writings/herstories are extremely insightful, honest and moving explorations in many areas. It feels that a main intention and result of Walker's writing is an exploration toward defining her life in her own terms. Walker does this as the complex person that she is. One of the most interesting and instructive paths that this process takes can be seen as Walker's examination of the conflict between affiliation and individuation in her life as a daughter and as a mother.

Mother-daughter interactions occur throughout the different forms of Walker's writing: in her essays, novels, short stories and poetry. They occur in relation to her own mother, to her literary/spiritual foremothers, to imagined/fictional mothers, and to her own self as a mother. These different views of the role and the actuality of motherhood, the myth and the reality, the institution and the experience, as well as the varied forms in which they are expressed, provide a complex analysis of one woman's search for self within the context of her experience as a woman/feminist/womanist who is a black daughter and mother. Through her own personal insight and

experience, Walker gives us insight into the experiences and lives of other women who are black mothers and daughters in the United States. This chapter will examine Walker's different views of motherhood and the different forms in which they occur in an attempt to better understand these experiences and these lives.

Walker's exploration of the role of motherhood begins with consideration of the life of her own mother.

Alice Walker's Mother

MOTHERROOT

Creation often
needs two hearts
one to root and
one to flower
one to sustain
in time of drouth
and hold fast
against winds of pain
the fragile bloom
that in the glory
of its hour
affirms a heart
unsung, unseen.

Marilou Awiakta⁴

In Common Differences Gloria Joseph examines black mothers and daughters in the context of the history of the black family in America. The institution versus the experience of motherhood in patriarchy takes on a different element for black women in a white culture, due in large part to the particular history of blacks in America. Black

families, brought to the United States as slaves from Africa; stripped of their own languages, religious beliefs, customs and rituals; and forced into slavery, have depended on and continue to depend upon one another for survival. To be a black mother for Alice Walker's mother's generation and before (and after) meant/means the learning of survival skills from their mothers and the teaching of survival skills to their daughters--skills for survival of and in the black community. "Black daughters," Joseph explains, "were actually taught to hold the Black community together" (CD, 106).⁵ Thus, due to the special history of black women in America, the pull toward affiliation among themselves (and black men) has been and is very strong.

Alice Walker's poem speaks movingly of these "Women":

They were women then
 My mama's generation
 Husky of voice--Stout of
 Step
 With fist as well as
 Hands
 How they battered down
 Doors
 And ironed
 Starched white
 Shirts
 How they led
 Armies
 Headragged Generals
 Across mined
 Fields
 Booby-trapped
 Kitchens
 To discover books
 Desks
 A place for us

How they knew what we
Must know
Without knowing a page
Of it
Themselves (IS, 242).

In an essay, "In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens," Walker writes of her own mother as ". . . a large, soft, loving-eyed woman" and tells of her mother's hard work in which:

She made all the clothes we wore, even my brother's overalls. She made all the towels and sheets we used. She spent the summers canning vegetables and fruits. She spent the winter evenings making quilts enough to cover all our beds. During the "working" day, she labored beside--not behind--my father in the fields. Her day began before sun up, and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruptions by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children . . . (IS, 238)

Yet, Walker's mother seemed to always find the strength not only to carry on, but to give enormous love and understanding to her children. Although overworked herself, she never demanded that Alice do the housework, and allowed her space and time to read or be alone whenever she chose. And, as previously mentioned, in the essay, "Her Mother's Gifts,"⁶ Walker's mother further showed her support and encouragement of her daughter with three gifts: a sewing machine, a suitcase and a typewriter.

In the previous poem and in her essays, Alice Walker describes her mother in almost completely positive terms. She seems perfect; in fact, a saint in spiritual terms or the supreme embodiment of MOTHER in temporal terms. When Walker does mention a "negative" quality about her mother, it is interpreted in a positive light. Her mother's temper was never evident except ". . . only a few times a year, when she battled with the white landlord who had the misfortune to suggest to her that her children did not need to go to school" (IS, 238). And in speaking of her parents adopting a white religion and savior, Walker explains that although they had been ". . . force-fed a white man's palliative, in the form of religion, they had made it into something at once simple and noble" (IS, 18).

Walker's mother's life seems so molded around religious and societal models that she seems defined to a large extent by the needs of her family and community in opposition to her and their racial oppression. How can a real person be so perfect? Is she really? Is this Walker's idealized view or perhaps a combination of the two?

The answer is, I believe, partly in the actuality and partly in the perception. Gloria Joseph explains it to a certain extent when she tells us that it has been the experience and duty of black women historically to keep

black families together; survival depended upon it; essentially there was little choice. Joseph adds more understanding when she explains the special bond between black mothers and daughters. Not only did black mothers teach their daughters survival skills, but she tells us:

It was and still is necessary for Black mothers and daughters to collaborate in their fight against powerful societal conditions that continue to force fathers out of work and out of the home; that push brothers and boyfriends into prisons and/or onto drugs; that make it necessary to raise babies without economic support from the father; that make it difficult to scrape together college tuitions and fees or to buy a new piece of furniture on the installment plan (CD, 94).

Joseph also tells us that ". . . daughters appreciated their mothers' ability to endure and survive . . . hardships" (OD, 96). And that:

The interpersonal problems and conflicts [of black mothers and daughters] are transcended to accommodate the cooperative effort needed to solve the common problems they face as Black women in today's America

(CD, 94).

Thus, Walker's perception and description of her mother in such saintly terms is probably at least partially related to this historic pattern of understanding and support between black mothers and daughters--certainly a very strong pull toward affiliation.

Walker, wondering how black mothers get their survival strength, writes of her own mother working in her

garden. She sees her as an artist creating, re-creating herself. She tells us: "I notice that it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that she is radiant (IS, 241). Walker explains that being a gardener, an artist is one example of many such ways black women have found for years to "hold on"--to survive.⁷

Alice Walker explores motherhood through her personal experience with and essays about her own mother. She continues to explore the issue of mothers and daughters further in her fiction. Walker gives a vivid, informative analysis of motherhood and daughterhood through her novel Meridian. In Meridian she implicitly and explicitly seeks to answer the question: How does the black woman define herself as a person including and in spite of her role as a mother and a daughter. She more specifically defines and engages the conflict of a strong pull toward affiliation with the desire for individuation.

Meridian: Motherhood in Fiction

If Alice Walker's actual mother's life provides a positive, rather glorified view of MOTHERHOOD, essentially the opposite view is portrayed in Walker's novel Meridian. Meridian provides a painful exploration of the institution of motherhood as it is experienced by a black mother and

daughter and the attempt by the daughter to be a person within this context.

