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Home and Away:
The Female Artist in Academia

By

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the conflicts, contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the lives of those women who, as artists and academics, seek to connect their personal and professional lives in their work. It explores how creativity and the pursuit of self-knowledge relate to the lives of female artists and academics. The dissertation arises from a study of my own experience as woman, writer and academic.

Inquiries into creativity and feminist, critical and cultural theory provide the framework for examining how the identity of the female artist is shaped within the patriarchal institution of academia, an institution originally created by, and for, men and still strongly influenced by this history. These inquiries allow a deeper understanding of the impact of this institution on the life and work of the female artist both within and beyond the academy. As a self-study, the distinctive voice of this dissertation is developed through autobiographical narratives, journals, letters and a development of personal metaphors, as well as through a dialogue with others. This is therefore a performative text in which narratives map a process of transformation that traces the artist's path from silence to voice.

This work has important implications for women in higher education as self-study is revealed to be an essential methodological instrument for the articulation of alternative, authentic perspectives of marginalized and under-represented women. Moreover, the acknowledgement of the academic/artist paradigm in teacher education opens the path for a re-viewing of the metaphors of self-denial, impersonation and masks that are part of the landscape of teacher knowledge.

Résumé

Cette dissertation analyse les conflits, les contradictions et les paradoxes inhérantes dans la vies des femmes artistes et académiques, qui cherchent à marier leur vie personnelle et professionnelle et leur travail. Des plus, nous pourrons constater de quelle facon la créativité et la quête du savoir sont introduits dans la vie de ces mêmes femmes. Cette dissertation relate ma propre expérience en tant que femme, écrivaine et académique.

Une étude sur la créativité et le féminisme procure la structure qui nous permettra de reconnaître de quelle facon l'identité artistique de la femme est modelée à même l'institution académique patriarcale, une institution fondée par et pour des hommes et dont la philosophie est encore vivante. Ces études démontrent l'impact de ces institutions sur la vie et l'œuvre des femmes artistiques à l'intérieur et au-delà du cercle académique. En tant qu'auto-analyse, le ton que vous rencontrez à travers cette dissertation est le reflet d'une narration autobiographique, de journaux, de lettres, de développements de métaphores personnelles ainsi que de dialogues avec diverses personnes. Ces narrations et dialogues tracent un processus qui transforme le chemin de l'artiste et change le silence en parole.

Cet ouvrage apporte d'importantes conséquences pour les femmes académiques; l'auto-analyse représente l'instrument logique et vital pour énoncer une alternative, pour des perspectifs incontestables des femmes marginalisées et sous-représentées. De plus, la reconnaissance du paradigme académique/artistique de la formation des enseignants nous entraîne sur la voie de la révision des métaphors de reniements, des personnifications et des masques qui font partis de l'environnement des connaissances des enseignants.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

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I dedicate this work to,

My family, who inspired and encouraged me daily. My husband Francois who , for the past few years, has put his own dreams and aspirations on the back-burner so that I could pursue my own. Francois cared for our three children, supported us all financially and emotionally and guided us through some very difficult times. His generosity of time and spirit kept us all afloat.

My children, Stephanie, Karyne and Jean-Francois for being the people I dreamed they would become and for helping me to become a better person.

To Jana, my grand-daughter, for coming into my life.

Home and Away :

The Female Artist in Academia

I want my words to serve as women's art has always served - white stitched quilts, sienna pots, woven water wheels, spears, bows, houses. To carry food, keep warm, pass on the muscle of those who stood and those who fell . Words to be a place to come home to.

Ellen Bass (1980, p.161)

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PART TWO : The River of Then and Now

PREFACE

Of This Much I Am Sure

The journey to this dissertation was a difficult one. As an immigrant, mother, writer and academic I had lived with a sense of social disorientation and cultural dislocation. I had to overcome self-doubt, silence, lack of history and a distrust of the future. I also had to overcome the sense of beginning from nothing, of starting from nowhere. To do this, I had to grope my way through gender, cultural and social biases. This meant kicking addictions, examining open wounds and facing imposters.

As a private writer, entering the public domain meant leaving the security of my "writer's closet" and daring to publicly proclaim and confront myself as a writer/artist. This requires conviction of spirit and a courage of purpose, as it renders oneself vulnerable to charges of misrepresentation. Are you a *real* writer ? Are you *truly* an artist? What can *you* know? For a time, self-doubt settles in. Then, slowly, knowledge thickens. Past all the uncertainty, beyond the hurtful doubts, far from the stabbing criticism, I realise that of this much I am sure :

The uncommon path of my own academic journey challenges widely-held assumptions of who academic women are. A significant development of this journey has been my daring to venture into the public domain while struggling to form stylistic techniques in my publications that incorporate the public and the private, the artist's and the academic's voice (Kamanos Gamelin, 1995; 1996; 2000).

Indeed, as an artist, my story brings to voice ways of being and knowing that have been under-represented and unarticulated in academia. I speak of the losses that result when an artist's life circumstances deny her the means or opportunity to fully and freely practice her art . As a female artist in academia , I make explicit how sensing myself as "a living contradiction" (Whitehead, 1993) is a condition that begs creative resolutions. I describe how I have engaged in the academic landscape from my perspective of artist and reveal how within the tension and inherent struggle of conformity and self-expression, process and product, artist and academic, comes the need to express my knowing in a way that I, as a woman and writer, make meaning of the world.

Of course, the label of artist is a contentious one, and the use of it here in an academic context reflects well the dilemma of the female academic who straddles the line between self-acclamation or self-denial as artist. In this work my goal is to push back the boundaries that strictly define who is or can be an artist. Beckett explains that :

> In art there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former.That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists separate from the material it accommodates. To find form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now. (Beckett, 1961, p.93).

And that is the challenge of the female artist in academia. That was my challenge in this dissertation; to find a form that accommodated the messiness of the creative life. Indeed, in order to flourish in my work I need to maintain a connectedness between my personal and public worlds, a dialectal relationship between artistic and intellectual ways of knowing, between the mundane and the sacred, between emotion and reason. I inhabit a little-known corner of the academic landscape that houses the artist in academia and that has been unvisited in traditional educational research.

Therefore, in this dissertation I take you, the reader, with me on a process of uncovering and recovering the different pieces of my life history that have constituted the artist/creative self. I describe the creative self's struggle for artistic expression and for reclaiming the writer's voice. The narrative form of this self-study is what gives shape and meaning to my experiences. My story stands, as Maxine Greene (1999,p.102) puts it, as "a living argument" for the need to question what happens when the female artist's voice is silenced in academia. How can she (I) make a home of the patriarchal house of academia? How can her (my) voice be heard? Of what can she (I) be sure?

Indeed, authenticity, integrity and creativity are the alpha and omega of artistic as well as knowledge-making activity. As an artist, I am resolving the problem I have lived as an academic. And that is to speak in my authentic voice and to answer the creative and

intellectual yearning in a way and in a place where my beliefs and practices are aligned. I must reclaim my writer's voice. Only then can my perceptions of the world be rendered in so potently truthful a way that they resonate with meaning and purpose for myself and my readers. As Auerbach (1990) writes, "the best of our writing is entangled in the messiness of our experience" (p.385). My narratives, therefore, are key to this dissertation. And of this much I am sure:

My relationship with the written word has helped me survive a dauntingly bleak and hurtful childhood and adolescence. Writing allowed me to capture the twinkle and preserve the stardust of the encounter between the natural world and the child. I built soft cocoons of snowflakes and leaves. Bright red huts and sparkling castles. Icicle drawbridges and leafy lakes. And though the years beyond childhood have stretched, the future, it seems, has shrunk. But not in silence. The centre of the child I was remains the essence of who I am. Only now can I recognize her and welcome her back. Now I can take my place in the world, in my writing, in academia.

Indeed, my cultural, social and educational experiences had taught me that to nurture oneself was narcissistic, self-centred and indicative of a personality stuck in a sort of post -adolesence limbo. I know better now to reject this. My writing, I understand, was a tool for the building of meaning in a world that offered no interpretations for a life like my own. But the writing was never good enough, the experiences too crude. I kept the writing in such a deep, dark place that retrieving it was painful. It was like dragging

something up from the depths of the ocean floor with all the vegetation, sea urchins and moss still hugging it for nourishment.

It has become impossible to call upon my writing and to be true to my voice without clearing all the debris that has clung to my writing. I need to be free of much of it. This cleaning needs to be done, not only for myself but for other women like myself. I don't claim to speak for all women. But some will recognize their knowing in my own. And that's my purpose, that, bit by bit, words of different women and different experiences be considered as, and added, to our knowledge of how women, artists, academics live their lives.

So this dissertation is a salvage operation of sorts. It means putting what has been buried into a historical context. It means understanding the circumstances behind the sinking of women's treasures and examining what has been uncovered in some contextual light. At times the feelings of fear and insecurity return, the conflict between artist and academic resurfaces. Have I read enough books, am I a real writer, was I let in the Ph.D. program by mistake, am I too old, do I really know what I know ? Yet, an inner voice whispers; of this much I am sure :

Whether painter or poet, writer or weaver, becoming an artist is a continuous process. It is lived daily. It is akin to feeling, loving, breathing. And once we experience the process unobstructed, we cannot return to a former state of being. The transformation

is never complete, the process always ongoing, the freedom bottomless. Therefore, the building of this thesis must rely on a feminist theory that gives breath, that inspires the artist. The academic anchors that weigh down the female artists' voice will be cut. With the wind in our sails, we travel new courses, reclaim territories, trace new borders, redraw the landscape.

My love of the ocean is in- bred. I love the ebb and flow because it reminds me of how things are different , yet the same; of how one travels far only to return; of how a wave can cradle or swallow you in its undertow. The ocean is a metaphor for the paradoxes inherent in knowing and being and becoming. Also the contradictions.

I live in a country of vast differences; the landscape reflects this. My Medittereanean blood never quite adapted to the glacial winters that make my veins shrivel. And like the waves that wash debris up to the shores, there are certain things that I carried with me into academia. Some were harmful; sticks and stones, others treasures; shells and bones. Each a reminder of a long journey. There is also a certain knowledge stored in my body that is triggered off by sensory awakening. These are the bones that rattle with the knowledge of my own journeys past. My supervisor's British accent, for example, is a reminder of humiliation at school; paper napkins, of lunch box notes to the children. *Hey Jude* still makes me cry. And *The Cat in the Hat* still makes me laugh. Bob Dylan makes me happy, Billy Holiday makes me sad. My life story is illustrated by the music, and books and the solitary creative company I keep. And of this much I am sure :

Creative work is as valid and rigorous a form of feminist knowledge-making as other more traditionally defined research in academia. The social, cultural and economic environment and context of my life pervade my work and leak into the crevices of the theoretical meanings I make of the world. I know the world in a certain way because of how I approach and interact with it. I interpret it from my own palette of colours.

The design of my method evolved from a need to evoke in the reader an understanding of the relationship between becoming an artist and becoming a feminist academic. Artist and academic are like fingers of the same hand. And though at first glimpse the notion of artist and academic may seem contradictory, it is the possibilities that feminism has imagined for women that makes the revelation of academic as artist possible. The paradox inherent in the concept of "artist as academic" is a useful guide for understanding women's creative lives. In inspiring, literally giving breath to female academics, feminist research has revealed how the absence of the female artist's voice from the knowledge-making process has deprived women of the possibility of reconciling the form and content, process and product of their creative lives.

All women do not think, talk and write alike. Our visions are multiple, our creative forms varied. Our history, knowing and experiences collide, constrast and jostle for recognition. And along with the scientists, historians and traditional female scholars, we need to begin to recognize and acknowledge these alternative ways of women's

knowing, being, doing . This cannot be accomplished by replicating what is already in the mainstream, academic picture but by imagining the importance of what has been left out.

In retrieving vestiges of women's knowing, their novels, letters, diaries, quilts and pottery, we understand how women have transformed their lives into artful creations when no other instruments to express their knowing were available. This knowledge that is recognizable to other women, but not to many men, has therefore been discounted and recounted as being something else. I am reminded here of how right I was in believing the value of journal writing at a time when it was considered frivolous, wasteful and (female) childish. So academic women have had to learn to perform methodological somersaults, perfect their back and sidestroke in order that the importance of their work be recognized.

Indeed, I spent much of my graduate life trying to learn the skill and technique of the academic backstroke from many brilliant professors. I tried to stay within pre-determined lanes. More difficult however, was learning the butterfly. And regardless of what I was told, academic writing was not like learning a new language for me. Rather it was like learning to be a new person. I felt obliged to sing off key, to paint blindfolded and to write with my hands tied behind my back. The difficulty lies in never being yourself. For so many years I tried to disregard myself as an artist. In fact, I began to question whether my initial attraction to academia might not be associated with it being a

much safer place for a "closet" artist. And though each day in academia was a challenge to my integrity, of this much I am sure :

In becoming an academic I do not want to fulfill the mission that my primary education set me on the path towards. That is, to become someone I am not and to conform to a way of saying and doing that dissimulates my perspective, and my social, economic and cultural background.

I therefore see creativity as a way of transgressing the traditional boundaries of expression in academia and view feminism as the political tool that makes this possible. This is the point where feminism fulfills its political and personal potential for women. Creativity is how the political arm of feminism reveals itself in the personal and daily. It is the manifestation of feminist principles in academia. And though much of what I have experienced as negative in academia might be dismissed as my own misunderstanding of the academic process, of this much I am sure :

My perceptions of the world have been borne from the grains of my experience.These seeds have not been sown with purpose, row on row. Rather, they have flown crazily with the wind, dropping here, growing there. I stand back and look at my experiences as a farmer would look at her fields. There are no straight lines in mine. There are curves and loops and zigzags. What others see as chaos, I see as the particular

design of my life. What others see as mundane, I see as the narrative of daily living. I know that there is harvest and abundance.

So that I may maintain a sense of integrity in my work and a sense of authority in my voice I must take this way of being and seeing into account when I write. Of this much I am sure.

Living the Story

A self is made, not given. It is a creative and active process of attending a life that must be heard, shaped, seen, said aloud into the world, finally enacted and woven into the lives of others. Then a life attended is not an act of narcissism or disregard for others; on the contrary, it is searching through the treasures and debris of ordinary existence for the clear points of intensity that do not erode, do not separate us, that are most intensely our own, yet other people's too. The best of lives and stories are made up of minute particles that somehow are also universal and of use to others as well as oneself.

Barbara Myherhoff

Part One

Passages

INTRODUCTION

Journal Entry

Committee Meeting : they'll never understand the feeling ... As I tried to explain it: It's like being a tap dancer trying out for the Winnipeg National Ballet.

The Dancer and the Dance

I believe that when Isadora Duncan claimed "If I could say it, I wouldn't have to dance it" she captured the paradoxical situation of creative women, who as artists and academics live and move within worlds that have traditionally and historically misunderstood and denied women's knowing and creativity.

In the broadest sense, this work is part of a current within academic feminism that seeks to examine the culturally, historically and politically situated nature of women's knowledge both within and beyond academia. As such, it contextualizes, politicizes and legitimizes personal experience as a valid and productive means of knowledge-making, thereby erasing the split between mind and body. Here, we move beyond theory as a subtle form of silencing and begin to see the transformative potential of embodied feminist epistemology.

In essence my struggle is the struggle of the female artist in academia who seeks to bridge the distance that separates the worlds of inner and outer, personal and

public, home and the academy. It is about how women like myself, whose knowing and experience is best expressed in their creative voices, are silenced in academia. Years after Tillie Olsen first introduced her groundbreaking ideas in her book Silences (1978), I am grappling with the damages incurred by what she called the "unnatural silences" that disrupt the creative process. These silences, as Hedges and Fishkin (1994) explain, are those that result from "circumstances of being born into the wrong class, race, or sex, being denied education, becoming dumbed by economic struggle, muffled by censorship, or distracted or impeded by the demands of nurturing" (p.3). As a "survivor" my work "bears witness" to the void such silences have left and to the losses (individual and collective) sustained.

As a theoretical autobiography and self-study, this work explores the nature of the relationship between my own creativity, experiences and identity as an artist and my work, experience and identity as an academic. Felman (1993) explains that in such texts theory, autobiography and discourse can complement and resist one another. Middleton (1993), too, describes the theoretical autobiography as resting "on the idea that by keeping to the forefront the rich emotional fullness of our own and others' contextualized personal narratives, we can find ways to resist the encroachments and confinements of oppressive institutional and wider political restructuring" (p.179).

The Dancing Bears

I don't remember exactly how old I was the first time I went to the circus. It was in the old Montreal Forum and the smell of elephant dung and wet straw stuck to

the cement like sweat to skin. My school had distributed passes to needy families and I was excited to ride the bus uptown with a sense of purpose and destination.

"No, No", my mother told the driver as she pushed me ahead, holding up her five fingers. I wanted to holler that I was really older, that on Saturdays I babysat Mrs. Johnson's baby boy and that I could skip double-dutch with my eyes closed. Another dime saved.

From our seats in the rafters high above the three rings, I waited in anxious anticipation of the spectacle I had been told to expect. Chequered clowns, pink cotton candy, spinning red-painted ladies and breathtaking, high-wire acts. But all I saw were broken horses, droopy elephants and nervous monkeys. The big brown bears that rolled in were muzzled and chained and wore sequined hats and curled feathers. I was sad for all the animals that were whipped and teased. I secretly wished for the lion tamer to be swallowed up by the beasts. I was envious of the children in the front rows who got to ride in the magic train. Rather than caramel popcorn and Eskimo Pies, our row munched on the hard-boiled eggs and salami on rye bread that our mothers had packed. I brooded and fought against my anger and disappointment all the way home. The next day, a disbelieving teacher proclaimed my perceptions as wild, untruthful and a sign of my acute selfishness, ingratitude and unwillingness to adapt.

Years later as a graduate student in university, I felt the same sense of contained desolation. I had returned to academia because, as a teacher, I somehow believed that the disappointment and resentment I felt in the classroom had, once

again, much to do with my skewed perception of the world . Theresa Amabile (1990), an academic who studies creativity, remembers how her first grade teacher chastised her for being too creative. She questions why she still draws like a first grader and claims, "I study creativity because I'm still trying to figure out something that happened in grade one" (p.61).

Rather than integrate my creative perceptions and personal history, I believed I had to exorcise them and spent the first few years of graduate school training to be much less than I actually was. I learned to maintain a separation between the university and my private life as a writer and a mother of three. The "primal scene" that Grumet (1988) talks about was far removed from the university classrooms I attended. Perhaps years of living on social, cultural and economic margins had defeated me. I was tired of figuring things out. I believed it safer to be told how to "do and be". I tried to disregard my troubled educational history , my cultural background as a Greek immigrant and my social and economic history as a resident of a unique housing project in downtown Montreal. I wanted to surrender, to give myself up and to learn the steps to success and conformity. Bring in the dancing bears, I thought.

The irony, of course, was that the more I became an accomplice to the stifling of my own creativity in graduate school, the more I came to understand its importance as central to my understanding of the world, the more I was "becoming" an artist. I knew that I was an oddity, had defied the steady logic of a linear progression through life. My educational journey was unusual and had lead me down many unexpected

pathways. There was very little in my past that suggested it would wind through the academic landscape. Indeed, how I have come to be a writer, a teacher and an academic is bound through autobiographical narratives and self-study to an important purpose in this dissertation of "making the past usable" (Mitchell & Weber, 2000) which, as these authors explain, is "a remembering in service of future action" (p.11).

This work is therefore about the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in my life as a woman, artist and academic. It is about living in the safety of a private writing life, yet wanting to expose that life publicly. It is about being a resistant student (to the point of dropping out of high school for a time) and yet returning to pursue a career as an academic. In my master's work, I describe this event as a return "to the scene of a crime" (Kamanos,1992).

As an artist, this work is also about resiliency and vulnerability; about the struggle to convey, within the traditional confines of academia, the experience and knowledge of a life lived on the social, economic, and cultural borders. Experience, of course, "is the bedrock upon which meaning is constructed" (Mullen & Diamond, 1999, p.23). Eisner (1993) describes "those who are called artists as having for their subject matter the qualities of things of direct experience" (p.73). Mullen and Diamond (1999) turn to Dewey and explain the artful representation of meaning and experience in this way:

> Dewey (1938) distinguishes between experience and "an" experience. While the former is a feature of daily life and lacks design or form, a vital experience stands out meaningfully in our minds because of its contributions to an ending. The culmination and the path chosen to reach the ending make the experience meaningful. The quality that pervades the experience often emerges only after being represented in artful form (p.23).

Self-study

As an artist in academia, this means understanding marginality as a strength rather than a liability. To do so, in this dissertation I climb the slippery slope of self-study and transformation , oftentimes looking backwards in order to move ahead. This kind of work is what Ann Victoria Dean (1998) and poet Dionne Brand (1994) call the "travel back" and is a process that requires a revisiting of sites/sights so that we will be free to ask the questions that we have been forced to repress, questions that may point us toward new paths.

Russell contends (Loughran & Northfield,1998, p.6) "there is only one way to understand self-study, and that is to experience it personally." And while " in self-study recognising the dissonance between beliefs and practice is fundamental to action" (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p.7), self-study, Russell notes, is a way to learn personally and collectively from our experiences as " it is linked to ideas about the development of knowledge through better understanding of personal experience" (Loughran & Northfield, 1998).

Of course, if one of our goals in academia is empowerment and emancipation for women, then transformation is almost inevitable and the process needs to be

documented as evidence of women's alternative possibilities and potential. Ann Victoria Dean (1998) explains that women must be allowed to write creatively and uncensored if they are to know themselves and to create worlds in which they can live.

Diane Middlebrook's 1994 article entitled, "Circle of Women Artists: Tillie Olsen and Anne Sexton at the Radcliffe Institute", addressed the question of the silencing of women's creativity in academia. Here Middlebrook explained that in the 1960's Mary Ingraham Bunting, then president of Radcliffe, founded an experimental new program called the Radcliffe Institute. The program was designed to "harness the talents of intellectually displaced women" (p.17). I was dumbfounded when I read Middlebrook's article in 1998 because years earlier, in 1995, I was attending the McGill Summer Institute and had written a paper entitled "The Circle of Women: Artists at the Institute".

At that time, I had no idea of who Tillie Olsen, Anne Sexton or Maxine Kumin were. I wrote the paper in response to the bonds that had formed between a group of female artists who attended the Institute over the summer. We were writers, painters and poets who were trying to co-exist as teachers, principals and students. We were grappling with the notion that our creative voices were being stifled and that giving up our creative perspectives in our academic work meant giving up the best of ourselves. Our time at the Institute was a creative oasis that provided the impetus and nurturing that sustained some of us for so long a time.

President Bunting had devised the program at Radcliffe to address what she described as the "climate of unexpectation" (Middlebrook, 1994,p.18) in which many mature women struggle for professional visibility after having dedicated a major part of their lives to family occupations. The program made available twenty fellowships to women who wanted to return *full-time* to intellectual or artistic work. Of course, the idea of giving full-time consideration to such work was unusual because for women, art and intellectual pursuits were part-time work, second to more important concerns of family duties and obligations.

Olsen's seminar at Radcliffe entitled "Death of the Creative Process", evolved into her book, Silences (1979) and made the connection between the suppressing of women's creativity and the silencing of women's voices and knowing. As Hedges and Fishkin (1994) explain, Olsen's concern was not only with the lack of female texts, but also with the details of the lives of those who failed to produce texts. Fishkin writes,

> Olsen wrote for all those silenced, and for those not silenced. In her view, the achievement of those who were not silenced (including herself) bore witness by its very existence to what might have been, in the shadows of what never was (p.23).

Fishkin goes on to explain that oftentimes these women were silenced because of domestic responsibility, economic hardship, corroded self-confidence and by the "cost of discontinuity" , a pattern still imposed on women. Of the Radcliffe experience Florence Howe said, " It was like having your eyeballs peeled" (p.23).

Therefore, in the same spirit, this dissertation bears witness to the potential and possibilities of women like myself in academia. Women whose life circumstances have been such that they have never experienced conditions which nurture their art, of leisure and space, energy and power to produce alternatives to mainstream ways of being, knowing and creating. A dissertation such as this one actively investigates these conditions through the practice and experience of writing them. It rests upon an awareness of how our "lived stories" and experiences are influenced and shaped by our personal, institutional and cultural stories (Clandinin, 1993,p.18).

Diamond (1999) explains that "arts-based narratives provide a sanctuary from which, as émigrés from rigidity, we can launch fresh inquiries"(p.226). As methodological tools, self- study and narrative inquiry are a way of revolutionizing and transforming societies, institutions and worlds. These experiences and knowing form the "circles within circles" that Margot Ely (1991) talks about and the stories within stories that Metzger (1992) talks of. "Writing", claims Said (1996), "then becomes a place to live in harmony, in beauty, in understanding"(p.266).

Mullen (Diamond & Mullen, 1999) envisions such work as "an invitation to share a vision of an emancipatory pedagogy that brings artists into education, educators into art, and art into research" (p.147). Indeed, beyond informing , for women like myself self-study is a confirmation of what we already know; it is both self-affirming and self-confirming , and returns meaning to the research process.

Dance of the Od(d)yssey

I have borrowed here Christine Overall's (1998) use of "od(d)yssey " as a metaphor of my own dissertation journey because, as Overall explains, "od(d)yssey" is a word which depicts the eccentricity of her journey through academia. It is well-suited to the purpose of this dissertation, which is to broaden our understanding of the diversity of the lives of women in academia so that women be liberated to shape and transform the institutions in which they live, work and create. Mitchell and Weber (1999) remind us that there is probably no point more important in self-study than understanding that:

> writing memoir and engaging in memory work is undertaken in the service of understanding classroom life better and that experience doesn't end in high school, it is the experience of learning and teaching in academia as well (p.73).

This is important work, for time and again the lives of academic women have unveiled the overt and subtle means through which patriarchy is maintained in the academy and "the damage it can do to women's minds and bodies"(Christian-Smith and Kellor, 1999,p.229). To say nothing of our spirits.

Perhaps, the most damning experience of a dissertation journey is that of Kristine Kellor (2000) whose metaphor of "soul murder" is both chilling and revealing (p.229). Kellor describes her experience in terms of loss of integrity, while Schiwy (1996) describes hers in terms of loss of voice. Daly too (1992) describes her university experience as "academentia and soul-shrinkage" (p.385) . But there is

hope. As Kellor (1999) explains, "giving witness to a transformative testimony" is at times a "bonding", "sparking", connecting experience which "invites and permits working across socially formed difference" (p.220). Women, artists and feminists in working through institutions are participating in the wider movement for transformation of the traditional distribution of power and leadership in our society. Artists can inspire, change consciousness, effect lives, bring about change, help people name their fears and so can acknowledge and transform them. Transformation is in our hands.

In my own quest for meaning , I map in this text the distinctive path of transition (Part One: Passages) and transformation (Part Two: River of Then and Now) travelled in my own academic experience. The notion of transitions and transformation is important as it is at the heart of self-study. This dissertation is a model for self-study and as such reveals the circular process of transition and transformation that takes place while in the midst of the dissertation process; circles within circles, stories within stories, process within process.

Overview of themes: Stepping In

The question this text addresses is: "*How can the female artist in academia make a home of the patriarchal house of academia*"? Home is therefore an overriding theme and the central metaphor for understanding the politics implicit in women's location of knowledge, and the separation of experience into private and public. It is a holistic, ontological and ecological perspective of knowledge-making that takes into account the landscapes of inner and outer worlds.

My knowing has evolved from my perspective as a tri-lingual immigrant, woman, writer and academic living in a bilingual community. I have lived on borders and boundaries of social and cultural landscapes. Home is therefore an actual and metaphorical location, a thematic site of creative beginnings and endings depending on the conditions that thwart or foster the artist's growth. Home is the place where women have created daily with the means and instruments at hand. Oftentimes, these have been insufficient or inefficient. Yet we have continued to do the best with what has been provided.

An important theme interwoven throughout the text are the obstacles and challenges that women, as artists and academics experience in their quest for self-definition, authority and agency. Many of these are the result of the mismatch between women's needs and expectations, and those of their social or cultural environment. An ensuing theme is the emergence from silence and development of strategies to counter a sense of loss, to reclaim voice, agency and identity. The ropes of feminist inquiry form the thematic knot that ties together the text of public and private world .

The above themes present two simultaneous and parallel accounts of the flux between the inner and outer life of the female artist in academia. Both lead towards the "centre of consciousness" (Cixous ,1981). The text is the method by which the methodology is revealed. Therefore, the sequencing of narratives follows more of a thematic than chronological order. Theory is brought to life and life is brought into theory.

PART ONE : Passages

In Chapter one I examine feminist theory as a starting point for an understanding of my creative journey and re-examine my experience as a student in the Master of Education program in light of this understanding. The role of narrative as re-invention, self as text and theories of creativity are explored . The traditions from which these theories have evolved are examined and illuminate the need for feminist re-visions.

In Chapter two I explore the relationship between self and place and the cultural and social circumstances that had fostered a personal sense of dislocation in and beyond the academy. I discuss the need for alternative readings and mappings of home, and of our inner and outer landscapes. As well, I discuss re-membering as an ecological and ontological perspective of ways of being, caring and preserving. These are points of departure that signal inner and outer change. Oftentimes, we must leave home in order to see our world in a different way. My homecoming is developed in a re-vision and re-cognition of my identity as a writer.

PART TWO : The River of Then and Now

Chapter three explores the influences of home, the cultural and social experiences that have shaped my perspective as artist. I explore my writing as a survival strategy and as a means of understanding my home life and the everyday within and beyond the academy.

Chapter four deals with the change that is in the process of happening. I discuss the process of becoming an artist and the fear that this unravels in the re-cognition of ourselves. Most importantly, this change signals an awareness of our self-defining and self-naming authority as artist.

In the final chapter I undertake a discussion of how in academia, fear is masked by denial of class and ethnic origins as well as in the denial of the artist-self. Here, I talk about how I am most myself when I am creative and least myself when I am not. In terms of teaching and academia, self-denial had lead to a sense of alienation and fragmentation; a feeling of being an imposter. In recalling my experience as a student in the class of an artist/teacher, I illustrate how authenticity in teaching means authenticity in learning.

ONE

COMING HOME

Look ahead into the past, and back into the future,
Until the silence.

Margaret Laurence

Openings

This project feels like coming home. In a sense, I have been working on it since I was old enough to write. Looking back, I see how I have been its hostage, always at arm's length of escape. I am no longer struggling to free myself from it. It has caught up to me and deliverance to the process is my only salvation.

