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**A Rebel Band of Friends:
Understanding Through Women's Narratives
of Friendship, Identity, and Moral Agency**

by

Margaret Wendy Donawa

B.A., University of the West Indies, 1971
M.Phil., University of the West Indies, 1981
B.F.A., University of Victoria, 1983

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We accept this dissertation as conforming
to the required standard

Dr. L. R. Baxter, Co-supervisor (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. C. St. Peter, Co-supervisor (Dept. of Women's Studies)

Dr. A. A. Oberg, Departmental Member (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. C. B. Harvey, Outside Member (Dept. of Educational Psychology and Leadership
Studies)

Dr. C. Leggo, External Examiner (Dept. of Language Education, University of British
Columbia)

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University of Victoria

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Co-supervisors: Dr. L. R. Baxter, Dr. C. St. Peter

ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry is grounded in friendship. It draws its data from the narratives of four longstanding women friends in the Caribbean, where I have spent my adult life. I draw on these narratives, and on my own reflections, to suggest the limitations of Western Grand Narratives as an explanatory framework to understand historical events and to legitimize knowledge. I locate myself and my participant-friends among the *petits récits* of those feminist, post-colonial, and poetic voices whose aim is not to predict and control, but to reflect and understand.

The emergent design of the inquiry evolves from the interests, themes, and assumptions to which it gives rise. Its meaning-making processes also generate criteria for the assessment of its rigor and validity. The document is shaped by the assumption that the fundamental structure of human experience is a narrative one; thus narrative has proven an apt crucible for this inquiry into friendship, identity, and moral agency.

The women's narratives of adolescence illustrate the inscription of the dominant ideology, but they also pivot on evocative moments of self-identity and self-understanding, and evince youthful stirrings of resistance and self-assertion. Their narratives of maturity attest to a grounding of the moral imagination and of identity in friendship. I propose friendship as a model not only for self-knowledge and moral autonomy, but also as an epistemological frame for academic inquiry. I suggest that four practices arising from and tested by friendship—empathy, trust, reflexivity, and narrative connection—are ways in which we may strive to understand ourselves and our world.

The women articulate and celebrate difference and multiplicity; they speak to identity and moral agency engendered by friendship, literature, and work; they speak of self-recognition through recognition of other. From these epistemological narratives, a knowing self emerges, capable of choice, change, and agency.

Examiners:

Dr. L. R. Baxter, Co-supervisor (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. C. St. Peter, Co-supervisor (Dept. of Women's Studies)

Dr. A. A. Oberg, Departmental Member (Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. C. B. Harvey, Outside Member (Dept. of Educational Psychology and Leadership
Studies)

Dr. C. Leggo, External Examiner (Dept. Of Language Education, University of British
Columbia)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Titlepage.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of contents.....	iv
Figures.....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
Dedication.....	xii
Preliminary.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: LARGE AND SMALL HISTORIES.....	1
Embarking.....	1
Multiple Exposures: Three “Post” Directions.....	3
Exposing the Connections Between Knowledge and Power	3
Exposing the Fiction of Impersonality.....	4
Revealing the Limitations of Logic and Argument.....	5
Grand Narratives and <i>petits récits</i>	6
<i>Petits Récits</i>	8
(I) The Twins.....	8
(II) The Baker	9
The Susu.....	10
Locating My Self (I).....	12
<i>Petits récits from the Memory Album</i>	12
Coming to the Question.....	19
Contribution to the Field.....	20
Overview.....	21
Chapter 2.....	21
Chapter 3.....	22
Chapter 4.....	23
Theory.....	24
Practice.....	24
Chapter 5.....	26

CHAPTER TWO: A CONTEXT FOR INQUIRY.....	28
Methodology: A Frame for Working.....	28
Emergent Design: A Map of the Journey.....	28
Narrative Inquiry: Shapely Illusions.....	31
Narrative Structure of Relationship, Identity, and Moral Agency....	31
Narrative, Memory, and Historical Truth.....	33
Narrative Truths and Fictions.....	33
Articulating Interests.....	35
Locating My Self (II).....	37
Inter/Views.....	38
Foundational Interviews: 1997.....	38
Transcription.....	39
Subsequent Interviews: 1998.....	42
“Simultaneous Actions”.....	43
Appropriation.....	43
Issues of authority.	43
Issues of intimacy.	44
Writing the Other.	44
Journals/Fieldnotes.....	45
Validity: Epistemic Authenticity.....	49
Aesthetics.....	49
Critical Reflection and Intellectual Soundness.....	50
Congruency of Form and Function.....	50
Usefulness.....	51
Dynamic Vitality.....	51
Interpretive Caveats.....	51
<i>Very Petits Récits</i>	52
A High-gloss Product?	52
The Great B/W Debate.....	53
What’s in a Name?.....	54

CHAPTER 3:	
PRECARIOUS SUBJECTIVITY: GENDERING THE COLONIAL GIRLCHILD	54
Criss-crossing Valuing.....	54
Felicia’s Story	54
Domestic Horizons: In the Company of Women	54
Subconscious Subversions	57
Respectability	59
Epistemic Violence: Religion and Education	62
Religion: Missionary positions.	62
Education: Great expectations	62
Summary: Ideology and Contradiction	71
Lucinda’s Story	74
“Our Own Little Sphere”: Home, School, Church.....	74
Points of Departure	79
Elizabeth’s Story	82
Family Mythologies	82
Education: “A Feel for What Information There Is”	83
Family Ties: At Home in the World	85
Margins and Centres	87
Naomi’s Story	90
Home, School, and the Wheel of Fortune	92
Values and Identity: “A Curious Creature in My Own Land”	94
Literature: “The Way We Were Spoken Of”	98
Gender: The Young-lady Business and the Hidey-hidey Thing	101
Critical Mass and Racial Difference	106
Summary	109
CHAPTER 4: AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF FRIENDSHIP.....	111
Theory: “The Reservoir of Practice”.....	111
Narrative Sites and Intersections	112
Felicia	112
Naomi	113
Elizabeth	114
Lucinda	115

First Shift: Towards an Understanding of Gender as Relationship:	
“Empirical Egos Walk in Gendered Garb”.....	116
Standpoint Epistemology and Women’s Will to Knowledge.....	117
“ To Put a Shape on Things ”:	
The Women Speak of Telling their Stories	118
Second Shift: Toward Situated Knowledge: “Partial in all its Guises”.....	121
Third Shift: Toward Identity as Moral Process: The “Epistemological Lean”	123
Fourth Shift: Necessary Contradictions: “Crucial Misogyny”.....	125
Fifth Shift: Toward Intelligence as a Social Relationship.....	128
Practice: To Discern and Alleviate.....	129
Imaginative Empathy.....	132
Envisioning the Other.....	133
Empathy and Communities of Choice: The Susu.....	138
Befriending Men: Hard and Soft Options.....	139
Empathic Imagination and the Inquiring Self.....	141
Trust.....	142
Trust and the Inquiring Self.....	144
Trust and Hope: “The Power of Expectation and Possibility”.....	145
Trust and Fidelity.....	146
Trust and Risk: “Exposing our Throats”.....	147
Reflexivity.....	149
Reflexivity and the Inquiring Self.....	152
Narrative Connections.....	153
Gender as Narrative Relationship.....	153
Situated Knowledge as Narrative.....	154
Narrative Identity as Moral Process.....	154
Narrative Contradiction.....	154
Narrative Intelligence as Social Relationship.....	155
Narrative Empathy.....	155
Narratives of Trust.....	155
Narrative Reflexivity.....	156

CHAPTER 5	
IDENTITY AND MORAL AGENCY: “CONTINUING GESTATION”	157
Evil and Agency	157
Evil	158
Elizabeth’s Story: The Diseased Sparrow	161
Identity and Difference	163
Identity’s Liminalities: Thresholds of Exclusion	164
Naomi’s Story: The White Cockroach	170
Credentials	171
Inside of the Inside: “Inclusion Does Not Include You”	174
Identity as Amoebae: Personal and Historical Limitations	175
Liminal States	176
Friendship and Moral Identity: “A Rebel Band of Friends”	178
Friendship and Moral Alternatives: “Living Options”	180
Sentimental and Political Friendship	181
Potential Countercultures	182
“Identity-conferring Commitment”	183
Identity and Work	185
Labour, Work, and Power	186
Work, Resistance, and Identity	188
Identity and Literature	190
Canonical Reading	191
Resistant Reading	193
Responsive Reading	194
Identity, Self-knowledge, and Knowledge of Other: Active Agents	196
Finding the Metanarrative	197
Metanarrative Conversations	198
Crisis and Transformation	200
Attentive Spirit	201
Active Passion	203
Conclusion	204
Terminus	204

Bibliography.....	206
Appendices.....	224
<u>Appendix A.</u> Letter of invitation to participants.....	224
<u>Appendix B.</u> <i>Taking Leave</i>	226
<u>Appendix C.</u> Epistemological questions.....	228
<u>Appendix D.</u> Interview questions.....	229
<u>Appendix E.</u> <i>Girl</i>	232

FIGURES

<u>Figure 1.</u> Caribbean birthplace and location of susu participants.....	13
<u>Figure 2.</u> The inquiry's initial articulation of interests.....	36
<u>Figure 3.</u> Sketch from photograph of susu picnic, 1997.....	48

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The susu, of course. This document is my acknowledgement of their crucial place in my heart.

DEDICATION

**This work is literally a labour of love.
I offer it
with love and gratitude
to the susu,
the rebel band of friends
from whom I learned
the power of expectation and possibility,
and with profound thankfulness
to “Felicia”, “Lucinda”, “Elizabeth”, and “Naomi”**

**Some kind of rebel band of friendship...claims something more out of life than...evil or
absurdity would dictate could happen. So it's actually creating another culture.**

Naomi

Preliminary

(PRE-L. *Limen limeris*/ threshold)

...the idea of an individual, the idea that there is someone to be known, separate from the relationships, is simply an error. As a relationship is broken, or a new one developed, there is a new person. So we create each other, bring each other into being by being part of the matrix in which the other exists. We grope for a sense of a whole person who has departed in order to believe that as whole persons we remain and continue, but torn out of the continuing gestation of our meetings one with another, whoever seems to remain is thrust into a new life. (Bateson, 1984, p. 140)

This document is grounded in friendship. It has evolved through the stories four longstanding women friends have told me, through the relationships that have made it possible for me to hear them, and through the reflective processes by which I have sought to understand them. From the threshold to which these processes have brought me, I discern a model for ethical and academic inquiry which arises from an understanding of the dynamics of friendship.

The narrative strands with which my research engages are spun by women in midlife, women shaped by their historical and cultural location in the Caribbean. Because I have spent my adult life in the Caribbean--because I have been student and teacher, artist and curator, spouse and mother, friend and householder in this cultural milieu--it is my own lived experience in this culture, and the narrated experience of these Caribbean women that I reflect upon and seek to understand.

I search for connections between the personal narratives of remembered experience and the broader ideological and social scenes in which they are embedded. This inquiry is, however, by no means a sociological or ethnographic project; nor does it purport to define what these women's stories "really" mean, or to chart their "development". Rather, it is intended as an attentive, mindful listening to the unique voices of a small but varied group of interesting women.

Through recursive reflection, I explore the phenomenon of friendship as it is embodied in the narrators' expressed understanding of what it means to be a friend, and also in the meaning I have made of their generous participation in this inquiry. From their narratives, from their construction of friendship, I perceive a correlative, contextual, and narrative frame for ethics, and an understanding of the self as constituted in moral relationship.

Another strand of my inquiry is spun from the ravelled sleeve of my own reflections on my friends' stories, from my own remembered experience of the Caribbean

and from the peculiar insider-outsider understanding of margins and commitment that this location has permitted me. My narrative is a work in progress, and it is to a great extent a story of my inquiring. And this is so because I have found the models for knowledge and research in which I was trained to be inadequate either to frame as “real” that which has given depth, richness, and meaning to my life, or to delineate that which is intractable and problematic.

My story therefore is embedded in those insights and perceptions that emerge from the reflective process; it takes shape and direction as my understanding emerges through reflection and writing. Critical reflection requires ongoing questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions and values, requires rigorous self-questioning. It requires me to stay open, to stay at risk, to stay with difficulty, to journey without a destination, knowing that “what [I] search for does not exist until [I] find it” (Bateson, 1990, p. 28). I am drawn to question the ideological invisibility of women's' lives, and to read and write that invisibility into being. I am drawn to make the realms of heart and mind, of personal and professional, of self and other, permeable to one another, and drawn to the hope that I will come to an enlarged understanding of friendship, identity and moral agency.

I have never felt at home here
where I live. I am always looking
into another landscape.

Even in dreams I prefer to be
legitimately lost in a strange city
fumbling with the local currency
where no-one knows me

a foreigner sipping tea or wine
in houses far more interesting than mine

where I am a mystery
discovering myself through strangers' eyes
discovering again the kindness of women.

(From *The Kindness of Women*, Williams, 1997, pp. 117)

CHAPTER 1: LARGE AND SMALL HISTORIES

Embarking

In the late 1970s, while I was teaching literature and simultaneously doing my Diploma of Education at the University of the West Indies, I was disturbed by the discrepancy between the abilities of the young women I taught and their aspirations for themselves. I made this discrepancy the topic for the thesis-sized research paper required of Diploma Students. The program prided itself on its rigor. It was impressed upon us that however our interests might arise from our personal experience and observation, our research, to have credibility, must be verifiable, objective, impartial. We must, we were told, demonstrate our cognitive authority through an exemplary disengagement from our subjects, through an impeccable marshalling of empirical information and rational argument. Only through these procedures could our experience be legitimated, become “knowledge”; only to the degree that we transcended the specifics of our inquiry, the passion of our interests, might our projects, abstracted, generalizeable, become “real”.

And I agreed that this was so. I was not a rebellious student. I attributed my discomfort to the poor “fit” between my interest and the format into which I was trying to shape it. I did not see this as an epistemological problem; I did not have the concept of “epistemology”.

My supervisor for this project was a scholar well known throughout the Caribbean for his educational research. He believed that any kind or degree of knowledge or evaluation could be elicited through a sufficiently refined multiple choice instrument. His procedures, all quantifiable, seemed to me dauntingly, elegantly mathematical, and I apologetically suggested I would have to stick with simpler methods. I produced an early outline for my research, and spoke unguardedly of my students, of their potential, the vitality and variety that made teaching such a joy; and of the dismay I felt to see how often their limited aspirations worked against their own interests.

Coldly, in exasperation, he tore my ideas and my morale to tatters. It seemed to me that his scientific frame for research was required to evince not only its own value, but also the inadequacy and incompetence of other ways of knowing. And if that frame offered the legitimate way to know what is worth knowing, it showed by implication that what cannot be known this way cannot be worth knowing. I stumbled down the stairs from his office choking with mortification. Later, at work, I hid and wept angrily, and told my department head that I was dropping the program. Prudent counsel and sympathy prevailed and I remained in the program, but I swore I would not go back to the Great Man, swore with a vehemence that, remembering my timidity and desire to please, quite surprises me.

While other Diploma students met weekly with their supervisors, I trudged grimly

on solo, determined to hand in a piece of research so faultless that I couldn't be penalized for my insubordination. I was aided in this piece of stubbornness by Lucinda Richmond, whom I shall introduce presently as one of the four friends participating in this dissertation project. Lucinda and I had begun teaching at the same institution in the same year, but she had done her Diploma the year before me. Using her own fine research paper as a template, she walked me through the necessary stages of my research paper. Like an inquisitor looking for heresy, I rooted out the personal, the tentative, the ambiguous. I quashed any tendency to anecdote or narrative; as Sheree Meyer (1993, p. 54) puts it, I checked my "self" at the door.

To my astonishment, my paper was given top marks, commended by the UWI examiners. Even the Great Man was gracious and congratulatory. From time to time I heard from subsequent students who used it as a reference.

What is the point of this long introductory anecdote? The paper was so dry and bloodless, so unredeemed by humanity, compassion, humour, so *boring* I have not even kept a copy. It offered no insight or inspiration, no practical help, either to young women whose aspirations fade, or to the teachers who watch with loving and futile concern. The point is that I see how perfectly I embodied, was constituted by, the ideology of Western rationalism. "It is the role of ideology", says Catherine Belsey, "to construct people as subjects" (1985, p. 47).

And ideology, she continues, is *real*, existing in the behaviours of people acting according to their beliefs. But it is also *illusory*, in that it discourages a full understanding of the conditions that shape those beliefs. Where ideology is most powerful, where it seems most right, natural and inevitable, it is indiscernible and unquestioned. So to some extent, the point of that anecdote is also that it is a point of departure for my inquiry, for my long journey in coming to discern the ideological structures that have shaped my actions, and that have constructed the central taken-for-granted cultural assumptions which are "profoundly embedded in all modern social activity" (Benjamin, 1986, p. 80). It is a journey in which I may expect to find many shared paths and intersections with other women of my generation, women whose narratives, with mine, will constitute this inquiry.

Sometimes that point of departure seems, thankfully, far behind me, lost in the mists. But sometimes, like a sinister mirage, it looms, and the more I strive to leave it behind, the more pervasive it becomes. For the epistemology that serves ideology is one of abstract logic, quantifiable processes and objective procedures; it has traditionally embodied a way of knowing that seems not only more desirable, but also more valid, more real, more true than any other path to knowledge. Its lure is seductive, and it is not always something

I want to leave behind.

Multiple Exposures: Three “Post” Directions

The presence of signposts along my journey indicates some of the boundaries of Western epistemology. That is, by being *beyond* its domain, they locate the domain’s boundaries; reveal that it *has* a location, and that it is not a universal reality. The signposts I position myself by have been erected by theorists and practitioners of the “post” disciplines we associate with post-colonial, post-modern, and feminist discourses. The signmakers are by no means monolithic; they frequently demolish, replace or turn around one another’s signs. They offer, variously, re/visions of “universally” accepted understandings; they have created what Sandra Harding (1996, chapter 14) terms “the epistemological crisis of the West”. Yet, they do have commonalities; they do intersect. Several of their common approaches are germane to this inquiry, and I elaborate upon these below.

Exposing the Connections between Knowledge and Power

I highlight here, first, how these epistemological discourses unmask the connections between knowledge and power. They reveal “absolute,” “universal” knowledge as an artifact of a relatively small group of people in unmarked positions of privilege. By “unmarked,” I mean that some groups such as, for instance, “Caucasian” or “male” tend not to be perceived by themselves or others as having racialized or class-specific positions, or as having special interests. The hegemony of such a group seems “natural” because its members have the power to generalize their norms across the social order. In the intellectual realm, they create and distribute resources to encourage certain kinds of knowledge production (such as the maximizing of technological processes) and withhold them to limit others (such as media literacy). In this way they construct key historic, scientific, and cultural conceptions, and set limits¹ on what can be understood, or even questioned. (It is difficult for “real” biologists, physicists, or computer programmers, for instance, *within the framework of their disciplines*, to ask ethical questions concerning the social implications of their knowledge.) From their power, then, the dominant order creates the epistemic community that legitimates that power.

So, inevitably, those interests that the powerful have in common, interests which are invisible to them, pass unmarked into the results of their research (Harding, 1993,

¹Sandra Harding (1993, p. 54) sees an awareness of this limitation as the starting point for standpoint epistemology.

p. 57). I speak here not just of blatant political oppression, but of blind spots like those in medical and psychological research. For instance: the enormous profits that accrue to pharmaceutical companies; the prestige that flows to the medical profession; the power that inheres in both through the pathologizing of childbirth and menopause; a norm for health based upon male subjects.² For instance, a norm for moral development, also predicated entirely upon male subjects, shows women's development to be deviant or deficient.³ I am stressing here that knowledge which appears "natural" and purports to be universal, in fact supports an ideological power base and its production of knowledge.⁴

Exposing the Fiction of Impersonality

Secondly, I highlight the way the theorists I cite expose the transcendence, the supposed "impersonality" of the authoritative, rational researcher's voice. They reveal its stance to be a fiction. The impersonal tone, claiming to be uncontaminated by subjectivity, is in fact a denial of the subjectivity of which it is constituted, a denial of the interests and power that are at stake, a denial that the researcher has his/her own personal qualities. The impersonal tone assumes that "all reasonable men" speak with this voice. The apparent neutrality of the voice that comes from nowhere, or from everywhere, excludes all that is embodied, biological, and specific, and the "universal human norms" it endorses are constructed through excluding attributes of the underclass, of women, of the Other.

And as this neutral voice is shown to be located, situated, *relative* to its interests, so it becomes clear too that data are not neutral, but sought or made; that evidence, methodologies, do not just occur, but are selected. Knowledge is an artifact, comments Code (1993, pp. 21-22), and, like all artifacts, bears the marks of its makers. Knowledge reveals the processes of its making (Harding, 1993, p. 64); it discloses the impartial universal moral universe as in fact patriarchal, "man-tailored to a masculine purpose" (Jehlen, 1981, pp. 584-585). All knowledge, then, is socially situated, socially determined;

² For instance, it was only in 1996 that for the first time the Medical Research Council of Canada planned a written policy on the necessity of including women as subjects in medical studies (Lipovenko, 1996, p. A5).

³ As Carol Gilligan (1982, p. 18) indicates, Kohlberg claims universality for his model, but women appear deficient in moral development when measured by this universality, and rarely achieve his higher stages of principled justice.

⁴ See also Benhabib (1992, p. 155), Belsey (1985), Benjamin (1986), Eagleton (1983, p. 135), Grosz (1994, p. 188), Morgan (1988, p. 148).

no knowledge is natural or universal.

Revealing the Limitations of Logic and Argument

Third, much feminist and post-colonial scholarship emphasizes the limitations (not the *uselessness*, but the *limitations*) of logic and argument. The neutral voice that is necessary to logic, which masks the connection between knowledge and power, also fosters an invisibility to motive and interest. The emphasis on the importance of the finished product arrived at through logic obscures its relation to any non-logical process by which the product was achieved, so it is clear to see how moral concerns may remain extrinsic to the research.⁵

Logic does not require a connection between epistemological assumption and moral result. Perhaps Milgram's (1963) obedience experiments (also discussed by Noddings, 1989, chapter 8) could not have found a site in an epistemological frame requiring this connection, or in one that posited the aim of knowledge to be *understanding*. Nor, looking closer to home, would there be a "natural" rationale for the destruction of social programs to allegedly help balance the national budget, nor a logic that represents economic health in terms of corporate profits.

JOURNAL: Bank meeting today. The beautifully suited investment advisor assigned to me kept referring to my ethical guidelines as "your ethical bias". If it's biased to be ethical, is it unethical to be unbiased? (Feb 27, 1997)

JOURNAL: In the car, listened to *Quirks and Quarks* (CBC, March 1) consider the ethical repercussions of Dolly's [the sheep's] cloning. A researcher deplored the interference of "irrelevant" ethical concerns which had no business in science, especially, he said, because ethics is a branch of sociology! He insisted there was no clinical reason humans would utilize cloning and therefore no need for regulation.

Nonetheless, said the moderator, cloning was not publicized until it had been successful and until a patent for the process had been taken out with a commercial firm. (March 1, 1997)

Argument, the methodological vehicle for logic, the legitimate, the preferred mode of discourse, succeeds by refuting and attacking, and by surviving the refutations and attacks of others. a survival that in the field of literary criticism, Olivia Frey (1990) calls "literary Darwinism" (p. 507). Logical argument's pretence of objectivity blinds us to the subjectivity of its speaker (because there must be a speaker, and she/he must be located

⁵See also Harding (1993, p. 71); Benhabib, (1992, p. 155); Noddings (1989, chapter 4).

somewhere), “making it appear as though we all...speak with the same voice”(Meyer, 1993, p. 57). A reliance solely upon logic and argument can support an impoverished understanding of humanity, and a disabling scepticism, one which devalues other knowledge processes and “distorts the continuing conversation of humankind” (Phelan and Garrison, 1994, p. 264). Schweickart (1996) concurs: “Cognitive and moral distortions... result when discourse is dominated by argument” (p. 313).

However, when *the* universal epistemology is reconceptualized as *a* local, situated knowledge, its “distinctive patterns of ignorance” are readily discerned by those situated outside the paradigm. In this reconceptualizing of knowledge as local and contextually relative, new kinds of epistemological horizons frame views that could not have been perceived, let alone legitimated, by the abstract rationalism of science. The limitations of logic are evident when we speak to dimensions of experience to which logic is not central, but which are now seen as worthy of inquiry. Dwayne Huebner (1969, n.p.) finds logic to be of “secondary” importance, “most useful when that which has been spoken is organized for further use.”⁶ And so I discovered, encountering the lovely metaphoric flow of “that which [had] been spoken” (the interview transcripts), which I had to “organize for further use,” imposing my own logics, chronological and conceptual, as I constructed an epistemology of friendship.

Grand Narratives and *petits récits*

The conflation of knowledge and power, the primacy of objectivity and rationality, are methods used to tool the master narratives, to maintain the master’s house.⁷ These tools construct the Grand Narratives⁸ which overarch or obliterate our individual small stories: they provide an explanatory framework within which all historical events can be

⁶I have cited Dwayne Huebner from his unpaginated essays, which were provided for course reading during ED-B 691, a doctoral seminar he offered at the University of Victoria, Summer, 1998. The date refers to the document’s original date of publication, noted in the bibliography. The essays are available in the University of Victoria curriculum course file, in the Curriculum Library. They are currently in press (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum) as *The Lure of the Transcendent*, a volume in the Studies in Curriculum Theory Series.

Throughout this document I also make reference to his comments and to discussions that took place during the course.

⁷Audre Lorde (1996) unpacks this metaphor in “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (pp.110-113).

⁸See Lyotard (1984, 1991). Also discussed in Pinar (1995), pp. 470-474; Mourad (1997), pp. 28-37, Benhabib (1992), Chapter 7.

understood; they determine what knowledge is legitimate; and they render invisible that which may not be questioned.

Rationality is not unnecessary. It serves the chaos of knowledge. It serves feeling. It serves to get from this place to that place. But if you don't honour those places, then the road is meaningless. Too often, that's what happens with the worship of rationality and that circular, academic, analytic thinking....

We have been taught to think, to codify information in certain old ways, to learn, to understand in certain ways. The possible shapes of what has not been before exist only in that back place, where we keep those unnamed, untamed longings for something different and beyond what is now called possible, and to which our understanding can only build roads. But we have been taught to deny those fruitful areas of ourselves. (Lorde, 1996, pp. 100-101)

The Grand Narratives of Western metaphysics, in particular those of imperialism and patriarchy, are so woven into our knowing of the world, into our socialization, that without great exertion to understand otherwise, they seem natural, right and inevitable; they constitute much of "the weighted keel of the unspoken life" (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 93).

The fearful, unspoken exile from the real and legitimate is no idle threat, for by its very nature, dominance requires subordination to actualize itself.⁹ Central requires marginal: Master requires servant; colonizer requires native; Man requires Woman. The Grand Narrative requires the *petit récit*, defines itself by the small histories of the deviant, and thus is inevitably sexist, racist, and imperialist¹⁰ in practice (Mourad, 1997, p. 83).

What keeps us clinging to that weighted keel? What enables us to let it go? What brings us to change? Much of the process of writing this document has been my charting of living in these questions, although its trajectory has become clearer to me only as I bring my writing to closure. I see my work as a strand among the "multiplicity of small narratives" (Lyotard, in Mourad, 1997, p. 35) of feminist, post-colonial, and poetic voices who strive for insight and understanding. We deny the centrality of the Grand Narrative in varying ways, by *writing back*, by deconstructing Western values and

⁹The subordinating power of colonial and patriarchal discourse is "a process of epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1994, p. 83), "spirit thievery" (Brodber, 1988, p. 83) embedded within the structures of law, education and social custom. Its subtext is to position the *petits récits* of the subordinate as "discredited" (Morrison in Cooper, 1991, p. 65) knowledge, "subjugated knowledge....inadequate...naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy" (Spivak, 1994, p. 76).

¹⁰ Eugenie Lam (1998), interviewing other Chinese-Canadian women, speaks of "safe" and "unsafe" stories: "Safe stories position the "spotlight" on the teller [in a way that reinforces stereotypes comfortable to the hearer], while unsafe stories turn the 'stagelights' to reveal the background or context which becomes the site of critiques and questioning" (pp. 148-149).

assumptions, by claiming our own standpoints of experience and understanding, foregrounding our own “small” histories. We look for a knowledge that brings us not to hegemonic ascendancy and control, but to understanding and self-understanding.

We who seek that understanding connect the specifics of our lived experience with critical and reflective intelligence; we honour feeling and intuition; we work to understand our place within relations of power. We construct new questions to ask and new ways to inquire. It is often fruitful to reconceptualize rather than to reject, to enlarge the boundaries of discourse rather than to reinscribe the binary. Philosophers like Sara Ruddick (1989) speak of the need

to confront the sexual and social politics of Reason, if only to speak self-respectfully to my children....an argument that didn't draw on love and sustain it in action was worse than no argument at all.....Yet...destructive as Western ideals of Reason may be, the capacity to reason is a human good....there is real strength in steady judgment, self-reflectiveness, clear speech, and attentive listening. These are activities of reason and they are human blessings....

If I could not reject Reason, could I honour Reason differently? ...Was it possible to reconceive a reason that strengthened passion rather than opposing it, that refused to separate love from knowledge? ...Were there alternative ideals of reason that might derive from women's work and experiences, ideals more appropriate to responsibility and love? (pp. 8-9)

Particularly, we distrust the conviction that truth can only arise from generalization and abstraction:

The capacity for deep feeling....is not the product of general thought, but of real events, acutely seen, lived through with awareness. (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 90)

The chief fallacy is to believe that Truth is a result which comes at the end of a thought-process. Truth, on the contrary, is always the beginning of thought; thinking is always result-less.... Thinking starts after an experience of truth has struck home, so to speak. (Arendt, in Brightman, 1995, p. 24)

One of the results of exploring these new pathways (new to me at any rate) early in my inquiry, was the surfacing of early childhood memories, almost inchoate, but insistent. I re/turn to them as I recognize in them my first remembered instruction about relations of power, about “Man's” place in the world, about “good” and “bad” knowledge.

Petits Récits

(I) The Twins

JOURNAL: I was a war baby, and my absent, enlisted father was not a regular part of our family life until I was four or five. When I reconstruct this period, I'm never sure how much I remember, how much was given shape by my mother's stories, what I imagine from a few sepia photographs where we sprawl in the garden, squat in the sand, squint at the sun.

It was always summer. My mother and her twin, me and my brother, a little clutch of same-age cousins. A small harmless tribe, we lived in a gentle world of sandcastles and Beatrix Potter and blowing bubbles in the sink where we were bathed. I remember camping in a seaside hut; each evening one of our interchangeable mothers took the children foraging for berries while the other prepared supper, made batter for a berry pudding. Was it *each* evening? Did it become so in family myth? I remember the clammy feel of the mandatory canvas life jacket and its metal buckles; indeed, a photo in which I scowl at the camera attests to its existence.

This was our world. Into it thundered huge men with cross, frightening voices and scratchy chins and unfathomable demands, who brought about incomprehensible changes in our mothers. And so we moved from our tribal encampment and became wives-and-children of gallant returning warriors whose courage and self-sacrifice could never be repaid, whose wishes must be heeded without question, and whom we must *never* cause to be disappointed in us. And so we entered the domain of the father.

My semiotic idyll disappeared into the mists of childhood memories and imaginings, and it is only in recent years that I wonder how this transition was for our mothers, young women left in uncertainty and without sexual partners for years, with minuscule incomes and total responsibility for home and children. Yet it must have had its satisfying aspects; the twins were each other's lifelong best friends; they pooled resources, made important decisions, hauled firewood, gardened, sewed, somehow kept us fed and clothed and housed in love. I never remember discord, a raised voice.

But when the men returned it was as though none of their wives' endeavours had happened, or, if they had, were of import. Never was it implied that those long years required faith and loyalty, required fortitude, competence and ingenuity, that a secure and loving family clan was itself a remarkable achievement. Did the twins harbour a secret disloyal nostalgia for those times, for an agency that had been erased? Did they say to each other, *Remember when we...*? Not that we knew; in the communal memory, the years of our early childhood became *When-we-waited-for-Daddy*. Benhabib (1992, p. 15) tells how Lyotard contrasts the Grand Narratives of post-Enlightenment history with the *petits récits* of women and children, fools and primitives. Just so, the exclusion of our small narrativity actualized the patriarchal, heroic warrior ethic that had proven, we all agreed, that might had been shown to be right.

(II) The Baker

As I attempt an excavation of my earliest sense of the threshold between connection and agency, I know I distort, through memory and analysis, sensations for which I had no language or conceptual grasp. Still, I knew about *bad*. It was bad to shout *Won't*, bad to spit porridge back in the bowl, bad to wallop my cousins. It was bad, in an indefinably alarming way, to play doctor with the neighbour's boy. I didn't play doctor; I played baker. I had watched my mother dredging some cutlet, or dough, in flour. Flip, went the dough, into the beaten egg, then, poof, into the pan of flour, in a little cloud of flour motes, from slimy to downy-soft, spongy, fleshy, curiously thrilling.

I thought it would be fun to flour each other all over, like bakers. We must have been small enough to think that if we didn't see the mothers they couldn't see us, and old enough to sense this game must be a secret, secretive. So we settled on the capacious darkness of the hall cupboard. And of course, the door was opened, light falling like the flaming sword on our flour-smear'd bare puppy-bodies.

I was exiled in deep disgrace, marched home in my little rainslicker through a torrential downpour, elbow yanked tight by my mother's grip on my wrist, trotting to keep up, both of us splashing heedless through the puddles. My mother's face alarmed and bewildered me; the rain on her face looked like a grown-up crying. I knew I'd done something worse than *bad* in both kind and degree, and sensed, like a chasm opening before me, limits to maternal agency. Years later, in high school art history, I placed the silent *O* of anguish on her face, the face of Massaccio's Eve in his *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*. Poor mother, it was her expulsion from an innocent domestic Eden as well as mine. (May, June 1996)

My participant friends in this research have countered the "exclusion of small narrativity" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 15) by the wide range and rich specificity of their interview narratives. Their "small" stories emerge, ostensibly in response to my interview questions, but they are perhaps in a deeper sense called forth as a making and remaking of friendship, called forth, too, by the deep need of the self to speak and be heard. Their narratives manifest themselves in astonishing variety, taking shape in ways that sometimes even startled their tellers. They evoke, in engaging detail, coming of age (and of understanding) in a particular historical time and place, in a region itself coming of age.

Yet the meaning the women find and make of these stories arises from thoughtful, reflective maturity. Perhaps "the coherence of memory is due more to what we feed into it than the basic material of recollection itself" (Kerby, 1991, pp. 22, 23). From mid-life, too, they speak mindfully and often ironically of women's place in a society and in a world whose only stable attribute seems to be change and uncertainty. Tales past, tales present, all are nuanced with perceptions of identity, of agency and power, of understanding and self-understanding. Lived experience is vividly re-presented, vibrant figure against the Grand Narrative ground.

The Susu

Susu *n.* A friendly co-operative savings scheme in wh[ich] each one of a small group of persons contributes every week or month as agreed an equal portion of money to a trusted "keeper", who pays the total amount weekly or monthly to each participant in rotation....Yoruba *eesu-esusu*. (Allsopp, 1996, Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage)

Our susu began as something of a joke among half a dozen of my women friends, most of whom knew one another. The susu was a mechanism to push us to make time (as opposed to *finding* time) for pleasant, regular socializing. We invented rules of compulsory attendance to combat, individually and collectively, our absurdly overactive sense of accountability to whomever—colleagues, families, clients, students—might require our attention. To our surprise, the susu's monthly ritual became a priority, a commitment; we developed our own in-jokes, a new way of being together. The susu membership was not

static: it grew with this one's friend, that one's sister. Members have taken leaves of absence (to function, a susu requires its members' participation throughout a full cycle). And, of course, I have left. At last count the susu had ten members.

Although we are not all intimate friends, and continue to lead our separate lives, we have crafted another dimension of kinship with one another, what Mary Catherine Bateson (1994, chapter 8) might call "longitudinal epiphany." Perhaps the dynamic of our friendship is what Thomas Moore (1992) calls *soul*:: "Not a thing, but a quality or dimension of experiencing life and ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance"(p. 5). In a community offering me no ties of blood, I was sustained across the years by these rich interactions of affection and interest, by my own version of extended family. If I am homesick without a home it is for these heart-kin whom I have constituted and who have constituted me.

Are we more similar than we are different? We find ourselves a fascinating topic and wonder about this endlessly, or did when I was there. It is a question that encompasses me throughout this inquiry. We are all in midlife, middle class, in a broad sense, academics or educators. We have spent much or all of our adult lives in Barbados, and are deeply committed to the Caribbean. Intelligence, relationship, integrity, and a sense of humour matter to us. Commonalities bond us.

We grew up in different territories. (See Figure 1.) Our educational backgrounds and family structures vary; our temperaments and racial inheritances differ; so do our sexual and, to some extent, political orientations. Difference enriches us.

I did not ask the whole susu for interviews. Not all were born and raised in the Caribbean, and I wanted to hear how each woman's coming of age resonated with her country's independence. Not all were in Barbados when I needed to begin my interviews. Some I sensed would feel uneasy at such a request. In any event, each of the four women I invited to participate, agreed to do so. (See Letter of Invitation, Appendix A.) I have known them at the least, for 15 years, at most, for over 20. They speak for themselves in this document. They introduce themselves through the coming-of-age narratives that structure chapter 3. I re-introduce each of them in chapters 4 and 5, the texts of which revolve and evolve around the cultural, social and ethical intersections of our adult lives.

I respond to their voices as text, as catalyst, as "incitement to discourse" (Lather, 1993, p. 673), as conversation. I have tried to avoid explaining, or interpreting or otherwise *speaking for* any of them. I have tried to follow Margaret Urban Walker's (1992) precept that identifies moral understanding with "a collection of perceptive, imaginative, appreciative and expressive skills and capacities which put and keep us in unimpeded

contact with the realities of ourselves and specific others” (p. 170).

Locating My Self (I)

I have been putting off, uneasily, the need to locate myself in this discourse. The research process itself calls for the human being who is the research instrument to articulate her connections with its substance and process, and this I attempt to do in a more specific and explicit mode in the next chapter. But I also need to define my location from a standpoint of friendship; some equality of disclosure with that of my participants seems called for. It would be true, but less than truthful, merely to say, *middle-aged, middle class, white, academic, Caribbean expatriate*. And my generation was raised with a “modesty” that resonates uncomfortably with Josselson’s (1996) warning against the “welter of narcissistic tensions” (p. 94) that accompany this sort of research. So I have attempted to locate myself by attending to the *petits récits* that arise from my memory album, and to place them in an historical context that would not have been evident to me at the time.

Still, it is humbling to remember that even the real voice “is still a performance” (Meyer, 1993, p. 58), that the “self is as hard to see justly as other things” (Murdock in Clinchy, 1996, p. 230).

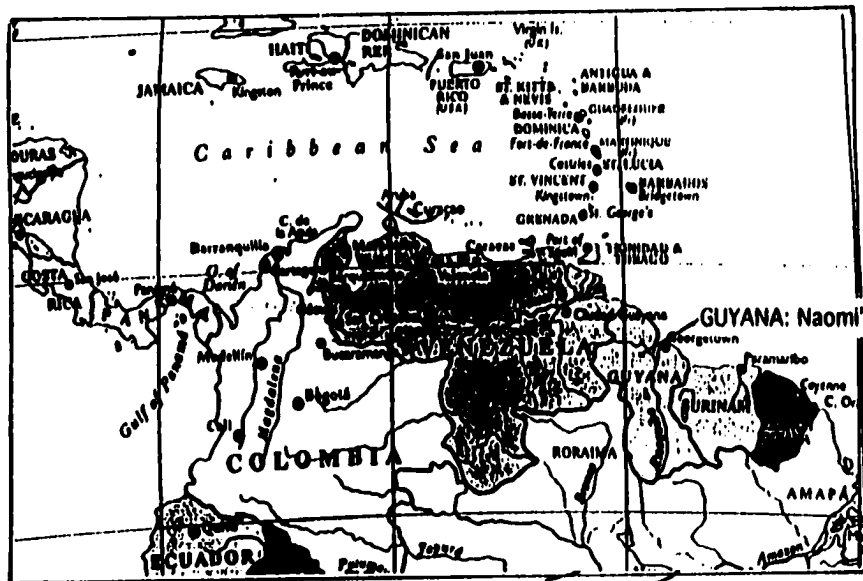
Petits Récits from the Memory Album

I was born and brought up in Victoria, B.C., the middle child between an older pre-war and a younger post-war brother. It was a snug, smug era content with its modest comforts, secure in its conviction that it was the best of all possible worlds, while Japanese Canadians were attempting to reconstruct their shattered lives, and Aboriginal children endured the purgatory of the residential schools. But I knew nothing of that.

I did well enough at school; I had learned to read effortlessly, and read voraciously ever after. I could draw, that is, I could copy accurately, which at times during my uneventful primary schooling, was seen as clever. I was put to copy maps and diagrams on the board with coloured chalk, which I did with a great sense of my own importance.

My horizons rolled back when I was eleven and the school selected me to attend a Saturday morning art class. It was, I suppose, a district project for artistic adolescents; the other children were, like me, the one or two chosen from their various schools. In retrospect, I can see it was my first experience of creative or even intelligent pedagogy. I was filled with sensations I had no words for, a kind of excited anxiety at a conceptual

JAMAICA: Naomi's school years



GUYANA: Naomi's early years

ANTIGUA: Lucinda

BARBADOS:
ST. VINCENT: Naomi's parents
THE SUSU
Felicia
Wendy's adult years
GRENADA: Felicia's father
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: Elizabeth
Naomi's birthplace

Figure 1. Caribbean Birthplace and Location of Participants

VENEZUELA: Naomi's early years

world so different in kind and degree from the one in which I lived my everyday life. The teacher wore great silver pendants that she had made; I had not imagined there to be jewellery that someone *made up*, or that there could be a grownup who attended with interest and intensity to my creative processes, who required me to be aware that I *had* creative processes. Dazed, infatuated, longing to shine, I brought her all my best drawings of pretty ladies copied from advertisements. I was mortified and mystified by their brisk rejection, for *I could do them perfectly*. I learnt they were Chocolate Box Stuff, which was bad. I rolled up my pretty ladies and took them home, a small tearful inner voice insisting that *I had done them perfectly*.

Equally incomprehensible was my epiphany following an absence from school. I had been convalescing from one of my recurring fevers, weak, bored, querulous, and my mother mollified me with the household supply of Ivory Soap. This I carved into a minute village of Eskimos (as they were then called), igloos, sleds, dogs. It kept me absorbed the whole weekend, but it seemed so childish, like playing with toys, that the art teacher saw them only by accident. She swooped down on them, commandeered the display case in the entrance hall and arranged the little figures on a rumpled white cloth snowscape, surrounded by books on primitive (as it was then) art, next to an exquisite miniature ivory Inuit carving. This was not Chocolate Box Stuff, it was like real things in books, and this was good. My name on a little card. The artist. I tiptoed past the display case repeatedly, queasy with delight and confusion.

The next year I went to junior high school, and thenceforward had a good art teacher or a good English teacher nearly every year and sometimes both in one year. As I was an insatiable reader and obsessive about art, I did well in these subjects. I was allowed to remain virtually innumerate and scientifically illiterate, girls not requiring skills in these areas.

My awakening to art and literature was accompanied by ardent religious fervour. I am perhaps untrue to the experience to trivialize this intensity, through a faint embarrassment, as *religiosity*, for I experienced it as profound faith, as epiphany. I found the sonorous cadence of the liturgy and ritual powerfully moving, and still do; the chants, the archaic rhythm of the language still inform my aesthetic. I am long past the capacity for that sort of faith, but it left a spiritual hunger. While my mother was alive, I would, from filial piety and a sort of ethnographic curiosity about myself, take her to church, to midnight Mass at Christmas, and be unbearably moved.

A highlight of my adolescence, one that still hangs halcyon in my remembering, was the summer camp run by the church on Thetis Island, which I attended, first as a

camper, later as a counsellor. The setting was lovely, wooded, sloping down to a many-coved shore with secret vistas and enchanted rockpools that reflected the universe, turned us upside down. Or so my memory tells me. To be there early, alone, to see the mist shift and thin on the silent beach, the dawn crows cawing from the arbutus trees, offered me a sense of the sacred that has survived adolescent self-dramatization. It has even survived my subsequent realization that during that period, half a mile away on Kuper Island (Welsh & Campbell [film], 1997), Aboriginal children cowered in loneliness and fear, and endured deprivation, humiliation and brutality that would ensure for most a lifetime of difficulty, and for some, early death.

During these years no one suggested I might plan to give my interests a shape in my adult life. I didn't know about role models; I didn't like the available teacher/ nurse/ secretary options; my visions of the future went no further than waiting tables so that I might hitchhike around Europe. So I finished school, worked and saved enough to enroll in my first year of university, and did very well. Both my brothers had hated school, and left as soon as they were sixteen. My father, a primary school teacher, read slowly, with difficulty. In retrospect, my parents were curiously unencouraging of my academic aptitudes.

That year, shattering forever our understanding of the world's order and goodness, my older brother committed suicide. It was only when I struggled, years later, with my own child's learning disability, that questions from this period clamoured to be explored and answered. As I brought those memories back into focus, I saw in my remembered father, my brothers, behaviours I now recognized: the creativity, the inventive compensatory strategies, the perceptual deficits, the secretiveness, avoidance of reading, hostility to the academy, denial, and finally, despair.

I started art school and loved every minute. I returned to university for a year, to study art history. But then, impetuously and in quick succession, I met and married my Caribbean partner, and moved to Ontario. I worked, as wives did in those days, while my student husband finished school,. We moved to Barbados when he graduated, and I worked (also as wives did in those days) as his Girl Friday for ten years,. My embeddedness in the gender assumptions of the day was enacted in my conviction that I had abandoned suburban conventionality, when all I did was move 7,000 miles and continue to embody the most conventional of domestic patterns.

Nothing had prepared me for the Byzantine complexity of Barbados, then still a colony. But I was engrossed in, committed to my partner's endeavour; we were young enough to have bottomless energy and determination, and his practice eventually

flourished. In my spare time I ran children's Saturday morning art classes, and taught secondary school art part-time. I followed my passion for printmaking, participated in group exhibits, and gradually made friends. One young art teacher collaborated with me in a two-person exhibition, and we sold well. Two years later, we did it again.

The colony became a country; the young couple became a family. Barbados became independent in 1967, and set about transforming its social structure; the following year I had my first son, and my spouse and I designed and built a home. The proceeds from my artwork paid the downpayment on the land we had bought from a neighbouring planter. He came for tea, looked benevolently around the walls and said, Well, art, now, that's a nice little hobby for a woman.

I was 31 when I finally went back to school. UWI [University of the West Indies] had retained the colonial bias against North American education and its perceived lack of rigor. My three years of tertiary study were dismissed, so I started at the beginning again but eventually I had my BA. Three months before my final exams, I stopped being Girl Friday. This seemed a monumental decision at the time, dangerously self-indulgent, neglectful of family.

Ironically, my career ambitions were protected by the very laws that defined women as chattels. I could attend the university and apply for work at a time that expatriates were flying like chaff because my identity was legally subsumed in my husband's. This law caused multiple resentments quite apart from its injustice to the Barbadian woman who could not assume the right of a citizen to settle in her own country with her family. Men who married "out" were resented: Aren't our women good enough for you? And even when jobs were still plentiful, people like me were seen as outsiders taking jobs rightfully belonging to Barbadians, an understandable reaction to their historical position as second class citizens in their own country.

I had my second son and spent ten years teaching literature at the community college. The '70s and early '80s were good years to be a teacher. The post Independence euphoria was maintained by a healthy economy, an empowering sense of cultural identity and expanded vocational opportunities for Barbadians. The educational ladder to employment and status was a reality; many of our grassroots youngsters were the first of the family to achieve secondary, let alone tertiary schooling. Their enthusiasm made them a pleasure to teach, and it was a pleasure too, to see them off to university, to employment, and sometimes to welcome them back as colleagues. During this time I completed my Diploma in Education, and then my M.Phil, an outlet for my passion for Caribbean literature, which was only starting to appear on the Oxford and Cambridge A-level syllabus

we taught.

I was beginning to try to articulate ways in which it seemed to me that the colonial process was replicated in relations between men and women, but I could find no frame for my reflections, which, when I tried to bring them into discourse, were shrugged aside as beside the point. "A charming slip of the feminist pen," red-pencilled my graduate supervisor, sending me back to rewrite. I did not yet grasp what I would recognize when, in the future, I would note Jehlen's (1981) contention that women must understand their condition as a *precondition* to writing about it. Only with self-knowledge can women "construct an enabling relation with a language that would of itself deny them the ability to use it creatively" (p. 583).

I had begun to return to British Columbia in the summers. After an 18 year absence, it was no longer the society I remembered. Much as I enjoyed a respite from a life which was now my norm, and in which I was so visible, I felt curiously dislocated, both upon my arrival in B.C., and upon my return to Barbados.¹¹

Returning to B.C. also gave me the gift of my mother's friendship, into my mid-life, into her old age. It was instructive to observe how the women's movement played out for older women, women who had lived the traditional role, completed their life tasks of homemaking, child-rearing, "husbandry." My mother's creativity flourished in gardening, quiltmaking, flower arranging. She became something of a political activist in her gentle way; she boycotted Nestlé; she wrote indignantly to Ronald Reagan. I recognize her in Bateson's (1990) evocation of an "attitude toward...the planet [as an] expression of homemaking, where we create and sustain the possibility of life" (p. 136). As Parkinson's Disease took its toll, each year's leavetaking became a greater wrench, but she modelled for me an old age of grace, generosity, and courage. (Appendix B)

My annual visits also made it possible to attend the University of Victoria and complete the art training I had so regretted leaving unfinished, and after four challenging summers, I had my BFA. It was a bittersweet goal to have reached, for I recognized that if I had wanted to be an artist of calibre, I should have remained immersed in art over the last 20 years. I could not see myself merely as a housewife hobbyist, and from that time, I stopped thinking of myself as an artist.

I left my college teaching when my son's dyslexia was finally diagnosed. While the

¹¹Ted Aoki (1983) writes of an analogous experience, of returning, a young Japanese-Canadian, to Japan. He was not used to being in the mainstream. Their *present*, he says, of his immersion in a Japanese majority, intersected, but his past was totally irrelevant to theirs. "From their perspective, my history counted not at all"; he was "something of an a-historical person" (p. 323).

problem had remained nameless, its mechanism had remained incomprehensible, and my efforts had often been useless and sometimes counterproductive. I now recognize the sense of empowerment that came with the diagnosis, the power to name. For with the naming came the tools to demystify, to make visible the intractable, to advocate, to celebrate my boy's intelligence and creativity, for he confronted his difficulties with resourcefulness, courage, and tenacity. I have spoken of that journey elsewhere (Donawa, 1995c).

When I returned to work, it was as a curator, a museum educator. I had the opportunity to immerse myself in an entirely different discourse, recognize a new epistemology (although I did not think of it in those terms at that time), an opportunity to implement many of my ideas about education, about the function of culture in a developing society. The museum world is, like many cultural institutions, in the throes of postmodern reconstruction, with its issues of interpretation, appropriation, and voice. Artifacts, as the material evidence of history and culture, reverberate with meanings beyond their objective existence; the educator's task is to create a context that assists the public to "read" those artifacts.

I was free of curriculum constraints, free to define my own mission, free to research and design exhibits. Eventually I trained a staff of docents, developed curricula for them, and for an annual school intake of 6,000, designed special-needs programs and teacher workshops. And I re-enrolled at the University of Victoria, using my vacations to take advantage of its excellent immersion programs for museum professionals.

My *magnum opus* was the design and construction of a Children's Gallery, a teaching gallery with an 1100 sq. ft. permanent exhibit interpreting Barbados' social history. It absorbed all my academic and artistic experience and fired my wildest pedagogical aspirations (Donawa, 1993, 1995a). If the events of the past few years had had a different sequence, the materialization of the Children's Gallery project would have been the subject of this dissertation.

In the postpartum letdown following the Gallery's completion, I began my doctoral studies, intending to develop museum education programs for at-risk adolescents. But my studies brought into sharp focus a perception that I had always put determinedly aside: a perception that I worked within an institution, a culture, whose concern with status and hierarchy was so internalized, so naturalized, as to seem almost like a genetic disease. I questioned my place in this structure, questioned the extent to which I colluded in what I critiqued. I saw my work as trivial, cosmetic, if it could not effect some kind of top-down systemic shift. I saw that what I constructed would not last beyond where my personal energy would take it. As I came and went between B.C. and the Caribbean, from one

margin to another, the tug-of-war continued between these bleak insights and my professional practice, which demanded dedication and a conviction I could no longer muster. Finally, I resigned, and spent a poignant term bringing closure to relationships in ways that honoured the faith I once had in them, and the affection I still felt, still feel.

The course of my subsequent work unfolds in the Methodology section of the following chapter. I do not yet have the perspective to outline with confidence the course of my life since that point. Throughout all of this document's research and writing, I have addressed my material, and the reader, from an internalized Caribbean stance. As I approach the end (by re-writing this beginning), my life has changed, and it seems my future will be as an apparent part of the Canadian mainstream I resemble in speech and appearance, but among whom I feel like Aoki's (1983, p. 323) "a-historical person." I can scarcely yet articulate what that does for my sense of self; I speak throughout the document, and at some length in chapter 5, of the vagaries of identity.

In my life, as in my inquiry, I seek self-understanding; I seek Hirshfield's (1997b) *presence*: "the willingness to inhabit ourselvesTo feel, and to question feeling; to know, and to agree to wander utterly lost in the dark, where every journey of the soul starts over"(p. 51).