Walker describes Meridian's mother's life as "sacrifice." "A blind, enduring, stumbling . . . through life" (M, 77)⁸ (albeit with dignity). Walker writes of Mrs. Hill's narrow perspective of the world in which she is unconcerned about events and ideas outside her immediate family. She describes a bleak and pathetic life and an unloving woman. In a sad chapter entitled "The Attainment of Good," Meridian sorts through her mother's opinions and actions, attempting to find meaning in them. The meaning she finds is in her mother's desire and need to be good. Seeking a state of righteousness, the specifics of that state were essentially irrelevant to her mother. She simply did her duty as it was set out for her. She tells Meridian: "I never stole, I was always clean, I never did wrong by anyone. I was never bad, I simply trusted in the Lord" (M, 124). Mrs. Hill had little to no understanding of her own life on her own terms.

While she fulfilled her essential duties as a wife and mother, Mrs. Hill was not affectionate and loving with her children; in fact, she was angry. Walker writes:

In the ironing of her children's clothes she expended all the energy she might have put into openly loving them. . . . In their stiff, almost inflexible garments, they were enclosed in the starch of her anger (M, 79).

Walker's expression of Mrs. Hill's lack of open affection and her anger toward her children evidences frustration at a black mother's misdirected energy. Walker states that the energy spent ironing would be better spent in loving her children, and implies that the children (not the oppressive white society) are the unfair recipients of her anger. This expression reflects a pattern of complaints from black daughters about their mothers demonstrated in a study conducted by Gloria Joseph. Joseph explains that the lack of overt affection by black mothers for their children may often be the result of the mother's physical and psychic exhaustion due to the hard work necessary to insure the survival of the black family in an hostile society (CD, 103).

Meridian questions and seems/is puzzled over her mother's life and lack of awareness, but at the same time understands intimately this life and lack of awareness. While giving credit to her mother and feeling guilty for deserting both her and her values, Meridian attempts to define her own life.

Meridian becomes pregnant as a young woman, and after a day and a half of hard labor, gives birth to a boy. Thoroughly exhausted with the incessant demands of motherhood, she begins to understand ". . . what slavery is like. Rebelling, she ... dream[s] each night . . . of ways

to murder him" (M, 69). Unexpectedly offered a scholarship to Saxon College, Meridian decides to give up her baby and go to school. Doing so she leaves behind her pregnant friend Nelda and her mother, both trapped in the institution of motherhood:

Away from her mother's Meridian thought of her as Black Motherhood personified and of the great institution she was in terrible awe, comprehending as she did the horror, the narrowing of perspective for mother and for child, it has invariably meant (M, 96,97).

Although her mother felt Meridian's refusal to stay and take care of the child was immoral, Meridian was convinced that ". . . she had saved a small person's life." However, ". . . [o]n some deeper level than she had anticipated, she felt condemned to penitence for life" (M, 91). Meridian is indeed haunted throughout the rest of the novel. She has nightmares and illnesses of many sorts. And at Saxon College, she is specifically haunted by a thirteen-year old pregnant adolescent, "The Wild Child."

Meridian felt that she had failed her mother and had herself failed as a mother:

To Meridian, her mother was a giant. She had never perceived her as any other way. Or if she did have occasional thoughts that challenged this conception she swept them out of her mind as petty and ridiculous (M, 122).

Extremely ill, Meridian seeks her absent mother's forgiveness through a mother substitute, Mrs. Winter.

Absolved of her guilt through Mrs. Winter, Meridian returns to health.

Meridian acknowledges her mother as a "giant" and acquiesces in guilt and illness to her "goodness." Meridian, through duty, it feels, pays homage to her mother, but renounces her mother's narrow life--at least in the specifics. Meridian, however, continues her mother's legacy of goodness and martyrdom in a different way in her political struggle against society's restrictions against the black community. She, at times, temporarily takes on the role of mother to do this: she stares down an army tank so that black children can see a sideshow, and, in protest, carries the decomposing body of a five year old boy into the mayor's office. Thus, while denying motherhood as her mother has lived it, Meridian experiences it in her own way. Although mirroring her mother somewhat in her martyrdom, at the end of the novel, Meridian consciously rejects martyrdom, and turns toward a more healthful future. (The specifics of how she accomplishes this are left unanswered.)

It is interesting to compare Doris Lessing's character, Martha Quest, in her identification of and rebellion against her mother as an embodiment of the institution of motherhood within patriarchy, with that of Meridian. Both women question and renounce

institutionalized motherhood, but each one has different reactions in the process. It is my opinion that at least part of the difference arises from different socializations as a white woman and as a black woman in Western culture. Although there are clues that Martha realizes that her mother is essentially not to blame, Martha does blame her mother and feels repulsed by and extremely frightened of her. She calls her "loathsome, bargaining, calculating and disgusting,"⁹ among other things. Meridian, on the other hand, calls her mother a "giant," absolves her of all blame, and, throughout the novel, has extreme guilt feelings for failing her mother. Again, in fiction as in Walker's real life, the pull toward affiliation seems to take precedence.

Alice Walker examines the issue of motherhood further through the life and writing of Zora Neale Hurston. Walker views Hurston both as a spiritual and literary mother.

Zora Neale Hurston: Literary/Spiritual Mother

Zora Neale Hurston, Walker's spiritual and literary mother, like her actual mother, is seen in almost completely positive terms. Walker writes of Mules and Men as ". . . this perfect book" (IS, 84). Walker says she discovered Hurston ". . . like a golden key to a storehouse of varied treasure" and tells us she was "hooked" (IS, 12).

She writes that in Hurston she has discovered a model in life and out and ". . . though her [Hurston's] life sprouted an occasional wart, [she was] eternally grateful for that life, warts and all" (IS, 12). When Walker criticizes Hurston, saying that her autobiography rings false, Walker explains that this is the result of Hurston attempting to be sincere with the insincere. As in her criticism of her actual mother, this criticism of her spiritual/literary mother is actually a reverse form of praise.

Walker's short story "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhoff" allows her to use the powers of her literary/spiritual mother, Hurston, to make restitution for humiliation and pain suffered in her own mother's life (and, consequently, her own). Walker's mother, turned down for government surplus food in an humiliating way by the white woman in charge, said she lived to see this same white woman grow old, senile and badly crippled. While Walker's mother gave thanks to Jesus for her health and success and the offending white woman's ill-fortune, Walker, with the knowledge of root medicine learned from Hurston, rewrote the story. In it, the main character, Hannah, acts directly to cast a voodoo spell on the offending woman. Not long after, in terrible fear, the woman dies.

From the life of her own mother; to the life of Mrs. Hill in Meridian; to the life and writing of Zora Neal Hurston; Walker continues in her exploration of the role of motherhood through her own experience and life as a mother.