This dissertation is a study of women's emergence from that epistemological opening that is female creativity. It explores the relationship between feminist theory, creativity and the production of knowledge in patriarchal institutions. It explores how creativity and the pursuit of self-knowledge relate to our lives as female artists and academics and arises out of a study of my own experience as woman, writer and academic.

More specifically I ask, how can women who are both artists and academics make an appropriate "home" out of the patriarchal "house" of academia? My purpose in this

work is to add to an understanding of what it means to be a woman, academic and artist, in academia at this particular time . But mostly I offer it as an example of how " being" and "becoming" a woman , a writer and an academic are inseparable parts of the ontological picture. Like Eisner, I too see " art as a form of life...that makes aesthetic experience possible" (1996,p.12). And understand that it is the process of living a creative life that provides a knowing for art to actualize. I am an artist by virtue of how I express, respond and live in the world.

This is therefore a purposefully engaging text. It is written with the intention of going beyond the informative text, giving the reader not only information but experience of the inherent dilemmas of creative women trying to integrate their knowing as artists, academics and women in academia. As Dillard (1982) argues, we do "not produce a work and then give it a twist here and there like acupuncture needles. The work itself is the device" (p.29). I therefore espouse Diamond and Mullen's (1999) contention that " arts-based inquiry is art pursued for inquiry's sake and not for art's own sake" (p.25) . I question: how is it possible to disregard the creative centre from which my knowing stems and also what would be the value of this in terms of contributions to women and knowledge?

I have experienced the severing of vital experiences from the core of my academic work that this type of "wishbone" thinking proposes. This happens when I finally cede only one part of my knowing and self (public) to the academic text. The

other I hide for safe-keeping. However, as a writer, the part that I cede is not dependent on my weakness but rather on the force of the institutional pull. How does one summon the strength to resist the force of wishbone thinking?

The Master/piece

In my Master's monograph entitled Autobiography and Piecing : Images of a Life in Small Squares, I explored gender and journals from my perspective as a "closet" writer. I had searched for the key to escape from the traditional form of the academic monograph and found it in women's creative traditions of quilting . Again, salvation.

The metaphor of the quilt best reflected how being a female writer and academic remains an ever-shifting and continual process of piecing. It is a process that examines the common experience as well as the communion of experience. As Showalter (1989) explains, "Piecing is thus an art of making do and eking out, an art of ingenuity, and conservation. It reflects the fragmentation of women's time, the scrappiness and uncertainty of women's creative or solitary moments" (p.149).

Certainly, the notion of "making do" for academic women has meant servitude and acquiesence to patriarchal designs of ideas already in place in academia. It has meant making do with other people's stories rather than our own. But it has also meant that women have struggled to use their creativity and ingenuity to free themselves from these patterns.

As Wendt (1980) reminds us, "quilts represent beauty wrestled from dailiness" (p.4). They also represent a way of linking women through generations and of recognizing a common history and artistry that might otherwise have gone unrecorded. Oftentimes, these quilts might be the only permanent evidence of a woman's work and life.

I describe my Master's journey as a struggle to proclaim, perform and protect the integrity of my creative self. And though I was moderately happy with the final outcome of my work, I remained unsatisfied. I now understand that my vision of the world was neither cock-eyed nor unrefined. Rather, the battles I had been fighting within academia were spirited manifestations of the desire to protect the creative self from negation.

I perceived the major part of my academic experience to be pyschologically depleting. I was angry at the damage incurred to my creative writing voice during the academic writing process. I had acquired different writing skills but I had also sustained a painful loss. I was constantly having to "hold in" my authentic way of seeing the world in order to "hold on" in the academic community. As the object of an academic "makeover", I had let go of an important part of my self; so important in fact that the loss of the creative, writing self produced a void that literally left me wavering, awash in an intense sense of anguish and shame at the surrender. I was *déplumé*-plucked of the

voice through which my knowing , of myself and of my world could be expressed . I did not attend the convocation ceremonies. I felt I had little to celebrate.

Crossings

Like a beached whale, I returned to the system that washed me up to the academic shores in the first place. I returned to teaching, to the classroom. There was still so much I could not make sense of. I stumbled into a school that catered to adults in a community just north of Montreal. It was here that I came face to face with my past. These were students who for a variety of reasons, had not fit the traditional educational pigeon holes. Everything about the situation I walked into on that first day of class had a surreal quality to it. I felt as though I was in a time warp. In so many ways the students reminded me of classmates I had so many years ago.

The experience was also a stark reminder of my own sinuous educational journey. Indeed, although I had overcome many debilitating experiences, I remembered just how powerless I had felt throughout my years of education. Namely, I recognised how difficult the "crossing over" into new cultures is for many students. These difficulties are compounded by gender, language, and social and economic conditions. However, the most difficult and perilous "crossing" for women is the one from powerlessness to empowerment. Embedded between the two positions are the social, cultural and institutional conventions that govern gender, culture, language and the rules (often unspoken) women transgress in their crossing.

I also began to realize that my encounter with feminism in the university revealed the ways in which I was oppressed but it hadn't given me any instruments with which to foster change. I learned that the powers in institutions remained with patriarchy and that knowledge of one's oppression and remaining powerless to overcome it, is almost as damaging as the oppression itself. I felt I needed to pursue work that I had begun in my Master's. I sensed that some things had been left unfinished.

Fragmentation

The most difficult aspect of the Master's experience was the struggle to remain whole, to resolve the dilemma of fragmentation in the writing process. Like Arbab (2000), I realized that "I was the seamstress, the needle and the thread" (p.44). At the time, the method of piecing used in my monograph represented the best possible solution to the problem of assembling bits and pieces of my knowledge, my self, my life into a cohesive pattern that would express my perspective. I believed it had to be seamless; a balanced portrait.

My understanding of feminist theory had allowed me to believe in the possibility of producing an authentic academic document whose form and content would be evidence of a female writer's struggle to protect and nurture the creative self. In practice, however, the success of the monograph depended on the constant repelling of the creative self. I

tried desperately to wrestle her back into the closet but she always seemed to squeeze through the tiniest of openings.

Private/Public

In my case, the world of private journals was the place that had sustained the creative writer/self. It was home and hut, castle and cavern, island and infinity. I could write freely, intensely. I could inform, transform and reform. I could appear and disappear. Here was the magic.

My Master's work was a public document that explored the realm of private writing . As I proceeded through the work, I found it rather odd to be writing about something so inexplicable, so undefinable. It was like trying to explain magic. Once you do so , it no longer is . So entangled/dependent was the creative self with the private writing, I was afraid that in examining them publicly, I would (be) examine (ing) (away) their existence. The ephemeral quality of the creative experience is disturbing. As Alice Walker (1996) explains, "it is like trying to explain a poem. If you could, you wouldn't have written the poem" (p.140).

At times I felt that I was engaged in a covert operation , literally undressing the private writer in public. Sometimes without her consent. But always for her own good (sabotage). I wasn't sure whether this was for punishment or vindication, veneration or celebration. I recognized the buttons of self-doubt that were threaded throughout the

document. In the process my integrity slowly crumbled, one word at a time. Indeed, the writing was authentic but it did not convey important perspectives essential to a deeper understanding of what it meant to write quietly, secretly, endlessly. I wanted the reader to know the intensity of secret words pressed between mind and paper. I simply could not write about the creative writer without writing like her.

The question of form, of course, was part of a larger issue that had to do with patriarchy, tradition and academia on the one hand, and women on the other. As a writer, woman, and student, I needed the monograph to be as faithful a portrayal as possible of how I negotiated the world. This was of utmost importance because I believed that the whole premise of the work was that it contribute to the base of knowledge . And as my way of experiencing and knowing were not reflected in the academic material I had read to that date, I wanted to be heard.

Moreover, the move to this new culture (towards empowerment) also meant leaving certain things behind; habits of the hand, mind and heart, once so familiar, suddenly seemed foreign and mundane. And the integration of knowledge, if not attached to women's everyday experience, objectifies women, their experience and the cultures in which they are born. It cuts a trail through "then" and "now". It blurs our understanding between the "actual" and "ideal" situation of women. Yet, we sense the importance of what we've been obliged to leave behind. And as we glance back we see the dust rise from our trail of experience. We recognise how it has furnished the time

and space, miles and years which fill the gap between then and now, with meaning. We make a solemn, silent vow to return.

This dissertation exists as a result of that return. Indeed, that it exists at all is a testament to what Middleton (1993) has called "counterpoint" or Lather (1991) the "polyvocal" nature of recent academic feminist research and the appropriation and redirection of the research process so that it reflects the experiences and knowing of a broader range of women's experiences (Christian-Smith & Kellor,1999; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Spender, 1980). Moreover, in examining how academic institutions overtly and covertly work to exclude the knowledge of marginal groups, feminist research has given us insights into "the complexity of the feminist struggle and the layers of differences of interests and standpoints among women" (Christian-Smith & Kellor, 1999, p.3).

The examination of personal experience as situated politically, historically and culturally is a constructive framework for understanding how women's subjectivities and knowing are shaped both within and beyond the academy. For example, in their study of female academics , Christian-Smith & Kellor (1999) examined how the subjectivities and professional lives of women are shaped within women's homelives, education, teaching, research, writing and activism.

INROADS

The present tense of the verb to be refers only to the present : but nevertheless with the first person singular in front of it, it absorbs the past which is inseparable from it. "I am " includes all that has made me so. It is more than a statement of immediate fact : it is already biographical.

John Berger (1972, pp.370-1).

As a woman, writer, teacher, mother and academic, I was particularly interested in finding a methodological framework that would be porous enough to allow the writing of this thesis to be absorbed by the living of it. I wanted this document to be a testament of the mutuality of the life and work of the female academic. My purpose was to reveal how the interweaving of identity and experience strengthened the fabric of the document and provided a balanced pattern and design to both my life and the thesis. I wanted to reconcile my academic as well as artistic self, past and present, private and public.

To this end, what follows is the topos of the feminist theory from which my perspective has been elaborated. Exploring the terrain of such a dissertation requires a shift in consciousness, a refocusing of perspective that brings into view the ways in which the world can be read, re/visioned, re/membered , re/viewed. It bears regenerative potential. Also, as a feminist text that is an ontological inquiry it therefore owes its existence to life experiences, to exploring ways of being and knowing in the world (Van Manen,1990; Heidegger,1977).

As Stanley (1990) explains,

> Feminism is not merely a perspective, a way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing; it is also an ontology, or a way of being in the world. What is distinctively feminist about a concern with research processes is that this constitutes an invitation to explore the conditions and circumstances of a feminist ontology, with its slips and contradictions certainly, but a feminist ontology none the less. (p.15)

Such work resists the traditional form of dissertations as the lifeworld (Van Manen, 1990) from which it evolves cannot be contained in neat compartments or sterile categories. Life bobs in and out. Narratives of experience shape and illuminate the theoretical. They become inquiries into how meaning is developed and how we act upon and live within these meanings. Such research comes to form under the glow of a unique life. As Mitchell and Weber (1999) explain, "studying ourselves is a form of research, and our own accounts of "how we got there" can contribute to a body of knowledge about teaching, learning, and adult identity. Studying ourselves might be regarded as research-in action" (p.9).

Self-preservation

Pointless stories are met with the withering rejoinder "So, what ? " Every good narrator is continually warding off this question ; when his narrative is over it should be unthinkable for a bystander to say "So what? "

William Labov (1972, p.370-1)

I have therefore preserved the thickness of life in the underbrush of narratives , essays, anecdotes and journal writings that form this inquiry. These texts do not resolve

the tensions that exist between the traditional form of dissertations and life history. Instead, they make explicit these tensions. As Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) explains, composing a life is an art of improvisation, defying linear movement that is "purposeful and monolithic, like the sculpting of a massive tree trunk... rather than something crafted from odds and ends like a patchwork quilt that can warm our bodies" (p.4). This work is intended to explore the process of stepping into the academic landscape from a life lived on the borderlands. I share with Christine Overall (1998) the idea that, "in recounting what I learned through these experiences, my aim is not to claim the status of the oppressed, but rather to contribute to a growing feminist understanding of oppression" (p.24).

This is where my interest in women's autobiography, life-writing and creativity meet with memory, personal knowledge and academia. This fits well with the idea of "crossing" as a social, cultural and personal movement between present and past, private and public. Writing this dissertation and making my own experience central to it means sharing what I know and making it of use to others. It is embodied feminist inquiry whose usefulness lies in the challenge it offers to the conventional understanding of the lives of academic women.

This "looking back" is what Mitchell and Weber (1999) understand as a way of "making the past usable" (p.46). It is also as hooks suggests, a way to "illuminate and transform" the present. Within what Mitchell and Weber have called a "pedagogy of

reinvention", such a cumulative process of "creating new images" is "an active process that transforms the creator" as well (p.8). Reinvention is the process "of going back over something in different ways and with new perspectives, of studying one's own experience with the insight and awareness of the present for purposes of acting on the future"(p.8).

HANDPRINTS: Narration and Reinvention

Moon Time

As a child I was always curious about my mother's fascination with the moon. "New moon", she warned as she tore a leaf off the calendar and read what was written behind . This wasn't a bank calendar nor the calendar from the garage where my father repaired his taxi cab. This was a Greek calendar and was pinned to the kitchen wall with a thumbtack for easy reference. The pictures on our calendars were not of puppies or children or flowers. Ours were of Byzantine brown and gold images of Virgin Marys or of silvery patron saints.

There were no white pages on our calendar ; no linear month by month, week by week count of the year that stretched ahead. Rather, ours was a single day calendar. Our time was accounted for in a small, tightly stacked block of thin, sand-coloured papers that sat squarely at the bottom of the picture. One day at a time, my mother would peel a small sheet from the block and read the biblical inscription written behind. Unlike ordinary calendars, the shape of time never appeared before us in the form of the weeks or months ahead. Sneak peaks were caught in the smudge of thumbprints left on the bottom of the curled paper . As a child I measured time by the thickness of the block, from top to bottom not left to right. I learned early on that there was no plan, no shape, no future. It was a day to day existence. There was no skipping ahead.

Story, experience and fingerprints

In relation to story and personal experience, Davies (1993) explains that feminist writing "is not just an angry fracturing and breaking of unwanted images and positionings" (p.11). And though she notes that it may be that, Davies goes on to explain that the strength of feminist writing is in its "quality of bursting open the absoluteness of experience". Madeleine Grumet (1988) who has drawn upon life histories in her feminist analyses of teaching, echoes the "usefulness" of the personal narrative and says , "before I began to think of narratives as forms for educational research and criticism, I thought of them as literature" (p.67) .

Van Manen (1990) has described the relation of text to experience as,

> ....reaching for something beyond, restoring a forgotten or broken wholeness by recollecting it in our experience in the present with a vision of what it should be. This kind of text cannot be summarized. To present research by way of a reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet it, go through it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and be consumed by it (p.153).

Neilsen (1998) too explains the importance of the relationship of the particular experience to the research process and writes that,

> Just as literate behavior has its own fingerprint, formed in the all-round growth of the individual in particular social, political and cultural climates, the way we approach inquiry and the agendas and issues in which we become engaged are unique. Others may or may not share the goals, depending on the degree of overlap of our particular interrelational contexts; but the questions which concern us arise from the experiences and issues in which we have been immersed (p.265).

Indeed, Neilsen's (1998) own "research autobiography" made visible her particular journey as a researcher and her problematic relationship with language and scholarly identity. Her "renovated inquiry processes" are developed in poems, essays and narratives and are reflective of her search for a way to make a home in the academy (p.8). She writes,

> Early in my professional life, I learned methods and formulae as one would read the alphabet; as the seasons passed, my research literacies, like my writing and reading, began to describe and to motivate me: I began to live inside the work that I do, just as a literate adult (Neilsen,1989) uses her literacy to be at home in the world (p.8).

Neilsen's (1998) and Van Manen's (1990) understanding of literacy as a way of reading, being and making meaning of the world helped me contextualize my experience as both source and product of my research. Beyond the common understanding of literacy as a coding and decoding process, literacy, as Neilsen (1989) explains it "is a process of learning to participate fully in necessary and personally important social, intellectual, and political contexts. It is a lifelong process of learning to read and create contextual signs in print and in society. Literacy has many houses, each of which we can learn to make our home" (p.10).

Self Text as Self

Life based inquiry in the research process maintains the relationship between our public and private worlds and who we are and what we do as researchers. As Neilsen (1998) writes, "we are learning that we are no longer mere creators of text, we are text

ourselves" (p.10). This kind of "research in the round" attracts and incorporates the tropes of daily living, investigating dimensions of experience and how they integrate and reflect ways of being and knowing in the world. What has informed and shaped my knowing both outside and within the academy ? What has been the impact on my life and work ? What does it mean to be a woman, and artist in academia?

In turn the research process must be "one of learning through words, actions, and revisioning of our daily life. Inquiry is praxis that cannot be boxed up and delivered, it is a story with no ending " (Neilsen,1998,p.8).

Chora/ sponding

Feminist inquiry therefore emerges from and responds to the lives of women (Personal Narratives Group, 1989,p.4). It derives its vitality from feminist practice and its credibility is tested in women's experience. In Dilthey's (1985) words, "lived experience is the breathing of meaning" (p.223). And being experienced, according to Van Manen (1992) "is a wisdom of the practice of living which results from having lived life deeply" (p.32). Indeed, this text has been developed from and responds to my recognition that "living deeply" has been as integral to my work as being female. My research stems from this struggle to express the full scope of my knowledge from my perspective as an artist, woman and academic . I feel that to disregard such vital components of my knowledge would be to present a skewed perspective of what I know and how I came to know it. This seems hardly beneficial to an understanding of women's experience.

Inside out and Upside Down

The authors of The Personal Narrative Group (1989) suggest that , "since feminist theory is grounded in women's lives and aims to analyze the role and meaning of gender in those lives and in society , women's narratives are essential primary documents for feminist research" (p.4). In Neilsen's (1998) words, the value of feminist perspectives is that "they have shown us how the flesh of the story embraces, disturbs, and connects more strongly than disembodied, neutral text" (p.10).

My multi-genred narrative approach in this dissertation aims to manage the central contradiction of doing research from the inside out; of being what Middleton (1993) calls "multiply marginal" (p.102) . That is as a female academic within a patriarchal institution , but also as an outsider by virtue of my status as a woman, immigrant, artist. Rachel Blau (1990) writes,

> Insider-outsider social status will also help dissolve an either-or dualism. For the woman finds she is irreconcilable things: an outsider by her gender position, her class. She can be both. Her ontological, her psychic, her class position all cause doubleness. Doubled consciousness. Doubled understandings. How then could she neglect to invent a form which produces this incessant, critical, splitting motion. To invent this form. To invent the theory for this form (p.8).

Middleton (1993) describes her own struggle to create a form that accommodates reinvention of her thesis and her life. She writes that,

> blurred boundaries: intersections; fluidities-ebbs and flows in time and space; harsh interruptions... these will not "write themselves" in tidy arguments.They will not follow the linear paths, or submit to the ordered hierarchies of headings. The sociological voice is interrupted by "internal

> talk" (Noddings,p,1991,p.164). The logic of the argument is disturbed by anger, laughter, pain... My typing fingers follow the driftings of consciousness, transfix in print scores of their tunes and cacophonies. Refusing to remain in the "sensible emptiness" (Pagano,1991,193) of theory, they compose narratives, "tell stories" about my experience of "being a feminist academic" (p.103).

De Vault (1986) explains that the dilemma for the feminist scholar, always, is to find ways of working within some disciplinary tradition while aiming at an intellectual revolution that will transform the tradition (p.2). But for some women, transforming patriarchal traditions from and within those traditions is like walking a tightrope without a net; a self–conscious, strategic and dangerous balancing act. It might also be like bungy jumping – intentionally throwing oneself off a bridge into a vast unknown, hanging upside down by your ankles as the world swings below. And because, as De Vault notes, " the body of research generated by academic feminism-involving a new and careful attention to women's experiences in the world –is beginning to 'bring women in' to theorizing, this research also demonstrates the extent to which traditional paradigms have been shaped by the concerns and relevances of men ". As Neilsen (1998) puts it, transforming traditions means a "rebodying" of science by feminist theorists and researchers under our own terms. However, "the challenges, consequences and privileging of certain ideas remain part of the power game in academic inquiry" (p.10).

Outside/in

Indeed, in academia, what women qualify as concessions (in terms of voice, space and time for example), males might justify as academic qualifications. Perhaps because

women did not create the public world, their ability to see its inadequacies is actually a source of intellectual strength rather than a deficiency. Lenz and Myheroff (1985) explain that Thomas Kuhn argues,

> that accepted scientific paradigms are severely culture-bound , oftentimes blinding us to any but our own assumptions. And that scientific revolutions are often pushed by people outside the field of expertise...the outsider, in other words, can conceive of that which is unimaginable (p.228).

The perspective of the outsider is precisely what is necessary to give rise to an original approach, which is why women are able to interpret the world in fresh, even revolutionary ways. Because of their "otherness", women have been associated with marginality, with nonbelonging, the very qualities that offer opportunities for questioning the givens, the conviction that one is in possession of the only truth (p.228).

Overall (1998) suggests that a "minority status often results in a kind of self-consciousness" (p.177). She turns to Marilyn Frye who observes ,

> One of the privileges of being normal and ordinary is a certain unconsciousness. When one is that which is taken as the norm in one's social environment, one does not have to think about it...If one is the norm, one does not have to know what one is. If one is marginal, one does not have the privilege of not noticing what one is....
>
> This absence of privilege is a presence of knowledge. As such, it can be a great resource, given only that the marginal person does not scorn the knowledge and lust for inclusion in the mainstream, for the unconsciousness of normalcy (p.177).

This notion of rebodying, redressing and renovating tradition means repopulating the academic landscape one person, one story, one experience at a time. In my case, it

also means shedding the skin of an academic tradition in which I felt trapped but which I had spent years trying to learn, to pattern, to conform, to fit into. I was taught that this tradition meant success, accomplishment and acceptance.

Feminist Theory: Breaking In & Breaking out

I initially felt great resentment towards feminist professors who suggested that I risk what I assumed that they as tenured academics, hadn't . I wanted to know what "worked"; what was I supposed to do to "get in" and "get ahead". I had always stood on the ledge of conformity barely avoiding the fall over the edge. I now wanted their recipe for success . I was standing on the bridge holding onto the ledge with Woolf to one side and "the procession of educated men" ahead. I was ready to jump. I was asking the same questions she had asked sixty years earlier.

In Three Guineas Woolf (1927) stands on the bridge that connects the worlds of private and public, home and work, women and men and asks us to "fix our eyes upon the procession –the procession of sons of educated men". She too questioned whether "we wished to join the procession or don't we? On what terms shall we join the procession ? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?"

What I had learned throughout my life was that inevitably, being myself meant trouble. How could I take the risk? Would these women ask me to? I had gone to

great lengths to learn how to speak and write, read and report in academese. I had taken the course.

Revelation & Re-cognition: In the beginning

The "genesis" (Middleton, 1993) of my research questions stemmed from the tensions and contradictions in my everyday life as a woman, academic and artist. However, I believe my training in critical inquiry began much earlier in my life.

Always throughout my youth I struggled with the notion of conformity – that somewhere inside of me was a bad girl. Not a stupid girl , just someone who couldn't quite "read" what and who I was supposed to be or do. I tried girl guides, cheerleading and hall monitor. Nothing fit. I was getting the signals mixed up. I was constantly in some kind of trouble. Maybe if I could be someone on the outside, it wouldn't matter who I was on the inside.

As a schoolgirl I wanted to be a Catholic; to wear the Catholic girls' pleated blue tunic, worn with the long sash and fringed end. I wanted to be a nun. I loved how their floor-length black robes flowed as they walked and how their long silver crosses thumped against their chests in time with their broad steps. I loved how the wind tossed their veils. I wanted to be a soldier. Not a bland Canadian soldier, growing up in the 70's I wanted to be the more glamorous U.S. soldier.

In areas other than the academy, I viewed myself as a confident, intelligent woman. I had emerged from difficult situations relying only on myself. But my experiences in academia had depleted that confidence. The ground of self-knowing and confidence turned to quicksand. It seemed that I was slowly being swallowed up. There was no question that I would survive but who would I be and what would I live like ?

Wrong Again

These tensions became the topic of discussion among a group of women I had met while a graduate student at a Canadian university. As it happened, a few of the women in the group were artists ; a painter, poet and writers. We were all at different points in our doctoral dissertations. They towards the end and I somehow stuck at the beginning.

Our discussions were passionate and highly personal and generated some of the themes of this dissertation. More importantly, the discussions justified the need and importance of such a work. But my reason for seeking out the group was more self-serving. Initially, I had done so in reponse to my supervisor's suggestion that I find a supportive community of women that would help me find my way back from the academic tundra I was living in. I wanted to find out what was wrong with me. Why wasn't I moving as quickly, networking, teaching?

Our talks in this group circled around our acknowledgement that our "creative bents" so necessary to our life sustenance, were behaviours considered to be somewhat "deviant"in the institutions we attended. In my case, it wasn't that my work was considered to be outright "wrong". But it wasn't considered to be "right" either. Also, we viewed ourselves as self-learners and wondered whether the institutionalization " of our creativity was a "gain" or a "loss" for us in other areas of our lives.

I understand now that as women, artists and academics we were not only struggling to forge "acceptable" ways of doing and writing our research, ones that would best express the perspective from which our research was being conducted , but were also struggling to reveal ways of being ; of maintaining a sense of authority and authenticity in our work ; a way of revealing ourselves in our work as well as a way of recognizing ourselves in our work. But acceptable to whom and what would the cost be to our sense of identity and integrity as women and artists?

As a burgeoning feminist , I had a sense of the political and patriarchal system that undermined my ability to pursue my own research objectives and agenda. Yet I had no path to follow; no bread crumbs had been left on the way. I lived these problems daily but had no framework for theorizing them.

As a writer I began keeping a journal of our group discussions and my reactions to them and I initially thought that I might use the "data" from our informal meetings as

evidence of a woman's perspective in relation to the Ph.D. process. But when I brought this up with the group, the whole mood of our discussions shifted. The feeling was that in revealing characteristics that might identify them, these women's credibility would be threatened. They would be seen, known, discovered. It would be them who would be judged as inadequate, not the system .

Portals

I mention the above experience here because it serves as a concrete example of the portals in feminist researchers' lives that need to be crossed if we are to conduct research that investigates questions and concerns from the entrance of our experiences. As well, it is an example of how, in spite of all the existing feminist theory and inquiry, women continue to experience ways of silencing , whether overtly or covertly,ways that prevent us from making certain kinds of knowledge. At once such research reveals the limitations of current feminist theory while at the same time arguing its justification. Heilbrun cautions feminist academics about "the danger of refining the theory and scholarship at the expense of the lives of women who need to experience the fruits of research" (1988,p20).

In fact, beyond "data", what I carried away from those discussions was revealed in my own relationship to the research process. After years in the academy I was weary at the idea that perhaps under the auspices of white-gowned, rubber-gloved, "objective" science I would have to claim to observe , analyze, examine and explain the world with

little reference as to how that world became observable to me in the first place. My language would be stark, my data would be lean- none of the "thick" descriptions which Geertz (1973) refers to, or the "language of the arts " that Eisner (1991) proposes. In order to be successful I would conform and learn to write my knowing as the "well-socialized member of the culture"; at what cost, however, to my voice, authority, integrity and agency?

But as hard as I tried, I could never get to that point of numbness. As a woman and artist, I was uncomfortable with the "piecemeal" approach to knowledge construction; feeling that it was not only unfulfilling but also producing half-truths. I needed instead to construct a form of persuasion that explored and defined the fullness of being ; body, mind, emotion. How else could I define the relationship of poverty to writing as a means of survival? How then could I describe how the sting of social, cultural and gender bias swells anger and resistance in a young woman? In what terms could I discuss the relationship of motherhood, of nurturing , of caring and the choices I made in my teaching ? How to examine the wounds that are healed in a young girl's writing ? How to define how memory sneaks into the creases of daily living, popping in and out of experience unannounced ?Under what terms could I justify the silences and gaps in my writing and research ? How would I manage their escape from meaning?

I suppose the fears Woolf harboured for the" educated men" were the same fears I harbored for myself; a loss of sensibility and consciousness. Woolf wrote,

> They lose their senses. Sight goes. They have no time to look at pictures. Sound goes. They have no time to listen to music. Speech goes. They have no time for conversation. They lose their sense of proportion-the relations beween one thing and another. Humanity goes.

The important question of how women live in academia and at what price remains a concern of contemporary feminist scholars. Jane Roland Martin (2000) explains that after thirty years of teaching in the academy,

> I came to see that the academy charges an exorbitant admission fee to those women who wish to belong. But that is the least of it. In turning male and female members alike away from the lived experience of real people in the real world, and especially from society's desperately urgent problems, the academy creates a brain drain within the culture at large (p.x).

As Martin explains, doing feminist research that maintains a foothold in women's lives means allowing women to locate their lives within their historical and cultural tradition . In turn, knowledge of women's experiences, of how we interact with the world, how we know the world, fills the void that partial perspectives have allowed. Feminist research, its theory and practice leads to a fuller perspective and knowing of the world.

Traditions:Back/tracking, back/breaking

Working in a patriarchal tradition has been back-breaking work. It's been a struggle to remain authentic, to bring to voice that which has been silenced for so long. Woodman (1992) reminds us that " if we are to hear the feminine , we must open ourselves to new meanings of old words. Love spoken from the mind is one thing; love

whispered from the volcano is another" (p.124). The blurring of genres, the echo of some voices and the strength of others in this text reveals the process of working through this struggle. My hope is that while other women, artists and academics will , upon reading this work, nod their heads in recognition of their own struggles, they will also recognize the space it opens for theorizing their own experiences.

My work proceeds from what Neilsen (1998) claims are two key issues facing literacy research today: "One that the growth and life of the researcher is written into the work-the body is in the text. And secondly, making the invisible processes visible is an act of responsible scholarship, the final push to remove the vestiges of Cartesian thought and Western scientism that have allowed us all to escape response-ability " (p.10).

Traditionally, what was considered as truth, knowledge and reality were constructs of a male dominated society. In academia, research topics were accorded importance in relation to their value to male experience. The understanding of human experience was an understanding of male experience. However, the fact that human experience is gendered provides the common ground for a study of women's lives and experiences, which is crucial to a reconstruction of a feminist understanding of the world.