Coming to the Question

Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (Rilke, in Mood, 1975, p. 25)

When I wrote my proposal, I thought I had formulated the question that writing this dissertation would answer. Then as I designed my questionnaire, with *its* dozens of questions, I thought my friends' stories would offer cumulative answers to cumbersome meta-questions I couldn't quite formulate. As I moved through my coursework, there were helpful sessions concerning interpretive inquiry where we unpacked thesis questions, and I worked with others to develop *their* questions. Tetsuo Aoki's course¹² had a helpful frame for distinguishing titles from questions, and I generated whole constellations of questions. I needed to link identity and moral agency, and show the connection of both to friendship. I had to suggest friendship as a way of making meaning that was applicable to other discourses. I had to work the cultural setting in, but when I did, it implied a post-colonial

¹²*Writing/REwriting Texts of Lived Experience*, ED-B 591, given by Dr. T. Aoki, University of Victoria, Summer, 1995.

document, and when I took it out, I erased the location of my inquiry. It seemed, not that I had no question, but that I had too many. A recursive and contemplative dwelling with the texts of my interviews provoked questioning that seemed to feed on itself. Finally, as I wrote and reflected, I tried to put my questionlessness to one side.

My susu friends were intrigued, for we had all been UWI trained not to move until an immutable research question had been generated. One of their first queries on my initial visit was, Have you come to your question? At my second interview visit a year later, they teased, Have you come to your paragraph? A recent e-mail quizzed, Have you dealt with the Q-word?

I was by this point so immersed in the writing pressure cooker that I once more put aside my questions. I doodled sample questions in my journal when I thought about it, but they got longer and more complex. By May 1999, feeling frantic about the completion deadline I had set myself, I registered for a week-long writers' retreat in the Gulf Islands, hoping to jumpstart my writing and focus my mind. The idyllic setting, the silence and isolation, the wholesome routine of good food, rest, work, and congenial company, calmed me and supported my writing process. To my surprise, the seemingly endless conceptual shopping lists flew to my pen, and in three days the draft of my final chapter fell into place. It was coincidental, but seemed fitting that with its completion, the group entered a 36 hour period of silence.

JOURNAL: Finished my chapter 5 draft yesterday. I can't believe it! I fell into bed, into the strange but comfortable silence, bludgeoned with weariness, feeling I could sleep forever.

But I woke up before it was quite light, suddenly, as though someone had called me. Something *had* called me; as clearly as a voice, my question spoke itself: *What is it like to understand through friendship?*
(7 May, 1999)

This is the question that had withheld itself from me until I had finished trying to answer it.

Contribution to the Field

What does my research, addressing *what it is like to understand through friendship*, contribute to the advancement of knowledge? In academia, this question can pose difficulties: the reflexive inquirer does not produce (as the empirical researcher may) a population survey, a technological improvement, a vaccine. But it is a valid question. I am in mind of Dwayne Huebner's contention that research has a pastoral dimension (class discussions, July 1998. See also footnote 6, p. 6). Huebner stresses the need to work for the fulfilment of the field, to honour the spirit of inquiry that brought the institution into being, and to re-shape public discourse. In this spirit, I suggest three domains in which my

work contributes something of worth.

First, despite the value of the existing research to which I have turned, connections remain to be made, or strengthened, or re-directed; gaps need to be filled; narratives call out for re-interpretation. The literature on female friendship and its relation to understanding and moral agency is not extensive; it suggests starting points rather than destinations. On the other hand, much discourse attests to failures of communication and good will between black and white feminists, between North and South. In the Caribbean, there is considerable scepticism towards what one friend of mine calls “the post-colonial racket,” often perceived as just one more hegemonic takeover. And although Caribbean research offers extensive sociological and literary treatment of poor/working-class women, there is little discourse that does not ignore, demonize, or stereotype middle-class women. I believe the voices of my research can contribute to all these conversations.

Second, although this is a contribution I recognized only as I noted the dearth of models for my own research, I offer a detailed account of the way one researcher has worked her way through a particular kind of interpretive inquiry. The qualitative domain is still sketchily mapped; the journey is a lonely one, without a priori guidelines. I offer a rationale, a methodology, criteria for validity that might clarify aspects of narrative discourse for those who are drawn to it, and that might assist them in their own inquiry.

Third, the inquiring human being is a human *be-ing* more knowledgeable, tactful and mindful in her practice, whatever that may be, more intelligent and responsible in her competence to think, feel, and act. We bring one another into being through our attention, concentration and insight; through understanding the creative potential of contradiction, conflict and ambiguity; from the activities of language and relationship. I believe my research will contribute to a poetics (*Gr poieo*=to make) of such understanding.

Overview

Chapter 2

In the following chapter, I enlarge upon the assumptions I have outlined in this one. I describe the methods that have framed my inquiry, and that enable me to propose friendship both as a discourse and as an ethos. I suggest that emergent design is an appropriate mode for an inquiry whose context changes as it revisits earlier understandings. I offer narrative as an apt vehicle for this document.

Human meaning-making has a narrative structure. The way we choose to narrate gives rise to questions of moral agency. How we are narrated by ourselves and others shapes our identity; the way my participant-friends have shaped their narrative is part of

their agency. Social discourse and power relations constitute our narratives, but so do the imagination, perception, and memory of the discerning self. To discern the limits of historical “truth,” the limits of the Grand Narrative, is to understand that those “truths” are narrative constructions generated by dominant groups to confirm their own intelligibility. I contend that in a hermeneutic enterprise such as this one, definitive notions of truth and authenticity need not separate the narrative constructions of “real” life from those of fictional truths.

Chapter 2 also outlines this project’s interview process, and points to the ethical and methodological concerns that arise from transcription and interpretation, and from issues of representation and appropriation. I locate myself in the discourse throughout the text, and particularly through my journal extracts. Thus my own reflective voice is interwoven with the voices of the interviewed women throughout the next chapter and subsequent chapters. My journals provide a narrative record of our friendships, offer material for reflection, and keep track of the simultaneous re-iterative activities of reading, listening, writing, theorizing, and reflection.

Finally, I unfold the criteria I have constructed to ensure the validity and rigor of this dissertation. The five categories by which I have evaluated my work concern its expressive authenticity (*aesthetics*), its transformative energy (*reflective and intellectual soundness*), its ethical structure (*form/function congruence*), its incitement to action (*usefulness*), and its intellectual and moral compellingness (*dynamic validity*).

Chapter 3

In chapter 3, each of my four participants/friends speaks of her Caribbean childhood and coming-of-age. The rich specificity of their narratives evokes both the “criss-cross valuing” (Mordecai & Wilson, 1989, p. xiii) of race, class, and gender in the Caribbean, and the futility (for the researcher) of trying to generalize about “Caribbean women.” Nonetheless, cultural and ideological commonalities exist. To avoid repetition, I have highlighted them in Felicia’s story, which I have therefore treated at greater length than those of the other three women.

Felicia, the lone child of an all-female extended family, recounts a well-ordered, sternly predictable childhood, with a stress on respectability, achievement, and appearances. Her narrative reveals how comprehensively patriarchy and imperialism enacted Spivak’s (1994) “epistemic violence” (p. 76) on the subjectivity of Caribbean children. This violence was effected through an education that erased any mirror, in literature or history, of the children’s material lives, their language, or their colour. Yet

even this indoctrination was seeded with its own deconstructive energies. Competence in language, in the dominant discourse, along with her intuitive sensitivity, fuelled Felicia's capacity for agency and resistance (as it did for the other three participants).

Lucinda's early understanding of excellence, too, was shaped by imperial history and by the British literary canon. The eldest of 10 in a devout and devoted family, she seems to have been predestined by her birth order, with its quasi-maternal responsibilities, to be a teacher. Yet she too resisted subsuming her life in that of the family, or her values in those of the dominant discourse, to pursue her own passion for the life of the mind.

Elizabeth and Naomi, a decade younger than Felicia, Lucinda, and me, seem almost to be of another generation. They speak from an assumption of Creole culture, and from their grounding in it. For Elizabeth, it is family lore, family history, that endowed early events with meaning. The secure youngest of six in the dynamic family of an up-and-coming technocrat in late colonial Trinidad and Tobago, she immersed herself in her father's well-stocked library, travelled with her parents, and observed the comings and goings of a multicultural world. She developed a sense that to be different was not to be marginalized, but to be unique and special.

Naomi's supportive and unconventional parents protected her from the inscriptions of bourgeois values, and inculcated "a sense of honour that came from being trusted" (Naomi). After a peripatetic early schooling (in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Venezuela, Jamaica), she settled happily into her black, working-class secondary school. She was hard-pressed to find reason to rebel against her liberal, loving parents, and it would seem that for her, as for them, resistance and agency find expression in political action.

From my reading of these stories, I understand each voice to be charting an epistemological journey. Each evokes the voices heard in childhood, the voices of home, church, and school first internalized as authority. Each suggests stirrings of resistance, and of liberation from that authority. Acquiescence is replaced by dialogue, by "a dimension of recognition between the self and other" (Benjamin, 1986, p. 98), recognition that would mature as self-knowledge and moral autonomy.

Chapter 4

Creating a chasm between theory and action deprives thought of consequence and action of deliberate depth. Thinking is an activity, and action is a "thought-event." (Raymond, 1986, p. 214)

Chapter 4 constructs the theory that enables me to postulate a practice of friendship. From my reflection upon the writings of post-colonial, postmodern, and feminist thinkers,

I have absorbed five concepts that have altered my own understanding of research. My friends' rich narratives, braided into these insights, complement and illuminate them.

Theory

The first of these conceptual catalysts is the recognition of the extent to which relations of power embed themselves in knowledge production, and particularly the extent to which they inform our understanding of gender. Yet that recognition also enables us to resist and offset the gender relations inscribed in us by the ideology of the powerful. The second conceptual shift, a refracting facet of the first one, involves the comprehension that all knowledge is socially and culturally situated. To see knowledge in its epistemological context is to see what is at stake and whose interests are served. To understand how we know and where we are located is to understand who we are. No knowledge is objective or universal: all is *partial*, in both senses of the word.

The third shift led me to understand identity as a process, inescapably relational and moral. Caring intersubjectivity is a process of "reading" others into being and of defining one's own identity. I trace the thought of several writers who maintain that the early relational bonds by which we identify ourselves nourish later cognitive and moral growth, and ultimately may offer relational models for inquiry into other discourses.

Yet difficulty and paradox are inherent in relationships. My fourth shift is an acknowledgement that contradiction and ambiguity are inevitable, and woven into the events of our complex, multilayered lives. The contradictory yearnings for inclusion and connection on the one hand, and independence and autonomy on the other, constitute tensions that compose "the restless creative motion of life itself" (Kegan, 1882, p. 107). It is where the incommensurate issues of our lives are knotted together that we encounter original difficulties of being, and are presented with opportunities for a new understanding of critical thought.

My fifth shift suggests intelligence as a relationship. The early connections that "precede both knowing and gender" (Ruddick, 1996, p. 263) underlie the knowing self. If intelligence is a product of relationships, it too is continually in flux, in the productive (gendered, situated, incommensurate) tensions of those relationships. Intelligence is therefore mutable, permeable, and transformative; it enables the transfer of varied meaning-making to new contexts.

Practice

I suggest that particular practices arise from, and are tested by friendship, and that

these practices may be transposed to other discourses. I speak to four qualities I believe to shape the practice of friendship, and of an epistemologically “friendly” framing of knowledge: empathy, trust, reflexivity, and narrative connection.

By widening our experiential base, imaginative *empathy* nourishes both self-understanding and understanding of others. It is the ability to perceive oneself from the perspective of the other that makes moral agency possible. Empathy enlarges our “epistemic capacities” (Friedman, 1992, p. 199), enlarges our ability to engage in discourses other than that of friendship, encourages experimental forms of research, and inspires praxis.

Empathy makes possible a methodology of *trust*. Trust, in friendship and in research, directs what we can know and how we can know. Trust connects knowledge and knower in meaningful ways; it honours relationship and experience. A trusting relationship requires ongoing judgement and observation; when we trust someone, we trust them to be attentive, observant, and discriminating in the expression of their trustworthiness toward us. The entire methodology and content of this inquiry rests upon trust, a mutual faith in the good will of participants (of whom I am one) to one another. The risks to which trust makes us vulnerable we may temper by a care-ful, discerning, “appropriate trust” (Baier, 1994, p. 10), investing in the more extensive climate of trust that evolves as we “expos[e] our throats so that others become accustomed to not biting” (p. 15).

Empathy and trust assist a recursive returning to experience, so that eventually we understand more fully the nature and significance of our knowing; they support the critical *reflexivity* that arises from friendship and that offers conditions for its practice. The reflective practitioner who calls into question the assumptions that underlie her values and beliefs understands that prolonged attentiveness to experience leads to insight. Our reflexivity determines the meaning we make of the discourses available to us and how we perceive our location within them. It is in the reflexive cycling of attention, insight, and understanding that I have come to comprehend the intersections of my academic interests and the processes of my own life, and in which I strive to work productively in the difficulty and mystery of human experience.

The *narrative connections* of friendship that constitute the data of my inquiry are enhanced by the real friendships that make my research possible. And my own reflections, widened by friendship, in turn affect the friendships themselves. Different stories are of course always possible, for our unique experiences determine how we interpret the narratives we hear, what stories we tell, and what we integrate into our own life narrative. The meanings we make of the events that flow around us become the stories we tell.

Indeed, our moral and emotional maturity determine how we make the connections that enable us to “read” ourselves and others. Narrative’s contextualizing function connects the individual to the environment she shapes and is shaped by, and friendship offers a particular context for the life narrative.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 addresses moral agency and suggests how it suffuses the understanding of identity that emerges from an epistemology of friendship. The chapter unpacks experiences my friends identify as important constituents of making them who they are: These experiences include a sense of evil arising from the particulars of everyday life: their location in the gendered, racial realities of a particular historical time and place; their friendships; their work; their insatiable reading; their desire to know themselves and others more deeply.

All four of my participant-friends describe evil in terms of exclusion, of multiple marginalizations, of unmindfulness, of the unjustifiable causing of pain. They speak, essentially, of the *thoughtlessness* manifested by “insensitiveness, opacity, inability to make connections” (McCarthy in Brightman, 1995, p. xxc). This opacity inheres in the value system of the dominant, and in particular, in its use of *difference* to render trivial or invisible the agency of subordinate groups or individuals. That is, that which differs from the accepted norm, differs in that it is in some respect inferior to it.

But much feminist, post-colonial, and postmodern thought celebrates difference as a source of identity and moral agency. The discernment of difference enables us to recognize our own and other’s locations and renders us permeable to otherness; it offers insight, and enables us to tolerate ambiguity and to move and change. Who we are, in our distinctiveness, becomes a field of potential for our being and becoming.

Friendship opposes the evils of exclusion; it supports our construction of moral identity and agency. Friendship’s practices of empathy, trust, reflexivity, and narrative connection (see chapter 4) offer opportunities to craft the self in relationships with intimate others and also with the wider world. Moral possibilities inhere in the commitment to friendship. Our experience is enlarged vicariously by our trust in a friend’s “epistemic capacity as a moral witness,” (Friedman 1993, p. 204) and to the extent that reciprocity informs our friendship, our narratives open up standpoints for one another. Furthermore, every friendship is both a miniature culture and a “potential counterculture” (Hutter in Friedman, 1993, p. 219). The emotional fullness and reflective insight that characterize friendship have the potential to bring it into the realm of the political, and to inform our

communal being and our work, another crucial embodiment of agency.

But women's work, the work that has historically been seen as "natural" to women, is the work that those in power may choose not to do, a *petitrécit* to the Grand Narrative of hegemonic endeavour. It is work that is difficult to problematize because the dominant discourse renders it invisible and erases its moral agency. Nonetheless, women's work offers opportunities for resistance. The four participants construct their own identities as working, caring subjects by investing their work with love. We craft ourselves in the processes of work and its ongoing generativity. To labour with love is to shape our selves, to insist on self-care, and to understand and resist the relations of power that would define our working world.

Literature too is a site for identity. Although the literary canon may support the values and power relations of the dominant discourse, it also enlarges our experience and understanding, and expands our subjectivity. It provides us with the discursive tools to interpret, to resist, to unravel, and to deconstruct. We can change our knowing selves as we enlarge our narrative ways of seeing; reading "catalyzes a more critical view of our identities" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 79).

The social roles inscribed in our identities are not immutable; they can be offset by self-knowledge. In the ongoing processes of the self's construction lie the possibilities for choice and change, for growth and transformation. The discerning subject sees herself, partial, contextual, continually evolving. Such self-knowledge enlarges our capability to know the other. And understanding how the other sees us in turn enhances our self-knowledge. If we see ourselves discerningly in this flux and process, we locate ourselves within a cultural and historical context; we become aware of our own standpoint and its location in the metanarrative. In this larger terrain we may situate and thus understand more deeply our experience. In this unpredictable process lies our agency.

CHAPTER 2: A CONTEXT FOR INQUIRY

Methodology: A Frame for Working

My method is implicit in (etymologically “folded into”) my topic. The successive ways in which I have elaborated upon this topic, and in which it has worked upon me, have dictated the form it has taken and the processes through which it has emerged. And as my methodology is a narrative one, its rationale is my story of its emergenc/y.

Emergent Design: A Map of the Journey

It is only AT THE END of the experience that we begin to see the whole we constructed (Meloy, 1994, p. 1).

It was only as I brought my inquiry to closure that I understood why the first chapter of Judith Meloy’s (1994) excellent guide to writing the qualitative dissertation was titled *Understanding by Finishing: The End is the Beginning*. I can now understand why my inquiry has taken the form it has, but in my proposal I had great difficulty trying to predict convincingly what form it *would* take. Herein lies a dilemma for the qualitative researcher in a tradition that requires of us that we should have clear focus, question, and design from the beginning. As Marjorie McIntyre (1994) mused, preparing to write her phenomenological dissertation:

Often I am confronted with the notion that I should know exactly what I am doing before I start—a notion that often keeps me from starting. Eventually, I found myself questioning the whole idea of research itself....What transpired was an underlying belief that something worthwhile would come from my staying open to the process as it happened...and allowing questions constituted within the inquiry to guide the study. (p. 170)

I envision the emergent design of my inquiry not as a *deviation from* the traditional research norm (and certainly not as less rigorous) but rather as an entirely different mode of relating form to function. The form of my inquiry emerges from the interests, themes, and assumptions it gives rise to; the aptness of the form consists in the extent to which it embodies the concerns of the inquiry (and so provides criteria for its assessment¹³), and the vibrancy with which it emerges as a discovery process. Meloy suggests that “the congruence of what we do and how we present it...[may be] as important to qualitative studies as the explicit structures that allow us to examine an experimental study”(p. 5).

¹³Just as, for the empirical researcher, her/his characteristic way of working provides criteria for validity.

The processes through which I have shaped my inquiry arise from my capacity to make meaning from the narrative resources I have assembled. The charting of that evolutionary process has determined my methodology; the charting--a continuous, cumulative articulation of interest--*is* the methodology.

Open-ended and *emergent* do not signify *free-floating* or *shapeless*. My bias, my situatedness, drives my commitment to the interests and assumptions that fuel my research and--it is to be hoped--give it congruency and power, constitute its validity (*valides*: strong). These assumptions include the belief that:

- The intersubjective bonds of love and friendship can offer models both for ethical behaviour and for academic inquiry;
- My friends/participants' narratives inscribe their lives with a strong sense of self and of moral agency;
- To document, to re/present these processes of interrelationship and self-understanding is to suggest a certain quality of inner and outer life, an ethos of hope and possibility.

Even at the proposal stage, in 1996, I argued for an open-endedness that would accommodate an ongoing evolution of meaning, that would allow an organizational structure to develop from the processes of data collection and interpretation, and that would locate the literature review throughout the inquiry. I did not attempt to codify my procedures, but rather intended

to work along a web of perceptions in a way that allows focus to emerge, and I accept that this may not occur until well along in the inquiry. As Meloy (1994) says, "It is only at the point of closure...that the complex layered experience...begins to take shape as a sensible whole that can be...organized, interpreted, and perhaps, understood....Understanding follows doing" (p.12), [Donawa, 1996, Dissertation Proposal].

JOURNAL: It was only after I had written much of what has now become chapter 4 that I realized I was constructing an epistemology. It was only after much reflection and revisiting that I saw that my writing was an account of the theorizing that enabled me to think of friendship as an epistemology, and an account of the practices that embodied that epistemology. It was later still that I saw the work's location in a metanarrative of friendship, for it was my friends' empathy, trust, reflexivity, and narrative meaning-making that determined how the gift of their stories would be given and received, and how I would use them to infuse my growing conviction that the dynamics of friendship offer us a way to make meaning in the world.
(May 1999)

JOURNAL: All has shape-shifted since I spiralled back to the beginning of my work. My enormous (over 100 pages!), theory-packed [C]hapter 1 has evaporated. Some I have let go, no longer feeling such need of discursive armour; some has

dissolved into subsequent chapters; much that was “true” for the writer who began, no longer grounds the one seeking closure.

It’s not so much that I didn’t “get it right” the first time, but that the subsequent material emerges as a context that calls me to revisit my earlier understanding. The whole thing becomes palimpsestic. And the new “watermarks”¹⁴ soak through and re-shape the “known coordinates” of my inquiry.

My question has been a hairshirt from the beginning [see *Coming to the Question*, chapter 1]. While I looked to my friends’ narratives as contexts for identity and moral agency, I generated question after question; I was well into my inquiry before I realize that friendship itself was the metanarrative.
(May 1999)

It required a leap of faith to believe in Meloy’s “point of closure” (p. 12), in Bateson’s “self-invention,”¹⁵ for there were times when my inquiry’s open-endedness offered unanswered and unanswerable questions that multiplied as terrifyingly as the sorcerer’s apprentice’s brooms. As Freeman (1991) says:

the trajectory of developmental transformation can only be told in *retrospect*....there exist *emergent* developmental ends, which, precisely by virtue of their emergence, render previous ends insufficient or inferior through their very juxtaposition against them...rather than being seen as a teleologically driven push toward the future...instead to be seen as a never-ending retrospective story of transformation.
(p. 88)

Encouraged, I wrote hopefully:

JOURNAL: What I’m searching for isn’t a concrete goal, an external beacon to guide me, because what I find won’t exist, as Bateson says, until I create it. And “it” will be a point in the ongoing journey where questions that have been generated can be addressed, and where closure seems possible and desirable.
(November, 1998)

And so it turned out. Up to a month before I completed my first draft, I despaired of ever knowing how or when I would tie off the ends. But mid-afternoon on May 6, 1999, I finished a sentence, closed my folder, went for a walk, and knew I had finished what I had to say.

¹⁴ Michaels (1996, p. 137) speaks of the “watermarks” of memory as the *terra incognita* (my understanding of *petits récits*) superimposed on the known co-ordinates of “real” history (which I take to be the Grand Narratives).

¹⁵ “We are engaged in a day-by-day process of self-invention--not discovery, for what we search for does not exist until we find it”(Bateson, 1990, p. 28).

Narrative Inquiry: Shapely Illusions

Narrative....like rhetoric, pulls us in through the cognitive mind as much as through the emotions. It answers both our curiosity and our longing for shapely forms: our profound desire to know what happens, and our persistent hope that what happens will somehow make sense. Narrative instructs us in both these hungers and their satisfaction, teaching us to perceive and to relish the arc of moments and the arc of lives. If shapeliness is illusion, it is one we require--it shields against arbitrariness and against chaos's companion, despair. (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 26)

Impossibly myriad, the events of the world swarm and flow and unfold around us, and we attempt to impose coherence and intelligibility upon them. Using what we perceive, notice, imagine, and remember, we construct narratives.¹⁶ We are "storytelling animals" (McIntyre in Kerby, 1991, p. 12); the stories we tell and the reflections they give rise to "are a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately, of ourselves" (Kerby, p. 3). The fundamental structure of human experience is a narrative one; Kerby claims narrative understanding to be "the most adequate approach to the human domain" (p. 87), and one that yields a quality of insight not to be drawn from any other kind of analysis.

In life as in art, we order our narratives; we establish a desirable endpoint, and select events relevant to that endpoint; we order events in some temporal fashion; we weave causal linkages into the narrative tissue (Gergen, 1999, n.p.). The ways we report our lived experience are open to multiple interpretations by others, but they constitute our very being: "our existence is an understanding of the world" (Packer, 1991, p. 71).

Narrative Structure of Relationship, Identity, and Moral Agency

It is because of this flexibility and multiplicity that I have found narrative so methodologically rich and satisfying, so accommodating of my inquiry into relationship, identity, and moral agency.¹⁷ Our relational life follows a narrative dynamic; our emotional life determines *how* we narrate ourselves and others, how we interpret, how we reflect. Emotions do not merely have an impact on social life, "they constitute social life itself" (Gergen, 1999, n.p.).

¹⁶I use the term *narrative* both to describe the plot or storyline of sequential, linked events, and to imply the meta-story made possible by the narrator's presence. *Narrative inquiry* connotes the latter, larger sense.

¹⁷See also Freeman, 1991; Gergen, 1999; Kerby, 1991; Packer, 1991; Tappan, 1991.

Identity, which can also be understood as a narrated self-portrayal, cannot be disconnected from social life. Our capacity to make our story intelligible to others, affirmed by others, is central to our sense of self: “Self-intelligibility depends on others’ agreement as to their place in the story” (Gergen, n.p.). If, for example, on the completion of this document, my friends never speak to me again, I shall have to revise drastically the self-image I have constructed in its writing. “The identity of the self is constituted by a narrative unity, which integrates what ‘I’ can do, have done, and will accomplish with what you expect of ‘me’” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 5). “Am I anything,” asks Kerby (1991, p. 38), “Other than these various...stories told by and about [me]?”

Relational and social, narrative also has a moral dimension. Narrative is by definition moral, claims White (in Tappan, 1991), in that it “attempts to endow a sequence of events with the kind of legitimacy and meaning that would justify and sustain the moral perspective on behalf of which it is...told”(p. 9). To value, to ascribe worth, requires an awareness of the standards one lives by, and requires an intention regarding how we choose to narrate them.

But we do not only make a *self* through our stories; we also create a *context* as we weave our personal memories with the larger social memory. When we create a narrative, we create a context as we encounter our experience and construct its meanings. “Living creatures...arrange things....they make sense, literally” (Le Guin, 1989, p. 42). Narrative in general, and fiction in particular, is an “enlargement of present reality by connecting it to unverifiable past and unpredictable future...[Narrative] connects possibilities” (pp. 44-45). Le Guin here echoes Merle Hodge (1990), Caribbean novelist and critic, who points to the story’s visionary possibilities, and to the storyteller who can assist people to know themselves and their world to be substantial and worthy of regard:

I began writing, in my adult life, in protest against my education and the arrogant assumptions upon which it rested—that I and my world were nothing and that to rescue ourselves from nothingness, we had best seek admission to the world of *their* storybook. (p. 202)

Here is an adroit decentring of the Grand Narrative; like many post-colonial writers, like many feminist writers. Hodge “writes back,” rewrites, creates a new context, new values, new meaning. As Lucinda says, you have to let down the bucket in your own back yard (personal communication, March 1997). Social discourses and power relations shape our narratives, then, but so do the perception, memory, and imagination of the discerning, resistant self.

Narrative, Memory, and Historical Truth

Gergen (1999) suggests memory itself is “a discursive achievement. To ‘remember properly’ is to generate a story replete with the earmarks of a well-formed narrative”(n.p.). Memory, “all recollection that seeks understanding [is] a narrative endeavour” (Kerby, 1991, p. 89), and what we recall, socially and culturally, as “historical truth” is but another narrative construction. The past has meaning only in the context of *its own past and future*, and our construction of this context “not only shapes the past—it *becomes* the past”(Spence, in Kerby, p. 89). Historical tradition is not just that which lies behind us--“in fact, it comes toward us because we are its captives” (Heidegger in Huebner, 1969, n.p.)

Cultural and social groups generate stories that confirm their intelligibility and sustain their values; the successful historical narrative, like the life-story, approximates a well-formed narrative, with a desired end-point, selected events and turning-points, causal linkages, and closure. To perceive and comprehend this narrative structure is to understand the limits of historical understanding, and to locate and identify oneself in relation to such understanding. This reflective knowledge and insight make it possible to seize the present as a moment of vision and possibility that “opens the world” and therefore the past, and to make it available for interpretation and re/vision (Huebner, 1969, n.p.). Historical “reality” is not immanent, but constructed, brought into existence by those whose ideological needs it serves. To discern this constructedness enables choice and agency; it encourages “colonial subjects rendered opaque to themselves, or relegated to positions of helpless marginality, or deformed through an internal colonization....to help break through the cycle of historical necessity that disproportionately determines who they are and what they do” (Juneja, 1996, pp. 10, 120). Sylvia Wynter (1996a) concurs, stressing the invidiousness of the mechanism of inner colonization, in which “minds...for centuries moulded and pre-formed to come to terms with the *actuality* of scarcity and therefore injustice and elitism and division, find it difficult to come to an awareness of the distortion of their own barbaric formation” (p. 313).

Narrative Truths and Fictions

What does all this signify for the truth of our narratives then, for their credibility and reliability, for the relation they bear to the “realities” to which they correspond? Does “reality” have a narrative shape? Gergen (1999) comments that “there is nothing about the world that demands our singling out end-points and investing them with value” (n.p.). I take his point, recalling that my transcribed interviews at first seemed to me to lack narrative form and intelligibility. My friends’ voices were more “real” than literature, that

is, they were more untidy, lacking the balance and unity that literature imposes; they lacked closure, just as the practical ongoing processes of living, at any given time, lack closure. Their voices arose from the flux and fluidity of open-ended interviews, in which each speaker's choice of language and focus determined the direction and meaning of her stories. So I might maintain that their interviews, unmediated by my interpretation, more closely approximated "reality" than the narratives I subsequently shaped.

Yet language is not neutral, not transparent; it mediates reality: "It is populated--overpopulated--with the intentions of others" (Bakhtin in Tappan, 1991, p. 14). And it would be ingenuous not to recognize that I have called forth these memories by my questions: "We rarely write in a way that recognizes our role as inventors of the questions we pose" (Josselson, 1996, p. xii).

And what of the "truths" of my own self-narratives, for instance, the *petits récits* of my infant transgressions (this document, p.10)? For what, in fact, do I really remember? Dusty pine needles scrunching under my bare feet, small grubby hands dropping berries in the chipped enamel basin, the smell of berry cobbler. A table-level view of the cutlet being floured, the dark closet, and the startling light from the door, the rainy walk home, my arm uncomfortably gripped, my mother's wet unhappy face, a sense of not-rightness. The images and feelings as I actually recall them inhabit space, not time; they are dreamlike, with no inherent order, no connection. I have imposed sequence and logic on them, so it seems to me they are "about" patriarchy or childhood idylls.

I want to pursue here my recurring sense that no definitive rubric of truthfulness separates the fictional and the personal narratives that in/form us. The pleasure we derive from literature, claims the psychoanalyst Ignes Sodré in her conversations with the writer A. S. Byatt, comes from "the writer's capacity to apprehend and communicate aspects of reality (including psychic reality) in original and complex ways...[We encounter] several versions of reality, which need not be contradictory...enriching one's capacity to think and to imagine....The experience of conflict--within parts of the self, and between people--and its psychologically truthful resolutions is what makes something gripping" (Byatt & Sodré, 1995, pp. 244, 247). Byatt adds: "Every time you re-read...you rediscover both the people and the narrative *and* the mind of the author which is the place in which all these things cohere"(p. 249).

Boundaries blur. If fictional narrative has a "real" influence on our lives, what of the narratives we construct from our "real" experience? "A totally factual narrative, were there such a thing, would be passive: a mirror reflecting all without distortion" (Le Guin, 1989, p. 45). I have just revealed the unreliability of my own childhood memories; in

reconstructing those little tales, I could only make sense of them through the lens of my own subsequent interests and biases.

Does the imposition of narrative structure somehow falsify the “truth” of the unmediated, lived experience? Not unless one moves into another epistemological domain where what is to be represented must also be verified. But narrative inquiry is a hermeneutic enterprise, whose aim is not to control and predict, but to deepen insight and understanding:

The truth of our narratives does not reside in their correspondence to the prior meaning of pre-narrative experience; rather, *the narrative is the meaning of pre-narrative experience.* (Kerby, 1991, p. 84)

Narrative truth can be defined as the criterion we use to decide when a certain experience has been captured to our satisfaction; it depends on continuity and closure and to the extent to which the fit of the pieces takes on an aesthetic finality. (Spence in Kerby, p. 90. See also discussion on validity, this chapter.)

Articulating Interests

To begin with, I did not begin my doctoral studies intending to research friendship. I had entered an interdisciplinary program by taking, annually, a term’s unpaid leave of absence from the Caribbean museum where I was Education Curator. I intended to develop low-cost, culturally appropriate museum curricula for at-risk adolescents. But as my interest grew in feminist research, in relational ethics, in interpretive inquiry, the structures of post-colonial power within which I worked, and in which I gradually realized I was complicit, came painfully obvious to me. I came to see that my intended research did not stand on an ethical foundation, and after three years of attempting to change its form and focus, I left my three decades of home and work in the Caribbean, and my nine years at the Museum and moved permanently to Victoria. I was unprepared for the effect a change of this magnitude would have on me. The meanings I had constructed from my research had so altered me that my own life-narrative began to change, and called for re-writing. I was subject to shifts both within my control and beyond it, and returned to central questions of meaning and being in relationship.

My inquiry moved toward understanding ethical being, toward a construction of identity I could live with, and toward an epistemology of friendship. The first shape it took was more a colour-coded spiderweb than an outline (see Figure 2) as I attempted to connect:

- the content areas that compelled my interest;
- the recursive, reflective processes that made me attend to meaning-making;
- issues of power and location and their ethical implications;
- the connections through which each of my interest areas might ground the others.

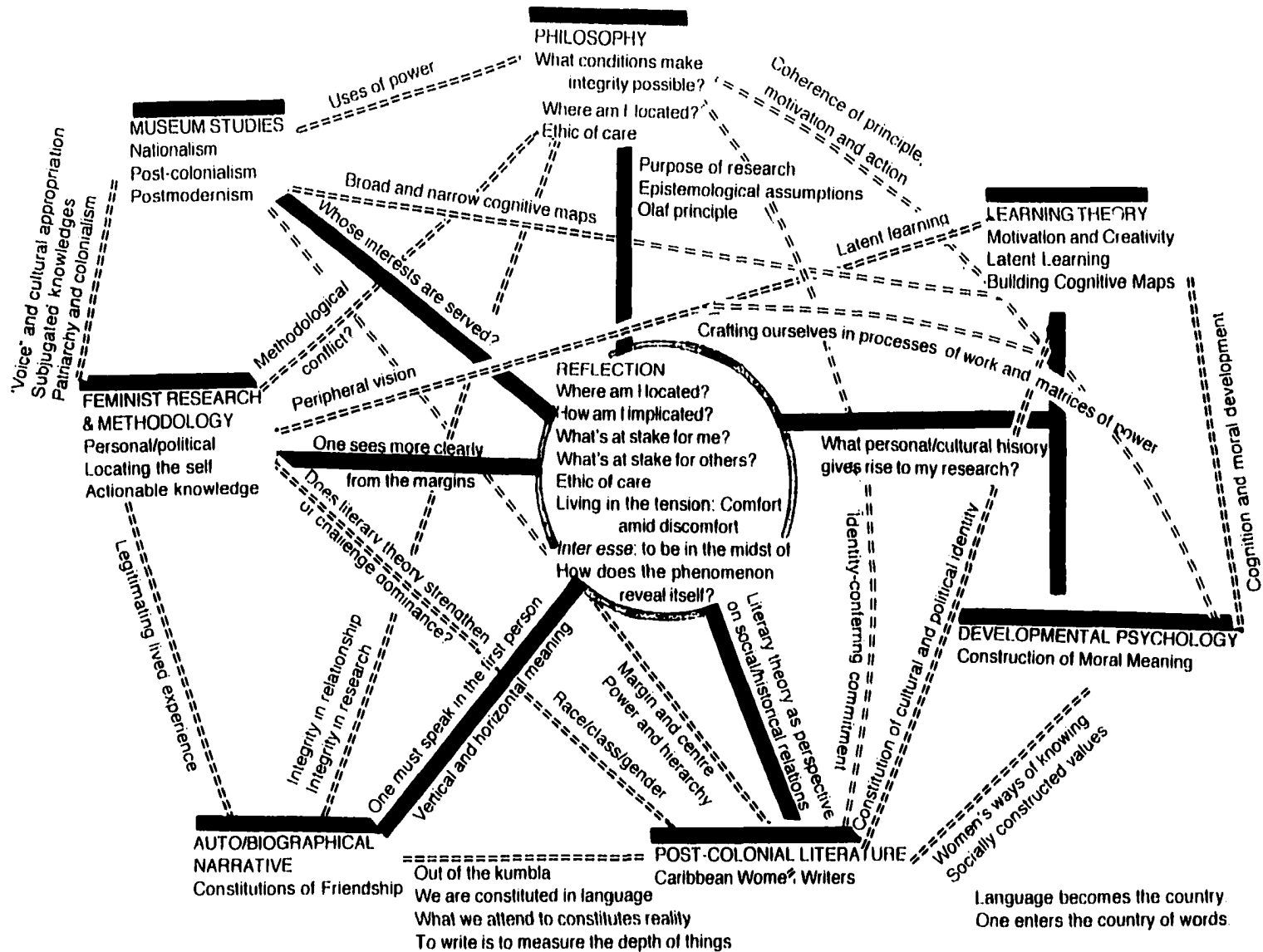


Figure 2. The Inquiry's Initial Articulation/Connection of Interests

Content Areas: [Solid line]
 Reflective Processes: [Thick dashed line]
 Issues of Power/ethics: [Thin dashed line]

At the time, I was at a loss over this, the first of my early efforts to give shape to my thoughts. Now I see that its shifting, multiply-layered structure was a fairly apt predictor of the methodology that would develop. I used the themes and ways of working that evolved to construct my proposal that friendship offers an epistemological frame for knowledge.

First, it was clear my inquiry required a methodological open-endedness that would support a discovery process, a “believing game” (Elbow in Clinchy, 1996, p. 206): contemplation, intuition, and the hermeneutic dialectic. “To operate at all, the hermeneutic circle assumes an element of intuition” (Palmer in Watson, 1995, p. 12). Within this organic structure, I plotted the discursive resources of post-colonial and feminist literature and theory, and of the hermeneutic human sciences. All offered valuable insights, but none supplied a methodological “fit” for my interdisciplinary inquiry. I turned to narrative, which offered me the most fluid and generative way of inviting in these multiple voices and layers as I braided together theory, my friends’ narratives, and my own reflections. These ways of working provided the theoretical context for my research chapter.

Second, I began to address friendship as a way of knowing, to explore its discursive construction as a “going forth in the world” (Tomm, 1992, p. 108) with the potential to model both moral development and critical inquiry. I became encompassed by this dynamic; it led me to deeper levels of understanding; it responded to concerns about my own being as I “entered the country of words.”¹⁸

Third, I needed to locate myself in this discourse, to determine my own standpoint, to try to discern what it was I did not know. For myself, as well as for my participants, I needed to delineate how ideological conditioning has shaped my gendered, racialized, politicized identity, how it has neutralized my agency, dismissed my work as “natural,” set limits on what I might understand or question. How have I colluded, protected by labels of “white,” “middle-class,” “academic”?

Locating My Self (II)

What does it mean to use oneself as a research instrument, to use one’s reflections as a mechanism for analysis, to use personal narrative as primary data? Is this “I” constructing fact or fiction? With what discernment or reliability do I identify and articulate my own biases, discover the personal and cultural history that give rise to my interests? Like Gregory Bateson’s conch stirring on the abrasive seabed (Bateson & Bateson, 1987,

¹⁸“At a certain moment for the person who has lost everything, whether that means a being or a country, language becomes the country. One enters the country of words.” Suleiman, 19 , p. Xx.

pp. 34-35),¹⁹ I shift onto the uncomfortable cusp of self-reflection, the sharp edge of insight --and then perceive that the awkward, unsatisfactory study of the individual process is also the study of qualitative research.²⁰

This locating I have attempted to do overtly, in my first chapter, and in subsequent reflections and journal excerpts. I have aimed to disclose myself in a measure equivalent to that of the stories my friends have offered. But I have also done it more pervasively, if less obviously, through the construction of this document. "Is qualitative research about the context, or is it about the researcher, who defines the needle, spins the thread, and pieces together the understanding?" (Meloy, 1994, p. 85) I am *in* every sentence of this document. If the epistemology is the *framing* of my interest, methodology is the *working* of it.²¹ I have situated my self in both the framing and the working of this inquiry.

After some months of further reading and re/vision, I made a verbal presentation to my supervisors, with the aim of teasing out the epistemological assumptions (see Appendix C) caught up in my original spiderweb of interests. When I had asked and answered the questions these assumptions provoked, I felt ready to start writing. I constructed a massive first chapter, packed like the too-heavy backpack of an overly cautious camper, for every theoretical contingency. I mention its unpacking earlier in this chapter, but I now see its original assembly as a useful exercise, a discursive calisthenics.

Inter/Views

Foundational Interviews: 1997

In January 1997 I returned to Barbados to interview my participant-friends.²² In

¹⁹Bateson, for whom everything is a metastory, describes how a conchshell "has the narrative of its individual growth pickled within its geometric form as well as the story of its evolution....and protrusions that keep it from rolling around the ocean floor, it's been worn and abraded, so that's still another story" (pp. 34-35).

²⁰Meloy (1994) suggests that to conduct independent study *is* to study the nature of conceptual research (p. 43).

²¹I am indebted to Antoinette Oberg [classroom discussions, 1997, 1998] for pointing to this distinction.

²²I have used pseudonyms for the participants and for their immediate families and friends, but I have in general referred to public figures and institutions by their real names.

preparation, I had adapted Bronfenbrenner's (1977) four-level ecological framework of questions. I subdivided each level: I posed questions intended to evoke responses drawn from memories of childhood and adolescence; I then reframed the questions to address adult experience.²³(See Appendix D.)

At no time have I attempted an ethnographic or sociological focus;²⁴ the questions were merely the launching pad for these highly individual, articulate, divergent thinkers and speakers. One question might spark a long, reflective commentary that made other questions unnecessary or irrelevant. In any case, I was less interested in sociological data than in hearing how each woman made meaning. Each chose to disclose at her own comfort level: One would talk freely but say, Don't use that; one would signal me to switch off the recorder while she continued to share her profoundly-felt narrative with me. Often it was more a conversation than an interview; sometimes they ended up interviewing me!

What was going on here? Why did these women give themselves permission to disclose so frankly matters some of them had not spoken of before? They did not know exactly what use would be made of their narratives; at that point I did not know exactly what use I would make of them. Obviously, there was self-censoring too, which I do not feel at liberty to comment on, but it was only in retrospect I fully appreciated how the fact that they could talk this way constituted part of my data. The way they shaped their narratives is part of their agency.²⁵

Transcription

I returned to Canada with tapes that rendered over 400 pages of transcript. I was overwhelmed. However would I shape it? What patterns might I find or make?

²³I adapted Bronfenbrenner's four levels to evoke:

- 1 Routine roles and activities *within the immediate setting* (e.g. home, church, school);
- 2 Relations *among these routines* (e.g. congruence/dissonance between family and church);
- 3 Events outside our immediate lives which nonetheless have an impact (e.g. the educational system);
- 4 Ideology manifested in the customs and practice of everyday life (e.g. feminism, the culture's spiritual practices)

²⁴Nor did I focus questions on domestic intimacies. Although obviously relationships with partners and children are woven into our lives, and certainly manifested in our sense of identity and moral agency, issues of ethics and confidentiality made their exploration too problematic.

²⁵I acknowledge their narrative agency throughout this document; I particularly address their own sense of constructing a narrative in "The Women Speak of Telling Their Stories," chapter 4, and in the function of their narratives in an epistemology of friendship, especially during discussions of risk and trust.

JOURNAL: Daunting! What can I do with 400 pages (much of it single spaced--bad idea) of what seems almost a conversational stream of consciousness? How to bring it into some comprehensible order, how to relate the narratives to one another *and* to the literature *and* to theorize the lot *and* to remain true to the original voices. Inescapably it means *using* those voices, taking the voices as text, looking for interpretive power in those voices (not just summarizing events, and certainly not interpreting them). This will doubtless make the whole project longer than I had originally intended, and certainly longer than my committee will welcome, but I don't see a way around it at this point.

But I found things shape up better than I thought--that a shape existed where I despaired of finding one--when I took the childhood themes and ordered them chronologically. They make wonderful little stories! I find myself thinking *petits récits, petits récits*, quite defiantly; I turn around that dismissive term and see it as a badge of honour.

Much speaks to the sheer contradictoriness of gender indoctrination, as well as to its infusion in race and class issues. Benjamin's re-working of the entry into the symbolic order has been really helpful; what does it mean in a Caribbean context?²⁶

(July 27, 1997)

JOURNAL: I'm looking for metaphoric patterns; they're more evident on reading than they were (to me) in listening.

Felicia's accounts were full of references to structure, constraint, rules, laws of composure and decorum--so absolutely regulatory that she was adult before consciously understanding how little choice she had had. On the other hand, she speaks of gaps and spaces within which she finds/makes room to manoeuvre (gaps through which her dreams and intuitive premonitions emerge?), and many of her adult insights have to do with understanding thoroughly how a system works (matrimony, civil service, administration) in order to find the space in which to manipulate affairs to one's advantage.

Reading Elizabeth's narrative, I picked up metaphors I had missed when I listened--they reveal the extent to which her childhood seems to her to have been blessed with luck--a sense that she herself was special, that to be a loner, to be unusual was, despite a certain introspective shyness, to be unique, remarkable.

(August 20, 1997)

JOURNAL: As I work, some problems resolve themselves and others emerge. Initially I was daunted by my apparently unpatterned interviews, by their circuitous, non-linear, reiterative conversations. But after a few false starts, I began to draw the narratives out chronologically, and issues emerged with a clarity that was not at all apparent at first reading.

I detect, anticipate, a new difficulty. I had thought, as I drafted the chapters, to send them (with their own interview transcripts, of course) with their own narratives, deleting the interview material from the others. Now, I find so far that the different stories so balance, elaborate and embellish one another (an *acappella*

²⁶Benjamin (1986) reformulates Freud's interpretation of the child's entry into the symbolic, gendered realm of the father. She claims an engendered, pre-Oedipal process of simultaneous differentiation and recognition, so that the capacity for both agency and connection meshes with the symbolic structure but *is not created by them*.

I connect this mechanism with the contradictions my participants articulate through their childhood recollections in chapter 3.

narrative?) that the whole tone and texture of the text will shift if I only send them my commentary and their own single voice.

My other thought, to keep the sense of conversation going, is to ask for their response to what I've made of their stories. Agree or disagree, it will add another layer. Maybe I can get down next winter and do another set of (shorter!) interviews.

(August 22, 1997)

When the transcribing was complete, I read them through several times for a sense of flow, and also with a mind to Catherine Reissman's (1993) levels of representation and Leah Fowler's (1997) narrative "orbitals"²⁷ to sense what layers of meaning-making might suggest themselves. But I also found limits to my own interpretive freedom:

JOURNAL: I do not feel free, as autobiographical researchers, or historical researchers might, to speculate and probe the psychic wounds and intimacies of others. There is much that I cannot say, of narratives offered me in trust and friendship, from my awareness of their lives or from their confidences outside the interviews. Some of what was spoken to intimate friendship during the interviews I do not feel was intended for wider exposure; some of my alternative readings of the constructions they offer might offend or wound. There is always the possibility that I might clumsily, however inadvertently, do real harm.

(August 2, 1997)

I also read the transcripts while listening to the tapes, both to pick up anything the transcription had missed, and to experience more richly the memories that tone of voice evokes. The catch in Naomi's voice brought back the bamboo rattling behind us, the tears sliding from under her closed eyelids as she spoke of her father. The postman's bell and Lucinda's laugh brought back our high spirits as we drank tea and munched her banana bread, elbows on her tiled kitchen table. The tapes made me aware of the impossibility of the attempt to capture experience in its fullness, the inadequacy of representation. But they seemed rich and evocative compared to the poverty of the silent printed word.

I adapted Brown and Gilligan's (1991) guide to the multiple encounters that

²⁷ Reissman's five levels of representing experience include: (1) *Attending*, actively constructing reality by thinking; (2) *Telling*, re-presenting both the already ordered narrative, and the self as teller; (3) *Transcribing*, displaying the text in ways that support a particular interpretation; (4) *Analyzing*, creating a metastory with turning points and epiphanies; (5) *Reading*, involving the reader's collaboration and agency.

Fowler's orbitals of pedagogical narrative include (1) *Naive storying* of voice that breaks the silence; (2) *Psychological construction of narrative* that integrates cognition and affect; (3) *Psychotherapeutic ethics* of the difficult, intimate grounds of the self; (4) *Narrative as craft*, the editing and rewriting that must accept certainty as a postmodern casualty; (5) *Hermeneutics*, an acknowledgement that understanding is layered, partial, recursive, linguistic; (6) *Curriculum pedagogy*; (7) *A poetics* of teaching.

listening entails,²⁸ for the metaphors, narratives, themes and concepts that surfaced. I coded, first, for larger categories: family, church, school; friendship, identity, agency, ethics; and I ordered them more or less chronologically. I marked striking recurrent metaphors, salient stories, “flavours” of irony, tone, wit. My typescript became a honeycomb of rainbow lines and arrows. I noted when their reflections resonated with my own, and with the voices of the writers I was drawn to. And it became clear to me that I was documenting a conversation, all our voices nudging one another, listening and responding somewhat as a Quaker circle of friends might. Thus some of the theorists’ voices seemed to call for reinforcement in another register, a friend’s narrative or one of my own. Or vice versa.

When I found common subtexts linking narratives to my own inquiry, they often enacted not only the power of ideology to inscribe the gendered, colonial subject, but also the creativity of their own agency and resistance. On another level, the narratives created compelling portraits of my friends’ younger selves, created a portrait, too, of a late-colonial culture as these young women experienced it at a certain historical juncture.

Subsequent Interviews: 1998

In February 1998, I returned to Barbados with drafts of my first three chapters. My friends’ confidence in my work was by no means a foregone conclusion, so to maintain the confidentiality of each from the other, I edited out each participant’s contribution for her to assess. I taped six more hours of their responses and updates. I was particularly determined to keep the balance of power as reciprocal as possible,²⁹ to deconstruct my own privileged position as researcher by inviting input, response, and self-censorship, and by leaving myself open to the risk of their declining to continue to participate.

Two more contacts provided unanticipated pleasure and enriched my narrative resources. In the summer of 1997, Elizabeth visited me in Victoria, and we continued a conversation that never seems to run dry. In November 1998, Naomi spent several days on her way to a writer’s retreat. I taped another conversation, and we deepened our previous

²⁸Brown and Gilligan suggest that listening is “a practice of relationship and a practice of resistance” (p. 55): They pose four questions: (1) Whose voice? (2) In what body? (3) Telling what story about relationships? (4) In what societal and cultural framework?

²⁹To this extent, I considered Lather’s (1986) *face validity*, by “recycling description, emerging analysis, and conclusions back through at least a subsample of the respondents”(pp. 272-273). I do not share her reservations about the false consciousness of research participants compromising the data. It is their meaning-making that interests me, not empirical data credibility.

discussions on conundrums of race, identity and spirituality.

“Simultaneous Actions”

My reading, writing, thinking, listening, envisioning, theorizing arise from deep personal engagement, whether with a stimulating article, a lively discussion, or an as-yet-unarticulated intuition; such multiple workings call for “multiple, simultaneous actions and reactions from the human being who is the research instrument”(Meloy, 1994, p. 68).

It is my hope that I am opening up possibilities for understanding, my own and the reader’s, rather than herding my discursive resources to converge on The Point, or even A Point. I hope the reader can join the conversation, and that my writing style invites engagement and participation. The juxtaposition of my personal journals and my friends’ narratives are deliberately set in a counterpoint to leave room for all *petits récits* that arise in the text, including those of the readers.

My friends speak in their own voices. I speak in mine. But by transcribing them, I have made of them a text, and then added my own interpretive frames. And now you, the reader, as you engage with the text and build your own connections, take custody of their, and my, meanings.

Appropriation

What does it mean, in a research relationship, that the subjects of my inquiry are intimate friends, and that their racial and cultural location is perceived to be “Other” than my own? For one thing, it may mean I walk on thin theoretical ice. I therefore want to point out three areas in which I have found difficulties to arise from issues of representation, and ways in which I have addressed these issues throughout my work. I further would invite a readerly care of assumptions made both about my participants and about me.

Issues of authority.

The first critique suggests that true collaboration between researcher and researched is impossible because of the researcher’s power to frame and direct the subjects’ contributions; this critique sees academic ethics to function only as “a kind of damage control” (Rosenwald, 1996, p. 251). I cannot deny there is truth in these allegations. However, my response is that awareness and discernment do offer an antidote to this kind of invisible power,³⁰ and that naming and claiming authorship can enable the researcher to

³⁰Terri Apter speaks of “psychological cruelty,” and of awareness as the “crucial antidote” to the “undue power of a so-called expert narrative and of its undue claim to be a master narrative”(1996, p. 42).

be helpful rather than harmful (see also Tappan, 1991, pp. 7-22). In fact, the research relationship can be mutually beneficial, as both researcher and participant have “the opportunity to be heard: each may have his or her life enriched and life’s meanings deepened” (Josselson, 1996, p. 135). “The process of listening to, taking in, interpreting and speaking about the stories, the narratives, the words, and the silences of another person [is] a relational act.” (Brown and Gilligan, 1991, p. 44. See also Anderson and Jack’s, 1991, discussion of “listening in stereo”; Chase, 1996, p. 56.)

Issues of intimacy.

The second critique, an overlay of the first one, deals with issues of intimacy, and their attendant risks of manipulation and betrayal. Intimacy constitutes, for me, the most dangerous ground: “The greater the intimacy...the greater is the danger” (Stacey, 1991, p. 114). My response is to put myself at equivalent risk. I attempt equivalent disclosure in my reflections, narratives, journals. I ensure participant checks, which make veto possible at any stage, which *could* effectively erase my work at the last minute.