Alice Walker as Mother

An insightful essay that seems to be part of an attempt for Walker to reconcile the disparate views of motherhood as institution and experience occurs in her essay, "One Child Of One's Own." With humor, Walker writes of an interchange with her mother on the question of having more children. Giving advice to her daughter, Walker's mother is a staunch advocate of the institution of motherhood. She mouths stock phrases from the mythology of motherhood that Walker labels "Women's Folly":

. . . advice [that] does not come from what a woman recalls of her own experience. It comes from a pool of such misguidance women have collected over the millennia to help themselves feel less foolish for having more than one child . . . (IS, 363).

She tells her: "You should have another [child] soon, so that Rebecca will have someone to play with, and so you can get it all over with faster." Her mother scoffs at the pain of childbirth with, "That little pain," and says that ". . . until my fifth child I was like a young girl. I could pick up and go anywhere I wanted to" (IS, 364).

Walker, remembering the pain of her own childbirth and her mother's weariness with many children, is skeptical. She relates to the reader that, at times, the knowledge of her mother's own experience does win out over her programmed advice, when she advises women without children who are yearning for them: "If the Lord sets you free, be free indeed" (IS, 364). Walker--at least at the time of this writing--seems disinclined to have another child, and examines the effect of her one on her life.

In her acknowledgments in In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, Walker thanks her daughter Rebecca ". . . for her help in gluing [Walker] to Life, present and future" (IS, xvii). She writes of her job teaching as compatible with having a child, but also says that she ". . . wrote nothing for a year [after Rebecca was born] that didn't sound as though a baby were screaming right through the middle of it" (IS, 66). She seems to envy--and perhaps believe "politically correct"--Buchi Emecheta, who dedicates her book Second Class Citizen to her ". . . dear children . . . without whose sweet background noises this book would not have been written" (IS, 67). Walker admits that she herself requires absolute quiet and privacy to write (and, if possible, a garden view).

Years ago, I was particularly drawn to one of Walker's poems for what she felt to be its honesty about

the conflict of being a writer who is a mother with a small child:

Now that the book is finished,
 now that I know my characters will live,
 I can love my child again.
 She need sit no longer
 at the back of my mind
 the lonely sucking of her thumb
 a giant stopper in my throat (IS, 381).

But in a later essay, Walker to a certain extent negates the feelings in the poem when she calls it "self-pitying" (IS, 381).

As far as I have found in my reading, Walker speaks specifically of anger only once in relation to her own motherhood. Just after Rebecca is born, pondering the warnings to female writers about the incompatibility of children and writing, Walker was ". . . curled around [her] baby, feeling more anger and protectiveness than love . . ." (IS, 369). She calls these warnings more of "Women's Folly," and comes up quickly with ideas of "Folly Resistance." This particular part of Walker's essay rings false to me, especially considering her usually clear and very specific thinking and writing. It is, however, understandable in that Walker had only just become a mother, and has had very little personal experience at this point. I wait for more development of this conflict as the mother-child relationship continues, but, surprisingly to me, anger is not mentioned again.

Walker does mention:

. . . conflict, struggle [and] occasional defeat--not only in affirming the life of [her] own child at all costs, but also in seeing in that affirmation a fond acceptance and confirmation of [her] self in a world that would deny [her] the untrampled blossoming of [her] own existence (IS, 362).

This statement seems a revealing one in which Walker connects the affirmation of her child to the confirmation of her self. Affirmation of her child, she writes, "at all costs."¹⁰

Walker re-analyses, regrets her doubts and writes that her mistake was ". . . in seeing The Child as [her] enemy rather than the racism and sexism of an oppressive capitalist society," and that she:

. . . understood that her child, a victim of society as much as she herself--and more of one because as yet she was unable to cross the street without a guiding hand--was in fact the very least of her obstacles in her chosen work (IS, 371).

Walker has been strongly opposed and criticized by some black men for what they have seen as something of a "betrayal" of the black male in her writing. This, of course, must be a painful charge to endure. Perhaps Walker, at this point, cannot risk emotionally a potential charge of nonloyalty as a mother. How can one person openly fight on all fronts at once? Strong attacks from

one or more sides makes one inclined to insure support from another. As Audre Lorde writes:

How much of this truth can I bear to see
and still live
unblinded?
How much of this pain
can I use?¹¹

Walker now begins to see Rebecca not only as not a distraction or hindrance or cause of anger, but as a source of strength. She writes of Rebecca at age seven:

[Rebecca] is one's friend, and can be told of the fears one has, that she can, by listening to one, showing one a new dance step, perhaps, sharing a coloring book, or giving one a hug, help allay (IS, 382).

In fact, she tells us that they are "sisters"--allies in opposition. "We are together, my child and I. Mother and child, yes, but sisters really, against whatever denies us all that we are" (IS, 382).

Although Walker does at first express some ambivalence and one mention of anger, she ultimately arises from any questioning with almost total affirmation of motherhood.¹² Walker decides that Rebecca is more delightful and less distressing than Virginia Woolf's madness; George Eliot's ostracism and anonymity; Jane Austen's lack of privacy and love life; the Bronte's reclusive lives, early deaths and dependencies; and Zora Hurston's poverty and poor health. And she is positively

enraptured at Rebecca's seeing a "world" (instead of a scar) in Walker's wounded eye.

But Walker also tells us:

[Rebecca's birth] forced me to understand, viscerally, women's need for a store of "Women's Folly," and yet feel on firm ground in my rejection of it. But rejection also has its pain. Distance is required, even now (IS, 369).

Here, I believe, Walker informs us briefly, and somewhat obliquely, that she does have some emotions connected with motherhood at which she cannot look too directly or closely, just yet. The question of being a person and a mother--a person who is a mother, a mother who is a person--is a complex one requiring much intelligence, sensitivity, emotion, and, at times, not a few defense mechanisms ("Women's Folly"). The conflict between affiliation and individuation grows stronger. Part of the cost of "affirmation of her child" and what she sees as subsequent confirmation of her self may be an inability at least at this point to look too directly at the negative side of her own motherhood--the fear, the exasperation, the anger. Locked in a pact of protection and support with her daughter/"sister" against outside oppression, Walker needs the spiritual and emotional strength of their partnership. Walker, on different levels, in different forms, has faced many of these problems and questions, and answered not a few. However, like Rebecca, she seems more often than not,

to see the world and not the scar. In doing so, she continues the pattern of many black mothers and daughters who have historically found great solace and strength in their alliance, their affiliation.¹³

In both poetry and essays, Alice Walker essentially idealizes the life of her own mother as well as the life, writing and her relationship to her adopted literary/spiritual mother, Zora Neale Hurston (in her essays and the short story "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhoff"). Similarly, she only gingerly, engages the "negative" aspects of motherhood in relation to her own self as mother in poetry and essays. In contrast, however, in the novel, Meridian, Walker looks very closely and specifically into the price and pain of being a black mother and a black daughter. This is a very compelling and welcome examination. This novel deals with issues and emotions that I believe have been difficult, for good reason, for black mothers and daughters to acknowledge. She does so in extremely intelligent, sensitive, and affecting manner. (More writing in this vein could contribute to debunking the myth of the strong black woman/mother and acknowledging the toll it takes on black women; who, as total human beings with a very painful history, have suffered and are vulnerable as well as strong.) Perhaps this scrutiny in Walker's fiction

will eventually allow her to open the door further, to look more directly, and to tell more of some of these same pains in her essays and poetry. Meridian is a truth-seeker, regardless of other peoples' opinions, or her own pain. Walker is also. Her sense of affiliation is powerful, and so is her sense of self. She addresses the conflict with integrity. I am looking forward to her further explorations.