Feminist theory over the past twenty years has worked its way into the general theory of studies in the humanities and recent feminist theory has focused on the psychological, societal and institutional barriers that women face in academia. However,

researching feminist issues within patriarchal institutions leave feminist researchers in a paradoxical situation indeed. That is, not only do these women work in the very institutions they are trying to subvert, but they are also dependant on the very people and institutions they are critiquing for their academic survival.

This has lead researchers to a critical questioning of the conditions under which women's knowledge has been elaborated, conditions which, historically, were not of women's making. In fact, not only have the reasons for the limited importance accorded to women's issues in academia come under scrutiny, but so too have the means available to women for developing alternative forms of knowing. Feminist methodologies and epistemologies have therefore challenged the traditional social order by examining the contexts and conditions which had allowed, protected and authorized a singular "licensed" perspective.

Indeed academic feminists now question why they must re-formulate their knowing to fit malestream-mainstream institutions rather than formulate their knowing as a means of re-forming these institutions. They also insist that their products can be authentic representations of their knowledge only if the process from which the products were born is revealed.

This, of course, is contrary to the scientific, positivist traditions of objectified research that situates the researcher outside the research. According to this tradition,

social reality exists outside the researcher waiting to be discovered and can be explained and described as it really exists in the world. The process of "data collection" or "observations" could then be interpreted, catalogued and selected independent of the researcher's perspective.

Shift

Critics have challenged this notion by reexamining the concept of knowledge as a social and historical relation which "locates" the active knower at the center of various kinds of knowledge (Jackson, 1991,p.127). According to Jackson,

> At the foundation of this shift has been the explosion of the myth of the archimedian standpoint, the belief in a context-free and value-free location from which an objective way of knowing could be organized . Instead, scholars across the disciplines have come to the recognition that every way of knowing, every form of knowledge is organized from somewhere, a null point, a set of coordinates that mark the standpoint for the knower (p.127).

Contemporary feminist scholarship recognizes that there cannot be one single feminist voice that speaks for "women's experience ". Rather, a feminist perspective distinguishes itself by acknowledging that "racial, ethnic, class, regional and other divisions among women as relevent constituents of experience and of a standpoint" (Jackson, 1991). In this sense, knowledge is multiple, emergent and situated (p.126).

However, all knowledge claims are not equal- they are also politically situated and speak from positions of more or less power. Who speaks for whom? Who will be listened

to? Whose ideas, voice, theories will count as knowledge? Rich (1986) examines the "politically located" character of white feminist scholarship and questions the assumption

> That only certain kinds of people can make theory; that the white-educated mind is capable of formulating everything; that white middle-class feminism can know for "all women"; that only when the white mind formulates is the formulation to be taken seriously (p.230).

Feminist Inquiry

At issue here are the contemporary feminist scholars concern with epistemological questions and issues. And these concerns are directly related to the method, procedures and processes of feminist inquiry. The "practice" of research , from a feminist perspective, implies different approaches . The "features " of feminist inquiry which I have discussed above and which inform and form the basis of my research practice draw on my belief that; first, an inherent component of a feminist research project is situated in women's experience of political struggles; second, I use women's experience here in the plural form as a reminder that race, class or any other "divisions" are equally important instances of women's knowledge and perspectives; third, that women should be the ones to reveal what women's experiences are; fourth, , that their perspective be known.

And though feminist inquiry (Aisenberg & Harrington,1988; Simone, 1987; Spender,1982) has brought to light the particular constraints and societal and institutional obstacles faced by women in academia, finding a "fit" for doing a feminist work in patriarchal institutions remains difficult. As Hartman (1991) has argued , while identifying the fit between approved stances and academic institutions raised our consciousness, it did not remedy our situation.

Because I say so : back-breaking

Never in a thousand years would I have imagined becoming a teacher. But for a few rare exceptions, my experiences with teachers had been very negative and intensely hurtful. Yet, years later I found myself listening to a lecture on Educational Psychology in the auditorium of an Education Faculty . I suppose that my naiveté coupled with what my math teacher had called a "hearty" imagination allowed me to believe that I could somehow effect a change, if not upon the world as writer, then perhaps within students as a teacher in their classroom. I had initially wanted to enter the Faculty of Arts and the English department but was told and tried to believe how "impractical" that was . Secretly, I wanted to be a writer but settled on the idea that if I couldn't be a good writer, then perhaps I could be a great teacher.

The professor signaled the end of the lecture by closing his notebook and the rush was on among the students to get out of the drab, dark building. I grabbed my coat and books and rushed down the auditorium steps to reach the professor. A group of students were huddled around the T.A. I needed answers to a question concerning the final assignment. I followed the professor out to the elevator where other students and professors were waiting. I approached him and was about to ask my question when , without turning to look at me, he shook his head from side to side and with a wave of a hand dismissed me. "See the t.a.", he insisted. I explained that my schedule didn't permit it and that I truly needed some clarifications. "Why can't you give me two minutes?" I asked.

He turned to me and in a loud voice bellowed " BECAUSE I SAY SO " !

The elevator arrived, the other professors got in, the students buzzed around and the doors closed. I stood there dumbfounded. Because I say so ? I was shrinking under the sound of the words. Because I say so ? I felt betrayed. Because I say so ? I had been belittled. I stopped breathing.

That evening I sat at the kitchen table and wrote the professor a letter explaining that my children, my long commuter rides into the city, my part-time jobs and my full-time course schedule often left me little lee-way in scheduling. I also critiqued his tact as a human, his patronizing attitude as a male and his professionalism as a psychologist and an educator.

I was astonished when he devoted the following class to angrily explaining the difference between a "tenured professor" and "a teacher" in the hierarchy of the world of education in general and in academia in particular. Or as he put it when he pointed to me –the difference between " You and Me". I wished that the floor would open and swallow me up. I could feel the heat of the other students' gaze burn my skin. My face was being flooded in red. My ears were burning. I felt my heart jumping out of my blouse. Until then I hadn't realized what my lowly status as a teacher would be.
By the time the lecture was over I was exhausted. It was like grade school all over again. I didn't understand the relationship of culture to education nor patriarchy to teaching. I was putting on my coat when I looked down at my blouse and realised that I had been wearing a child's bib during the whole class. I had put the bib on that morning to keep my blouse clean as I rushed around the kitchen, making breakfast, packing lunches, getting the kids ready for school and daycare and gulping down a drink of coffee in between.

The bib might just as well have been a dunce cap. It was all déjà vue.

Feminist knowledge: re-body/building traditions

Caplan (1994) has argued that as the impact of women and other "non-dominant" groups has been limited , so too has our knowledge of the "richness and scope of the work produced and the lives lived in academia" (p.xv). Proof of this , writes Middleton (1993), is that "the women who spearheaded the second wave of feminism found little published writing that could help them to explain and to theorize their "sense of something wrong" (p.16). It is therefore critical for women with differerent perspectives and experiences to engage in creating alternatives to male/dominant definitions of the world.

Transforming traditions, as Neilsen (1998) puts it , means that feminist theorists and researchers are rebodying science on our own terms and argues that "if there is room for multiple subjectivities , there is room for multiple authorities" (p.13). Under such terms, the "balancing act " for academic feminists is no longer one of feigning research strategies or putting on masks. Instead, it becomes an inquiry into the cultural and social practices of home and the academy , of how we produce them and how we are produced by them.

What I am suggesting here is that the institutional practice of relegating women's creative experience and expression to the private sphere has undermined feminist research principles which foster such alternatives. These principles include knowledgemaking from the perspective of women as historical beings with concrete ,

specific desires and interests (Harding,1991). They foster a holistic approach to knowledge construction. They also situate women's experiences as sites of political struggles (Harding, 1987,p.9). The fault line (Smith, 1991) between what women's experiences of academia are and the tools they use to express these experiences (how we live and how we work) expose the political, social and cultural values existant in the construction of knowledge" (p.13).

Theorizing the Personal

As Miller (1991) notes: feminism has "made it possible to see that the personal is also the theoretical; the personal is theory's material" (p.21). Middleton (1993) too stresses the importance of analyzing "the relationships between our individual story, biographies, historical events , and the broader power relations that have shaped and constrained our possibilities and perspectives as educators" (p.17). In fact, feminist methodologies should provide strategies for managing this central contradiction-strategies that will help us with the "balancing act" demanded of any scholar who attempts innovative research within a patriarchal tradition.

This is important because it makes evident what women are expected to give up and what they risk for academic acceptance. Theoretical autobiography, as a tool, investigates the dialectal relationship of self and text, self as text and works on parallels of self in society . As Mitchell and Weber (1999) explain,

> narrative inquiry is often dialectical. It uses the particular to understand the general but also relies on the general to illuminate the particular; it incorporates the social within the personal, but can maintain that the social constructs the personal as the personal constructs the social. The epistemological objective of the narrative inquiry is meaning. Meaning may be viewed as context-embedded (historical) and culturally-framed but also as transferable and subject to critical evaluation. Through interrogation of personal stories researchers can seek that meaning which is underlying, widely-shared, or deeply-rooted in some common element of human experience (p.72).

Christine Overall's (1998) theoretical autobiography, A Feminist I, is a reflection on her developing consciousness as a feminist and academic. She argues that the value of "exploring the strength and liabilities of our conflicting roles as feminist and academic has potential epistemic value, offering insights into such matters as how the university works, how oppression operates, and what paths we might take toward liberation " (p.23).

In her work, Overall "breaks the taboo" of her philosophical training by "deliberately and explicitly using her own academic life experience as the primary resource for (her) philosophizing" (p.19). Indeed, Overall recognises the immense value of personal experience in academic theory and practice and views the theorizing of this experience as a contribution "to a growing feminist understanding of oppression" (p.24). Her purpose is "to exemplify the use(fulness) of personal histories within feminist philosophy " (p.3).

Common to Middleton (1993), Martin (2000), Overall (1998) and Neilsen (1998) are their explicit concerns with process and product and their responsibility as feminist

scholars to politicize their perspectives by making their privileged position clear. That is, as tenured academics they write with a net. They make visible the position from which they write that allows the "freedom to express themselves that comes with tenure" . As Middleton (1993) writes:

> I am privileged to be able to indulge in the luxury of writing....As a tenured academic, I can-with the mortgages, credit cards, and overdrafts extended to today's professional classes-purchase a computer and create a study space. I gaze at the grey luminescent screen of my Macintosh, grateful for the clear black type that appears as I press the keys. Grateful for technology and tenure. Grateful for the salary that has bought release from the typewriter on the kitchen table, surrounded by scraps of food and children's comings and goings (p.2).

Martin (2000) makes the important point that "to be ignorant of how educated women of this and earlier times solved the dilemma of being living contradictions is to be condemned to reinvent our lives and our work from one moment to the next" (p.145) And here in lies a crucial part of my purpose here : that this text be both an inquiry and attempt to resolve the question of how to live as a woman and artist in academia so that women's work no longer be relegated to reproductions of "still life".

Leading

The work of feminist theorists who have taken their place at the front of the procession, exemplifies how the use of narrative and the theoretical autobiography as a knowledge-making instrument is one that brings women into theorizing, that rebodies the academic landscape with their experiences. It is a direct response to Martin's (2000)

question of, "How can feminist scholars find acceptance in the academy without losing sight of their mothers, daughters,sisters, half-sisters, female cousins, aunts –which means females of all classes, races, sexualities, and states of being" (p.4)?

This is important to the work of tradition building that needs to be done so that women have frames of reference to draw upon; so that we not always be condemned to begin from nowhere or from places and experiences that are not our own, reproducing in fact, work that oppresses us and which under such terms make us accomplices in our own oppression. Indeed, Steinman (in Martin, 2000) , notes that "academic acceptance too often demands the rejection of authenticity-one's own , other people's and sometimes whole chunks of human experience"(p.x).

This in turn produces a historically and therefore theoretically crippling legacy for academic women. As Steinam writes, "one disheartening result is that women in academia sometimes have to disqualify crucial parts of their own lived histories, and become estranged from their mothers, grandmothers, even from 1970s feminist scholars who grounded pioneering scholarship in lived experience" (p.xiii).

Clearly, "rebodying" and "reinvention" are exercises in balance, in sustainable growth both ontologically and ecologically. Female academics need to step into an academic landscape that has been tilled, worked and prepared by women who have populated it before us. Under such terms we can maintain a solid yet flexible foothold,

one which allows us to focus on the distance ahead and remember the steps behind . We must be able to walk in confidence and not fall through the theoretical traps set for women. We must find and develop fertile ground .

Journal entry

I'm falling off my chair....she's written: inquiry is autobiographical, ecological, artistic.....

All this time I was right.

TWO

THE WAY BACK HOME

Your own words are the brick and mortar of the dreams
You want to realize. Your words are the greatest power
You have. The words you choose and use establish the life you experience.

Sonia Choquette

Letter to Ann

Dear Ann,

Greetings from the tail end of the summer- it's a time of year I love and loathe... I love August for the promise it has fulfilled- Yes, it has been warm and sunny, so much so that it made some (more foolish than I) wish for the cold of winter. I love that I can still eat fresh Topeka red tomatoes, sweet corn and Kirby cucumbers in September.

I think seasons are nature's metaphor for contradictions. I hate that the summer's past (another one... is it just me or are they getting shorter as I get older?). I suppose Autumn is really summer's fight with death- a battle against darkness fought in bursts of colour. Its fate, however, is always sealed..fall...

The end of summer is also a time that makes me wonder... Am I where I should be ? Grand projects are put into perspective, made, torn down and remade again. Unlike Spring, where nature opens to new possibilities, overworking herself- Spring is when I begin to unload, calm down and am really not thinking of production... rather thinking more in terms of reduction. Doing less work, needing fewer things. Things are laid back, easy.

Fall, on the other hand, reminds me of my foolishness, the freshness of and dampness in the air that goes right through your clothing, the smell of old maple burning, the sparks and dark ashes of leaves flying crazily in the wind and preparation for the winter. I'm reminded that I must work to get food, clothing, heat, schooling. I'm reminded just how old the car is, that my winter coat isn't as warm as it once was and that the tiny hole in my winter boots will only get bigger and my feet wetter as the winter progresses. I have no gloves.

So this is where I am, Ann. The day is rainy. The tip of the maple tree is just yeilding its colours to the season. It's resistance is tempered by the colder evenings. My roses continue to bloom but with less vigour. Only my Ruebeckas still stand straight, their beedy brown eyes mocking me. And as I look at my garden I think, "what has been sown this past season? "

Well, as I said, I will have an article published in Atlantis. ..the last of my children has gone off to university... experience tells me they don't come back home. And I and my thesis are on better terms with each other. I suppose that my gardener's hand has touched these in some way and as much as I tried to fashion them in a particular way, they've outgrown my teachings... experience tells me they'll come back transformed.

I've been working on my thesis and in many ways it's a reflection of how I live my life. It swells and contracts to the rythmns and whims of living attentively. What is it about ? Well, Ann, it's come down to this- as a woman, writer and academic, I have needed some kind of framework to work from, some theoretical basis to explain the missing voices of women like myself-artist/academic- from academia. Where are we- painters, poets, writers... in the knowledge-making world of academia? We don't belong ? Says who? Where can I find out why, because I am not a professional artist, my claim to an artistic perspective is dismissed and denied? How does feminist theory help to include my knowing, my voice in academia?

Finally, in regards to teaching in particular, why is the recognition of oneself as an artist important in our relationship to teaching? And what are we telling /teaching women when we deny them the possibility of knowing and painting and writing themselves and their knowing?

How am I going to do it? How am I going to show that women's creativity has been misunderstood and mistaken for something else (other than intelligence)..and that the "rules" governing the making of knowledge have excluded this as a way of being in the world and as a way of explaining it. And that if who you are is an artist, and that the way you produce is artistic, then when you mask this in your academic work something of who you are (authentically) and what you could produce (originally) is lost in the translation. This, I think, goes to the heart of feminist theory- applied feminist theories are ways that we live/transfer our feminist theories into our daily lives and work. What good (for all women not just academics) is feminist theory if it remains just theory?

Ooops once again... have gone on and on...
Well, what I initially meant to say was that I'm still working on my thesis. It is becoming clearer and clearer in my mind. The only problem I have now is one of time... and..$$ to make it appear on the page.

Well, I have performed magic before... recreated, reinvented myself... so I can do it again. Hope to hear from you soon. Also, hope that your family is well.

Regards,
anastasia

Self and Place

Between the writer and her work, between her work and the world, lies the territory of reciprocity.

Sternberger, J. (1991,p.17)

Perhaps because I have lived in different countries and have spoken languages that differ from my "home" language, I have always had a visceral relationship to language and culture. I felt I was always in the company of strangers, an exile among compatriots. As a student, it seemed that I never quite got a grip on the rules and when I did understand the rules they made no sense to my work. I saw my writing as a political act- something that would further change and have an affect on the outer world. However, I wasn't prepared for its effect on my inner world.

This relationship has pushed me to both hide behind my writing (by remaining silent) and hide from writing (by being too outspoken). And I say visceral because my relationship with writing has provoked intense feelings of joy and fear, anxiety and pain, excitedness and sadness – all deeply felt in the mind, heart and hand. These feelings have been the source of much of my writing throughout my life.

Writing has been an act of survival – a way of privately negotiating my path through difficult social , cultural, and economical circumstances. Writing has also been a place of security where ideas could be tested, knowledge made, meaning wrestled; a place that felt like home.

However, writing within an academic context has destabilized that sense of comfort and security. It has been a challenge to my selfhood. Wiley and Barnes (1996) contend that the fight for survival links the personal construction of identity with the more social project of construction of home : these two creative tasks focus on making us at home with ourselves and at home with others (p.xvi).

Women's struggle for coexistance within the home as well as within the academy has been one of political, personal and creative hardship. As Wiley and Barnes (1996) explain, "For the relationship between self and place is an interactive and changing one; the politics of where we locate ourselvelves is an integral factor in the construction of female identity and subjectivity " (xvii).

In her introduction to Calling Home : Working Class Women's Writing, Janet Zandy (1990) explains that :

> Home is literal; a place where you struggle together to survive; or a dream : "a real home," something just out of one's grasp, or a nightmare : a place to escape in order to survive as an individual. Home is an idea : an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of "otherness," where there is, at last, a community (p.1).

This dissertation therefore claims for women a place within academia where women can be at home in their own skin, where they can be themselves. Indeed, whether metaphorical or actual the concept of home suggests support for both individual and communal identity. However, home, is not always a place of security and comfort for women. In fact it is oftentimes a site of contradictions, both a safe haven and a place of violence. And though certainly aware of the current debates over definitions of home, I use the concept of "home" in relation to women in academia because it lends itself well to the tenuous relationship between women and their struggle for autonomy, authorship and authority over their knowing in the patriarchal "house " of academia.

Contradictions

Wiley and Barnes (1996) note that "The concept of home, much like the concept of identity, is a fertile site of contradictions demanding constant renegotiation and reconstruction" (p.xv). My use of home as a site of both social and political struggle and reform for women is therefore closely linked to the personal construction of identity and survival of the creative self. For as Rebecca Blevins Faery (1996,p.136) reminds us, academic women are "dwellers in contradictions", struggling to change academic institutions while questioning the validity of them as vehicles of change. They are constantly repositioning the borders of new territory while occupying the old reconfiguring and reforming from within the very instituitions they themselves have come to form.

The notion of home and identity are neither static nor fixed, but are rather in a state of constant flux and renewal. And as dwellers in contradictions, women are constantly in search of possible ways to see, to know and to be "at home" in academia. Female artists in academia resist compartmentalisation, as they move through languages, histories and traditions , retrieving some parts and rejecting others, reconstructing new academic territory as they move along. However, undoing a house is as difficult an acitivity as making one. The process of recovery, uncovery is painstaking and slow, satisfying and dangerous.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1992) describes the process of reconstruction and renegotiation of the notion of home through political struggle as "a reterritorialization through struggle" (p.90). The "space" we struggle for and the "territory" we attempt to reclaim, are reflections of both external and internal landscapes symbolic of certain values, a site or moral debate; the ground on which I stand.

Saunders (1987) writes that "the fact that we are occupiers of land, in and of the landscape, as well as shapers of spaces, makers of paths, vicarious but literal destroyers and builders of new geographies- all this means that the lexicon of landscape is both familiar and appropriately problematic" (p.5). I use the concept of home therefore also as a location for internal as well as external transformations.

Mapping

The geographical metaphors of academic women's texts map our search for a way out of what Joanne Pagano (1990) has called the "patriarchal wilderness". In opposition perhaps to themes of home and security , alienation and loss are an integral part of the female academic's story. An internal compass points us toward home, towards recognizable and familiar landscapes and places where we feel comfortable and able to furnish with our knowing and experiences.

Certainly problematic for women academics in patriarchal institutions has been having the means to faithfully map how identity and meaning emerge from this complex relationship of women to place. "Mapping", writes Buss (1995) "can be seen metaphorically as joining the activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world" (p.9). Buss argues that we see women's historical exclusion from the predominatly male activities of mapmaking parallelled in their exclusion from direct participation in "power-based mappings of culture" cultural mapping and language mapping,

The consequence of this is that not only have women been denied access to whatever knowledge the "sophisticated" map makers have, but so too have the men who make a culture's map been denied access to " what women learn of language mapping in the world that has contained their work". Therefore, gender, says Buss,"must then be,

historically and culturally, a powerful influence on the way we make maps, the way in which mapping (language making) shapes our view of ourselves and the world" (p.12).

Journal Entry

Every time I read an anthology or any book for that matter about women writers, I feel paralyzed; Gugenheim this, Academy of that, Radcliffe here and Fellowship there. How can I enter? Where's the door?

This reminds me of the French Ambassador's twin sons who ended up at my high school during my graduating year. The High School of Montreal was initially built to serve the residents of prestigious Westmount but as high schools during the 70's were bursting at the seams, students from poorer Point St. Charles, Park Extension and downtown Montreal were directed towards the "quasi" private school.

Needless to say that within a short time, a brand new school was built in Westmount. The "best"students moved as did the "best" teachers. However, it seems that no one at the French Embassy had been informed. Relying on outdated information, the twins entered the High School of Montreal like monkeys on Mars. They were completely disoriented, wearing two-piece suits as starched as their fearful grins . Yes, I suppose that's how I feel , like a monkey on Mars.

Dislocation

For "dwellers in contradictions", mapping is crucial to survival, for it locates women at the crossroads where gender, class, race intersect with culture and knowledge. Women's individual life stories, though each different and complex in structure, can be mapped onto one another so that similar points of dislocation begin to appear. The shape of cultural obstacles, the conditions of the social terrain and the personal distances that women have travelled and have yet to travel (the road ahead and the road behind) signal points of dislocation.

Dislocation as I have experienced it, means living in a daily state of wrongfullness; the wrong place,wrong time, wrong person, wrong experiences. It feels like writing with twisted elbows and knotted joints. It means feeling inappropriate, being corrupt, and having knowing dis/jointed. It means committing transgressions. Hooks (1994) explains transgression as "a movement against and beyond boundaries". In relation to education, transgressions push us to know "beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, and create new visions". Transgressions, according to hook, is "a movement which makes education the practice of freedom" (p.12).

Life Particles

My use of geographical metaphors signals this movement; arrivals are points of rest and departures are possible paths to self-actualization . My purpose in tracing these

paths is to reveal the significance in the details of our daily lives and how these "life particles" nurture and sustain the theory we perform when we re-think them. Listening to the wind, preparing the meal, bathing the children, writing the poem – all are simple acts that when done with intention reveal who we are and how we live in the world. These "life particles" are the points that connect what we know to how we have come to know.

A woman's claim for a space in which to express this is in itself an act of resistance. Mapping is to freedom as theory is to home; that is, they both propose a challenge to common perceptions of women and their roles; (show a way out and a way back). It reveals the necessity of freedom and the marks of oppression. Mapping also builds a bridge between women's inside and outside world.

To faithfully trace the path outwards from our own centres of experience requires that certain conditions of emancipation and autonomy be met. Saunders (1987) explains that "feminists need to have some elbow room for their arguments-they are usually important ones- as well as to extend the collective space women may inhabit. An overriding demand for unanimity, an axiomatic appeal to sisterhood, narrows our space to the width of a tightrope" (p.4).

This means that though there are commonalities to be understood from women's experiences, I do not claim to speak for all women. Rather, I suggest that the exploration and mapping of women's creative lives shows us the way from what women are supposed

to be towards what we could be. Saunders (1987) writes, "artistic expression can be more explicitly political than that; what forms and what issues can we constructively explore in our work and to whom do we want to direct our work? What do we call what we are doing " (p.4) ?

Lessons in Living and Reading

May the point of our needles prick the slave-owner's conscience.
Sarah Grimké

Writing for me is a ragged and restless activity with scattered fragments to be pieced together like a patchwork quilt (1991, p.134)

Janet Sternberger

An Ecological Perspective

In its etymology, the word "ecology" is connected to knowing and caring for one's home place; it derives from Greek roots, oikos (household) and logos (discourse) (Williams, 1983,p.10). Barron (1995, p.6) writes that an ecology may refer to conditions of existence, to systems of living things and their environments. An ecological perspective of women in academe therefore takes into account the social and cultural conditions of women's private and public worlds.

It stems from the belief of the historically, culturally and politically situated nature of women's knowing and being in the world . It is a holistic perspective of the meaning making process that recognizes the interdependence of individual to

environment, of self to history , of knowing to being, of life to theory. Ecology, therefore, can be understood as a social practice that connects knowing to becoming. And in the context of academia , feminist ecological texts are stories of survival that articulate this practice.

Hooks (1994) suggests that " the connection between the will to know and the will to become " (p.19) is intimately linked to an experiential meaning making process that emphasizes the union of the mind and body and spirit. From an ecological perspective, a home might therefore be considered a literal/ metaphorical location for self-actualization, a place where identity , voice and knowing reside. Hooks (1991) defines "homeplace" as a space that celebrates and tolerates difference, that promotes relationships between complete selves, and that becomes a foundation for political action. Thus, as Jones (1996) writes, "homemaking, the attention to details of physical and spiritual existence of both the self and the other, not only grounds us in reality but become an activity that allows us, at the same time, to examine it critically " (p.255).

An ecological perspective of women in academia reveals the importance of creating and sustaining conditions that make knowing and becoming possible for women. It also means commitment to preserve the maps and products of women's creative paths for future generations.

Quilts : A Lesson in /Form Reading

Unable to publicly express their resistance to patriarchal norms and their own powerlessness, Grimké (Hedges & Wendt,1980,p.18) advised women to embroider messages of dissent in the undercover of quilts and other household, work-related items. In the introduction to a discussion of art and quilting , Hedges (1980) writes, "Our response to quilts as an art form footed both in meaningful work and in cultural oppression will therefore inevitably be complex : a combination of admiration and awe at limitations overcome and of sorrow and anger at limitations imposed (p.19).

The move from needle to pen and women's need to prick the oppressor's conscience still remains true. At times I use the visual metaphor of the quilt in this dissertation as a reminder of the parallels between the process, recognition and value of the quilt as representative of women's art and life; and the process, recognition and value of women's writing and experience in academia as representative of women's knowledge and life. Both represent the continual piecing of issues that have been marginal within male-dominated institutional enclaves. Pieces of women's lives that have been discarded as unimportant to the academic knowledge-making enterprise are recuperated as they oftentimes express, for those willing to see, the complex truths of our lives.

Re/collecting

As precursers to abstract art, quilts are also a re/collection of the fate reserved to women's creative productions which don't fit the intended purpose or form of man-

made categories and male-oriented objectives. Similarly, the combination of female, artist, academic as producer; and journal, autobiography, story, testimony as process and product of this dissertation, may not fit squarely within patriarchal definitions of an academic text.

Such definitions tend to exclude genres that women have invented or have made especially their own. In sum, the categories which have defined the academic genre apply mainly to the experiences and products of men. Because women's lives and opportunites have historically differed from men's I need to ask how such differences have affected the subject matter of our academic and our creative work . I return to my question; How can women who are both artists and academics make an appropriate home out of the patriarchal house? Of course answering this question within the context of this dissertation is like being commissioned to paint a tableau on the subject of the struggle of the artist who paints on commission. It's doubly difficult and twice as risky.

As a prime metaphor of women's lives and women's culture the quilt can be seen as "the piecing together of salvaged fragments to create a new pattern of connections, and integrated whole....providing the elements for a new transformative vision" (Lippard, 1989). Quilting is not a repetition of design elements but aesthetic decisions that involve transformation of conventions. Joyce Carol Oates' poem "Celestial Timepiece" sees quilts as women's maps and history, their lives recorded in cloth. In

Adrienne Rich's poem "Natural Resources", it is the most simple things saved by women that have the "power to reconstitute the world" (Showalter, 1991, p.162).

Hedges (1991) explains that the quilt often stands for a way of bridging the gulf between domestic and artistic life that women have found so much difficulty in negotiating. I will argue that for some women whose art and daily life intertwine, the difficulty lies in having this "dailiness" of her creations recognised as art. Indeed, quilts are text/ile representations of women's historical journies through life cycles. They are the visual expressions of creative traditions that women can proceed from, proof that women's art has existed and that it began somewhere. All this time, we were looking in the wrong places.

Unpacking the Past

I was so much older then.
I'm younger than that now.

Bob Dylan

Leaving Home

Today, as I pack and prepare for my youngest child's departure from home to university, I am reminded of the personal sacrifices and difficult circumstances that are a part of so many women's lives, and how my own circumstances have impacted my creative and academic work. I am reminded of life-transforming experiences that have provoked an expansion and shifting of identity and a new way of seeing.

The absence of these experiences from my academic texts I now understand as a pervasive silence that has infiltrated my work. In their reexamination of the impact of Olsen's work, the editors of Listening to Silences (1994), explain that "Olsen had expressed the hope that higher education would be a particularly emancipatory space for women, and in many ways it has been. Yet her insistance that we remain vigilant about the dynamics of silence and silencing requires that we not ignore the ways, both overt and covert, in which this new space may nonetheless continue to mute women's voices or prevent women from coming to voice" (p.6).

Indeed, when I started at university I didn't know anything about the history of women, their contributions to knowledge, to life. Their work hardly showed up in the

places that I learned housed works of art and knowledge. How had they shaped the world? What had their influence been? It was as if as a woman, I had been whispered into existence and that I could as easily be blown away. Similarly, as a writing woman I thought I was alone. I had never heard of other ordinary women writing. In fact, I thought only extraordinary women could write. Everything I had read had lead me to that conclusion. Only great women wrote. Poor, young mothers from poor schools and poor families certainly didn't.