On another level, risks arise from the unpredictable changes in relationship that inhere in this sort of inquiry, and that accompany inevitable changes in self and other. A kind of ballast is provided by mutual trust, of which I write at length in chapter 4. It is crucial to attend to the personal sense of dignity that “functions like a pain signal in human relations” (Rosenwald, 1996, p. 251). No formal code of ethics can protect my friends or me from the subtle distortions with which we read one another into being. Faced with the old saying about doing the thing right or doing the right thing, I am at risk of a penalty far greater than one that the academy could impose: If I don’t get it right, I stand to lose the friends of my heart. I agree with Josselson (1996) that “we must do our work in anguish...To be uncomfortable...protects us from going too far” (p. 70).

Writing the Other.

The third critique locates theoretical pitfalls from feminist and post-colonial discourses that would maintain I have no right (by virtue of my racial and cultural origins) to do this kind of research, to write the Other. I acknowledge that my response might well be unacceptable to those who put forth this critique; nonetheless, I believe assumptions have been made about my relative Otherness which are infused with the expectations of North American racial discourse. One such assumption is that as a member of a dominant culture, I am in some measure exploiting the goodwill of vulnerable women of colour.

Such an assumption flatters no one. My self-perception is that I am a minority

belonging (until recently) to a Caribbean culture, where I have been educated and spent my adult life. I'm the other Other. Who and what can I speak of if not the material and spiritual conditions of my own life? And I find the suggestion patronizing that I might "speak for" these forthright, articulate women, who are of the ethnic majority, and whose class location in that culture is superior to my own.

I find it useful here, without conflating race and gender, to flag four intersections between feminist and post-colonial discourse³¹ that speak to concerns of appropriation. Both post-colonialism and feminism focus on relations of power between margins and centre, and aim to subvert and destabilize that central power. The one writes from a sense of the body, the other, from a sense of place, as colonized. Both work to appropriate the language of the oppressor, and to re-shape it to their own ends, the one against imperialism, the other against patriarchy.³² For both, oppression is not only located in external institutions, but also enshrined within the family, and within individuals. All these intersections fuel the resistant energies of my own work in a way that I hope is appropriate, not appropriative.

And in the end, the only essential permission is that of my friends. The question that encompasses me: Will the work be worthy of them?

Journals/Fieldnotes

The journal is a way of imaging a stream that flows through (underneath?) and surrounds the territory of qualitative research. (Meloy, 1994, p. 60)

The fieldnotes that accompanied my interviewing over this two-year period also provide a record of our friendships, which were never static or to be taken for granted. They also remind me that while my friends continued to engender layers of meaning in my life, I felt I was probably becoming less and less of a presence in theirs.

³¹Writers who reflect variously on these connections include: Ashcroft, 1989; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Donnell, 1996; Minh-ha, 1995; Mohanty, 1995; O'Callaghan, 1993; Spivak, 1995; Suleri, 1995; Wynter, 1996b.

³²Ashcroft (1989), however, posits that language is not *inherently* sexist or imperialist, that it is "a process rather than a system...it is in the acts of the speaker rather than the structure of the system that language has its being"(p. 26). Further, he suggests that the post-colonial writer must create anew the relation between people and place, to re-invent their "original relation with the universe" (Emerson in Ashcroft, p. 28). Similarly, "feminists must recreate in language their own original relationship with the excluded and negated subjectivity located in their bodies" (p. 28). Ashcroft's emphasis makes the parallel explicit: "My contention is that the [Kristevan] desire for a return to the original pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother replicates the desire within post-colonial discourse to return to an original pre-colonial relationship with the sense of a community *which gave you birth.*" (p. 30)

I hardly know how to categorize the pile of hardbacked spiral-bound notebooks that have accompanied and accommodated my inquiry. I have a sense that the term *fieldnotes* has a more respectable academic resonance than *journal*. And they *are* fieldnotes: interview schedules, detailed accounts of my own reactions to the inquiry's processes, responses to articles. But they are also whims, hunches, poems, dreams, epiphanies, desolations and doubts.

Some of the insights and resources that I originally felt to be crucial, I have since discarded: some of the most off-the-cuff meanderings have since become foundational. I do think that trying to keep one's finger on the pulse of all the simultaneous and often contradictory activities being forced through one's thought processes, provides catharsis and brings to consciousness much that lies lurking in the shadow. My journals stored for me experience that I could not always make meaning of at the time, but which provided fertile material for subsequent reflection. For instance, it was not until I concluded my work by re-writing this chapter that I saw clearly how my journals constructed their own narrative of relationship: "A journal can hold your heart" (Meloy, 1994, p. 60).

JOURNAL: I can see that both the difficulty and reward (if these first interviews are anything to go by) is that there is such continual, seamless weaving back and forth, and connecting of such apparent contingencies, that any categorizing on my part seems as if I'm bending the stories to fit my design rather than expressing their own flow.

I constructed that Bronfenbrenner-ish grid to prime the pump, expecting it would help lead into open-ended inquiry—but I barely work through the first question before [my friends] are up and running. In each case I get caught up in their stories and pay less and less attention to my own questions.

(February 1997)

JOURNAL: When Elizabeth came to visit I was anxious, but also reluctant, for her to read what I had written. She too may have had qualms; she secluded herself with my manuscript, the parts that concerned her. I was awkwardly aware how much I wanted her validation. She'd taken my point, too, that the "meaning" of much of her story, as I had appropriated it, lay in its juxtaposition/contrast/reinforcement of the other three narratives into which I'd folded it. She'd have to take a lot on faith. I realized how much my vanity was involved too, *really* wanted to hear flattering little asides about the quality of my insight and expression. Well.

We seem to be in accord with the main points. She took exception to a phrase I'd quoted from her, which I'd used as a heading. Oh, she said, I'd never say that! Oh yes! I triumphantly produced it on the transcript. She said, Let's listen to the tape. I finally found it (I hadn't wound the tapes back, yikes!) and we both said triumphantly, You see? But I *had* misheard it, I could detect it when she pointed it out, so of course it had to come out. But it made me wonder what else in my careful transcripts might be off kilter.

(September 1997)

JOURNAL: Wonderful to see everyone again, but a feeling chunks of my life have dropped out like crumbling plaster. The whole rich fabric of daily gossip, political

outrage, our jobs, academic absurdities—I was out of it, missing connections. Even driving along roads I'd followed for years, on the way to our picnic, several times I drew a blank, confused by new construction. I feel this drift so much more strongly than I did last year.

(January 24, 1998)

JOURNAL: Late afternoon, after a long hot workday for E, sitting on my front porch with our feet on the rail, stirring the ice in my glass with my finger, both of us reminiscing about our years of sundowning on the porch while we set the universe to rights. It's still not to rights, and we're still ruminating, catching the evening breeze. A pleasant ritual. Layers of affect floating in the sunset.

My own startling sense of dislocation, a visitor in my own home, a tourist. I experience anew the abrupt fall of darkness, fireflies in the bamboo. I didn't tape much; we talk and talk, and laugh about how we talk and talk, and never run out of things to say.

I feel an almost tearful pleasure in our conversation, also a sense of time's constraints—will our few hours fill up with enough to sustain another year of absence? Selfishly, I think, did I get enough on tape? A certain melancholy that, where my inquiry ensures they remain an ongoing presence for me (is that why I chose this topic? or it chose me? so I could keep them with me?), I am only a few hours of interruption in their full lives.

(February 14, 1998)

JOURNAL: There are other photos of this susu picnic [celebrating my '97 visit], but I took some of them, so I've chosen one with me in it (see Figure 3), surrounded by friendship, protected. Naomi is the photographer, and caught this image in the middle of our threats to summon the cleavage police for Lucinda, whose elegant clarity of mind is partnered with a total insouciance for mundane practicalities, tidy lists, and in this case, buttons done up. We are well into the rum punch.

The circular seating enacts the group's genius for the improvisational, for a sense of occasion, for the circling of wagons to protect, to celebrate, to share. Pictures are a wonderful aide-memoire, although without this snapshot I would still have a pleasant memory of a happy reunion. But with the image, I remember Lucinda propped against me, swinging around with some snappy rejoinder as her button popped open yet again. I remember the multi-course picnic, the rum punch the ants got into. It began to drizzle, and M had brought a section of parachute fabric we draped over us, carried on laughing, eating, drinking.

Yet already I had a sense of the last of something shared and cherished slipping away. I celebrated being back in their lives after a year's absence. The following year I picnicked again with the susu, which now included several new members I knew only slightly. The susu narratives constituted an ongoing core in my life, but the interviews on which they were based were already a year-old experience in my friends' challenging, ever-changing lives.

The meeting planned for the following winter did not transpire, and returning to Barbados is no longer an option for me. Perhaps I will not see them again.



Figure 3. Sketch from photograph of the 1997 susu picnic

What will they remember of me? The journey they have given me the resources to travel has taken me so far from all I thought I was, will they recognize me? Will they recognize themselves in my work? Will they feel I have seen them authentically? Will they care?

Some nights I put on the interview tapes just to hear their voices.
(April 1999)

Validity: Epistemic Authenticity

It remains problematic to find or develop criteria by which the strengths and excellences of interpretive inquiry may be recognized and assessed, for the yardsticks of generalizability, reliability, and universality may be actively counterproductive when applied to "multilayered, ongoing sensemaking" that is "inexorably intuitive" (Meloy, 1994, p. 12). How is the researcher to counter suggestions that her work is self-indulgent, narcissistic, therapeutic, and, above all, lacking in rigor?

I was initially daunted by the prospect of constructing my own criteria for validity, my reading suggested such an infinite variety of perspectives. I spent some time fruitlessly trying to tailor grounded theory to my inquiry. However, I gradually focussed my search and was able to assemble criteria from those researchers with whom I felt an affinity.³³ Again, it was dismaying to find that each seemed to have his/her own criteria for validity. Where they shared terms, they often defined them differently. More often, they did not share terms, and I assembled a list of dozens of criteria.

Finally, as I combed through them all, looking for what might animate my narrative inquiry, I found my organizing principle. The criteria applicable to my work (regardless of how they were labelled) fell into five broad categories: *aesthetics*, the work's expressive authenticity; *critical reflection and intellectual soundness*, the recursive, transformative energy; *congruence of form and function*, an ethical as well as a structural dimension; *usefulness*, an action orientation; and *dynamic vitality*, an intellectual and moral compellingness. Each category generated questions, and these I used to evaluate my research chapter.

Aesthetics

However much we may come to believe that "the real" is subjective and constructed, we still feel art is a path not just to beauty, but to truth: if "truth" is a chosen narrative, then new stories, new aesthetics, are also new truths.
(Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 5)

³³Writers I have found particularly helpful and provocative include: Hirshfield (1997b); Hoskins (1997, pp. 135-142); Lather (1991, pp. 55-57, 62-68); Lenzo (1995); Meloy (1994); Mourad (1997, chapter 6); O'Dea (1994); Van Manen (1990, pp. 16-21).

Aesthetic criteria govern the expressiveness and authenticity of the work: They support Meloy's contention that "the qualitative researcher must be a writer" (1994, p. 47); they support O'Dea's (1994) conviction that authentic writing "leaves room for the irreducible complexity of the world while yet offering penetrating insights as to our experience of it" (p. 163); they endorse Kvale's (in Hoskins, 1997) sense that artistic truth in writing conveys the writer's knowledge claims so powerfully they "carry the validation with them like a strong piece of art" (p. 141).

- Is the description full, expressive, and evocative; does it render the complexity of lived experience?
- Does the language avoid cliché, jargon, and conventionality? Does it startle, persuade, compel belief in the writer's authenticity?
- Does it convey something of "the elusive intensity by which [art] knows"? (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 5)

Critical Reflection and Intellectual Soundness

This criterion seeks evidence of critical reflection and intellectual soundness that is recursive and transformative, that "explicates intellectual pathways for the reader to move from the subjective experiences to cultural discourses" (Hoskins, 1997, p. 140). It seeks that focussed attentiveness that "opposes not chaos--which is just a stage of transformation --but the laziness and entropy of ordinary mind" (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 6).

- Is there a depth of intellect that goes beyond the simplistic and superficial?
- Is methodological choice grounded in solid understanding? Is it clear how and why the methodology "works" this inquiry? Are the multiple sources trustworthy? Is tradition acknowledged?
- What is the relation between critical reflection and form?
- Is there a reflective bringing-to-consciousness of underlying assumptions?
- Is the thinking recursive? Is it clear the "revising...is no arbitrary tinkering but a continued honing of the self at the deepest level" (Hirshfield, p. 6)?
- How do I write myself into the research? Am I willing to be known?

Congruence of Form and Function

All the criteria overlap, and each is layered with the others, but I looked for a particular focus on the relation between form and function.

- Are form, method, and content congruent? (Hoskins, 1997)
- Is the design structurally sound--logical, appropriate, and identifiable?

- How does the form reveal assumptions about the self?
- Is there a “fit” between the writer’s ethical responsibilities and her choice of style?
- Does the writing challenge a system of domination?

Usefulness

By *usefulness*, I understand a praxis that both builds theory and leads to action.

- Is the theory-building conscious? Is it built from particulars of daily life? Is lived experience connected with critical consciousness?
- What contribution does it make to a field? to a readership? (See chapter 1, *Contribution to the Field*.)
- Do the stories create critical consciousness that enables transformation? Do they lead us to insights about ourselves?
- What ethical principles fuel the work?
- How is narrative research part of a larger “moral endeavour, one that leads toward action” (O’Dea, 1994, p. 170)?

Dynamic Vitality

By *dynamic vitality*, I mean those pervasive qualities that promote Lather’s “incitement to discourse” (1993), Mourad’s “compelling idea” (1997, chapter 6).³⁺⁴

- Are the issues important, meaningful, non-trivial?
- Is there a sense of discovery and excitement?
- Does metaphorical language communicate powerfully?
- How does my voice emerge? What is the mechanism for seeing myself in the process?

Interpretive Caveats

Questions of format pose little difficulty for the quantitative researcher, for whom guidelines minimize interpretive choice of tone, style, and format. But the qualitative inquirer often finds, as I did, that seemingly innocuous stylistic decisions can carry ethical and psychological luggage that requires unpacking.

³⁺⁴Mourad finds an intellectually compelling idea valuable for its “enhancement of the inquirer’s capacity to form and pursue meaningful intellectual experiences....to serve as the basis for other intellectually compelling inquiries....to be useful in application toward enhancing the quality of human experience” (1997, p. 95).

Very Petits Récits.

Selecting the style and format that best convey the substance of the inquiry is far more than a whim or personal preference, for even details of typography or layout can convey an unintended ideological message. Early in my own writing, in the interest of saving space and providing contrast, I printed my textual commentary in the 12 point type required for dissertation text, and my friends' lengthy narratives in 10 point type. I was startled when a friend pointed out that I had *literally* made *petits récits* of their stories!

My journals remind me of several such situations, where a minor decision concerning style or format led to reflection on its deeper implications.

A High-gloss Product?

JOURNAL: In much Caribbean writing, and certainly in Brodber's,³⁵ refusal to gloss is a willed political act, an appropriation and abrogation of the dominant language on one's own terms. Flagging one's own vernacular as variation from standard English signals *difference*, it's like flagging myself as variant from the real. It foregrounds cultural distance, and not on one's own terms, it "installs linguistic distance itself as a subject of the text" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, p. 58). Leaving one's own language unglossed and untranslated is a political act, then. It "requires the reader's own expansion of the cultural situation beyond the text" (p. 65). Refusal to gloss is refusal to "[give] the translated word, and thus the 'receptor' culture, the higher status" (p. 66).

How to say *Uh fire de wuk* "really" means *I fired the work*, or even *I quit*, or even, trying for that facetious, somewhat truculent edge, *I quit before I was fired?* How about *Every skin-teet' ent a smile?* This was the title, the perfect title, we gave an exhibit of Caribbean political cartoons curated at the Museum. Certainly can't get the pith of it from *Every skin-teeth [toothy grin] isn't a smile*. Could try *I can smile and smile and be a villain*, but that carries its own cultural baggage.

I don't feel I was able to convey to my committee how reluctant I felt about this, and how uncomfortable. A Caribbean reader could feel patronized by a constant pointing out and explaining, but I know I must make myself clear to my current academic readership.

I've situated myself somewhere mid-spectrum, glossing terms essential to understanding the discourse (using Richard Allsopp's dictionary),³⁶ and leaving those whose meaning is pretty clearly implied by the context.

(June 19, 1997)

³⁵I originally included a study of four pairs of coming-of-age novels by four Caribbean women writers in our age group: Brodber (1980, 1988), Hodge (1970, 1993), Kincaid (1985, 1996), Senior (1986, 1996a). None of them gloss (although Heinemann's Caribbean Writers Series included a gloss for Hodge's (1970) *Crick Crack Monkey*).

³⁶ (1996). *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Great B/W Debate.

JOURNAL: I discussed the b/w problem with Lucinda. *Black* and *White*, or *black* and *white*? And some write *Black* and *white*, but that disturbs my sense of symmetry. Yet *White* seems affected, theoretical flavour of the week. I finally settled on *black* and *white*. Maybe in 15 years, small-b *black* will read as irritatingly as the generic *he* does to contemporary feminists. But I dithered with Lucinda. And too besides, she says, Caribbean readers probably won't care, but Americans might be aggressive—better go for B and W. Right, I thought, I'll go back and change the lot.

I asked Elizabeth what she thought. She says, Anyhow, who are you writing for? She says, It disturbs me to see you so concerned about being shot down by hostile, cutting-edge theorists instead of having confidence in your own experience and expression. And *White, White, White*, throughout, yes, it would look odd, faddish. Yes, in any case, I thought, if readers have a mindset that I have no business with this kind of inquiry, nothing I do with upper or lower case will alter their perception. Better stick to lower case.

Naomi points out that *Black/white* inverts/subverts the real material conditions of domination. A kind of discursive affirmative action that she has no quarrel with. But prefers *b* and *w* aesthetically. And feels a certain irritation--*Do they think I'm stupid, that I won't know about social-political dominance of white over black unless they tinker with the label? Do they think that will change everything?*

Does this matter of form really warrant the time and space I've spent on it or is this one more triumph of style over substance?

(January 1998)

What's In a Name?

JOURNAL: My readers ask me--why those pseudonyms, why are the women introduced in the order they appear? I wasn't sure these housekeeping matters were substantive, now I think that maybe they are.

Names, well. I wanted to use fairly common Caribbean names that weren't the real names of anyone we knew, more easily said than done. *Elizabeth* is a suitable middle-class name. *Felicia* seemed apt for her namesake's vivacity and cheerfulness. *Lucinda* is not a usual name, but suggested a certain dignity and formal reserve. *Naomi Claibourne* is singular, but then so is 'Naomi's' real name. As one of her stories concerns her beautiful name (see chapter 5, p. 169), I tried for something equally euphonious. When I phoned and asked her, What about *Naomi Claibourne*, she laughed like anything.

When later I doodled in my journal, I found I'd written:

Felicia	joy
Lucinda	light
Elizabeth	regal
Naomi	faithful

So I am quite pleased with the names.

I arranged the four growing-up stories partly by design (two colonial adolescents followed by two post-colonial adolescents--a decade's difference in age placed them in different political frames), and partly by intuition, poetically. As soon as I read Felicia's *I've always hated rain and heavy downpours, I just don't like rain and dim stuff and darkness*, I knew *that* was how I wanted to begin.

(December 4, 1997)

CHAPTER 3

PRECARIOUS SUBJECTIVITY: GENDERING THE COLONIAL GIRLCHILD

Criss-crossing Valuings

There is an agenda which refers directly to issues of value: the worth of male to female persons and vice versa; the worth of black persons (or other persons of colour) to other black persons and to white persons and vice versa; the worth of persons who have-not to other persons who have-not, and to persons who have, and vice versa; and finally, the complex of these criss-crossing valuings, for no-one is sexed without race, or 'raced' without class. (Mordecai & Wilson, 1989, p. xiii)

Felicia's Story

Domestic Horizons: In the Company of Women

"I've always hated rain and heavy downpours, I just don't like rain and dim stuff and darkness," says Felicia, recounting her childhood perception, ominous, fraught with incomprehension, of the rainy day that marked her expulsion from the secure predictable domain of her grandmother's extended family.

My grandmother had about five cousins, so the whole area was like a shelter, because wherever you turned, there was some relative that knew you, and cared, and would tell if you did anything wrong, which was usually the only thing they ever talked about....My whole life...was focussed on books and education and church. It was all very structured.

When Felicia was about two, her father had left Barbados to work as a headmaster in Grenada, leaving his wife and Felicia with his mother's family. Felicia remembers his periodic visits home as exciting disruptions of the domestic routine: "Whenever he came home there were lots of fruit from Grenada and chocolates, and he didn't like anyone to flog me, and so I could do whatever I liked when he was there, and he romped with me a lot in the afternoons, and stuff like that". When she was informed, at age eight, that her parents were getting divorced, she didn't know what the word meant. Her father turned up intriguingly, inexplicably, from Grenada--"Nobody tells you anything, nobody explains what all this is about," and a few days later:

Mummy turned up with a truck and a whole lot of men, and they moved out the heavy things, of which, for me the most important thing was the piano. Her piano was moved out on the truck, and all the way from there to where we were going, it absolutely poured with rain. I've always hated rain and heavy downpours, I just don't like rain and dim stuff and darkness, so that for me, that moment was the divorce. Driving with all these strange people in a truck, I don't think I'd ever entered a truck, and constantly thinking, the rain is going to destroy the piano, we won't be able to play again.

She stayed in the country with her mother's friends for about six months and spent idyllic days, away from the strict control of a grandmother and aunt:

who determined what I could do at any given time, who I could be friendly with, where I could go. And then for the first time in my life, nobody bothers about what I do after breakfast, maybe it was vacation time, because I wasn't going to school, and I played with all the children in the neighbourhood, ran all over the place, and it was great in the day.

But every night she endured what she subsequently understood to be night terrors:

apparently quite common when you have a complete change in your life....every night I thought it was real...I thought that the people in that house were ill-treating my mother, and beating her up, and I would wake up and scream...until it reached a point where I was afraid to shut my eyes, afraid to go to sleep. This happened night after night, and I could not separate, I could not accept that it was a dream. ... Eventually, I got ill three or four times, and my grandmother in town said, you'd better send that child back to me, so we can save her life.

Felicia's new freedom was "just too much at once." She felt safer back in town: "I learned to shut my eyes and go to sleep at night...with no overt help from anyone. So, clearly, my head was doing something for me." The loving if rulebound domain of aunt and grandmother who instructed her in the importance of decorum and of the face we turn to the world "was what I knew." Across the road lived

Aunt Soph, Aunt Bess, and Scottie, these three old sisters who lived together there they had this nice home, but it's only since I've grown up, I've realized where their income came from. The C's [a prominent white family], you know that name, who lived not very far away, used to send their laundry down by their maid, to these three sisters. And they washed all those clothes, and they ironed on a great table, and then the maid came and took all these beautifully starched, shining shirts and carried them back. And that's how they earned their money.

Aunt Soph, Felicia's favourite ("I remember her with more joy than anyone else") was a gentle storyteller, married to the grandmother's cousin.

Aunt Soph, I got the impression, was in more or less control. But my favourite memory was that Uncle Ulrich would every now and then say that he wanted *coucou*³⁷ for lunch, and she would make this coucou, and she'd be grumbling in the kitchen, saying, *he knows very well what's going to happen if he has this coucou*.....he would eat the coucou, and he had a hernia, and something would go wrong, it would make the hernia, I don't know, something would happen.

And Aunt Soph, after he'd eaten this food and had this attack she would turn him upside down, on his head, and she would hold his legs, and shake his tummy back into position again, and put him to bed. And then he'd be all right....

But, nowadays, whenever I think of that, I just want to die, because it is so funny, but it was treated with great seriousness. She would be very vexed with him, but she would allow him to be. So he was there, and then at the point where she had to come in and shake things back into position, she did it, and *chupse!* came along back downstairs. And life continued.

³⁷A porridge-like dish of corn flour beaten into a smooth paste with sliced, boiled okras. Served with flying fish, it is Barbados' national dish.

For everything under the sun there was an appropriate mode. Only her aunt could comb her hair properly:

She considered herself an expert at combing, that was her job....I remember her bragging to people that when no one could calm me and make me sleep...she used to sit and smooth my brow. I've heard her say that so many times, I've come to see it as a reality. Smooth my brow! I mean, they were all so Victorian that it is just incredible.... She determined to educate me from the day I was born...she...made sure that I knew my alphabet as soon as I could speak, and right through my life was this thing about education. You had to keep learning things to be anybody.

My grandmother ran the house; she was in charge of the household, so she saw about meals and supervised the laundry and was in control of what they used to in those days call the servant, and poor as we were, there just always had to be a servant, [although]...I remember there was not running water in the house when I was a child.

She was in control....the widow of an evangelical minister, so this is the whole aura of the house.....We had to go to church every single Sunday...in the morning and in the evening, and there was Sunday school in the afternoon....It was only when I reached about 19, one Sunday, I said, I can't go to Sunday school today because I have an exam tomorrow morning and I must revise. And there was horrors everywhere. And that was when I first realized that I wasn't going out of choice, that I had to do it. And for the first time I actually expressed a little bit of choice, and I was told, No, I didn't have a choice.

Felicia lived in this well-ordered and sternly predictable world, a world in which there was no concept, for a child, of *choice*, until her early twenties. The stories she tells of her grandmother illustrate intriguingly that, in life as in art, the contradictory tensions that the dominant discourses of colonialism and patriarchy provoke within women are rooted not only in the larger society, but also within the family, within the individual. For despite the obsession with respectability that shaped Felicia's childhood world, her grandmother's actions also demonstrated her resistance to the dominant order that would deny the voice and presence of the black majority.

My grandmother was a real harridan, felt strongly about things, and horrified me as a child. ...As you know, in our society, poor black people could not go back to shops and say, "I have rights as a customer." nobody took anything back. it was unheard of for you to take something back to a shop....

But not Granny, Granny could go back to a shop and raise her voice, and it was kind of low, it was a low, strong voice, and she could raise her voice so that people around could hear, and she would say, "I'm not taking that back, I have to have my money," and the rule in the shops was, you don't give money back, they have to buy something else, that was the bottom line. But not with Granny, because she would create such chaos, and I wanted to die, I never wanted people to know I was with her. But she was like that, and her favourite thing to say to people in

shops in Broad Street³⁸ was “Remember 1937.”³⁹

When she said “Remember 1937,” the image I had was of herself and me....I would have not been yet three when the riots took place, but I know that on that night I was out with her, and we had shawls...when you went out at night, you had to wrap a shawl around you, and have a hat....I remember walking with her up Dalkeith Hill and being required to hurry to get home, and there was a reason, but I never knew the reason, but it was the night of the riots, and we had to get off the street. That for me was 1937, the night in the shawl, hurrying up Dalkeith Hill and trying to get home because something was wrong.

And then, you know, in all our schoolwork, in all our history, in all the public things we went to, there was never a mention of 1937, except from my grandmother, who kept telling people to remember it.

So it was not only in the domestic but also in the public sphere that Felicia’s grandmother’s outspokenness, determination and self-respect demanded a hearing, demanded, ahead of her times, acknowledgement of injustice. It is true that these actions were at times contradictory, but their very inconsistency may have signified the conflict and confusion of a society coming to awareness, attempting to re-orient itself.⁴⁰

Subconscious Subversions

Obsessive respectability and self-assertiveness: I think the paradox of the grandmother’s behaviours illuminates a fundamental conflict inscribed in women who are (as O’Callaghan, 1992, says of Annie John’s mother, Kincaid, 1985) both indigenous resource and atavar of colonial values for their girlchildren. In both the fictional and the oral narratives to which I refer, the simultaneous workings of subordination, on the one hand, and moral agency, on the other, are peculiarly insistent. This contradiction so requires to be addressed that I digress at this point to reflect on a feminist re/vision of psychoanalytic

³⁸ Bridgetown’s main street, the site of the main banks, department stores, and larger business enterprises.

³⁹The 1937 riots in Barbados were part of a series of working-class protests throughout the British West Indian colonies (beginning with a 1935 strike in St. Kitts and ending with Jamaican riots in 1938). By the time the Barbadian riots were quelled, 14 people had been killed and over 400 arrested. The cumulative disturbances led to the Moyne Commission of 1938-39 and to its recommendations for extensive social and political change. These measures included the legalisation of trade unions, minimum wage legislation, the introduction of old age pensions, and an extension of the franchise (Fraser, H., Carrington, S., Forde, A., & Gilmore, J., 1990, pp. 149-150).

⁴⁰ Walker-Johnson (1989) writing of Brodber’s (1980) *Jane and Louisa will soon come home*, speaks to a similar phenomenon. There are correspondences, she says, between the “outlook of the women portrayed and particular periods of Jamaican social history, [how they] create myths...by which they themselves are controlled.”(p. 48)

theory, a model that allows for female agency and for an enlarged understanding of moral subjectivity.

Jessica Benjamin (1986), as I understand her, reformulates the symbolic, or patriarchal order, and offers a changed understanding of *self*. By shifting focus from the Oedipal to the ungendered pre-Oedipal stage of development, she unravels the Freudian oppositions of male and female, of agency and dependency. Even in infancy, says Benjamin, the impulse toward separation is present. ⁺¹“The self does not proceed from oneness to separateness, but evolves by simultaneously differentiating and recognizing the other, by alternating between ‘being with’ and ‘being distinct’”(p. 82). Eventually, the small child becomes *aware* both of separate existence and of dependency on the nurturing maternal environment. With this awareness she enters the symbolic order of language, and of consciousness of self and relationship. The child’s *self*, then, “requires response and recognition” from the discursive domain, but exists *a priori*, and “is not called into being by [it]. This capacity for connection and agency⁺² later meshes with symbolic structures, but *it is not created by them*” (Benjamin, 1986, p. 93, emphasis added).

JOURNAL: How might this dynamic manifest itself in a specifically Caribbean context? Contradictions abound. If we are indeed discursively constructed, it seems that Felicia was rushed headlong into the symbolic realm, learning her alphabet as soon as she could speak, learning to read at three, reciting publicly at four; at six, “there was nothing I couldn’t read....I could recite whole chapters from the Bible.”

There can be no doubt that her aunt and grandmother were acutely aware of the power of language and insisted on its mastery. Not the language they heard around them every day (as Kincaid’s Xuela put it, the language of “the forever humiliated, the forever low,” 1996, p. 31), but the discourse of the dominant, of Standard English and the Bible, of church and state. (July, 1997)

To what extent could Felicia’s rigorously supervised upbringing have permitted her the process of “simultaneous differentiating and recognizing”? What subject positions

⁺¹ The idealized Cartesian subject’s *steplike growth* from oneness to autonomy is replaced by a *process* of “simultaneous differentiating and recognizing the other” (Benjamin, 1986, p. 82), an understanding of *self* as constructed in relationship.

⁺² It is also instructive to examine the epistemological contradictions of these narratives in the light of Jehlen’s (1986) trope of Archimedes’ lever. The lever’s fulcrum reveals its site at the point “where misogyny is pivotal or crucial to the whole”, where a “necessary contradiction” reveals “the meshing of a definition of women with a definition of the world”(p. 586).

I suggest that we imagine a parallel to Jehlen’s model. Where she addresses the workings of patriarchy, an analogous metaphorical fulcrum might demonstrate the dynamics of colonialism. Crucial post-colonial issues then will manifest themselves at the fulcrum where racism is essential to the whole. Further paradox arises in the Caribbean context, where feminist and post-colonial concerns intersect, but where the fulcrums of misogyny and racism are not necessarily located at the same tipping point.

could be constructed within the confines of these authoritarian discourses? If the child's desire for agency is prediscursive,⁴³ existing prior to her entry into discourse, what form might the expression of the insistent subconscious take; how disruptive might it be of these ideological constraints?

Felicia's stories suggest an acutely receptive, intuitive child with an astonishing recall of detail, almost from a prediscursive stage. She seems to have been imaginatively (and accurately) attuned to mood, able to register and respond to events which were not explained or made comprehensible to her. Her need to process "that which cannot be expressed" (Braidotti, 1994, p.165) may have worked itself out in dreams like her night terrors, and emotional states like her ongoing dread of rain and darkness. Thus the unexplained divorce and change of home, the disruption of the emotional and discursive worlds *which constituted her*, she appropriately experienced as an upheaval of nature: dark, rainy weather would subsequently be accompanied by a sense of foreboding and depression throughout her youth.

More surprising is her response, before she was three years old, to the ominous mood that preceded the 1937 riots. Where rain signified an inner cataclysm, the little girl, wrapped in her shawl, hurrying through the night "trying to get home because something was wrong" was registering a larger external, social disturbance of which she would have no cognitive understanding until she was an adult.

Respectability

The strictures and contradictions of the larger world were routinely enacted and inscribed within Felicia's domestic horizons. She remembers a visit from a family friend, the father of a now well-known musical family, "my grandmother would have considered him a respectable man from a respectable family.... what Bajans would have accepted that they could actually call black.... because that sort of thing in Barbados was not racial, it was always to do with physical description."⁴⁴

Anyway, in came Mr. Clarke and he chatted and so on, but he was wearing short white trousers and he put his leg up like that [Felicia puts ankle on knee]. To tell the truth, I didn't notice anything. But apparently these two ladies sat there and Auntie

⁴³ Braidotti (1994) argues the affective foundations of thought: "Thinking...is to a very large extent unconscious, in that it expresses the desire to know, and this desire cannot be adequately expressed in language, simply because it is that which sustains language"(p. 165).

⁴⁴FELICIA; When someone said to you, "Oh she's a mulatto," it was nothing to do with what *mulatto* really means. In my head I had the exact vision of the shade of skin in comparison to who was *cob* [Felicia's own skin tone, a warm brown]. It's physical, it's a shade I'm dealing with. But I had been told at some point that I wasn't to call people black.

Michelle considered it indecent that he sat in the presence of ladies in short pants and lifted up his leg. And then he left, they started this conversation about what he had done, and Auntie Michelle turned to me and she said, That is why, you see, you must never marry a black man because...they ent have no culture. And my grandmother said, Excuse me, we never say things like that in this house because I know several respectable people that you would describe as black. It almost became a row.

Yet layered on to this principled but contentious outspokenness that so confused and mortified young Felicia were opposing but equally firmly enshrined values. Among the photographs in the drawing room Felica remembers “were these two white families, from overseas I imagine. And she always spoke about them, and she would frequently say...with a feeling of great pride...Well, we sat at the tables of white people and ate with them. Yes.”

Respectability was not incompatible with self-respect; one was expected to aspire, but aspiration lodged with a profound and unexamined belief in hierarchy:

We had friends from the country, we used to call her “H,” Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, and I think those people were landed people from St. George,⁴⁵ but when they came to see us, they would bring a great bag of yams and potatoes and stuff, which they had probably lugged on two buses to get to us, they would come, and when H came and gave us all this food that could keep us going for ages, *she sat on the floor*. She sat on the floor, she never came to the front of the house, she always came to the back. And she came in and she would sit on the floor.

They were friends, because there was a lot of communication going on and talking and so on. When she was leaving, Granny would slip her a little money, surreptitious fashion, you know. I don’t think she was ever invited into the house, fully, never sat in our drawing room. But she was a real friend. And when her family got married, I remember we journeyed to the country to go and help, to help bake things and so on. But they treated us with a kind of deference, awful deference, you know.

The consequences of defying the dictates of decorum and appropriate distance could be daunting. Felicia was tempted by the ebullient family of the St. Lucian next door neighbour, who had

about six children, poor soul, and...they had such fun together because all these children could play together, and I once went there when she was feeding them, and I thought, Oh my God, how is it going to serve them all? This great pot of rice, and I seemed to think that was all they were eating.

We had an association with them but it was very structured, you could go so far with them and no further. I certainly was not to go out and play with them. But they were allowed to come over to our house and play, within our walls.

We had a very young maid, someone I could talk to and play with. So when I knew Granny and my aunt were going to go out and the two of us were going to

⁴⁵Of Barbados’ eleven parishes, originally ecclesiastical and now governmental administrative units, St. George is one of the two inland, landlocked parishes.

be left... we told the neighbours, They're going out tonight, and we planned everything, and we had a hell of a good time...we ran all over the district, back and forth, checking the time, you know.

And when it was ...time for me to go back in and make things look as if I'd been sitting there reading all night, I was walking through the drawing room...and Hyacinth...said to me Oh God there's blood pouring from your feet. That was the other thing, I was never supposed to run around outside without shoes. And so the maid took the foot and couldn't get it to bloody stop bleeding. I remember she took a great lump of salt out from the salt pot...and put it into the cut and held it...and she took a big plaster and put it on , and I put my shoes back on...and kept them on for three days. And we cleaned up the house and made sure there was no sign of blood.

But you see, it all tied in with the religion...if you disobeyed and you did wrong things, you would be punished. And I knew that I had got that cut as a punishment for having insisted on running wild....I couldn't let them know, because then I'd have had to admit that I was outside, running around, barefoot, and that was not respectable....I'd have been flogged....so [the salt in the wound] was probably part of the punishment from God, and I had to bear it.

JOURNAL: What did it mean for a small girl to live by such a rigorous understanding of respectability? How did she come to understand a punitive God as right and natural? In the coming-of-age fiction depicting this milieu (like Brodber's, 1980, *Jane and Louisa*, and Hodge's 1970, *Crick Crack Monkey*),⁴⁶ there seems to have been this conflation of the spiritual and the respectable. But then, all across the Empire, children were singing "The rich man at his castle, the poor man at his gate; God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate".

Perhaps the Grannies and Aunties of the colonial period did not experience as contradictory a profound belief in hierarchy and appearances that coexisted with an insistence on self-respect. An ordered world required an elaborate internalised hierarchy; perhaps there is a hierarchy of domestic geography? Thus Granny could welcome the neighbour's children to play decorously within her walls, could welcome her friend H who sat on the kitchen floor, yet feel proud that she herself had sat at the tables of white people. (July, 1996)

So respectability, says Felicia, was about knowing one's respective place. But it was also, contradictorily, about appearances, about social comparisons to, for instance, the rambunctious St. Lucian family that tempted her into "running wild". And how did her highly respectable aunts reconcile their social position with the deep disgrace of menial work, of laundry?

Well, the size of the house....yes, they were doing all this laundry but they lived in an old time colonial house with a drawing room....[Aunt Soph's] brother-in-law was apparently the first [professional] photographer in Barbados and they had all these photographs of important people....the floor was like glass....if you had a maid you were respectable. I don't think [the aunts] had a maid, but they had a lot

⁴⁶I found remarkable correspondences and complementarities in representations of Caribbean girlhood between the narratives of my friends and the coming-of-age fiction by Caribbean women writers. In particular, see Brodber (1980), Hodge (1970, 1993), Kincaid (1983, 1985, 1996), Senior (1986, 1989, 1996a).

of property....But [they] spent most of their time in Aunt Soph's house with the ironing and stuff. It was to do with not being seen, perhaps, to earn your money.

Aunt Soph had a tap in her yard....when we had no maid they used to send me across to bring water down....But I always was told to look along the avenue and see if there was anyone we knew coming, they mustn't see me doing that. So, in my mind, it was always a disgraceful thing that I was made to do....

I used to be sent to the shops...again, that was something that people like us didn't do, didn't go to the shop, you had a maid, or a boy, a messenger who went to the shop....so, when I was sent to the shop, I used to look out of the shop and make sure that no buses were coming by before I went back home. Can you imagine that? Because it was not respectable to be seen buying things in the shop. To be a messenger was disgraceful, to bring water was disgraceful.

So I could do all this awful drudgery in the house....there was nothing wrong with that. But to be seen, outside, doing menial tasks, because you heard that word, *menial*, so this was what respectability was about. A maid delivered [the aunts'] laundry, they weren't just walking along with a bunch of laundry on their heads; I think that was part of the respectability.

The kind of house you lived in, the way you ate, you laid your table, you didn't just eat, if you know what I mean, there was a ceremony. [Respectability] was strongly related to having a real code for how you lived. If you didn't have a code, if you didn't have a set of values, if you didn't seek after education, you weren't respectable.

Epistemic Violence: Religion and Education

I originally intended to examine separately the religious and educational structures that have evolved in the Caribbean, and to argue that these have colluded in the colonial order and supported its imperial and patriarchal foundations. However, I have found it difficult to adequately discuss the one apart from its entanglements with the other, so intertwined have their effects been, in the Caribbean's history, in its fiction, and in the narratives that my friends unfolded.

Religion: Missionary positions.

During the struggle for the abolition of slavery in the English Caribbean, the dissenting churches and, particularly in Jamaica, the Baptist Church were, unlike the established churches,⁴⁷ forces for emancipation. Upon the 1834 abolition of slavery, then,

⁴⁷From the onset of English colonization in the Caribbean, a strong supportive relationship existed between church and state. *Establishment*, as it was called, lasted into the 20th century, and gave the Anglican Church (the Roman Catholic Church in French and Spanish colonies) a privileged legal and political position. The Anglican Church represented respectability and the legitimacy of the social order throughout the entire colonial period.

Towards the end of slavery, parliament decided that Anglican religious training should be part of preparation for emancipation. The elementary school system grew out of attempts to give slaves a smattering of Christian education. Rote learning of scripture was stressed, with some reading (though not necessarily writing) instruction. (I have heard people reminisce about their parents' being sent to school with 1d a week for reading instruction, up to 3d if they were to be taught to write.)

the Baptist missionaries, who had gained a powerful foothold in Jamaica, were seen as the champions of the free blacks, and as their defenders against the rapacious plantocracy. The Baptists had a vision of a new society, one that linked the emancipation and the conversion of the freed population. It was a premise of the missionaries that slavery had been abhorrent and unnatural because the essence of *manhood* was independence, and slaves dependent on their masters could not therefore be truly *men*.. The great experiment, the dream, then, was that “black men would become like white men” (Hall, 1995, p. 53), responsible, respectable, industrious, lords of their modest castles, and that

black women would become like....the white women of the English middle class imagination, occupying their small but satisfying sphere....A new gender order was central to the vision of the abolitionists...black men would survey their families with pride, black women would no longer be sexually subjugated to their masters but properly dependent on their husbands (p. 54).

The free villages established by the Baptist mission were “the missionary fantasy of a good society....a new social order with its gender order firmly in place, a social hierarchy with the white missionary, then ‘his’ wife, then ‘his’ deacons, then the rest of the congregation (p. 53)....Missionaries fought for equality before the law, yet they constructed ‘their’ people as children and pupils, learning from them the ways of civilization”(p. 56).

The missionaries’ efforts to accomplish these goals illustrate perfectly what Belsey (1985) claims to be the role of all ideology: “to construct people as subjects” (p. 47). It is this colonising process that Spivak terms *epistemic violence*, the power of European colonialism “to constitute the colonial subject as Other” and the “obliteration of...that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity”(1994, p. 76). Ideology, then, is a “set of representations ... concerning the real relations in which people live” (Belsey, 1985, p. 46). Colonial ideology manifests itself in “relations of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex

After Emancipation (1834), the British Parliament allotted funds from the Negro Education Grant, 1835–45, to prepare the newly emancipated population of the English Caribbean colonies for freedom. Missionary bodies, who already had a functioning infrastructure, administered the grant, developing and expanding their existing educational work. Almost every church had its little school, which often doubled as an evening and Sunday school. The main achievement of the Negro Education Grant was to establish the idea of popular education.

The goal of education was to produce a docile productive Christian working class, to “teach the mutual interests of the mother-country and her dependencies; the rational basis of their connections, and the domestic and social duties of the coloured races” (Colonial Office, 1847, in Donawa, 1995b). Elementary schooling was not intended to promote social mobility or to enable access to secondary and higher education; only a small number of exceptionally able working class children cleared the scholarship hurdles. Those who did were celebrities, which is why, even in fictional representations of a more contemporary era, Brodber’s Nellie is so elated with “the best” scholarship (*Jane and Louisa*, 1980, p. 2), and why middle-class relatives in Hodge’s novels (1970, 1993) turn up out of the blue to lay claim to the promising children of their more humble connections.

hegemony....a created body of theory and practice [and] material investment” (Said, 1994, p. 133). These theories, practices and investments include not just the ideology’s controlling discourses and myths but also the conventions and commonplaces of daily life. It was a *comprehensive* missionary ideology, then, that ordered the “real relations” of the newly emancipated villagers, from their church-going and family structure to the size of their gardens and style of clothing (Hall, 1995).

The comprehensiveness of that missionary ethic, the established/ dissenting dynamic, the respectable conflated with the spiritual, all are re/presented not only in the narratives of my participant-friends, but also in the coming-of-age fiction by women writers of our generation (see footnote 11). The missionary ethos provided the social and cultural framework⁴⁸ for colonial Caribbean world, and tacitly endorsed the missionary belief that “without whites, blacks were locked in the dark and degradation, intellectually at zero, with no memories, traditions, or culture to build on” (Hall, 1995, p. 57). Thus Hodge’s (1970) fictional adolescent Tee learns that when she comes to Glory her “black sins” will be washed from her, and she will be “cleansed...white and shining stand...among the blessed children” (p. 30). Her confusion evokes the real-life indoctrination of Felicia, who “saw the world as *us* and *natives*.” [See *Education: Great expectations* this chapter.]

Felicia enjoyed the drama and relative freedom that evangelical religion offered. Her grandmother attended the nearby Evangelical Mission as long as her husband was alive.

But once he died...and her children were growing up, she recognized that most of the people in that church were a touch below what she wanted to be, and so she joined the Methodist church. She used to go to the Evangelical Mission on afternoons, she taught a Sunday School class there, but her membership was at the Methodist church, so she went there to the morning service and to the night service, and I was brought up in the Methodist church.

I was allowed to go [to the Evangelical church]...about two minutes away from our house.... You know, it’s quite awful for a little girl to be living in a house with only older people, and not being allowed to go out much, and not being allowed to have neighbours in. But this one place she would allow...me to go on my own, at night, during the week, and so I got saved, several times, I learned that to play a tambourine was a great achievement. I don’t think I ever got up, had the guts to testify...but it was great entertainment for me.

The opposing attraction of evangelical fervour and “big people church” status was not the only manifestation of belief among Felicia’s respectable older relatives. Although

⁴⁸The established church conveyed a social cachet, while evangelical movements and folk religions captured the imagination of the black poor, and offered an alternative to the established church and its values.

they would have been horrified at any suggestion of pagan superstition, faint traces of obeah, African folk survivals, can be discerned on the palimpsest of their lineage. Felicia recalls how Aunt Soph told her that

she used to wash her hair and go into the yard to dry it in the sun, and it was thin and long; she assured me the reason it became thin like that was because a neighbour who envied her had come to the house when she was much younger and insisted on combing her hair for her, and she had put her hand under her own arm, and taken her perspiration and put it into Aunt Soph's hair, and so it all began to fall out and ...that's why she had such thin hair. And a lot of little things that she would tell me would be rooted in a firm conviction that someone had caused this⁴⁹, and yet here were people that were extremely religious, went to church every Sunday, and believed that you should love your neighbour as yourself.

Education: Great expectations.

"All [our school] literature was about people from Europe." When Felicia read *Annie John* (Kincaid, 1985) many years after her own schooldays, she "loved that book...the first book that I thought reflected honestly the kind of life that I had led, growing up, or that I would have wanted to lead. The things I was told I couldn't do, which she managed to slip out of the house and do." A measure of Felicia's response to Kincaid's authenticity found expression in her involvement in a theatrical production that included a dramatization⁵⁰ of *Girl* (*At the Bottom of the River*, 1983, see Appendix E) whose central character is a somewhat fantastic precursor of Annie John.

When we heard [*Girl*], a groan went up from the audience...somehow or other, although I lived in a female house, yes, I knew I had to be taught how to iron a shirt, which I ent wear anyhow, but I had to be taught how to start with the collar...and this is how you tidy your bed and you smooth the sheet and all that.

JOURNAL: Is there something wistful in Felicia's admiration for naughty, defiant Annie John? I must ask her. I hadn't thought before of the parallels to be found

⁴⁹A similar, low-keyed but recurrent motif in *Jane and Louisa* (Brodber, 1980) suggests that those who are bright and promising are particularly at risk of attracting the envy and spite of illwishers: Mass Stanley's sister "what pass first year....hair drop off clean clean before she dead....Mass Cliff that silent mad. Him did bright bright you know and is *people do him so*"(pp. 11-12). Alexander annually evokes his childhood memory of Dorcas, "smooth-skinned, fair with straight pretty hair" (p. 13), who died mysteriously, quickly of "the vomiting sickness..or *something somebody set*"(p. 14). Miss Elzada follows "certain rituals needed to stay the power" of the envious against her talented grandson, and Sarah warns the children not to provoke Mass Tanny: "Be polite to him....*Don't eat anything from him* or anybody else outside of this yard unless you let me see it" (p. 11, emphasis added).

⁵⁰ In *If you Wait Till All the Lights are Green, You'll Never Get to Town*, directed by Earl Warner at Queens Park Theatre, Barbados, 1986. Groans of recognition and hoots of laughter at this interpretation of Kincaid's *Girl*. The women in the audience might not have been familiar with Kincaid, but they all recognized this representation of their upbringing.

between Felicia's and Jamaica Kincaid's upbringing. Both started school at three and were exceptionally able pupils. Although Kincaid's family appears to have been far more indulgent than Felicia's, there were also similarities. Kincaid comments: "My whole upbringing was something I was not: it was English...I never knew we were poor...we ate well...My mother was grand in every gesture. I could never speak bad English in her presence"(in Cudjoe, 1990b, p. 219).

Both grew up when England's "glory was at its most theatrical, its most oppressive. Everything seemed divine and good only if it was English," but Kincaid's precocious defiance of authority included her refusal "to stand up at the refrain of 'God Save Our King.' I hated 'Rule, Britannia'; and I used to say that we weren't Britons, we were slaves. I never had any idea why. I just thought that there was no sense to it" (p. 217).

Annie acts out this hostility in the comic "Columbus in Chains" episode [Annie John, 1985], which Kincaid admits has an autobiographical basis. An illustration in Annie's history text shows Columbus, chained, waiting to be shipped back from his third voyage. "What just desserts, I thought, for I did not like Columbus. How I loved this picture--to see the usually triumphant Columbus, brought so low, seated at the bottom of the boat" (Annie John, pp. 77-78). Annie defaces the picture, writing "The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go" in the Old English script she has recently mastered.

Her teacher's hysterical rage at this irreverence is both ludicrous and demonic, as described by the unrepentant Annie. Her punishment includes the copying of books I and II of *Paradise Lost*: unsurprisingly, she rejects the Miltonic myth that so devalues women, and pagans, and identifies with Lucifer, the rebel, the outcast, black. (July, 1997)

In Felicia's paradoxical world, although it was respectable to observe hierarchical distinctions, it was also assumed, *required*, "that you aspired....I think...in their minds this obsession with education was based on the fact that education could get you anywhere ... as long as you had book knowledge....Upward mobility was related very very strongly to education."

[Felicia's father], having divorced, couldn't stay as a headmaster anymore, because it was a church school, so he had to leave....He felt he would never be a free person, a truly free person in the way he wanted to be and so he switched to Law...My father had been expected to perform...When I think of the things that he did in order to perform, that he did his law degree in, I think, six months of studying 16 hours a day, he told me. And that without a tutor. So all he was doing was just taking books, horrible law books and reading them 16 hours a day...I don't know how he got himself that six months, in Grenada itself, did his exams there and everything, and then, of course, had to go to Britain to eat dinners, you have to go to law, to the inns there....it was the only way for black poor people in Barbados to become someone. The only route was education.

Felicia, too, was expected to perform: "They expected me to be outstanding. I wouldn't say necessarily the best at everything, but they expected me to be outstanding in any group." Some of her early memories are of performing to high expectations: "Right through my childhood I was performing at whatever the church did...so on the odd

occasion when there was an award to be given and I didn't win it, I had let them all down."

Her first experience of being put on a stage, at four, was

very harrowing, but nobody considered thatI was apparently very good at learning things by heart, and I thoroughly enjoyed leaping about the house and saying [the recitation] at the top of my voice and so on. And then, they took me to this church on Sunday, and the church didn't normally have a platform and they had built this high thing; I had to be hoisted onto it, this man that I probably didn't know very well, lifted me onto it, and the image remained with me for years after. I looked down and there were eyes everywhere, just eyes, eyes, I didn't see anything else...I just saw eyes. I was terrified. And so I whispered the entire poem. And no one thought that they had done something horrible to me. When I came home, I can still remember having let the family down. And what a disgrace I had been, they talked about it and talked about it.

....When my aunt died, I was in my 50s...but I stood on the same spot, I insisted on doing the eulogy myself....because I knew that for her I would have been required to perform on that day....I'm very pleased with the eulogy that I did...because as I wrote it I was in tears all the time. ...But as I stood there to do it, I thought, I can deal with the eyes, I started dealing with eyes at four years old....And it was really doing what I thought she had required of me all my life.

Felicia started school at three, not the local village school, but a dame school, a respectable school, which its elderly proprietor had originally started for her nieces and nephews. Her family had already taught her to count and recite the alphabet. The school had eight or ten pupils, who were taught

in her bedroom and she sat on a great bed, you know, probably a feather bed or something....there was as I recall just this one little bench about two feet away from her and we all sat on this bench....Facilities, the last word....the syllabus consisted of tables. You had to add and subtract and you had to know all your tables up to 12. And you had to be able to write....Do you know how she taught us to write?

She took me under her arm, and I could almost bring up her old smell. I can almost feel that in my nose when I think about it. And she was fat ...so I would be squeezed up into all this fat lady, and we had a slate..and she would say how the letters were formed...with her holding my little hand crumpled up in her great fat hand, and her hand shook...I just took it for granted that people of her age had hands that shook.

There was a little book about *Dan is the man in the van*, you remember the calypso⁵¹ ...as a treat we would be allowed to sit in the bedroom next door...and look at the clouds....no gym, nothing, I don't think we actually drew. And when I left her school at six years old there was nothing that I couldn't read, I could read any book at speed, I could recite whole chapters from the Bible...would you believe they made you do that?

I simply learned everything by remembering. She used to give us problems for homework...but the people in the problems never had names like ours because our names were things like Grace and Shirley and Michelle, you know, the typical Barbadian names, but the people in these problems were always called Elizabeth and Anne and Mary Jane, so it never occurred to me that it was real....All these

⁵¹This Caribbean equivalent to *Dick and Jane* was satirized in a calypso that ridiculed the rote learning of the day.

little problems were always a mystery because all these people were so strange to me.