Alice Walker builds her own life redefining herself through the lives of real and imagined women. Perhaps she leans a bit toward the idealized romantic in her essays and some might say a bit toward the melancholy romantic in her fiction, Meridian. However, in the exploration of the different levels of these extremes emotionally and structurally, there is a great amount of truth that Walker conveys to the reader about herself as a daughter and as a mother and thus about black mothers and daughters in America. As Walker finds in Hurston, women (and men) may find in Walker, a golden key to a store house of varied treasure." It is a valuable gift that can contribute enormously to the health of us all.

NOTES

¹Adrienne Rich, On Lies, Secrets and Silence (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1979), 310.

²Alice Walker, In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1983). Page numbers appear in the text preceded by IS.

³Eleanor Johnson, "Reflections on Black Feminist Therapy," in Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology ed. Barbara Smith (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 323.

⁴Marilou Awiakta, "Motherroot," In Ms. Magazine, November, 1983, 65.

⁵Gloria Joseph, Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981). Page numbers appear in the text preceded by CD.

⁶Mary Helen Washington, "Her Mother's Gifts" In Ms. Magazine, June 1982, 38.

⁷It is interesting and perhaps significant to note that in Walker's writing about her mother in In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens, that her mother's name is not specifically mentioned. Never referring to her by name increases the perception of her as MOTHER, rather than as a person named _____, who is a mother. In contrast, although Walker writes of "her child," she mentions, in several instances, her child Rebecca's name.

⁸Alice Walker, Meridian (New York: Washington Square Press, 1976). Page numbers appear in the text preceded by M.

⁹Doris Lessing, Martha Quest, vol. I of Children of Violence (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 16.

¹⁰Emphasis added.

¹¹Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider (Trumansberg, N.Y.: The Crossing Press, 1984, 106.

¹²While part of this perception may be connected to Rebecca's age (seven can be a delightful age), I believe it is more than this.

¹³Another element in the analysis of Walker's relationship to Rebecca is how much help, if any, does Walker get in raising her child.

PART IV:

ILLNESS AND HEALING

CHAPTER 12

ILLNESS

Implying ruthless self-suppression, does the "eternal feminine" necessarily imply illness? If so, we may have found yet another meaning for [Emily] Dickinson's assertion that "Infection in the sentence breeds." The despair we "inhale" even "at distances of centuries" may be the despair of a life . . . that "has no story."

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar¹

The conflict between affiliation and individuation is dramatically expressed in women's illness, both psychic and physical. While it is unwise and untrue to reduce or simplify illness solely to psychological-sociological causes, at the same time, psychosociological conflicts can be and are felt in physical terms. This issue is an extremely complex topic that has been explored in various important and informative books, such as: Women and Madness²; For Her Own Good³; GynEcology⁴; Women Who Marry Houses⁵; The Hungry Self⁶; as well as others. Although the range of this topic extends beyond the scope of this study, for purposes of this thesis, it is useful to consider the general issue.

The conflict between affiliation and individuation is an ongoing conflict that can take its toll in illness. A woman defining herself in her own terms in a world which

not only does not support this endeavor, but severely penalizes women for it, is in danger. This is, however, a "catch-22" situation. Whether women acknowledge or consciously "fight" the conflict or not, it takes its toll. Failing to define oneself in one's own terms can be equally or perhaps even more psychically and physically damaging. For women, there exists no really safe ground.

In For Her Own Good: 150 Years Of the Experts' Advice to Women, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English write about the epidemic of invalidism in women of the middle and upper classes in the mid and late nineteenth century. They explain that these women were paralyzed with depression brought on by what they perceived as two opposite life choices, neither of which was satisfying and need-fulfilling in and of itself:

For, in the new world of the nineteenth century, what was a woman to do? Did she build a life, like her aunts and her mother, in the warmth of the family--or did she throw herself into the nervous activism of a world which was already presuming to call itself "modern"? Either way, wouldn't she be ridiculous, a kind of misfit?⁷

Ehrenreich and English go on to say that this dilemma continued to affect "tens of thousands"⁸ of women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They point out that although a small number of these women may be able to turn

their pain and anger into activism--many more unknown women remain permanently depressed and confused.

In Women and Madness, Phyllis Chesler documents the disproportionately large number of women in psychiatric hospitals and psychotherapeutic treatment.⁹ (Her explanation of the meaning of these statistics goes well beyond the superficial explanation we are often given that women seek "help" more than men.)

In addition to depression and mental illness, illness in women is exhibited in other forms that meaningfully reflect the conflict of women in Western culture. Certain illnesses may in fact be viewed as very direct metaphors for women's psychosociological conflict. One such illness or group of illnesses is the category of eating disorders.

Eating disorders (including anorexia, bulimia and bulimarexia) chiefly affect women: ninety-five percent of anorexics and 85-90% of bulimics are women.¹⁰ It is significant that the onset of anorexia generally occurs during adolescence, and the onset of bulimia usually occurs in the early twenties:¹¹ these years are a crucial time of physical and psychological development. The occurrence of eating disorders in young (and sometimes older) women strongly signals the conflict these women experience concerning contradictory developmental issues. It is

useful to specifically delineate how conflicting cultural pressures from a predominantly male culture are expressed and responded to in physical terms through eating disorders.

Laura S. Brown speaks of certain spoken and unspoken societal "rules" related to the physical: 1) women are supposed to be small and occupy little space; 2) women are encouraged to have slim, male-like bodies; and 3) women are not supposed to overtly nurture themselves (women's nurturing is reserved for men and children). Physically, although both men and women are more highly valued in society if they are thin, this holds true more for women. (In one study, female students who were obese were rejected more often from college than were obese males.) Raised in a society in which 50-75% of American women consider themselves overweight, many girls are already on diets by the fourth grade! And while growing boys are made to feel good about their newly developing muscles, growing girls are made to feel fat and ashamed of their newly developing roundness.