Necessarily, therefore, a strong current that runs through this dissertation is the ebb and flow of my experience as a woman, writer, teacher and academic. What brings me to my work and takes me away from it ? What are the forces that push me towards creativity and then pull me back ? And though the notion of push and pull, private and public, voice and silence are dualistic, the use of these opposites is sometimes unavoidable as they derive their strength from the contradictions in which my life is steeped. They rock me back and forth , delivering meaning from one extreme to the other. Chambers (1994) suggests that we might regard movement " not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world. The question would be, then, not to arrive, but how to move, how to identify convergent and divergent movements; and the challenge would be how to notate such events , how to give them a historical and social value" (p.42).

Re-locations

Rather than claiming personal narrative as the traditional border which separates life from academic theory I see narrative as the line where the two connect. Borders can be redrawn and knowledge redefined with each new story. According to Chambers (1994), "knowledge is not a storehouse to be discovered and then broken into, but is rather a performative event-it speaks; and in speaking to us and through us it bears our histories, traces, signatures and responsibilities, always in transit"(p.42).

This document is therefore a performative text (Christian-Smith &Kellor,1999) which through life history bears witness to women's alienation and silencing in academia. In this sense it becomes a "tactical text which has agenic potentials for writers and readers" (p.xv). I use the concept of home in relation to academe as an "actual" location of possibilities for women and narrative as a metaphoric location of self-transformative potential. Cecilia Lawless (1996) argues that "the act of narration can be a form of "home" where self-identity emerges" (p.374).

I use the concept of home and metaphor of maps as a way of locating places of possibilities and of ways to getting there. Mapping the movement through the narrative of journals as "piecing" and quilts is accessible and overrides any mismatch between social world and inner world. Our strength as artists, women and academics, lies in our ability to express our knowing in a way that makes women nod in recognition of their own seldom acknowledged experiences.

Such work is therefore political in nature as it is a call for women to reclaim the knowledgemaking process by insisting that the exclusion of personal experience from their research practices is both restricting and damaging. Furthermore, leading women to believe that their personal experiences have no theoretical significance only perpetuates the status quo. It diminishes the importance of the local and finite details of what women attend to daily. It distances them from the centre of their experiences. If closeness equals a sense of home and belonging , distance equals alienation and exile .

The thread that winds its way between my different identities as artist, mother , student, teacher, is emmeshed in the clusters of social and cultural webs. And try as I might, I cannot disregard how one impedes or empowers the other, to shut my eyes at how they intervene and impact my creative and academic work . I don't use the words creative and academic in opposition to each other but rather in relation to each other in terms of how they are an integral part of the whole picture; how they preserve balance in the larger understanding of the females artist's experience in academia.

Re-defining

In her journal Anne Truitt (1982) writes of the daily contradictions inherent in the life of a woman who is both mother and artist. She explains that though the redefiniton of these roles certainly shifts in regards to purpose and time, they remain solidly at the core of who she is as a woman. The selflessness of motherhood and the selfishness of the

artist give rise to tensions that both starve and feed creativity. And in later years,while the promise of freedom and independence looms on the horizon for both child and mother, it is the latter who feels the intense sense of loss and guilt at the idea of a long awaited independence and freedom. Truitt (1982) writes,

> It daunts the mother that the artist is so indifferent to the children's departure. Yet it is to the artist that the mother turns for relief as the car drives off bearing its cargo of phonograph, records, books, carefully pressed clothes, extra tidbits of money, and arms waving from every window. It is the artist who hurries the mother through the house cleaning after the departure and then forgets her as cooly as she waved farewell to the children, returning to her work, solitary, engaged (p.182).

The artist, writes Truitt, "could not have come into herself without the mother's experience : She owes her a debt of honor for all the layers and layers of hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly knowledge of what life is. For the artist has grown out of the student, the wife, the nurse, the friend" (p.183-4) .

The mother and artist, "cross- grained as she is in relation to society in general" understands the desire for independence that has motivated her children. And as I wave to my son and return to an empty, hollow house, I immediately sense the shift of conflicting emotions; yes, the artist's independence but also the mother's loss.

Indeed, my job has been to ensure that the children outgrow their home, that they move beyond the circle of their own communities and enter new cultures. Will their lives

speak loudly of their home? Will their behavior tell the story of children loved? And will their stories always be mine? Perhaps my work will be silent, unknown to others. Yet, it is the skin and blood of who I essentially am as a person. What is the relationship between my history as a mother, teacher, artist and writer and my work as an academic? Such relationships, I suggest, lie in the interstices of women's lives, in the spaces of everyday experiences that academia dismisses as too common, too emotional, or too feminine. How does my life inform my work? How then can my work inform my life?

And though beyond the distinct focus of this dissertation a question on a grander scale would be to ask : how has women's historical absence from the public knowledge making systems shaped our understanding of the world? My work stems from one of this questions' thousands of tributaries. My work reveals what this absence means in our (my)daily living as women and how women who are both artists and academics negotiate the academic path that is forked rather than converging.

Homelessness at Home

Oftentimes the tension between writer's creative world and the inhospitable social world makes the journey towards speech and selfhood difficult if not impossible. Emily Dickinson (1960) called this state of instablility for women writers "Homelessness at Home". Seyla Benhabib (1995) explains that, "To leave home is not to end up nowhere; it is to occupy a space outside the walls of the city, in a host country, in a different social reality" (p.28).

Feminists start from an insistence on the importance of women and women's experience, but a woman-centered perspective alone does not constitute feminism. Before a woman-centred perspective becomes a feminist perspective, it has to have been politicised by the experience of women in pursuit of self-determination coming into conflict with a sex-gender system of male dominance.

By examining what was already in place in academia and then seeing myself in relation to it , I began to question whether there was a mismatch between this place I was in and the person that I was . I wondered whether it was necessary to distance my creative identity from my academic one and questioned the circumstances that supported such a mismatch. Feeling lost, I tried to find my way home.

Writing Home

You need only claim the events of your life
To make yourself yours.

Florida Scott-Maxwell

I use the notion of homecoming because it captures the sense of security and comfort which a return to the familiar evokes. I use it to make evident the sense of relief that follows self-discovery and self-recognition. Wiley and Barnes (1996) explain that writing is a form of self-discovery, "in which the writer can contextualize her self, write herself into being, and locate herself on the page. Writing is the physical embodiment of

our interventions in society; writing can ground us, and chart a way home that we might otherwise not be aware of" (p.xxiii).

I understand home as it resides in myself. In a sense I am still that small child in the closet. I remain a person of words. I am still her in a different body with an extended, expanded repertoire of experience from which to choose, but in essence I am that little girl. In her discussion of writer Brigitte Kronauer's work, Jutta Ittner (1996) asks an important question; "How does a woman bridge that abyss between the inside and the outside so that she can say : I live in the house as I live inside my skin" (p.57)?

Story

Metzger (1992,p.59) proposes story as a frame or lens that unifies and organizes different images of the world into coherent meaning for ourselves and for others. She explains that "there is a large story that each one of us is living into which all the other stories fit, like one Russian doll into another ". The larger story has parallel stories and other component stories "all of which coexist with our one life story".

I'm reminded here of Patricia Williams' (1988) essay , "On Being the Object of Property". Writing from the perspective of a black, feminist legal scholar, Williams begins her essay on commercial transactions by telling the story of her great-great-

grandmother's rape by her slave owner at the age of twelve and the consequent pregnancy. In the narration of her story Williams links her own personal and racial history and her experiences of marginalization to legal issues like the forced sterilization of black women. She writes:

> There are moments in my life when I feel as though a part of me is missing. There are days when I feel so invisible that I can't remember what day of the week it is, when I feel so manipulated that I can't remember my own name, when I feel so lost and angry that I can't speak a civil word to the people who love me best. Those are the times when I catch sight of my reflection in a store window and am surprised to see a whole person looking back. Those are the times when my skin becomes gummy as clay and my nose slides around on my face and my eyes drop down to my chin. I have to close my eyes at such times and remember myself, draw an internal picture that is smooth and whole; when all else fails, I reach for a mirror and stare myself down until the features assemble themselves like lost sheep.

William's story, her great-great grandmother's story and the story of women's oppression makes visible the co-existence and co-dependance of theory and praxis in feminist texts. The ground on which Williams stands to reveal how her perceptions of oppression have been formed is firmly historical, strongly personal and highly instructive/political. In her discussion of the essay, Faery (1996) suggests that William's essay is "a frontal attack of the master's house, a stream of words aimed at eroding the rock of oppression at the foundation of culture. Her essay insists that there is never just one story, rather there are many stories which can and must be told, which must be heard" (p.140).

Story and Theory

The interweaving of personal narrative and feminist theory in this dissertation responds to a need for alternative methods of inquiry that explore what women's historical absence means in terms of our daily lives as women. We must bridge the distance between our experiences and the academy, as if what goes on "there" and what goes on "here" aren't intimately related.

Peta Tancred (1988) explains,

> The road that women scholars have decided to travel is that of research. Not the kind that men belligerently define as "pure". No, our research is joyously impure, is action-oriented and issue-oriented- our theories include reflections of our life experiences. We live our feminism daily, and our work cannot be separated from it. It is with enthusiasm that we narrow the gap between theory and praxis (p.10).

I explore the intertextuality of women's (my own and other artists, academics) lives by interweaving critical and creative pieces and setting them in dialogue, connecting rather than severing the boundaries between women's experiences and theory. I believe it's important to reveal the conditions and circumstances under which this thesis is being written. It's another example of a story within a story; writing of creative women as a creative female academic. In what kind of soil was this thesis grown and by what was it nourished? Would it have been different if conditions were other? Under what conditions do women write, live, exist, create/ themselves, knowledge, art?

Academic and poet Rita Dove (1991) asks, "can it be that even as one grows to fit the space one lives in, one cannot grow unless there's space to grow"? Like Florida

Maxwell's metaphor of seed and container, women have outgrown the traditional "academic genres" and need more space, more alternatives.

Journal Entry

Of course, I'm thinking about the notion of distance; for creative women everything is close. I'm thinking of this because it's August 1st and the wind and sun remind me how different this day is from the one before. Are we farther from our centre? Are the sun's rays weaker ? Things are warm because I keep them close in my writer's mind. Everything is nearer to my centre spirit, soul,hand.

I know distance (objectivity) is less possible, desirable for women artists. We gain our energy , heat, lifesource , when things are close to our centre. Major point of thesis is going home, to the familiar, the "knowing"... distance(education) is alien(ating) Quilt is art that came out of necessity, and so is this way of writing the thesis. Yes, the design of this work must reflect my life.
A life by design.

Writing Left

Writing has always been my strategy for survival. I have followed the winding path of the narrative because it yields to an understanding of the kinetic nature of my journey. The use of narratives elucidates the meaning of experiences in a way which, to quote Eisner (1991,p.2) "reveals what, paradoxically, words can never say". Narrative has allowed me to stake my position freely, firmly regardless of the language and culture, or time and space in which I am immersed. In story, I can transcend these limitations.

According to Van Manen (1990,p.3), the writing of one's life story becomes the "conscious"and "purposeful" creation of tools or "objects of meaning that are expressions of how human beings exist in the world". In the piecing process of quilting, as in the writing process, a women's life is framed by the texture and complexity of the everyday experience. Meaning is revealed in the details and sacredness of the mundane. The process is oftentimes one of documentation. This process of documenting the particular is so very important because it becomes the touchstone for creative women who oftentimes seem to begin from nothing.

Virgina Woolf (in Cameron, 1998) observed that, "Often nothing tangible remains of a woman's day. The food that has been cooked is eaten; the children that have been nursed have gone out into the world" (p.50). Yet, the particularity of women's lives is that we choose to elaborate instruments that testify to the ordinary life rather than build monuments as reminders of exemplary ones. This work is such an instrument. In it life, language and text interweave. No matter, that important pieces of the text will remain folded in drawers, waiting for searching eyes to find. No matter also, that once the page has snatched the words, I can claim them no more. No matter, that I am confined to a convention that has historically belittled and disregarded women's words.

It is however, no small matter for me to write against these conventions, to be neck deep in patriarchal traditions and to feel them pushing against my breast and pressing at my fingers. No small matter for me, Anastasia, to be here, on this page. For I

have travelled a treacherous path, been to the tip of my selfhood and back. Yet, I am not alone. Women have walked wearily before me. How to understand these women whose creativity has been plundered, whose work has gone unnoticed, tossed aside like leftovers from the academic table? Who are these knowing women that write, paint, live, perform their lives with epic courage and sensitivity? Where can I know them, learn them, model them?

Writing Women

Held (1988) explains:

> The power to shape consciousness in an overwhelming one, ruling out alternative conceptions and perceptions, crushing aspirations unacceptable to it, and leaving us devoid of the words with which to express even our skepticism, and certainly our anguish and our opposition. What could be more total than the power to control the very terms with which we think, the language through which we try to grasp reality, the images with which we see or block out features of our surroundings and of ourselves, and the awareness we need to try to guide the trajectories of our lives? The culture of a society has such powers (p.91).

Virginia Woolf understood that women's lack of knowledge about their literary heritage was more than a mere oversight and that women "writing" women, and women "reading" women, meant women "knowing" women. In response to her own questions concerning women's writing and their propensity for fiction she answers "a little thought will show us that we are asking questions to which we shall get, as answer, only further fiction" (Cameron,1988, p.47).

Fiction indeed. For how can we know about women, their lives, writing, creativity, knowing, if women have been prevented from expressing their lives with the clarity of their authentic perspectives? Fiction indeed. For we have known women from the perspectives of men. Women themselves have been captive of repressive conventions so constraining that their mouths and hands have been numbed from lack of speech/words/utterance. Throughout history, their repressors have taken on many disguises; the husband, the priest, the doctor, the professor, the politican, as have the forms of their repressions; the novel, the blackboard, the ballot, the thesis, the tableau. Where to go and how to find women's knowing, writing and living?

Woolf (in Cameron, 1988) suggested that,

> the answer lies at present locked in old diaries, stuffed away in old drawers, half obliterated in the memories of the aged. It is to be found in the lives of the obscure-in those almost unlit corridors of history where the figures of generations of women are so dimly, so fitfully perceived. For very little is known about women.

So little in fact, that my own meeting with Virginia, Mathilda, Violet, Tillie, Zora, Mary ,Gloria and others came only after many years of womanhood had passed. Indeed, my children had grown, my parents had left, my partner had set new orientations for his future. I had gone through university, held a bachelor's degree, was teaching and had almost completed the course work towards a Master's degree. I had not intentionally set out to find these women. In truth, I hardly had an idea that they existed. Rather their worlds were brought into mine, unexpectedly, stitch by stitch, word by word. Some I had

met before, in passing, as a side dish (hors d'ouevres/out of bounds) at the academic table.

That is, professors had included women's texts as greenery which enhanced the centerpiece of male texts. And when women's thinking was presented, it was not grounded in any feminist perspective, history or tradition. Nor did it branch into or from a core of research or knowing that revealed the existence of an alternative to male perspectives. Instead, the works of women were plopped like rocks in a pond, first making ripples within ripples then settling quietly to the water's bottom. What I call "feminist" texts are texts written by women, who questioned, directly or indirectly, in poem or in psalm, the circumstances of women's lives in the patriarchal society which they lived.

Mending

I learned for myself that women writers turn things inside out because they need to see how the pieces of their world are joined together, how the cloth of experience is held together. They write from the inside out , verifying that meaning and experience match. And when they don't, when there is no match, when things aren't what they seem, then they know that the story has found its writer. Unfortunately for women, there are as many lost stories as there are lost writers.

What I mean by "lost" is that the stories and the women writers of them exist, but they haven't been found worthy of publishing, of teaching, of making public their knowing. It also means, perhaps more tragically, that they are lost to the writer herself, that they exist beyond the writer's grasp, that she cannot capture them on paper, can't weave them into the fabric of her life. The meaning of that experience is lost both to the artist and to the culture.

In her autobiographic narrative Jane Marcus (1993) writes of the importance of preserving women's culture and connects her mother's work of "invisible mending" to her own work as a feminist and biographer. She writes, "Preserving the fabric of history is the same job as mending the family's jackets and sweaters. ...invisible mending has now become for me a metaphor for the feminist criticisms our collective produces. We want to weave women's lives and words back into the fabric of culture, as if they had never been rent" (p.381).

Weavers

Life, however, intervenes. While juggling the double shift of work and family, the writer promises herself to jot down the general framework of a great idea then forgets to take note of it. Or when she does, they are written on scraps of paper but then get shoved into pockets and are laundered with the wash.

These stories sometimes appear disguised as something different. My story of a childhood of poverty is told in my inability to throw things out. My closets are cluttered with "I might need them" shoes and "this style might come back" dresses. The blue polka dot dress with the mao collar and pleated skirt, for example, tells the story of my first job interview following years away from the work force to care for my three children. It reveals how confused and unsure I was about my self-worth, my capabilities, who I was and what my future could be. This "interview dress" represented who and what I thought the world expected me to be; demure, serious, mature, obedient.

Underwriter

My dining room table, a hand me down from my Aunt Soula, stands sure-footedly as the reminder of both my dreams and of the knotty relationship between my different cultural identities. For this is the table that my aunts would sit around, elbow to elbow, following so many a family gathering. As a child, there were three things I could count on for entertainment at these affairs : one was the traditional male dance that included the crashing of dishes, the balancing of chairs and the throwing of money; the second was my uncle George's habit of dancing on the table in a drunken stupor while literally crying for his homeland. The third , however, shaped the way I integrated, translated and transformed the world into meaningful understandings.

As the party would wind down and distant relatives and friends would leave, my aunts would gather around the dining room table and talk far into the night. I could sit cross-legged under that table for hours without tiring. There was something very special, exquisitely serene about being able to sit there, in the centre of the universe, unseen. I would sometimes press my face against the surrounding lace tablecloth and imagine it to be my veil. Othertimes, the curves and folds of the cloth I imagined to be the curtains of my own theatre.

I loved that time. It was a quiet time. My aunts would whisper and at times I could barely make out what they were saying. But I learned to pace myself, to make meaning from the tone of the words as much as from the words themselves. This, I suspect, is where I learned to listen.

I liked to sit close to my Aunt Kaliope. From my place under the table, I could recognize her swollen feet in the tiny black patent shoes that were a size and a half too small but which she insisted on wearing. Kaliope was the wealthiest of my aunts. Among the mounds of coats piled in the bedroom that I would fall asleep on, hers was the one that smelled the sweetest. Kaliope was also my favorite storyteller. She had a way of using cuss words that didn't seem to offend others. My mother, of course, never swore in Greek. She did though, from time to time, use English words. My mother explained that this was of no real consequence because God, being Greek and all, couldn't understand what she had said. I believed her.

I could tell when my Aunt Kaliope was going to begin a particularly interesting story because she would wiggle from side to side on the chair as she tried to cross her pudgy legs. Her heels barely touched the floor. I also recognised some of my other aunts' reactions to Kaliope's stories by their shifting, shuffling or ankle scratching. I knew that my Aunts Deana and Sophie resented Kaliope because they would constantly give each other a kick or a nudge on the leg every time Kaliope began to speak. I learned so much from the stories I heard under that table. Stories I might otherwise never have come to know.

I learned that my paternal grandmother had not really died of stomach cancer at fifty-five. Rather, she had died of a punctured heart; a condition induced by the suffering she had endured during wartime and which had slowly drained the love and life from her body. My grandmother, a young girl at the time, had lost her family, including her parents and brothers to the war. She had fled a burning Constantinople with her three-year old sister in tow. But in the confusion and chaos of one fateful second, she had allowed her sister's tiny hand to slip away. The hole in my grandmother's heart never healed.

I learned that my maternal grandfather's hair had turned a snowy white overnight when, at the age of sixty and after fathering four daughters, he suffered the tragic loss of his year old son to pneumonia. I also learned that following my mother's birth a year later, the talk among the midwives had been of ways to rid the family of this girl child. I

learned that my father was called a refugee and that my maternal grandparents, Athenians, were devasted when they heard of their daughter's courtship with a refugee. This did, however, explain why my mother told us that the "refugees" rather than the "boogey-man" would catch us if we played outside after dark.

There was also always the talk of the return; to the homeland, to the family, to the vineyards, to the olive and lemon groves; to the warmth, to the water. Of course, except for the power of story, little of what I learned "under" the dining room table over the years prepared me for the lessons learned "over" the dining room table.

As Metzger (1992) explains,

> Stories move in circles. They don't move in straight lines. So, it helps if you listen in circles. There are stories inside stories and stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you're lost, you start to look around and to listen (p.49).

Fireflies : Journal entry

I thought I came to this project by chance. But in retrospect I see that I have been on a journey, a quest for an understanding of my own inability to see in ways that others saw. In fact, I have always been led to believe that this was a disability. More than by circumstance, economic conditions dictated that I should not be able to pursue music, dance, or painting. More fitting to my circumstance was the pen and paper-the poor girl's palette. Coupled with this yearning for expression was a more pressing need for intimacy- not with another but with the Self. Perhaps because that self had been robbed of her essence and security, instinct dictated that like a shoot grown from a cut branch, a new self should grow- more wise, more sensorial, capturing and cataloguing events into meanings beyond those given.

A habit it became to keep that new self protected from the elements, from both the light and the darkness of the human spirit. The joy of writing , making sense, creating worlds without the hindrance or intrusion of the critical eye allowed me to bathe in the happiness of the world, to bask in the making of a life of meaning. And so it was that a pattern emerged- one of bringing creation to every situation encountered. Not for me was the mundane. Life I saw as a knot of experiences, a twisted thread, swinging from tree to bough, twirling, unknotting and twirling again. The pleasure was in the undoing as well as the doing, in the deliberate twisting as well as the untwisting.

I set about to make my life what some would describe as difficult. Life, I understood as a great experiment and I was to do the testing of it. Increasingly, the scientist/explorer in me found herself attracted to the sparks in the dark. I sought out the tensions in situations. And soon took it upon myself to create sparks of my own when none other existed. I now remember the fireflies. It caused me great pain to see the fireflies in the jar at school. At home in bed, I would imagine them sending out signals in the dark. I never understood why we had to capture the fireflies in order to observe them. What was the point of having a jar of fireflies? We already knew they flickered. We had watched them blink in the dark, starry, summer night.

My purpose in life was to test the known, the givens. It seemed instinctual, primal. To not test was to not be myself. When presented with truth, I asked how true? My questions were seen by others as a lack of understanding while what I saw in the responses was a lack of depth, vision, quality, fullness. I needed to stretch the purse of experience to see how much it could contain. But at what a price.

As a child and teenager I had a wildness that comes with unbridled freedom and fierce independence. I tried and tested the truth of myths, the validity of theories and the logic of what others called "just common sense". If I smoked pot would I graduate to LSD? If I slept with my boyfriend would I get pregnant? If I listened to rock music would I lose my hearing? If I didn't graduate from high school would I be a bum? If I got married at a young age would I be divorced in seven years ?

And though the flesh of some questions withered, the skeleton of others lingered. If my inner knowledge of the world could not be outwardly expressed in academia, then was it really knowing or something else? If I was not making my self and my knowledge known in academia, then whose knowing was I performing? As a female artist, how was I to exist in academia? I searched and listened for women who could show me how to be an artist in academia. I met a great many of them privately in the doorways of seminars , in class discussions and in smokey cafés. However, like the classroom fireflies, the spark and flicker of their unique artistic voices was sealed tightly within the jar of personal experience, far from their public, academic texts. Their knowing glowed in the dark.

Part Two

The River of Then and Now

The country beneath
the earth has a green sun
and the rivers flow backwards:
the trees and rocks are the same
as they are here, but shifted.
Those who live there are always hungry;
From them you can learn
Wisdom and great power,
If you can descend and return safely.

Margaret Atwood

Introduction: My Travels With Alice

I almost wish I hadn't gone down the rabbit hole-and yet- and yet- it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life. I do wonder what could have happened to me.

Alice in Wonderland

Tracking

During the development of this dissertation, quiet moments of reading for simple pleasure were few and far between. Having sold my car , I came to appreciate the long train rides into the city as a time to indulge in such a luxury . During these passages from home to the university, I began reading Alice Walker's The Same River Twice : Honouring the Difficult . Here, Walker chronicles her transition following the immense success of The Colour Purple, from a reclusive, peaceful life of poet and writer to one of public figure. Composed of journal entries, correspondence , essays, articles and a screenplay, the book , Walker considered, would be especially useful for women "as a record of the process" (1996, p.33).

Back and forth, as I rode the tracks and read her book, in the early mornings and the silent evenings, the parallels of our creative, inner journies surfaced despite the so different landscapes of our outer lives. How do the private and public mesh during times of intense creativity and stress ? In what ways do they support or weaken each other?

At times I was overcome by the relief and joy in recognizing my own way of perceiving the world in Walker's. In passages where Walker describes moments when she could not "speak", I felt silenced; at times when attempts to "forget" failed her, my memory faltered , and the well of her "soul-deep exhaustion", I shared daily. I had been struggling with my writing , sidetracked by attempts to write in a voice that wasn't truly mine. I felt the split. It was as if I had to leave the artist in her seat the moment I got off the train.

The university was a lonely place. Caught between the constraints of time and the confines of the isolation I needed in order to create, I often spent days on end talking to no one but myself. But I was never truly alone. As Walker (1996) explains,

> Always with me was the inner twin; my true nature, my true self. It is timeless, free, compassionate and in love with whatever is natural to me. This was the self that came in dreams, to be pursued in essays I was writing at the time (p.32).

I had secretly relied on my own "inner twin" for company since childhood but dared not now bring her out publicly. She had been called everything from naughty and funny to wild and loose. She was attracted to the oddest of people met under the strangest of circumstances. She had been labeled stubborn and silly, worthless and weird.

But here I was reading in Walker's words a recognition of my authentic perceptions -not in the terms of defects and inadequecies I had been accustomed to, but rather in terms of uniqueness and abundance. Like Walker, I too thought I was suited to " the wondrousland quality of life to which I was apparently born attuned " (1996, p.33) but unlike Walker, I had spent a lifetime trying to conceal rather than celebrate this. Walker explains the value of her own authenticity in this way : "I know I am of most use to others and to myself by being this unique self; Nature I have noticed , is not particularly devoted to copies, and human beings needn't be either " (p.33).

I found in Walker's words a way home. I returned to my writing . My focus had shifted; the bedrock had moved. I began again; the same river twice.

I realised that of everything I had read at university, all the theory, all the stories, journals and essays, written by wonderful brilliant women, none had moved me to understanding the world so deeply and so powerfully as did Walker. She was the teacher I needed. I knew that voices like hers needed to be read within the context of academia because as an artist, academic and woman I deserved to hear them as much as I deserved to write from/in /about them.

Re-cognition

Of particular importance was Walker's recognition that some of the understandings we have as children are oftentimes reinforced in our experiences as adults (1996, p.33). What is learned intuitively, spontaneously, within the naiveté of younger years, resurfaces as knowledge when we remember in later years. I understood what she meant by ," there was developed in me a spontaneous way of knowing that seemed more like remembering than learning" (p.35) .

As memory is the reference point from where knowledge proceeds, I also shared Walker's desire to situate the stories of our mothers and grandmothers within the loop of history, writing and memory that circles back into oneself. As a feminist, Walker helped me understand that such connections must be made, the maps must be drawn, the stories must be told, the screenplays must be written lest the current of women's knowledge be diverted or be damned. Walker (1996) writes :

> Societies all over the world fear woman's critique, a critique now crucial to the survival of the planet; the methods used to silence us, whether verbal or physical, are as crude today as they were during the Rennaissance, a time, ironically, when men boasted of being enlightened and women were still being burned as witches all over Europe. Truly all the ages of the world exist simultaneously (p.40).

I too had wanted to name my past, to cross the river on the stones that other women had set there for me. I loved that Walker honoured the need for teachers, and credited creative women for her own artistic sure-footedness :

> *A Room of One's Own*, a book that made me happy to be a writer, and bolstered and brightened my conciousness about the role other women, often silenced or even long dead, can have in changing the world (p.41).

Walker (1996) also echoed the doubts I harboured as a woman, artist, academic of having my work recognised, understood or accepted within the patriarchal house of academia. She rode the path from certainty to estrangement with me daily :

> It was painful to realize that many men rarely consider reading what women write, or bother to listen to what women are saying about how we feel. How we perceive life. How we think things should be. That they cannot honor our struggles or our pain. That they see our stories as meaningless to them, or assume they are absent from them, or distorted. Or think they must own or control our expressions. And us (p.39).

Transformation

Education is a transformative process that links knowing to becoming. The artist bridges inner and outer landscapes by making visible the passage from one to the other. How can academia not be an appropiate home for women who are able to express what knowing and becoming mean in our daily lives; who make sense of this regenerative process by documenting it ?

I finished Walker's book and I returned to the dissertation. I had arrived at a state of being, rather than a point in time. I could let go of the pain of harsh criticism and injustice. I had moved past the point of fear. Walker too discovered that "letting go is

actually a state that can be survived, lived in, and treasured" (p.32). I imagine her looking over my shoulder and understanding " how difficult it is for a creative person to stick to one way of doing things " (p.35). And in moments when I waver and wonder whether it might not be wiser to return to a safer track, Alice reassures me , " you really cannot step into the same river twice. Each time it is different, and so are you" (p.35).

We consider this dissertation to be especially useful to women, artists and academics– as a record of a process .

Three

The Beyonderers

but they had their being once
and left a place to stand on.

Al Purdy

Are we there yet?

I come from people who have lived their lives on the threshold of conformity, language and citizenship. Borders were social, economic and cultural. I remember sensing this, laying in the back seat of my father's 1966 Plymouth on our flight from the crisp Manitoba winters to what my parents imagined was the kinder, more embracing climate of Montreal. I lay there watching how the endless stream of telephone poles stood like needles threading the landscape together with long, uneven seams of weighty wiring. The wispy tips of the flat, golden land stretched up to catch the colours of the sky before they seeped into the soil.

I couldn't understand why my parents wanted to leave the place where our neighbours would hang out their long underwear in the winter until they froze like beads of headless gingerbread men, or why they wanted to leave the nice Ukrainian lady whose house and flowered dress smelled like pasty yeast and sourdough. I had

once heard my father talking about something called opportunity in the place where we were going. What that was and how I would recognize it when we got there, was a source of pickled wonderment that sustained me throughout the long journey. My parent's notion of citizenship, belonging and community has always conflicted with my understanding of home, place and community. As immigrants, leaving home for them had meant leaving certitude (Kamanos Gamelin, 2000,p.148).