But if you think about it, that was what our entire education was about. You never read about people that you knew in any of your books, but yet in several ways you identified with them.

At age six, Felicia went on to the elementary school where her aunt taught, which was “a very selective kind of experience.” Her friends, the relatives of other teachers, were chosen for her, and because she read so well, she bypassed primary school altogether and was placed in a class of ten year olds. She went on in this way for four or five years, when the education authorities imposed the grouping of children by age.

My aunt wasn't having any of that....she just took me out of school and made me stay home for that whole year....They were preparing me for secondary school...she gave me arithmetic every day....English too, every day, and she introduced me to French which was really lovely and I was very badly taught, but I loved it, being very badly taught, I was thrilled with it, her pronunciation was almost non-existent, but I just loved that new language.

Felicia was enrolled at Queens College⁵²; “I was shocked that I was going to be going there, because I knew very well we didn't have the money, to pay twenty dollars a term! [Twice the fees of the other acceptable girls' school.] A lot of money then, but to them it was important, so if it killed them they would have sent me.” During her first year, while watching a school play, she observed

that the entire cast was white, except for a girl who had a role called the Property Man...the one who had to come out and roll down the river, and place the chairs for the Prince and the Princess and so forth. And her only lines were Quack, quack, whenever the king would say something like Let the river flow, and she would have to come out and roll the river down, and her only response to that would be, Quack, quack....and I thought that perhaps they had chosen all those girls because they speak very well⁵³, but I thought, I can speak just as well as they can, and so I will be in future performances...I have always...rushed into places where I have no right to rush in,...where I really wasn't competent to rush in, but it was because I felt I could. So maybe I should have told you that was the message I got in my home.

⁵²Queens College, founded in the early 19th century, has long been seen as Barbados' most prestigious girls' schools (it is now coeducational). Originally for fee-paying children, later accessed through rigorous examinations, it offered a classical education modelled on the British public school. Its students were encouraged to aspire to Oxford and Cambridge, or at least to a British university.

⁵³ “You were good at English if you spoke well at home, and if you had been properly brought up, you would turn out to be good at English, basically [i.e. speaking standard English rather than dialect]....in each class there were probably two or three whose English wasn't good, and...people referred to their English as *standpipe* English.” (Water that served the general population was distributed from village standpipes, from which it could be collected in buckets and carried home. The reader may recall Felicia's resentment at being made to collect water, although from her aunt's, not from a village standpipe.)

Felicia also remembers “a little prejudice that we all had”:

I knew what poor whites looked like, and I didn't really want to have anything to do with them....We had a whole set of very clever black children In Queen's College at the time, the school must have been about almost half and half black and white...but it started off as a school for the children of the Queen's Regiment...so there was a time when there were no black children there at all, and there are stories of the first black children and the terrible times that they had. But by our time, we felt that most of the white children were there because they had the money to pay....Because of the [exam] results, we just knew that most of us were quite bright, and we were really ... supercilious in our attitudes to people who would ever say, I don't understand, it was not done.

We thought only white girls and fair-skinned girls in the class got good marks with [the Geography mistress]. Only those people were ever good at Geography, and so I decided that...I was going to show her that she didn't mark my book but Cambridge⁵⁴ did, that I would beat the whole lot of them because I always felt that most of them were not very clever. The whole idea was to be better than the British intellectually, if you could be. So standards were very hard, very harsh.

Miss Seale [the History teacher] was a poor white Barbadian....to this day I can even look at people who are a little coloured and...I will know that that person's grandfather or whatever was an indentured [servant]⁵⁵...it was a look I knew. But...Miss Seale was really special, an outstanding teacher...and I only know now that she treated me with great caring and love, probably because she understood my background. Because when I became a teacher, I recognized students who needed me in that way, and it's only in retrospect that I think she knew that I needed her.

The syllabus did not include the history of Barbados, because in those days you did European history, or [Imperial history] relating to our dates of colonization here....Miss Seale decided that it was her job to teach us the history of Barbados because it was in no book anywhere at the time....I remember her saying that she was sure she was descended from one of the Royalists that Cromwell had sent out here as indentured labour...she always felt inclined to be on their side. But when she talked about *we* and she said how *we* in Barbados had fought the British when they sent down Ayscue⁵⁶, and *we* had won, that included... herself and me. It was

⁵⁴The school's syllabus was developed to prepare children for final examinations set by Cambridge and marked in England.

⁵⁵ Barbados' earliest labour force (from its 1627 settlement) was largely composed of indentured white servants: petty criminals, debtors, and press-gang victims. Large numbers of royalist political prisoners were also sentenced, by Cromwell's judges, to be *Barbadoesed*. Their poor white descendants were “largely dislocated” in the plantation society that subsequently developed, and whose essential division was between white planters and African slaves. (Fraser et al, 1990, p. 147)

⁵⁶During the 17th century Commonwealth, Sir George Ayscue was sent to subordinate Barbados' Royalist planter faction, who rejected Cromwell's mercantile principles. As Ayscue's force lacked the military power to conquer the royalists' militia, he blockaded the colony for three months. The colonists eventually accepted the terms of Ayscue's delegation, which were generally favourable to their own interests. (Beckles, 1990, pp. 23-28)

the two of us fighting against the British, but nowhere in this was there ever any mention of this massive black population that was here.

The slave trade...consisted of one page with a triangle... started in Africa. ... to Britain, across the Atlantic, back to Africa, and that was the sum total of the slave trade. And nowhere in those classes was there any connection between who I was and the slaves...there was never any mention of slavery in Barbados, in any of the classes I was taught.

You know, I saw the world as *us* and *natives*. I never realized that the word *native* could have applied to people who lived here in Barbados. You see, we were the civilized, cultivated people and the natives were mostly in Africa and India. [My] horrible colonial book said how all Chinese wore their hair in a plait. I remember calling it a "plate" for ages because I didn't realize that that was the plait that we wore, too. There was a picture of them with the round hat, and I thought that that was the "plate" and I thought that all Chinese wore their hair in a "plate" and wound it round and made this "plate" until I got old enough to recognize that it was always spelt "plait".

But, you see, I thought all Chinese...looked like that, and I thought of all Africans, perhaps, as pygmies, from the description...I thought they were all little, there was some reference to their backsides....That was the image that I had, and I did not connect any of the natives, so to speak, with us. ...They had said everyone in Africa was black, I was brown-skinned, so I would not have made a direct connection.

What meaning was Felicia to make from so many layers of contradiction? Aware of her own and other black children's academic superiority, and feeling that some teachers harboured a bias against darkskinned pupils, she nonetheless perceived the all-white (non-menial) cast of the school play to be a result only of their "speaking very well." With a certain disregard for European intelligence and outright disdain for poor whites, she nevertheless bloomed under the loving pedagogy of her poor white History teacher, who first brought to her attention the marginal status of Caribbean history. Yet another paradox: caught in her own world-view, Miss Seale could not visualize a history that was not Eurocentric, and absorbed Felicia's subjectivity as one of "us," with no connection to a world of "natives."

The contradiction and self-denial that Felicia recounts in such specificity seem so bizarre that the contemporary reader might be tempted to dismiss them as one odd little girl's misapprehension. But the fiction writers I have noted here speak to a similar cultural marginalization. Their narratives function to bring to the foreground girls' and women's experiences, *petits récits* indeed, and to expose the ideological ties that bind and blind, that trivialize, that delude.⁵⁷ These writers of Caribbean girlhood have exposed the connections

⁵⁷Senior's children are undone by the ever-shifting perspectives of race and class that constitute them. Like Spivak's subalterns (in Williams & Chrisman, Eds., 1994), they are "only constituted as subject[s] through positions that have been permitted" (Young, 1990, p. 165). But these positions are both contradictory *and* required.

between patriarchal and colonizing power relations; they have encouraged self-awareness, and en-*visioned* female agency for a generation of women whose education offered no mirror for their own lives, their own narratives.

Summary: Ideology and Contradiction

Felicia was not as rebellious as Annie, but neither was she as fragile as numerous fictional Caribbean girlchildren.⁵⁸ But how is it that Felicia and her principled, determined guardians were able to *live* such contradictions? How is it, not only that patriarchal and colonial interests can enforce and compel compliance, but that women internalize these values, and police one another and themselves on behalf of the dominant order? An answer may emerge from an examination of the workings of ideology.

Felicia's narrative implies that patriarchal and imperial discourses permeate all levels of social and cultural life. They constitute an epistemological framework for a hierarchical understanding of race, class and gender, so that home, church, and school inculcate unconscious compliance with authority. Dominant discourses obliterated the subjectivity of Caribbean children by erasing any mirror, in literature or in history, of the material realities of their lives: by devaluing the Creole dialects their culture had evolved ("the language of the forever low," Kincaid 1996, p. 31); by denying them the power to name their realities ("I was never to say...someone was black", Felicia, 2:14). Nonetheless, I contend that the will to aspire and excel, the will to power and agency, enables the subversive subconscious to pursue its desire for knowledge and self-knowledge. And in this process "of going forth in the world" (Tomm, 1992, p. 108) lies the possibility of choice and change.

Catherine Belsey (1985) claims that it is ideology's function to construct people as

Brodber's Nellie (*Jane and Louisa*, 1980) too, is permitted/required both to follow the Baptist Amen *and* the Te Deum, to seek guidance from Anancy *and* from Polonius, to be brown and better *and* a black activist, Cock Robin's sexual athlete *and* Aunt Becca's respectable girl, a competitive scholar *and* piously passive. In *Myal* (Brodber, 1988), Ella is compelled to encompass impossible contradictions: a highly visible child whose teachers "stopped seeing her"; she is required to pass for white *and* not to be an "alabaster baby", manipulated for social and creative expression *and* denied all but a grotesque travesty of her history.

Hodge's Tee (*Crick Crack Monkey*, 1970) is torn between the folk and bourgeois cultures of her aunts. All the novels' girlchildren are pulled in opposing but required positions; it is unsurprising that they all shatter.

⁵⁸The psychological breakdown and/or suicide of adolescent girls is a sombre and recurring theme in Caribbean women writers' fiction (e.g. Kincaid, 1985, *Annie John*; Hodge, 1993, *For the life of Laetitia*; Rhys, 1966, *Wide Sargasso sea*; Brodber, 1980, *Jane and Louisa will soon come home*; 1988, *Myal*; Edgell, 1982, *Bekka Lamb*; Senior, 1996a, *Discerner of Hearts*).

ideological subjects. By *ideology* she means “a system of representations (discourses, images, myths) concerning the real relations in which people live” (p. 46). What is represented, however, is “not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relations of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (Althusser, in Belsey, p. 46). That is, ideology is *real*, material, and exists in the behaviour of people acting according to their beliefs. But ideology is also *illusory* in that it discourages a full understanding of the conditions that constitute those beliefs. And it is in this delusive mode that we are surrounded, shaped, constituted by ideological machinery whose structures remain as in a glass darkly out-of-focus, insubstantial, or even invisible to us.

Thus Felicia’s aunt and grandmother acted in the sincere belief that the child would be advantageously positioned in colonial society if they insisted upon her speaking Standard English, achieving academic excellence, and demonstrating ladylike decorum and an unquestioning obedience to all authority, domestic, social, and divine. That these qualities were good in and of themselves was not questioned, for their effects seemed self evident in the accomplishments of a child who did indeed “perform” and “excel.”

But Felicia’s guardians did not fully comprehend the conditions that shaped those beliefs, beliefs that served the ideological interests of patriarchy and imperialism, which in turn, set limits on what could be understood or questioned. Thus Felicia, who had no concept of choice, perceived herself, until she was almost twenty, to be actively choosing the conditions of her life. Thus her upbringing and education rendered her blackness invisible; thus, if necessity required class-inappropriate tasks like running errands or fetching water, she was to render herself invisible. Yet the resistant, subversive self emerges in the gaps between these contradictions: “Remember 1937”; “The whole idea was to be better than the British intellectually.”

Ideology, then, is blinding, and it renders invisible the desire, agency, and identity of subordinate groups and individuals. Women’s desire for agency, seen ideologically, is the desire to become visible. But the struggle to en-vision the self threatens the intrinsically hegemonic nature of ideology. Self-knowledge makes ideology visible, brings it into focus, defines its location, and disrupts it. As long as ideology remains obscure, it seems “natural,” because members of dominant groups have the power to impose their values across the social order. This naturalness in turn supports its ideological power base and its production of knowledge. “It is one of the functions of ideology to ‘naturalize’ social reality, to make it seem as innocent and unchangeable as Nature itself....Ideology seeks to convert culture into nature, and the ‘natural’ sign is one of its weapons” (Eagleton, 1983,

p. 135).

Colonial ideology and the language in which it is made to seem natural, the language of the church, the school, of respectability, impede the colonial subject's, and certainly the female colonial subject's, efforts to become self-aware, conscious of her ideological construction. And it is the function of colonial education, in rendering colonial discourse as "natural," to frame women's knowledge, natives' knowledge as deficient, *petits récits* to its Grand Narrative. As Belsey (1985) points out, women's ideological invisibility has a direct connection to their actual absence from real power relations. Likewise, the "natives'" invisibility (Felicia: "I did not connect any....natives...with us") constitutes what Spivak terms "an *aporia*, a blind-spot where knowledge and understanding is blocked" (in Young, 1990, p. 164), and constitutes part of the "project to constitute the colonial subject as other" (Spivak, 1994, p. 76). The dominant order, then, produces knowledge that will legitimize it. Resources are made available to encourage certain kinds of knowledge (such as, in Felicia's case, a strong articulate identification with Empire, and the certainty that wilfulness and insubordination will be punished) and are withheld to limit other kinds (such as an understanding of Africa and her connection to it). This is the ideological process that Spivak terms "epistemic violence" and that Brodber (1998) calls "spirit theft."

To what extent did Felicia's sense of identity support or subvert that discursive inscription? Sarah Ruddick claims that "the knowing self is created within relationship" (1996, p. 263). We become the persons we are in relation to specific others, notes Hekman, (1995, p. 74). Felicia's close attachment to her grandmother's family ensured a trust in their values. Thus Felicia "knew" that her gashed foot was punishment for running wild. On the other hand, she did not understand that she had no choice in churchgoing, did not "know" of her African connections. Children do not have the experiential base for Baier's (1994) "appropriate trust," that links the realms of care and self-care, and that enables self-knowledge.

But Felicia's identity and her potential for self-knowledge were also served by her guardians' insistence upon competence and excellence in the dominant discourse, and by the assumption that she would aspire ("I have always...rushed into places where I had no right...because I felt I could....that was the message I got in my home"). Felicia's adult career has been characterized by an acute perceptiveness, and by her skilful negotiation of the gaps and crevasses where change is possible. "In a system you have to be able to move....there is always a way to manipulate it if you understand it wellThe key to mental health is a sense of how to survive in all circumstances." Felicia's awareness of

powerful systems was entrenched by the time she was four, aloft on her platform, surrounded by eyes. “Children are very good at accepting; they wriggle into the space that’s allowed them, and they fit into it. It’s just amazing.”

Lucinda’s Story

“Our Own Little Sphere”: Home, School, Church

JOURNAL: “The education system in Antigua has this incredible history,” says Jamaica Kincaid (Cudjoe, 1990B, p. 217). “It went from colonialism to the modern world—that is, from about 1890 to 1980—in five years.” Kincaid is of course given to extravagant statements, but the phenomenon she describes played out on a wider Caribbean stage, and her comment provides a hinge for this chapter. When I read through the interview transcripts, I was struck by how, for all their individuality, the four narratives fell into two pairs, colonial and post-colonial. Felicia and Lucinda were far more influenced by the imperial values that mediated their culture and dictated the intellectual climate. Elizabeth and Naomi, a decade younger than the rest of us, seem to be almost of another generation; they speak from an assumption of Creole culture and from their grounding in it. (July, 1997)

Lucinda laughs, recognizing her own Antiguan upbringing in Annie John’s narrative:

Did I tell you that story about Jamaica Kincaid and Sunday School....there’s a chapter called *The Circling Hand*, and...Annie John becomes aware of the sexual relationship between her mother and father. She comes home from Sunday School and surprises them in bed. I laughed at that, but I made no connection.

I was talking to one of my sisters with whom I’m particularly [close], we have cliques in the family, with such a big one I’m closer to some, and this sister said that my mother had told her, the reason why we had to go to Sunday School—this was at 3:00 every Sunday...I was 16 and 17...resisting, I remember saying, I am big enough, why should I go to Sunday School—because that was the only time that she and my father could make love. Same thing in *Annie John*...Sunday School has now been changed from 3:00 to 9:00 in the morning, so I don’t know what...Caribbean families do.

As the eldest of 10 children, Lucinda found, unsurprisingly, “no privacy,” but later “realized I wasn’t the only one who missed the pleasure of being alone in solitude.”

Where Felicia was a solitary child in an all-female extended family, Lucinda was the maternal eldest daughter of “a very loving couple, it was a very good relationship between them and they obviously agreed on how they would bring up their children.” Nevertheless, despite these differences, Lucinda’s upbringing was in some ways as structured as Felicia’s, structured by the parameters required to raise a respectable, competent, aspiring middle-class girl in the post-war, pre-independence Caribbean.

If I had to say what class we fell into, I would have to say lower middle class because we didn’t really have a lot of money but we were comfortable, and we were, in our own little sphere, I guess, sufficiently importantMy father...started

in the government service....I know it was a low grade because he had to wear uniform and bowler hat, and I know the higher grades of the Civil Service don't wear that. But he worked right back up to the grades where he didn't have to wear those. I think now that he was remarkable for his time, he didn't have secondary education, but he became...Superintendent of the Reform School, which was called Skerritts in Antigua...

He used to keep records of the children's behaviour, he arranged a work-scheme where they would plant a garden and the proceeds would be put up for the boys when they left at 18, and he kept records. The first time I learned the words *carnal knowledge* was from sneaking into his reports and one of the boys had come in for carnal knowledge of somebody, and I asked, and of course I wasn't answered so of course, I went and looked in the dictionary. But the boys came in for vagrancy, from no family, they weren't really bad boys, and some of his best friends [were eventually] those young men, many of whom have responsible positions in Antigua, in the States and so on.

He moved up again, to an administrative post in the Welfare system...and when he retired...had a job with the British High Commissioner. I was aware of their standing, especially in the church, my father was a local preacher and many Sunday mornings we would go with him in the country where he was preaching. And he was also a steward in the church, he had a very high profile in the church, and he had a high profile in the government service of Antigua.

[When he died] the eulogy made me aware that you really should tell your parents how much you appreciate, not quarrel about their failings. The eulogist [at his funeral], a well known political activist in Antigua...a close friend of my father, said that when the social history of Antigua is written, his name will be mentioned, because, without any secondary education...he built up a remarkable institution....

A Harvard sociologist...had come under the Peace Corps...and he became interested in the social organizations of Antigua and was quite impressed with, it's called the Boys' Training School and how it was run, and the family orientation, and the sense of self-worth and the responsibility, all the values that he had inculcated in them. He actually wrote a piece about my father and the Boys' Training School in some text.... This is why I respond so to Jamaica Kincaid's comment about Skerritts [in *Annie John*, 1985], when she said only the Red Girl would play marbles with the Skerritt boys⁵⁹ and beat them,...we could probably be called Skerritt girls.

[My mother] had a secondary education, and one of the things I remember about that social situation in the Caribbean is that was a very harsh system. She had done her what was then called the School Certificate, which I took when I grew up, but in those days, if you failed one subject, you failed the whole thing, and that was the tragedy of her life, because she failed Math....[She attended] the first secondary school that would take in children who were illegitimate ...the first school to allow children whose parents were not married to get a secondary education, or children who were not white or not brown skinned, so [the founder of the school] is well-known in the island for having done that....

But...it was class-ridden, they would talk about children who weren't to the manor born....there was a subtle discrimination, even though she had done a lot for the society by being the first educator to take in those illegitimate black children, so to speak. There was still this incipient class prejudice....My mother is quite dark, ...she has had, still has, a very beautiful voice, she's a...high soprano, she

⁵⁹Annie's beloved, unkempt and incorrigible Red Girl "loved to play marbles, and was so good that only Skerritt boys now played against her." (Kincaid, 1985, p. 58).

would have been destined for good things, but again [when the school produced] *HMS Pinafore*, a lot of people didn't want her to get the top part because she was too black, but she found a champion in this same Miss A [the school's founder]. Miss A said, She has the best voice, so she will get it...Oh, it was riddled with anomalies.

She used to teach for a while...then when my father got the job as Superintendent of the Reform School, she was taken on as Matron....really a good time for them and for us, because with her gifts, music and teaching and literature, they revitalized the school. I remember in our childhood having Christmas celebrations where she would write plays for the boys to perform and she would teach them songs and harmony, Good King Wenceslas, and they would perform and they would charge sixpence entrance and we were all involved with it....she could use her skills and her aptitudes there. She gave the young boys, especially those who were in there because they had no parents, a sense of home, and somebody to care about them, and she also has some good friends among them.

Lucinda comments wryly that being the firstborn of a large family predestined her for a teaching career. The childhood play that was her work enacted inscriptions both of eldest-daughter-responsibility, which would later weigh heavily on her, and of the power of hierarchy. This power she enforced, she remembers with chagrin, violently, and was in turn punished by higher authority.

I take over things and that's because I was the first. I was allowed to chastise my brothers and sisters, with my parents approval. I could beat them. [My sisters] reminded me, to my shame, of my having pushed my second sister down nine steps because she didn't want to play school...I was serious about playing school, and my parents....were very happy, because you need to have nine children organized, and I was a good organizer with play school, but they wanted to *play*....[I] pushed my second sister down nine steps because she didn't want to play school...and my parents beat me of course for it.

[I was] always trying to teach them when they wanted to play. So we played Sunday School too, and I would sit down and play the organ, play the table, and then during the week we'd play school....Definitely, birth order is very important....I would write sums on the pillars of the house....I would be a little tyrant...do their sums wrong on the board...One present I remember [from my father] was a big blackboard and easel, and so I could teach, teach the sticks and stones if my sisters didn't want to play with me.

Each older child had a younger child to look after. [Some of the siblings were jealous of the closeness between Lucinda and "her" sister.] but I was telling her I remember I was given the responsibility for [her], I used to have to wake her up in time, get in the bathroom, comb her hair, dress her, make sure she had breakfast, and take her to school. And the three bigger ones had three small ones to do that for...and as the eldest I had to make sure they were behaving themselves.

My mother, I would say, was fanatical about cleaning...and every Saturday we had to take everything down and clean them thoroughly, and the house was cleaned, there were ten children, it got dirty. Morning, before we went to school we had to clean the house; afternoons, we'd have to clean the house out, tidy. My oldest brother remembers how he had to clean the steps outside, and it was a damp area, and frogs were always there, I am terrified of frogs. He says I used to beat him with a hanger because he wouldn't go down and clean that place so that I wouldn't have to walk there and find any frogs.

We all had our duties to perform, and we followed that *At the Bottom of the River*⁶⁰ girl, when she says This is the way you...wash your coloured clothes...so you won't be the slut that I am. That ritual was followed in our house. When I was in Tennessee State [on a recent Fulbright Fellowship], the students had to do that section, and really, for Americans, you have to gloss a lot because they don't know anything about...put the white clothes on the bleach⁶¹...one white student had been to Jamaica and he said he knew. C.L.R. James, in *Minry Alley* [1936, London, Secker & Warburg] he talks about the bleach stone, says it was an altar to Minerva, who's Minerva, God of War, Mars, because they would use the stones to throw at people.

My mother would say *Noblesse oblige*....for example, you shouldn't be seen eating in the street...it was a *worst* thing to go in rumpled up clothes, so your clothes should always be pressed and clean...shouldn't hang about, loitering. Caribbean parents don't like loitering, because they believe in the adage, the devil finds work for idle hands to do. Respectability forbade talking too loudly or laughing too loudly...*commonness*.

JOURNAL: In this concern for the appearances of respectability, Lucinda's mother, Felicia's grandmother and most of the literary aunts and grandmothers made common cause. They socialized their daughters well. I recall walking in town with a colleague who roundly scolded a girl in a Queens College uniform, unknown to both of us, for standing in the street by a coconut vender's cart and drinking coconut water from the nut. (July, 1997)

Lucinda does not appear to have found the gendered nature of her chores and responsibilities, and the umbrella requirement of respectability onerous, but rather in the natural order of things. In the well-regulated world of her home and school, her own position--her authority among siblings, her scholastic competence--was publicly acknowledged. Nonetheless, the secure round of family activities was linked to an expectation of responsibility that caused Lucinda some anxiety by the time she was in her mid-teens:

If you know the Caribbean at all, you know that there are things that you're

⁶⁰From "Girl," in Kincaid, J. (1983). *At the Bottom of the River*, pp. 3-5. See Appendix E.

⁶¹A patch of stones (in Barbados, marl) on which soapy clothes are spread to bleach in the sun. Compare Lucinda's own account with that of *Girl*:
 "There would be two piles, the white clothes and the coloured clothes, and the white clothes would be washed first, and then would be put [still soapy] on the bleach...if there were any particular stains, you put lime and salt, and rub it, but you had to keep them wet....Then on the Tuesday, you'd do the coloured clothes and then the third day, you would starch....You had to mix up a batter of arrowroot...in water, make a paste with it, and then you pour boiling water and then you'd get this gelatinous stuff. You'd put it in a bath of cold water, and then dunk the clothes. And so by the third day you're ready to iron, of course, sad-irons [small irons heated over coalpots]....Those clothes with the starch would have to be sprinkled because they would be standing up like in the frost; many times they were done over night, sprinkled, rolled up, and covered in a bath, and then the next morning they would be ironed. And that would take you up to Thursday or Friday, washing laundry was a week of activity."

expected to do, in fact, I think that I am regarded as somewhat selfish because I went on to do all these other degrees and didn't take a child under my wing as some of my younger sisters actually did, but they weren't as consumed by the desire for higher education, I suppose, so they were willing to subsume their desires. That is a very important thing, when you've done your work, you have to help the others, and as much as I have been able to, I have. One of the families that determined that I wasn't going to fall into that ... a family very much like ours, [had] an older girl who had to take on the responsibility of mothering nine or ten children, never married, never had any life of her own, and of course...I didn't see myself in that role at all, and I really didn't want to do that. Maybe I wasn't altruistic enough.

A religious influence pervaded family and social life, but, unlike Felicia, Lucinda does not speak of damnation and punishment, nor of the social restraints imposed by religious tenets:

Every morning we had morning devotions, and Mother or Father prayed and sometimes children prayed, there was a Bible reading and singing....Every birthday, of which there were many, the birthday girl or boy would be put in a ring, and after all the devotions, happy Birthday was sung,...and they often prayed for the birthday child, that was one of the things I remember from my family.

We went to church three times a day on Sunday...8:30 service in the morning, 3:00 Sunday School, 7:00 evening service...and at least once in the week....I often quip that I've been to church often enough as a child, I don't have to go back, and somebody says, you can't say that, just because you used to eat three times a day, you can't stop eating. I was in the Junior Choir, and then at 16 I was transferred to the senior choir...We had a youth guild...we couldn't go to youth guild unless we'd done our homework....They were very liberal with us...going out with people from the church...I don't know if they didn't think we could get into mischief....Christmas we'd go around singing carols in an open lorry and I have very fond memories of the moonlit night in the back of lorries, singing carols and going for sherry and getting chilly, Christmas....

After evening service on Sundays, my parents used to take us to the movies....My mother and father loved movies, so they would go all the time, and they wouldn't let us go during the week. George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* came, and I was having an exam. I said, Mummy, can I go with you to *Rhapsody*? She said, No, you have an examiny in blue. But they used to go regularly, and we used to look forward to her retelling the story in the morning, after she had been.

Lucinda attended her mother's alma mater, the first secondary school in Antigua to admit illegitimate black children.

And one of the reasons why we went to that school, of course, because she had pleasant memories of the school, and also because they would give free places to children of graduates of that school....Because there were a lot of us, money was always a problem because as you know we had to pay, free education didn't come until much, much later. It was very Victorian....we did plays like *HMS Pinafore*, *Merry England*, didn't know anything about Caribbean plays or anything like that. We had the maypole every year, and a Queen was chosen, and of course only the fair-skinned girls were chosen to be queen. Very very colonial in that, and children should be seen and not heard.

About school, what do I remember about school? Well, I liked school a

lot....Except for drawing, I was noted for my inability to draw. We had one drawing mistress who would come one hour a week, and she'd have the whole school to do. In the lower forms she'd come at 11, so she wouldn't get to the top forms until nearly quarter to 12, so I'd be reading until she got to me, because then I was in the higher form. When I was in the lower form, I would take my drawing book, one that lasted me for my whole career, five years, and when she passed...I would turn to things I wanted to do. Of course we had sewing, and I hated to sew too, and one piece of cloth lasted me my whole career, too....

I always liked literature, the thing I always finished reading the book before everybody else, that was a problem. But I got good marks. I remember that I wasn't taught how to write anything, my books would come back with "good," "bad," and I didn't know why they were good or bad. *Northanger Abbey*....I was always asked to read because I always liked to read aloud.

My interest [in literature] has influenced how I get along with people, how I interact with people, because literature has always been very important to me....I'm always aware that literature is not life, it's only a mirror of life, but when you read literature, you see the kinds of things that people go through and you see that people have dimensions that you're not aware of....A novelist can do things with characters because he has created them and he knows, supposedly, everything about them, but in life we don't know everything about the people no matter how often we see them, no matter how much they tell us, there's always some part they don't tell us, or there's some part they're not even aware of.

This is the adult voice speaking. But what of the schoolgirl reading *Northanger Abbey*? Like Hodge's (1970) Tee, who found that Reality was always Abroad (p. 61), and like Felicia, who observed that "You never read about people that you knew in any of your books, but yet in several ways, you identified with them," Lucinda's early understanding of reality and excellence was shaped by Imperial history and British literature. The aim of her education was certainly not the development of independent critical thought: "Miss A, who was the founder of the school....was doing a sum and she was doing it wrong, and one of my friends said, But Miss A,--*Don't contradict me*--and she had to shut up. Children should be seen and not heard...they didn't like children to assert themselves."

Canonical literature discourages the reader's full understanding of how she is constituted in ideological discourse; literature makes the dominant values seem right, natural and inevitable. The discursive machinery that hid from Lucinda a conceptual frame for her own history, ironically provided her with language and "models to facilitate thought" (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, p. 35). Later, the mere mention of Caribbean writing would be the catalyst to transform her literary and epistemological encounters.

Points of Departure

Stories, says Merle Hodge, "Allow a people not only to know its own world but to take it seriously" (1990, p. 206). Lucinda observed her lifeworld as seriously as her

discursive exposure permitted, aware of some, though not all, of its shortcomings.

I didn't know anything about Caribbean literature... '49, '50, the people had just started to write,⁶² and I was 12, so I didn't know anything about the Caribbean writers. I was aware that I didn't know anything about the trees around me, and I would ask people about the shrubs, and they wouldn't know, and there weren't any books as there are nowI was, I suppose, like Merle Hodge's Tee [1970]....that was so delightful when the girl started wearing shoes and socks, *When you start to wash your clothes then you can wear your socks, stupidness you going on with....*I don't think I created another Helen [Tee's imaginary English playmate, "the proper me"], but I was aware that I didn't know the trees and so on.

[England was the] Mother Country, of course...I knew a lot about... daffodils, about Bath, you know from reading Jane Austen and so on. I really wanted to go there and see. Because we did think of it as the Mother Country.

[My understanding of Africa?] None, none. We just thought they were primitive savages, nobody made us think any better. That was a faraway country and had no connection with us....I don't remember anyone talking, there were no books about Africa, teachers didn't comment, they would comment on England, but not on Africa. I was unconscious of it.

Despite the epistemic violence of an education that denied the African experience, and demanded unquestioning obedience, Lucinda, pragmatic and observant, was clear-sighted about her own interests. As a schoolchild, she could make a drawing last five years so she could "turn to things I wanted to do." An emerging critical curiosity made her aware that she could not name the flora of her own land. But she remained "unconscious" of the African diaspora, an *aporia* she contrasts with the precocious awareness of her contemporary, Jamaica Kincaid:

One of the things that struck me about [Jamaica Kincaid] is that in her interview with Selwyn Cudjoe [1990b], she talked about having, she says...stood up for hours in the hot sun, waiting to see a putty-faced princess disappear behind the high walls of Government House; she was seven. I was there too, I was 11, and I didn't see anything wrong with it.

Her political consciousness was very obvious, even at [that age]....One of my friends ...taught her at Princess Margaret and the way she describes her...as Americans would say now, she had an attitude. So she's always been like that. But she was very poor, I know the area from where she comes is really dirt poor...in that society a girl like that would not be liked, because she would question...and they didn't like children to assert themselves.

Jamaica Kincaid...says she's not writing autobiography....she said, I didn't go to England to study nursing, and that's why it's not an autobiography, but it's true to what used to happen because young girls that age would have gone....It is patently clear [who] the Junior Choirmaster is, though she doesn't name him, it's quite obvious....And in her Brownie pack, the portrait is exactly like the Brown Owl...who just recently died, I asked about her....she talks about the grave stones in the school yard, in the churchyard...all of us used to jump around on those

⁶²The next 10 or 15 years were astonishingly prolific, with major literary production by V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Samuel Selvon, Wilson Harris, and Derek Walcott, to mention only a few of the more widely known Caribbean (male) writers.

graveyards and read the old grave stones, so it's certainly true to the time to which she was born.

In adolescence, Lucinda foresaw the danger of subsuming her life in that of the family:

At the time when I left school...I would have gone into the Civil Service and tried to get a scholarship, to save up money, and then go to America, always where I was going to go because you could work and study. But..they weren't hiring any civil servants, there was a down period. And my mother, knowing that I would get depressed if I didn't have any work, went and asked the school I went to, she had gone to too, so it's a dynasty...she went and asked them to give me a job...she put me in service to those people [but] by that time I was just alienated from them and their values....so I taught the whole of 1958 and by 1959 was out of there....

I had already gotten acceptance into Hampton University, then called Hampton Institute. I kept my tuition scholarship by keeping my grades, which were B-plus and A-minus, and I worked. When I worked for the university and I owed them, they took my money, so I could get a babysitting job to buy my little things. All through I had two jobs, one for the college and one for me. And that's how I survived, and every term I got my scholarship for tuition.

Hampton is in the Tidewater area, and when I went there in '59, was the first time I saw *Coloureds Only*, we had to go to a movie where it said *Coloureds Only*, and Leggetts, a department store didn't hire any blacks in the front, there were only janitors....It's a very funny thing though because they said we could go anywhere we wanted as long as we showed our passports, of course we didn't do that, we said, what good if our black brothers can't go, why should we go: The funny thing about the racism in that country, once you showed your passport, presumably you could go to places.

Anyway, the marches continued ...until they finally broke the back of it....the Ku Klux Klan were not very happy about that, and left a burning cross on the lawn of Hampton Institute one night. I must have been aware that there were such things, but it was quite a shock to find that you couldn't go anywhere, you know, and that you had to sit in a particular area of a cinema.

But we had lots of white professors at the university, and one of the things I remember about my ignorance about the Caribbean is that I was in an English class, and the professor...said something about George Lamming, and I didn't think I'd heard of him, and he said, looking at me, You know George Lamming....And I ran to the library and the first book I read was *The Emigrants* [1954, London, Michael Joseph].

The same thing happened in History, [the professor] talked casually about adult suffrage in the Caribbean and pointed out to me as if, from the Caribbean, you would know. I didn't know anything about it. This is what started me on my quest for Caribbean literature, and....when I went to UBC in the Ph.D. program I decided I didn't want to do these other literatures, I wanted to do Caribbean literature, that was in '68...the irony, [now] they're churning out Caribbean studies all the time, but they told me, frankly, we don't know enough about that. Nobody here could supervise it.

What brings us to change, to strive for the larger vision? Outwardly compliant--responsible daughter, capable student--perhaps Lucinda's awareness of contradiction and ambiguity assisted her liberation from the discourse of others, suggested the requirements of intelligent self-interest. She was uneasily aware, as a child, that the trees of her landscape were nameless. Nor was there a conceptual frame for her African heritage.

However, ample discursive signposts were offered by her British curriculum, by her love of literature, by the guidance of parents, church and school: *respectability, responsibility, noblesse oblige*. And that Caribbean catch-all, *broughtupsy*. As an adolescent, Lucinda reflected on the conflict between her aspirations and the domestic responsibilities the future offered. Crucial issues manifest themselves, says Jehlen (1981), where a definition of women contradicts a definition of the world, “where misogyny is pivotal or crucial to the whole” (p. 586).” “I didn’t see myself in that role at all,” says Lucinda, referring to the Antiguan definition of her womanhood. And when as a young woman, she left the employment of her former school, she was consciously rejecting its racial and class biases, preparing for a more comprehensive and inclusive context to situate her experience. Lucinda is not blind to the irony of her initial engagement with Caribbean literature, which occurred in the American South during the civil rights struggle, and was suggested by a white professor.

“I gain truth when I expand the constricted eye...that has only let in what I have been taught to see.” (Pratt, 1988, p. 16)

Elizabeth’s Story

Family Mythologies

Elizabeth’s recurring references to family history, lore, myth, demonstrate the power of narrative, whether fictional or personal, to endow events with meaning and value. Elizabeth’s family stories, their ways of framing family experience, constructed for her an understanding of her family’s place in the world that was indeed “mythic” for a child. And within this burgeoning world, her own place was privileged, special, and secure.

My mother married without her father’s consent, and...never spoke to him again until his deathbed...so that’s part of the whole family history....My mother in 1935 [in Tobago]...would have been seen as the one who had the most status, partly because she was fairer and also because she was the plantation manager’s daughter, that could have given status, no money, but status. Whereas my father, the butcher’s son, the merchant’s son had very little status except up and coming with the class that were educated. It’s funny that my mother’s family should say you couldn’t marry below you...couldn’t marry this low status person....

Hindsight is a good teacher because [I] can look back and say I see the seeds of him being the up and coming technocrat that the colonial powers would look to, but clearly he was seen as the butcher’s son....His father ran a store during the Depression, there are many stories of him helping people--you go to Master Osgoode, you say you want whatever you want, and he would give you, you know, he was known like that.

It’s really interesting...because to me [my father] would already have had status...would have been to Trinidad to be educated...won a scholarship, high school and all of that. But by about the ‘50s, by which time my father had gone to Liverpool [to university] and come back...he was travelling a lot, I can remember

distinctly where my mother's sisters, who previously had told my mother, according to family folklore, *Don't marry this black man, he go just breed yuh, he go just make yuh have children*, were suddenly having my father to tea, you know, he was the director.

By the time we went to the South Pacific in 1965, oh, they were falling all over him, he had his own TV program, he had written books. That same family who had made my mother feel so bad, that her hair was not straight enough...There's quite a lot of racial overtone in my mother's family, which left her deeply deprived of self-esteem, and also of ways of loving, because she had not had it expressed to her.....

Also in her family tree...is a whole scenario created around her asking her father, did she have any other sisters, because people were telling her that there were people that looked like her, when she was a teenager...and he said no.....By the time she was getting married, she knew that her father had lied, and there were half-sisters, one of whom came to live in the house as a sort of a family maid, on the plantation...I don't know how much sense she made of that....Her whole background is so strange and perhaps typical of the plantation system, the racial problems, the kind of prejudices which go on.

Because of my own interest in birth order and my own research...I am quite convinced, like Adler, [that birth order] plays a great role, not only because you each live in a different family, each child will experience a different family, but also, the stage at which your parents are...really makes a great difference....I've many times analyzed my own family...you're the baby of the family, you're helpless, I've had that ...and I partly left Trinidad because of that, because of the need to find my own niche, you know.

Part of the family lore: when [my father] saw the first child, he promised [my mother] never again, never again to put her through that pain [but] even after five [children], by the time he's come back from university [three and a half years in Liverpool] bingo, he couldn't resist again, you know. And there comes Ms. E. O., the love baby. It was a sort of family myth, my brother had prayed for...a sister, so I came...feeling a sort of messiah...and also they got out of school the day I was born, so I came in with a public school holiday for the rest of the family....I was the youngest...even when I was 40 years, I was still the baby of the family. My mother says I was very pampered, my brothers had me in a pram, racing up and down . I was their toy....My eldest sister would say she mainly raised me, while my mother was off curtsying to Princess Royal, or whatever she was doing....Family legends, yeah.

Education: "A Feel for What Information There Is"

I would say...my education and upbringing would have been parallel to [my father's] post-scholarship life, the rising technocrat in the end of the colonial era...I was the only member of my family born in Trinidad, when my father had come back from university...my siblings all born in Tobago, came across to Trinidad before I was born, and...settled into ...government schools.

My sisters would talk about coming to Trinidad and going to a primary school, and some of the children there had chiggers⁶³ in their toes, and...one of my sisters didn't want to mix, the other one would mix. But by the time I was five.

⁶³A blood-sucking flea that infests sandy ground and burrows under the skin, causing swelling and intense itching, and sometimes loss of toes. The implication here is that the schoolmates were poor, barefoot children (remember the insistence of Felicia's aunts that she never go outside barefoot).

six, I went to a small kindergarten in somebody's house, screaming all the way, by the way...and then the top private school with the Prime Minister's daughter and so on...paying what must have been exorbitant fees at the time.

One teacher...had kittens up her sleeves, she was all over the place, but that's my earliest memory...a sort of caring person, beyond falling asleep, beyond kittens up her sleeve, she seemed to care for us....And the headmistress used to sing...from Winnie the Pooh or something, Nobody knows, tiddly pom, no matter what was happening, she was always singing, she wore sensible Clark shoes...she would be...finger painting ...nature trails, writing hieroglyphics ...Nice place...pressing leaves and music and tiddly-pomming....You had to take an entrance exam, even at seven, I remember sitting on this same lady with the kittens' lap, and she said, Read the story here for me. Even before that I went to a little private school in Port of Spain, crowded, sort of one room...I remember only once getting strapped on my hand, because I didn't tell them I had passed for this other school.

[Secondary school] was not stressful about tests...but I didn't like the [mathematics] teacher who threw the chalk ...actually, [she] was the wife of the commissioner of police. Somehow, in my mind, I couldn't protest; she'd have her husband on my case. So my mental arithmetic was sharp, sharp, sharp, because I wasn't going to have any chalk pelted at me, but I wasn't fearful particularly of tests....I quite liked school.

I had my own Enid Blyton collection, *Secret Five* and all that....I loved a little cosy arbour in school where we were the Secret Five, codes and like that. [Did it occur to Elizabeth that there was a contrast between her world and the world of the books she read?] No no no, I could easily have been whoever Famous Five, I could recreate the feeling, it seemed seamless.

Trinidad came into independence when I was 12...my whole adolescence has been post-colonial in terms of independence....Prior to that in primary school, we had a few strange English teachers boarding...they would come out in their swim suits and suntan...and dance the Highland Fling, swords on the floor...and so on. But no Mother Country, even Nobody knows, tiddly pom, How cold my toes, tiddly pom; I didn't have a sense of being taught English history and being denied other things.

Britain was not the Mother Country. [But] even though I would have read some Caribbean writers...I'm not sure I would have thought it ...a valid influence on my experience....Remember we would have been following the Cambridge syllabus: Dickens, Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot....If Caribbean literature was in my consciousness at all, it would have been as recreation, not as a powerful influence on my life....It would have been another book to enjoy, I would not have seen it as political.

[Subsequently] I paid for my son to go to a fee-paying school, not snobbishly, but I recognized in part what that rich educational exposure has on your total approach to learning. One of the things which is different...is that [I] learned very little by rote...a pity, because everybody around me [did]...I never had to learn these long poems or anything, and I still can't remember absolute fact in a vacuum....Last night I was talking to a friend, he can talk in quotations...they just roll off his tongue, just roll off, you know; some people have a facility, which he seems to have....at one point I said to myself, This man doesn't have an original thought!

But there I was [at school] writing hieroglyphics on clay and putting it in the sun, finding the clay, learning about Ionic and Doric columns, such useless information. On the other hand, it gives you a feel for what information there is,

and also the curiosity, I think that is the important part. That you could control what you want to learn.

Family Ties: At Home in the World

If I had to define a role [for my father] ... this is a traditional male role, the person who is in contact with the outside world, with the intellectual world...and my mother, on the other hand ruled the home and the emotional side and so on, there was never any sense of inferiority. I remember you asked me about whether I was then so much the educated one that my mother was somehow inferior; it wasn't, it was different, she was different. And she encouraged me to read my books or do whatever I wanted to do. It was thought that I would continue to be bright, and perform well and do whatever I did. It's kind of funny to look back, and try to figure what role your parents were...shaping...if they did deliberately in a way...which I certainly attempted, specifically, to give my son an enriched childhood, to make sure he had the experiences which would make him open and tolerant and gifted and so on. I'm not sure....If I looked back, I would say there were three things general to everybody.

One was the knowledge of current events, which was played out in not only conversations, but formalized in the Sunday dessert, you could have another slice of dessert if you could say something about the current affairs, and so there's these six adolescents trying to peek in the newspaper in the last chair, to be able to say, The Prime Minister did whatever...and we all are pretty much very conscious and well-read and able to talk about current affairs. Sunday lunch was fixed, you couldn't have any appointments or anything....You had to let your conscience be your guide with the serving of the desserts, and as youngest, I had to depend on the conscience of my siblings and my parents, it used to be nerve-wracking to hope that I'd get a little dessert at the end. But then a second helping of dessert...if you could say something of current affairs....I tended to just eat and then I would talk, I could eat and then stop, and my father would say, No, put down your knife and fork, and converse in between, the food is not going anywhere....So, that was natural, my father listening to the BBC so we would hear that, and also in the '50s, the legislative council debates....To me that was just normal, I didn't think it strange that I should be expected to read the news. This is why I feel puzzled when people don't read the papers.

The second thing is perhaps some sort of social conscience...in terms of treating other people well, both my mother and himself actively made sure that we were deferential to our employees...not, you are middle class and therefore you are higher or lower, but a sense of treating everybody in a civil way. And the last, honesty was always a theme. I do remember my father saying, it was the one thing he'd take off his belt for, being dishonest. And generally, if you could own up, the punishment was less than if you didn't own up....There's the silly incident where I ate cashew nuts, I must have told you this...it's the only time I got struck, and denied it to my mother. And she said, let me see your mouth, and my mouth is full of cashew nuts, and I'm still saying, no no no, and she beat me for lying. And she made it clear it was for lying, not for taking the cashew nuts, but for lying, you know. But generally we were not beaten at all.

Saturday chores: my brothers did the outside things, the garden, the car, my sisters...one was cooking, the other one was cleaning, and my task was to wash the hand basins...everybody's bedroom has its own basin, and the only thing I can remember is dilly dallying at it and not wanting to do it, and not wanting to do it. And by about 10 o'clock...I would ask my father could I go by his books and read

or catalogue or dust them ...at one point...I was going to set up a sort of Dewey's system throughout his library, what did I know about alphabetical or non-fiction...I loved books.

My father's library had a special place...I was the only person allowed to go among his three walls of books...he had brought home from England, from Liverpool where he studied, some of his texts, and philosophy and psychology, he had poetry and stuff like that...in some ways more immediate and more influential than the central library....having it on tap in my house was greater...I could get anything I wanted on anything from my father's room....*Lady Chatterly's Lover*...my father had judged that I could not make sense of it, you know. I remember looking at it and saying, Why is everybody fussing about this, I can't find any good parts. I think, in a sense, he was right. But...that whole set of books at my disposal, and a variety of material, the Koran, anything, everything.

And if my mother called and said by about 11 o'clock, Elizabeth, have you done those basins, my father would say, Well, she's working in the library on the books...this kind of got me away from cleaning. I've had some bad episodes, you know, where my mother stuck it out, and before I ate lunch...I had to wash at least one basin, but I must say, I cruised through some Saturdays quite easily with my siblings doing the major chores....I guess this is why --I'm going to tell you this, recorder--I still have not cooked my way or cleaned my way into the heart of any male.

My father was sort of a public figure...he would take us during the holidays to open a community centre, or offices in the British Consul or whatever, we would be with him for the National Anthem...Mr. Osgoode's daughter....I understand protocol without having to think about it because I've had to be part of that. [At Independence,] my parents were away.... My sister was fretting about going to the raising of the flag, she was chosen as an usher...a to-do about what she was to wear and that she was going to this function. Which all my family seemed always to be going to functions.. But my parents were not there, I was told later on...my father...apparently sang the National Anthem on the boat, they were travelling by boat...he sang at the time he thought the flag was being raised as they pulled into Port of Spain....I assumed Independence because all my teenage years we were independent.....My sister apparently gets goose bumps when she sees the pictures of the flag being raised; I didn't have that, I assumed it.

The other thing, strange people come into the house, and that also was part of my upbringing, I mean, that's why I'm a geographer....The man from Nigeria was a chieftain, flyswitch and robes and so on....My mum would...be annoyed that my father had brought someone home yet again without telling...but she would put out all the stuff, and put on the damask tablecloth, monogrammed napkins...to which we were not a party, the guests would eat and we would scotch⁶⁴ in the kitchen...I guess that's why I don't like to entertain because I think of monogrammed napkins....I guess not everybody could say they were taught to swim by a lady from Greece who threw you in the water as an eight-year old and said, Either sink or swim....But strange, it's interesting, I don't remember being shy with strangers....

Looking back at this now...with the eye of a psychologist, and self-concept and identity is one of the things I'm interested in, I would say...I didn't have an inferiority complex about who I was, colour, class, or otherwise, I was quite comfortable with who I was, partly because, we were told, and this really seems very strange now, it seems so snobbish, but to be an Osgoode was to be .

⁶⁴ *Scotch*: to perch, to squeeze in, to be wedged in (dialect).

The family lore that Elizabeth absorbed was expansive enough to encompass the world that came to them: Nigerian chieftains, Greek swimming instructors, Fijian firewalkers; at home an Aladdin's cave of books "more influential than the public library." At the same time, she could be secure in her unique and privileged position as the cherished love child in an eminent clan where "to be an Osgoode was to *be*." Ultimately, Elizabeth would find that her personal horizons no longer coincided with those of her almost overwhelmingly dynamic family, and she "left Trinidad because of that, because of the need to find my own niche."

Psychologically, if I had to look back at it now, I would see it in terms of striking a blow for my own identity, having imbibed all these external factors of identity...the baby, the bright one...being part of the accomplished Osgoode family, I don't mean my six...my father's brother's wife has nine...hosts of people, manager of...this and that, so I would see it now in context of striking a blow for myself....to have a sense of self, that you're not just a creature of your parents.

But as a child, she had rich and varied opportunities to build what E. C. Tolman (1961) called *cognitive maps*.⁶⁵ Thus the enjoyable "useless" learning about hieroglyphics, the latent Tiddly-pomming, "gives you a feeling for what information there is, and also the curiosity, I think that is the important part". Open-ended browsing in her father's library, whether an uncomprehending look through *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, or grandiose plans to catalogue the books, both fed and fed on that curiosity. From trailing behind her father at official functions, "I understand protocol without having to think of it". Hosting exotic visitors like the Nigerian chieftain suggested that Difference can be honoured and celebrated. Another latent hunch for Elizabeth, scotched in the kitchen, may have been that a future as the chatelaine of damask tablecloths and monogrammed napkins was not for her. (And indeed, I can attest that Elizabeth has no monogrammed napkins.)

Margins and Centres

⁶⁵We arrange our maps, says Tolman (1961), from both our conscious and our unconscious learning, from our emotions, insights, hypotheses. The range of these maps determines how inventively we learn, to what extent our "creative instability" enables us to produce new behaviour. It is important to discover how far these maps are relatively narrow and striplike or relatively broad and comprehensive....the narrower and more striplike the original map, the less it will carry over successfully to the new problem; whereas the wider and more comprehensive it was, the more adequately it will serve in the new setup. (p. 245)

Tolman stresses the importance, in this mapbuilding, of latent learning, knowledge neither rewarded nor translated into performance, knowledge lying dormant until a need arises. Latent learning, then, fabricates a rich matrix of "hunches" on the cognitive map, tentative hypotheses that can later be confirmed or abandoned.

When Elizabeth was 15, her father was assigned to Fiji, and she found herself (again, like a mythic character) transported half-way around the world to a strange and enchanting environment. Her new surroundings gave rise to a double shock, one from perceiving the irony of her expatriate identity, and the other from the dislocation of her understanding of cultural foreground and background, of centre and margin.

The United Nations would pay for any child under 16....it would mean disrupting my education for one year....But I remember being given the choice, it's up to you. I wanted to go...I mean, eyes like saucers, Fiji! Fiji was a very different experience, certainly one of the watersheds...in my life, because I came back from Fiji quite a changed person. I had my first kiss, to which I said *yuck!* under the frangipani tree, nice romantic place in my front garden, but I thought, what is all this spit, what! Couldn't possibly be something desirable.

Two things: One, being part of the diplomatic community, I mean, these are people who, in Trinidad, I had thought, these strange people come from wherever and want to impose on us their culture, and here was I being one of these ...very very strange. Secondly, I saw *South Pacific* in Fiji...put on as a play, and realized it was their local culture. And that gave me a real shock, a real double-take....that this was local to this people, and that I was therefore really in a quite different place....In Trinidad, *South Pacific* had been a romantic, in the sunset, wash that man right out of my hair, kind of movie. And I remember sort of sitting up and saying, Well, this is a local play for them....When I came back from Fiji, I...was in demand to talk about the South Pacific, to school children and other people....I remember saying, maybe people are more afraid of me than I have reason to fear them. And that was the beginning ...you know I'm quite shy, but able to overcome it and talk like this at length on a microphone and not run and hide in the bathroom.

Clearly I was a stranger in a strange school. But the education system was easier, perhaps, than what I was accustomed to in Trinidad, but heading towards the same school certificate kind of thing, so my French was way ahead, my English was way ahead, my Math was way ahead....I was quite fascinated by the few Fijian mixed children, who were the product of one very busy Englishman about three generations back....I was interested in how they managed, what sort of identity, even then...just being among...strange people and trying to find myself....I was adopted by the American, which was kind of funny, white American and a black Trinidadian as being the closest, we were from the same part of the world, whereas if I looked in the mirror, I would be nearer to a Fijian, a native Fijian...and I was seen as foreign and as diplomatic, as expatriate. I mean *expatriate*, me an expatriate, what is this! And so school was fine, and again the sense of being among a privileged few. And much petted again, because I was exotic in the school setting, you know.