Also, psychologically conditioned to be "other-oriented," females tend not to look in to themselves for identity and affirmation, but outside to their effect on others, particularly men. Feelings of self-esteem and

effectiveness are largely tied to attractiveness/ thinness, and usually specifically to the ability to attract and hold a man. Paradoxically, at the same time that women are pressured to be thin, there also exists societal pressure for women to feed others. (Conditioned in their other-orientation, many women are often not in touch enough with their own bodies to even know if they are hungry.)

While young women are trying to absorb and obey these confusing "rules," they are often not rewarded for their efforts. Instead of "rows of handsome princes waiting to court, many women suffer male rejection about this time."¹² (Societal pressure toward heterosexuality is a related but different issue.) The response to these contradictory pressures and messages may be the development, not of a mature female self, but of an eating disorder. A young girl who cannot reconcile these contradictions may feel, and rightly so, that her life is out of control, and she seeks, often desperately, to regain some control. One area in which she can exercise control is in her own eating.

Theorist Hilda Bruch refers to anorexia as a "struggle for control for a sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness."¹³ Karen DeCrow sees anorexia, not only as a method for gaining control, but as a protest:

Anorexia is not only a hunger strike, it is a strike against the nurturant role of women. These girls are telling the world in no uncertain terms that they will not be like their mothers, they will not cook for people, they will not attend to the biological needs of a family. No eating, no cooking.¹⁴

Bruch explains that in the related disorder, bulimia (in which large quantities of food are eaten and then vomited) "[b]ingeing [is a way to] ward off people with a 'wall of [perceived] fat.' It is a way of 'filling up' emotionally without needing others."¹⁵ Purging serves to get rid of guilt and potential forbidden fat in a culture that prescribes/mandates thinness especially for women.

Thinness represents compliance in a culture that requires its women to maintain low visibility and exhibit few needs. But where the appearance signifies compliance, the activity (of an eating disorder) exhibits rebellion. Bulimia can be seen as an extreme metaphor of the affiliation-individuation conflict: affiliation with the culture by ingesting, consuming the culture through food, and then, subsequent purging of this alien matter.

Thus, both anorexia and bulimia represent as well as act out and apparently (but not actually) resolve the affiliation-individuation conflict: simultaneously complying (affiliation) with the directives of Western culture for women, and also, at the same time, rebelling

against them (individuation). To these creative young women, it seems a way to beat a game played with a stacked deck. However, it doesn't work.

The conflict within women's sense of self and the external culture is also evidenced in the illness of agoraphobia (literally "fear of the market-place"). Karen DeCrow writes in Women Who Marry Houses:

We believe that in a culture that has consistently doled out punishment to women who travel away from home (from unequal pay in the workplace to blame for children who turn to drugs to actual physical assault on the streets), it is no surprise that certain women, sensing the existential irony of their situation, refuse to leave home. We see agoraphobia as a paradigm for the historical intimidation and oppression of women.¹⁶

As DeCrow points out, what is actually a metaphor for illness in the society is treated as individual illness or disease. The symptoms are treated with drugs and behavioral therapy, and the underlying cultural causes are generally unacknowledged. Sadly, this superficial treatment only serves to further obscure and aggravate the real problem, doing even more damage to women's lives.

Actions that work on a deeper level to resolve the conflict might include: a "transformational passage"¹⁷ advocated by Kim Chernin in which ritual is evoked to give meaning to developmental conflict; a suggestion from Dr. Jill Steinberg to learn to get rid of guilt, perhaps

replacing it with more appropriate anger, possibly stimulating exercise or other therapeutic activity;¹⁸ and Marlene Roskind-Lodahl's suggestion of a female therapist to serve as a positive role model to help women "grow toward a healthier, more independent self."¹⁹

NOTES

¹Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 55.

²Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon Books, 1972).

³Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1979).

⁴Mary Daly, GynEcology: The Metaphysics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

⁵Robert Seidenberg and Karen DeCrow, Women Who Marry Houses: Panic and Protest in Agoraphobia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

⁶Kim Chernin, The Hungry Self: Women, Eating, and Identity (New York: Times Books, 1985).

⁷Ehrenreich and English, 3.

⁸Ehrenreich and English, 3.

⁹Chesler, xxii.

¹⁰Arnold. E. Anderson, M.D., Practical Comprehensive Treatment of Anorexia Nervosa and Bulemia (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

¹¹This information and the statistics and ideas on anorexia in this and the following two paragraphs come from a lecture in Dr. Jill Steinberg's Psychology of Women class at San Jose State University, 4/29/87. This information was contributed by Dr. Steinberg, and also by a student in the class--Nancy.

¹²Marlene Boskind-Lodahl, "Cinderella's Stepsisters: A Feminist Perspective on Anorexia Nervosa and Bulemia," in Psychology of Women: Selected Readings, ed., Juanita H. Williams, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 519.

- ¹³Boskind-Lodahl, 522.
- ¹⁴Seidenberg and DeCrow, 94.
- ¹⁵Boskin-Lodahl, 522.
- ¹⁶Seidenberg and DeCrow, 6.
- ¹⁷Chernin, 204.
- ¹⁸Steinberg, 1987.
- ¹⁹Boskind-Lodahl, 474.

CHAPTER 13

HEALING

"Solutions"/Questions

What is the way out of this dilemma? How does a woman reconcile the exigencies of the species--her desire for stasis, her sense of ancestry, her devotion to the house in which she has lived--with the urgencies of her own self?

Sandra M. Gilbert¹

The process toward individuation, or recognizing, developing, and accepting our own authentic selves, may involve clarifying the questions as much or more than coming up with particular solutions. Questions that lead us in certain directions toward individuation, rather than forming "definitive" answers or solutions is more in keeping with the spirit and "truth" of process as a function of women's authenticity.

The question of the conflict between affiliation and individuation is a complex one in which as components of the question change, the "answers" change. Considering the question from a practical, living-the-conflict, day-to-day standpoint, some questions might be: if one necessarily defines oneself in relation to others, does one define one's authentic self in relation to other authentic selves,

or is one's self inauthentically subordinated for others' domination? Does this domination and subordination occur in the conventional "masculine" role of emotional separation or the conventional "feminine" role of emotional affiliation at the expense of one's true self? What is an authentic or individuated self, and how many people can claim one? How many people know what it means to "create" a self with regard to individual attributes as well as community considerations? Not a self outside of community, a self inclusive of community, and, at the same time, a self not drawn into that community without ultimate regard for authenticity? A self inclusive of community, even if that inclusiveness results in a decision to exclude (for whatever period of time) aspects of community?