This sense of bewilderment and grandeur, of flight and hope that the trip inspired in me remains deep in the flesh of my consciousness as a Canadian ,woman, writer. Throughout the years I came to view the geography of the outer world as symbolic-a metaphor for the changing landscape of my inner world. The cycles of renewal and the interconnectedness of survival, growth and transformation were as integral to my texts as they were to my life. However, in spite of my developing feminist consciousness or perhaps because of it, there seemed no way to contextualize these perspectives within the framework of my work as an academic; no way to make something of the unarticulated landscape.

Shaping

Estés (1992) explains that many women have tried to give symbolic shape to their creativity. "They have listened to what others have come to describe creativity as and because they hadn't recognized any of what women do in these definitions, they went off and believed that they were not creative". As well, Estés explains "many women also believe that there are certain places designated as one where creativity resides, where it can be celebrated and recognized. But where women are usually

found are not those places. Homes, kitchens, bedrooms are not creative. Nor are classrooms" (p.315). This work stems from my recognition that creativity is not like the old winter coat I can hang up or the wet boots I can take off when I enter academia. It's a way of being, feeling and perceiving; a creative tension, a heightened consciousness, a perceptible awareness that is a part of, not apart from who I am and what I know. According to Barron (1995), "Creativity is the ability to respond adaptively to the need for new ways of being "(p.31).

How some women perceive and resolve problems, or how we create, reinvent ourselves and our world and the means with which we do so, may not be understood as creative ways of knowledge making in patriarchal institutions. I am reminded here of a discussion with a sympathetic professor who suggested I "test" my creative abilities by coming up with fifteen novel ways of using a paper-clip.

In my excitement I had "come out" to this professor, had revealed myself as a writer . I had talked about my dissertation project and of the relationship between creativity, feminism and academia. Creativity, as he saw it, was a skill, a technique, something that could be practised and perfected, "like spelling", he said. And indeed, Piirto (1993) and Amabile (1996) have pointed out that we can sometimes talk about creativity in terms of specific, domain-related areas. However, I didn't do particularly well at the paper-clip exercise. Puzzled, I felt that my self-doubt would be confirmed in his suspicion that perhaps I really didn't know who I was or what I knew. (Only now do I truly appreciate another professor who never made me feel like an idiot

when I would come up with hairy ideas or naive assumptions. I'll always respect her for never ridiculing my enthusiasm which others mistook as stupidity).

I froze at the idea of facing him and imagined myself unfolding the fingers of my tightly-clenched fist to reveal the crushed remains of a thousand paper clips. Shame on me for having grandiose ideas of what I could accomplish, or of who I could be. I had forgotten that there were so many things I knew nothing about : raising children, cleaning a house, saving money, buying a home, being serious, acting maturely, being an artist, writing a dissertation.

The professor's "paper clip problem " had no meaning for me and coming up with a solution for what *I* didn't see as a problem was futile. And herein lies the difficulties when we try to express solutions to what others don't see as being problematic. The voices return: Can't you do anything right? What's wrong with a nice Greek boy? Why don't you listen? What a waste of time. What a waste of money. Why can't you write like that?

Experience

Piirto (1992) explains that , "the artist redefines the problem as she creates. She in choosing the problem to resolve, finding it and in doing so is being creative" (p.34). The ideological problems creative/artistic women perceive must be resolved creatively/artistically. And what episodes, shifts, turns and drawbacks we consider of

experiential importance may be dismissed as less consequential in terms of male experience.

Held (1993) explains that ,

> the central category of feminist thought is experience. It is not the constricted experience of mere empirical observation. It is the lived experience of feeling as well as thought, of acting as well as receiving impressions, and of connectedness to other persons as well as to self. Time and time again, feminist inquiry begins here and returns to the experience of women so inadequately reflected in thought that has been taken as standard, which we can so often recognize as constructed from points of view privileged in terms of gender as well as of race, class and culture. When women test male constructs against our own experience, we often experience conflict. Because of male domination, we may have attributed the clash to what we imagine to be our limited capacities, in comparison to men, to think or to act. But in times of flourishing feminist expression, the theories men have constructed are often undermined by our lived experience (p.24-25).

The necessity therefore to make experience central to our work as female academics and artists is one of survival. But survival, as Audre Lorde (1981) notes, "is not an academic skill , it is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"(p.99). The importance of responding, of creating the meanings and giving forms to our experiences is crucial to our sense of self, collectively and individually. Estés (1992) explains that,

> To create one must be able to respond. Creativity is the ability to respond to all that goes on around us, to choose from the hundreds of possibilities of thought, feeling, action, and reaction and to put these together in a unique response, expression, or message that carries moment, passion, and meaning. In this sense, loss of our creative milieu means finding ourselves limited to only one choice, divested of, suppressing, or censoring feelings and thoughts, not acting, not saying, doing, or being (p.316).

Piirto (1992) reasons that philosophers study creativity because creativity implies human freedom. "The existential philosophers especially were concerned with freedom, and thinkers such as Wittgenstein and Sartre said that human beings have the freedom to thus create themselves" (p.31). Creativity , feminism and feminist epistemology are therefore interrelated. And once begun liberation and identification are irreversible.

Counter/space: kitchen, conflict, culture

Maria Mies (1996) suggests that there has been an existential necessity for academic women to overcome the "sterile" divide between practice and theory. And that what June Nash called the "double consciousness" of women existed "because all women with a beginning feminist consciousness in academia experienced existence as women/scholars as contradictory, as being torn in two opposite directions" (p.10). The academic practice of maintaining a distinct separateness between the private and public world is similar to what I had experienced growing up in an immigrant household where the public voices that lived beyond the stoop of our bolted front door never filtered past the cultural threshold.

Later, as a teacher and academic I recognised the pattern of silence that I would be required to replicate in the move from the kitchen to the desk or the blackboard to the lecture hall. The need to integrate the voice of the immigrant, mother, daughter , artist that had been severed -silenced in academia stems from this hyphenated existence . But, I also needed to free myself of their culturally assigned meanings by creating a space for them within the world of knowledge and thought.

The multi-cultural, multi-lingual brew of ethnicity and difference through which I travelled required that I proclaim my individuality within these differences; that I sharpen it, refine it, hold it up to the light and watch for the ways my differences were reflected. As a first generation Canadian, first generation writer and first generation academic, I had to mark my own way, find my own words, build my own ideas.

Faux-pas: you mustn't

Olsen claimed that, "the first generation artists' first creations are themselves; to become self-made, they compose original systems" (Dizard,1994,p.305). And one way to claim my knowing in academia was to reclaim shards of the identity of all the women who in me were collapsed; my grandmothers, mother, daughters, sisters, cousins, friends. However, bringing my life into my academic work , was like bringing gypsies to the king's court. It was regarded as a faux-pas; quite embarrassing and distinctly out of place. I remember that my paper on the literacy practices of elderly women was weeded of its roots in my grandmother's letters . So too was a mother's voice rejected when found hiding in the texts of pedagogical practices, as was the journal writer branded when discovered squatting between the lines of writing theory.

Kitchen

Martin (2000) explains the dissonance between private and public worlds is evident in academia when all "the qualities associated with the private home and with

women –run counter to education's raison d'être". Indeed, these were "obstacles to the achievement of preparing people for membership in the public world " and ran counter to education's "main task of casting off the attitudes and values, the patterns of thought and action associated with home, women, and domesticity"(p.48). And as Lorri Neilsen (1998) explains, the spaces where women work daily are imbued with reflections of "life in its raw form". The kitchen, she writes "represents the unpainted complexion, the mess, the daily hunger and the unkempt emotions we prefer to conceal as we prepare to make our way through the door and out into the world" (p.139). These metaphorical and actual places exist but are marginalized within the patriarchal house of academia.

Indeed, as architect and archeologist, witness and wanderer, explorer and mapmaker, I had designed my own "response system" as a way of making meaning and surviving my life-long position at the cultural front. Of course, from my parent's perspective, being "first" didn't mean being "best". Instead, doing things and being ways that were unrecognizable to them, meant conflict and shame, resistance and regret.

Culture

Moonwalking

As Greek immigrants, my parents came to Canada thinking that their children, like seedlings planted by their own hands, could be sown and could grow and prosper without taking steadfast root in the depth of the unyielding Canadian soil. They hadn't

counted on their children being transformed by the climate, environment, and culture. They understood the recognition and protection of their children's desire to be called Canadian only as a rejection of their Greek origins. But origin, as I explained to my mother, is where I can trace and map, know and recognize people and places that I have shaped and have been shaped by. Yes, I am Greek by birth and circumstance but I am also Canadian in mind and heart, in custom and culture.

My mother couldn't understand why I should leave the home to enter academia. What was the purpose? Had most of her goals for me not been met; husband, house, children (especially in that order)? According to her, a woman's leaving home meant uncertainty. I would be entering a world of temptation; be exposed to new ideas, new lives, new men, new customs. I might find myself dizzy with independence, drunk on freedom. Walking out of the home was like being the first woman to walk on the moon. I had moved from moon time to moon walk.

Louise de Salvo (1993,p.38) has written on the internal conflicts experienced during the time of her dissertation when , for the first time in her life, she resisted her culture's mores and went off on her own to pursue her research. In the culture she had been brought up in, women (especially married women and mothers) who leave their home to pursue self-interests were "puttanas", whores. "Puttana" is also the Greek word for whore and I heard it used wilfully against women who went to work, went to school, learned other languages, made other friends; against women who sang, who wrote, who painted and who told.

DeSalvo writes eloquently of her years spent working on the writings of Virginia Woolf and the implication of this work in her own life. DeSalvo writes, "My work has become more important than my life...I must look back over my life to try to salvage something of myself, to try to see clearly what of my past I have tried to bury in my work" (p.46). She had initially thought her choice of Woolf as the subject of her dissertation was quite accidental. But as she braids together her life story, dissertation experience and Woolf's life and work, she weaves a pattern wherein she recognizes " the difficulty of being a woman and being a creator".

Unity: Full moons

Barron explains that abilities are important, but only the self creates. The self creates in a sustained matter, which calls for the recognition and guidance of gestalts that include change over time. To achieve unity of being requires a self to integrate the part-selves. And the more original, complexly inclusive, and deeply experienced the self is, the greater its power of creativeness (Barron, 1995, p.13).

Jane Tompkins (1987) writes about her own need to connect the two voices inside her, the voice of the critic and the voice of a feeling person. And claims that she had been conditioned to accept the conventions that keep discussions of epistemology "segregated from meditations on what is happening outside my window or inside my heart" and to feel embarrassed in her attempts to speak personally in a professional context. This "public-private hierarchy" she claims, is a founding condition of female oppression. (p.169). She writes,

> These beings exist separately but are not apart. One writes for professional journals; the other in diaries, late at night. One uses words like "context" and "intelligibility," likes to win arguments, see her name in print and give graduate students hardheaded advice. The other has hardly ever been heard from. She had a short story published once in a university literary magazine, but her works existed chiefly in notebooks and manila folders labelled "Journal" and "Private".This person talks on the telephone a lot to her friends, has seen psychiatrists, likes capuccino, worries about the state of her soul. Her father is ill right now, and she has a friend who recently committed suicide.
>
> ... the problem is that you can't talk about your private life in the course of doing your professional work. You have to pretend that epistemology, or whatever you're writing about, has nothing to do with your life, that it's more exalted, more important, because it (supposedly) transcends the merely personal (p.169).

Ava McCall (in Christian –Smith & Kellor,1999) has explained that in her experience, academia encouraged the development of "only some" feminist voices. Indeed, McCall claims, "I learned the language, theories and research to help express the strong emotions I felt about the multitude of ways I and women of all races, and classes, the poor have been discriminated against". But the unstated expectation was that she not use or express that knowledge in her academic work. In fact, "the emotional, personal voices were considered out of place in academia " (p.87). McCall viewed this as a direct threat to her sense of self; a challenge to the development of her writer's voice and her understanding of how she thought and who she was. Of course when who you are and what and how you know is questioned, the result is uncertainty, doubt and instability.

In her discussion of Alison Jaggar's work, Tompkins writes that Jaggar argued that Western epistemology was shaped by the belief that emotion should be excluded

from the process of knowledge making. And because women are "required" to be the cultural bearers of emotion while men are conditioned to repress it , "an epistemology which excludes emotions from the process of attaining knowledge radically undercuts women's epistemic authority" (p.170). Of course, adhering to conventions of patriarchal institutions is to "uphold a male standard of rationality that militates against women being recognized as culturally legitimate sources of knowledge" (p.171). But the alternative, that is to break with the conventions, would mean risking the probability of not being heard at all.

Double Standards

Journal Entry
Graduation at the Kon-tiki

Mint-green borrowed gown; once a bridesmaid's dress and much too satiny for a 70's grad. We so much wanted to do what others were doing... I felt like the stone they'd thrown at arm's length and this is where I've landed...

I suppose it's difficult for many to understand the struggle; like pulling on a rope, a hundred thousand times, hand over arm and passion over passion. A rope weighted down with a one ton rock. ..just to get to where I am. And still, they threaten me; it's taking too long; are you "really" serious or maybe you just want to be a student a bit longer. They don't know that being a student has meant sacrifice- personal and familial. It has meant leaving things behind and lugging this along the way. It has meant student debt that I might never crawl out from under. It has meant working menial jobs that pay so little and expect so much. It has meant financial, physical and emotional risk.

Risk and self-transformation; the potent mix of self-activated and self-accrediting pedagogy. When not even a whisper of credit or encouragement for what you've done is spoken you end up owing yourself. It's so much easier not to know, not to experience intellectual and creative freedom.

It's a drunken state from which you cannot return unchanged, untransformed, in the deepest sense: viscerally. It's what Florence Howe has called having your eyeballs peeled. What Gendlin calls a shift-literally your "focus", the way you see changes. Like the clockwork of a watch, your inner being moves a notch. My mother was right... I can't go back now.

Double Standard #2

One of the pernicious ways in which the academy relegates women's experiences to the crawl spaces of social, historical and cultural importance is in its devaluation of disciplines traditionally associated with women (Martin (2000) asks,

> why are the fields of education, nursing, homemaking so scorned by the academy, so deprecated that they are usually considered to fall beyond the very borders of liberal learning? Their objets of study and inquiry-teaching, nursing, homemaking- are historically associated with home and family. Considered women's domains, these areas are tainted in the academy's eyes by the second-class citizenship of the people who practice them. Even more telling, the historical association of these practices with the world of the private home sullies them (p.53).

In using my own personal history as situated in the home and in the academy, I stake my position as one of a feminist and educator who is aware of the pitfalls of theory , feminist or otherwise, that seeks to impose one set of values on research perspectives. I refute the argument that my position within a traditionally female discipline somehow weakens my posting as a feminist. Rather, I would argue that

such a view promotes a "keyhole" perspective of the lives of academic women, dismissing important knowledge of ourselves and keeping it from other women.

Martin (2000) warns that when feminist scholars "fall into the trap of double standards, the academy's denigration of what it sees as Other is transmuted into a form of self-hatred" (p.54). And, as if this weren't bad enough, Martin writes, "she who would resist the double-standard must allay feminist fears that an interest in girls, women, and assorted female- associated phenomenon will imprison us once again in the kitchens and nurseries from whence we sprang" (p.55).

I note here that the importance of my work as an educator, mother, daughter, companion and the activities associated with them are important to the "well being of society". Like Martin (2000), I "deplore their devaluation, not their presence in the public world" (p.56) I share with Maxine Greene (1988) in the quest to "single out the determinates in my life, the seductions as well as the controls...the dialectic: the recognition of the determinates and of the inevitable tension between the desire *to be* and the forces that condition from within and without". And I agree with Martin's statement that to " highlight our vulnerability is not and never was a mistake. The mistake has been to reject research that sheds light on ourselves and to walk away from the admittedly difficult problem of discovering how to change the culture's gendered expectations and division of all forms of labor" (p.61-62).

Connections

The narratives of academic women are thick with the descriptions of the social and economic concessions women have had to make in order to survive. More recently, academic women have begun exploring the cost of their creative concessions as well. Oftentimes, these narratives relate a woman's struggle as academic and artist, to maintain her sense of self, her integrity, her voice; the sense of wholeness. They connect the loss of the creative voice to a deepening sense of self-doubt and fear, often leading to self-sabotage.

Estés (1992) reminds us that in Latin , "creare" means to create; meaning to produce, to make (life) , to produce where there was nothing before" (p.313). But how do we change a river's current? How do we turn a gust of wind on its tail ? How do we bring to life our texts and bring our texts to life? How do we make visible that which was not? How do we reclaim all this in our work as academics?

Self-doubt/debt

Estés (1992,p.314) explains that "gifted women, even as they reclaim their creative lives, even as beautiful things flow from their hands, from their pens, from their bodies, still question whether they are writers, painters, artists, people, *real* ones". Self-doubt penetrates the fleshy parts of the body, it enters the bloodstream and travels to the tip of selfhood , through the fingers, muscles, toes, mouth and mind. "We recognize the deformation of new potential is taking place when we begin to question our ability, and especially our legitimacy to think, to act, or be. ..But are you

a *real* writer (artist, mother, daughter, sister, wife, lover, worker, dancer, person) ? Are you r*eally* talented (gifted, worthy)? Do you *really* have anything to say that is worthwhile, enlightening, (will help humankind, find a cure for anthrax?)" (Estés, 1992,p.315). According to Estés, "real is what has life, the deadness some people call being neutral".

Echoing these tensions, in her journal English professor Deb McDowell wrote, "here I am able to close my mind and ears to that bloated, overfed superego, that disgusting internal critic and censor who finds everything I write for 'scholarly' and 'professional' audiences wanting and unfinished in some respect" (Schiwy,1996,p.216).

Schiwy writes of her struggle to reclaim the passion in her writing voice that had disappeared after years of academic writing. But as she writes,

> ... lo and behold-it was not that simple. My voice had not just been waiting patiently for an invitation to return, and hadn't gone unaltered by my years in the academic world. Suddenly, I wasn't sure what my voice was anymore, or even whether it was still there (p.30).

In A Voice of Her Own , Schiwy (1996) discusses her dissertation journey and how in her unconscious drive to conform to the patriarchal mode of academic rhetoric which she had internalized, her "own" writing voice - "the voice that had known truth and confidence"- had been silenced. She found that "in its place was my best attempt to sound authoritative and erudite, dispassionate and elegant, to be other than I was".

In her discussion of her research on the life and art of May Sarton, Martha Wheelock writes of the difficulties she encountered in trying to write in the "so called objective stance that the academy requires" (1987,p.418). She questions,

> Why, I thought, can't criticism be enriched by the personal ...I was determined to integrate, as I believed Sarton had, my own self and my experiences with my work- the subjective and objective- an integration that I felt was the only possible stance appropriate to me and to my values as a feminist (p.418).

The dismissal of Sarton as an "unimportant author" by her committee, and the imprisoning format of the dissertation finally led Wheelock to abandon her work in the academy. "Life is art....I had to believe that I was creating something that represents who I am as well as who May Sarton is" (p.428). She turned her research into a film where she could "feel" a more deeper understanding of Sarton's work.

As a feminist sociologist Sue Middleton too feared turning the "rich, emotionality " of her research narratives into "abstracted data"(p.67). What does it mean to cut out important parts of your life; to snip out the baby's birth, to chip away at the writer's voice, to drive a wedge into the sacredness of daily rituals? For a time, I loved to iron, used starch and buttoned every shirt, blouse and skirt before hanging it up. I enjoyed making patterns on the carpet while vacuuming; I lingered in the doorways of bedrooms and bathrooms, awaiting to dry tops and bottoms , tears and kisses, from the time of the kids' childhoods to their adolescence.

Cutting pieces of women's lives out of our work transforms its meaning . And though what has been left out of our academic work may speak louder than what we

have left in, its absence means that women are unknowingly condemned to re-making, re-building, redoing work that may have been done by other women before. Will this process, as Jane Marcus (1993) questions, be "doomed like housework to go on forever ? Will they always be ripping holes in our work, leaving us to sew them up again, always rending while we are mending? "(p.393) .

Spender (1988) suggests that there are significant political and epistemological consequences to breaking with such traditions of silence and invisibility. She questions,

> What will happen if we make women's past visible and real. If the process is not to be repeated again, if we are to transmit to the next generation of women what was denied to us, we need to know how to break the closed circle of male power which permits men to go on producing knowledge about themselves, pretending that we do not exist. And this is to enter the realm of theory-not to mystify, intimidate, or oppress, but to describe and explain the experience of women in a male-dominated society which says that if such experience does exist, then it is of no account (p.23).

Martin (2000) claims that to be "ignorant of how the educated women of this and earlier times solved the dilemma of being living contradictions is to be condemned to reinvent our lives and our work from one moment to the next" (p.145).

The natural order

A legacy of invisibility is one of lost traditions, abandoned knowledge and misinterpreted experiences. And in the absence of tradition, we sense the absence of possibilities. Indeed, when we erase the structural evidence of academic women's lives, we are ensuring that their successes not be replicated.

Artist Judy Chicago (1982) suggests that women's general lack of knowledge of our traditions and accomplishments is pivotal in women's continued oppression. She writes:

> The absence of female role models in my own development had sometimes made me feel as if my intentions to be a major artist were insane. But a closer examination of history taught me that my ambitions were entirely consistent with those of many women in the past. Women had always made significant contributions to the development of civilization, but these were consistently ignored, denied or trivialized (p.8).

History has show us that the danger in not pursuing research into how women create and know, lies in the perpetuation of an ideology which explains women's absence as part of the natural order of things – that for historical, biological or cultural reasons women have either been unwilling or unable to abide by the established set of rules and standards which have been deemed necessary to the preservation of the status quo in academia. That it has been natural for women to have no say in setting the standards or making the rules, seems not to have been questioned. In fact so common was the perception that academic life and intellectual rigor were practices either undesired by or unnatural for women, that the underlying reasons for women's absence were handily overlooked.

Of course, when common perceptions remain unquestioned they take on a comfortable, orderly, almost natural quality that tumble neatly into the category of things which need not be questioned or explained. When unchallenged, the perceptions and the ensuing practices become a familiar and integral part of our

understanding of the world. So familiar in fact, that we are blinded to the underlying tensions that familiarity harbours.

Spressatura

The notion of natural order operating within the framework of institutions, is one embodied in the concept of Spressatura. Grumet (1991) explains that the renaissance concept of Spressatura was a term originally used to symbolize the apparent artlessness of the courtier who could master many arts but present them as effortless. This mastery rested on the assumption that the careful balance of order and disorder represented in the courtier's work, was the outcome of a natural, therefore effortless ability.

Grumet (1991) writes that "the tension between order and disorder is what Anton Ehrenzweig has identified as the special tension of art, as its organizations of space and time challenge habitual order, figure-ground gestalt with perpetually new configurations" (p.84). Inherent therefore in the appearance or "artlessness" is the denial of knowledge of underlying tensions existent between order and disorder. And in the assumption of "naturalness" is a denial of the deliberate constructions which are required to achieve the impression of balance.

In practical terms, therefore, the extent to which the courtier was successful in camouflaging the chaos of the creative process or the practical details that the product embodied, was as important as the work itself. Of course, traditionally, there has

always been the assumption that the better the craftsman, the less visible the structural details. And in the courtier's case had the structural details of his artistry been disclosed, its mythical quality would have dissipated and so too would his purpose.

Indeed, I suggest that the courtier's survival rested on the perpetuation of a set of contradictory notions: first that natural ability suggests the impossibility of replication while artlessness implies the possibility of reproduction; and secondly, that though the impression of mastery rests on artistry, the extent to which this artistry is not apparent determines the degree of success and ensures survival.

Similar contradictions are apparent in institutions and when they remain unexamined they can work against people in a number of ways. For example, the notion of mastery as determined by natural ability can act as an exclusionary device to deny people access to institutions. Also, the impression of natural order can work in defence of these practices, while artlessness can allow the perpetuation of these practices. This according to Grumet (1991), fulfils the assumption and perpetuates the belief that the better the system, the more artless it appears and warns that to default on our obligation to pursue research into the underlying ideological structures of institutions, would be to disguise the cultural construction of institutions and "of the roles and expression that its system allowed as natural, and thus inevitable, unalterable and necessary" (p.82).

The concept of Spressatura as I am using it here in relation to women and academia, symbolizes the degree to which institutional processes, practices and

products, when gone unexamined, give the appearance of being something other than they are; fair, true, objective. And that as outsiders in academia, women are particularly aware of how these impressions contrast with their experiences within these institutions. The concept also symbolizes the degree to which women's knowledge and questioning of the embedded ideological constructs of academia, as well as its practical and structural details, disturbs and disrupts the inherent academic practices which women have been taught to accept.

When relating the concept to the female artist in academia, we begin to understand the conflicts and confusions which give rise to questions concerning how these women too must give the appearance of being something other than they are. Their survival is oftentimes dependent on the extent to which their knowledge represents both mastery and artlessness.

Still Life

Journal Entry

I *wrote something about Butterwords... the language my mother used when she spoke to my father about things she knew he wouldn't understand if said in her own words. They always melted my father's resistance as surely as butter in a hot pan... My mother could do that- make important things seem insignificant and trivial things important.*

I was always amazed at how she could make things from nothing. How she had taught herself to sew; she made me flowered granny dresses and had made my brother his first suit. How she had learned to read English; I remember her reading Shakespeare late into the night. How she made things perfect for visitors; we had plastic covered sofas. She kept them for thirty years; her own reproduction of the perfect still life.

During my graduate years I was engaged in the conflict and struggle of writing from places and perspectives that I had encountered in the world outside academia. I looked for the ways that women made the connections between the everyday and theory. I wanted to learn how they had accommodated the difference between how they actually lived their lives and how those lives were expressed in academia. I searched for texts, a way of words, pathways out of how things actually were to how they could be.

For a long time my writing in graduate school centred on issues that "mattered" to professors within my field or my department. I tried desperately to make their concerns my own by keeping my own history and experience out of my writing. It took me awhile before I realized that as a writer, feminist and immigrant the material of my work had as much to do with transformation as with preservation.

My knowledge emerged from my living in the world as female, as artist, and as an immigrant. As an academic, I had to write from my position as an outsider, from the margins, to de-compose what I perceived as the relations of power in the academic text. Like poet Jessamyn West, I too believed that " the experience of women is waiting to be expressed in all its various individual ways, and that when I write, I am filling in part of the picture (Hedges, 1980 ,p.61). I believed Alice Walker when she proclaimed that "each writer writes the missing pieces of the other's story". And like Canadian –born artist, Miriam Shapiro I also wanted my work to connect to the

hidden work of other women. Following her work with Judy Chicago, Shapiro explains that (Hedges,1980,p.71)

> I wanted to explore and express a part of my life which I had always dismissed- my homemaking, my nesting. I wanted to validate the traditional activities of women, to connect myself to the unknown woman artists who made quilts, who had done the invisible 'woman's work' of civilisation (p.71).
>
> ...The collagists who came before me were men, who...often roamed the streets at night scavenging, collecting material, their junk, from urban spaces. My world, my mother's and grandmother's world, was a different one. The fabrics I used would be beautiful if sewed into clothes or draped against windows, made into pillows, or slipped over chairs. My 'junk,' my fabrics, allude to a particular universe, which I wished to make real, to represent (p.72).

I was relieved to find out that I had not pitched my tent on the edge of River Madness; that the name plate hung on my writing hut's door did name who I was : Do not enter, Artist at Work. Beyond the works of women artists, their words were an affirmation of a deep seated need to integrate our life history into our life work.

Walker (1983) writes of black female artists who she imagines were seen as "crazy saints...crazy, loony, pitiful women...our mothers and grandmothers" who saw "visions no one could understand...driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them from which there was no release" (p.232-33).

Those who did find release, Walker writes, did so in "wild and unlikely places": cooking, gardening, sewing, church singing, the blues. So when we look for their "texts", Walker writes, we must learn to look "close and low". Walker describes a quilt made by an "anonymous black woman in Alabama, a hundred years ago":

> Though it follows no known pattern of quilt-making, and though it is made of bits and pieces of worthless rags, it is obviously the work of a person of powerful imagination and deep spiritual feeling... if we could locate this anonymous black woman from Alabama, she would turn out to be one of our grandmothers-an artist who left her mark in the only materials she could afford and in the only medium her position in society allowed her to use (p.239).

Palestinian-American writer, Lisa Suhair Majaj (in Wiley & Barnes, 1996) questions what kind of self-effacing allegiance academic women are pledged to when they are prevented from formulating their own perspectives. She asks,

> who are we if we cannot speak about what we have undergone, learned, become? We are the stories we tell about ourselves; our words map the spaces of home. Our experiences etch themselves into our faces, the lines of grief and joy becoming sharper with age; our lives are timbred with a resonance underscored by the surprisingly fragile bass note of sorrow. To remain silent is to deny the embodied selves which bear us, rooted stalks, into the world; to become complicit in our own homelessness. It is to deny as well, narratives which inhabit us... (p.46)

And while the encounter with texts of women artists has been like accidentally falling over a treasure chest, it has also been like prying the chest open only to find it empty –pillaged by others who have been there before you. How difficult is it having this novel idea and then finding (two years into your research), that it's the same idea another brilliant woman already had ? How discouraging is it when you think what you've written is so original and then you find it (two hundred note pages later) popping up at you, almost word for word, in the text of another female author? How frustrating is it when what you thought, spoke, wrote was unique and then find out its been fought, painted, kicked, broken and done twice before? This , I suppose is the

result of the lack of knowledge of women's history, knowing and traditions. This is the important work of feminist scholars who live in the "in-between" worlds. And though we may be ordinary woman, there are no short cuts through our lives.

Housekeeping : An ordinary life

An ordinary life

"Who do you think you are"? the teacher asked. My silence sifted through the air like white powder and settled to the ground, softly- yet was grounded nonetheless. Again, in a more prodding and forceful tone the teacher repeated, "Who do you think you are"? The giggles and muffled laughs of the other students encouraged the teacher to continue. I remained silent. She spanked me. They laughed. I sat down.

Years later, Danny, the scrawny boy who was ridiculed by our classmates for his poor hygiene and his threadbare clothes, asked me why I hadn't responded, hadn't even moved. "Anchorage", I explained, "Anchorage".

I was brought up in a part of the city that was sectioned off by cattle fence steel poles and railings. I was never quite sure whether this was meant to keep others from entering or whether it served to keep us from leaving. My mother said that the night beyond was "not good for girls with families; only no-family girls walked outside". The sentence was always tailed with a murmuring of Greek words that implored the Gods to protect us and was accompanied by a hand gesture meant for damning outsiders. During the winter months, she would double-damn the weather and the neighbourhood. As a child, I could never understand what it was that she so despised and that I so loved about the place and the people that it grew. This was my place. I had settled into it as it had settled in me. "In time", my mother would say as she hurried to work, "God will give you a mind to understand".