The Australian and the New Zealand children were clearly the stars of the school...and the teachers were almost exclusively Australian, in their knee-high socks and their khaki short pants which was so funny. I laughed...next thing was the cork hats. That was Fiji, I was close to both the East Indian and the native Fijian population, and I saw fire-walking in the Indian culture, fire-walking in the Fijian culture, hula dancing, carnival lights, hibiscus festival, a very very rich environment, and different....it really was very mind-boggling, and perhaps encouraged a kind of romanticism which has continued....It seemed natural, because remember I had already been brought up on this folklore of my specialness....all that one-of-a-kind kind of thinking...didn't alienate me, I wasn't *you're beyond the pale, you're only a Trinidadian*: [It was] *You're unique and*

special, and it was reinforcing in a positive way.

Trinidad was central to Elizabeth's world; its realities had been her cultural norm. *Expatriates* were therefore white, "people who came from wherever and want to impose on us their culture." To find herself perceived as foreign, as expatriate, was indeed a reversal. To recognize that *South Pacific* "was their local culture" was to realize that her own assumptions had been colonial in nature, and that she had been representing that culture to herself as a romantic fiction.

These contradictory perceptions did not dismay Elizabeth, but led rather to deeper understanding that strengthened her confidence and self-esteem. Bateson (1994) speaks to the possibilities for insight that come from such "a multiplicity of vision":

Insight...refers to that depth of understanding that comes from setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning to let them speak to one another To get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions learned within a single tradition, habits of attention and interpretation need to be stretched and pulled and folded back upon themselves. (pp. 6, 14, 43)
In a situation that many adolescents might have found invidious, threatening,

Elizabeth was intrigued, amused, and stimulated. To be marginalized is not necessarily to be a victim, to be voiceless. Much post-colonial writing has made its marginality a source of creative energy (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989). "At the centre of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives," says Bateson. "At the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different" (1990, p. 73).

Brought up on the folklore of her specialness, Elizabeth felt that to be apart and separate was to be unique and privileged. The cherished love child, "going to this...fee-paying school [when] her sister had been picking chiggers from her toes", was alone of all the children allowed the run of her father's library. The last at-home child of the six, the only one to accompany her parents to Fiji, Elizabeth's cognitive map was well marked with signs that to be unusual had epistemological rewards. To be a black expatriate student in a (mainly) white school in a South Pacific culture "didn't alienate me...it was reinforcing in a positive way."

As a young adult, Elizabeth's broad cognitive maps, her lively curiosity, her satisfaction in being unique, and her enjoyment of paradox gave her a secure sense of self, an active social conscience and an indifference to popular approval.

I would say the '69, '70 Black Power revolution in Trinidad, more informed my thinking overall than any other event, more than Independence, because my father, for example, had just retired, and marched in the streets with the Black Power leaders and all the rest of it. I was working and I was searched every morning and every evening...the company happened to be located in a depressed area, and the manager was American or something...I remember him saying, Lock the gates,

lock the gates, there's a demonstration.

And the 12 of us who were in the office wore our red arm bands in defiance of him and in solidarity with workers....I knew people at UWI on campus⁶⁶ who were part of the movement...freedom fighters up in the hills and all. That was...formative...going to Fiji, certainly, and then, I suppose, Black Power, yes, those two.

Mona [Jamaica's UWI campus] was a real hotbed...when I went up...in solidarity with Sir George Williams where they would not let the Canadian High Commissioner come on campus, where gowns were burnt and so on....By the time I got to Mona, I was very much aware that I was a West Indian and this was superior....Britain didn't have a place, didn't have a strong place even in years where I now know my mother was meeting every kind of princess royal, or Princess Alice or Princess Margaret and what have you, that was not part of my thinking. It just was that my mother was not home yet again....Four years old, I used to mimic her curtsy, when she used to practice her curtsy...she curts practising. But that did not figure at all in my thinking.

I passed through Black Power, Black is Beautiful, that was fine. In Mona, we had African students, Ethiopians and somebody from Cameroon...from Central Africa, Congo and so I had met these people....the Rastas at that time, the students were caught up with back to Africa and African roots. I remember at 22...[when] I went up to Mona [UWI's Jamaica campus], my hair very long, straightened and...people telling me I must cut it, I must wear...natural hair....I remember the contradiction.

Elizabeth was sufficiently confident in her own judgement of her worth and identity as a West Indian to decide against the natural Afro that was de rigeur at that time. She rejected it, moreover, *because* it was de rigeur, and because she saw the layers of contradiction in the demand that she adopt it.

I remember them saying, You have good hair, you should wear your hair short, you have good hair. And I remember being shocked by the irony, of the very black conscious people telling me to wear my hair short and making the comment that it shouldn't be hard to comb because I have good hair. I don't know where that kind of awareness of contradiction would have come from. So I didn't go Afro when I was there at Mona, partly because I didn't wish to be told, and in any case, you're a bunch of hypocrites.

Naomi's story

"I feel as though I came with a lot of love into the world, [a world] created by them," says Naomi of her unconventional parents, Alex and Velma. Her peripatetic

⁶⁶St. Augustine, UWI's Trinidad campus.

The 1970s were a time of dissent and ferment, of class consciousness and of resentment that the country's oil economy had not led to prosperity among the masses. For months in 1970, sugar workers (mainly Indian), oil workers (mainly black) and UWI students marched and demonstrated. NJAC (National Joint Action Committee) attracted worker and student activists. They were joined by soldiers who had mutinied in their barracks, an upheaval known as the Black Power Mutiny and Uprising. The Mutiny was put down by the Coast Guard; NJAC followers and mutineers took to the hills, where they were hunted down. There were shooting deaths, and numerous courts martial.

The Mutiny is the social and political setting for V.S. Naipaul's *Guerillas* (1975).

childhood, with the stimuli and challenges her parents provided, was grounded in a loving and supportive family life that only ended with Velma's, and then Alex's deaths a few years ago. Naomi's knowing self was engendered by parents whose lively intelligence was embedded in relationship and committed to social action. Love was, indeed, not external to their intellectual life, but "its very condition" (Cavell in Ruddick, 1996, p. 263).

My mother was always very hesitant...to tell me much about [their romance] but I picked up bits and pieces...Velma and her husband had already become estranged, and Alex appeared in St. Vincent...a civil engineer...working on some kind of water system for the city.... They had, I guess, scientific interests in common. Anyway, she was working in the agriculture department [which was] developing a strain of sea island cotton, which in fact turned out to be the longest strain of sea island cotton developed in the world at the time. And this was under colonial administration with planners and development and all of that....

They came to spark each other off in a number of areas....My father was more inclined to tell me things, he told me that I was conceived under a tree...a real romantic place...I do feel that there is that element about them and about me.

I don't romanticize them, because they then proceeded to a very ordinary life...they never married...in the battle of two people maintaining who they were, but still being in a union, and raising two children, and the various other tensions that must have affected their relationship. My father was married when he met my mother, and had three children...it was handled very nicely by everyone, but I would imagine there were difficulties, and there were financial burdens, but they were both people who were taken out of...the tedium of bourgeois existence from the layers that that puts on people, from the people that they originally are...

They both were adventuresome, and they were not limited by the prescriptions of the class and the society that they were from, so that gave them a quality that was attractive to other people all through their lives....

My mother had a conflict [years later] with another member of the family who was upset about my father's peculiar behaviour. we didn't realize it, he had Alzheimer's...but her response to that person was *He's my friend*, and that was her kind of basis for how she would deal with him....That comment remains with me even now, because the meaning of friendship, I think I understand in every relationship, more and more as I get older. And I think they discovered that in the process of their lives.

As Naomi talks, she places even intimate memories and events in a philosophical and cultural context. Anecdote and reflection are linked and reflected upon: it is her mode of thinking and recounting to connect private and public experience. She doesn't see her parents' romance, or their situation as part of a fair-skinned minority as separate from their Caribbean identity, or as separate from the consciousness of Caribbean identity which was then evolving, and which would lead to political independence.

[My family was part of the] coloured community of St. Vincent in that period...I don't think of it as a white community, in the way I think of white Barbadian community, because it's more mixed up, my family has a much wider range of colours than if I had been Barbadian born....These questions [about how a fair-skinned family fit into the society of the day] are extremely confusing to me, because I've never myself been able to figure out how it all fits, how the race factor

about this family construct... works, when you get into these periphery areas, families that are, like mine, such a mixture...they're never really one thing, properly, they're sort of in a transition place, at the end of one spectrum and the beginning of another....

I think it's unconventional, but...remember that in very small societies, as opposed to communities, there is quite a range...of exposures, of influences...and I think in that particular period of Caribbean development and Caribbean history, there was a lot of communication going on. Everything from what the Colonial Office was doing, to what the middle classes in the Caribbean were doing to create some space for themselves, and I think, a certain amount of nationalism, I don't even mean island nationalism, I mean regional nationalism....There were institutions which...allowed for movement...like the Caribbean Commission. And my father, being an engineer...moved around....He just seemed like a rugged individualist to me.

Home, School, and the Wheel of Fortune

Naomi's upbringing was unusual, not only in her exposure to several cultures, but in her parents' determination to protect her from the inscriptions of middle class respectability and to allow her an unusual degree of self-determination.

My memory of my childhood, is to some extent romantic....My father always wanted to be in the bush, and Velma went along with him...because of how she felt about him, but she couldn't stand it, because she wanted to be in the place where there were things happening. He was more reclusive, and she was more involved in political activity. They ran off into the sunset and....I was born in Guyana, and then we went to Trinidad...which is when she was working with Eric Williams⁶⁷...

Then we went to Venezuela because my father got a better job there, in the oil industry....She was not working because she couldn't speak the language, and that's when I think, she got unhappy...because she couldn't work, she couldn't express herself, she was just taking care of her child, and then another child, my brother. And I don't think this was what she was cut out to do. And I would say that my memory of her in that period is of when she was unhappy, which communicated something to me....so that period of time, four to seven...is when I knew that this is... not a good idea for women to do, because I knew my mother didn't like it.

I went to school at three, in Trinidad, I went to a little baby school, but they had kids up to 14 years old...it was a one-room school...I knew all my times tables and all that, I could read and everything by the time we left Trinidad. But then when we went to Venezuela, I went to an American school, where apparently ...you're not supposed to learn to read until you are six, and I already knew. So all we could do is finger paint when I was in that school. So my mother was quite disgusted, so...now she was teaching me, well, that was awful, that was really horrendous, because she's the worst teacher in the world.

After an early childhood in remote rural areas of Guyana, Trinidad and Venezuela, with mainly her family for companionship, Naomi felt dislocated by the move to urban

⁶⁷Dr. Eric Williams, founder of the People's National Movement, one of the groups agitating for independence since 1956, and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago from its independence in 1962 until his death in 1981.

Jamaica when she was seven, especially by the demands of the school she was enrolled in:

I associate schools and all forms of authority with very depressing phenomena and structures, and up till now when I hear a school bell ring, my heart kind of sinks....my parents were always away from a lot of people...so I wasn't really accustomed to people at all. My first introduction to an intense number of people was in that prep school, which was a horrible experience ...I'd never really had teachers. I didn't meet these people until I was eight, and it was extremely alienating for me....Prep school was a miserable existence...like something out of Dickens to me, which I had read. It was horrible, I hated it, thank God I had Mummy and Daddy....it was really oppressive and little kids and these big horrible teachers, I just couldn't quite get it.

I went to a preparatory school...they did 11-plus...it was the first year of zoning....and I did get a scholarship, I did get a free place to a high school, which is amazing, considering I hadn't gone through all that other stuff that kids have to go through, being drilled since you were four.⁶⁸ My parents gave me a prize for sitting the exam. I didn't realize how awful it was; they did, and they did everything not to communicate it to me....When I came out of the exam they said, We are so glad that you sat this exam, we're going to let you go to Guyana on holiday with your cousins. All the other kids had to wait till they passed to get their prizes, but my parents gave me my prize just for having been subjected to this without going to pieces.

My marks were not at the very top...I would have been in the next bracket, which meant that I was going to be zoned⁶⁹, and they zoned me into a school that I'd never heard of, neither had my parents...My parents immediately set about working with the Ministry of Education to get my position changed, so that I could go to a "proper" school...proper to my class location. But when the term passed, and I was now free to go to this other school...I didn't want to go, because I felt...it was okay, the school that I was in, there was nothing wrong with the teachers, nothing wrong with the school, it was just that it had another class association....

My father told me that everything moved in cycles, he said it was like the wheel of fortune, he said, some schools will be at a certain place, the whole place changes, history changes things, people move through society, this school will be different 20 years from now, it will be a different place on the wheel of fortune....It's like they listened to what I thought....they were leaving it to me now to make some kind of decision, and I chose to stay in the school....The kids I'd gone through prep school with, all spoke in middle-class accents of varying types...but the kids in Ardenne High School were [from] black middle-class or ghetto areas [and so spoke dialect], because it was a Church of God founded school...established for poor kids from Kingston...that's another reason that it wasn't acceptable to my parents' friends, because it wasn't an Anglican, Methodist

⁶⁸This is not much of an exaggeration. Competition for the comparatively few places available in the sought-after grammar schools is keen; children of middle class and aspiring working class families have traditionally been subjected to a gruelling series of drills and tests almost from the time they can read.

⁶⁹Like Barbados, Jamaica periodically tinkers with the Common Entrance exam (a descendant of the 11-plus) in a gesture towards greater democratization, allowing the very top scholars, regardless of where they live, access to the top secondary schools, but restricting the choices of the also-rans to schools in their zones.

or Roman Catholic school.

I had an American accent when I was in Venezuela...I could also speak Spanish then....I remember my parents coming to the very first sports day [at Ardenne]....I was leading them over to where they would sit, and I stopped to say something with these other kids...I remember turning to them...to make sure they were still there...and seeing their two faces just absolutely fascinated, like...where did this kid learn to talk like this, in one term? Their eyes were huge and they were smiling and they were totally puzzled and mystified, and my mother said, How did you learn to talk like that? And I said, well, I do, just like I learn a language, and my father told me afterwards, even though he was working with men in the bush, he said, I still can't understand how you...actually speak , it's really good, because he always prided himself on all the different languages, he can speak Creole and French Creole, Spanish, wherever he worked.

Being the school's only fair-skinned pupil "was okay", the least of Naomi's concerns, and paled beside the distress she had experienced adjusting to the Dickensian rigours of her prep school. The lower class school nobody had heard of was a pleasant surprise:

When I went to this school now, there was more space, there were more kids, there were more of us than them, we had a critical mass that put some kind of counter-balance on the authority of the teachers. Not that you could just run wild and create havoc...even though it should have been extremely repressive because of the religious overtones, the preoccupation with religion that the poor headmistress had but....she had a good instinct for good teachers and good staff, and they were at a school that had to make their way in an environment [riddled with class], they had some kind of pride in what they were doing...it had the ingredients of a good school, so that students had a certain poise...it wasn't repressive....Maybe I was finding out that I could be alive in this.

Values and Identity: "A Curious Creature in my own Land"

Naomi's parents' most stringent requirement was that she be true to herself. Meanwhile they shielded her from some of the more inane aspects of Caribbean bourgeois life--the dread surrounding the eleven-plus, for instance, the obsession with ladylike appearances, and her own illegitimacy. On the other hand, they put up with the usual adolescent conflicts and allowed her to make decisions quite unusual in that social context: to stay at her lower class black school. to set her own curfews.

We had terrible conflicts, especially me and my mother....we didn't agree [but] they were master psychologists, I think, with us....they were liberal in their ideas and their approach to their children, but they were very kind of particular about their standards....For example, when I became a teenager, all the other kids' parents said, You have to be home at 10 o'clock...but [these parents] didn't have this kind of reverse psychology...where you wouldn't come home at 10, but you wouldn't get laid.

There was something, I could not tell you what this thing is, because it was not motivated by fear, and it certainly wasn't motivated by a desire to please them...I fought about every idea....It was a sense of honour that came from being

trusted. I was raised without...being focussed on a particular objective with regard to...profession...all the emphasis was on your moral being, your ethical being and education for the sake of your self.

So I feel I was raised to work hard, to take pride in what I do....I have found that I have a very eclectic arrangement in my head about the things that I engage with intellectually, but the overriding interest in my life is my own spirit and the way that I interact with people and ideas....I have not figured out my own identity...as a professional, or development and gender person or whatever the hell, I think it's because I have not sorted all this childhood, not the childhood per se but who I am, a curious creature in my own land....Identity is not about an ethnic or class or religious grouping prescription that you will never fit, identity is about the relationship between things, really, and that is what I try to write about and think about.

I was socialized without much direction...in terms of worldly achievement...I was not *expected* to go after academic goals...or to marry...but I was expected to be true to myself...my expectations were all to do with ...qualities in the person, honesty and that sort of thing. Being proper, with the marbles⁷⁰ and the slingshot, I was never burdened in that way, narrowed in my upbringing. I would say I was expected to use the privilege I had of going to school....there was a kind of reverse psychology used on me, in that, because of privileges, they were never described as such, but I think, being a light-skinned child, a white girl, coming from a family that was literate, I had so many advantages in comparison with other children, that, I think it would have been considered lax or bad...It would be like spitting in God's face, if you didn't do...your exams, do your homework.

And if I recall incidents...that were traumatic...for example when we first moved to Jamaica...I would have been about seven....In those days the bread was delivered in mule-drawn carts, and milk...also the mule-drawn carts pulled the dung of the mules around the city to sell to people who needed it for their gardens. On one occasion, one of these carts was going by up our street...and I had a slingshot and I couldn't resist aiming at the hub of the cartwheel as the bread cart rolled by. I wasn't as good a shot as I thought and I hit the shoulder of the driver. I was so terrified, I immediately knew I could have hit him in the eye or in the ear, but I knew that he must be okay, because he leapt off the cart and came straight to our house....I ran into the kitchen and Zeldene, who was our helper, I went behind her, *Help me Zeldene, I hit the man with the stone in my slingshot*. And she was just horrified. And we just heard the man bang, shouting outside and making a lot of noise. And Daddy went out to him and he said Some child in here, whatever, and my father came and got me and made me go out to the man. Asked me if I had done this, I said yes...apologize, and the man was okay about it after that....

The obvious thing is...if you do something bad, you have to own up to it, that is expected of you. It didn't occur to me to lie or pretend I didn't do it....But the other thing is, I think it's the first time I put something together with that...the very dangerous consequences that accrue in life from not acting in a certain way....It's like...you nearly killed somebody, it's just so fragile...It's something to do with the room for manoeuvre as far as a certain way of treating people goes. It seems to me that it's very, very narrow....I don't think that the amount of space I have to express any mood or any passion or any desire is large, for me....not in my

⁷⁰JOURNAL: Marbles again! Jamaica Kincaid (1985), too, weaves a tale of class and gender power struggles among the marbles. All four of my storyteller friends, unbidden, speak of marbles and their class or gender location. Marble as icon? July, 1997

relationships with people...that are potentially destructive....I would not be as violent in my expression of...anger toward another person in the way that...violence has been expressed to me.

Naomi picked up on the dissonance between the values her parents represented and those of her Church of God school and of society at large, and:

my parents won hands down in moral terms....In Second Form [age 12], one of our subjects was religious knowledge, and the person teaching it said that Jesus said that a man who puts away his wife and takes another woman commits adultery,...and the offspring of this union, the product of adultery....I was most horrified to hear this, I put up my hand and asked, now wait a minute....At this point I did not know that my parents were not married, I thought that they were both divorced, because my mother's name is the same as my father's, I did not know that she was astute enough to change her name by deedpoll to protect me from such biases...that was another interesting thing about the kids at Ardenne, most of them would have been like me, which I did not know, born out of wedlock...So the teacher was really telling the whole class that they're all full of shit and they're all the product of adulterous unions.

Anyway, I...asked if this meant that people who married and divorced and married were...adulterous unions, she said, Yes. So that was it for me, I had no problems with this religion after that, they were trying to get you to...be converted and born again and whatnot, they could not touch my parents as far as I was concerned, when it came to people who were good and decent and Jesus must love, because they were really pretty cool.

My parents...were in the Independence movement for the Caribbean...their working lives were oriented to that kind of consciousness...They saw themselves as ...Caribbean makers, a new Caribbean and that kind of thing, so the whole run of independence in Jamaica has to do with the Federation⁷¹ and the breakdown of Federation, which is a whole wonderful story of tears and woe and disappointment. The beginning of ...the breakup of [my parents'] youthful ideals when Jamaica came out of the Federation....My mother was... campaigning with their friends totally in support and very enthusiastic, and my father was...more thoughtful and watching about things....watching and assessing the campaign in a way that my mother wasn't.

And the night of the election that would decide whether Jamaica could stay in or leave the Federation, we were all at these friends' house...much drinking and politicking and discussion....They started with the votes closest to the city of Kingston...to stay in Federation, it was a very high percentage in favour, and they were drinking and cheering and really happy, and my father kept saying, Remember that this is the city vote, and there's a large population of civil servants, teachers, people who will vote to stay...when you get into the rural areas, it's going to be different. They were so excited about these results that they were not

⁷¹During the mid-decades of the 20th century, in the wake of uprising by the working class and impoverished, numbers of West Indian intellectuals, politicians and trade union leaders felt that some form of union was the best way to achieve self-government and standing as an independent nation. After prolonged discussion, the Federation of the West Indies, with 10 member states, came into being in 1958. There were serious difficulties from the beginning, and popular support was limited. In 1961, Jamaica decided by referendum to leave the Federation, followed the next year by Trinidad and Tobago. Following the loss of its two wealthiest and most populous members, the Federation collapsed and was dissolved May 31, 1962. (Fraser et al, 1990, p. 68)

listening, and I remember him sitting there, kind of worrying, and then my Mum especially being so happy.

And then watching the thing change, bit by bit, they all ended up over by where Alex was sitting, very sad and crying. It was the first time I ever saw my mother cry....I remember thinking how devastating this was for them, that she actually wept....It sort of said what the rest of life would be about, as far as their ideals and their nationalism went, and we're still today working out that, we're working out post-colonial status, we're working out dependency...we're working out failed dreams or unrealized ones, and the whole world has changed anyway, so maybe that kind of regional union will come in another...form, because things come around, as my father said, on the wheel of fortune.

I think I felt Caribbean because of my family, but one conflict between me and my mother was that, I said to her, you have to understand that you brought me here and I am connected to this place, because she had always thought that they would go back to the Eastern Caribbean...which of course they did....when I was, for all intents and purposes, Jamaican....[in any event] I went to the University of Saskatchewan....there were about a dozen of us [West Indians]. But [Canadian students] thought, my accent, and looking white, and speaking, I guess they thought I was quite exotic, but...I was very familiar with myself, I knew I wasn't. In terms of identity, I feel I strongly identified with transposed culture that has a lot of African elements in it, even though I'm a light-skinned person, I don't feel like a light-skinned person from another culture, I feel like a light-skinned person from *this* culture.

Naomi's wholehearted, if problematic identification with and commitment to the Caribbean was modelled by Alex and Velma, who were also the one consistent social context for her early childhood. Her early understanding of the world was rooted in the specifics of her relationship with her parents. The quality and staying power of this bond was witnessed by a family friend who spoke to Naomi many years later, when Alex was in the final stages of Alzheimer's:

Just a few months before Daddy died, I took [Victor] to see him in the home. He's a very big man, he's younger than my parents. When he saw Alex, he knelt down beside and kissed him, he was so tender with him, it was amazing to see this big strapping man being like that with someone who was now so tiny, and he said to me after, when we left, he said, When you were a baby, when I met you all in Trinidad you must have been like two or three years old, I never met three people that got on so well. There was just something about you.

I just thought, imagine, he's talking about a child of two or three and two big people of 34 and 35, which is how old they were, and I just thought, yeah, I know what you mean, and it was them, they were just always so interesting....There's some connection in my mind between that and what I'm interested in in life, because I feel like they were somewhere in there, they had something like that going on in their relationship and in their thinking....I'm really glad I knew them, for that reason, I feel kind of lucky, that way.

The relationship determined how and what she could know. How she could know: with trust, hope, interest, curiosity, confidence. What she might know: phenomena based on exposure to the culture and language of four countries; complex class systems and the

importance of individual human worth; her parents' reading, interests, and friends; the example of their behaviour toward each other and to her. "Trust will influence cognitive processes," writes Olivia Frey (1990, p. 517). Thus despite her mishap with the slingshot: "It didn't occur to me to lie or pretend I didn't do it," and her insight, at seven, into "the very dangerous consequences that accrue in life from not acting in a certain way." And in maturity, Naomi could reflect on her relationship to that knowledge, to connect epistemology and morality:

The overriding interest in my life is my own spirit and the way that I interact with people and ideas....identity is not about an ethnic or class or religious grouping prescription that you will never fit, identity is about the relationship between things...that is what I try to write about and think about, to... sift through that understanding better.

Literature: "The Way We Were Spoken Of"

Naomi's love of reading assisted her in "sift[ing] through that understanding." She was enchanted by the far horizons of other worlds that literature offered her, enraged by literary misrepresentation of the world she knew, transfigured by her exposure to Caribbean literature.

[Reading for pleasure], *Black Beauty*, *The Hardy Boys*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Nancy Drew*, and...this wonderful, wonderful book that my grandmother sent me from England, *Greek Myths*, it was beautifully illustrated...stolen from me by a teacher at my school...I used to read those myths and look at the pictures for hours....another book I loved was *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates*. And I loved the stories of...Hans Christian Anderson, loved, loved, loved them...Heidi, Heidi. I loved Heidi....

When I was older, in my sexual awakening phase, I read the *Life and Loves of Frank Harris*, which my parents had on their bookshelf, and *Fanny Hill*, you asked what I read for pleasure. And then I used to read all those Frank Yarby novels, and historical novels, light stuff...outside of what we had to read in school....We did *The Rainbow*...I loved Wordsworth and Coleridge.... I loved Shakespeare's sonnets...I didn't care if I didn't understand, the rhythm was so lovely. And that's why Walcott⁷² is my love...he knew exactly how I felt when I read those things, and he'd turn it into something that was ours.

Naomi's love of reading, and her judgement of what she read, echoes the shift illustrated by Hodge's (1970, 1993) girlchildren: The first novel is colonial, and for its protagonist, Tee (as for Felicia: "All [our school] literature was about people from Europe"), books "transported you always into Reality and rightness, which were to be found Abroad," (1970, p. 61). A generation later, Laetitia [of *For the Life of Laetitia*, 1993] like Naomi, finds self-affirmation, not escape, in Caribbean writing: "It meant we

⁷²St. Lucian Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott.

were real, and had weight, like the people in stories”(1993, p. 76). “It’s very interesting,” says Naomi, “Because I was completely given over to the delights of these Others”:

But when it was about the Caribbean, I used to get furious, like *Robinson Crusoe* made me vex, I remember complaining to my mother about it, and there was another book in which these boys are marooned on a desert island....they climb a coconut tree, they’re English boys, they have on the kind of pants that English boys would wear, up to their little spotty knees with big huge pockets, and you know how awful they are, the English, and so these boys would be climbing the coconut tree, and I’ll never forget the sentence, “filling his pockets with coconuts”.

I was so furious about that, I remember saying to Mummy, Look at how they’re writing about the islands and...not even those stupid pants that those English boys wear could you fill your pockets with coconuts, that’s so ridiculous....When it came to them talking about us, I would get vex, which is why Naipaul was such heaven to discover.

About ten years ago, I found a collection that my grandmother had...of Kipling, and she had written an inscription ...inside one of these books...a quotation from Naipaul....dated 1958. I didn’t recognize the quote....but I could tell that she was terribly excited....When I saw it, I got the same feeling that I had when I first encountered writing by...one of us. I knew that she was feeling that too, and there was something about the way she juxtaposed it on this other text.⁷³

But Naipaul is very criticized as you know, but I...love what he did, and I think that he opens the question about a certain kind of irony and absurdity about us which he admits to, and it is seen by many Caribbean people as a put-down. I know he’s made some stupid statements....And irony is not well received.

Wide Sargasso Sea...had such an impact, in terms of that feeling that I’m trying to describe, of loving writing or literature...loving the beauty of it or the way it’s made, but...angered by the way it was, we were not in it, or the way we were spoken of, and then to find Naipaul, to find Jean Rhys....I just remember being speechless, and it’s to do with this feeling that somebody has written about us, and it’s a real book, it’s a proper thing in the world, but it’s about us.

The particularities of Caribbean experience, described with critical understanding and read with imaginative empathy, offered a way to encounter the world, a way of knowing, that in turn, informed Naomi’s aesthetic and moral understanding. She was intrigued by my undertaking to connect my experience of friendship with morality and literature, and we discussed at length ways in which racial differences had framed our own relationships:

Do you find race, in the novels you’re looking at, as a context in which what you’re talking about [friendship and agency] either doesn’t happen, or does? For example...I’m trying to compare...my real life with the characters that you’re talking about. I would think that one of the ways that children become self-knowing, in a colonial culture...it would have to be that...the barrier of race would be leapt over or examined across the fence; that that would be one of the things that would have to happen for alienations to break down.

⁷³Naomi’s grandmother was perhaps anticipating post-colonial subversion and re/vision, “writing back” against the master text of imperialism.

Attempting to connect her own lived experience with her reading, Naomi suggests that children can only be “self-knowing” if they recognize and challenge racial alienation. In a similar vein, Myra Jehlen (1981) cites ideological understanding as a precondition to understanding the self, a tall order for children. Elizabeth Abel (1981) highlights the imaginative empathy to be found at the intersections of literary and moral insight, and Seyla Benhabib (1992) argues for the capacity to reverse perspectives, to listen from the other’s point of view. Naomi notes that the friendship between Tia and Antoinette (Rhys, 1966, *Wide Sargasso Sea*) founders because the children fail in their attempt to bypass these barriers. She connects their tragedy with one of her own:

That happened to me as a child in school, my best friend...in First Form at high school...was a black girl called Michelle from the ghetto, I don’t know why we were such good friends....I wanted her to come to my 13th birthday which was going to be a beach party, and by this time we would have been in third Form, and my mother wrote her mother a note, and I took it to school, gave it to her, to ask if Michelle could come to this party. And then to my astonishment, the next day Michelle came and said, no, she couldn’t come. I was really quite upset and I couldn’t get a proper answer as to why, it didn’t seem like she was doing something else.

So I went home and told my parents, and they said they would go in person and ask the mother. So it was described to them how to get there and I’ll never forget the experience, because I had been close friends with this girl for three years but we had never been to each other’s houses, she was my best friend in school. It was...a kind of slum, shanty town behind the drive-in...it was just unbelievable. I had never been in such a place...one of the early urban, suburban slums....At some point the car couldn’t even go because there weren’t roads, it was just zinc shacks and cardboard shacks...and we had to stop the car and ask. And we went to this place that this child lived.

And her mother, I can barely remember the sequence of events because I was just absolutely stunned. I had never experienced how Michelle lived, she had a clean pressed uniform, just like everybody else. Her mother came out and her mother was angry that Alex and Velma had come, because she had already sent a reply that this child couldn’t come. And she said, Mrs. Claibourne, our daughters are from two different worlds, and I will not encourage this friendship because my daughter will be hurt, my daughter will get hurt in the long run.

And that was the end of that. And it was the first taste of the whole class and race reality....It estranged us, our friendship couldn’t stand up to the glare of day. And this is something that we were aware of subconsciously, because we knew the teachers used to laugh at us and call us, black and white Scotch whiskey...the ad with the two dogs. And so we were aware of those kinds of things, but there were just sort of on the periphery, it didn’t affect us.

We had different interests....but we had a base...there was enough different about us that our friendship had something to grow on, of difference. But when it was reflected into the difference of who we were in our social places, which we had nothing to do with, it just blew everything out of the water. We were never friends again.

And she got pregnant when we were in Fifth Form, God knows how it

happened, what was done to her...But by that time, we hadn't even spoken to each other. I would have been in the top stream, and she would have been in the bottom stream. Because I had all those things, I had books in my house, I just had so much, and this girl just didn't have this advantage, and God knows who was preying on her....

But I remember the headmistress...in the assembly, said that [matriculation] exams would be starting in two weeks' time, we would be sitting in the hall to do them: she would like everybody to know that...a certain girl in the Fifth Form had done this disgraceful thing of becoming pregnant. Out of the Christian goodness of her heart, the headmistress was going to allow her to sit the exam. But she was going to isolate her desk from the other students and there would be...a radius of so many feet. And if anyone was found speaking to her, or handing her anything, they would both be thrown out of the exam. They would be disqualified. That was how she was treated.

"Bonding is possible for white Creole women and African Caribbean women if the women can bracket the sexism, racism and imperialism that are thrust upon them," writes de Abruna (in Cudjoe, 1990a, p. 97). But children are "subalterns",⁷⁴ a subordinate population with little power to position those brackets. Naomi wept when she told me this story.

This chapter's narratives and discussions, have, I believe, conveyed some of the difficulties of untangling the "crisscross valuing" (Mordecai & Wilson, 1989, p. xiii) of race, class and gender from one another, and conveyed, too, the futility of generalization. Nonetheless, I want to set forth some observations specific to gender and race that occurred to me as I developed the preceding conceptual frame.

Gender: The Young-lady Business and the Hidey Hidey Thing

Martin Packer (1991) stresses that we do not exist in the world and then, separately, acquire knowledge and understanding: "Our existence *is* an understanding of the world" (p. 71). As I understand his discussion of Heidegger, our *knowledge* is always grounded in and determined by our practical engagement in the world. Our *understanding* is the way we engage with that knowledge, and how we comprehend ourselves at the same time. *Interpretation* is the "articulation of...possibilities" that our understanding has made available. This paradigm reveals the gaps and distortions pervading the understanding of the young girls of this chapter. Their "practical engagement" in the world denied them sexual information or experience, and limited their understanding of their identity as

⁷⁴See Spivak, 1994, "Can the subaltern speak?"

gendered beings, and the resultant “articulation of possibilities.”⁷⁵

All four of the women I interviewed speak of maternal embarrassment, inaccurate and inadequate sex education books, and bizarre misunderstanding. I had to smile, because maybe every woman of our generation had a version of that book.

FELICIA: In elementary school...this rumour went around and it's awful, that they had peeked up under a particular teacher, and they had seen blood. And somebody said, But that happens to all women....I never believed it, I thought she was a woman with some peculiar problem....But then when I got to secondary school there would be conversations among the girls about “your period” and then....I used to pretend I had my period...

Came my 14th birthday and nothing had happened, and so one morning, as my grandmother was combing my hair, believe you me, at 14 she was still combing my hair, I said to her, Granny, don't you think that it's time we talked about periods, about menstruation? I heard her afterwards telling a neighbour, You could have stuck me with a pin! You wouldn't have found any blood! Anyway, she sat up, and said to me that yes, this would happen....and that the first time I saw any indication of it, I ought to go to my aunt....

Of course, they didn't tell me the details....I was told very little. And then when I did attempt the books (which were, in retrospect, very stupid and incorrect books...quite incorrect information), they hid them.....I knew you got pregnant as a result of something entering your body, but for quite a while I thought that anything entering your body could make you pregnant.

I had seen little boys running around and it didn't occur to me that the male organ grew with them. So the first time I saw a grown man's penis, I was amazed, because I thought of it as something finger-sized.

LUCINDA: My mother just said, when I had my period, You can't go near boys. I saw that in that Canadian book, *Harriet's Daughter*...and I had to smile because the mother said, You can't go near boys. But they put books around us...the Adventist people used to have these big books where you'd see the baby in the womb and so on, and they would put books around so we'd know.

⁷⁵Art imitates life. It is striking how fictional representations of girlhood during this period similarly illustrate how colonial gendering limited both self-understanding and potential development. Brodber (1980), Kincaid (1983, 1985), and Senior (1996b), in particular, depict an Eden-like childhood. Puberty brings painful self-consciousness and expulsion from the garden as the girlchild moves into a world of prescription and prohibition, a world defined by tasks and duties. Her feminine identity is a negative one, reflecting by its incompleteness the idealized male, whose desire structures and en/genders relations of power. Each of these girls is socialized out of the male world of action and agency, socialized to subordinate herself, to see in the idealized Other “her possession of herself and of the universe her represents” (De Beauvoir in Benjamin, 1986, p. 79). Much of *Annie John's* plot evolves from Annie's aversion to “the young-lady business” (Kincaid, 1985, p. 27).

The children remain ignorant and uninstructed: their minds “hatched and set and hatched and multiplied like fleas and chiggers... 'It' was a hidey hidey thing! 'It' made you whisper.” (Brodber, 1980, p. 96). “It” could ruin your life (as Felicia was continually told of the ruined schoolgirl who could “never be a lady,” and as Naomi witnessed in her friend Michelle's ostracization). “It” was a hollow without a name or face, a hollow that pulled innocent girls in, obliterating power, desire, identity, threatening their “precarious Subject-ivity” (Spivak, 1994, p. 26)

NAOMI: The first inkling I had of something ...I was three years old, we were living in Venezuela, and they were in the bath together, actually all three of us were in the shower, and at some point, there was a lot of laughing and stuff going on. I remember them taking me, drying me off, and putting me in my room to play....there was a lot of laughing, later on I figured, Oh, maybe that's what happened, but it sort of stuck in my mind.

They didn't tell me anything straight, but we had all these animals, lived in the bush, so there was a lot of that going on, birds and bees....When I encountered other children, which wasn't until I came to school to Jamaica....I discovered this really kind of lustful and brutish world which was what kids at prep school are like. And one girl used to draw these kind of pornographic kind of pictures, she was very good, she knew the style of love comics, but she could do much more with them than they did with love comics....

Menstruation, I knew of it, but I just refused to accept that it would happen to me....My period came when I was about 14, my mother gave me some stupid book, I was so angry, she couldn't even discuss it with me, I was really disappointed in her.

ELIZABETH: I know that at my first period, I didn't know what it was....and then after that I remember [my mother] putting a book at the foot of her bed, and Here, read this. And I read it and I guess I gathered it was something to do with something....I shouldn't say this on tape because the transcriber will laugh, but I thought *menstruation* was *mensuration*....and so I was looking in the dictionary for the wrong word, and seeing that it was length and breadth, which maybe it is, but anyway that was the extent of my knowledge.

I had no sense of sex per se. If I left it to my parents, and...I could as well say it on tape, I would have to think I was a virgin birth, that it was done by holy ghosts....Because my father would walk across [to my mother's room] with his pillows and I would see those little scraps of foil in the morning and I knew he slept with my Mum sometimes. So I don't know where I thought these six children came from.

Even the business of my being the love child because my father being away for three and a half years...but he came back and he could not wait to get a contraceptive or whatever, and therefore I am born almost nine months to the day that he came back to Trinidad...Family myth had it that you weren't planned but you were the love child....But I never thought of it as to do with sex. He pined for his wife...and he came back and she got pregnant....Real romantic patina over the whole thing.

And then there was the outrage of the condom that I filled with water and bounced around, I must have told you....It's Saturday morning and...they didn't come in colours...I filled one up at the outside tap, this was a super strong balloon that you could bounce, you know, and my mother looking through the window, *Where did you get that?* A great hue and cry about it. ...

One of my cousins got pregnant, and I was all of 16, because it was after I came back from Fiji, and I remember my Mum saying, Don't say *pregnant* in front of Elizabeth.... There was all this fuss about *Lady Chatterly's Lover* in a paperback, but I was allowed to read it, I was allowed to go in my father's library.

Girls were strictly supervised after puberty; they were left in no doubt that much was at stake, and elaborate rules governed acceptable behaviour towards boys they might meet. Annie John's mother's consternation at having seen Annie talking with boys

on the street (Kincaid, 1983, p. 102) does not seem an exaggeration to women who remember similar admonitions.

LUCINDA: [Teaching about sexual morality?] they just said Don't, you're not to: the worst thing, from my mother's [perspective] was to get pregnant. But she did a lot of lecturing, she was very watchful, and was very disapproving of anybody that came around that she didn't like and she'd always find work for people to do when she saw you talking.

FELICIA: One of the reasons that I had to be so protected and surrounded and given rules and regulations was because I was a girl.

Morality was important, because the Methodist church was quite explicit, they made it very clear, that sex outside of marriage was a sin...and there was always the story of one young lady in the church ...who was one of perhaps 50 black girls in Queen's College at the time [30 years before]...and had let down the entire race by becoming pregnant.

Of course it was the end of her education. But in my house, when it was spoken of, it really was the end of her life. She could never be a lady again. She could never be a lady again. She had done the ultimate, she had been the biggest disgrace. Although Granny talked about her with sympathy, and...allowed her to come to her house....Imagine that, if you ever became pregnant, you would no longer have a life, you would never be anyone.

That was held up...even the things that were physically wrong with her....She had...developed an ulcer, she probably had bad circulation...and for years she wore bandages and stuff...of course now, with modern medicine...it got all cleared up. But all through my growing up, there was that...symbol of her being a fallen woman.

And I grew up knowing that what had happened to her must never happen to me....Men could go anywhere...and they could do anything. Girls couldn't, girls had to be accompanied where they went, their hours of coming home were very restricted, and there were a whole lot of things you weren't allowed to go to....If I had ever allowed a boy to ride on his bicycle while I walked along next to him, that was the ultimate....He must get off his bicycle and walk while you walked....You focussed the relationship and respect that a man should have for you, on the bike.

ELIZABETH: I don't remember knowing about the birds and bees till very late, very late. And in a way I'm happy for that childhood which didn't have me worrying like these youngsters⁷⁶ about if their period has come and if the man still loves you after they have sex and so on, so a sexless childhood has its points, has its points. An all-girls school, looking at a boy over the wall was most daring, we weren't allowed to walk with a male in the street or anything like that. So, birds and bees, very little. I remember my first kiss in Fiji and it was *yuck!*.... But we dated in groups, friends and so on...boyfriend in terms of who sits next to whom at football....I had kissed the grocery boy and that was yucky too....I came here [to Barbados] and in a flash had the whole thing before my face, falling in love and the whole caboodle.

NAOMI:They did sex education very explicitly in the school that I went to. which I think was very good....I suspect that the woman who was teaching us

⁷⁶Elizabeth was for some years a school counsellor.

was trying to get across that idea that girls should protect themselves, [but] certainly they never talked about birth control as a recommendation....In the classroom...was a kind of realistic approach, even though it wasn't actually condoning or saying, You kids use birth control. Never....

In the assembly hall, on the other hand, where we had worship...there was a completely different anti-sex morality being conducted. So we had both those things. We had both the not-actually-endorsed notion that girls protect themselves...that came as a moral thing in a package to do with information, and in the religious setting, fingers were waved and we were told that boys and girls shouldn't hold hands...Literally....

We on the other hand, the girls in the course, thought the boys were totally asinine,⁷⁷ and we couldn't understand why girls from girls' schools when we went to play matches...would be running up and down and screaming over our stupid boys, because we were with them all the time, we found them to be ridiculous.

How helpful, ultimately, was the guidance and modelling given this generation of women, how applicable to the real circumstances of their lives? Not very, it would seem. Felicia found her first accurate sexual information when she was finally in a relationship:

...When I started going out with Richard, I think he realized how naive I was, and he gave me a book to read...the first thorough book on the subject of sex....A man like Richard...a plantation person...the first time we drove through one of the old plantations and he stopped to talk to one of the men who worked there, this man said such a gross thing to Richard, You does put the whip pun her often, he meant, did we have sex often? And he said that loudly with me sitting there, and of course Richard didn't turn a hair, he just laughed and probably said yes....

On a plantation, people would be leaping in and out of bed...that was how plantations worked.⁷⁸ I once did a program for CBC [Caribbean Broadcasting Company] about sex education in schools, and there was an older man on the panel...saying that he had learned about sex in the way that most young men from respectable homes had learned about sex, he had learned from the maid. And it was the accepted thing that a lot of men had sex with the female employees in the home.

ELIZABETH: In Fiji, when I was 15, [my mother and I] spent a lot of time together because...Daddy travelled a lot and so there would be the two of us. But even then, I still would not say that we shared any intimate sort of female type relationship....Much later I understood that she worried she might have been pregnant...I was quite ill at that time, I had pleurisy and one of my lungs collapsed...and she was worried [but] it wasn't feminist sharing....

She was very much in love with her husband, very much devoted to him....and so although I was surrounded by her love and her food, which is why I

⁷⁷Familiarity bred contempt. Naomi was the only narrator who had attended an integrated school, a source of great envy and excitement for adolescents in single-sex schools, as most were at that time.

⁷⁸A common phenomenon, given the plantation's historical ethos. Remember that Elizabeth's mother discovered one of her unacknowledged half-sisters working as the family's maid. Nor are fictional children like Olive Senior's (1996a) Laura, Bertrand's unacknowledged "stray shot," unusual.

have this ...eating problem, food problem, [she did not offer] a guide to being a woman or guide, to relationships. So, yes, my mother was always powdered and dressed,⁷⁹ but I knew that I would never be that...I was 20 by the '70s, already a period of *I'm woman and I am strong* and all the rest of it. And so...my life was not going to be through a man, through a person, I was going to be my own person.

She loved me, that was fine,...but there was no real bonding....When I was pregnant, she was amazed that for the four months that I lived in her house, that I had said nothing....There was no sense in which, this is a person from whom I can expect a sympathetic response in terms of how I feel....I remember telling my father that I was pregnant...[my mother] was sitting on my bed, and I'd developed acute tonsillitis, my tonsils were bleeding, I could not talk—I remember her asking, Who was the father, and my response was, None of your business, not in a rude or crude way, but just in my implacable, this is how I'm dealing with this and just don't ask me....

Now I think about it and I think, Oh my God, that must have been incredibly painful for her, but at the time that's how I was coping....She came up to Barbados just before Matthew was born, she was there in the nursing home...But again, she seemed more scared by seeing me in pain, more broken, more devastated...than helpful. More stricken than anything.

But then once my son was born, she was all over him...full of motherly advice, then, he must have Birdseye gauze diapers, nothing less, he must have Pyrex glass bottles, which must be sterilized, boiled...you weren't to use chemicals....And he must have crushed bananas, pumpkin, no Gerbers...so she was full of advice then.

But while the girls chafed, in varying degrees, at social strictures, their families and schools also sent them a strong message about their competence and potential. In Caribbean fiction and reality, there are many tales of girls passed over in their brothers' favour, education and opportunity denied; however, the fictional girls I have discussed and the women that I interviewed were all clever and academically successful too. And notwithstanding the gendered values inscribed in these girls, their families insisted on the best education available to them, and fully expected them to excel. Choice and change and growth became possible, even in Naomi's "very narrow" space to manoeuvre, even in Felicia's "wriggling into the space that's allowed," the cracks and gaps of opportunity made vibrant by the subversive subconscious and by the "power of expectation and possibility" (Raymond, 1986, p. 209).

Critical Mass and Racial Difference

Discourses of racial difference related by Caribbean women and those recounted by African

⁷⁹Elizabeth's memory of her mother freshly bathed and powdered, presiding over tea for her returning brood, became something of a rueful but amusing icon for us when we met as tired young mothers juggling toddlers, full-time teaching and graduate studies. The image suggested a standard of refinement utterly at odds with our busy domestic lives.

American women often focus in different ways.

JOURNAL: Re-reading bell hooks (1990) highlighted this contrast for me. I've noted before how umbrella groupings of post-colonial women's writing, of women-of-colour writing, third world women's writing, seem to assume that New World women of colour speak from the same racial assumptions. bell hooks powerfully evokes the dilemma of the academically gifted black American child. Originally nurtured by dedicated teachers in her segregated school, hooks encountered systemic racism when she sought to engage her critical intelligence in the academy. She tells story after depressing story of how the institutionalized forces of racism and sexism functioned to isolate, oppress, and demoralize minority students.

In contrast, in the Caribbean, the critical mass of the population are people of colour, and racial terminology is often, as Felicia puts it, "Not racial, it [is]...to do with physical description". Eurocentric, sexist and class-ridden as their education may have been, Felicia, Lucinda, and Elizabeth did not spend their formative years blighted by the insecurity of belonging to a discredited minority. By the time they encountered the overt racism of the metropole, they could express outrage and disapproval towards an unjust system without in any way feeling threatened or diminished by it. (Lucinda, recently returned from a fellowship year of teaching in the States, says bell hooks doesn't like Caribbean women; they pour too much oil on troubled waters. But then strategies of aggressive confrontation don't always work in the Caribbean as they do in America.)

I asked each of my friends how they remembered their first experiences of being in a minority. Felicia, even as a schoolgirl, had started from an assumption of superiority:

"The whole idea was to be better than the British intellectually."

My first full awareness of being really different...was when I went to Britain to study....My first evening in Bristol, I went up to the dining hall and I probably took the wrong door, which is very me, and the result of that is that I walked right down the length of the dining hall to find a seat. And everyone looked at me, for the first time, I thought, My God, I'm really different, I'm black. I'm sure I didn't say "black" to myself. I probably just said "different," because at that point the word "black" was still a forbidden word, for me, and I would not have used it in reference to myself.

But I was jolly different, and I felt the difference, and I remember sticking my nose up and walking down there like I was the Queen. Somebody told me afterwards that everyone looked, because I walked down there as if I owned the place. But I was terrified, I just felt, for the first time, different. But somewhere inside me, I had to show them that I was better, so apparently that's what the walk was about. And my friend told me afterwards that they all thought, Gee, who is that fabulous woman that thinks she owns the earth, or something like that. I probably wanted them to think that, you know. Oh God, and I was wearing a yellow dress!

As a university student, although Lucinda would have been a minority on the larger American stage, she attended a small, black college. Nonetheless, her Caribbean passport made her a privileged minority in the eyes of both black and white. In solidarity with the civil rights protesters, she declined to use those privileges. Her response to the ferment of those times in the South was indignation at the injustice and oppression which was the

daily lot of African Americans, but she did not allow the social climate to wound her, to assault her self-esteem.

I remember the expectations of white people of black people. I remember going to a bank and the woman gave me too much change, so I gave it back to her and said, You gave me too much change. And her eyes popped, she didn't even say thank you, but it was obvious that she didn't expect a black person to give her back money. I was aware of what she thinks about black people.

For Elizabeth, to be different was to be special. In Trinidad, "I didn't have an inferiority complex about who I was, colour, class or otherwise, I was quite comfortable with who I was." Even as a racial minority in Fiji's school for expatriate children, and given her ironic resemblance to a native Fijian, she found herself "much petted...exotic in the school setting." She recounts a less benign encounter with racial difference in New York:

We had diplomatic passports...we stayed in a hotel...which is gone now...I can recall, perhaps, just fortunately the way my life has gone, maybe one incident of my colour being thrown in my face. When we were coming down in the lift with my father, he was going to address the UN, and this lady was in the lift before us, she got out, she said, I didn't know they allowed coloured people in here, or something like that.

Well, it was easy for me to say, Ha, little do you know, I'm off to the UN, so there! It remained with me as to how it must be for the black American experience, when you have that kind of thing thrown in your face all the time, and that I was very lucky to be brought up in a confident situation; that did not throw me, that did not really throw me.

Like Lucinda, Elizabeth viewed the American situation with sympathetic indignation, but with her own identity firmly in place and thus less vulnerable to racism's power to wound and demean. As she started university at UWI in Jamaica, "I was very much aware that I was a West Indian and this was superior." "Britain was not the Mother Country." And even there, her "awareness of contradiction" made manifest the ironies of racial identity when the activist students who insisted that she cut her long hair, classed it as "good" hair.

Naomi's existence as a white West Indian has been a lifelong immersion in difference and paradox. As a young child, however, the shock of difference was not so much racial as cultural, as she moved from unpeopled backlands to the formal schooling of urban Jamaica, "my first introduction to an intense number of people." She did not experience her position as the only fair-skinned child at school as in any way remarkable until the crisis in her friendship with Michelle: "There was enough difference about us that our friendship had something to grow on....But when it was reflected into the difference of who we were in our social places, it just blew everything out of the water."

Summary

I hope, reflecting on my friends' stories, that I have rendered the tone and texture of their disclosures in a way that honours their trust and does not work against their own interpretations. I have indicated how their narratives reveal the workings of ideology, particularly the extent to which ideology embedded itself in the workings of home, school and church, the extent to which it had been internalized within the children's families and within the girls themselves. But I have also listened for the metaphors through which they evoke early stirrings of resistance, ingenious subversions of the subconscious, and assertions of self. And I have listened for voices speaking of the relationships in which their early understanding of morality was engendered.

The epistemic violence enacted in the education of Felicia's generation illustrates how ideology animates not only the larger institutional framework, but also the conventions of everyday life. Thus might God require a little girl to endure salt packed in a wound for going barefoot. Felicia's older relatives inscribed in her the importance of appearances and the code of respectability; school erased "natives," blackness, and Caribbean subjectivity.

But the child's self resists, brings from infancy her prediscursive desire, the will to oppose authority. Felicia's resistance was both overt and subconscious: she "ran wild" and lied ("Oh dear, I was an awful little liar....I knew it was wrong, but it was always a way of saving myself...from punishment and retribution,") but her dreams and intuitive responses offer insight and suggest realms of knowing. A precocious deconstructionist, Felicia eventually learned to use her discursive indoctrination to her own advantage. Watchful, she came to understand the workings of power, and to detect the gaps and contradictions where choice and manoeuvre were possible. In this mode, her family's insistence upon excellence ultimately gave her the confidence and competence to "rush into places where I have no right to rush in...because I felt I could....that was the message that I got in my home."

Lucinda's position in the family repeatedly reinforced her awareness of the role of eldest daughter: selfless responsibility, organizational competence, "noblesse oblige", the avoidance of commonness. These values transferred seamlessly into school, where she was a school monitor, a model scholar, a credit to the Mother Country. But Lucinda's instinct for self-preservation served her well; like Felicia, she would use her proficiency in the dominant discourse and its literature to extend her own knowledge and agency, whether this meant, as a child, looking up "carnal knowledge," or later utilizing her academic achievement to make her way in the larger academic world. Lucinda's love of reading fed her capacity for thought and critique, for choice and action. Ultimately, she would read, write, and teach against the literary canon: "I have found the teaching of literature to be both

a source of joy and a source of income....when your avocation is your vocation, that's a good thing."