These are possible questions that each individual woman (and man) needs to explore for herself (himself). I will not and cannot answer these questions for someone else. However, I will propose possibilities or directions that may be useful in the process toward clarifying these questions. In doing so, I will consider four broad areas: Analyzing and Redefining the Questions; Clinical Therapy; Community; and Ritual.

The first approach toward clarifying the questions is the very process of analyzing and redefining the questions

according to women's own experience and understanding. This step essentially involves what this thesis is doing: reviewing past and current theory, literature, etc., and weighing what is read with the woman's own experience. She may also choose to write, in whatever form, an analysis and expression of how what she has read applies to her. Writing may be helpful in clarifying and refining her understanding, as well as more deeply internalizing her new knowledge. This activity involves the emotional and spiritual in addition to the intellectual aspect of the woman's self. It involves a certain amount of solitary, although not exclusively (groups and classes can support and clarify), exploration.

The second approach useful in clarifying the questions, if the woman so chooses, can be clinical therapy. If properly conducted, clinical therapy does two main things. First, it allows a safe place to acknowledge and to express feelings that inevitably and naturally surface in the process of exploring new ideas related to one's life, or actually, just in the process of living one's life. (The view of clinical therapy as a "safe place" is a controversial question, and one which leads many women, including myself for a long time, to reject therapy and view it as a psychic "violation".)² Therapy provides a safe place for women to feel and express pain,

turning, for example, potentially debilitating guilt and helplessness into the sometimes more appropriate feelings of fear and anger. (As Audre Lorde writes: "Guilt is not a feeling. It is an intellectual mask to a feeling.")³ It is difficult for women in general to admit anger since in Western culture women are socialized not to show anger. Anger is, however, sometimes appropriate, and women very much need a safe place in which to feel and express it.

Second, clinical therapy is useful in that acknowledging and expressing feelings makes it more possible to integrate these emotions with their accompanying experiences into a clearer understanding of the woman's life. It enables the woman to continue in her life, not weighed down and debilitated by potentially threatening emotions, but to live and act incorporating her own understanding of these emotions and experiences into her life.

Specifically, in relation to the conflict between affiliation and individuation as it defines a woman's understanding of her life, this conflict is a central issue in therapy. In A New Approach to Women and Therapy, Miriam Greenspan reports:

There is no doubt that the problems in female identity that center around issues of autonomy and dependence are foremost among those that women today are bringing to therapy.⁴

The third approach useful for further clarification and support can be working with a community of like-minded people."⁵ This community can be as small or as large as the need dictates at the time (and, although there are advantages to a flesh-and-blood community of people--if one at certain times is feeling especially vulnerable with people--the community can even begin with special books one has chosen). A community of like-minded people can supply much support and clarification, adding to a woman's intellectual, emotional and spiritual development. Jean Baker Miller writes:

It is difficult to see one's way all alone, to have a true vision about which aspects of conflict are appropriate or inappropriate, to know when we have the right to ask or assert and when we are making exaggerated or distorted demands.⁶

And, lest we forget the important physical part (for women claim our bodies equally with our minds), these friends can be companions in physical activities to add further to integrated development and well-being. And, in a more general physical (and emotional, spiritual and intellectual) sense, a community of like-minded people allows for "safer" and more effective action in the world.

The fourth possibility is the use of ritual. Some women who have felt betrayed by traditional religion have experienced some difficulty integrating the spiritual into

an integrated self. Some feminists identify themselves as "spiritual feminists" and place significant emphasis on this aspect of their development. However this is done, and on whatever level, there are certain activities that women participate in which can be seen as rituals for tapping our spirituality. These activities may range from spiritually significant personal acts, such as the "everyday," "turning-in-her-lap" activities of women such as Adrienne Rich writes about in her poem "Transcendental Etude." Or they may be more elaborate full-moon and solstice rituals (which often include the spiritual healing powers of nature) performed by groups of women.⁷ Kim Chernin writes:

If women today were encouraged to evolve authentic rituals for themselves, in which they could move knowingly through the transitional passage required by every woman who enters culture, we would not have to purge our appetites and plunder our bodies as a means to express our need for transformation.⁸

In speaking of the "idealized image" and the "real self" (in Karen Horney's terms),⁹ it could be useful to go through a ritual of mourning the loss of an "idealized" self as well as a ritual of the birth of a "real" self in order to signify this transformation.

Writing for Health

As a part of the process of analyzing and redefining questions and issues, and in connection with "rituals," as well as in keeping with the literary analysis aspect of this thesis, it is interesting to consider the therapeutic benefits of writing in relation to specific women writers. How much of a "solution" is writing for women attempting to deal with the affiliation/individuation conflict in terms of health and survival? Tillie Olson has said, "Every woman who writes is a survivor."¹⁰ Yes, but in what sense --physical, spiritual (in a broad sense), or both? Alice Walker concludes:

I think writing really helps you heal yourself; I think if you write long enough, you will be a healthy person. That is, if you write what you need to write, as opposed to what will make money, or what will make fame.¹¹

Is Alice Walker right about staying well if one writes what one needs to write?

Writing for health seems to work differently for different people, and there are varied opinions on it.

Writing on Anne Sexton, Suzanne Juhasz observes:

Art as therapy appears less profitable for the artist, who gives the gift of herself, than for its recipients. I think that I can learn from Sexton's poems as she never could.¹²

In an earlier essay, Juhasz had proclaimed the health-giving benefits of writing poetry. She later decided that this only went so far:

In an earlier essay on Sexton I maintained that poetry had saved her from suicide. It did, for the years in which she wrote and was the poet. But it is equally true that poetry could not prevent her death . . .¹³

The same is true for Sylvia Plath: poetry could not prevent her death. In her poetry, Plath expressed a feeling of being trapped in a "bell jar," in "plaster," in a "wax house."¹⁴ One could argue that she was trapped in patriarchal directive.