My mother worked in the housekeeping department of a large city hospital. She would often come home in the night light, her coat laden with bedsheets, pillowcases and empty bedpans that would serve as waterholders for her plants. Our linen closet never contained coloured sheets or blankets. For years, I associated coloured linens with the wealthy.

My mother was not alone in compensating her weekly salary with food and dry goods from the hospital. It had become common practice among the Greek, Italian and Portuguese to "order" goods from different hospital departments and use them for barter. So it was that my friend Gregory's father repaired my father's taxi cab and that our small telephone table was replaced with a handier steel shelf.

My mother often told, with great amazement, the story of how Mr. Pasquale had made a lawnmower disappear from the hospital tool shed by dismantling it piece by piece. Maria, Mr. Pasquale's daughter, would often come to school with cuts and dark, blue spots on her legs and arms that apparently came from lifting such heavy objects up and down the stairs. Maria and I were good friends until our sophomore year in high school when she disappeared as mysteriously as the lawnmower had. My mother's explanation was that "the burden of a dishonoured family cannot be erased by the footsteps of their women- as their weight bears witness by the marks they leave on the ground ".

The three-story red brick building we lived in stood in the belly of a u-shaped section of the housing project. Reading the names on the mail boxes was like riding the trail of Canadian immigration; Ho, Johnson, Suzuki, Panagiotiopoulos, Manna, Perutsky, Olsheski, Faucher. Afternoons in that place always smelled like tomato soup.

By far, the most exotic set of adults were the Perutskys. Porky Perutsky, as we called the younger boy, was Hungarian. A tall, hefty boy with thick , wavy hair. His father, he told us, was an artist. And indeed he did have that air about him – the slim body, ruffled hair and tousled shirt. Mr. Perutsky would always blow his smoke upwards into air, catching it in the squint of his eyes.

Not as much was said in the neighbourhood of him as was of his wife. Mrs. Perutsky was the object of every remark among the men and the subject of every conversation among the women. Talk on the merry-go-round among us kids was that she was a porn-film star. Porky wasn't sure. It was possible. After all , neither parent worked. Once in a while Mr. Perutsky could be seen rushing to his old car with a painting under his arm.

Porky's mother was a woman of average height though her hair was piled in such a way that it was difficult to say whether this might have been an illusion or not. Her lipstick overstepped the shape of her lips . And when her mouth was closed ,the shut lips formed a set of upside down and right side up Ws. She was slim and waddled atop her tall, spiky heels. But the worst part, according to Mrs. Ben-Apur, was the way she dressed; the tiny shorts and matching bustier. Rachel Ben-Apur was my best friend for a while. Kids weren't allowed into her apartment until they first kissed a religious object on the door frame . We never told our parents. The friendship ended when she called me a Christ-lover and I called her a Jew. Snap-just like that. We never spoke again.

Years later, I met her older brother at the Amsterdam airport. I was waiting for my flight to Greece, he to Israel. Rachel married Peter. My God, she was Rachel Perutsky. When I told the story to my mother, her reaction was to put her hand to her heart and ask why hadn't Rachel just ripped out her mother's heart and stomp on it. That, according to my mother, would have been less painful.

My mother experienced the world in terms of hurt and hardship. As children we were to fear the old men that roamed the streets looking for stray children. As young girls we were to fear the men that walked the streets and as women we were to fear all men-particularly the one we would marry. She would call out the play-by-play of her life's game: "I came from a good family. I met your father, the devil on my back. I work like a donkey at the hospital. I work when I get home. Everyday it's the same thing".

I felt sorry for my mother. I knew she was attractive because all the kids told me so. It seems strange to me now that I saw her as being old, when I was young. She was probably in her late 20's when I was seven or eight. I had seen a school photograph of her. I distinctively remember her smiling back at me from the photograph. That shy, grinnish look. The one with the drooping eyelids. Good Lord, my mother did have a way of making herself endearing. In that photograph, her hair was braided and laid softly on her shoulders like sheaves of freshly cut wheat. It was that honey, bran colour of gold that reflects a different hue of sunlight in each strand. I remember how happy and worry-free she looked and how happy I was to know that she had once been that way.

Brushes, pens, and blue guitars

Things as they are – are changed upon the blue guitar

Wallace Stevens

I suppose that much of my writing and knowing comes from what Sternberger (1991) has called the "stewpot of discontent". And keeping the lid on the conditions that have shaped this knowledge has meant a constant struggle to re-fine and re-define ways of disguising this knowledge in academia. It has meant struggling with the contradictory nature of being an academic and artist, of dismissing what has been

central to my creative life. Patricia Hampl writes that "being oneself is always an acquired taste". It means bowing to the realization of writing about the things you care about. "It isn't a matter of whether you can go home again. You just do. Language, that most ghostly kind of travel , hands out the tickets" (Sternberger, 1991,p.25). How did I come to believe that what I knew was also what mattered. I listened and came to know that what mattered was the resolution of pain. I was set on healing it through writing.

According to Eisner (1991),

> The resources we use to construe the world not only guide our attention to it, but when used to represent it, both constrain and make possible what we are able to convey. Knowledge is thus mediated in two ways. First, it is mediated by what we bring to the world as we achieve experience. Second , it is mediated by what we use to convey our experience once it is secured (p.60).

In other words, what Eisner proposes here is that the effect our experiences has on knowledge is determined by the instruments we use to convey that knowledge. And, conversely it is that experience which guides the choice of instruments. As an artist, therefore, an important aspect of my knowing and being in the world is transformed through the choice of tools we use to express that particular perspective. And as an academic, the way I convey that knowledge as feminist researcher is to make visible the tensions and conditions which enforced these choices.

In his discussion of the justification of the "language of the arts" as a means which serves epistemological interests, Eisner (1991) directs us to Langer and writes:

> What we look for, as well as what we see and say is influenced by the tools we know how to use and believe to be appropriate. The language of propositions, that language fundamental to the empirical sciences, Langer tells us, cannot take the impress of the life of feeling. For feeling to be conveyed, the 'language' of the arts must be used, because it is through the form a symbol displays that feeling is given virtual life. The point, therefore, of exploiting language fully is to do justice to what has been seen; it is to help readers know (p.3).

The particular dilemma of the artist in academia is that she must translate the language of feeling and perception into a language that denies those emotions and perceptions. Legitimacy in academia often means internalizing the accepted forms of academic rhetoric to the point of making them seem effortless and natural.

The conflict for the female artist –if in her work she disregards the particular tension inherent in the process of writing within academia, is that she perpetuates patriarchal modes of research that revere the appearance of objectivity. If in her work she masks her artistry, she hides the particular perspective that has informed her knowledge, disregarding the social and psychological pressures that function alongside the actual writing process and which have a direct effect on her creativity. And when the artist's creativity is effected, so too is the perception of herself and her knowing.

Engaged in this web of contradictions, author Marlene Schiwy's (1996) journal entry, written during the time of her dissertation, expresses the academic as artist's struggle. She writes, "what am I afraid of, success or failure? What they can't take away is my integrity-but if I say what I mean-they don't like it" (p.276). Indeed, for

the artist in academia the urge to survive and the urge to create are fiercely interconnected. And the depletion of one, at the expense of the other means that they are both weakened.

Art historian Barbara Rose (Lenz & Meyerhoff, 1985,p.163) suggests that the "interpenetration" of life and work is evident in the productions of women and that rather than adaptation, "women make art to escape, overwhelm or transform daily realities". Furthermore, Lenz and Meyerhoff (1985) claim that the daily lives of women are transformed into an aesthetic experience through their artistic perspectives. They suggest that,

> Women's total immersion in the process of creating and sustaining life had predisposed her toward the immanent rather than the transcendent. As an artist, she is usually in the midst of life when she puts paint to canvas or words to paper (few women artists have the luxury of complete isolation while they work), and her art reflects the inseperability of her life and work (p.163).

Judy Chicago's Dinner Party exhibit, for example, reflected this impulse toward the integration of the arts and transformation with everyday life. Chicago (1979) explained that her goal was "to establish respect for women and women's art; to forge a new kind of art expressing women's experience". She firmly believed that "if art speaks clearly about something relevant to people's lives, it can change the way they perceive reality" (p.12).

Crossing

As artisans of change, therefore, women need to negotiate their space in academia, one which will reflect the particular stance of the academic in relation to her art, her knowledge and her experience, her life and her work. To adopt the stance of the artist means to challenge the taken-for-granted values and culture that one shares with others. Julie Cameron (1992) claims that "to be an artist is to recognize the particular. To appreciate the particular. To allow a sense of play in your relationship to accepted standards. To ask the question why" (p.181) ? "To be an artist", writes Grumet (1988),

> is to perpetually negotiate the boundary that separates the aesthetic from mundane experience. The degree to which the crossing is difficult or the voyager suspect varies with the values of a culture, its conception of work, community, nature, gender and family (p.86).

And the precariousness of the crossing, from private to public, home to academy, and the value accorded to women's work is oftentimes revealed in both their public and private, lives and work. Indeed, female academics have pushed the parameters of acceptability in institutions by exposing and justifying the importance of private or personal knowledge (private only to the extent that it has been unknown to men).

In her study of women's creativity and innovations, Fee (1990) explains that "a deep-seated sexist ideology that says that only what men do matters, has profound and negative effects on women. It also structures society's reaction to women's creativity and innovation, making their achievements insignificant or invisible".

Perhaps the whole idea of "inventing" is so commonplace for women in their daily routines that they haven't made it bigger than it is. They "invent" everyday-cooking, sewing, cleaning, caring. It is "home" work, outside the public realm. What men call "inventing" women call "coping". I have turned mince meat into Boeuf Wellington, old bed spreads into Halloween bunny costumes, and cigarettes into bandaids. As Fee (1990) explains, "domestic creativity is discounted as is women's creativity in the more public worlds of science and arts" (p.309). One cannot help but wonder how much female creativity is, and has been, channelled into... creative living, ranging all the way from interior decoration (sometimes called nest-making) to how to live for a month .

Judy Chicago (1982) has shown how the legitimacy of female artist's particular perspective was brought into question in the art world. Chicago suggested that because the female artist's style and attitude toward her work was different from that of a male, it was logical that so too would be her representations. For women, there was "an interpenetration between life and work that made it hard to distinguish where one left off and the other began" (p.62). Chicago saw how the fragmentation of women's lives, the blurring of boundaries between their different roles, emerged as a lifestyle common to women. And that in order to represent this fragmentation in their work, women artists needed to find new forms of expression that perhaps challenged those of the male- dominated art world.

Lauter (1984) suggests that features of style which are said to define female writing amount to the same kind of challenge to the modernist idea of art as object. She cites Stanley and Wolfe who write:

> As women strain to break through the limits of English, certain patterns begin to emerge, recurrences of similar syntactic ways of ordering perception that is always moving and often contradictory. One observation may negate the other. The natural imagery of growth, proliferation, and evolution replaces nature as object and product. Flux, not statis, perceptive categories give way to active, process verbs and concrete nouns, the language of touch; verbs of specific action replace the abstract more general verbs. On the discourse level, we find a discursive, conjunctive style instead of the complex, subordinating, linear style of classification and distinction. It is not that there is no classification taking place, but rather that the syntactic structure must accommodate itself to the shifting perspectives of the writer's observing mind (p.543).

Perhaps because women have been restricted to the private realm and disconnected from their past, from the mapping of their traditions and accomplishments, their disorientation in the public world make it more difficult for them to transcend institutional, social, cultural as well as aesthetic boundaries. As Grumet (1988) explains, "the present is hardly more transparent to the inquiring gaze than the past. We have all come to form within the very forms we wish to study. And so it is difficult to separate the well-taught consciousness from the consciousness that teaches" (p.86).

Indeed, what Grumet's and Cameron's words suggest is that the struggle common to both the female artist and academic, is the struggle to disentangle herself from her cultural and social situation in order to better see and study it – to see and to see again.

Recall. Reclaim. Reveal. Rebel.

May Sarton believed that "private dilemmas are, if deeply examined, universal, and so, if expressed, have a human value beyond the private" (Schiwy,1996, p. 89). Of course, when restricted to the private realm, women as "isolated" creators of knowledge, represent no threat to the status quo.

However, when this private knowledge becomes public it solidifies as a strong body of knowledge which runs counter to the malestream-mainstream way of knowing and being. It ignites a frothing of consciousness and awareness that empowers the knower to recall, reclaim, reveal and rebel.

Rollo May (1975) claims that artists have the capacity to communicate the significance and depth of human experience because they express what Jung called the collective unconscious. The artist, according to May, "are the dew line, to use McLuhan's phrase; they give us a distant early warning of what is happening in our culture" (p.17). Because of this, the artist is perceived as a threat to the status quo, to the old concepts each society and institution is devoted to protecting.

Donmoyer (1991) suggests that sociologists make a similar point. He turns to Nisbet who represents historical data to demonstrate "social scientists' reliance on more artistic forms of knowing":

> Over and over, it seems to me, we are made aware in the history of thought of the primacy of the artist. I mean this in a double sense. Not only is the artist likely to precede the scientist in recognition of the new or vital in history-with a Blake castigating the machine-driven factory long before anything but complacent acceptance had occurred to a social philosopher or scientist- but, in one and the same person, it is the art- element of consciousness that is likely to generate through intuition and other states best known to art, the elements we are prone to describe as science (p.94).

Rollo May (1975) also suggests that both creativity and consciousness are born our of rebellion against an omnipotent force and that out of this struggle the creative act is born. The conflict that confronts the female artist in academia is that she is constantly engaged in a battle between conformity and rebellion; in a struggle for both academic survival and creative power and license. For the artist, the creative act is an admission of authority, knowledge and evidence of her battle for consciousness. The troublesome paradox, in terms of her work as an academic is that rather than conforming to the androcentric practices and products of the academic culture, she seeks legitimization of her subversive activities from the very institutions she threatens.

Judy Chicago (1982) explains similar contradictions that the women in her Feminist Art Program at Cal Arts experienced: "Because male values and attitudes pervaded the whole institution, women became confused. When they acted on their own behalf, they violated the standards of the institution. If they conformed to the artmaking values of the institution, they denied themselves as women" (p.184).

In her work on women's writing, Schiwy (1996) observes that

> The journals of writers and artists provide insights into the creative woman's role in society, and the inner and outer circumstances that make art possible. More often than not, they reveal a fierce conflict between the demands made on the artist and those made on the woman, a conflict unparalleled in the lives of our male counterparts (p.67).

And choosing between the role of artist or academic leads to confusion, guilt and a heightened sense of incompetency and a weakened sense of agency. Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1968) asked herself "how can I do this thing? Serve my family and serve my work? I've got to reconcile the woman and artist or the conflict between them will blow me assunder, scatter my pieces to the ends of the pacific"(p.88). Kate Danson (1992) couldn't complete her doctoral dissertation and was racked with guilt for challenging the patriarchal system she had long paid tribute to. Schiwy battled the imposter syndrome in her academic life. And Peggy Ornestein (1994), when expressing a similar feeling to a professor was told "you feel like an imposter ? Don't worry about it. All smart women feel this way". And as Martin (2000) writes,

> Every educated woman must monitor her speech and behaviour lest she do the unacceptable. None of us can ever be sure that our speech or behaviour patterns will not some day betray us. And women who make the academy their home have an added burden. We are in the unenviable position of transmitting to future generations the very educational ideology that turns women into living contradictions-into people who are and are not women; or are and are not men. Like any other guild, the academy charges its members an annual fee. One portion of the admission price that men and women alike must pay is complicity in this process (p.51).

Four

The Wanderers

We need a coat with two pockets.
In one pocket there is dust, and in the other there is gold.
We need a coat with two pockets to remind us who we are.

A poem is a way of life

Eloise Klein Healey

Detour/ Retour

I was in the tenth grade when my father had the idea that it was time for the family to make the move back to Greece. The rest of us hadn't been privy to his plans and we were probably on the train ride back to Montreal from New York while my father was auctioning off our lives. My mother , sister, brother and I were returning from a visit to our American relatives in Long Island. And though I don't remember details of the week spent at my aunt's , I do remember feeling that the visit confirmed the unspoken suspicion that as Canadians, we were perceived as having picked the short straw of the immigration lottery draw . I was thinking about that as I sat in the railroad car hot, sweaty and fat with layer upon layer of dress, blouse and hosiery. I was hoping this humiliation was worth the money my mother was purportedly saving by buying clothes in the U.S. and forcing us to wear them back to Montreal, thereby avoiding customs.

By the time we arrived home everything , from the couch to the cat, the car to the curtains had been sold. I got undressed, packed my bag and left for my parent's old life a few days later. I'm not sure of the financial details, but imagine that it must have been cheaper to fly to Germany and then drive from there through Austria and Yugoslavia to Greece. In Munich, my father had bought an old car that broke down twice in the azure night of the Austrian Alps. The second time it had left us stranded in a curve of the sinuous climb and we had to trek our way up to the safety of a small cave where we spent the night. Inside the small grotto were two long wooden benches and a gilded blue and china white statue of the Virgin Mary.

Throughout the journey my mother had religiously worn a scarf over her head . Every twist in the road, every squabble from the back seat and every dip into her pocket book warranted an extra pull on the already tightly knotted scarf. But there in the quiet of the cave, my mother removed her deep red and burgundy flowered scarf. At that moment, I realized that putting on her scarf was how she kept her head on straight.

Though our brief stay in Greece was a moral, financial and psychological defeat for my parents, I loved the adventure of that journey and the vibrancy of the colours and experiences that flip on and off in my mind when I remember it. I can still see myself in the back seat of the car waving at the gypsy children as they run down the road after us . I feel myself transported by the spectacle of the convoy of horses and carriages, as we pass the gypsies on a dirt road in the Yugoslavian countryside. I

hear the children, screaming, running, laughing and pointing to the cookies and candies they see through the car's rear window. A little girl runs alongside the car, her dark braids swinging and coloured skirts brushing and won't let go of the car handle until we give her the cookies and gum.

The girl reminds me of Pickles and Peaches, two sisters who are friends from the housing project. Their families are Romanian gypsies on their way to New York from Toronto. They only stay a short while and regardless of what my mother says about their citizenship or moral status, I know them as generous and caring people.

Estrangement

My father and mother, in their own different ways , gifted me with what Carolyn Forché (1991,p.187) calls "a sense of estrangement". My parents teeter-tottered between preparing us to live in the new country and planning for our return to a life in the old country. The flip between familiarity and estrangement was as quick as a coin toss. Heads, I am . Tails, I'm not. This sense of making the familiar strange and the strange familiar served me well as a child managing new places, languages and circumstances. I believe it is also what birthed the writer in me. I hovered on the brink of the future, displaced by a past, and never quite of the present moment. I understood that homesickness was in the egg and lemon soup; it was in the sweet smell of incense and in the vanilla flame of a floating candle; it was in a letter from

home. I dreaded the meals where my mother would read my father these letters; the fissures in her voice, the rustle of the words, the spoonfuls of sadness.

My mother is the one who gave us children some sense of anchorage and stability, putting up the same curtains and mounting the recognizable picture frames in every apartment we lived in. My father chased the wild forces of change and possibility. He moved crazily with the shifts of other family members' circumstances; from his cousin's restaurant in the Maritimes , north west to a construction site in Churchill Falls, east to my uncle's grocery store in Toronto, and farther east to Montreal and another cousin's bread run. And though they collided like bumper cars, my father's instability and sensitivity was balanced by my mother's sense and sensibility . My parents were like Anne Truitt's (1982) "dark riders " who,

> gallop into the night, eagerly leaning on their horse's neck, peering into the blinding rain. And they have to do it over and over again. When they find they have ridden and ridden-maybe for years, full tilt- in what is for them a mistaken direction, they must unearth within themselves some readiness to turn direction and to gallop off again. They may spend a little time scraping off the mud, resting the horse, having a hot bath, laughing and sitting in candlelight with friends. But in the back of their minds they never forget that the dark, driving run is theirs to make again. They need their balances in order to support their risks (p.26).

Truitt (1982) writes that the specialness of artists is in the degree to which they can balance intuition against sensory information and sensitivity to one's self against pragmatic knowledge of the world. But suggests that this balance is really a backup for the artist's real endeavours; "their essential effort is to catapult themselves

wholly, without holding back one bit, into a course of action without having any idea of where they will end up" (p.26).

Lessons in living

What I learned from my parents was a whole methodology of living. My mother's quest for security was counterbalanced by my father's zest for adventure and risk. He saw life as benevolent and plentiful, its landscape a natural canvas waiting to be painted. For my mother, life was a craft and living a pattern, a technique that could be learned and handed down. Their lives were interwoven. Weaver, Glen Corbet Povey explains that

> ...weavers aren't like painters. You have a painting up there and you can change it just a little, step back and make a few more changes. Weavers are almost blind. You weave and you weave and you weave. You can't see the whole piece. You might be able to see six inches of it that you've woven, but your mind has to place the whole weaving out there for you (1980, p.45).

My mother had her children's lives sketched out, while my father lived day to day. My mother worried about the outcome of our lives while my father wondered what we could get out of life. My mother attended to our needs for warmth, comfort and food ; made beautiful blankets, shawls and place mats. My father, though perhaps unknowingly, attended to our spirit and in quick brush strokes made unpredictable changes to our lives. He forced us to become fiercely independent. The differences in my parent's visions fostered a way of perceiving life in terms of shades and contrasts. Nothing could be taken at face value, nothing was ever what it initially seemed to be. The relationship of depth to surface, horizontal to vertical , distance to proximity,

concave to convex always needed to be tested. I learned that to live fully, one dimension was needed to sustain the other.

Artisans

As artisans of life I suppose I also inherited the compulsive nature of my parent's restlessness and the obsession to keep pushing myself. In fact I left the security and stability of my teaching job at a time when I could least afford it. My husband had just been downsized (financially, psychologically), and my children were just beginning college and university. But the longing to write, to experiment, to create, to change was so strong, it overcame me. It was all encompassing. Circumstances suggested that I wait but intuition dictated that I wait no longer. I had been stockpiling experiences, preparing for my own " dark run".

Truitt (1982) reasons that unavoidably, "the central fact of the dark run is its high emotion ... even when the *look* of what you are trying to make is clear in your mind's eye" (p.27). I could feel the excitement, sense it in a heightened awareness of colour, taste and smell. I was on a razor's edge of emotion, so sharp that the life compressed between the lemon dawns and the apricot dusks was almost unbearable. The tingle became unnerving. The days made my spine twitch. At night, my stomach was taut with want. Though a series of events put me on the path of the run , two experiences in particular catapulted me to risking it.

October

I was teaching English as a Second Language in a French elementary school in a small town north of Montreal. On the first day of school the principal, questioning my acceptance of this posting , asked whether I had been informed that the school was situated in the "gray zone". I said that I hadn't and she proceeded to explain that "gray zone" was the "unofficial" term used for areas where the mix of children from various economic, social and cultural backgrounds hadn't been "officially" categorized by the schoolboard . In fact, she explained, many parents from the more affluent district hadn't waited for the schoolboard's decision on the school's mandate and had sent their children to "better" schools. Therefore most students here, the principal warned, were not expected to measure up to the standards of other schools. I felt queasy. I realized that as a teacher, I found myself back to where I had begun as a student.

Many events led up to my leaving that teaching job. Some stick out like knives in a butcher's block. Perhaps it was the little girl whose mother dragged her angrily by the coat sleeve up to the third grade teacher in the school yard. "Here", the mother said, as she flung the girl towards the teacher. "You and your stupid Halloween costumes". The little girl stood there in the mushroom coloured shade of the October day. She had a plastic see-through bag on her head. Ash trays had been emptied into the bag and it bulged with grey and brown cigarette butts and gold and blue beer caps. A shoe lace pierced and tied on each side secured the bag atop the child's tiny head. My stomach churned. I was sick with grief. My knees were like marshmallows. Later in the teacher's room, there was no talk of empathy, no mention of a mother's anger

and anguish, no introspection, reflection or prevention. I learned how some people, blinded by privilege, could misunderstand poverty, addiction, abandon.

May

Perhaps the incident that most likely pushed me to leave happened in May of that year. As a teacher, May had always been a special month for me because it signaled a kind of accomplishment for both my students and myself. By that time of year, we had built a rapport with each other . I had seen them grow, learn and change as they were preparing to move on. I remember that this May day was especially warm and that we could hear the traffic of birds and cars through the open classroom windows. The sixth grade class was engaged in individual reading while I packed my papers and pens before the lunch bell rang. A rustle in the back of the class made me look up just as one of the livelier boys was pulling a paper from another boy's hand. He ran towards me laughing and slammed the paper onto my desk. By this time other students were turning around, talking and laughing as desk tops were opened and closed and chairs pulled in and out.

Philip was a timid boy who did quite well in school. We had spoken often of his desire to become an illustrator or engineer. He hadn't decided. I just caught a glimpse of his face in the corner of my eye in that split second before I picked up the paper from my desk . I can still remember the expression of horror on his face . The drawing was of a sexual nature. By this time Philip was being taunted by his classmates and I decided not to lend fuel to the fire by making a case out of this in class. The bell rang and the students streamed out. Philip disappeared. I made a mental

note to discuss the issue in private with him, put the drawing in my desk, locked the drawer and went off to lunch.

Later that afternoon, I was asked to the principal's office. Sitting in the office across from principal's desk were Philip's parents and slouched in the corner was Philip. Tears of betrayal streamed down his cheeks. He couldn't have been more naked than he was there sitting in a pool of humiliation. I never thought to mask my chagrin and surprise. The principal explained that she had heard of the drawing from other students. She had retrieved it from my desk during the lunch hour and had immediately called Philip's parents. We were convening to decide on the nature of his reprimand.

I was suddenly stung by the realization of the kind of teacher I was becoming. The fear of this clung to me like wet cloth to skin. I could not be a party to this. I handed in my resignation the following day.

Life Writing

Luckily the documentation of my experiences over the years has served me as well as might have a handbook of lessons on how to live. My writing , the journals, short stories, poems , plays, notes and letters have marked my progression through life and experience. These are deeply ingrained in my centre . They are what Olsen (1978) has called "accumulations" (p.6). As Truitt (1982, p.27) explains it, what a retrospective of our work or life reveals is the "character of (the) effort, as lucid as the annular rings of a tree's growth" . These expose year after year of labor. And as I

raked through the leaves of my journals I could see a pattern of discontent slowly emerging .

There had been a time when I could feel my body stretch; arms extended , writing on blackboards, picking up babies, passing the peas and painting worlds on paper. I realized that I had become only half the person I could be. My spirit was drying, the spine of my work was becoming brittle and splintered . I had left the writer behind somewhere. There, between the desks, beyond the night table.

Threshold People

Rites of passage

Victor W. Turner (1987) uses words like "liminality" and "communitas" to describe cultural experiences associated with "so-called primitive societies", with initiation and other "rites de passages"

> ... liminal personae (threshold people) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these people elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention and ceremonial (p.x).

Of the concept of "communitas" he writes, "in essence it bespeaks a social relationship of equals, united by a deep bond of feeling as is common among ritual participants in a de-differentiated sense of wholeness , oneness, continuity".

Certainly the integration of my parent's approach to life was a conditioning factor of my own artistic stance. I had lived among their daydreams and had learned to

consider the sacredness of experience as a prerequisite to imagining any possibilities. As "witness" to their survival, the every day constraints of language and culture defied any claim to easy categorization of experience.

Shapechanger

Anzaldua (1987,p.66) explains that in the Indian tradition, her people did not split "the artistic from the functional, the sacred from the secular, art from everyday life". The writer, therefore was seen as having great powers, for she was a "shape-changer" . Indeed, story carried the power of transformation of both the teller and the listener. Anzaldua writes that

> Western cultures behave differently toward work of art than do tribal cultures. The 'sacrifices' Western cultures make are in housing their art works in the best structures designed by the best architects; and in servicing them with insurance, guards to protect them, and the educated and upper classes to 'view them'. Tribal cultures keep art works in honoured and sacred places in the home and elsewhere. They attend them by making sacrifices of blood (goat or chicken), libations of wine. They bathe, feed, and clothe them. The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons. The 'witness' is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual, and not a member of the privileged classes (p.68).

Truitt (1982) explains the metaphorical and actual interweaving and communion of life and art in terms of constraints and possibilities, of then and now. She explains it this way:

> My past meshed into my present. It had to be taken in, considered, woven. I found, to my surprise, that the experience of my twenties, thirties, and forties had room in my fifties. The warp and woof of my self was looser and stronger that I had known. Thinking I would not survive, I found myself enriched my myself (p.123).

Life and art, identity and selfhood, are interwoven, expressions of our inner and outer lives reflected in outer and inner patterns of possibilities. Technique separated from life is craft. Art is the "quality" of life that is brought to our work, any work.

Estés (1992) too proclaims creativity as a shapechanger. "It is" she explains, "like a dazzling spirit who appears to us all, yet is hard to describe for no one agrees on what they saw in that brilliant flash" (p.298). It is the

> wielding of pigments and canvas... the flower borders on a garden path and building a university... ironing a collar well and cooking up a revolution.... Catching the hot body of a new born, raising a child to adulthood, helping raise a nation from its knees (p.298).

Povey (1980) explains that ,

> Art happens when a person having learned a craft, reaches inside herself and finds her passions, her interest, what most fascinates her about life and then expresses it. In my weaving I use double weave tapestry technique to talk about that wild quiet that exists before civilisation, what the world feels like from the side of a mountain, the colour of twilight between my children and me. In being most personal, most myself in the expression of my craft, the warp and weft of my life and work are joined (p.44).

The weaving and strengthening of inner landscape makes for a re-weaving of outer landscape. And changing metaphors means changing lives.

Home again

Though I didn't understand it at the time, I imagine now how difficult the return to Montreal must have been for my parents. The experiment of repotting their Canadian children in the sun-burnt soil of their native Greece had failed. They returned to Montreal empty handed and empty hearted; "tzigans", gypsies... migrants still.

My initial excitement at the idea of returning home was short-lived. We moved uptown into an old two room apartment above a bowling alley and I soon began to miss the downtown housing project and community where we once lived. I missed the smell of kitchens and the screetch of roller skates on pavements. I missed being able to know who was home just by checking the front parking lot. I missed days like Fashion Fridays and people like Mrs. Faucher.