Unlike Lucinda, positioned by stewardship over her numerous siblings, Elizabeth's family ranking as the baby postulated helplessness and dependency. Paradoxically, it also offered her a cherished and indulged focus of affection that encouraged individuality. Elizabeth's curiosity was encouraged, not only through enlightened early schooling, but through her father's library, the family's current-events discussions, her travels, and the correspondences she sees now between her education and her father's ascendancy in the political and cultural scene. Thus she understood quite early that knowledge is power: "you could control what you wanted to learn." Her rejection of traditional domestic aspirations dated from the avoidance of the basin-washing chores--no Angel of the House for Elizabeth-- and she was confident that "I could have been whoever." The times, too, supported her secure sense of identity: the colonial world with its burdensome self-denial was already on the wane, and she began university at a period of assertive female consciousness and student activism. Accepting difference in herself and others, "aware of contradiction," Elizabeth had already begun to develop, in her young womanhood, a contextual understanding of the world.

Naomi, like Elizabeth, reached adolescence in a society that assumed Caribbean identity. "Not limited by the prescriptions of the class and the society that they were from," Velma and Alex never restricted Naomi's development by imposing a bourgeois regard for appearances on her activities; they supported her decision to stay in her black working class school: they were delighted that she picked up Jamaican patois. For Naomi, the symbolic order did not coincide with a hegemonic environment; she firmly rejected those values she encountered from church and school when she found them to be incongruent with those she absorbed from her parents. In this respect, her socialization differed to some extent from that of Felicia, Lucinda and Elizabeth. But not unlike Elizabeth, instructed to let conscience be her guide, Naomi was constrained by "a sense of honour that came from being trusted," and the expectation that she would use her privileges responsibly. Naomi's relationships constituted her identity, and her moral and practical understanding of the world. And it is clear, in her engaging and poignant reflections on identity, knowledge and power, good and evil, that they continue to do so.

JOURNAL: As I reflect on these narratives, it seems that a sense of specialness allowed all four storytellers both to excel within the colonially-imposed narrative and to subvert that narrative to facilitate their own. Like water in concrete they quietly undermine the seemingly immovable structure and extend the veins of their own influence as the edifice cracks and tumbles about their elegant shoulders!
(September, 1997)

CHAPTER FOUR: AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF FRIENDSHIP

Theory: The Reservoir of Practice

The previous chapter illustrates how the early relational life of my four friends constituted not only their youthful sense of identity, but also their moral understanding. Their coming-of-age stories generate experiential truths that pivot on evocative moments of self-identity and self-understanding. With the persuasiveness of works of art, their narratives carry their own validation, and invite belief in their authenticity. Richly hermeneutic, they provoke reflection. They demonstrate how dominant systems inscribe ideology, and how the resilient self resists and subverts. An “incitement to discourse” (Lather, 1993, p. 673), my friends’ stories lead me to the layered understandings that friendship makes possible: they encourage the theory-building that is the task of this chapter.

I will trace on two levels the theoretical grounding that shapes the initial section of this chapter. First, from the narrated sites of their adult lives, I will re-introduce Felicia, Naomi, Elizabeth, and Lucinda; within these adult sites, our lives intersect for the first time, theirs with mine, and with each other. The stories of all four women, ranging across their extensive lived experience, continually voice an awareness of the conflict between the codes of the dominant order and the way their own ethical and relational inclinations would lead them.

Second, through this narrated site of their reflections and mine, I will discuss the five conceptual shifts, postmodern and feminist paradigms, that have led me away from my earlier, more traditional and empirical understanding of research. These five concepts constitute the theoretical foundation of my conviction that being in relationship (that is, working hard to create and recreate relationships) offers an epistemological model for a wide range of knowledge, and for the development of multiple moral perspectives. These concepts make possible a perspective that manifests “the productivity of hermeneutic, interpretive, literary methods of analysis and explanation [which are] not so different from the interpretive skills that human relationships require” (Code, 1993, p. 37). Moreover, they demonstrate that the exclusion of relational and feminist thinking from the dominant discourse is “not just a political omission and a moral blind spot but constitutes an epistemological deficit as well” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 13).

In this inquiry, then, narrative and reflection are interwoven, each often complementing the other. In their concrete specificity and rich particularity, my friends’ stories incite discourse; they are both catalysts for and embodiments of my theorizing.

Narrative Sites and Intersections

Felicia

Felicia Harcourt is aptly named. The little girl fearful of rain and darkness, mindful of codes and prohibitions and how they could be breached, is an elegant, vivacious, competent woman, a *felicitous* woman, never at a loss for the *bon mot*. Her grandmother and aunts did their work well, but the apparent propriety of Felicia's demeanour hides a wicked wit, an agile mind; she can rescue an awkward moment or skewer pretension with equal deftness. I have seen her dismayed but never distraught, under pressure but never frazzled. She sets high standards for herself and others; her determination and vision shaped a language centre which still draws students from across the Caribbean and South America. Versatile and skilled, Felicia acts, sings, and makes the susu quite glum with her disciplined pursuit of physical fitness. Newly retired, she volunteers her considerable administrative and pedagogic abilities to community organizations.

Felicia and I cannot remember how or when we met. However, in a small community, two women interested in the arts, teachers, would be bound to cross paths, emerge in one another's peripheral vision, have mutual acquaintances. We taught at the same institution for some years, where she was senior to me, an administrator. I was flattered and challenged when she asked me to design and teach a course for her students, although it was not in my subject area. My admiration for her as a dedicated and talented pedagogue evolved to become pleasure in her friendship, delight in her ironic sense of humour and her eye for the absurd. An aura of calm and order is a function of her superb, unobtrusive organizational skills.

JOURNAL: Finished packing, drove to Felicia's to tape our last interview. Out of the heat and noise, the frenetic traffic, Satanic traffic, and into a haven of gracious, serene hospitality. The old house with its narrow corridors, high ceilings, banks of white louvres and trelliswork letting every possible breeze into the restful gloom of the interior. Gleaming wood floors, dull gleam of the heavy mahogany table. Banks [beer] beaded with condensation. Leisurely lunch--souse, green bananas, flying fish--to make me homesick before I even leave for the airport. As always, wonderful conversation, quicksilver twists and turns of wit. (10 February 1997)

At ease with herself, Felicia moves with pleasure among other languages and cultures; her graciousness and imaginative empathy make her friendship an art form. But she does not suffer fools gladly, and her tart comments indicate an acute understanding of how power operates in social institutions.

FELICIA: [Our conversation about critical reflection and lived experience]made me go back to the complete turnabout in my attitudes to my students....in Barbados we had a very strict rule...that if a student demonstrated over a period of years that they

were *incapable*, that was the word...that they had to leave the school....a whole code of how you approached education and dealing with people. If you set your standards, people were required to do certain things, and when they couldn't do them, they could be discarded....

When I went to teach at St. Michael, I discovered that there was an actual personal caring for the individual child, and eventually out of that, I did say to myself, You know everyone can achieve, it's just a question of finding the way....And that eventually became the approach that I took...to believe that it was my duty not to apply a whole set of rules, but to focus on that person, and the details of each individual person, and see what was my role in helping that person....

That was a long way away from the educational code...and it is the most difficult thing to communicate to colleagues that you are training. It's a real turnabout from understanding that there are standards, there are rules, there are codes, there is the whole thing....a lot of the codes were based on moral principles...to do with fairness and rights....the ability to discern..is the essential thing that you should be working with

I begin to recognize, of course, all these things that we have lived by, as you say, have been male. Starting with God himself, was male, and he made a man first and the woman tempted the man to do horrible things and turned the whole world upside down. That's always been there at the base of a whole lot of so-called philosophy.

Naomi

Naomi Claiborne and I came to know each other by fits and starts. Neither our work nor common friends--although we had several--brought us together with any regularity until the monthly susu meetings imposed a certain rhythm on our encounters. Yet instead of the more usual, gradual, cumulative growth of friendship, from the time we met I felt an immediate liking and affinity. Over the years, we would meet, talk intensely, empathically, then I wouldn't see her for months, sometimes a year or more. Yet I felt from the beginning she was someone I could say almost anything to.

Naomi embodies "other" in her social and cultural positioning, and belies it by her warmth, compassion and intelligence. Pan Caribbean (she has lived in Trinidad, Guyana, Venezuela, Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Barbados), fair-skinned, "a curious creature in my own land," her early background was unconventional, intellectually and politically sophisticated, and sheltered from bourgeois inscription. (Her mother ran an opposition newspaper in St. Vincent, and in her seventies, nearly blind with glaucoma, faced arrest for her political outspokenness.) Naomi's work at the University kept her on the margins for years, the temporality of her life dictated by whether she was awaiting, applying for, or overdue the necessary work permit. She has a committed relationship with a woman colleague; they are of necessity discreet in this homophobic society.

As her mother's eyesight worsened and her beloved, brilliant father succumbed to Alzheimer's, Naomi brought them from St. Vincent to live in Barbados. Her mother died

suddenly; her father's decline was dignified by her daily loving attentiveness. Later, she wrote poignantly of how this caring labour politicized her to understand "that political consciousness comes profoundly during a process that moves the subject to the site of disempowered activity." "If you look at love long enough," she writes, "You will become lovely." A perceptive thinker, a creative writer, an adroit wordsmith, she keeps us in stitches with her wry commentary on the human comedy. I watch her closely because I think she has developed the capacity for finding "comfort within discomfort" (Aoki, discussions during summer course, 1995, see footnote 12, p. 20) to a high art.

NAOMI: [a relational epistemology] is to do with power or the subversion of power ... because it's dynamic, it won't be like that all the time...it can only be like that at a given moment because of what's happening to me or what's happening to you. It just has this subversive quality to it, because it has at its disposal all kinds of conflicting possibilities It isn't fixed, it isn't in the rules, and yet it's always possible.

Elizabeth

I first met Elizabeth Osgood at the University, both of us doing Diplomas of Education while coping with toddlers and fulltime teaching. She has told many tales (see chapter 3, *Elizabeth's story*) of her upbringing in a prominent Trinidadian family and how she came to Barbados as a young pregnant teacher determined to forge an independent life. Elizabeth's serene and apparently imperturbable gaze appears to absorb everything; stoic, self-sufficient, reserved, she moves in an aura of impenetrable containment. We circled each other for years as we moved imperceptibly from classmate to colleague to friend. Her apparent composure covers a painfully acute sense of responsibility to the vulnerable students and clients who have encountered her as teacher or counsellor. A geographer, Elizabeth recalls the susu from its frivolity if she feels that we have failed to note in passing any significant feature of landscape or terrain. She misses Trinidad's vitality and diversity, its word-play and sense of style; she toys with notions of escape and return. Elizabeth is an adventurer and spiritual seeker; her narrative will have changed by the time this inquiry is written. One of the many paths her intellectual curiosity led her to was a course of theological studies, which offered her a startling demonstration of cognitive dissonance, of learning divorced from relationship.

ELIZABETH: I discovered the extent to which theology is patriarchal, which I always knew intellectually....what did I think? I thought they left their ethics at the door....[they] had attitudes that were antagonistic to women....They couldn't see inconsistencies in terms of their ethical stance about people at large, about the way they treat women....The same kind of loose thinking and dominance of the penis that you'd expect from 15 year olds...most of them grey-haired old grizzled men, some of them ministers of religion...quite an eye-opener. Maybe as you said, let's let them off the hook and say they were products of their environment.

[I learn more] from informal than formal sources....I spoke about an earlier education which included pressing leaves and writing on clay and all the rest; I think that spurred my curiosity for learning...till I go to the grave....I'll be curious right down to the end. Oh yes, I'm learning lots; I'm not learning what they want me to learn, that's the fascinating part, the sense in which we make meaning or whatever, whatever we learn,...we don't have to become confined by the specifics of what they want you to learn; I sit there sort of smiling and saying, ha, hmm, interesting....I've been in other places besides theology where I don't overtly think that I'm going to learn anything, but then I can see that sitting there and being bored has its role.

I've always wondered...in psychology and in counselling, quite often there is a crisis of not being able to find a relationship or to understand a relationship, [which] can produce a crisis in some people, yet, when I was counselling, I was always very, very careful not to in any way impose or in any way suggest that students needed to find an answer to this question. But now I would think possibly they do and that for some, maybe I denied them some information or some help which they could have used.

Lucinda

I met Lucinda Richmond on my first, nervous day of college teaching. Both of us were juggling work, study and young children. From Antigua, Lucinda was new to Barbados, dealing intuitively, as is her wont, with the difficulties and challenges of being newly single, struggling to establish a career and a home for two small daughters. We shared an adventurous approach to teaching, a passion for literature, and a sense of the ridiculous. Lucinda possesses a lovely singing and speaking voice; to hear her read poetry is to hear the poem ever after in that timbre. But I love Lucinda as much for her sense of occasion as for her fine scholarly mind; she can turn a shared bottle of beer and two crackers into a celebration. For a decade we taught together, read each other's books, finished each other's sentences, cheered one another through our respective studies, provided intellectual sounding boards, moral support, and babysitting for one another. As well as a friend, I gained two splendid, surrogate daughters. Sometimes when I miss teaching, what I really miss is teaching with Lucinda. She notes that by participating in this inquiry, by articulating her understanding that her own desire to know has given her life power and meaning; she has brought herself more vibrantly into being.

LUCINDA: Your study, you're saying that this is valid because you're learning a lot about women just from ordinary experiences...from particular experiences, and that is valid because how else are you going to come to these conclusions? In a novel you have particular situations from which you make generalizations about people, so, it's quite understandable that you can make judgements about women's lives from the particular experiences that women have. And that's what the feminists...have been saying for so long. That the view of life is skewed because women's voices have not been heard, the personal intimate dimension that women bring to life is often not seen.

In their engagement with the world and its knowledge, these women illuminate the way in which the qualitative inquirer perceives, not necessarily further, but differently, than the traditional scientific researcher. It is from a standpoint akin to their embodied, contextual way of knowing that I wish to unfold the five conceptual shifts I have made, understandings that arise from relationships, and on which I have grounded my own inquiry.

First Shift: Toward an Understanding of Gender as Relationship: “Empirical Egos Walk in Gendered Garb”

Sandra Harding (1996) offers an understanding of gender as a relationship. She contends that gender is a socially constructed product, not an artifact of individual choice, or a defining attribute. If gender is a relationship, a social product, always embedded in specifics of race, class, sexual orientation, age, if it is always embedded in power relations, it follows that any social change is also a site of gender struggle. Knowledge is always invested in power, and any change in the power construct must manifest itself along the tensions of class, race, gender, and any other contested sites between centre and margins. To dis/cover these tensions, we might ask: How are the dominant cultures (of for instance, the military, of multinational corporations, of technology) gendered? Whose knowledge is produced? What ways of knowing are privileged? Whose interests are served? Who has access to knowledge and to power?

JOURNAL: A post-interview telephone conversation with Elizabeth:

ELIZABETH: You know, two men in this last year have accused me of thinking too much, of being cerebral. It wasn't meant as a compliment.

WENDY: Was this a way of saying they were only comfortable with a sensuous emotional manifestation of women, strong earth mother tralala?

ELIZABETH: No no, I was guilty of thinking *thoughts*; women must not think thoughts.

WENDY: But Elizabeth, what can we think but thoughts?

ELIZABETH: No, you're missing the point--it's osmosis, you see--the powerful concentrate flows through the permeable barrier into the weaker solution and permeates it. The weaker solution can't flow into the stronger, the source, it's against nature. Women must not think thoughts; they must *osmose*.

We wondered who, among our women friends, would ever accuse one another of thinking too much, of having ideas that were too complex, too unsettling, too *long*. (14 February, 1997)

Standpoint Epistemology and Women's Will to Knowledge

Here, standpoint epistemologies (grounded in the material conditions, the personal histories, contexts, relational networks of women's lives) are crucial; they enable the inquirer to perceive and understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of a dominant system, to reveal the patterns of ignorance invisible to those confined to one conceptual framework, to illustrate how gender is embedded in relations of power. Standpoints, "saturated with historical and social life" (Harding, 1996, p. 57), offer an "engaged vision of the world" (Ruddick, 1989, p. 129). There is in this engagement, argues Ruddick, less distortion than in allegedly "value-neutral" research—abstract, objective, rational— which stays blind to its own interests and unaware of its own bias. This unseen bias functions to validate "objective" research, whose worth is actualized by the devaluation of that which is engaged and embodied, especially the worlds of the "natural" and of women.

"Empirical egos," claims Kathryn Morgan (1988, p. 148), "invariably walk in gendered garb." Sandra Harding concurs (1996), pointing out that it is only such dominant groups "in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, and gender [who] could imagine that their standards for knowledge...should be found preferable by all rational creatures, past, present and future" (p. 60). Not surprisingly, feminist standpoints are sites of struggle and contention, for they reveal what is not supposed to exist. Women must osmose.

A feminist rethinking of this "natural" osmosis "undoes the discursive constraints of binary logic" and makes it possible to ground connections "between the lived experience and the activity of the critical intelligence" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 176). A recognition of standpoints literally undoes an epistemology purporting to be universally valid, irrefutable, an epistemology supportive of ideological dominance. Passionate curiosity, the desire to know delineated by Braidotti (1994) is a dynamic process,⁸⁰ profoundly threatening to patriarchal knowledge systems because the will to knowledge is also the will to be visible, to have substance and agency. It is, as well, the will to power.

The informed will to self-empowerment can offset the dominant ideology. An understanding of ideology is an understanding of how dominant interests in society organize intellectual activity, how they construct key historic, scientific, and cultural conceptions, and how they set limits on what can be understood or questioned. Ideology determines where the core of power lies in the intellectual, philosophical, and political

⁸⁰Many of the writers I cite theorize how binary oppositions may be reformulated in the productive tensions of relationship. Benjamin's (1986) intersubjectivity, Benhabib's (1992) "enlarged thinking" (p. 9), Harding's (1996) multiple subjectivity (p. 66), Raymond, (1986), who suggests theory as "the reservoir of practice" (p. 214), all make possible a redefinition of women's agency and subjectivity.

concepts that construct our values and our subjectivity; it determines, too, where the margins of power lie. It is “profoundly embedded in all modern social activity and forms of knowledge” (Benjamin, 1986, p. 80).

But to write one’s own narrative, to shape and articulate its meaning, is to name and empower the self. is to resist ideology. Each of the women in this inquiry noted, independently, the connection between women’s ideological invisibility and their political powerlessness; each expressed a sense of the deep validity inherent in the telling of their stories.

“To Put a Shape on Things”: The Women Speak of Telling Their Stories

What we don’t talk about, bring into existence by our articulation of it, remains deniable, is relegated to the realm of madness. (Butala, 1994, p. 116)

the little man
 too early home today
 surprised me scribbling
 while the washer turned
 ahaa...I see you
 take your little write
 well let me see your book...
 hmm...mhmm..not bad not bad
 a little comma here
 a period there
 that sentence can make sense...
 Almost

Velma Pollard (1989), *Women Poets (with your permission)*, in *Considering Woman*. p.xi.

LUCINDA: [I thought] why would she want to hear about my life, there’s nothing interesting in my life. But then when you stimulate me to remember things, I realize, my life has been very interesting, lots of things going on...and I’m aware that...there seems to have been a divinity that shaped my end, because in some way I managed to do something with my life, it seems to be turning out very nicely in the latter part....

Maybe in a way we were moving towards this without being consciously aware of taking, as you said, the opportunities. Now I look back I realize that where I am now in terms of my career started because after the children left I said, All right, now I have time to do different things. I started taking you up on your offer to do your courses at the Museum⁸¹ and so I began to read even more Caribbean literature. Then, what else, I did up that paper...I actually sent it away to someplace that publishes...taking opportunities to read with [a well-known Barbadian poet]. I guess you’re right, I did take the opportunities or saw

⁸¹Lucinda gave a number of popular seminars and readings in Caribbean literature when part of my job was the design of the Museum’s education curriculum.

opportunities and used them without being aware...and they all led finally to a Fulbright....And so I was ready for this without being consciously aware that I was ready for it.

ELIZABETH: Well, it's kind of funny [to be storying my life this way], funny, not unusual, because Osgoods are all raconteurs; I've heard many, many stories about the family, as a narrative, see, it's not a problem...I've heard these tales told about family; my father was very strong about knowing where we came from.... So I'm accustomed to tales.

I've never told my own tales though, except to you, and so that's been kind of interesting. All along I have a sort of second narrative in my head, hmm, what's all of this going to mean, what's going to come out at the end, is it going to be the right kind of sausage or not, you know? Will it fit the picture?

So that's the kind of second layer, but when I'm actually talking, it's not a problem....What I found more difficult, more risky, because I have a sort of total trust in whatever sense you're going to make, and not to do any harm. [was] more challenging, putting some of my beliefs on the line, my beliefs about myself, that to me has been more challenging, and this morning when you asked, what was evil, I thought, Oh my gosh, what do I know about evil? So that kind of stuff really sprains my brain and sends me into a panic of searching through the records, do I have any evidence, do I?

NAOMI: The timing was great [for telling my story] because it's just a changed period in my life. I've left my job...we're too old to work for anybody [laughter]. So...the timing is wonderful for me, one still feels after all at base bourgeois, it's very not proper and correct, to make oneself the subject of one's experience. And to be a writer is such a male, and such a self-centred occupation for somebody who has been discovering the value of responsibility to others, it's very hard to just find that new kind of ego; I'm slightly embarrassed by it, but for some peculiar reason you have this extraordinary notion that there is some use in people telling you this stuff. And I'm fascinated to know how it's going to turn out. It also, very simply, is an opportunity to talk with you....So to have it happen for a formal reason kind of reinforces the fact that it's something I'll have to get over my shyness in doing.

I was discussing the paper I had written [on caring for a father afflicted with Alzheimer's] with a friend of mine, and I wanted him to critique it from the point of view of the writing. And I was very disappointed when what he did was a critique in terms of the theory and the sociology of it....I finally figured out what was going on was the separation of these things that you're talking about [rights and justice vs. care and relationship]. I was expecting...an informed, literary kind of critique. But when his critique concentrated on the sociology of what I had written, we ended up having a kind of tussle about that....

I realized that what I was really feeling, rather than thinking, was disappointment in the fact that he'd chosen this tired old ethics approach to what I had been trying to do. One of the first things he said was, Well, you use the term *Alzheimer's* which is a medical term, but did your father really have Alzheimer's?....

Anyway, the point is I just had a very, very acute experience of these different universes of thought and one of them is definitely asking for a critique--I don't mean that I want it to be soft, but I want it to be a critique made about writing....But the question as to whether you can tell if somebody has Alzheimer's or not...that kind of critique brings nothing to the text, it seems to me.... There's a kind of breakdown, then, of communication....between people who are prepared to

venture into this area that other people are afraid is too gooey or touchy-feely or something, and I myself have gone through that transition. I used to think talking about caring or feeling was rather silly. But now I don't see that the conclusion that this other thinking takes us to has much to offer.

FELICIA: [Telling my story] has made me recall a whole lot of things that I'd forgotten...I enjoy the chance to try to put a sort of shape on things that have been just hanging loosely about, and I think that's what this exercise has done. It's made me look for shapes here and there, and that for me is interesting....it's exciting this has given me an opportunity to focus on me for once....it's rather nice, because someone is actually interested, someone listens...a stimulating exercise, and I find there is not very much in my life that is....When I think about things like this, I keep them entirely to myself. I never verbalize at home, and I really don't want to be talking to my friends about things like this.

We've lived through things which I think are far more important than the socialization that we were given. And I think that sort of experience and the things you read and question begin to put socialization into a slightly different context. You're brought up to feel that these...are vital and ..based on truths that exist. And then you discover that in fact that's not true at all. That the very religions that they have told you are so vital to survival ...have in fact destroyed more people than anything else has done. Those very things that in fact close your mind, that say to you, other people are different are really bad things....The things you ... read and reflect on...put your values into a certain order...more the result of education and observation and reflection than on training and upbringing.

Doubtless ideology is, as Benjamin says, "profoundly embedded in all...forms of knowledge" (1986, p. 80), but so is resistance. These women's narratives demonstrate the desire and agency embedded in their thought, demonstrate how their *petits récits* write back against the Grand Narrative of rationality, abstraction, universality, and the autonomous male subject. They embody those "gifts of observation and analysis, the social gifts that Mary McCarthy (in Brightman, 1995, p. xxi) claims women develop "from their historic position of having to get their way without confrontation." Their stories illustrate how women's knowledge and women's work, the concrete skills and nurturing responsibilities men do not want, have developed within patriarchal relations of power that define women's norm as deviance. So, ironically, the more successfully women function in these roles, the more their work is dismissed as *natural*, "the more invisible it becomes to men as distinctly social labour" (Harding, 1993, p. 55) or as "distinctly human culture and history."

Woman, then, is the subordinate *other* whose *lack* (of power, agency, desire, penis) defines, actualizes the transcendent male. "An entire domain of human activity, namely, nurture, reproduction, love and care...is excluded from moral and political considerations, and relegated to the realm of 'nature'" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 155). But human savagery, as well as mother love, is "natural;" the natural attribute is a valuable ideological tool. Like maternal nurturing, this savagery can be conveniently "excluded from

moral and political considerations” (p.155), but unlike women’s work, which remains invisible as labour, culture, or history, violence may actually bolster patriarchal ideals of power and transcendence. But women’s work and knowledge as it is articulated by these narrators— engaged, endowed with agency, embodied, contextual— brings us to an understanding that knowledge, all knowledge, is perspectival, situated in specific historical and cultural contexts.

Second Shift: Toward Situated Knowledge: “Partial in all its Guises”

I promised to show you a map you say but this is a mural
then yes let it be these are small distinctions
where do we see it from is the question

Adrienne Rich (1991).
An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991, p.19.

An epistemology of understanding other and self in relationships (including new understandings of gender) also requires that we understand all knowledge as local and situated. Knowledge, as we have seen, is not “naturally” universal. All knowledge, as Harding points out, is socially situated, socially determined: “The same kinds of social forces that shape objects of knowledge also shape...knowers and their scientific projects”(1993,p. 64). Even rocks, she says are removed from “pure nature” into social life by research interests; whether we exploit nature or revere it, we bring it into some scientific or mercantile or cultural or religious relationship with us, into some changed way of being. In some sense we constitute it culturally, even the geophysical world.

It is crucial to pay as much attention to that scientific/mercantile/cultural/religious context of discourse as to its content, for epistemological positions do not float free of those who express them. “To understand an idea is to understand a person in her social context” (Ruddick, 1996, p. 259).

To maintain that legitimate knowledge is universally valid and generalizable is to ignore the unmarked interests of the dominant powers, and the extent to which their norms have been imposed across and internalized by the social order, the extent to which their “universal human norms” have been constructed by excluding the attributes of the subordinate, of the Other, and particularly, of women. As Lucinda puts it, “That...view of life is skewed because women’s voices have not been heard; the personal, intimate dimension that women bring to life is often not seen.”

JOURNAL: Is Ann Michaels speaking of Grand Narratives and *petits récits* in her trope of the known and unknown sites located on historical maps? “Terra cognita

and terra incognita inhabit exactly the same coordinates of time and space. The closest we come to knowing the location of what's unknown is when it melts through the map like a watermark, a stain transparent as a drop of rain. On the map of history, perhaps the water stain is memory" (1996, p. 137).

What a vivid image. It brought to mind Felicia's memory of her grandmother's insistent voice: *Remember 1937*, at a time when the meaning of Barbados' 1937 riots, the collective outrage of the black and poor, had been erased from the official consciousness. The voiced black memory as watermark.

Felicia echoes Lucinda's sense of a "skewed" vision:

FELICIA: Hard and soft functions--[the men in the organization for retired people Felicia belongs to] see financial operations as the main thrust of the thing, and a certain amount of political manoeuvring....they keep in touch with politicians that they think can sway the thinking of the Cabinet. It is useful, but those are the things that are considered *hard*.

[But] when all the members meet each other, this is what people say: We want to get to know other members, we want to do things that improve the quality of our lives, which is what the original mandate was, to improve the quality of life. But for people working like this, it is not the personal contact with the members that is important, it's the statistics, the number of people we have, how much money comes in....The human side of it, since there are only two women on the executive, it's very hard to insist on the human side.

The way I was brought in is very typical of how all the administrators of the system function....the way all male administrators set about doing this, always a kind of controlling and manipulation approach to getting things done. And they have come to identify with the association as the owners of it.

"The knowing self is partial in all its guises," says Susan Hekman (1995, p. 100). The self-knowledge that constrains or enables our knowing also defines our identity. How we know is who we are. Knowledge and understanding are always processes, always in flux, always shifting sites and relocating as new experience alters relationship and perspective. Nowhere have I found this to be more poignantly true than in the evolution of my own inquiry, the evolution of my own lived experience and understanding.

JOURNAL: As I completed the draft of my third chapter and might have begun to think of myself as half way along in my dissertation, I ended my marriage of over 30 years. It seemed at the time to happen both with shocking swiftness--for how can you step off a cliff slowly?--and in excruciating slow motion. As the circumstances of my life changed with dizzying velocity, as my partner and I struggled to treat one another with compassion and respect, as we dismantled our lives and expectations, I had for months the sensation of falling through space, like those nightmares where one misses all the handholds, grasps at the air.

I learned deeply what any introductory feminist pamphlet might have told me about the status and comfort a married woman forfeits when she breaks the social contract. I learned that despite my partner's resolute generosity of spirit in speaking of me, society wants someone to be at fault. I was ingenuous to be so surprised at how threatening to other married couples my decision proved to be. I had never chosen to air our difficulties and did not choose to do so now. My decision was seen as incomprehensibly rash, brutal and irresponsible; I was told marriage needs work and commitment, asked if I was sure of what I was doing.

Those acquaintances who perhaps had seen me, with my handsome, dark husband, as half of an “interesting” couple, clearly did not find me so engaging as a single woman in a modest flat. From the small community of other mixed couples we had known, I heard little, and was saddened to feel racial loyalties subsumed those of friendship. My sons gathered supportively around their father; I was ironically aware that the family togetherness I had seen as my task for so many years was only effected through my leaving.

Against this backdrop of astonished disapproval, a few friends offered compassionate moral support, did not require a rationale to have faith in my necessity. They alone understood that pain and desolation attend the “perpetrator” as well as the recipient of a rupture; that it was a grief and loss like death to witness the end of my adult life’s major relational work, that it was a desolation of the spirit to witness the pain I occasioned in a decent man.

For months I was too disturbed to concentrate on anything except day to day necessities, too drained to write or even to journal, which I now regret. The painful rawness of that period is now somewhat filtered through memory and framed by my academic responsibility to complete my inquiry.

But what is clear to me is that my inquiry fuelled the necessity of my changing, that I am no longer the person I was. And so I look on my initial work with a sense of dislocation, and the need to re-articulate much of what I had once understood to be true. (September 1998)

“If you want to understand something,” says Bronfenbrenner. “Try to change it” (1977, p. 517). And indeed, it has been the effort to change my life that has taught me profoundly how situated, partial, braided with contradiction, my knowledge and self knowledge are. I also see that it has been my relations with others, and my struggle to remain ethical in those relations, that has been central to my self-understanding, my identity. I attempt in the following section to delineate this connection between identity and moral process.

Third Shift: Toward Identity as Moral Process: The “Epistemological Lean”

JOURNAL: When I first began to shape my inquiry, I saw my five theoretical concepts as five links to tether the central theme, friendship as epistemology. I now find the link an inadequate metaphor, with its suggestion of chain-like linearity and sequence. In fact, the five insights are so simultaneous, so layered and interwoven it has been difficult to tease them apart sufficiently to reflect on them separately. Perhaps fabric is a more suitable trope, or a prism with five facets that reflect, variously, a re/visioning that contests the dominant world-view. (October, 1998)

Just as an engaged vision of the world made possible my first shift, a retheorizing of gender as relationship, and my second shift, an awareness that all knowledge is situated and perspectival, so the “continual negotiation” (Hekman, 1995, p. 107) between these multiple perspectives of knowing and of the gendered self led to my third shift, a sense of subjectivity itself as a moral process. Identity will be the central theme of the next chapter,

but here I want to stress its relational, and therefore inescapably moral, nature. Susan Hekman speaks to identity from relational discourse, which accommodates her contention that morality is central in the construction of self: "I become the person I am in action with specific others. The way I feel it necessary to be with them is the person I take myself to be. The self-organization becomes my 'nature'" (Mitchell, cited in Hekman, p. 74). The connection of identity and relation as a moral phenomenon is echoed by Lynn McFall (1987), who speaks to "identity-conferring commitment" (p. 13), the fundamental commitments that make us who we are, "the conditions of continuing as ourselves" (p. 12). Although the relational condition is fluid, unfixed, it need not run down the slippery slopes of relativity. "We cannot escape [our relational constitution]," says Nel Noddings (1989, p. 237), "but we can reflect upon it, evaluate it, move it in a direction we find good." How the subject knows is linked to who the subject is.

ELIZABETH: Moral development, yes, I'm trained in the Kohlberg stages, and the outcome of a principled system of beliefs, which would guide action and so on. Yes, universal justice and truth and all, as compared to caring and relationship, as compared to call to action in a particular way, in a sort of immediate and particular way....The emphasis, it seems to me, is more on your particularity, in terms of picking up the signals...making sure you look at so you can act....you use the word *congruence*, and *dissonance*. Research has found a great difference between what we say we believe and what we actually act on, and the problems of trying to find that consistency, between belief and attitude and behaviour in particular circumstances.

And how are they to be arrived at, these principles to guide our action and by which we define ourselves? The knowing self, as Hekman reminds us that "is partial in all its guises" (1995, p. 100). Friedman (1992, 1993) endorses a relational, identity-forming view of moral development, pointing out that early success in friendship reinforces practices of informed partiality and respect for the other that can later be generalized to people yet unknown. Similarly, Elizabeth Abel (1981) traces how the relational bonds of early childhood nourish the later intimacies of friendship and how these in turn inform relational models for inquiry in the human sciences. Friendship enables an imaginative identification with the other that Abel posits as "the essence of literature and of moral growth" (p. 423). Sara Ruddick (1996) concurs: "A knowing self...is created within relationships" (p. 263). "Thinking begins in attachment to others....There is thought only where there are questions and answer, need and response, interpersonal activities and communications of various sorts,...Love is not external to mind, but its very condition" (Cavell, cited in Ruddick, 1996, p. 263).

NAOMI: Caring for others, let me talk about that. With such determination and passion, [when] I saw the need that they had, and leapt into that, I shocked myself

how important that was to me....I discovered caring really is the essence, not just of the family and friendship, but of civilization....It is about love, loving, that's the thing that knits everything together....

But what I can't figure out is how caring for others and caring for the self became in my mind inextricably linked. As a feminist and an inheritor of Western approaches to thought, and critical approaches, I have been having a struggle, and ...there was a terrible conflict in me at first, between what I wanted to do, which was to take care of them, and what I was told by people who loved me and were concerned was not good for me, because I wasn't taking care of myself. But I couldn't; my identity...was tied up with my ability to take care of them when they were vulnerable.

I have outlined here the connectedness of identity and moral process, first through the inescapably moral dimension of relationship and the substrate it constitutes for cognitive and moral growth; second, through the contention that caring intersubjectivity is a process of "reading" the other into being and of defining our own identity. Yet the difficulty and paradox inherent in a relational epistemology are folded into it as inexorably and vividly as streaks of crystalline limestone are pressed into marble. It is this constitutive contradiction that I discuss in the following stage of this chapter.

Fourth Shift: Necessary Contradictions: "Crucial Misogyny"

Which particular contents of the soul, which elements of the fat, relentless ego, must be dispensed with for the sake of loving vision and which must be retained in order for there to be a self that views? (Fox, 1992, p. 115).

This continual contextualizing of relationship and knowledge, a continual epistemological negotiation, is incompatible with the universal world-view it contests. Yet, shot through with paradox and contradiction as it is, it leads to a new understanding of rationality, a reconstruction of critical thought.

In my reading, I continually hope for insights into this oppositional clash. Here Myra Jehlen (1981) has been instructive. In her article "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," she appropriates the fable of Archimedes' lever, whose fulcrum could have moved the world if Archimedes had had somewhere to stand. Jehlen questions the location of a patriarchal universe that has always represented itself as absolute. The fulcrum at which she shifts this world lies at the point "where misogyny is pivotal or crucial to the whole"(p. 586). It is at this point that crucial issues manifest themselves, this "necessary contradiction", "the meshing of a definition of women and a definition of the world."

Just such a contradiction evoked, too, the memory of a CBC interview I had switched on while driving:

JOURNAL: Gzowski interviewing an eminent scholar of Jewish antiquity, a

woman both ardently feminist and devoutly Orthodox. A lively *burgeoning* mind and personality—I thought, now *there's* a living contradiction, but she addressed those contradictions with verve, intelligence and humour.

Two things stayed with me: First, she said, Talmud claims every ounce of one's intellect and emotion; I have so immersed myself in Talmudic study: I feel so *intimate* with those scholars. There was a short silence; then she said drily, But I do not think they would feel intimate with me.

Second, she said of her religious and political stance: There is room for discourse and debate at every level, but the difficulty is moving it from the private to the public level. (28 July, 1997)

The scholar embodied paradox, both within herself and with her colleagues. And misogyny emerged crucially, in her own multiple self-definition, and in the world defined by her male Orthodox colleagues, a world invested in preventing private discourse from moving to the public world.

JOURNAL: When I joined the Museum in 1986, its constitution had not been amended since its founding in 1934. Written in the colonial legalise of the day for an expatriate and upper class membership, it was shockingly racist, classist and sexist to the modern sensibility, or would have been if anyone had cared to struggle through the language.

After I'd been there a few years, and thinking the anachronistic document contradicted everything a museum in a developing country should aspire to, I prevailed upon its board to undertake a revision. I subsequently found myself on a committee of board members, although the actual task of rewriting, once substantive changes were authorized, would be mine.

The points of contention were instructive. No one could object, of course, to weeding out racial anachronisms. But I was naively surprised at the resistance to demystifying the language, which was ludicrously ornate and legalistic. (The eminent lawyer on the committee took great exception when I said this. "It's *legal*, he growled, "not *legalistic*").

I had brought in a rewritten draft, which I'd reduced to half its original length without omitting anything of substance. The committee admitted everything necessary was there, and that it was comprehensible. My revisions included a reframing of topics in gender-neutral language. This passed unnoticed, or would have if I had not ill-advisedly brought copies of guidelines which I thought might prove useful for others trying to avoid awkward he-or-she constructions. Without missing a beat, the lawyer reached over, picked up the guidelines between his thumb and forefinger, tossed them back over his shoulder onto the floor and continued talking. No one batted an eye.

When the constitution finally faced the membership for ratification, a member noted that I'd written *chair*, when "everyone" knows that the position is *chairman*. In vain to note that the national museum associations of Canada, the U.S. and England used *chair*, and that ten years down the road we'd look very old-fashioned. No one seemed to have found the old constitution objectionable; no one commented on its new clarity or accessibility. But the membership present voted to replace *chair* with *chairman*. (February 1997)

Following Jehlen's model, I look for the fulcrum, where misogyny is pivotal, where crucial issues manifest themselves. I did not see, as the feminist Orthodox scholar

did, that I was moving private discourse to the public world, the personal to the political. I was mystified at the time, and only later shaped and articulated my chagrin: What was at stake when so many busy, well-educated people could devote time, energy, and ill-will to so apparently minor an adjustment, and one they almost didn't notice? What unexamined ideological forces shaped the board and management of the institution? What kinds of knowledge production would the institution facilitate, and what kinds would be ignored, belittled or limited? To what extent would programs in which my values were discernible be permitted to develop?

Fully understanding the issues implicit in these questions, finding the fulcrum, took me another two years. By that time I understood that I would be able to develop programs only to the limits of my own investment of time and energy, and that they would not be carried on by institutional momentum, or nourished by institutional ethos. The "necessary contradiction" did indeed manifest itself for me as a "definition of [a] woman" (my vision of cultural mission) in collision with a "definition of the world" of my institution and its agenda.

Phelan and Garrison (1994) push Jehlen's "necessary contradictions" further, seeing in unreconciled paradox and contradiction opportunities for a new understanding of rationality and critical thinking. Lorraine Code's (1993) contention that knowing people in relationships provides a model for a wide range of knowledge also has currency here, for it is the finding of much feminist ethical thought that knowing in relationship is itself a paradox. "We know ourselves as separate only insofar as we live in connection with others, and we experience relationship only insofar as we differentiate others from self" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 63).

Differentiation and inclusion are two primal human yearnings, but they inevitably conflict; their tensions constitute "the restless creative motion of life itself" (Kegan, 1982, p.107). Women "who live with and in the tensions" of Raymond's (1986, see pp. 208-218) *dual vision*, both realistic and visionary, are empowered to live in the world as it is while maintaining a vision of the world as it ought to be. Analogous contradictory tensions structure Robin Dillon's (1992) *care-respect*, Annette Baier's (1994) *appropriate trust*, Seyla Benhabib's (1992) and Maria Lugones' (in Fox, 1992) *interdependent seeing*.

So: the paradoxical tensions of relationship create the knowing self. How can this lead us to a new understanding of rationality? Employing the *Constructed Knowledge* of Belenky et al (1986), Phelan and Garrison stress the need for a high toleration of ambiguity and contradiction. They yoke together *separate knowing*, the "doubting game" of differentiation, scepticism, autonomy, and a morality based on reciprocity, with *connected*

knowing, the “believing game” of participation and experience and of a morality that strives to see others as they experience themselves.

It is possible to embrace contraries, say Phelan and Garrison, if our aim is to disclose meaning and enhance understanding rather than to prove a truth through philosophic discourse. The dialectic of poetry--the integration of the inner voice and the voice of reason--drives the search for insight, and constitutes the paradox, the tension, that creates opportunities for new connections, for a reconstruction of our conception of critical thought.

Fifth Shift: Toward Intelligence as a Social Relationship

We can conceptualize knowledge anew when we perceive intelligence as “first of all, a social *relation*, not a mere trait in the observed individual”(Ruddick, 1996, p. 263). Knowing begins in attachment to others: “Relationships are as personal as ‘one’ gets; a person *is* the relationships that constitute and are constituted by her”. Sara Ruddick outlines the trajectory of relationship and knowing from an infant’s knowledge of its mother. This relationship determines the understanding that structures how and what the infant can know. Later, the child learns from “objects” of her knowledge: people, texts, narratives. Further on, she “turns the gaze of inquiry on the relationships....it is through knowing the relations in which she is constituted that a person knows herself” (p. 264). A feminist ethic that perceives intelligence as a social relationship, then, also suggests a link between epistemological ideal and moral result. And if intelligence is a product of relationships, it too is continually in flux, in the productive tensions of those relationships.

NAOMI: It starts with a view of the family as wider...as much more inclusive...that leads you into friendship....it has something to do with the way we perceive ourselves in a very very basic way...I’m talking about an ethical aura, the kind of space that friendship between people makes possible, an orientation of mind.

But ways of knowing are not immutable, nor are they exclusive of one another. “A person does not ‘know’ irrespective of the object of knowledge or the practices in which she is engaged” (Ruddick, 1996, p. 254). And I have found this to be so: my cognitive activities continually change as I strive silently to follow a challenging lecture, as I consult a mechanic about my car, as I argue with a friend about which film to see, as I try to make a decision about my health, as I write this chapter.

However, I may well transfer a habitual way of thinking to varied, seemingly unrelated contexts. “Prolonged focus on [this kind of inquiry] may ... produce cognitive capacities and attitudes that recur to different degrees in epistemologically dissimilar contexts. Thus maternal thinking, as a whole, might affect even models of theoretical

science” (Ruddick, 1996, p. 254). Mary Catherine Bateson builds on this capacity to transfer productive habits to other domains: “We must transform our attitude towards all productive work and toward the planet into expressions of homemaking, where we create and sustain the possibility of life” (1990, p. 136).⁸² In this mode she echoes Code’s (1993) contention that knowing people in relationships offers an epistemological model for other kinds of discourse. Similarly, Elizabeth Abel (1981), discussed above, claims that the relational ties of affection and intimacy create an imaginative identification with the Other that is “the essence of literature and of moral growth” (p. 422). This model, positing the possibility of transferring a habitual kind of meaning-making to other contexts, resonates for me; it is the one I will follow as I trace how the phenomenon of friendship provides a template for self-understanding and for academic inquiry. What is it like to understand through friendship?

Practice: To Discern and Alleviate

Where are we going?
 What are the bindings?
 What behooves us?

Adrienne Rich (1991), *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, p. 23.

The etymological roots of *practice* signify doing and action. When we theorize--observe, perceive, envision, discern--what are we subsequently bound to do and how are we bound to act? Carol Gilligan (1982) sees the essence of moral discourse to lie in *choice*, the willingness to take responsibility, “an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate” (p. 100). Thus the theory, the *effort* required to discern the hidden structures of domination, implies a practice, the *responsibility* to discern and alleviate. Thus reflective understanding is linked to the necessity for action and for particular practices. Without both reflection and action, how would agency be possible?

I have outlined the conceptual grounds from which I approach an understanding of friendship as epistemology. These have included a perception of knowledge as relationship, constitutive of gender and intelligence; of knowledge as situated, perspectival, contextually relative, riven with inescapable contradiction; and arising from this understanding of knowledge, of identity as moral process. This engaged, contextual theorizing connects knowledge and knower, makes it possible to provide the foundations upon which we build our practice, informs us what actions behoove us.

⁸²The metaphor of homemaking as care of the planet is beautifully elaborated in P. K. Page’s *Planet Earth*. See Appendix F.

What is it we mean by *practice*? Sara Ruddick (1989) sees practice to be defined by goals so constitutive that without the goal, the practice would not exist. (So: the pragmatist might consider the goal of the university to be the transmission and evaluation of education, that is, the granting of degrees; without this goal, the practices of the university as we know it would not exist.) She also claims that “thinking arises from and is tested against practices” (p. 13). This claim startled me at first reading; I considered switching the order of the “theory” and “practice” sections of this chapter. But I now see the process as a recursive one, *praxis*; indeed, it was my relatively unconscious and unreflective practice of friendship that led me to reflect and theorize, which in turn has enhanced and changed the friendships, which has led to deepening dialogue and to this inquiry.

I am indebted to Ruddick, first, for a model of inquiry that defines maternal practice (a domain of humanity often dismissed as “natural” and rendered invisible) and identifies its demands; second, for her argument that this practice has a political and epistemological structure that can be transposed to other discourses. Both of these insights have had a strong influence on the initial shaping of my own research.

Several feminist philosophers whose work has engaged me address the “demands” (Ruddick’s phrase, 1989, p. 17) of practice. Ruddick sees maternal practice to be constituted by the demands of preservation, growth, and social acceptance. “To be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands by works of preservative love, nurturance and training” (p. 17). In a related paradigm of practice, Marilyn Friedman (1993, chapter 8) contends that friendship, characterized by ideals of equality, mutuality and trust, is sustained by the practice of *exertion* (the active intention to maintain the friendship), *initiative* (the ongoing impulse to share, assist, affirm, communicate), and *care* (the avoidance of distrust and disaffection). If thinking is the theory, thoughtfulness is the practice that materializes in female friendship, claims Janice Raymond (1986), speaking to the conditions of friendship manifested in that thoughtfulness. The thoughtful friendship provides a context for *passion* (“not a blob of feeling, but movement rooted in knowledge....active, daring and rigorous discernment,” p. 228), *worldliness*, where thought is concretized in public activity (worldlessness can be one effect of friendlessness), and *happiness*, an activity of the mind striving for full use of one’s powers, for integrity of self.

Naomi’s reflections on *occupation*, her profound need to make meaning of her father’s affliction with Alzheimer’s, his *petits récits*, seem closely allied to these paradigms of women’s invisible practices, the repetitive and habitual tasks of living:

NAOMI: What is it that an individual is occupied in doing in the world? Now, the

occupations that have status and invest control and power as we understand it, occupations which for want of a better world, are male-defined, they are occupations that are culturally coded as male....

And there are other occupations, and I'm talking about everybody's daily life, and I don't mean a career, I mean the occupation of whatever, other occupations are coded inferior or female....So this other occupation, this habit we have to live and do and make, these other aspects of what we do, I believe have more connection to the self-affirming, nurturing part of identity, rather than the controlling one...

The dramatic example of what happened to my father's brain, and his obsession to be occupied, it was such a tragic thing to witness, but it showed me how occupation is the basis of everything, and you can examine a whole power structure at the weakest or the strongest end, in terms of that. You can start from a very simple domestic space, like how is a person in a household, or what does a person do when they lose their fucking mind, and see the habits of occupation being so anxiously grabbed at, by someone who is going mad.

And it was a real shock for life to be brought to such a simplicity.....You see the bizarre habit of what we all do, exaggerated in this peculiar form, because he was still trying to be occupied, because of who he was, because he was an engineer, because he was a man, because he was a father, all the power that he had had, to find it so strangely inverted, the only recognizable thing was the force of habit, the longing to be occupied. It didn't amount to anything...comprehensible. But ...the impulse to be occupied would never leave him.

Habits of occupation, practice, the urge "to live and do and make," its connection to "the self-affirming, nurturing part of identity," how do these habits enable an epistemology of friendship? On what foundation does the practice of friendship rest? Here I want to pursue the notion, first, that particular practices arise from, are tested by, and define friendship. Further, I suggest that we are friends to the degree that we are committed to the work, the practice, of friendship. Moreover, I contend that those qualities that shape the practice of friendship also encourage an epistemologically "friendly" framing of inquiry into other discourses. For the remainder of this chapter, accordingly, I will lay out my understanding of *practice*, and of four qualities that I have found to characterize the practice of friendship, qualities that enable knowledge and self-knowledge.

JOURNAL: As I worked on the draft of this chapter and wrote of "laying out" my criteria for the practice of friendship, I thought--Now where did that term come from, and why do I find it so affecting? The image that came, dreamlike, was of a careful, mindful, almost ceremonial setting out of food. I finally tracked the phrase back to Dwayne Huebner's (1969, n.p., see footnote 6, p.6) account of [Heidegger's] language in teaching, of its practical, reflective and theoretical functions (as I understand Heidegger's ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, and present-at-hand). The need to "lay out" the language is the need to speak so the words' accessibility and reliability gives the reader the means to open up the world, to make theory useable, to make possible reflective and theoretical places of dwelling and being. Yes, I thought, this is what I so want to do, so that "everydayness is rent" (1969, n.p.), so that the qualities I attempt to speak of speak through me. (26 October 1998)

I will enlarge on the concept of practice more specifically in the ensuing sections of this chapter. I want to examine four particular “demands” (Ruddick’s phrase) of friendship, demands I have found to arise from friendship and which provide conditions for its practice: imaginative empathy, trust, reflexivity, and narrative connection.

Imaginative Empathy

We grow in dialogue, not only in the rare intensity of passionate collaboration, but through a multiplicity of forms of friendship and collegiality. (Bateson, 1990, p.94)

The imaginative empathy of friendship, what Belenky calls “the deliberate imaginative extension of one’s understanding” (in Goldberger et al., 1996, p. 209), Benjamin’s “dimension of recognition between self and other” (1986, p. 98), speak to a knowing of the other that is inseparable from self-knowing, a self-knowledge that is foundational to knowledge of others. Thinking, says Hannah Arendt, is “intercourse with oneself” (in Raymond, 1986, p. 222); “In the activity of thought I am together with myself” (Arendt in Brightman, 1995, p. xxii). Raymond concurs: “The conversation of friendship with others can only be had by those who have learnt to think with themselves” (p. 222). It is this reciprocity, this capacity of the knower both to preserve the “otherness of the other” (Clinchy, 1996, p. 230) and to perceive herself from the perspective of that other that makes responsible action, moral agency, possible.

Indeed, it is what we call “thoughtlessness,” the anti-empathic, wilful ignorance of self and other, that opposes Gilligan’s “injunction to care...responsibility to discern and alleviate” (1982, p.100) that induces Noddings’ “separation and...the neglect of relation” (1989, p. 118). Thoughtlessness prevents empathy; it encourages the laziness and entropy of Hirshfield’s “ordinary mind” (1997b, p. 6); it enables much evil and accounts for its astonishing banality. Writing *Eichman in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt was struck by Eichman’s “manifest shallowness....insensitiveness, opacity, inability to make connections...something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*” (Brightman, 1995, p. xxii).

An imaginative intelligence is implicit in mature relationships: “Through the active imagination...the empathizer creates, reworks and continually clarifies a dimensional inner map of another’s consciousness” (Stanley, 1994, p. 96). This interaction of contrasting perspectives “offers the other a discontinuity in a habitual pattern of perception and interpretation” (p. 202) and interrupts the impetus of “ordinary mind.”

Envisioning the Other

I want to address the problematic ordinariness of habitual perception through metaphors of visibility that recur in the moral philosophy of the writers discussed here, metaphors that illustrate their intersubjective ethos. Women's ideological invisibility, their absence from (and when they *are* seen, their inadequacy in) the epistemological frameworks of literature and art, of theology and science, of psychoanalysis and psychology, of moral philosophy from Socrates to Kohlberg, women's invisibility has a direct connection to their *actual absence* from the "real relations [of power] which govern the existence of individuals" (Belsey, 1985, p. 46).

Those writers who address the necessity of making ourselves visible, to ourselves and to one another, echo Carol Gilligan's *responsibility to discern*. Marilyn Frye (in Fox, 1992) posits seeing as an *active* endeavour, a moral endeavour, requiring love and attentiveness. Seeing requires self-discipline, self knowledge, the ability to distinguish one's own interests from those of the other. It creates a new reality: "The responsive eye enlivens the vista to which it responds" (Bateson, 1994, p. 51). No one, says Mary Catherine Bateson, "is independent of the actions and imaginations of others"....No legal definition can free us from the need to bring one another into being" (1994, p. 63). Janice Raymond (1986), whose concept of *dual vision* celebrates reciprocity, notes that "we treat others as the persons they are just insofar as we try to respond to the way they choose to be seen, and not through our favoured ways of seeing them"(p. 75). Neither a mere contradiction of the symbolic order nor yet another binary, dual vision embodies the creative tension between a necessary sense of realism, "acute nearsightedness" (p. 207), and the simultaneous visionary task of "far-sighted thinking and action that suggests where we are going". Raymond emphasizes that "women must learn how to live with and in that tension" (p.75).