Plath writes: "Father, this thick air is murderous . . . I would breathe water."¹⁵ Although Plath apparently had an emotionally stifling relationship with her own father (as evidenced by her poem, "Daddy"), Sandra Gilbert argues that Plath's claustrophobia extended into the culture at large:

The story told [by Plath] is invariably a story of being trapped, by society or by the self as an agent of society, and then somehow escaping or trying to escape.¹⁶

Plath did escape in ecstatically free poetic lines. "Now she is flying," she exalted in "Stings."¹⁷ And, in "Ariel": "I / Am the arrow, / The dew that flies /

Suicidal, at one with the drive / Into the red Eye, the
cauldron of morning."¹⁸

Plath's images of escape and freedom are strongly counterposed with images of destruction. She was ultimately unable to carry through with more absolute, unambivalent images of escape in her poetry, as well as to translate this sense of freedom and escape from page to life. She seems to express this inability directly in "Years" from Ariel: "What I love is / The piston in motion, My soul dies before it."¹⁹ Although this line may be read on many levels, the result is essentially the same: Plath's "soul"--her authentic self--dies. This death is echoed in her "suicidal" arrow flight in "Stings," in which Gilbert points out:

. . . the suicidal cauldron of morning is both an image of rebirth and a place where one is cooked; and the red solar eye, certainly in Freudian terms, is the eye of the father, the patriarchal superego which destroys and devours with a single glance.²⁰

This thesis proposes that these women were "victims" of the conflict between affiliation and individuation, between the pull toward a "masculine" society and their own internal, authentic female selves. Neither woman was specifically "feminist," with the support that such a like-minded community can provide. In her 1974 essay on Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich tells us that Sexton was not in any

conscious way a feminist, and that "her head was often patriarchal." However, Rich goes on to say that "in her blood and her bones, Anne Sexton knew."²¹ So, I believe, did Sylvia Plath.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was another famous woman writer who fought her "illness" with writing. In this, she went against the professional mandate of the famous Nineteenth Century "nerve specialist," S. Weir Mitchell. Gilman's brilliantly evocative short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," is a vivid account of what happened in one woman's mind under Mitchell's treatment. Sent to bed and forbidden any mental activity whatsoever, especially writing, to put it simply: she went mad.

Deeply depressed, Gilman left her family and became a political activist for women's causes. Although she wrote (and published) extensively, she continued to wrestle with depression throughout her life.

And, as is well known, despite her marvelous writing, Virginia Woolf (like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton) committed suicide.

Writing is often not enough for women who cannot be their true selves in life. As Elaine Hedges observes about the bed-ridden woman in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper":

With her husband she cannot be her true self but must pose; and this, as she says, "makes me very tired." Finally the fatigue and subterfuge are unbearable.²²

The woman goes mad--like Gilman's character and Gilman herself. Or commits suicide--like Woolf--like Plath--like Sexton.

If we are looking for "solid" answers, it is painfully evident from these women's lives and deaths that in dealing with the conflict between society and self, writing is not the ultimate answer. But, on the other hand, it has given some women relief and clarification.

Virginia Woolf wrote in Moments of Being:

I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. . . I suppose I did for myself what psychoanalysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and laid it to rest.²³

This relief was also experienced by Leslie Marmon Silko. Talking about the process of writing Ceremony, she says:

So my character is very sick, and I was very sick when I was writing the novel. I was having migraine headaches all the time and horrible nausea that went on and on. I kept writing and all of a sudden it occurred to me that he was very sick and I was wondering if he was going to get well... So here I was in my novel working on my character every day, and I was trying to figure out how some stay sane and some don't, and then I realized that the one thing that was keeping me going at all was writing. And as Tayo got better, I felt better.²⁴

So, while not the ultimately healing, life-saving answer, writing can and does work as therapy for women. Both the writing itself as well as the reading of it by other women. (I found solace and hope in Silko's expression of healing through writing for my own migraine headaches.)

Writing of "solutions" this thesis must stress the vital importance of communication. Throughout development toward individuation or search for authenticity, communication is a key element in understanding ourselves and each other. It is crucial to recognize different perspectives and orientations and to realize that assumptions for one person are not necessarily the same assumptions for another. Different women's (and men's) voices provide both similar and different perspectives. Miscommunication and misunderstandings occur when we

automatically assume we share a common perspective and we don't. If we recognize and know our own unique perspectives, then we can better communicate them to each other. In this communication is more of a possibility of authentic relation.

There are no "easy" answers. Old problems will persist, and new problems will arise. Also, new perspectives will not "take" immediately. The "answer" of balancing the "masculine" mode of separation and the "feminine" mode of affiliation by equal participation of fathers in parenting (as proposed by Chodorow as well as others), has been less strongly proposed since the discovery of numbers of cases of father-incest. This does not mean that fathers should not participate in child-care, but that the "answer" is more complex than it initially appeared. Also, this "answer," with its implied assumption that a female and a male are the optimum parental team, does not adequately incorporate homosexual couples who wish to be parents.

For me, exploring the psychsociological theory from which the definition and elaboration of human development, maturity or individuation evolves has been very useful in understanding the conflict between affiliation and individuation more thoroughly. Analyzing the conventional

theories of Freud and Erikson with my individual woman's perspective and questions allowed/allows me to form my own understanding, a woman's understanding of a woman's psychological development. Analyzing Karen Horney's theory, a woman and a peer of Freud and Erikson, brought more clarity. And even more resulted from my examination of feminists theorists Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller and others. Additional insight came from a more extensive analysis in terms of the affiliation-individuation conflict within feminism; in terms of race and class; mothers and daughters (white mothers and daughters and black mothers and daughters); and the impact of the issue on women's health. The conflict is a thread running throughout women's lives. It is perhaps the most central question in our lives.

I believe that the form of this thesis, more web-like than linear, has been useful and authentic for me in exploring the issue and providing for a more integrated understanding.

Seeking "solutions" is an evolving process. With new perspectives come new ideas. New wisdom could likely be the very opposite of the old, such as Kim Chernin's proposal of:

A woman president who makes difficult decisions when she has her period, because that is precisely when she is most emotional and most open therefore to the wisdom of strong feelings.²⁵

In the epigraph beginning this section, Sandra Gilbert asks:

What is the way out of this dilemma? How does a woman reconcile the exigencies of the species- her desire for stasis, her sense of ancestry, her devotion to the house in which she has lived--with the urgencies of her own self?

She responds: "I don't know the answer."²⁶

Maybe there are no answers. Perhaps all we really do have are the questions. This time though the questions will be women's questions, asked about our own perceptions of our own lives and experiences. Questions revolving around what has been called a "dialectic of necessity and choice."²⁷ Questions of the integration and delicate balance of our intellectual/emotional/ spiritual/physical selves combined with varying psychological, sociological, economic and other known and unknown factors--always changing.

The "solution," then, is perhaps to ask questions. And to keep asking questions--redefining, refining. For it is true that as the components change, the questions change, and the "answers" change. This paper considers some of these questions and some of these patterns at this

time. More work does remain to be done by us all. Women in
community, active, reflective, asking our own questions!
Where--one wonders--will they take us?

NOTES

¹Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Fine White Flying Myth: The Life/Work Sylvia Plath," in Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 260.

²As elucidated in the theory section of this paper, psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis, has historically been male-dominated; within this system much psychic abuse of women has occurred. See, for example, Mary Daly, GynEcology: Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

³Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider (Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 162.

⁴Miriam Greenspan, A New Approach to Women and Therapy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 227.

⁵Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 2d ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 132.

⁶Miller, 132.

⁷For more information and examples of rituals, see Hallie Inglehart, Womanspirit: A Guide to Women's Wisdom (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).