Mrs. Faucher had been our next door neighbour for as long as we had lived in the project. And for as long as I can remember, she bravely plopped down the fifty cent cost of a hair dye offered on Fashion Fridays at the Zago School of Coiffure . She had been different shades of blonde and red, black and brown. (I'm guessing that as a woman in her thirties, the purple grey and mousey white must have been some student's terrible mistakes). My mother had once been lured by the fifty cent Fashion Friday offer. She went from silk blonde to blue black hair and from a distance, looked like she was wearing a bowling ball.

I don't recall ever feeling alone in that place. I was self-sufficient and had learned to enjoy my own company. The asphalt covered playground was my world, I had laid territorial claim to it. I was careful not to walk on cracks (that would break my mother's back) and I could reach the peak of the slide by climbing the metal chains of the nearby swings. But I missed one year and kissed the asphalt with such force that I broke my front teeth and spent the summer in a thigh to toe leg cast. Itching and confined to a homemade wheelchair, I made sure all the wasted play time was made up for the following summer.

Journal Entry

Projects

There's a distinctive smell to hot, humid grey cement which so reminds me of my childhood. The pungent odour of crushed wet rock that is set off by the sun's rays... The ingredients of summer; the heat, the stone, the water. The summer of a child in the projects.

The smell- it reminds me of lying in the sun like a baked clam. The smell- it reminds me of running home in the rain from the small wading pool; of summer rain showers that relieve the weight of humid, lazy days. The rain that yells and hits and screams in a tantrum for a few minutes before tapering down and releasing its whimper to a distant rumble of great thunder. What poor kids miss (kids from the project) is the sound of rain pouring out of gutters, is the grassy moistness in the green air, the earthy heaviness of wet cedars, the shininess of green leaves. This is what I see now and missed then. Then...

I remember the heat vapourizing off the black, tarry ground and the cast iron lion spewing water from its mouth into the small wading pool.

I remember me.

Changing metaphors; Changing lives

I find it quite strange how things come together, how they chase you and finally catch up to you.; how the artist hunts you down. The creative impulse as I now understand it, can be a self-protective or self-destructive mechanism . In retrospect I see how I have tried running from a writer's life. Indeed, for a time I tried not being a writer, believing this was so much more easier than being one. The decision to do so had not been my own. Before moving to Greece, my father had thrown out all my writing . In doing so, he had also thrown out the writer. She was left on the curb along with the scrap books, diaries, poems, plays and letters .This had been a deliberate ploy to erase any attachment or memory I had to my past. I suppose my father believed that it would facilitate the separation of girl from country. And for a time it did.

I entered a long period of silence. Even after our return from Greece, I felt lost and disconnected. I was attending a high school in what my mother insisted was a "better" part of the city. I remember the surprise of entering a world where having a fur coat or owning a car was part of the every day lives of these students. I especially remember walking home past single dwelling houses and realizing for the first time that people actually owned and lived in these houses. I maintained my silence throughout that whole school year. Margaret Atwood (1991) explains that :

> you need a certain amount of nerve to be a writer, an almost physical nerve, the kind you need to walk a log across a river. The horse throws you and you get back on the horse. I learned to swim by being dropped into the water. You need to know you can sink, and survive it (p.155).

In Between

There's a time, she says, when the confidence of the writer reigns and then there's the time when the confidence is eroded. Between the two, there is the anguish. The bobbing up for air, the constricted breathing. The gasps. She explains her own silence, " For eight years, I simply didn't write. Then, suddenly, and with no missing links in between, there's a wad of manuscripts. One week I wasn't a writer, the next I was. Who did I think I was , to be able to get away this? What did I think I was doing"? (p.156).

I had lost my central nerve. I wanted a chance at being like every one else. I wanted to listen, to go to school, to wear the clothes, to be the person that I was expected to be. I wanted to look straight ahead, to see what others saw, to know what others knew , to speak how others spoke. I wanted to shake off the writer. But once again she resurfaced --unexpectedly. I was sitting in typing class. My fingers were moving left to right, my mind in and out. Until that day, the teacher and I had never spoken. In fact, I don't think I spoke much to anyone that year.

I suppose that as a typing teacher much of her time was spent observing the students, orchestrating their tapping on instruments and measuring the cadence of each paragraph or score. The clickety clack of typewriters would come to an abrupt stop

with the tingle of a bell. But I didn't really try to stay in time and followed a rhythm of my own, oftentimes overstepping the bell's ring with an added click and clack. One day the teacher walked up to my desk, looked down at me and said, "you know Anastasia, you should be an actress, artist or something". I remember feeling like a character in one of those movies where the magical qualities of the invisible man (never a woman) wear off and he slowly, blushingly, begins to re-appear . First the feet become visible, then the legs, the torso and finally the head. The jig was up.

Shortly thereafter I returned to the High School of Montreal . I returned home. This was where I could be myself, where it was okay for mothers to *be* maids and not *have* maids, where fathers, old and new, would appear and disappear like characters in a soap opera. This was also the place where my ambitions could be hidden under a blanket of silence. No one would challenge me to acknowledge that I even had any. Most of the girls in the high school year book of my graduating class stated their ambitions as being a housewife, secretary, stewardess, cosmetologist or model. I wrote nothing under mine.

I suppose women of my generation were raised with conflicting messages about how to realise ourselves as women. These years of silence and solitude were not totally unhappy ones. I believe they were necessary part of my path towards rehabilitation as an artist. I had internalised many of the oppressive aspects in society and needed a kind of detoxication. Admittedly, I fell off the bandwagon time and again.

Self-change

The risk involved in being a writer is tremendous, particularly in the academy. I tried so hard not to be a writer, not to let it show-to myself or to others. Avoiding confrontation with the artist meant avoiding confrontation with the self. As Truitt (1982) has explained it, objectification of one's work is a defensive strategy for avoiding confrontation with the artist and explains that she had used the "process of art not only to contain my intensities but also to exorcise those beyond my endurance, and must have done so with haste akin to panic, for its was a kind of panic I felt when once again inexorably confronted by own work" (p.4).

I fought to disregard the wild rush of images and the heady feeling of euphoria when the images seemingly translated themselves into words. How not to be a writer ? How to kick the addiction ? At times the heat of an idea would be so overwhelming that I would literally push myself away from the table, lest the warmth of it be so luring as to draw me into its flame. I resisted as best I could.

Paradox of Creativity

Linda Schierse Leonard (1989) suggests that perhaps the journey of the creative person and the addict are similar . She explains that while writing she had oftentimes experienced both the terror, anxiety and desperation that accompanies the creative process as well as the "moments of mystical fervor" (p.3). She explains that the connection between addiction and creativity is buried in the original etymological roots. Originally, the word addiction had a spiritual meaning-dedication to the gods-stemming etymologically from *addicere:* to say.

Thus, inherent in the meaning of addictions is the sense of dedication or bearing witness to creative energies. The challenge of creativity might therefore be in the difference between being "taken hostage" by the process or "choosing to be taken" by the creative call; to distinguish between the creative possibilities and the destructive ones. Creativity requires that we live in the tensions of these opposites, in the intensity of the creative fires.

Rollo May (1975) has explained the paradox of creativity and its relationship to the ancient concept of the Creative Daimon. He explains that the person who integrates the daimon, becomes more whole and is thereby in a state of being that Rollo May calls the eudaimonic. This is the way of the creative person; an ever-deepening and broadening process whereby one becomes more whole and centred in one's being (p.9).

Sondra Zeidenstein (1989) writes of the paradox makes her

> swing from the joy of writing to terrible negativity about my work with such violence that I sometimes think I can't continue, but I also can't stop. After lunch on almost every writing day I feel depressed; in the middle of the night I wake in a cold sweat: What do I think I'm doing, this is ridiculous, give it up.....but when I sit at the computer or with my notebook and feelings and images flow out my fingertips, or when I work at reshaping and refining as if I'm smoothing clay, there is no other life I would choose. I have never felt such despair or such joy (p.79).

Of the addictive nature and struggle of the writing process Atwood writes ;

"There's the story that wants to take you over and there's your resistance to it. There's your longing to get out of this, this servitude, to play hooky, to do anything else: wash the laundry, see a movie" (p.156) (get a degree).

Zeidenstein again explains that writing "is one of the few experiences that matches the intensity of life. Almost everything else seems partial, or not able to *contain* the feelings aroused, as Stanley Kunitz wrote, by living and dying at the same time" (p.81).

Indeed, there's the sentence that you save and then there's the one that saves you.

The Cure

Though I hadn't realized it at the time, I entered the Faculty of Education's graduate school with the belief that this was the safest place for an artist to hide. As a teacher, my experiences in the classroom had led me to believe that I should (it was safer, wiser) disregard the creative self, shoo-shoo her away with the back of the hand. The experience of graduate school confirmed my suspicion that the artist was unimportant and was impinging on the more professional and serious work of scholarly writing I was now doing.

I believed I could willingly give myself over to the academy , to be re-shaped, re-modelled, re-tooled by it. I wanted to be cured of the habit I had of constantly turning things into something else. I wanted re-adjustments and corrections to my teaching spine. I wanted to be midwife to others' aspirations, others dreams. I thought because I knew thirst –I would learn to dig wells, because I knew hunger – I would

learn to plant crops, because I had been emptied of self- I would learn to "fill" others. Such were the trappings of teaching, I believed.

Truitt (1982, p.222) explains that one of the fascinations of being an artist " is living in all the dimensions of life with an artist inside you". Indeed, I never could just turn the artist inside me on and off. She came to me at the worst of times, uninvited and unwelcomed. She intruded on my happiness. Made me see what I wish I couldn't . She had me paying constant attention.

Creativity is in the ideas we have, the things we do , but mostly in the people we are. Estés (1992) describes creativity as "having so much love for something- whether a person, a word, an image, an idea, the land or humanity-that all that can be done with the overflow is to create. It is not a matter of wanting to, not a singular act of will; one solely must"(p.299).

Journal entry

I am not a creative, immigrant woman only when I write, speak and do laundry. I am on the right path - the bridges I cross are not burnt behind me. The move from cultural, patriarchal, immigrant, background to feminist' consciousness is like walking backwards on hot coals. The move from poor to middle-class, from uneducated (they tell me) to educated (I'm told). The move out of the writer's closet. Academic women's desire to transform institutions but must first transform their lives. There's a personal cost to resistance and struggle. What is the artist good for ?

Selfhood

Author Erica Jong (in Hedges and Wendt, 1980) explains that there is a discrepancy between the way society sees women and the way women see themselves. And adds, "many women writers have yet to win the freedom to be honest". For women, the problems of becoming an artist, she explains,

> . are the problems of selfhood. The reason a woman has greater problems becoming an artist is because she has greater problems becoming a self . She can't believe in her existence past thirty. She can't believe her own voice... this is crucial in life but even more crucial in art. (p.116).

Jong reasons that by sticking to the stereotyped roles a woman is supposed to play in society, some women can get by by taking orders, not listening to oneself and by listening and pleasing others. As Tillie Olsen (Hedges and Wendt, 1980) has explained it, " women are traditionally trained to place others' needs first, to feel these needs as their own... their sphere , their satisfaction to be in making it possible for others to use their abilities" (p.83).

Who speaks/listens for the artist?

Catherine Itzin (1991) has written about her career as an author and theatre critic. And though Itzin values the work she did during this period, she claims that she chose other people's experiences and ideas to write about " because in a very real sense I had no thinking of my own-or rather I did not have access to my own thinking"(p.110). Itzin explains the unnerving realization that she had spent years thinking through other's ideas.

> without the prop of other people's thinking, I became acutely aware of the absence of my own. This confrontation with my empty head was terrifying and I found myself constantly shaking. I cried often and uncontrollably-from the grief of the loss of my thoughts. I lost my sense of time and space and place... And I knew I had thoughts, but they were always scattered. As if my brain had been smashed, my thoughts in fragments...(p.111).

An artist listens to the inner voice that nurtures the qualities of authenticity, integrity and honesty that are needed to be an artist. Women are taught to ignore these qualities in themselves but to encourage them in others. Women are taught to defend themselves from the inclination of being artists and living artfully. Our social conditioning doesn't teach women self-esteem and empowerment. Rather we're prodded into integrating forms that contradict intuitive modes of power and leadership-modes which are truer to our inner beings. Who speaks for the artist if she cannot speak for herself?

Naming

As author Ruth Noble (Saunders, 1987) describes it "our creativity is the means by which we name ourselves " (p.21). However this is conditional upon the ability to trust the "first awakenings" and to make it through the "painful fumble for words". Noble asks, "what risks dare she take, will the world welcome or reject her? What has already been taught her about what to expect out there, for herself and others"?

Hedges and Wendt (1980) explain that,

> becoming an artist therefore requires that one first become a 'self'. Even with educational opportunities, time and the energy to create, all artists need self-confidence; for the act of creation is also the bold act of "naming," of defining in new shapes and forms ideas and feelings common to many, but given new depth and meaning through art. Art does not ever repeat in exactly the same way anything that has been created before, nor can an artist who lacks the confidence to do something different and new hope for the originality art requires (p.3).

A person of integrity is concerned with substance rather than appearance; facades crumble. Yet even accomplished artists like Anne Truitt questioned the implications and fear of daring to name oneself an artist. She writes, "The open being: I am an artist. Even to write it makes me feel deeply uneasy. I am, I feel, not good enough to be an artist" (p.44). I worried constantly about how my writing, my knowing , my self would be interpreted in the patriarchal world of academia. Which voice was good enough for academia ?

I wanted to speak with the voice of authority through the voice of a woman, a writer, a mother, a teacher. In the storage space of my mind I had internalised the belief that not only was that voice distinctly male, but so too was "the ear,the eye and the pen" (Trinh T. Minah-ha,1989, p.48) which would hear, watch and judge me. Like Trinh T.Minh-ha's (p.48) image of the butterfly pinned to the board , I felt trapped in an academic name game where "classification entails death". Clipping the voice of the writer from my texts was like plucking my tongue. I was speechless. I needed the artist to draw, to give shape, to name the fullness of my experience in order for it to become seen, known, heard, understood; in order for it to appear whole before my very own as well as others' eyes.

Why do it?

The experience of my own work alternates panic with gratitude; knowledge with the refusal of self-deception. The only constant is a sense of driven , intense absorption. At times of peak production, the crest of creativity is twin forked; all encompassing and self-releasing. I enter a period of acute tension . As Cameron (1996) argues, "an artist in order to function fully, must be both vulnerable and resilient. Turned in on itself, creativity becomes both consolation and a source of isolation" (p.11).

Certainly writing allowed the private self to survive. And feminist theory enabled the initial stages of change that helped to close the gap, heal the wound between my public and private writing lives. I soon learned that separating who I was from how and what I wrote was demeaning. Metzger (1992) explains that the difficulties some women have in committing fully to writing has something to do with an inner "split". She explains her own process in this way:

> It had been difficult for me to commit myself to writing because there was a split inside me. The writer was in constant conflict with "others"-the teacher, the activist, therapist, healer mother and so on. The more I thought about this, the more I realized how divided I was in other areas of my life. There was within me a very gregarious woman and also a hermit. There was someone quite outspoken and someone extremely shy. An anarchist and a legalist, a free spirit and a drone, a sophisticate and an innocent, a crone and a child. I once put it in the following way: Always wanting to be Zorba, I've discovered I'm the Englishwoman (p.84).

In the past writing had meant foregoing important nuances in meanings, transforming the colours and depth of experiences. It meant shrinking the scope of my

knowing to a kernel from a cob. I constantly questioned which part of my identity was acceptable in academia, which part was "worth knowing" . My confidence as a writer was faint and fragile. I bent with each gust of wind, each word of critique or questioning. I mistrusted and stood in disbelief at my thesis supervisor's suggestion that entitlement was not something I would be rewarded with. Instead, it was something I would have to appropriate for myself. That, Meetzger (1992) explains "is the beginning; to know that we have a right to the creative and to follow it where it leads" (p.31). This is something we know when we are young but forget when we age. Certainly, the concept of this was contrary to my understanding of the world from my position of class, education and background. I thought that in academia you don't create your own life, you must create the one they give you.

Ironically, the very contradictions which those contractions fostered, only heightened my own awareness of my identity as a writer. And though I struggled to contain the writer, she did break free. It was inevitable. I realized that , as Caroline Forché (Sternburg,1991) explains it, "what keeps you from your work becomes your work".

Message to Ann

Thanks for the words of encouragement. I can't tell you just how important they are for me at this point. I've been thinking a lot about the idea of a self-reflexive text. I've returned to some of the "unofficial" texts I've written and can see that a lot of my difficulties come from my perception of who academic women are and how academic women speak. These perceptions, I believe, have so much to do with my experience as an (I)migrant, student, woman, but also with poverty and writing.
I also hadn't realized how very intimidated I was by McGill and its women... I am just now beginning to realize the importance I've accorded to getting women's approval.

Message to Ann

I thought I might drop you a note just to tell you what I'm up to. I have been sitting at the computer for days, weeks, actually a whole month. I have been writing, deleting, and writing then erasing. Something that you've often said to me keeps pricking at my mind- the idea of me sabotaging my work. ..It's true, I keep setting myself up for failure. It's like I'm testing myself.. and I am still doing it. I'll write for hours and hours, then read myself over and delete the whole thing.

That's one thing I truly dislike about computers; the ease with which you can make your work disappear.

Letter to Ann

Dear Ann,

I missed you at the Educational Studies dinner last week but I'm glad I that I went because I got to speak to a few people about my work. It's at such times, when I hear and feel myself talking about my writing, that I realize that what propels me is passion. I associate passion with a lovely sense of innocent craziness and dizzied freedom. It's a feeling that begins in the centre of your soul and spreads. Like an ink blot, it rapidly sucks your whole being into a pool of intensity.

I remember what passion is like when I think of how much I loved playing basketball, or how mesmerized I was at my first ballet, or how hearing my children's first cries would literally bring me to my knees. I've realized lately that I need to keep replenishing myself with passion because it is this feeling that validates, makes me know whether what I'm doing has any meaning.

Well, about my work..a strange thing happened. I had a dream one night about a class I took during the summer of '95 . A few weeks following the end of the course, I received my writing back in the mail along with a note and an article from the professor. The note frightened me. I immediately put the article and the note away and didn't get back to them until a few weeks ago. Briefly, the professor's note was quite complementary. He also included an excerpt from Eudora Welty's book and said that in some ways I reminded him of her.

Ann, I frantically looked through years of articles, papers, bags, and scraps in order to find the envelope with the note and article. As I read his comments, I remembered what scared me so much. They were full of praise, encouragement, hope, etc. I had pushed the idea of being a writer so far down to the bottom of my shoe soles, and had walked all over myself for so many years, that the idea that I could come out from under was too frightening.

At the time, I felt as though I had been caught, uncovered. I remember telling the professor that he had spoiled everything for me; that before this, I didn't have to acknowledge the Writing Self. Now, there was no going back. So, this I believe is my dilemma: How can a female writer survive in an academic paper? How can she negate that part of herself that allows her to be authentic, and to live with integrity and passion?

You see Ann, once you experience and acknowledge who you are, you are free... and it is almost impossible, I believe, to go back to bondage. This is how I feel about writing in academia. It's as though I'm tied and gagged. When I said that the professor spoiled the academic experience for me, I meant that once you experience the dizziness of freedom, you cannot wish for the safety and security of oppression. You long to live dangerously. Because there is, in a sense, security in oppression. I mean you have a clear idea of what you can and cannot do... the lines are darkly drawn.

Freedom, on the other hand, brings with it the heavy burden of responsibility, new borders, fresh starts, unknown alleys... risk.

What I'm realizing more and more, is that I thought academia was a safe hiding place for the writer. A place where you could write, impersonally, objectively. I was doing okay until that fateful summer when ... I met you, I met that professor, I met feminist theory... quite a lethal mix. From then on, the "academic writer" I tried so hard at being, died. I don't know why I dreamt of the note and article at this point in time, but I just cried endlessly while reading. It was as if I had found some sort of answer to a question I didn't know I was asking. Here's a little something from Eudora:

> *It is our inward journey that leads us through time- forward or back, seldom is a straight line, most often spiraling. Each of us is moving, changing, with respect to others. As we discover, we remember; remembering, we discover; and most intensely do we experience this when our separate journeys converge. Our living experience at those meeting points is one of the charged dramatic fields of fiction .*

But fiction and life, as do theories and life, converge. There can never be so clean and sharp a cut between the writer and her text, regardless of the genre. In my work, I am looking at the writer as the product of her text (what the text is doing to her) and the text as the product of the writer (what she is doing to the text). Does this make any sense?

Well, I'm going on and on again... I haven't done much writing, though I've done a lot of thinking, because my parents are here... for the next four weeks. I'll be trying to run away from home at least once a week (just like old times). I love to linger in libraries.

Hope all is well with you and your family. How did your semester go? What are your plans for the summer? Please don't forget, if you hear of any teaching, t.a. possibilities, please think of me. Sometimes, I think I'm crazy for doing this, other times I'm happy I'm crazy enough to do this.

Take care,
anastasia

A Stone in My shoe: A Hole in my Sail

Who gave us permission to perform the act of writing? Why does writing seem so unnatural for me?... the voice recurs in me: Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write? How dared I even consider it?

Gloria Anzaldua

Weave and Wave

I find myself wanting to move forward from the cutting and piecing of story and image. I am more attracted by the uniformity and flow of weaving metaphors, feel transported by the rhythm of weave and wave. The change in metaphors signals a change in life, of both inner and outer landscapes. From my search for wholeness , I now embark on a journey of transformation. My trusted quilt now becomes my sail. It is no longer used solely for comfort and decoration but is now more artful and beautiful, harnessing the wind of my creativity to move me ahead. I have apprenticed under Sarton, Woolf, Mansfield, and Laurence . Learned the art of knotting and of steadying the keel. I am now see-worthy; can pass under bridges, can glide on water, travel on channels. I not only have a destination but also a destiny.

One-two, buckle my shoe: of rhymes and reasons

I have a closet filled with shoes. When I choose shoes, fashion and style are unimportant. What is, is the way they make me feel, the colour and comfort of my temperament, atop and within them. Shoes choose me. They are a statement of who I am . They show me where I'm going. The pointier the better. I need them to remind me of what I can be, where I can go. Shoes remind me of starts and finishes, beginnings and endings, highs and lows, tops and bottoms.

I spent the summer that I broke my leg sitting in a converted baby carriage on the balcony of our apartment. There wasn't much to do or see as I was boxed in by the surrounding railing. I hadn't walked for four months. I was both excited and fearful at the prospect of having my cast sawed off. I wasn't sure whether I would remember how to walk. But I quickly forgot about all that when I saw the new pair of black patent, pirate-like shoes with the shiny gold buckle on the side that my mother had bought me. I remember trying them on and denying any pain in the short skinny leg that had just been relieved of its cast. I suppose my obsession with shoes must have started there.

It was like beginning again. I remember the sensation of feet to ground. Of exploration. I can't readily explain it except to say that it felt like somehow coming to the realization that I had been living inside my head. And though it's a sensation that I can call upon to this day, there was a time in my life when the feeling of groundedness had all but disappeared.

I believe it all comes down to a sense of trust in one's self and in the outside world. A sure-footedness. The trust to begin, to embark on something and know that you will be able to pursue it, bring it to completion, that there will be an ending. But trust is not naturally endowed, though as children we might start off believing that it is.

Pink slippers,white skates

I saw my first ballet from the "arrière-scene" of the Place Des Arts in Montreal. Well, it wasn't actually a full performance, but rather a dress rehearsal. My uncle was a janitor there and I had tagged along with him for the afternoon. Oh the beauty! "I want to be a ballerina", I announced to my mother. "No, you can't", was her reply. But I did.

I went over to the University Settlement, a community centre, registered for ballet and was lent little pink, leather slippers . For a whole week, until they insisted on the enrolment fee, I was a ballerina. It tore my heart to return those pink slippers.

There was an old-fashioned shoe maker's shop on the St. Lawrence hill . I would walk by it everyday on my way home from school and would stop and glance inside the shop window, checking for the pair of ice skates that hung next to the cobbler's bench. Large, boys skates to be sure, but when you have no skates, colour and size are of little importance. After much pleading and many sincere promises, my mother bought me the eighty cent skates. I remember my joy at watching the shoemaker bring the skates down off the hook. Of course, the coat of white house paint and the newspaper stuffing never quite concealed my embarrassment of wearing those skates. Nevertheless, I pirouetted and twirled and was a figure-skater that whole winter.

Dreams

I don't know when that trust in self disappeared. But it did. Perhaps, it was knowing that there could be no fruition, that the seed and hope of an idea would dry in the ground . For years, as soon as I was good at something , I quit. I could not accept success nor accomplishment for myself. And at times, even unconsciously sabotaged the process. How do you get back the dreams you once had for yourself ?

Estés (1992) explains that sometimes a woman's creative life is "taken over by the pressures of culture that say her ideas are useless, that no one will want them, that it is futile to continue" (p.305). She explains the disabling effects of the "polluting" of women's creativity as a "loss of vitality" and an inability to act or create "out there in the world". She explains that the sullying of a woman's creative life

> ... invades all five phases of creation: inspiration, concentration, organization, implementation, and sustenance. Women who have lost one or more of these report that they 'can't think' of anything new, useful, or empathic for themselves. They are easily 'distracted' by love affairs, too much work, too much play, by tiredness or by fear of failure (p.306).

Jong (Hedges and Wendt, 1980) suggests " that the most common complaint of talented women, artists manqué, women who aspire to be artists, is that they can't finish things". Partly because finishing implies being judged and more importantly,

> it means possibly succeeding at something. And success, for women is always part failure. Don't get a doctorate because then you'll never find a husband.
> Don't be too successful or men will be scared of you.
> The implication is always that... success at one end brings failure at the other ..(p.116)

Hedges and Wendt (1980,p.77) explain that for most artists, work continually interrupted often becomes work incompleted " and " for most women throughout history, the means of independent financial security, the private time to create have simply not existed". Excuses were my life line; I have to work, I have the kids, my husband needs me, my supervisor hates me, I don't have time, I found a job, I lost my job, I have no money, my computer broke, my parents are here , I'm tired.

Truitt explains that an undertaking begins with a surge of energy that carries it a certain distance toward completion. However,

> the energy required to push the original concept into actualization, to finish it, has quite a different qualitative feel from the effort needed to bring it to this point. It is this strange, higher-keyed energy to which I find I have to pay attention-to court, so to speak, by living in a particular way.

Audre Lorde (1981,p.180) would call this deep-delving , this confrontation of self -the erotic: the erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the powers of our unexpressed and unrecognised feelings" . Lorde examines white patriarchal suppression of this power in women and sees it as a means of oppression and powerlessness: a distancing from one's full self.

This "energy" is the "vital force" that Truitt talks about, or the "elan" that Parnes (1979) and Barron (1996) describe as well. It is the experience of freedom , the release from a "bridled creativity", the singing with the whole of ones self that

Sandi Russell (Saunders, 1987,p.216) writes of. It is relearning how to be free and knowing it's all right to be oneself. Trusting oneself.

In "*Breaking Out, Breaking In*", Angie Grunsell (Saunders, 1987) talks about women's internalisation of oppression and its manifestations in the way women's work and roles are perceived :

> we women who shape houses and lives yet have our designs negated must not continue to negate ourselves, our full selves. We must take and shape the space we inhabit and fashion it in a way that does not muzzle or deny whole areas of experience. But we can only do it if we hold on to the self that thrives in cubby holes and secret places, and struggles. We can only make a start if we ignore our guilt about not doing, harden ourselves for long enough to step out of the web and take time (p.104).

She writes,

> Locating the meaning and diverse tasks in our lives and their relationship to each other becomes an issue important for personal orientation and survival, of peculiar necessity for women to do- for me to do. Women of my generation, raised with conflicting messages about how to realise ourselves as women, are constantly faced with the task of making that meaning and developing it (p.104).

For women, learning to trust oneself is a very difficult thing to do. Grunsell writes of the guilt "of stolen hours" and then the ensuing "self-hatred" for selling oneself short. Estés (1992) explains that is because "art is not meant to be created in stolen moments only...creativity is meant to be an act of clear consciousness" (p.310).

Within

By the time I was twenty-three I had three beautiful children. When they were babies, I would close my eyes and feel over the contours of their tiny features with my fingers. Twenty years later, the memory of their touch remains stored in my fingertips. With hands clasped in grace, I accept their lives as part of my own with such a deepness of gratitude. I remain in awe of the extremity of their talents, the shape of their characters and the profundity of their inner and outer beauty. The experience of Motherhood forced me to confront all of who I was; the fearful, the deep, internal insecurities. It also afforded me the possibility of experiencing a deep humanity, humility and beauty.

According to Meetzger (1992), " Beauty appears when something is completely and absolutely and openly itself" (p.23). And I believe that is what the experience of motherhood empowered me with; the ability to acknowledge the authentic; to recognize the beauty of authenticity and to recognize, acknowledge and appreciate the beauty in authenticity.

Every creative woman has experienced the freedom of living artfully, of living in beauty, of living from the centre of self. And if you have ever gone without, the memory of that want haunts you throughout your lifetime.

Moments

My aunt Deana worked as a live-in maid for a couple and their two children. She had sailed from Greece in the fall and had arrived in Canada just as the leaves were done blushing. From what was whispered , the shame of an unfulfilled promise of marriage in exchange of money , was what had brought her to live with us. I remember that Aunt Deana was slim and stylish and wore her thick, blonde hair piled high in the bee- hive fashion of the day. In Greece, my grand parents had sent her away to the city to attend nursing school. However, Deana's plans for herself included neither bed pans nor penicillin. In the city, she had met the mayor's son , a married man, and had believed his tales of the expense and difficulty of divorce. Aunt Deana was willing to wait. Unfortunately , she was also willing to pay.

Aunt Deana spent her first Canadian winter with our family. And like most Canadian children, my body was equipped with that special, inbred early weather - warning system. I sensed and reacted to even the slightest changes in weather patterns. It's barely explainable but it has to do with being attuned to the different sound of crinkling in the pillow case, the added layer of dampness on the blankets, and the extra bite of crispness of the air. I remember lying in bed and just feeling, smelling, knowing of the season's first snow fall. The bed's headboard was pushed up against the window and I jumped on the bed, tore open the curtains, and proudly introduced my aunt to the charged display of quiet white. To this day, what my Aunt Deana talks about when she describes her first year in Canada is the sight of her first snow fall.

She also talks of her year as a maid in this wealthy household. The people were friendly and respectful, their children kind and well behaved. Summers were spent by the lake in the Ste. Agathe cottage. I had once visited the boy and girl who were a bit older than I was. They had toys I never imagined existed.

I was particularly amazed at the paint by numbers set and could hardly believe my luck when the girl invited me to use it. The picture of a horse came to life with the sparkling paint on a black velvet landscape. To me, it was like magic.