My *susu*, the network of women friends I left in Barbados, has the generosity of vision that these writers celebrate. Individually and as a group, the *susu* gave me the gift of en-visioning me in ways that I always recognized myself, that I felt what Raymond calls "the power of expectation and possibility" (p. 209). It is difficult to convey how deeply I cherished that rare and precious phenomenon of genuine good will. At times the daily reality of my professional and social life was that my *only* visible attribute seemed to be my colour; spiritually, I huddled and shrivelled before eyes sharp with centuries of entirely justifiable rancour and resentment. To some extent, the *susu* brought me into being: I could become who I was because they saw me actively, with attentiveness and love. And my reflections upon our relationships, our narratives, have gradually shaped not only my social

but also my academic subjectivity, and have come to constitute much of my inquiry.

So: the responsive eye, the visionary task. But in general, people see ideologically, and they see what filters through their own needs, desires, and interests. Seeing wrongly, "arrogant seeing" is not only wrong, but harmful, incorrectly constructing another person. Racism, misogyny, pornography, all are harmful, sometimes lethal "seeing". "Injury can be done to the beheld if the beheld is not viewed with love" writes Lugones (in Fox, 1992, p. 115) who, echoing Abel's intersubjectivity, hopes for "interdependence between two viewing subjects which cherishes and does not harm or diminish either one"(p. 115).

JOURNAL: Saturday morning: a tiny pyramid of powdered graphite accumulates at one edge of my drawing paper as I carefully shave the edge of a graphite stick with an X-acto blade. I stop scraping and begin rubbing the powder into the paper with circular sweeps of the tissue wadded in my fingertips.

The world recedes; the paper builds up a soft dense bloom of black fog, from which the drawing will emerge. Preparing the paper is a meditation; it empties my mind. If I had electrodes on my scalp they would doubtless show that my customary brain functions are absolutely altered, that I would be incapable of ordinary thinking, of, for instance, writing this paper. I become overly sensitive to sound, to words; if you spoke to me now I'd jump a mile.

My cousin knows this; she sits quietly with her own thoughts as I begin drawing. This portrait is to be a long overdue birthday present. Light floods the room; it strikes her forehead, edges her nose, a cheekbone. My whole consciousness is now in my gaze, in the kneaded putty eraser with which I stroke away the veil of black fog. Gradually, a brow emerges, the bridge of a nose, a jawbone. I draw back into the shadows, refine and sharpen the lights and darks. And so it alternates: the eraser bringing forth embryonic form, the sharp pencils giving it contour and substance.

Sunlight lines one eye. Its white appears translucent, the browns of the iris glowing and liquidly transparent. How many textures, directions, intersections where the eyelids meet and flow into cheekbone and jaw? How to translate this plenitude into lines and smudges of graphite? A negative shape is bounded by the back of her neck, the top of the chair, the edge of the doorway; it becomes important to capture the contours of this shape exactly. I am drawing the air that she breathes.

Why can't I see this intensely in my daily observing? Probably because all my other mental processes are in abeyance. I would really like my cousin to be happy with her portrait, although while I am actually working, that thought is not in my mind. While I'm drawing I cannot make a mental shopping list, carry on a conversation or ponder intersubjectivity. I am incapable of other forms of simultaneous judgement; I cannot tell if my drawing has captured a likeness, if it's "flattering".

My cousin clears her throat tactfully, and I jump. She's been trying not to move for an hour; we take a break. I've made a good start, but I can't actually "see" the image, until I leave it a while and then look at it in a mirror. This is a useful trick; the reversed image lets me see it with the shock of newness.

The drawing is not photographic, not "pretty." But it has tensions that speak of my cousin's strength and complexity; it has undercurrents. To her surprise, and mine, we see that I have drawn her mother's eyes (and my mother's; the twins were identical), although that is not a likeness I had consciously noticed. She is

intrigued, comments that she sees family history in the face. A promising beginning; with a fleeting twinge, I remember that once I thought that my life would unfold as an artist. Between sittings, other relatives catch sight of it and say, Oh, that's not her, why have you made her so *old*?

"Often in deep concentration, the self disappears," says Hirshfield (1997b, p. 4).

"We seem to fall utterly into the object of our attention, or else vanish into attentiveness itself." To know the other is to accept the responsibility for an attentiveness that seeks to see the other as she chooses to be seen, and to see ourselves as she sees us. The empathy of true friendship endows us with the imagination to see that the friend may be, as Marilyn Friedman says, "another self, but she is still ineliminably an *other* self" (1993, p. 215).

I have been fortunate to find friends who cherish both autonomy and affinity: Naomi celebrates an intimate friendship that is "free of me;" Elizabeth stresses that a friend "doesn't have to be a clone;" Lucinda speaks amusingly to women's bonding.

NAOMI: Friendship, its moral base, can I give you an example? I've told you this before but I would like it to be on tape. When Marjorie was retiring, we had a dinner party for which I helped organize. People came...they came from all over the place, Canada, other Caribbean islands...just to celebrate her.

And when she had to make a speech and thank everyone and whatnot, I was at the back of the hall...and Marjorie got up and she said, I have looked for a piece of poetry by a woman because I wanted to read something by a woman that will reflect how I feel, but everything I found didn't satisfy me. And so I want to read this.

It was a poem by [her husband] Basil, who had died about six months before....The first line was: *At farewell time it is my love that speaks....* Well I just can't tell you, when I think of it up to now it was one of the most wonderful moments in terms of being in sync with someone, and I just would like to express it, if there's any way that what I'm going to say now can affect or have a place in what you're writing, it is how I felt at the moment was that I was the most fortunate human being because I was in a relationship with somebody who behaves in a way that is free of me, who is autonomous, who has these particular qualities, but that offers me friendship.

I want to be friends with somebody like that because that person behaves in a way that I would. That's what I'm like. So here's another person who has the same way of thinking and feeling and honouring and just being so lovely, like me! Do you see what I mean? And I just think, *That's my friend*, and I just think, *Great!*

ELIZABETH: My real life is outside [work] with my family, with my susu, that's my real loving environment....There's a sense perhaps of validation...your friends are there for you which is how I would define friendship, your friends support you. A friend of mine, I wonder if I should say this...defined it as wiping the diarrhea from your leg when you are unable to do it for yourself, that's how we embodied the friendship. And so in that sense a friend makes a journey less lonely, less isolated, a friend is there for you.

If a friend of mine said, You know, I was awake at one o'clock or two o'clock and I really needed somebody to talk to and so on, but I didn't think I could

call you, I would feel I had not been a good enough friend to that person, a friend can disturb my sleep, and should be able to feel that they could. Although it's taken me a long time to feel that I could...It's easier for me to pour [love] out than really to be vulnerable, to accept it. So, I think that a mutual definition of friendship is important, because some people would say, they expect their friends to be...like a toy that you pick up and set down, convenient.

And so, I was just going to say that I do miss your friendship in terms of being here. I'm not saying that for the tape, I'm saying, in terms of the people who I can relate to and who I feel I can call in the middle of the night, although I don't because I'm considerate [laughter], because there are so few people who I feel understand what I expect from a friend.

I think we do share a definition of friendship which allows us to be variously emotional, boring, sentimental...I don't feel a sense my friend has to be this person; I feel like I can bore you to death with impunity, I can be outrageous and you too will accept me as I am...a friend doesn't have to be a clone of you once you accept...that's who they are.

LUCINDA: This isn't a susu story, but it's a story that has to do with women and bonding and when I was [away on a scholarship] my roommate was I would say, in her fifties anyway. And the first night I was there, like many women of my age, I went to the bathroom frequently and she told me later she said, Oh good, one of us!

But the most interesting story shows the problems that women of our ages have and the fact that we have them together means that we're able to understand. If this would happen with a younger roommate I would have had to leave. Well no, I don't think so. But anyway she had a toothbrush holder and we had two different coloured toothbrushes. Mine was red and hers was something...

Well...one day I couldn't remember which was my toothbrush. So for two days I did not brush my teeth because I didn't know which one was mine. But I could not tell because hers never seemed to be wet. I was saying, OK, if that one is wet then this one is mine.

Finally I broke down after two days of washing my mouth with a washcloth and I said, Which is your toothbrush? She said, I forgot so I haven't been using one. And we just burst out laughing...only when I told my children, they said, How can you forget your colour toothbrush for so long? How could you?

Narratives of empathy, from the sublime to the droll. But does empathy invariably serve the practice of friendship? When is it a simulacrum of care that reinforces emotional dependency, and when might it be one of the tools of charisma?

JOURNAL: Where do empathy and charisma connect, and what is the nature of that connection? Uncomfortable under a friend's prodding, I admit I propose imaginative empathy as a good without making enough of a case. Why is it invariably *good* that a person possesses knowledge of self and other, sees the other in her social context, and reflects upon this knowledge?

Perhaps these qualities are the equivalent of Gardner's (1985) inter-and-intra-personal intelligences, and can be used for good *or* ill. They are to be found in the great teacher, the guru, the political leader, the evangelist, the seducer. Inherent in all these roles is the power to evoke trust; inherent, too, are unequal relations of power. The power to compel trust draws forth a longing akin to love, whether that longing manifests itself as an urge to obey, to excel, to adulate, or to emulate.

Where this trusting relation differs from friendship lies in its lack of

mutuality. The leader, the politician, need not trust; she evokes and perhaps uses the trust of others. The charismatic herself remains invulnerable, calling forth and absorbing the trusting vulnerability of others. Her charisma may be a gift or a burden, but it certainly is a responsibility, as is all power.

It is that permanent power imbalance, that lack of reciprocity, that impermeability of charisma, that constitutes the barrier to friendship. Empathy alone, then, without an intersubjective trust [which I examine at greater length in a later discussion], cannot define friendship. Perhaps empathy linked to trust is like the Biblical *charity*, without which we are as tinkling cymbals. (February, 1999)

And where is the place of self-care in the practice of friendship? Stanley (1994) warns that “care of self needs to be understood as a moral responsibility,” that self-empathy accompanies emotional maturity and makes a person “more capable of being present in authentic loving relationships” (p. 25), mindful of self, grounded, cognizant of her own feelings and emotions, capable of setting boundaries. She adds that the apparent empathy offered by the “self-less” companion may be “highly charged with projection, fusion and identification” (p. 29). Gilligan (1982) concurs, stressing that the potential for growth is limited if a woman’s sense of self-worth does not allow her agency, choice and its concomitant acknowledgement of responsibility. Care of self liberates others.

I discussed reciprocity, empathy, with Lucinda, and we found much to be drawn from Mary Catherine Bateson’s (1984) implication that empathy is encouraged in women who “have been particularly interested in the notion of reflexivity....Perhaps...because we are not caught in the idea that every inspection involves an inspector and an inspectee, one inevitably dominant, the other vulnerable....The line between mentor and friend is evanescent. Friends guide and learn from each other, especially in unexplored terrain” (pp. 101-103).

LUCINDA: I like these phrases, they make me think...they make me aware that they have an important dimension that I never thought they had....One-upmanship, inspector, inspectee, suggest that one person is dominant, one person is more important? I’m wondering if, in women’s relationships, nobody’s trying to be dominant....Certainly in our situation [our susu friends] often the roles are reversed, sometimes somebody has the answer one week and then the other month they may need help with what they have to do and ...they’re giving and taking and sharing, I suppose. In true friendships, the lack of the attempt to score, the lack of the need to score...it’s a kind of transaction that we help each other. And I think that is probably what women know how to do best.⁸³

⁸³We were discussing here our specific susu friendships, not theorizing about “universal” friendship.

Empathy and Communities of Choice: The Susu

Empathy illuminates friendship's voluntary nature; both friends and the aims of the friendship are freely chosen, not inherited or socially ascribed. And the voluntariness is not contractual, but mutual, reciprocal. Shaped by shared confidence, trust, disclosure, it evolves in response to the particular needs of those friends, and need have no "socially defined purpose other than those that friends themselves evolve" (Friedman, 1993, p. 219). Lucinda sums up the susu's dynamic: "Very often the roles are reversed: sometimes somebody has the answers one week or month and then the other month they may need some help with what they have to do, and they're giving and taking and sharing" (5:19). "If kinship is a form of ascribed status, then friendship is a kind of achievement" (Friedman, 1993, p. 209).

I have described in chapter 1 (pp. 10-11) the lighthearted beginning and ongoing commitment of the susu group of friends. Where, as in most small societies, gossip and rumour abound, we have felt safe in each other's company to give voice to the delights, disasters and quandaries of our lives.

Sometimes we have mused among ourselves at how such a motley crew hit it off so well. We are in midlife. The eye of society would see us as disparate in economic and social positioning; our racial and national origins vary; our marital status and sexual orientations differ; we incarnate *difference*. We are in different ways peripheral to the Barbadian mainstream. Ours is a community of difference. "One of the strongest needs of the soul is for community", says Thomas Moore (1992, p. 92). "Soul yearns for attachment, for variety in personality, for intimacy and particularity. So it is these qualities in community that the soul seeks out, and not likemindedness and uniformity." The depth and personal substance of our connections enables us to give and accept help without the burdening attachments of power or value-judgement: we move easily within the spaces of our varied boundaries; responses join and separate and modulate, transforming seamlessly from a noisy cacophony of disagreement over a recent film (loved it/hated it) to strong sensitive support in more intractable dilemmas. Each of our friendships, freely chosen, is "a potential culture in miniature, and also a potential counterculture" (Friedman, 1993, p. 219), and our shared loyalties offer us disruptive opportunities in the larger social context.

ELIZABETH: I think all human beings do try to find something which is their own...finding your own sense of direction...in the bigger picture. At first, there was a part of me which said, But is this desirable, and you assumed it was desirable in terms of us and our friends, our susu. And there's a sense in which I would say, you know, somewhat contemptuously about people who eat and screw and shit mindlessly...maybe they get along just fine without seeking and teasing out

and working with this bigger picture....

Most of us who hang out together do have this sense of the bigger picture, it struck me, well, maybe that's why we hang out together...perhaps why we are drawn to each other because we are sort of outside of ourselves...because we operate in a different way.... We all have moved out of our own culture, and perhaps that has forced us to question the assumptions, the norms, the rules, the things we were brought up with. I don't think there are any of us who have lived continuously from birth to now in one culture, with all the norms and assumptions.

JOURNAL: It strikes me that most of the people I have loved in my life, I have loved because I've committed myself to that task, to fulfilling the cultural inscriptions of entitlement from parents, teachers, partners, children, that I have been complicit with them in the making of a self-less woman. It's only the loving support of close friends that confirms me in who I am, returns me to my best self. Truly a community of choice, friendship (to engage with Friedman's discourse), with no goal beyond what is needful for its own maintenance. (18 March, 1998)

Befriending Men: Hard and Soft Options

While neither my friends nor I quite echoed bell hooks' comment that perhaps "a profound despair...informs feminist feeling that it is useless to talk to or about men" (1989, p. 129), we all have experienced ways in which society's construction of masculinity, with its striving for autonomy, mastery, and transcendence, makes the mutuality and empathy of friendship extremely difficult to achieve. Lucinda finds "in true friendships, the lack of the attempt to score, the lack of the need to score, to say, I am better than you are.... it's a kind of transaction that we help each other. And I think that is probably what women know how to do best. I can't see a susu with men. Not our kind of susu." And Felicia has spoken of the split in her volunteer organization between the "hard options" of the male administrators' financial planning and political manoeuvring, and the "soft options" of personal contact and quality of life perceived as feminine.

ELIZABETH: What's been very funny with male persons is to try to defend friendship as against Eros. They talk about *philia*, but I don't think they could manage it.... Even to get past Eros, maleness, femaleness, and get to friendship.... There are two guys I tried to do that with.... at least they say that it need not interfere and yet to me it does.

Okay, in the susu, I think there's a freedom from expectations about the susu...all you expect is to enjoy yourself...people who are good to be with, to relate to each other, you may or may not feel like susu.... I don't always feel I want to be in the company of eight people, but you know that if you go, you're going to feel better than you felt before...so there's always an expectation of a positive experience, even if you're not in the mood for wine, women and jokes....

But also, it's not competitive, at all, and so there's no sense of oneupmanship.... You feel you'll have some interesting conversation, interesting people, it's going to be funny, you're going to laugh, even if it's because I spill my glass yet again.... But there's no obligation...there's no sense of a normal social interaction that we are obligated to each other.... and yet there's a sense, if I were moving [house], all my susu better be there with the cars, each one taking a

different room....We share our friendship...I'm surprised in the way the susu has taken on a life of its own.

You do have to share yourself....which of course is why its so difficult to be friends with men. Because I don't think they understand that there's lot to be shared in the inner dialogue. I think they are afraid that we somehow will see them as wanting, and if they share with us what is in their hearts and minds, we'll have the upper hand, we'll tear them to bits; it's very difficult to do, be intimate with a man. I think it's a fearful vulnerability, which, if you're going to slay the woolly mammoth, you can't cope with.

Men have not got out of the providing role, out and slaying the woolly mammoth, and we attend to the inner, and therefore they're always in the mode of *Look at what I've done*, and *So pleased with me because of what I have done*. And we don't get that because what we have done is what we have done from dawn to dusk, doing and doing and doing. But always for the men, it's Haven't I made you happy by doing this, not by being, but by doing things....But I'm saying that *being* is the base of friendship and not necessarily *doing*, especially *doing for*, which is what they love. I have made you very happy, they love that. And, By doing this for you, I have made your day. And I don't think they get it when your day's not made.

NAOMI: This story, it's my interpretation of what is going on between myself and a man that is a friend, who is having a very difficult time discovering new terms, or changed terms of friendship. As long as the relationship is sexual, explicitly sexual in nature, then that ...expression of what we had together could allow in other grand and wonderful ideas.

When, as I get older, and I do not wish to continue the sexual aspect of our relationship, I find it very hard to get any kind of agreement, it's difficult to negotiate ...I still want the friendship, and I don't have any problem imagining the friendship in the directions that it could go, without sexual expression, but from him I get the feeling that it's *How could you not want this? How could you forsake this particular form of expression for something as vague as whatever the hell friendship is composed of?*

To me it works the other way around, and maybe this is so common to women and the difference between men and women. To me the relationship that I have a strong need to express myself sexually in right now, is the relationship where these other conditions of love have been put in place. The other qualities and combinations that friendship really can go to, it has earned this solid base of a friendship, my friendship with Marjorie; my sexuality finds itself attracted to that space with her....There's something renewing and rejuvenating about it, and the more I see her as a separate, as an individual who I admire, who exists some distance from me, as friends do--friends are not your wife or your husband or your pickney--I'm saying that something stirs me in all kinds of ways...But it is not that you are starting with the sex and adding on other stuff, which I think my man friend thinks. And he's totally wrong!

I'm the one who's going to try and drag him out of this sulky place...doing everything except writing it down in chalk on a blackboard: These are the things if you want to keep loving me, you have to notice me enough to notice what matters to me, you have to notice what my values, are, you have to rest your jealousy enough to at least be curious about what is going on with me and this woman, because that is what I am committed to. You've got to at least *wonder*.

I'm thinking about half a dozen women friends of mine..all women with whom I can converse in the way that you and I do. And they're all women who

have stepped out of the limit of that groove....I do think it has something to do with the way we perceive of ourselves....that does not exclude an interaction with other people...I'm talking about an ethical aura, the kind of space that friendship between people makes possible, an orientation of mind....I think it has something to do with friendship and perception of friendship.

It has something to do with a friendship, or valuing of friendship as a context for the self, rather than a valuing of the family as a context of self. So it changes what a family is and it changes what a friend is, and it changes *you*.

So you can't buy those old tired values which can include all kinds of hypocrisies. All of that fuckery, it's just not good enough anymore...I'm the one who's motivated by this new culture, or this new morality, I'm the one who has to say [to my man friend] But hey, I don't want to do this anymore...It's not because I've suddenly had a Christian conversion, it's because it's too shabby and tacky anymore. So let us see if we remove the shabby and tacky thing from the way we interact, because of her, because of Marjorie, because of our other things, let's see what else is here, I'm dying to know. Man, what else is here? Aren't you curious? That is what I'd like to know: What else is here?

I don't want to risk taking an excluding place, but I can't help saying it, Good God, man, what are allyu doing, don't you see where we're going? Wanna⁸⁴ come! At the same time, I can't help comparing. The comparison is so stark.

The level of selfconsciousness and vulnerability that Elizabeth and Naomi would require of their male friends seems precluded by those friends' need for autonomy and control, and for protection from the risks of vulnerability. All the women speak of relations derailed by "oneupmanship", by "the attempt to score," by difficulty with *philia*, by friendship as a mere "add-on" to sex. Their cautionary tales make me feel that our friendships are indeed "a kind of achievement" (Friedman, 1993, p. 219).

Empathic Imagination and the Inquiring Self

How does the friendly practice of empathy enlarge our capacity to experience discourses other than that of friendship? Imaginative empathy, "the deliberate imaginative extension of one's understanding" (Belenky, in Goldberger et al., 1996, p. 209) invites metaphor and narrative, illuminates meaning-making; it constructs relational ties that link private and public discourse.

Empathy encourages evocative experimental forms of research, engages emotional and bodily modes of understanding, ways of knowing that encourage praxis, that reveal "topic and self are twin constructs" (Richardson, 1994, p. 523) that encourage the powerful, sensuous concentration of poetic language, "the shortest emotional distance between two points" (Robert Frost in Richardson, p. 522). Empathy is relational, not contractual; the trust and disclosure that "open up for us whole standpoints other than our

⁸⁴ Second person pronoun, can be singular, as in "You there!" or plural, as in "You-all".

own” (Friedman, 1993, p. 199) permit multiplicity, and offer autonomy of choice, potential and possibility. Empathy enlarges our “epistemic capacities” (p. 205). The empathic insight so necessary to friendship is also crucial to the emotionally literate scientist, scholar, or administrator.

JOURNAL: Schweickart’s (1998) empathic, intersubjective interpretation of reader-response encourages the reader to “visit” the absent writer, to “witness....to hear her voice, to make her live *in oneself*,” and in the process of constructing the text’s meaning, to “be careful not to appropriate what belongs to one’s host” (pp. 201, 203). Her interpretive strategy was a great support to me as I struggled initially with the need for epistemic respectability, for a “valid” base. I felt obliged to include the work and thought of many writers I did not want to visit or be visited by.

I found myself confronted, like Mary McIntyre (1994), with “the notion that I should know exactly what I am doing before I start--a notion that often keeps me from starting....What transpired was an underlying belief that something worthwhile would come from my staying open to the process as it happened” (p. 170).

And so it was for me. As I argued against the “impartial” voice, I came to recognize, in the theorists who most engaged me, the unique tone and nuance of each voice. My writing became a conversation as we “visited,” as their voices came and went, commented and interacted with one another, with my friends, and with me. I no longer felt an artificial separation between the voices of my experience and the voices of theorists who had become part of my experience. (12 April, 1997)

I have been examining empathy in this section, exploring its necessity in the practice of friendship and in the consequent understanding of self and other, as well its agency in the deepening of understanding in other fields of inquiry. While so doing I have at several points touched on its links with trust, which will be the focus of the next section, for it is empathy that makes possible a practice of trust.

Trust

Trust is much easier to maintain than it is to get started and is never hard to destroy.
(Baier, 1994, p. 107)

The issues that the discussion of empathy has uncovered are recursive, and I will revisit them in this reflection upon trust. Trust, like empathy, is of a voluntary, non-contractual nature, requires “the imaginative extension of self,” foregrounds the “hard and soft options” that evolve from a gendered understanding of morality, and is fraught with inevitable risks and vulnerabilities. Trust is not a product, but an empathic *procedure* that guides our actions and interactions. It offers a methodology for the practice of relationship, and, I will subsequently suggest, for inquiry into discourse, such as this dissertation.

“Trust...will influence cognitive processes,” writes Olivia Frey (1990, p. 517). Just as we have considered intelligence to be the product of relationship (see *Fifth shift*

discussion), so we can consider that to a large extent trust directs how we can know and therefore what we can know. The trust or distrust a child feels for a teacher, a voter for a politician, a lover for a partner, a reader for a writer, will markedly affect the kind and degree of attention brought to the details of what she is told, the selection of what is considered to be sufficiently significant to be remembered and integrated with lived experience. Trust affects how one person connects with another person, text, or discourse, and the meaning she makes of it.

ELIZABETH: It's a leap, it's walking on the edge, it's what you see in little children! They jump off the table into their father's arms in the perfect assumption that they'll be caught....the question of faith is a matter of trust...a trusting leap that there's some purpose, that there's some meaning to what can sometimes seem like a very crappy life.

Yet trust, so important a constituent of friendship, eludes definition. Nor is its practice reducible to guidelines or principles of regulation. Annette Baier (1994) notes that often we only recognize what trust involves when we have been injured by its unexpected absence. She stresses that a trusting relationship requires constant judgement and observation, that it relies on the good will of those we choose to trust and on its attendant "vulnerab[ility] to the limits of that good will" (p. 99).

And although we long to be secure in our reliance on those we trust, security itself can be an enemy of trust; the stimulus-response of predictability can be on "automatic pilot" (p. 136). The husband who directs his secretary to arrange for his wife to receive flowers on each birthday may trust the secretary to carry out her task; the secretary may trust the florist to deliver, and the wife may trust that she will receive flowers. But the very reliability of the transaction is inimical to trust *because* it is a transaction, and obviates the attentiveness and contextual particularity of judgement that attends a genuine wish for anyone's wellbeing.

When we trust someone, we trust them to use without malice the discretionary powers our trust gives them; we trust them to be attentive, observant, and discriminating in the expression of their good will, of their trustworthiness toward us. This is why principles cannot regulate trust. This is why contracts like those required by the Human Research Ethics Committee (of which the consent form in Appendix A is an example), which rightly attempts to protect the subjects of research from exploitation, cannot really guard them from the betrayals of trust and intimacy made possible by qualitative research and by implicit issues of gender.

Baier points out how, historically, philosophers have evolved a gendered

understanding of ethics; she speaks to a male fixation on *contract*, “essentially a matter of keeping to the minimal moral traffic rules” (p. 116). She stresses that male philosophers since Plato have seen trust as a contractual relationship, voluntary agreement among (male) equals. But as trust historically concerns women (that is, insofar as they have been expected, trusted, to be chaste, faithful, loyal, obedient, nurturing), it has been manifested in relationships which have evolved with those more powerful or less powerful. The conditions of women’s lives require a moral dynamic that suggests “how and why we should act and feel toward others in relations of shifting and varying power asymmetry and shifting and varying intimacy” (p. 120).

Trust and the Inquiring Self

The entire methodology and content of this inquiry rests upon trust, a mutual faith in the good will of one participant toward another. Each of us is vulnerable to the limits of the other’s good will and judgement, and none of these limits can be predicted or guaranteed (although they may be hoped for, as, for instance, I hope both to preserve the quality of my friendships and to complete my dissertation). But rules and principles are inadequate to ensure that this is possible.

I must trust the authenticity of my friends’ narrated experiences and meaning-making. They must trust that as I use their voices and craft their stories into a context that serves my own purposes, I will not violate their vulnerability to my goodwill. As I edit and shape their narratives into my own, as I intertextualize mine with theirs, I must trust myself to re/present their experiences as they were intended by the tellers, to avoid interpretation which, however “interesting,” might distort their own implicit and explicit meaning-making.

True, they are afforded a rough protection by reciprocity (Lather’s “face validity,” 1991). Returning early drafts to be checked by individual participants and deconstructing my own authority-as-researcher insofar as possible makes me vulnerable to *their* goodwill. Right up to the final stages of my dissertation, any or all of my friends can choose to withdraw themselves, and thus cancel my five years of work. Yet such a choice would not demonstrate a regulation of trust, but its betrayal. And if I produce an acceptable document *because* I fear their withdrawal, this does not reveal me to be trustworthy, merely capable of following “minimal moral traffic rules.”

Trust in scholarly inquiry enables researcher and researched to “affirm the critical but refuse the cynical and establish hope as central to a critical, pedagogical and political practice” (Mourad, 1997, p. x). Implicit in Mourad’s statement is trust that affirms its

presence in hope, “the power of expectation and possibility” (Raymond, 1986, p. 209), discussed below.

CONVERSATION WITH FELICIA:

FELICIA: I feel I would always try to understand why someone...I don't mean *betrayed a trust*, someone made a mistake. I believe that I could accept. Now, I'd get very upset if people didn't trust me, I would want them to know that there were some things that I would be incapable of....

WENDY: ...one of the reasons I asked [about trust] is, it seems...hugely presumptuous, virtually asking you to give me your life. In a way, I could betray that, I could damage that; I thought, how could I ask somebody to be part of a program like this, and yet, you do it.

FELICIA: It's to do with what I know about you, maybe that is trust...It's also to do with the value of the exercise, and it's plainly and simply because I see that it has great value for me, too. And I don't mind terribly what you do with it. I have this hope that you might be able to find something in it that would be useful for the whole exercise. But really and truly, if ...you took it and twisted it, abused it then, I would be shocked. So in fact, you see, I do trust you. Obviously, I would be shocked, but I would not say, I hate her for that. I would want you to come and tell me, how come you did this?

Trust and Hope: “The Power of Expectation and Possibility”

I know that
hope is the hardest
love we carry.

Hirshfield (1997a), *Hope and Love*, p. 39.

The attentive, connective tensions of Janice Raymond's (1986) *dual vision* (see *Envisioning the Other*, this chapter) empower women to live in the world as it is while maintaining a vision of the world as it ought to be. It is in these tensions that Raymond posits the potential of female friendship. Hope, she says, maintains an ameliorative tension between undue pessimism and unjustified optimism; hope “correct[s] the lopsided vision” (p. 210) and enables friendship to be realistically grounded. Hope allows friendship a spiritual dimension. Hope is the spiritual drive that makes meaning, says Raymond; the spiritual drive is “the contextual drive, the comprehensive drive through which [other drives] are related” (p. 213).

LUCINDA: If you can't trust you don't have any kind of a life, and I guess that is what makes life hard, because you have to have ...trust in peopleSo it's a very hard balancing act...you can't be everyday thinking that alright they're out to get us, but yet you have to have a measure of faith and trust, you have to live knowing what you know about human nature, what human nature is capable of, but again, you have to have faith that ...they won't take you for a ride.

If a friend betrays you, you feel it's very hard to take because you somehow feel, okay, this is a person who is close to you and this is a person for whom you have affection, and if you can't trust your friend, how are you going to trust people who don't know you?

How do I trust myself, trust my emotions, trust my feelings, trust my instinct? I suppose I've always been aware of the still small voice, when you grow up in a religious home, you're always being told about your conscience, so I do listen to that person inside me....So in a way I will say I do trust my instincts, sometimes I don't; sometimes I make mistakes because I don't trust my instincts, but I have developed the habit of listening to my inner self, and acting on that inner self, so that's important too, trusting yourself.

Dwayne Huebner⁸⁵ (1998), too, sees hope as a manifestation of spirit. "Love and care provide hope, not certainty." I have applied his insights to my reflections on friendship as he speaks to ways in which knowing is infused with the spiritual. There are grounds for hope in the recognition that life is too complicated and multifarious to grasp, that there is more to us than can be known, that we can transcend the "given-ness" of the world. He warns us to guard against "easy interpretation" (which recalls Arendt's "manifest shallowness," in Brightman, 1995, p. xxii; Hirshfield's "laziness and entropy of ordinary mind." 1997b, p. 6) to preserve the attentive, open vulnerability that allows hope, Raymond's "power of expectation and possibility" (1986, p. 209) which is also a stance of friendship.

Trust and Fidelity

Fidelity's multifaceted nature, impossible to define in the abstract, reveals itself only in practice. The attentiveness and flexibility required are as individual as those that make for a good marriage. (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 56)

The roots of *fidelity*, notes Nel Noddings (1986), connote a state of *faithfulness* and also one of *exactitude*, *accuracy*. Her construction of the caring ethic, arising from both the ancient notion of *agape* and her feminist critique (1988, p. 215), contrasts (as do those of Baier, and of the other writers whose work has guided me) with positivistic, gendered understandings of fidelity as duty, obligation and principle. Noddings' *fidelity* is more like Jane Austen's *constancy*, more like Baier's *trustworthiness*. Fidelity is both a precondition and an ongoing necessity for friendship; it ensures a caring direct response to the specific person cared for, and to the immediacy of the relationship.

A true friendship doesn't just happen; it must be built and maintained by constant

⁸⁵ "Several references to Huebner's work are drawn from notes taken during his course ED-B 691, *An Apprenticeship in Thinking*, (University of Victoria, 6-24 July 1998), and also from unpaginated copies of articles since published (1998). See also footnote 6, p. 6.

hard work. The mutual attraction on which it is built is merely the promise, not the fulfilment....The capacity for complete trust in another....[requires]no rules...and each tiny situation must be met as something unknown in which we must seek reality and love. (Luke, 1995, p. 68)

ELIZABETH: Trust? Crucial, crucial, crucial at every level. I thought first of all of female/male relationships, we have spoken of this at the susu, about the whole business of AIDS tests and all the rest of it, and I said at the time, Trust is so crucial in a relationship that without trust, the betrayal of trust, is so damaging, that I would prefer to start again with a new trust...than try to rebuild broken trust.

Trust and Risk: "Exposing our Throats"

JOURNAL: It is problematic that openness, vulnerability and the longing to trust go with a surrender of the self's defenses. (15 October, 1998)

What drives us, then, to let down our guard and allow others close enough to harm us, to risk unnecessary vulnerability to hurt and betrayal, to reserve our own judgement in the trust that our friend will use hers in our interest? "Why would one take such a risk?" asks Annette Baier (1994). "For risk it always is, given the partial opaqueness to us of the reasoning and motivation of those we trust and with whom we cooperate"(p. 15). And she finds an answer not in the "intellectual fun and games previous theorists have had with the various paradoxes of morality" (p. 14), but in "the expected gain in security which comes from a climate of trust...In trusting we are always giving up security to get greater security, exposing our throats so that others become accustomed to not biting"(p. 15).

Elizabeth shared my anxiety that our research was "a scary business", and I was moved by her articulation of its risks, and by her willingness to expose her throat:

ELIZABETH: Okay, the business of it being scary is the issue of vulnerability... I'm not very open with many people and therefore I recognize the risk....I went into it knowing that, yes, I was going to share and...I trusted you enough to do it, but, I felt as a methodology...to have your friends and to be a participant in your own research about friendship was going to be a double bind because it had the potential to blow up in your face at any minute. Even with the best--I won't say controls--even with the best *will* in the world, there were uncontrollables which could affect your friendship....I saw it as scary.

I saw the whole approach to being so involved in your work, in your research, in other words, putting your life on the line, as a risky one, because you could not control all the things which could go wrong....And in a way, it validated your methodology, in a very, very serious personal way, and so it counted for even more, that I was aware that you were walking on the precipice, you know....

About letters [our exchange of correspondence, and my quoting from her letters and phone conversations in my research]: okay, there are two aspects of that. One is, you get quite on a high of being a case study, you know, a person recording your every word...but on the other hand, there is a sense in which the interviews were the official part, and when you switch off the tape recorder, then

we're Elizabeth and Wendy again, in a different way from on the tape.... As I'm speaking now, with a tape recorder, I am conscious that I'm not holding back....But when I write you a letter...I didn't expect that my letter would contain anything so interesting that it would end up in the manila folder....It wasn't an invasion of privacy at all, it was *Anything I say can be grist for the mill*.

WENDY: I suppose the thing is, the research has so taken over my life and permeated aspects of my life, that the business of public, private, personal, political, is no longer just a phrase for me. Not that I'm saying, Aha, you've said something interesting and now I'll put it in my research, but just that I seem to be open to those kinds of things all the time.

ELIZABETH: You said that the others didn't seem to make that remark about scariness; do you think it was perhaps they are more confident?

WENDY: I thought it was more because you are a psychologist and a scientist and you are really aware of research and research methodology, and interested in it, and I think interested beyond you and me and our friendship. It's Look at this weird thing that Wendy is doing, and how is she doing it, let me follow it through its ramifications.

But why participate in an inquiry which, even if not "scary," allows another such extensive discretionary powers over one's narrated experiences? At the very least, it must be disconcerting for the participant who expects her narrative to be represented as she has portrayed it, to find "her story analyzed for the social processes it reveals rather than preserved in its uniqueness" (Chase, 1996, p. 50). Josselson (1996) reminds us that "language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation" (p. 62).

JOURNAL: Josselson sharpens the awareness of how intimacy can lead to a "deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation" (p. 62). She speaks all too evocatively of the anxiety and difficulty of fixing another in print. She speaks to shame, guilt and dread, which I recognize; as a psychologist, she speaks to "a welter of narcissistic tensions in both participant and researcher" (p. 64).

She's right, and what I pay attention to may not be what's central to the participant. And above all, interviews are *intrusive*: "Anything I say can be grist for the mill," says Elizabeth apprehensively. Josselson says we underestimate at our peril "the projected, imagined powers our apparent authority, which rests on our access to print, invokes" (Josselson, p. 67).

The guilt is more complicated—a desertion, a movement from a relation with my friends to a relation with my committee. "I suspect this shame is about my exhibitionism...shame that I am using these people's lives to exhibit myself...my cleverness...and fear being caught, seen in this process" (p. 70).

And of course, this too is true, knowing that the more adroitly I edit my friends' narratives, the more competent a researcher I will seem to my committee. And yes, I fear being seen in this process. It is hard to think well of myself. I use the discomfort as ethical litmus paper, knowing it is "work we must do in anguish....To be uncomfortable with this work...protects us from going too far" (p. 70). (18 March, 1998)

Naomi is, however, prepared to risk the “partial opaqueness” of my inquiry and my friendship, the possibility of my “going too far,” on the chance that, and in the faith that, we will “gain in security,” expand in a climate of trust:

NAOMI: Because the territory that each of us is holding is so precious, sometimes communication works because the desire for clarity or for resolution...is so great that I'm prepared to trust the crap that you are telling me, I'm prepared to trust what motivates you, so even though what you are saying makes me mad, still, something else is going on... a friendship would cause me to look at it a little more honestly than I would look at it if we weren't firing at that level. So it isn't that it's just hunky dory, it can be a struggle, but you let yourself do it....

With a friendship...it sort of creeps upon you from behind, and then often what I find happens is that another event occurs outside of what was the initial discussion. I am doing something, I am having a discussion with you about something, you tell me something that I don't want to hear, so I leave in a huff: we beg to disagree. I go off, and unrelated, some other event occurs that causes me to stumble upon myself, and I think, Aha, to be honest, this is perhaps what Wendy was getting at.

Now if it's somebody who is your enemy, or who you are indifferent about..this is not going to happen. Because you have to entrench your position of power, you cannot risk it, you really can't because you can be damaged, so I'm not saying you should.

Antoinette Oberg (1990) concurs; she sees trust as essential to the integrity of a research relationship. She points to researchers who “would forego any research in which trust were not present between researcher and researched” (Cornett, Chase and Miller, in Oberg, 1990, p. 5-6). The self-trust and self-knowledge that make self-understanding possible, that make the researcher trustworthy, arise from attentive, self-conscious critical reflection, the “calling into question the fundamental beliefs and values, both explicit and implied, on which practice rests” (Oberg, 1988, p. 2). This reflexivity, the third of the “demands” that arise from friendship and offer conditions for its practice, is the focus of the following section.

Reflexivity

Stanley (1994) defines reflection as “the movement of thought and consciousness back and forth to discover thought and emotion stimulated by the event where meaning emerges” (p. 184). Empathy and trust, with the fidelity and attentiveness they engender, may also emerge to make meaning and, as my friends' narratives have shown, to create disruptive possibilities within society. Friends construct, as Friedman (1993) has outlined, both a culture and a potentially subversive counterculture, one that supports critical reflection. A friend's perspective, shared, offers us “discontinuity in a habitual pattern of perception and interpretation” (Stanley, p. 202). “Widening our experiential base promotes

our more adequate evaluation” (Friedman, 1993, p. 196). Other writers concur: “Thinking is the theory; thoughtfulness is the practice [of friendship]” (Raymond, 1986, p. 218); “Friendship is both the vehicle and the product of self-knowledge” (Abel, 1981, p. 429); “Thinking is a primary condition of female friendship” (Raymond, 1986, p. 221).

LUCINDA: If you have a reflective cast of mind, you’re going to see diverse points of view. And if you can see the diverse points of view, then you’re capable of intimacy, because intimacy means that you can share, you can see things. If you’re intimate with somebody, you know a little bit more about that person than you would know about somebody you’re not intimate with.

[The conversation of friendship] emphasizes the importance of our particular cast of mind, the ability to reflect, to think about, to be aware of diversity....And then conversation of course is not a monologue; it means that you must listen, you must...give the other person a chance...It comes right back to taking one away from egocentrism, and people like me who love to talk [laughs], I always have to tell myself Alright wait....You have to be willing...to converse, more than one point of view.

Our critical thoughtfulness, our reflexivity, determines the meaning we make of the discourses available to us. And Richardson (1994) contends that the discourses available to us determine what something can mean to us. For many, the only “available” discourses may be the habitual, ideological discourses of Hirshfield’s “ordinary mind” (1997b, p. 6). But the contrasting perspectives offered and reflected upon in the trust of friendship enlarge our own subjectivity. In the untidiness and incommensurability of life, the “irreducible complexity of the world” (O’Dea, 1994, p. 163), friendship offers a discourse that “opens the world” and “makes possible a reflective place of being” (Huebner, 1969), that “draws out the implications of moral values we already hold” (Friedman, 1993, p. 199).

CONVERSATION WITH NAOMI:

WENDY: I have some quotations about friendship that cause me to think and think and think: Hannah Arendt sees that “Intimacy between friends is linked to the capacity for reflective inner dialogue....to intercourse with oneself” (in Raymond, 1986, p. 222).

NAOMI: Wow. Nicely put. Yes I’m not quite sure what to say....It’s a quote, this whole exercise of what you’re doing is an example of it, and is also causing the people that you interview to have a reflective dialogue with you, and to express onto you *their* reflective dialogue, at least its doing so to me, however daunting the attempt.

WENDY: And then this is almost a rephrasing of it: “The conversation of friendship with others can only be had by those who have learned to think with themselves” (Arendt in Raymond, 1986, p. 222).

NAOMI: When my mother was living with me for about a year...I used to worry a lot about the enormous changes in her life...all these unbelievably disruptive and

humbling experiences, and so I was always fretting that she was getting old...she wasn't getting the respect I thought she deserved....So I'd be fretting to get home from work to see her, because I was always thinking how lonely she must be and all of that. And she said, "Does it occur to you that I quite enjoy the company of my own thoughts? I really like the company of my thoughts."

"Real learning occurs in turbulence and difficulty," says Huebner, who sees grounds for hope and transcendence "in the recognition that life is too complicated and multifarious to grasp" (class discussion, July 1998). And this "more-ness" he posits as "the fabric of understanding within which the spirit can work." Richardson (1994), in a similar vein, speaks to complexity, to the potential of "multiple and shifting discourses [which ensure] our subjectivity is shifting and contradictory" (p. 519). When, through reflection, we understand how and where we are located in our own discourse, we do dis/cover our own ideological agendas, and call into question the assumptions that lock us into narrow, rigid ways of being. "The greater the diversity of perspectives one can adopt...the greater the degree of one's autonomy in making moral choices (Friedman, 1993, p. 202).

I believe that what Jane Hirshfield calls *concentration* is what I understand by reflexivity: "A wholeheartedness [in which] world and self begin to cohere. With that state comes an enlarging; of what may be known, what may be felt, what may be done" (1997b, p. 4). Hirshfield suggests that, just as geological pressure turns ocean sediment to limestone, so the poet's concentration transforms the subject of discourse. She outlines three modalities of concentration: a *drawing inward*, towards a common centre of integrity and coherence; a *focusing outward*, to enable clarity and exactitude (Noddings', 1986, *fidelity*); and an *increase in strength and density* that is an altered meaning-making state of mind, that opposes "ordinary mind" (pp. 5-7).

Recursive, the attentiveness of empathy and trust brings us to insight and understanding, the reflective critical consciousness Marie Hoskins sees as the "springboard of agency" (1997, p. 83), which in turn brings us to understand that "self-reflection is not just a private subjective act" (Anderson and Jack, 1991, p. 18).

JOURNAL: Not just a private subjective act? How so? says a friend. Somewhat defensively, indeed, somewhat huffily, because I thought that's what I'd been elucidating all along, I say, Well, because if we reflect deeply, critically, we perceive our own ideological location, we understand how we collude in our own predicaments. So we see what is required of us. What behooves us. As Gilligan says, discern and alleviate. Discern is the theory; alleviate is the practice. If we can discern responsibly, surely our knowledge carries an injunction to act in a certain way.

I don't like *alleviate*, she says. It's colonizing, it's matronizing. Maybe we shouldn't rush in and fix up what we imagine to be other people's problems.

I demur: The last thing I had in mind was Lady Bountiful with a basket of nourishing cabbage ends. Sometimes we can alleviate by silent mindful listening and waiting.

Am I imposing my own meaning on *alleviate*? It's etymological roots are *lighten*, *mitigate*. And what of mitigate's roots, besides *alleviate*? To appease, to lessen the violence or burden of, from roots of *mild*, *gentle*. I still like it, *discern and alleviate*. (4 December, 1998)

Reflexivity and the Inquiring Self

In the reflexive, recursive cycling of attentiveness, insight, and understanding, I have come to comprehend the deep interconnections between my academic interests and the processes of my own life. I am indebted here to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman (1995), whose survey of curriculum discourses has helped me recognize my own lived experience as discourse, as text, as a cultural product, like anything else "that is created as a result of human action and reflection" (McEwan, in Pinar et al., 1995, p. 49). If I see my academic studies as autobiographical text, I understand how inquiry gives me methods, techniques to understand and take possession of my own life. I perceive that my search for self-understanding is the enactment of a curriculum of self, and that I live out, also, a hidden curriculum of ideological and subliminal impulses. I see that my lived, embodied curriculum is in/formed by a complexity of political texts: post-colonial, racialized, gendered.

If I understand myself as phenomenological text, I am drawn to examine my lifeworld of daily taken-for-granted "reality", and to understand that the limits of this understanding also form the boundaries of my self-reflexivity (Gergen, 1999, see *Narrative truth as cultural convention*, n.p.). The direct encounters that phenomenological narrative seeks to re/present remind me that I am a languaged being, that the words I use require heedfulness and attunement, require poetizing. A primal telling of my lived curriculum is appropriate to my inquiry into friendship, whose goal may well make it possible "to live together in the house of being which is language....[to] establish a clearing within which that which is can shine forth" (Huebner, 1969, n.p.). "*Being* is the base of friendship, and not necessarily *doing*" (Elizabeth).

Discourse "form[s] the object of which it speaks" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 462); "Attentiveness only deepens what it regards" (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. vii); "We bring each other into being by being part of the matrix in which the other exists" (Bateson, 1984, p. 140). And my discursive reflections have constituted other layers of my friendships and my self.

Narrative Connections

Listen. To live is to be marked. To live is to change, to acquire the words of a story, and that is the only celebration we mortals really know.
(Kingsolver, 1998, *The Poisonwood Bible*, p. 385)

At this point, I want to gather up the strands of theory and practice that constitute this chapter and speak to their narrative dimensions. I have outlined a practice of friendship enabled by the empathic imagination that widens our experiential base and makes possible moral transformation. This empathic enlargement makes possible a methodology of trust; empathy and trust in turn make possible a reflexive attentiveness that allows insight and understanding. It is in the confluence of these qualities that the narrative connection of theory and practice becomes apparent to me.

The stories told by my four friends constitute a kind of praxis, demonstrating both a practical enactment of this chapter's theory-building and (through their empathic, trusting, reflexive involvement in my research project) a representation of friendship. From the beginning of the chapter, their narrative understandings establish the discrepancies between the Grand Narrative of the dominant order and the *petits récits* of their own lived experience. Felicia queries "the base of a whole lot of so-called philosophy;" Naomi speaks to the dynamic, subversive qualities of a relational epistemology. Elizabeth interpellates learning divorced from experience: "I'm learning lots; I'm not learning what they want me to learn." Lucinda deplores a view of life "skewed because women's voices have not been heard." These narrated sites provide "text" that has grounded my own theorizing, and suggest conceptual shifts that have evolved their own narratives.

Gender as Narrative Relationship

To reiterate the first of my conceptual shifts, an understanding of gender as relationship, is to illustrate the contextualizing function of narrative. Events and experiences flow around and past us; what we notice and remember, the meaning we make of them, are the stories we tell. To perceive the material conditions and relational networks that shape women's lives is to interpret our storied experience. To make connections between our critical intelligence and our lived experience is to narrate, to theorize our own lives. To understand the interests of the dominant is to understand *their* gendered narratives: "Women must osmose!" (Elizabeth).

And to write one's own narrative is to name and empower the self. All four women speak of the risk and exhilaration of telling their own stories, of the inadequacy of the "old tired ethics approach" (Naomi), of seeing how inadequate our socialization has been when

we seek the “truth” of experience. But where does the truth lie? How are things, “really?” Narrative truth does not reside in its correspondence to prior meanings; the truth *is* the narrative meaning; it is O’Dea’s (1994) “authenticity:” Its adequacy can only be measured “against alternative interpretations of that experience” (Kerby, 1991, p. 84).

Situated Knowledge as Narrative

“Alternative interpretations” brings me to the narrative aspect of my second conceptual shift, the understanding that all knowledge is situated. This is simply to know that a different story is possible, always. To understand a story is to understand its metanarrative (as Felicity so succinctly did with her “hard and soft options”). Stories that shape knowledge also shape knowers. The story of my own inquiry is a shifting narrative; my inquiry changed my story, my social role, my self-identity; I am aware that a very different interpretation of my recent life story can be made by other actors in it.

Narrative Identity as Moral Process

Self-identity provides the narrative link to the third layer of my conceptual grounding, that of identity and moral process. Here, narrative connections are made specific; here empathy and insight determine the particularities and congruence of our stories. To perceive, to “read” the narratives of self and other involves “an epistemological and moral lean toward an other” (Schweickart, 1996, p. 320), and the caring intersubjectivity that “reads” another into being also defines the self. As Naomi discovered amidst the difficulties of caring for her ailing parents, “caring for others and caring for the self became in my mind inextricably linked....my identity...was tied up with my ability to take care of them when they were vulnerable.”

Narrative Contradiction

Conflicts such as Naomi’s are a kind of crucible, or as Jehlen (1981) would have it, a fulcrum, where contradiction is inevitable, events incommensurate, where crucial issues manifest themselves and definitions of the self clash with those of the dominant order. Difficulties emerge, too, from the inescapable contradictions of connection and differentiation in relationship, a “fundamental ambivalence [that] may be our experience of the unitary, restless, creative motion of life itself” (Kegan, 1982, p. 107) and create the knowing self. “Actually, without these...imbbalances, there would be no movement in life. It is being off balance that keeps life changing. Total centring, total balance would only be stasis” (Ming-Dao, 1992, p. 11).

Narrative Intelligence as Social Relationship

The narrative of the knowing self, emerging from relationship, is the fifth layer of my conceptual base. Knowing begins in attachment, in relational context, and experience is therefore always in flux, contextual, narrative. The intelligibility of our experience *is* our narrative, arising from and constitutive of the intelligence that links, compares, finds cause, deduces, projects outcomes (Kerby, 1991, chapter 2). Narrative offers us “models to facilitate thought” (Bateson & Bateson, 1987, p. 35) and enables us to enlarge habitual ways of knowing and transfer them to other discourses. And I have done exactly that in this inquiry, in my use of friendship as a template for self-understanding and for my academic research.

I have reviewed here a theoretical substrate upon which my understanding of friendship rests, and I turn now to the narrative characteristics that inhabit its practice. The practice of a theory or a relationship is the making of its meaning, and practice offers theory a storied embodiment.

Narrative Empathy

Empathy, the imaginative extension of self into other, is a narrative project. In the flux of reciprocity, it calls into question the predictable, the habitual, the banal, the thoughtless. Empathy demands responsiveness, open-ness, an attentive reading of the other’s narrative. As Naomi has noted above (*Befriending men: Hard and soft options*), friendship as a context for the self offers the possibility of a different life-narrative than does family as a context for the self. Empathy prompts metaphor and story, encourages relational ties that link our personal and public worlds, opens up standpoints that are other than our own, and invites trust in our friend’s “epistemic capacities as a moral witness” (Friedman, 1993, p. 204).

Narratives of Trust

Trust, too, affects the tales we tell; it directs what we attend to, what we find significant, what we integrate into our life story. Trust has determined the extent to which I have intertextualized my friends’ stories with my own, and my intention to render their realities faithfully. They, presumably, trust me to evoke their experiences richly and exactly as they portrayed them. The metanarrative is that we all must be prepared to trust in the authenticity and integrity of each others’ narratives.

Narrative Reflexivity

Reflexivity widens, deepens, enriches the meanings of the discourses available to us. The meaning of the stories of friendship that provide the data for my inquiry is enlarged by reflecting on the real friendships that made the research possible. My reflections in turn affect the friendships themselves. My reflexivity has been widened by friendship; new meanings emerge, Huebner's (1998) "more-ness" that creates a "fabric of understanding, a springboard for agency" (Hoskins, 1997, p. 83), affirmed in its telling and retelling. "Narration draws a figure out of the materials of everyday life but only, finally, in order that the story it unfolds returns back to, and reconfigures that life" (Kerby, 1991, p. 44).

I have been revisiting theoretical and practical aspects of friendship outlined more fully earlier in this chapter. This recursive method allows an emphasis on those narrative connections from which I have made meaning of my friends' stories, and of my own. When I insert myself into a friend's narrative as a way of coming to understand her story, I am still in the midst of my own life story, and we are both embedded, each in her own cultural contextual narrative. But an interpretation of the relation between our (singular and shared) experience (our *petits récits*), and its social and ideological landscape has the potential to "write back" against the Grand Narrative of the dominant culture. These "small stories" constitute our identity and history; they illuminate the dynamic and logic of our narrative unfolding, and reveal the sources of our material and ideological domination.