Also see Starhawk, Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), and Starhawk, The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

⁸Kim Chernin, The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity (New York, Times Books, 1985), 202.

⁹Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts in The Collected Works of Karen Horney, vol. I (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1945), 96-114.

¹⁰Adrienne Rich, On Lies, Secrets and Silence (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1979), 123.

¹¹Alice Walker, "Novelist Alice Walker: Telling the Black Woman's Story," New York Times Magazine, 8 January 1984, 34.

¹²Suzanne Juhasz, "Seeking the Exit on the Home: Poetry and Salvation in the Career of Anne Sexton," in Shakespeare's Sisters, 268.

¹³Juhasz, 267.

¹⁴Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Fine, White Flying Myth: The Life/Work of Sylvia Plath," in Shakespeare's Sisters, 251.

¹⁵Gilbert, 259.

¹⁶Gilbert, 251.

¹⁷Gilbert, 258.

¹⁸Gilbert, 259.

¹⁹Gilbert, 259.

²⁰Gilbert, 259.

²¹Adrienne Rich, "Anne Sexton: 1928-1974," in On Lies, Secrets, and Silence, 122.

²²Elaine R. Hedges, "Afterword by Elaine R. Hedges," in Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1973), 51.

²³Marilyn Yalom, Maternity, Morality and the Literature of Madness (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 93.

²⁴Leslie Marmon Silko, "Stories and Their Tellers--A Conversation with Leslie Marmon Silko," Interview by Dexter Fisher (Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico, 28 January 1977, The Third Woman: Women Writers of the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), 20.

²⁵Chernin, 193.

²⁶Gilbert, 260.

²⁷Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson, "Afterword," in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980)," in Adrienne Rich, Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 69.

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION

The conflict between affiliation and individuation in Western culture forms a complex dynamic of which a very crucial part--both historically and currently--has been and is its gender connection. This paper explores gender patterns and makes gender connections not to reinforce the position that these patterns are innate or inevitable, but to expose the strong pulls related to gender that influence each unique person in her or his own difficult process toward individuation. To understand how these patterns work is a step in the ability to choose and change them, if we will, and also a step toward a more individuated, integrated, authentic culture.

It seems that if we can define the patterns and pulls as authentic people with authentic needs of both space and individuality as well as community and intimacy, we have grounds for compatible coexistence.

For women, historically oriented in a mode of affiliation, it is not the defining of oneself in relationship that is the problem; it is in the relationship that there is an imbalance of power and of right of self-discovery and self-expression. For, in historical terms,

the affiliation of women has been predicated not on a basis of equality, but on a basis of male domination and female subordination. It is not affiliation per se that is the problem, but the external mandate that women and not men should be affiliative, and also its hidden element of subordination.

The differences in male and female problems within a male-dominated system is that within this system men may have problems and may succeed or fail; whereas, within this system, women have little option of success--the overriding conflict is one of impossibility--sa catch-22 situation where the employment of our best powers leaves us defeated. For if we align ourselves with the dominant society, we deny and destroy our authentic selves, and if we go against the society, it often denies and destroys us.

Our only real option within this system is to define ourselves, decide for ourselves, and make ourselves heard in order to change this system--so that it will incorporate us and at least give us an equal chance for success as for failure.

The affiliative characteristics based on or related to this subordination must be examined and sorted out from affiliative characteristics that are based on women's own equal and authentic sense of ourselves.

One reason I now realize I chose to use the term "individuation" to define women's own true selves was/is the emphasis many women now need to place on the individual aspect of differentiation--not separate--but individual. Historically, so oriented and influenced by relation, the pull toward affiliation can at this time, for many women, be so strong that it may, at times or completely, override our authentic selves.

At the same time, men have not been historically required to do this essential work of tending to relationships, and have been too strongly pulled toward their own individuality. They have gained power, but at the expense of emotional detachment.

This analysis concludes that the conflict between affiliation and individuation is gender-related because it is power-related. Power does corrupt. At least in the form it has historically existed in Western culture as emotionally detached domination. It is the hope that for women with the insight of women's history of subordination, that power will not as easily corrupt. That it will be more balanced with humanity and understanding (the "power to" not "power over" that feminists have defined). And, it is hoped that men, tired and dying of the prevailing kind of corrupt power, will move toward relinquishing this particular form of power, and work toward creating, with

women, a more equal, life-enhancing, nurturing kind of power.

Freud couldn't answer the question, "What do women want?"; but women can propose our own possibilities and directions. We may not have and probably do not want absolute answers, but we can form useful frameworks within which to ask our questions. Jane Flax proposes a compelling one when she responds to the question, What do women want?:

What women want is an experience of both nurturance and autonomy within an intimate relationship.¹

This is essentially the same framework that Miller and colleagues at the Stone Center advance with their "self-in-relation" theory of "mutual empathy."

This thesis follows Flax and Miller in proposing that what women want is as simple and complex as the dynamic structure they define: the coexistence, the merging of these two historically held dualities: nurturance and autonomy, affiliation and individuation. It is possible that what men ultimately want is the same. Let us all be mothers to ourselves and to each other!

The Personal is Political

As I finish this paper, my daughter has left home for college--for her adult life. I feel differently--physically. I feel more often as if I inhabit my body, as if it belongs to me. What was a numb sensation, or negative feeling is giving way to feelings of excitement, even exhilaration--the feeling of possibility, of hope.

Things look different. They have had a grey cast, a diffuseness, an indistinctness to them that I thought was the way they looked. Now, they look different. I don't see a grey-greenish "blob" of a tree, for example. I see "individuated" leaves, precise, clear and perky green. The leaves shine on the tree with "life." They vibrate, a kind of "waving" to me, a friendliness. Crazy?

Someone said she's only heard of what I described from people who had escaped death. Perhaps that is it. I have escaped death. The threat of death of self, of living a life not defined by one's own self. Held by the "institution" of motherhood, my experience of motherhood has to a large extent not been my own. I have been a sitting target. Now, I will be a moving one, one with more options, maneuverability and power. "I'm ceded, I've stopped being theirs . . ."

I am very ready for this new phase of my life. Let
the joy begin!

The Soul has Bandaged moments--
When too appalled to stir--
She feels some ghastly Fright come up
And stop to look at her--

Salute her--with long fingers--
Caress her freezing hair--
Sip, Goblin, from the very lips
The Lover--hovered--o'er--

Unworthy, that a thought so mean
Accost a Theme--so--fair--

The soul has moments of Escape--
When bursting all the doors--
She dances like a Bomb, abroad,
And swings upon the Hours . . .

Emily Dickinson

NOTES

¹Jane Flax, "The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and Within Feminism," Feminist Studies 4, no. 2 (1978): 171.

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