My mother thought the couple to be overly generous in giving Aunt Deana every second weekend off and worried about what Aunt Deanna might do with her time. My mother and other aunts made sure that her wonderment and sense of adventure were short-lived. They set off on a crusade to find my Aunt Deana a husband. One aunt came back with a mechanic but he was brushed aside because of his unkempt fingernails. Another came back with a cook but he never made it past the front door because his spinster sister was part of the deal. Finally, a friend who worked with my mother had heard of a new arrival who fit the selection criteria; he was clean, hard working, Greek and male. Arrangements were made. The meeting would take place at the Rialto theatre where Greek films were shown weekly. My mother would chaperone. One kick would mean a slight interest and coffee afterwards. Two would mean good bye and that they head straight home after the film. According to different versions, it seems that signals were misinterpreted and my aunt's disinterest ended with coffee and conversation anyways. Three prospects and six months later they were wed.

My Aunt Deanna did return to hospital work. For thirty years, until her retirement, she worked with my mother in the housekeeping department of a hospital. Her job had more to do with bedpans than penicillin. I'm always hard- pressed to explain the discrepancy in the way my Aunt Deana appears now while sitting around the dining room table and how she will appear in the photograph I am about to take.

In every one of our photo albums, photographs of Deanna are like photographs of someone else; unrecognisable. It's not that she doesn't photograph well. On the contrary. It's that she doesn't come across in real life as well as she does in still life. I know of no one who can manipulate a flashing (tiny) moment and try to make it her own, as can my Aunt Deanna.

Journal Entry

Winds of change/choosing a life

At this moment, I am overcome with a sense of guilt and I'm not sure what has brought on this wave of uncertainty again. Karyna is home. My youngest daughter has just graduated from university. I had made the promise of education to her. Liar that I am, she looks at me . I am hanging by a thread. Hoisting the mast, I panic . I know nothing of sailing. The winds of hope slap and pull at me. I am whipped with guilt. I descend from tower to ground. The storm of incertitude is brewing. I have acquired a taste for bitterness, for salt water and tears. Jolley says she can't write when there's unhappiness in the house. Neither can I. The best time to write she says, is at night because she is not needed in others' dreams.

I have learned that dreams are what we begin and end with.

I know of places that are thick with dreams.

Five

The Diviners

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places;
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces...

May Sarton,(1974,p.156)

Letter to Ruth

Dear Ruth Karp,

My name is Anastasia Kamanos and in 1972 you were my Grade 10 English teacher at the High School of Montreal. I doubt very much that you would remember me (I called myself Nelly at the time) and as nutty as this may sound, I feel compelled to write you this letter. You see Ruth, your teaching had a very profound effect on me. In fact, a major part of what I learned from you that year influenced the rest of my life.

I imagine that at the time, a position at Montreal High wasn't exactly the ideal job for a young teacher like yourself. HSM was a poor, multi-ethnic school with a large immigrant population and few resources. As students we knew that our school was the boot camp of the PSBGM. That is, we understood that if a teacher could make it at Montreal High, she could make it anywhere.

I was a resistant student, bored with school and angry at a system that I felt was cheating me out of many opportunities. Writing was my only passion. And for a time, I showed my writing to no one, keeping it under lock and key. I also loved reading. Indeed, I was an avid reader but not of the chaffed, dry books that were part of the school curriculum. For years I moped through the school system, catching only glimpses of the possibilities that art and literature provided. By the time I got to your class, I was bitter, disinterested and quite distrustful of anyone who showed the slightest interest in me as a student or as a person.

I saw my world in hues of brown, black and grey . I was just beginning to discover that compared to the world beyond HSM, I was poor. (Actually, underprivileged was the buzz word). I also had a sense that being poor, Greek, immigrant, female carried with it certain expectations- most of which were not too promising. Then by some stroke of luck, I was put into your class.

I remember you as being kind, firm, and respectful of your students. That was something we didn't experience too often and it gave us such a sense of worth. Going to your class was a happening. Rarely did we skip or miss a class. There was always something new. I discovered and fell in love with Leonard Cohen and Simon and Garfunkel. I was overcome by J.D. Salinger, A.S. Neil and Gloria Steinem. But perhaps the one event that changed my life forever happened when you gave me the opportunity to leave your class.

It was October and by that time I had written a few essays and poems and began opening up to you about my writing because you were so supportive. Before class one day you asked me if I would like to attend a poetry class that was being given at McGill at the same time as your class. I was thrilled. I remember crossing the street and walking in disbelief of my good fortune (I'm guessing you knew the instructor). In any case, as I sat at the back of the classroom and listened (I believe it was Keats) I was overwhelmed by a sense of exquisite beauty, so much so that it hurt. I was in actual pain; a tight, clamping pain in the pit of my stomach and between my breasts. I wanted to cry. Not so much for the physical pain as for the pain of not knowing.

When I say not knowing, I mean that this was the first time I had experienced this kind of beauty and it saddened me to think that I might never have known it, that it had almost eluded me. Yet, it had been so close. It was as if someone had opened the window and let the light in on my world. I had finally connected with something passionate, something moving, something beautiful. And though this may sound trite and trivial to some, for a young woman whose world was darkness, the discovery of an inner rhythm and intimate language illuminated my days from then on.

Since that time, the course of my life has swerved in many unpredictable directions. I dropped out of school for a year and then returned. At the time I never would have expected that I would become a teacher. But that's what I did. And I must say, you were in my classroom everyday because the lessons that I learned from you as a student, were the lessons that I used as a teacher.

Life has a funny way of looping and just when you think you've moved on, it lassoes you back to remembrance. There is no way to forever forget an event, a lesson or a person that has journeyed with you, even for a short time, on your round trip of life. And so, while I was pursuing my Masters degree at McGill I met a wonderful woman, Abigail Goodman. As we discussed a publication I had submitted for the journal issue she was editing, I mentioned my experience of Miss Karp's class. I was stunned to find out that you knew each other. The lesson had come full circle.

This letter, therefore, is a way for me to say thank you. I'm sure that much of what you've done in the classroom over the years has had a major impact on many of your students' lives. We don't realize how some relationships, particularly student teacher ones, settle in our bottled minds and cottled hearts like the sediments of old wine. It sometimes takes a fearless shake of the head and point of the pen to bring their importance to the surface. I am truly grateful for both the lessons and the light.

anastasia

Night Lights: thinking, writing, teaching

I wrote this letter in the middle of the night. I had left my teaching job. I was thinking about the kind of a teacher I was. I was having second thoughts about my ability, desire to be a teacher. Eyes wide shut, I went through my list of teachers past. There was Tammy Bailey, my grade three, guitar strumming, happy to see you teacher. Then the next year, there was Mrs. Schwartz, the blackboard hugging, don't speak to me I'm busy with my wedding plans, teacher. (I was suspended from school for three days for having carved my name on her classroom door). My fifth grade teacher was Mr. Lovegrove, a kind , gentle and caring man with a winding Australian drawl. Mr. Lovegrove did his best to encourage me, even suggesting I enter a writing contest. He became my enemy from that day forward. Miss Alexander was my grade six teacher and my only memory of her is of her backside, woollen stockings , grey ankle length skirt and the heavy odour of cigarette smoke that was her calling card. In Miss William's grade seven class, we listened to, read and performed West Side Story. I was Maria. I sensed that I wanted to know, see and be -more.

High school teachers were more detached, peeped in and out like cardboard pop ups. I had felt sorry for and imagined a whole secret life for Miss Dick, the history teacher who never looked up from her text the whole year. And I suppose the Biology teacher did speak English but he was barely audible. I remember how the usually mild-mannered Tiny, a six foot, two hundred thirty pound student , got so frustrated one day that he literally picked Mr. Jaga up and locked him out on the fire escape. It was January.

Thinking about teachers *is* thinking about teaching.

I am a writer. I've been thinking lately about the kind of writer I am. As a graduate student, I've had difficulty keeping the parts of my writing separate; the creative writing, ideas, responses to reading, notes to my thesis advisor, stories, prayers, jokes, meditations on teaching. They all belong to and live among each other, an ecological perspective of living, writing and teaching.

I pay attention and watch closely for the ways that women have built, protected and preserved their writing habitats. I especially watch for an Alice Walker, Maya Angelou or Madeleine Grumet; anticipate speckled sightings of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield. I recognize the distinct call of Gloria Anzaldua and Tillie Olsen and am in reverence of the handiwork of May Sarton and Anne Truitt . The intensity, the fearlessness, the sustenance. The vision. The voice.

Thinking about writers *is* thinking about writing.

I am a female artist in academia. I've been thinking about the kind of woman, artist, student I have become. I've realized that who I am ,where I've been and how I live, make up my writing and my teaching. And while this text does defy easy categorization as autobiography or memoir it does call upon what Annette Kuhn (1995) calls "memory work" and follows what Mitchell and Weber (1999) call

"a pedagogy of reinvention". And so be it. I don't write side saddle, watching the landscape pass by . Nor do I write backwards, looking towards a fading past. Rather , the past rushes up to meet me where I am as I leap, stumble and progress forward.

As I have transformed so too have the goals of writing, teaching, living transformed. I now want to open myself in my work as I open the door to my home. I want to welcome visitors in, show them around, describe my environment, express how it is I survive, invite them to stay. I remember that when my children were small, toys ,like their laughter, spread across the house like dandelions. I forgot to be embarrassed by the clutter.

And my children still recall their principal's disbelief when I explained that I had kept them home from school one day for a special feast of pop corn , peanut butter and a Jerry Lewis film festival . I forgot to dismiss the pleasures of small celebrations. As a teacher, mine were the students who sang too often or talked too much. That I was a language teacher mattered little. I forgot to contain my enthusiasm.

I loved teaching. And what I loved about teaching is the same thing I love about writing a story, baking bread and raising children. It is the beginning again ; the fresh start; the patterns in passion. What I fear most about teaching is the same thing I fear about writing, baking and motherhood. I fear the drudgery, misunderstandings, monotony. I fear being unable to rise to the occasion; fear being uninspired. I fear being left out, passed over; vulnerable. I enjoyed the solitude of teaching, of raising

children, of writing ; of being alone with my students, my children, my self, my work. Sarton wrote, "loneliness is the poverty of self; solitude is the richness of self".

Thinking about women, artists, and academics *is* thinking about feminist theory, creativity and pedagogy.

It *is* thinking about who we are-when we teach.

Student/Teacher/ Student : We are what we do

I remember that I was staring out the kitchen window when Ruth called. I was looking at the empty backyard and the tiny birds that were picking at the bread crumbs I had strewn across the snow. It was Friday. When I sent Ruth the letter, I had no idea that she would receive it during the final moments of her teaching career . I recognised her voice. I was so happy to hear that I had done for her what she had done for me.

Palmer (1998,p.21) explains that the power of our mentors "is in their capacity to awaken a truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling their impact on our lives". In this encounter, not only are the qualities of the mentor revealed, but so too are "the qualities of the student drawn out in a way that is equally revealing". Ruth's class was like home; a place where we could be ourselves. It mattered little where we came from or what our economic, ethnic or social status was. Neilsen (1998) explains that,

> each of us comes from somewhere, but that "somewhere" casts a different shadow in each of our encounters with others. The recognition that each of us is a constellation of differing positions according to the culture or context in which we find ourselves-and that these "multiple selves" negotiate and monitor ever-changing positions in a complex web of relations in the world- need not be an awareness which strikes fear of chaos. It can, instead, be a liberating recognition that the "self" is provisional, growing, elusive, but nevertheless, for the time being, here. Such awareness also brings with it the obvious-the self is as the self does. We are what we do (p.197).

I suppose what I liked best about Ruth's class was her deference for rules. I liked that she spoke up to us and that she spoke out for us, that she didn't judge and that she privileged paths towards justice. I liked that she loved reading and that she loved writers. More importantly, I liked that Ruth allowed me to recover a dormant part of my identity.

In truth, I believe that is what Ruth's students did for Ruth.

Integrity, Identity

Jane Tompkins (1991,p.26-7) explains that "the kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what one really stands for ... what we do in the classroom is our politics". Much of the ambivalence I had come to feel about who I was as a teacher had much to do with who I was as an artist. Increasingly, I had become aware that as a teacher I was acting in ways that were a challenge to my sense of integrity, identity and authenticity. I couldn't understand why this was so. I had attended workshops, had recipes for rainy days, techniques, tricks, and tips. I kept

myself busy cutting, piecing, posting and photocopying yet was feeling more and more disconnected and alienated.

I was trying to be less and less like myself and more and more like what I thought people expected me to be. What I didn't know then and what I later learned was as Palmer puts it, "technique is what teachers use until the real teacher arrives" (p.8).

Palmer (1998) insists that integrity and identity is not only about the good things we do, or the masks we wear to hide confusion. "Identity and integrity have as much to do with our shadows and limits , our wounds and fears, as with our strengths and potentials" (p.13). I like the clearness of his definitions of integrity and identity . He writes

> By *identity* I mean an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffering- and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field , identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human (p.13).

His definition of integrity is equally powerful:

> By *integrity* I mean whatever wholeness I am able to find with that nexus as its vectors form and re-form the pattern of my life. Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood , what fits and what does not- and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me: Do I welcome them or fear them, embrace them or reject them, move with them or against them? By choosing integrity, I become more whole , but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am.

How do identity and integrity relate? Palmer again writes: "Identity lies in the intersection of the diverse forces that make up my life, and integrity lies in relating to those forces in ways that bring me wholeness and life rather than fragmentation and death " (p.13).

Indeed many of the qualities inherent in my identity as an artist are inherent in my identity as a teacher. I am most myself when I am creative and least myself when I am not. The art of teaching is in the being; this is what I do because this is who I am. And the more I was able to be myself, the better a teacher I was. I felt liberated. However, the more I was confined to ways of being that were alienating, the more confused and bitter I became. The feeling of fraudulence was overcoming. Only when one knows oneself and one's gifts can the role of technique be powerful. Palmer (1998) explains:

> ...as we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personhood from which good teaching comes. We no longer need to use to technique mask the subjective self, as the culture or professionalism encourages us to do. Now we can use technique to manifest more fully the gift of self from which our best teaching comes (p.24).

Artist/teacher/Artist

I have been exploring the world from my perspective of artist as female, student and teacher . Here, the implications of the "artist as teacher" paradigm shift is in the exploration of how the artistic perspective (stance) informs, shapes pedagogical practice, process. That is, the artist as teacher perspective, is a process-oriented rather than product- oriented approach; a perspective requiring a deeper

account of the dialectal relationship of inner landscape of artist, outer landscape of classroom and beyond. As Mitchell and Weber (1999) explain, such a view goes "beyond valuing the personal as part of the professional" and addresses the growing need for more attention "to be paid to the crossover from the professional to the personal" (p.225).

The split of identity from practice (who I am from what I do) has been a "self-protective" mechanism that I have used to conceal myself and my fear in my work as an artist, academic and as a teacher. The outcome, as many artists and teachers have recounted, has been fragmentation, alienation; a feeling of being someone you are not.

Thinking about teaching and writing is thinking about who I am as a woman, teacher and writer. When I teach, I teach who I am. When I write, I write who I am. And when I know something of this, I know something of who I am.

FEAR: Impersonating the impersonal

I went to graduate school wanting to become a better teacher, not a better writer. I believed I needed to remedy the tension between my external response to classroom situations and a gnawing internal sense of incompetence. School, I thought would do that.

Teaching, writing and motherhood had already tested every belief I had of who I was. Certainly everything in my outer world told me I wasn't a writer. Yet,

everything in my inner world told me I was. My inner and outer worlds were impinging on each other, battling for control. I had spent a lifetime either bumping against locked doors or hiding behind closed ones. I entered graduate school with absolutely no intention of revealing the past. To do so would be to reveal a part of myself that had no place in academia. Privately, I knew that my writing had so much more courage than I did. But I had learned that it was better to fit in than to stand out.

Tompkins (1991) explains:

> Each person comes into a professional situation dragging along behind her a long bag full of desires, fears, expectations, needs, resentments- the list goes on. But the main component is fear... fear of being shown up for what you are: a fraud, stupid, ignorant, a clod, a dolt, a sap, a weakling, someone who can't cut the mustard (p.25).

I feared that my ethnic, social and economic roots would show; I feared "coming out" as a writer; I feared that the combination of Greek, poor, female, writer would be held up as a mirror to my incompetency as student. I feared being recognized as an exile; a foreigner to the academic state. As Overall puts its, "to have a working class background is to possess a feature that simultaneously makes it more difficult to acclimatize to the academic environment and also offers potential insights into the class-based operations of the university" (p.27).

The fear of this kind of recognition drains into the details of living like water through sand. Some water escapes, but most is captured and forms a creamy sludge. Where does the fear begin and the courage end? How do we gain the courage to be ourselves in academia? In an article entitled Me and My Shadow, Jane Tompkins (1991) discusses the dichotomy between her "personal" voice and the voice of the

critic, and her desire to and fear of breaking with the conventions of academic rhetoric. She writes, "I saw that I had been socialized from birth to feel and act in ways that automatically excluded me from participating the culture's most valued activities. No wonder I felt so uncomfortable in the postures academic prose forced me to assume; it was like wearing men's jeans " (p.170).

Class/ work

Unlike gender or race identities, class identities are less stable and more easily concealed (Law, 1995,p.6). I lived by my mother's advice to never let anyone know we were poor because, she warned, sooner or later it would be used to harm us. Fear manifests itself in different ways and oftentimes masquerades as something else; misunderstandings mushroom, mistrust thrives. (I have always worn designer jeans bought from second hand shops).

I am reminded here of an especially difficult time during my graduate studies. I was working at four or five odd jobs simultaneously - everything from housecleaning to telephone sales. I realized how different the academic world was from my own when a professor kindly suggested that my standing as a graduate student would be enhanced if I "networked". My understanding of networking was getting to know and being known by like-minded people whom you could count on and who could count on you for help. It was a confirmation of status. However, if there were any women like me in academia, they certainly weren't revealing themselves.

I suppose when the playing field is equal such things are possible. But when you're a mother and full-time graduate student, working outside the university for forty hours a week, networking is as about as probable or as practical as crossing a man-hole cover wearing heels. They tell you it's possible. But you know that either you exchange your heels for more sensible soles or risk getting the square heel pegged in the round hole. Changing covers is not a possibility. Covering change is.

Of course in the working-class background that I came from, connections had more to do with blood than achievement. And an absolute rule of that background was that you never discuss your problems in public. To ask for help would be to reveal your weakness; financial, moral, or otherwise. It would mean revealing your incompetence as student, teacher, woman.

In writing about the relationship between her working- class background and her dissertation journey, Renny Christopher (1996) writes, "The feelings of homelessness that these conflicts leave me with is hard to describe" (p.144). Yet, the search for place like the search for self, must be expressed.

In discussing her reasons for co-editing a book on academics from the working-class, Carolyne Leste Law (1995) explained that there was a need

> to open a space where we can finally say out loud what we have been saying clandestinely to each other for some time: that where we come from (the South, working class) matters absolutely in how we interact with the academy now, with our colleagues, with our students, with the faceless mechanism that is the institution (p.2).

Her decision stemmed from a sense that she had betrayed herself : "in order to gain acceptance in the academic community, my strategy was silence and lies... everyday increased my resolve to erase my past and elude the humiliation of being found an imposter "(p.3).

Imposter

Perhaps the sense of not belonging is what has made me a writer. As Dews and Law (1995) write, "while one can appear to be a native in an adopted land, one is always haunted by voices from the other side of the border" (p.7). As a child of European immigrants, I have journeyed across linguistic, cultural, economic, class and social landscapes. I am always compelled, like Nancy LaPaglia is, to see "in two directions, awkwardly" (1995, p.177). I often feel like an outsider.

From her perspective as a woman of colour in a predominately white world , philosopher Maria Lugones (in Overall,1998) explains that "the outsider necessarily acquired flexibility in shifting from mainstream construction of life where she is constructed as an outsider to other constructions of life where she is more or less 'at home' . For the working-class person with the ability to"world-travel" , that is to move from the "dominant culture's description and construction of life" to a "nondominant" or "idiosyncratic" construction, "world-travelling" is a necessary skill (p.120).

As an academic the ambivalence of being neither here nor there is compounded by the desire for both escape and arrival. As Overall (1998) explains it :

> the presence in the university of faculty from the working class appear to confirm the myth of upward mobility. We must buy into academia in order to get out of the working class, but in doing so we also buy into the denigration of our origins and the preservation of class inequities. In the end, it seems the price of successful escape is to be intellectually and socially 'nowhere at home'.

In French Lessons (1993), a memoir into her journey of teaching and life, Alice Kaplan claims that people adopt another culture because there's something in their own they don't like, that doesn't name them. French culture gave Kaplan a way of claiming an identity and integrity that she couldn't find in her own. Certainly , the academic culture was a strange, and foreign one to me. And in turn there was little in my background, my writing, my experience that was recognizable to the academic culture. To "pass" as an academic would mean adopting a language and culture that was not only alienating but threatened my sense of integrity and identity.

These feelings of being a fraud in academia were fed by traditional patriarchal academic practices that had forced me to discard and disregard the connection between my past and my present in my work. As Dews and Law (1995, p.7) have explained "crossing from one world to another is never fully achieved for the working-class academic; the transformation is never complete". Indeed, to transform completely would be to leave my past behind, to conceal parts of who I am. It would mean fearing being "found out". It would mean not being able to re-cognize myself, my history. I would be stuck at the point of fear. To the closet once more!

Re-Cognition

Reaching The Point of Wheat

The now famous story of Nobel Prize winner and biologist Barbara McClintock highlights how we come to know by connecting not disconnecting from ourselves and our world. We seek re-cognition of ourselves in the world; first by knowing ourselves and then by transgressing, going beyond that knowledge and re-knowing ourselves within the world.

When Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) interviewed McClintock for her biography, Keller wanted to know "What enabled McClintock to see further and deeper into the mysteries of genetics than her colleagues ?" Keller explains McClintock's answer as , "over and over again she tells us one must have the time to look, the patience to 'hear what the material has to say to you,' the openness to 'let it come to you.' Above all, one must have a 'feeling for the organism' " (p.164).

As Keller puts it, McClintock, in her relation to ears of corn, achieved "the highest form of love, love that allows for intimacy without the annihilation of difference". McCLintock said that she learned the "stories " of the plants; that she knew her plants from the inside, that she recognized them. Anne Truitt (1982) too, describes the recognition of her relationship to colour as a pivotal moment in her life and in her work. It happened when she perceived and understood colour as a truth, as having a meaning on its own. She explains it this way:

> As I worked along , making the sculptures as they appeared in my mind's eye, I slowly came to realize that what I was actually trying to do was to take paintings off the wall, to set colour free in three dimensions for its own sake. This was analogous to my feeling for the freedom of my own body and my own being, as if in some mysterious way I felt myself to *be* color (p.81).

In a compelling essay which Cixous (1989) describes as a "meditation on creation" Cixous uses Joyce's and Clarice Lispector's works "to tell us something about how an artist is formed , about what actually makes an artist". Cixous uses what Lispector called the "point of wheat" to explain the dialectal relationship of connectedness and knowing that McClintock and Truitt have described . Cixous (1989,p.19) explains:

> What is the point of wheat? It is the relation one can have with the other and with the world when one has "de-heroized" oneself by not forgetting the other; even if it is a cockroach , or even if it is the rain, then one has the type of love that the rain and earth have one for the other. And that could be defined as a kind of economy of attention.

Lispector explains that becoming an artist is in the acceptance of paradox; in struggling for an understanding of the simplicity of the "busy flow" between self and universe; it is the freedom obtained from giving in. Of being totally taken in by the creative process and totally freed by it; of being as Truitt (1982,p.44) puts it "gently disarmed". It is "being totally in jeopardy and totally at home" (Truitt,1982, p.28). When we experience the bliss in simplicity and know it, that is the moment we realize that we are artists. It is achieving the point of wheat.

There is no going back. Creativity is like motherhood; where you become what you experience. That is not to say that all women are creative, or that only women,

only mothers can be creative. I use the metaphor to express the idea that "artist" is not a title that is bestowed by the outer world. Rather , it is a matter of intention and attention. Truitt (1982) explains the experience this way:

> When I painted a chair recently, I noticed that I put the paint on indifferently, smoothly but without particular attention. The results were satisfactory but not in any sense beautiful. Does the attention in itself with which paint is applied in art actually change the effects of the paint? Does the kind of consciousness with which we act determine the quality of our actions? It would follow, if this were true, that the higher the degree of consciousness, the higher the quality of the art. I think it likely. Training in art is, then, a demand that students increase the consciousness with which they employ techniques that are, in themselves, ordinary (p.130).

The attention and intention with which we become creators, be it of student potential, children's happiness, or the perfect rye bread means having the right to claim yourself as artist. It means that the uniqueness of a person is re-cognisable; she is re-known both to herself and to others. Whether in a painting, a loaf of bread , or a small child, art is something where the hand of the creator is obvious.

Survival

Journal entry

Attended a faculty seminar. It was interesting to hear Professor D. talk about the importance of finding out what the student "potentially knows ". I'd rather he talked about the "potential of her knowing ".

As a woman, artist and academic writing for me has always been about survival. Writing is about saving the artist I left behind and protecting the one I have become. It is about letting the artist and academic speak. Writing is about life on the left hand side. Throughout my years as a graduate student I used the right hand side

of the notebooks for "serious" scholarly work. But the left hand side was where I lived attentively. Here was a place that revealed what I was really doing, my intentions; who I really was , a consciousness; and what I really knew, potential. Here, in narrative, I wrote as though my life depended on it and in many ways it did . I needed this side of the page as proof of my existence. Ultimately, the voice and life I saved was my own.

Academic and author Ann Victoria Dean (Schmidt, 1998,p.119) writes that for her,

> narrative is at the heart of all my writing, including the writing I do in the academic field of education. Writing infused with narrative understanding fends off proliferous cant that belies fresh, original thinking, and erases ambiguity and the possibility of insight. I believe we need to return educational practice to the world and to do this it is crucial that we encourage "women to offer their own experiences as wisdom, recognize how each individual perception is vital and validate the importance of telling the truth, each of us writing out of the unique vision our lives have given us" (Allison, 1994,75).

Margaret Atwood (1991) puts it simply as : "Tell what is yours to tell. Let others tell what is theirs" (p.154).

Voices from the left hand side

Journal Entry

October; again, summer has fluttered by like a butterfly- in glimpses and glances. I suppose the most attractive feature of this province is the autumn. On the train ride I pass houses that have majestic maples in their front yards. It looks as though the golden orange light has lit up the inside of houses with its brilliance. I imagine that in the far away mountains, one gets a better perspective of the greying colours that fade into the landscape. One week they're on fire and the next they're ashen.

I'm thinking about the summers in Greece and my mother's country garden. It's surrounded by high, stone walls. There is an out-house at the end of the walkway; water is flushed with a pail. At night, cats, small lizards and snails (some of them homeless) keep me company. Apricots, lemons, tangerines and bananas. Giant ferns and palm leaves slap me as I pass. Large begonias with speckled leaves. Vines of rubies, dripping with red. Geraniums and luscious roses; basilic, thyme and carnations. There are pink earrings that hang like shrimp.

At times like this, when I cross the bridge on my way to and from my different worlds, I marvel at the beauty of the water that is splashed with sunlight and how these colours of gold, and orange and green mirror the light of the dancing silvery water.

At times like this I wish I was a painter rather than a writer, it's as though words are not enough to capture this sight. I look at the little pieces of the landscape or houses and try to imagine them encased in a square picture frame. No, on second thought I am glad to be a writer, to keep the image suspended in words; a moment of rapture before the capture. I have little talent as a painter. The brush fights my palm. Perhaps this lack of talent is compensated by the artist's "eye" if not by the painter's "hand". I am not sure what will come of the thesis. I must finish. It is a matter of honour, courage and commitment. To myself. I have a need to touch the world with my with my own hands.

Mansuetude

I remember reading somewhere that art needs clean hands. Preparing a meal, caring for baby, signing my name; I wash my hands in preparation of anything of importance. Clean hands means being yourself. It means to start afresh; to begin with your own words, to proclaim yourself.

One hand washes the other. At times I have felt that I have told only half the story. I wanted to explain that I have written into the night, that my father took ill, that I've read far more books than the list of references allows. I have given but a glimpse into the subject, a partial perspective. This is what academic feminism is, pieces of women's knowing that together make the sail that frees the boat. We want as many women as can fit, lend a hand , help them in. We prefer the flux and flow of re-invention.

Cixous (1989, p.19) uses the word "mansuetude" to express the notion of hands used for good. "This is a Brazilian word, still used in French but no longer used in English. 'Mansuetude' means kindness, serenity, but the etymology of the word suggests the taming of the hands: and it has to do with knowing how to use one's hand in a good way".

I look at my hands and all that they have done. How to describe the work they've accomplished, the children they've loved , the words they've written, the nurturing they've fostered, the lives they've touched. Helping hands...

I looked down at my hands one day , they were scruffy and bleeding. I had been writing this thesis in a voice that was not my own. They felt burnt and so brittle. It seemed the skin had peeled; an outer reaction to an inner turmoil. They were chaffed and red with "the blood and bone of memory" (Valenzuela,1991,p.192) .

Borders

This work is criss-crossed with the experience of my travels across the academic landscape. I have travelled the path of reflection and reinvention. As Mitchell and Weber (1999) explain, these have self-transformative potential. They write, "it can strengthen or weaken hidden bits of self, challenging us to incorporate certain ignored elements into our professional identity, or forcing us to wrap our imagination around a different image of ourselves in action" (p.232).

Camus tells us that "what gives value to travel is fear ". But the kind of fear Camus speaks of is "the fear we feel when we encounter something foreign and are challenged to enlarge our thinking, our identity, our lives- the fear that lets you know you are on the brink of real learning" (Palmer, 1998).

I have learned that I must write to know myself and to make myself known. To do so is to claim my authority as a female artist in academia . My work speaks in the multiple voices of my class, gender, culture and stance. I write as a feminist and artist from my place on economic, social, cultural borders. As a woman, artist, academic and teacher , I stand on the border where personal and public meet; on the brink where courage encounters fear.

I have needed to go beyond the questions of "what", "how", and "why" that are usually asked in Education faculties and to raise questions about "who" the self is that teaches, writes and lives in academia. This is an important question as our responses will determine how women who are both artists and academics, make an appropriate "home" out of the patriarchal "house " of academia. Our responses fit the shape of our hands. And these hands are instruments of change.

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