For narrative is always a process, connecting the individual to the environment she shapes and is shaped by, as re/visioning constructs another facet of our reality, as endings suggest the possibility of new beginnings. "Story, like all forms of concentration, connects. It brings us to a deepened coherence with the world of others and also within the many levels of the self" (Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 26). Ursula Le Guin stresses the crucial importance of narrative connection: "an inability to fit events together...to make the narrative connection, is a radical incompetence at being human. So seen, stupidity can be defined as a failure to make enough connections, and insanity as severe repeated error in making connections" (1989, p. 43).

I suggest that a radical *competence* at being human lies in those empathic, trustful, reflexive connections that constitute an epistemology of friendship, and I can do no better than echo Sara Ruddick: "Finally I look for ways of knowing and counting knowledge that would judge...in the light of the pleasures they offer, the love they make possible, the care they provide, and the justice they observe" (1996, p. 267).

CHAPTER FIVE IDENTITY AND MORAL AGENCY: “CONTINUING GESTATION”

Evil and Agency

If the previous chapter implicitly addresses friendship’s moral force, then this chapter will begin with an attempt to identify qualities that work against that relational ontology. How do we recognize evil, not just in large cultural and ideological events, but in the unexamined assumptions of our daily being?

How is it that we come to discern a moral order and our place within it? How is it that the perception of personal agency we develop with regard to that order is central to our definition of self? What remains invisible to us? What calls us; what are we behoven to do; what is it that we call *evil* and strive to avoid as a very condition of remaining the persons we believe ourselves to be?

My four friends speak evocatively of early relationships⁸⁶ within home, school and church, relationships that shaped both identity and a moral understanding strongly linked to obedience. Their adolescent and coming-of-age narratives are informed by a more evolved self-understanding and self-identity, by stirrings of agency. But it is in the maturity of their mid-life that they articulate the complexity of their own self-definition and their sense of ethical being; they reflect upon their conflicted location between prescriptive, dominant codes, and their own lived experience with its harvest of perceptions, commitments, and relational engagements.

At this site of reflective complexity chapter 5 explores the dynamic of identity and moral agency that unfolds between the Grand Narratives of the dominant order and the women’s own *petits récits*, the particularities of their lives. Within this tension, they define themselves and seek to compose their lives’ meanings. They consider the pervasive and frequently mundane nature of evil. They reflect upon the material and ideological forces that have moulded their identity, and their narrative reflections structure this chapter. They recount the “crisscross valuing” (Mordecai & Wilson, 1989, p. xiii) of race, class, and gender. (In chapter 3, their youthful tales evoke these layered influences more fully.)

⁸⁶Several of the writers in whose work I have grounded my thought speak to the early relational life that constructs a substrate for subsequent cognitive and moral growth. Ruddick (1989) speaks to an emotional maternal bond that determines how the child will perceive subsequent objects of knowledge, and, ultimately, the metanarratives she will construct; Friedman (1993) tells how early friendships develop the child’s capacity for an informed partiality that she may later generalize to others; Abel (1981) finds the quality of early relational bonds constrain or enable the quality of later friendships, and offer relational models for inquiry.

They speak of *difference* which is manifested in a multiplicity of exclusions, difference which, paradoxically, defines the self *and* enables resistance. They speak to the moral agency engendered by friendship, literature, and work. They speak of self-recognition through recognition of other. And I join the conversation, contextualize my reflections as I move back and forth from my own experience to the wider polyphony of friends' and writers' voices.

My friends' narratives offer a metaphoric structure which invites understanding; they enact the self's identity in moral process. From each woman's memories, reflections, and deliberations, a knowing self emerges, intent upon an understanding that in/forms the will, capable of active discernment, choice, and change. From these epistemological narratives, a critical consciousness emerges that is "the springboard of agency" (Hoskins, 1997, p. 83).

Evil

I begin to believe the only sin is distance, refusal.
All others stemming from this.

Jane Hirshfield (1997a), "Salt Heart," *The Lives of the Heart*, p. 14.

Moral agency requires a well-developed sense of identity. Through their narratives, which explore such central issues of identity and moral agency, the four women in my research suggest that neither good nor evil necessarily manifest themselves in acts of spectacular heroism or villainy,⁸⁷ but rather that they are embedded in daily social acts and attitudes. Indeed, their *petits récits* illustrate resistance to the Grand Narratives regarding questions of good and evil.

FELICIA: ...anything that is the source of unjustifiable pain...pain that's to do with your feelings and emotions, things that put you down and make you feel you are really nothing. And also, the pain that comes from horrible violence, *mindless* is the word. Mindless causing of pain and humiliation and constant persecution. I think that's evil....There's something else that is "evil" in inverted commas. I look at some people very often who think they are quite innocent and very moral, and I think, What an evil person she is, because everything she says has a horrible barb. And it is clear to me that it is intended to wound someone.

LUCINDA: Because of my literary background when I think of evil I think of Iago...the force I guess for evil....I think that there is evil...in the world, that

⁸⁷Friedman (1993) offers an amusingly tongue-in-cheek account of mainstream moral philosophy's insistence upon drastic heroic action, as, for instance, the captain of a sinking ship who must decide whether to save his wife or his first mate: "The moral world of patriarchal mainstream ethics is a nightmare of plane crashes, train wrecks and sinking ships. Wives and children drown in this literature at an alarming rate"(p. 71).

people can be evil, but I don't dwell on it....There's a force for non-good in the world, if you wish....But I think if you expect it everywhere then you will find it....There are people who might have an evil force in them that's stronger than the force for good....But it's a sense of balance, Matthew Arnold says, *poise*, that's what he calls it....It is there in the world and we must be aware of it but we must not always be looking for it because then it will come to us.

A feminist would see all the misery people suffer because they are downtrodden, because they are subordinate, because they are poor, that certainly could be evil.

ELIZABETH: To me, evil doesn't have the kind of absolute existence which people may want to give it...I think evil is part of a system of belief in which there is good and evil, in which there is God or his negative alter-ego or whatever you call it, Satan, dark forces.... To me it's more, *do you believe there's meaning?*....Because if you think being is a set of random happenings, then there's no value judgment, there's no positive or negative, anything happens to anybody and for any reason....

Evil...it is to me a value-judgment....one person's nuclear explosion is another person's scientific progress...and so the whole question of evil existing independently, I think, is a false question.

I'm not sure that it has a separate existence, as an entity, as a dark side, without the acknowledgment that there is a good side, that there is a positive, that it's a whole, rather than a single dark force. I'm saying it hinges.

The existence of pain in the world...evil in the world....racism or sexism, things which separate or divide us from our true nature....I use true nature in that particular way to make a point of the opposite of separation...I would have to go back to spirituality....separation in the sense in which it fragments us into these unreal, unnecessary parts.

But I was playing around with the theological concept of Satan as evil, as an entity, the fall....essentially external to human beings, it's something out there, waiting to take us over...as compared to an internal system arising within ourselves, which causes us to take decisions which cause pain to others. This is the other thing that is flitting through my head...Good for who, bad for who, whose good do you do?

[In response to speaking of what is profoundly acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the world] First, do no harm, really, not to create a negative impact on anybody or anything in the world, in my daily dealing, at a very critical level. I suppose I could quite easily be a Buddhist...even an ant must be saved. So that's an overriding totality, I would say.

And the other one would be to help, to make a positive impact on any fellow traveller, anybody who is in my path. It's not easy, because people make you angry, and that's part of my new thrust, to try to, not say that people don't make me angry, but I let myself be angered by people's actions, and so, try to retain control within myself of how I respond to the world. But certainly, I would say, in terms of not doing harm, and then helping a person, it's ...how I try, living in small actions.

NAOMI: To just give [evil] one word, I guess, *exclusion*. I think that's the source of evil. What happens is that [exclusion] becomes translated into a social phenomenon, a social reality, *alienation* and what people do to compensate for their alienation, which is anything from taking drugs or drinking too much...to stealing or beating your wife.

One of the things that I have found most upsetting...something that's very

very wrong, and comes from evil is that in working situations, people who are older and have more experience, not taking the time to nurture the working sensibilities of younger people. I have seen so much of that in the Caribbean. I haven't worked anywhere else very much, so I'm speaking of here. It's a great evil, and people miss so much pleasure in life...the pleasure of experiencing what it's like to do a certain amount of mentoring. I tend to not like these words...*role model...mentoring* and so on, but....there have been great rewards personally and to my sense of identity as a worker and a pride in my work, because I can see [young people] blossoming because of my attention. I think it's very very wrong not to be responsible about that as a worker....I think it comes from the same source as abuse of children...to me, all of that is one big thing.

I do think that the enormous repression of human sexuality by structures, such as the church, the family, and all of that...has twisted and warped the whole culture. People begin to identify with their repressed nature....It's a miracle if you can grow up straight or gay without being really twisted, without being a really screwed up person.

Right, evil being exclusion, as in say, the exclusion of Lucifer in mythology, who becomes the devil, who fell from Heaven or grace....I would interpret that in terms of our own experience for the Caribbean as the phenomenon of evil...social alienation *is* the foundation of Caribbean culture anyway, so everybody here because of history is already excluded and alienated from some older notion of what a civilization is. So it starts off, just to begin with, in an evil place. You're already with Lucifer, you know what I mean, the whole thing is so bloody rotten to start with.

But I think that Caribbean people, culture...has a lot more potential than our philosophizing about it recognizes. Just as a theology of the Christian church would have to be more accommodating to the phenomenon of evil...evil has to be admitted into the realm of good or real experience.

To make a rather crude parallel, if we were trying to philosophize about Caribbean civilization, given this place of starting, already an excluded place....If we're going to go, Who is good and who is evil in the Caribbean, and work it out in terms of history...you have one group of people is the downpressed, the masses of people who out of slavery have been forced into this unwanted diaspora, and the descendants of the people who caused it--the first problem is that they are already mixed, not just genetically, but also culturally. It is a new thing, it is new culture because of that.

But evil, if you think of it in terms of exclusion, is not just the responsibility of the force that perpetuates the evil; the undoing of it is also the responsibility of the one that experiences that exclusion. So...if evil is exclusion, it cannot be resolved by the political or the cultural or the social forces that created it, because that's already in the past. It has to be resolved by the people who experienced it, and that is now, virtually everyone. Everyone experienced that first exclusion. So...that's what we are, we are the Lucifer, the children of Lucifer, and we're always on a mission to state the value or the good of that experience that takes place in the excluded or evil condition.

Felicia, then, speaks to the mindless, unjustifiable causing of pain inherent in many social interactions; Lucinda speaks of striving for poise, equilibrium amidst the world's ills; Elizabeth suggests a theological frame to the generative "small actions" of daily life. And

when I asked Naomi what she defined as evil, she said unhesitatingly, "Exclusion."⁸⁸

Elizabeth's Story: The Diseased Sparrow

As Elizabeth pondered various paradigms of moral development, systems of principles "as compared to a call to action in an immediate and particular way," of the need to "make sure you *look at*, so you *act*," of the difficulties of making beliefs and behaviours congruent, she recounted a chilling tale within a tale that seemed to illustrate Naomi's *exclusion* and Felicia's *unjustifiable pain*, and to point to Lucinda's difficulty in achieving *poise*.

ELIZABETH: Okay, I just haven't got over it....I keep thinking that *I* must have got it wrong, maybe *I* am over-reacting, maybe, you know..I don't *get* something that everybody else gets. So, even as I tell it, I still have a sense of, maybe, I have got it all wrong and maybe I didn't look closely enough.

This report in the newspapers of a man who has since died who was stoned by a group of villagers, there were photographs and everything....Nobody denies that he was chased and stoned until he was on the ground and stoned, that he ran into a church, into the outside toilet of a church, and was stoned there, even as the pastor tried to shield him, and then decided he couldn't do any more. So the man was stoned even as he was on the ground and so on, helpless. There was no talk of any sort of retaliation, he was a defenceless man, was stoned, he was hospitalized and later died partly of his injuries, I believe. I have never heard anything further.

The justification, the buildup seems to be, from what I could discern, one, it was said that he had raped an elderly women; two, it was said, he had set on fire somebody's house, a well-liked person in the village. Third, as far as the report went, that he was known to be an out-patient in a psychiatric hospital and that he had AIDS, and this is why the stoning, not any kind of physical restraint.

Apparently, one comment was that the police took a long time to come and therefore the villagers had to do it themselves. But what amazed me, certainly sent really strong questions about civilization, a society which prides itself on its 3500 years of parliament, blah, blah, civilization, what sort of society was I living in?

But it also seemed so replete with biblical concepts that I said, Oh, theologians will have to do something about this...and this is really funny because now I can say that I wasn't even calling for action *per se*, I was at least calling for moral outrage. I mean, I don't know what the action would have been, the man was hospitalised, and the police never laid any charges on anybody, although they were known.

But it was amazing to me that in a class...we'd already had a term of theology, in Christian ethics...we had dealt in matters of compassion and what were the models that we should follow, and what were the messages about right and wrong and ethics and so on. Yet this class of 20 men and five females took the line that we didn't know the whole story and in any case, he was HIV positive and going to die anyway, and in any case he had raped the old lady, and in any case, the

⁸⁸ The Luciferian frame for Naomi's "excluded or evil condition" as the quintessential Caribbean experience that "has to be admitted into the realm of good" resonates with Elizabeth's claim that evil hasn't "a separate existence as a dark side without acknowledgement that there is a good side, that it's a whole...[that] it hinges."

police didn't come.

And nobody, nobody could even see that perhaps—and here perhaps I am just extremely idealistic—even the pastor who was shielding him and then decided he had to save his own life, could to my mind have sent his greatest sermon if he really had been able to put himself between the mob and this man. And nobody seemed to think this was a way of viewing this event.

And that really bothered me, but it was not inconsistent subsequently, with issues like abortion or capital punishment...where members of the class could see one position if it was their mother or wife or child and then another position if the perpetrator was somebody they knew. And so I could see that there was not consistency in the class between the particularities and the generally abstract way what you would say you believe.

It stunned me that there was not moral outrage...It was clear to the class that when you talked about the value of life and the sacredness of life and so on that the holder whose life it was, was crucial to their decision. And so the first thing they said, that he was an AIDS patient, psychiatric patient, and clearly there was no sanctity of life overall....There didn't seem to be a great acknowledgment that this particular event had significance, because of who the man was. In other words, the sparrow that fell, if it was a good looking sparrow, if it was a diseased sparrow made a difference in their thinking.

Elizabeth's layered narrative (her account both of the original mob violence and of the theological setting of its meaning-making) delineates a mechanism Hannah Arendt notes in her coverage of Eichmann's trial, when appeals to conscience "were met with...cliques and conventional sentiments [which] functioned as armour, blocking the consciousness...at just those junctures where painful intrusions of reality threatened....not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*" (Brightman, Ed., 1995, pp. xxii, xxv). Mary McCarthy sees the evil in a "wicked heart" to lie in "insensitiveness, opacity, inability to make connections" (Brightman, Ed., 1995, p. xxv). Elizabeth's colleagues' failure to discern, their blindness to their own assumptions and biases, enact the neglect of relation central to Nel Noddings'⁸⁹ understanding of evil; they demonstrate Ursula LeGuin's (1989, p. 43) conviction that repeated error in making connections is a kind of madness. Elizabeth's story answers Felicia's sense of evil as the "source of unjustifiable pain....*mindless* is the word"; Lucinda's of "the misery people suffer because they are downtrodden"; Elizabeth's "things which separate or divide us from our true nature"; and Naomi's *exclusion*.

⁸⁹Noddings (1989, chapter 4) notes three forms that evil takes. Natural evil includes illness and death; cultural evil weaves itself into the fabric of society as racism, sexism, poverty; moral evil involves the deliberate infliction of physical or psychic pain (and includes the cultural abuse well-intentioned men continue to inflict upon women).

Evil manifests itself through pain, separation and helplessness. Pain, the most basic, accompanies the other two. Separation results from the failure to attend to the quality of relations; it creates rivals and enemies, causes deep psychic pain, and renders us vulnerable to further evil. Helplessness, including learned helplessness and mystification, saps our efficacy and agency.

Identity and Difference

Our identity, our perception of our own agency, our sense of what it is possible to question and to understand, all are webbed by the relations of power that inhere in society's relative positioning of race, class, gender, and other categories (and these are unlimited: age, education, health, ability, marital status, sexual orientation are only a beginning) used to establish relations of domination and subordination.

Dominant cultures that benefit by this differential valuing produce these value systems, and they produce the knowledge that privileges those ways of valuing. Yet these patterns of power are rendered invisible by "value-free" intellectual activity that discourages a full understanding of the conditions that shape its ideological foundations. Indeed, ideology is most indiscernible where it is most powerful and unquestioned, and by denying the existence of its own power, it also renders invisible the identity and agency of subordinate groups and individuals.

In the political and moral realms of Western discourse, the subject has traditionally, universally, been masculine and European, grounded and given substance by the subordinate *Other*, whether this other be woman, servant, colonial, or non-European. Identity is discerned through difference between self and other; status is defined through difference between dominance and other; the dominant discourse often conflates the two.

The colonial subject offers an Other for the hegemonic discourse by which the West defines itself. For centuries the West has had "the power to enter or examine other countries at will [which in turn] enabled the production of a range of knowledges about other cultures" (Williams & Chrisman, 1994, p. 8), representations that have supported imperial relations of power and belief in European superiority (just as patriarchal representations of women legitimize male dominance). And colonial discourse elides colonial weakness with its difference,⁹⁰ just as patriarchy has conflated the knowledge it has constructed about women with the social structures it has developed to constrain them. Women of colour, whose "gender is always a racial category, and race a gender category" (Harding, 1993, p. 108), and most certainly in a postcolonial context, experience difference in many dimensions, often contradictory, simultaneously.

So far I have outlined *difference* as grounds for hegemony, and as negation of identity and agency. Difference is difference *from* something, and that something is the norm found to be acceptable by the dominant order. And that which differs from the

⁹⁰See Edward Said's (1994) account of *Orientalism*, a constructed body of theory and practise justifying imperialism.

accepted norm, differs in that it is in some respect inferior to it.

But difference is also a field in which some of the parallel strategies of feminism and postcolonialism become apparent as they seek to undo the colonizing power of the Grand Narrative over the *petit récit*. Feminist thinking has re/presented difference, “not as the reactive pole of a binary opposition” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 164), not as an essentialist, oppositional stance, but as an affirmation of multiplicity, defined by a network of relations and contingencies, enabling situated, perspectival knowing, grounded in the embodied particularities of specific experience. “Lives are marginalized in different ways...different feminisms inform each other; we can learn from all of them and change our patterns of belief” (Harding, 1993, p. 60).

Standpoints enable us to acknowledge that social forces shape both knowledge and knower, that critique always comes from the centre of others’ concerns. It is the recognition of standpoint (recognition of our own and others’ locations) that enables us to move. Epistemological shifts occur on the fringes, the margins of discourse, not at the centre. “To get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions learned within a single tradition, habits of attention and interpretation need to be stretched and pulled and folded back upon themselves....At the centre of any tradition, it is easy to become blind to alternatives. At the edges, where lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different” (Bateson, 1990, pp. 43, 73).⁹¹

“Wholeness and identity require continual negotiation in the fields of difference” (Meese in Hekman, 1995, p. 107). Consciousness of self is, after all, only possible through difference and contrast; entry into the symbolic domain is a process of differentiation. But differentiation as affirmation of multiplicity offers us insight, “understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, letting them speak to one another” (Bateson, 1994, p. 14). From the capacity to interrogate and negotiate contending discourses, then, comes that “multiplicity of vision” (Bateson, p. 6) that enables resistance and becomes a catalyst for agency.

Identity’s Liminalities: Thresholds of Exclusion

My four friends are Caribbean women of colour, although only Felicia is Barbadian. And I am neither Caribbean nor a woman of colour. But we have all spent most

⁹¹Or as Jane Hirshfield (1997b) , whose prose is as numinous as her poetry, suggests: “It is on the margins where one thing meets another, and in times of transition, that ecosystems are most rich and diverse--birds sing, and deer, fish, and mosquitos emerge to feed at dawn and at dusk”(p. 213).

of our adult lives in Barbados, and we have all felt our marginality to varying degrees in our daily lives, where the valuing of nationality criss-crosses with the valuing of race, class, and gender. It is a multiple marginality, imposed by our location outside the conventions and norms shared by the Barbadian mainstream, and self-imposed by our own sense of a broader and more multiple manifestation of community.

Barbados' brutal history of sugar cultivation and plantation slavery is shared by most of the other Caribbean ex-colonies. Yet the effect of divide-and-rule colonial policies has been to prevent the territories making common cause with one another, and to maintain a primary connection with the metropole. To this day, it is easier to get a flight to New York or London than to many relatively nearby Caribbean countries. Three centuries of plantocracy have left a legacy of hierarchical race and class structures, a contempt for Creole culture, and a deep distrust of the outsider. In Barbados, the Caribbean outsider (that is, a Caribbean national not born in Barbados) may experience an ambivalent and shifting mix of cultural solidarity and the suspicious stance reserved for intruders.

Even Felicia, Barbadian, married to a Barbadian, and of all of us the most rooted in Barbados, says:

I tell myself, Felicia, somewhere or other, you're on the periphery of Barbadianness. It means that you don't think like other Barbadians, and you have a problem...whenever I'm really happy and comfortable with someone...they may be a Barbadian legally, but...have a more varied background...that informs the relationship, the kinds of things that interest us and that we talk about.

And perhaps Elizabeth speaks to the sense of Otherness we all encounter:

ELIZABETH: We have all moved out of our own culture...I don't think any of us [in the susu] have lived continuously from birth to now in one culture, with all its norms and assumptions.

Not being a National...hasn't been very restrictive...I could still purchase land...and so on....[but] what I found actually, though, the change in the economy in the last five or six years, students have sometimes seemed to be resentful of my foreignness. While appreciating my teaching...there has been some resentment as a non-National, and then of course, I was interviewed and chosen for that [American scholarship]...and then to get a letter two weeks later, Hey, sorry, we didn't notice that you were not Barbadian. I mean, they heard a voice like this,⁹² never asked a question, it's on my CV....I remember feeling, Hmmm, Boy, you never pay your dues, because I already had been here for more than a decade.

I became more sensitive that I would never pay my dues...it struck me the extent to which speaking the language is crucial to a country. And I don't mean dialect, I mean accent...very very important, the foreignness more than the scholarship. If yuh really vex, you figure, *I'm not a refugee, I'm a highly qualified person, I can go back to where I come from...* So in that sense, not powerless, but certainly not an expectation of being a national hero.

⁹²Elizabeth has a strong Trinidadian accent.

In the last five years, going back to Trinidad and not having anyone turn around in the supermarket line or wherever you open your mouth, that is a real pleasure....The Trinidad easy language...I can't even begin to explain *fatigue* or *mamaguy*,⁹³ a tease, a quickwittedness that keeps you on your toes. And I guess I'm as dull as a used razor now, but normally a quick repartee back and forth, sometimes you sit in a taxi or whatever, and you say Oh gosh I wish I had a tape recorder, because the flow of language is so quick and so easy and not taking offense...different from here in Barbados where language is serious and thought out.

Oh I leave my *doubles entendres* at home. My *mamaguy*, my *fatigue*, although having been here for 21 years, I can mamaguy you and say *Comin' through the eddoes*, rather than *Crapaud smoke yuh pipe*, which is the Trinidadian equivalent, which in English would be, *Your goose is cooked*, although why you would want your goose raw?

My sense of feminist issues, an incident that stands out in my mind....I was having a prowler, and I called the police...and they came and the first thing out of their mouth was, Is your husband away? And I said, No. And the second thing out of their mouth was, So you can't get somebody to sleep with you. I didn't take that one on, but the third thing was a seeming implication that a woman alone was fair prey...and it struck me then that if I didn't need men for anything else, perhaps I needed them to keep off other men, in the sense of possession and territory and whatnot...I came away with a sense of...a woman can't live alone, it's not legitimate.

At the workplace, all female school, mainly female staff...male ground staff....I was about 30, perhaps inexperienced in dealing with the institution; I remember it was Founder's Day, because I had my academic gown over my hand; it was about 7:15, early in the morning. I was getting out of my car with my gown...and this gardener, creepy old man, coming over to my car, where I'm bending over...saying, You know, I like you, can I get your phone? And I remember sort of saying, Phone number? Yes, I like you, and we are adults. And I just turned, this is so strange, but then I said, No, no, no, and I went away.

But subsequently I didn't feel comfortable because he would be wherever I was...He would be there leering at me from whatever area, I had this sense of his presence. So I wrote to the Board saying this was untenable, I could not cope with this man leering, I felt threatened. The response was that they didn't want to fire him because they felt that as I lived alone, if they fired him, I would be at risk....but they would demote him and he would be grounds staff rather than porter. Which, okay, was satisfactory....but I subsequently heard that a prominent board member...remarked somewhat jokingly that you couldn't fault the man, he had such good taste....And the notion that a young unaccompanied, untaken female is somehow vulnerable....Maybe I should have a resident male....One of those inflatable men in the car beside you (laughs).

But the upside [of being an outsider]....One, I find they have few expectations of you, so you're not expected to conform, so I know that I have not had as hard a time perhaps as a black Bajan might have had, and I wonder about class, as you said. Because I'm not of them and they clearly don't know my family for three generations, which is one of the reasons I came, so I could make it on my own....I can do what I please, because they just say, I don't know better....I found

⁹³**Fatigue** (Trin) Continuous teasing, banter, or joking at somebody's expense.

Mamaguy (Gren, Tbgo, Trin) To mislead by blandishments; lighthearted banter or teasing. Allsopp, (1996), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*.

being an outsider...I have deliberately cultivated a vainness which allows me to sort of function in my own world and don't take on too much....that's kind of delicious...they just say, she's a crazy Trinidadian, how can you expect anything different? So, low expectations, less pressure.

And...

LUCINDA: They don't let you forget that you are an outsider [Lucinda was discussing mutual former colleagues whose success has been resented.] They just seem to feel that anybody who is not from Barbados should not get any of the sweets, if you will, of living in Barbados, when you are contributing to the Barbadian society...I was really quite shocked and dismayed at this antipathy to outsiders, to people who are from your own area, the same history, to be regarded like that. It's a very chauvinistic society. When good things happen to "foreigners", they forget all the person has done for the society.

The constraints of "foreignness," difference, were conflated with those of gender when Lucinda strove to acquire Barbadian citizenship by descent for her daughters,⁹⁴ and more traumatically, fighting for their custody, although the children had been continuously in her care since birth:

The court case took 13 weeks, and each time the case came up for discussion, the defence would have some reason why the case couldn't continue....[the father had removed the children without Lucinda's permission, and she was unable to see them during this time.]

There is a law in Barbados that the father of a lawful marriage is the legal guardian, and so the onus was on me to prove that I could look after the children. They didn't go to his house: the probation officer had to come and check *my* house to see that I was able to support them....The father knew the law and when I said things like, When I get the children, he'd say, When you get the children? I have to get these children, you don't know that there's a law that says that?

He brought in letters that I had written saying that it was very difficult in Antigua [where Lucinda had been living with the children] to prove that I was not a good mother, that I left the children alone, I let the children be brought up by maids. And knowing the law, he was able to manipulate to his own purposes--one of the children developed an infected rash from a mosquito bite, and instead of taking her to a regular doctor, he took her to a psychologist, who...did a psychological test on the child and showed she had conflicting emotions because of this mother, her own natural mother, and the woman...who became her step-mother....If I hadn't been in a job as reasonably comfortable as teaching, I could very well have lost those children.

⁹⁴Her ex-husband's Barbadian citizenship theoretically entitled his children--although not hers, if she had been Barbadian--to citizenship.

I had similar experiences in both Barbados and Canada. In Barbados, I needed my Barbadian husband's written permission (although he did not need mine) to travel out of the country with our children. And because at that time, only the foreign-born children of Canadian *men* (not Canadian women) were entitled to Canadian citizenship, I found myself barred from entering Canada with my three-month old Barbadian son. He was eventually given a three week visa.

Marginalization occurs, too, to Caribbean academics in feminist and post-colonial settings outside the Caribbean. Caribbean women are sometimes suspected of being a privileged elite, bell hooks' (1990) narcissistic "third world diva girls," invested in assimilation into the dominant culture. As a young university student in Virginia at the height of the civil rights movement, Lucinda was offered a species of assimilation as an unwelcome and unacceptable favour: "They said we could go anywhere we wanted as long as we showed our passports....Funny thing about racism in that country, once you showed your passport, presumably you could go places." Many years later, in an NEH seminar at Yale, Lucinda saw herself perceived in this way:

I was cast in that [diva] role myself, because I responded like a Caribbean person...and the tendency is for the black Americans to respond like a black person, always careful to show that they are aware of prejudice in literature....bell hooks suggested that many of us have fallen into the...trap, she suggests, I think, set by whites in America who say, You Caribbean people can teach, you black Caribbean people can teach the black Americans how to deal with white-black relations, and it can be uncomfortable for the black Caribbean critic.

There were only two black students at the NEH seminar....myself, and an African-American woman, and we were doing Robert Penn Warren's play, *Brother to Dragons*, I think it was, in which there was a black maid who had brought up a white young man....He had committed some crime, and because he was like her son, she didn't immediately tell the authorities that he was guilty of the crime because she loved him desperately....But reason prevailed and she finally told about the boy's involvement in the murder.

Now, I said, it's understandable she loved the child, she didn't really want to tell what had happened, but then later on, she realized she had to, and she did. The other black woman, African-American woman, was very critical of Warren's treatment of this incident and said, No black woman would ever behave like that to any white child, black people don't love white children in that way. And it was a very unpleasant situation in the class.

One of my classmates said to me later, You and the other woman have nothing in common but the colour of your skin. And I said, Well...I am not African-American, I see things as I see them, and perhaps it is her experience makes her unable to judge things the way I judge things. I saw an explanation later for her actions in a commentary by Maya Angelou in which she said, The African-American...is always under pressure to show that she's strong and she can react as an African-American, and that makes her more vulnerable because she is always under pressure to show that she will not be discriminated against.

And I don't know...if there are any upsides [to being an outsider]. What it's done though, it's made me...aware of being an outsider...my children say their childhood was very rich in the variety of people that passed through our house. Maybe because we subconsciously felt we were isolated we surrounded ourselves with other isolates. [Although the children are Barbadian] they've grown up with a sense of region, open and more tolerant, exposed to so many different lifestyles...I've always said to them, I may be middle class in profession, but I'm not middle class in values.

Naomi, too, is the site of multiple conflicts between self-identity and society's

identification of her. But these conflicts differ from those of Felicia, Elizabeth, or Lucinda. Even in our little susu society of difference, the differences differ:

NAOMI: In terms of identity, I feel strongly identified with a transposed culture that has a lot of African elements in it, even though I'm a light-skinned person, I don't feel like a light-skinned person from another culture, I feel like a light-skinned person from this culture.

That book you sent me [Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*] which I absolutely *loved*...I discovered that I was absolutely enraged to the point of feeling something akin to hatred for Noah...I was quite horrified at my reaction because it seemed so hateful, so filled with hate, and it reminded me of something that I knew about myself from before, what the feminists in the North American sense called patriarchy, which is a word I don't particularly use, because it's complicated with imperialism, and I'm a feminist from that point of view. (I have to sort out patriarchy and imperialism together which I find more interesting anyway.)

And I feel it very personally, because when I was engaged to be married, when I was in my twenties...the man that I was involved with wanted to change my name, put me down as his name, in the Automobile Association, when I was already a member in my own name. Just the idea of my beautiful name, *Naomi Claibourne*, who would change a name like that, it is so beautiful, to some ridiculous name like what he had. And all the feelings of affection and pleasure, the little world of a relationship that I had with him was absolutely threatened by my inordinate anger.

But I knew that however irrational or unreasonable, that clearly I was not a person who was made for marriage. I just did not seem to be made for it...in terms of my own sexuality, which certainly involves a relationship with a woman, at this point, and I think it will be so, always. And what I'm trying to say is, I don't want to marry her, either...that kind of setting, it's an association with something patriarchal

This Noah had me so enraged, I thought for the first time, talk about a leap, I know how H⁹⁵ feels. Soon after I read *Voyage*, they were launching a book about African something in Christianity in the Caribbean, and H said, which was really refreshing, he didn't think the book was particularly good...He said, I don't know when I've been so depressed as when I read this book. First of all, it's the fault of the historians...theologians don't understand because they don't know the history, that with the Africans who came to the Caribbean, came Islam and Christianity, that they practiced these religions there, so it wasn't like they didn't have this when they came, they did; and then he gives all sorts of examples from references that this existed....At some point he referred to a document that was written by this Anglican minister in Barbados who had 900 slaves, and... He just said, Honestly...I admit that when I hear Fr. X⁹⁶ on the radio, I just think of this man.

And I thought, Oh God, I understand him now, because that's how I feel about Noah and men who want to marry me, want to change my name and take away my things.

Identity is so complex...What I'm trying to say is, yes, you do have to fight

⁹⁵A prominent radical Barbadian historian who will remain nameless, famous/ infamous for his controversial opinions, a source of great discomfort to the complacent.

⁹⁶A popular and personable English clergyman who has a call-in program.

the Noahs and the slave-owners or whatever incarnation of the oppressive things you have at a given time in history...to sort that out is really what life is about....If you're not just scrunting somewhere, living hand to mouth, if you have enough surplus...if you have the privilege of existing in a little better circumstances ... there is so much more you could do, to sort out this awful muddle, that Noah and them put us in.

WENDY: You have to fight it, but before you can fight it, you have to see it. If you don't see it, if it's not real for you, if it does not exist for you, not only can't you fight it, but it seems to me that there is such hostility about making those structures visible.

NAOMI: That's true, and the hostility can be so great that you are not actually able to define, articulate or see, so you are actually so repressed yourself and self-repressed within that, that you don't even see. That is the dreadest thing. And that's what's so wonderful about Mrs. Noah, and what's so wonderful about all of us....just can't imagine why we're not completely obliterated....Mrs. Noah and that cat and them, I mean, how could their spirits take such abuse? Just reading about it had me going mad.

The question of needing labels is really the ...logic of resistance to oppressive things...It's a kind of paradox, because you certainly have to have a political way to identify with something, to resist something that's stifling or repressing....We need to find a new way into thought about these matters, because...you might start with wanting to work out an identity in order to create resistance to something that's stifling or repressing, and creating self-repression, that's the dreadest part of it all, but then if you end up with a label, it just works beautifully to keep the whole rotten thing going.

I'm coming to understand as I get older that identity is not about an ethnic or class or religious grouping prescription that you will never fit, identity is about the relationship between things, really, and that is what I try to write about and think about.

Naomi recalls an epiphany that brought home to her this relation between identity and relationship, when she acted the adult protagonist in *Sargasso* (Gilkes, 1991), a Barbadian-made video adaption of Jean Rhys' (1966) *Wide Sargasso Sea*:

Naomi's Story: The White Cockroach

The most important experience of doing that little film was a chance to act out...in that artistic product, the experience of exclusion. I'm not saying the sense of exclusion is only for a light-skinned girl, and that's what I think you're trying to get at. The thing about this expression of evil is that everybody's experience is that.

There was a moment when we had to do that scene about the white cockroach,⁹⁷ which is something every light-skinned kid in the Caribbean knows

⁹⁷Antoinette tries despairingly to communicate her own marginal status to her English husband (who is the re/vised Rochester, as Antoinette is the mad Creole heiress, of *Jane Eyre*): "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between them I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at

(It's not something that I would do any special pleading about because kids who are black-skinned go through God knows what, everybody has some terrible sense of alienation.)

You know, sometimes you have to do a scene 10 or 15 times because the sound is wrong...this is very common in film-making, and on this occasion, we only had to do it twice, the first time was a run-through, and then it was done again and it was completely finished....But when we did it the first time ...when we did that scene with the white cockroach where Antoinette talks about that to Rochester...I don't even know if he can really hear or understand...when I finished the scene, I looked up and they were all crying, the cameraman, all the people working on the set, everybody was crying, I was crying, and I just thought, My God, everybody knows, everybody knows what it is to be alone, estranged, completely alienated...in the situation that you're in, there'll be something about you that makes you a stranger in your own place.

So I think one way out of it is to form a kind of rebel pack, some kind of rebel band of friendship that...embraces the absurdity of it all and claims something more out of life than this evil or absurdity would dictate could happen. So it's actually creating another culture around this thing.

And even though I love and adore Jean Rhys, I think that Antoinette is doomed, because she's not able to find that link. And so even though these same questions are being raised, she cannot go anywhere new.

My mother was most distressed that I had to play this role...she couldn't bear it that the woman went mad, she didn't want that to be a resolution....It disturbed her, that this is how Jean Rhys ended the story....she linked it back into the English landscape. I think my mother would have resisted it, if she were the writer, she would not have had this happen...she wouldn't have been in Grace Poole's lock-up.

But I said to her, Mummy, don't you understand that's why I'm *not* mad? ...I realized part of what it means, part of what is so secretly and jealously guarded about the reader who is identifying with Antoinette, is that it is instructive, I hate to say it, *it is instructive about the path not to go on*. Not to go on with the Englishman, not to go on with Christophene, it's all there for you, like an instruction. [And there] lies the value of that novel for my development....I think so, Wendy Donawa. And then my mother was no longer distressed...because I was not going to be pulled down into this terrible place.

Credentials

Naomi and I had many conversations about the shifting markers that label one's acceptability and worth in the Caribbean's complex historical and cultural matrix.

CONVERSATION WITH NAOMI:

NAOMI: I wonder what we need to have friendships....The issue of race has to be an issue in a colonial setting, or a post-colonial setting, I think it would be necessary that that be part of what friendships in this culture would be about. It would be about overcoming that....an aspect of our friendship, in this particular cultural setting, is addressing race.

WENDY: It's either saying, let's put this aside and ignore it, *or* I like you enough to overlook it, *or* occasionally if there's enough intimacy, yes, we can talk about this. It's very delicate.

NAOMI: But I think it's even there between you and me, even though neither of us is black. So in other words, even as an area of what it is that we have absorbed from this colonial place...

WENDY: You have more credentials...

NAOMI: I have more credentials because I was born here and I have some African blood. I have more credentials than you in relation to you; I have no credentials as far as Kamau⁹⁸ is concerned, but maybe if he had you and me he would still give me more than you, I don't know. Probably. But the point I'm trying to make here is, even though you're not black and I am not white, am I white? Even....

WENDY: I remember once your saying with great flair, *I am an octoroon!*

NAOMI: Yes, even though I am an *octoroon*. (Laughter). We still have to discuss race, you're just as motivated to do it as I am because...in terms of the way you have set your method of inquiry into motion, race is part of that in our exchange, as well. Not in the same way that it would be if I were black skinned, right, and you were who you are. And not the same way as your discussion if other friends you are interviewing are black...But I'm saying, whoever it is with, pursuing this interest in what friendship is in this setting, race is a willing, race is the thing that is asking to be answered....these friendships create a space for race to come in and speak of itself in a new way...as opposed to the repetition of some other exclusionism, I can't remember how you put it, replicating the same paradigm....It cannot go away, it's coming in like the cat...it wants to be addressed with more imagination and more passion and more compassion, dare I say, than it has been.

WENDY: There's also the issue of visibility: [on the one hand] we talk of women needing to be visible, needing to have a voice, but to be fair-skinned in this society is to be visible in quite another way, in some little cowardly part of my mind, sort of like the dream where you're naked and everyone's looking. I'm aware if I'm out with a black friend, I am aware that people will look at her and say, What's she bothering with her (I mean me) for? To some extent, that I am a liability, that it is difficult, requires a great deal of magnanimity for my friends to commit to being friends with me, because it can be misinterpreted.

You're one of the few people I can talk to about my own West Indian affiliations, and the extent to which they have made up my whole adult life, and the extent to which they're all falling away from me like layers of an onion. Until recently, I expected my life would be spent in that context....Outside a small circle of friends there would be a smirk of disbelief, both in Canada, where I clearly look and sound Canadian, and certainly also in the Caribbean.

⁹⁸Kamau Brathwaite, Barbadian poet, man of letters, cultural critic. A foremost exponent of Creole culture, he has argued consistently and compellingly that European-descended West Indians have nothing to contribute to the society. In "Contradictory Omens" (1974), he deplores the focus on Creole/metropolitan relationships instead of "the deep subtle hopeless black/white 'West Indian' relationships"(p. 35).

NAOMI: Yes

WENDY: I mean, not to be paranoid about it, it's like the weather...

NAOMI: It is like the weather, definitely. Yes. I have an image in my mind of my friend F⁹⁹; I went to a performance [her theatre collective] did, and F had to make a statement at the beginning of the production, to say something about their work....And I always remember it because F sat in the pit of the auditorium...she did not even place herself for the audience to see her, so one only heard this voice which you would recognized as F's, and everyone in the theatre, their heads were swivelling, wondering where, they're only hearing the voice, where is this person? And F is an extremely flamboyant and gifted and talented person, and accustomed to acting and directing, she can handle the stage, but she was hiding, because of what you're talking about. Can such a light-skinned person have any legitimacy as Artistic Director of a group of black working-class women?

And on another occasion, I was at a presentation F was giving to students, I think this was in Canada at York University, so there would have been Caribbean and black students; one girl said, You know, this is so interesting because you're not the popular colour. A perfect way to put it.

Inside of the Inside: "Inclusion Does Not Include You"

NAOMI: One of the things I want to pursue in terms of a Caribbean aesthetic, or a critique...is how awful it feels to be a West Indian woman, with the same problems of alienation that West Indian men who are black describe, because it's a cultural truth, it's a geopolitical truth....A white-skinned or light-skinned West Indian woman experiencing that cultural alienation, then being told when you find something that you can identify with, the inside of the inside of the inside, that then Brathwaite would say, *These people have no right to make a statement about our culture.*

And that is a very silencing kind of statement, because you really are in a moral dilemma about it, because the inside of the inside of the inside is to be privileged because of your skin colour, and politically aware of what implications skin colour has, aware of privilege and all of that, but the space between that, the gap between that...is a whole area to go into, in terms of how it is we are living and what it is our civilization in the West Indies has to offer.

When Kamau Brathwaite, among the brightest and the best that we have, makes a statement like that, obviously, it's alienating. But the irony of it is that the movement of thought and spirit in the Caribbean...is a movement of inclusion, essentially, it is saying, All o' we is the people, the legitimate heirs to our culture or wealth....

But the point I'm trying to make here is when the contradiction between that motivator of intellectual activity and progressive thinking, when that motivator which is the demand for inclusion, then has a qualifier which says, *The demand for inclusion does not include you....* it is an absolute replica of what happens to the majority on whose behalf Brathwaite speaks when he is being creative, brilliant, and all the wonderful things he is. So the problem of cultural silencing or the

⁹⁹ Poet, and for many years Artistic Director of a Caribbean working-class women's theatre collective.

narrowing of the sieve of inclusion, is just this, insanely repeated¹⁰⁰...Inclusion becomes more numerical than qualitative.

When I presented a paper [at a meeting discussed], I called it *Race to the Finish*,¹⁰¹ and I was struggling with the problem of race [as] an essential dynamic of modern life that can't be avoided. And I was upset because...I would have thought that certain people who are also invested in this problematic of race would have shown more interest, and they in fact didn't even attend...When I spoke to people about this, they just—being busy or having something else, or forgetting—and my sense is that acts of race discussion are going to be individual, very, very individual, and everyone is still too inhibited, really.

That experience of exclusion on the part of Africans is the fundamental experience of being Caribbean, and everyone has it. I am not interested in a set of credentials that can be presented by a person of any race to say, This suffering is as good as your suffering.

This is not what I'm attempting to do, what I'm attempting to do is to look at race in a new way.... We are in that contentious place where the best that can be expected is a widening of the area of suffering from, say, a black person, to a brown person, to a Chinese person, to an Indian person, to a person of white skin; this is of no value to us. What would be the point of it?

I think that there is value in race consciousness. But I can't go very far with this idea because I don't seem to be able to attract other people....Everybody seems to be satisfied to continue to be miserable according to the terms that we now have.

So, after my presentation, several people spoke to me...[one had had] an argument immediately after the discussion with a friend of hers, who said that she was not interested, since there were hundreds of black children starving in the world, she was not interested in anything that Naomi Claibourne had to say about all of this.

It seems to me that the way we limp along is to have some kind of status of a dubious origin, used to block the flow of relations; there's something richer and more valuable that can be happening in terms of race consciousness. But it seems to me that we're stuck in this other place where a kind of antagonism will do, will suffice, we can pat ourselves on the back with that and not really move.

Criticism, conferences, says Naomi, it's all so bleak and sour, there's no generosity nor room for it. No way to get beyond race, no way to get beyond gender, it's in the language, *he-she*. Pauline Melville and her Amerindian stint. Look at them, Honour, Pauline, Rachel, Evelyn, Michelle;¹⁰² soon there'll be a critical mass with its own theoretical turf and their own construction of a world view (Naomi, personal

¹⁰⁰Perhaps both Kamau Brathwaite and Naomi demonstrate Stuart Hall's (1990) contention that cultural identity is not an essence, but a *positioning* (p. 226).

¹⁰¹Ever one for wordplay, Naomi also waggishly toyed with calling a presentation *Beyond the Pale*.

¹⁰²Honour Ford-Smith (1986, 1997), Rachel Manley (1996), Evelyn O'Callaghan (1986, 1987, 1992, 1993), Michelle Cliff (1984, 1987), Pauline Melville (1990, 1997): writers of critically acclaimed poetry, novels, memoirs, criticism, all fair-skinned.

communication, February 4, 1998).

To my great delight, Naomi visited me on her way to a Washington-based writer's retreat in November 1998. During this time we talked about the unexpected paths our lives had taken, talked about the process of this project (again!), talked a great deal about race, identity, and the shifting parameters that define us. I teased her that, although she was too fair-skinned for the Caribbean, once she crossed the American border, she could decide to be black. The week after she left, I received a postcard: "The ferry ticket seller inquired of me how to make 'rice and beans.' 'Do you eat those red ones or those black ones?' So you were correct about my crossing the border!"

Identity as Amoebae: Personal and Historical Limitations

The shifting parameters that Naomi and I discussed are not only the function of the differing interests and biases of external social forces, but also the effect of the conflict between those social frames and our personal epistemologies. Elizabeth stressed the contrast between an amoebae-like self-concept and the mythic identity ascribed to her by others: Naomi conceptualized the personal and historical limits to identity.

ELIZABETH: In my presentation [during the course of her research] I did...the difference between the self-concept and personal identity. My own self-concept is so shaky, so ill-defined, so fragile, and I perceive of it as an amoebae, which the class found rather interesting. Here is Elizabeth drawing an amoebae, with a nucleus and then with boundaries that were amorphous, as compared to the personal identity from outside, where people said things like, Oh you brave woman, raising a son alone, a single parent, this is wonderful, how do you manage, you have your house. Well. me and the bank.

But people seemed to think there was something heroic and so I recognize there was a distinction between personal identity, person as seen from outside, and the self-concept. And sometimes they're not related at all, sometimes they don't give you any validation....But I guess friends, people who you care about, people who perhaps you let into your amoebae-like role, would then have a lot of influence and probably could influence your self-concept, whereas the world out there, which is where personal identity comes from, maybe you could shut it off.

If Elizabeth distinguishes among the varying powers of external relationships to affect one's own sense of self, Naomi's perspective is to identify between those constraints and limitations within one's control and those insurmountable ones imposed by history.

NAOMI: Race, one's appearance in the colour spectrum, so to speak, really delivers you into the world with a set of limitations. And this is true for everyone, but of course I will speak for myself....A point of crossing, points of many lines crossing all the time, is the experience I'm trying to describe....

And how I have dealt with it is to observe the distinction between the things you can do nothing about (which have to do with the way you're perceived...caused by the limitations imposed on you by the history of the

place....I think these things are not surmountable...as when I was younger I might have wished or believed in some kind of revolution where colour wouldn't matter.

So the limitation that is imposed upon me...in the way I move in the world, to do with my light-skinned-ness, is a limitation that, along with my class location, defines me.

What I think we do in the race thing, in situations of conflict and stress...a person's *personal* limitations, I mean the things that you are flawed in, or your incompetencies, things that are hard for us to do for various reasons...We have these *historic* constraints, we can use them to cover our ass.

So I'm making a distinction between limitations imposed on who we are that cannot be changed because of your appearance or your class location, and the limitations which accrue to personality, social ineptitudes. Those limitations are sometimes substituted by the historical ones that we can draw on.

If we understand the distinction...at least between those sources of the power to be who we are, or the power not to change what can be changed...we have more insight into the way we could improve the conditions of how we work as a people, as a Caribbean people.

Liminal States

Elizabeth's and Naomi's reflections upon the indeterminacy of identity resonated for me with Jane Hirshfield's (1997b) account of liminality. Although she ostensibly speaks of poetry, to my mind she really speaks more comprehensively of language's work as "the magnification and clarification of being"(p. vii), through which we seek "the elusive intensity by which [art] knows"(p. 5).

To this end she posits a liminal state (*limen*, L. threshold) of ambiguity and openness in which anonymity is possible (Elizabeth: "I'm not of them and they clearly don't know my family for three generations, which is one of the reasons I came, so I could make it on my own"). In this liminal state, thought and relationship move beyond the prescribed and conventional (Felicia: "I'm...on the peripheryWhenever I'm happy and comfortable with someone...they...have a more varied background that informs the relationship"); in which "threshold existence opens into a more capacious sense of community" (Hirshfield, p. 206), (Lucinda: "My children say their childhood was very rich in the variety of people that passed through our house....they've grown up with a sense of region, open and more tolerant").

"In its deepest sense...threshold life...has to do with a changed relation to language and culture itself" (p. 209). (Naomi: "Some kind of rebel band of friendship that ...claims something more out of life than this evil or absurdity would dictate could happen. So it's actually creating another culture around this thing.") Who we have been becomes a field of potential for our being and becoming. A stage further, and more startling is the level of anonymity Hirshfield points to "when a gap opens between the old and the new....The self...both who we are and who we might become vanishes. It is just then, when all is

permeable...that a new way of being may emerge” (p. 212).

Leafing through my journals of the last few years, I find I have divested myself of much that I had thought to constitute my identity, and see indeed that the gap has opened, and all is indeterminacy. I am too immersed, too discomfited by the uncertainty in which I am suspended to romanticize it.

Yet I have seen these friends, seekers all, strike out into the unknown when the outsider might never have guessed the emotional and spiritual cost of their visions. All have embodied Hirshfield’s belief that the permeability and awareness of the threshold life engenders qualities that have made them care/ful women, compassionate, responsible. Good friends.

And so I trust it may be for me.

JOURNAL: THEM AND US

The woman has seen her image reflected in so many distorting mirrors, she sometimes wonders which ones are accurate, or if there is such a thing as a true reflection.

Mixed marriages like hers were fairly unusual in Victoria in the ‘60s, and her elderly relatives continue to regard her as some sort of exotic prodigal. They were not so unusual in the professional middle- class Caribbean milieu she moved to, but here she lacked the subtle but necessary indices of class suitability. Hardship she would have met as a challenge, but class as a definer of identity was new to her. (People who say, “Just be yourself” have never lived in a class-stratified society. What if, young and unsure, you don’t have much of a self, and what there is seems to be inadequate?)

But she put her shoulder to the wheel, had her first son, worked as her husband’s Girl Friday for ten years—that’s what young wives did in those days. She read, she painted, she fantasized about the verdant groves of academe.

She was exultant when she finally enrolled at the University for her first degree. But she revised her naive expectations of camaraderie with kindred spirits to a more realistic understanding that her presence was discordant to many of her colleagues. Ironically, as her embodied education instructed her more deeply in an understanding of exclusion, her research led her to a deeper engagement with the culture she had committed herself to.

The woman graduated and went on to teach at the Community College. She did her M.Phil in Caribbean literature, then a relatively new discipline, at a time when her Caribbean teaching colleagues were being educated in North America or England. So when the College’s canonical syllabus changed to include Caribbean literature, she became, briefly, the Caribbean literature person. Her career has had its ironies.

The woman’s first inkling of the resentment occasioned by her teaching area came when another UWI graduate, another Caribbean literature specialist, joined the staff. At this she was summoned before the College’s administration, and told her Caribbean work would be reassigned. Useless to point out she’d been assigned the Caribbean papers, that the students were happy and doing well. How do you prove racism is not lurking in the deceptive depths of your heart? The woman was devastated, and felt she’d been exiled to the furthest realms of the them-us spectrum.

But “the opportunity for probing comes more easily for those who live at

the margins,” says Aoki (1983, p. 333). The years have seen an accelerating move to throw out the colonial bathwater and reclaim the past. Caribbean history and literature are taught right through the curriculum now. Despite the odd mis-step, this cusp is where the woman has found herself, and where she has worked. She is not so naive she can't see her colour and accent brand her as *Other*, but amongst colleagues and cultural workers, she has earned a certain credibility. On a small scale it works.

Over the years she has made friends who sustain and support. They are her kin, her clan. She has become, by osmosis, West Indian. But her *them* and *us* is caught in a historical downdraught. Except for her closest friends, the others in her *us* see her as *them*. And she is taken aback when casual expatriates or tourists include her in their *we*.

In an otherwise congenial or professional group, if she is, as often, the only non-black, she does not *feel* “I am the only...” she feels *we*, and sometimes has a fleeting shock when she glimpses a reflection of herself, in that split-second before conscious thought, as *Other*. She has become invisible to herself while becoming increasingly visible in the larger society.

She tries to accept without bitterness that soon there will be no place for her, and that she has laboured to bring this about.
(October, 1994)

“I have to think what it means that I am here.”
(Dionne Brand, 1997, *Land to Light On*, p. 9)

JOURNAL: All the markers by which, for good or ill, I have been accustomed to being recognized in the world--wife and mother, artist, educator, curator, cultural worker, my very visibility as a minority--are gone.

The wealth of discourse that has nourished me and confirmed my identity as learner and seeker is part of a process that will soon come to closure.

My relational network of friends, distant though most of them are, and doubtless on their own thresholds, helps me maintain, sustain, a sense of my own being.

I think this is Hirshfield's opening gap.
(April, 1999)

Friendship and Moral Identity: “A Rebel Band of Friends”

I have been tracing the multiplicity of differences with which my friends' lives, and mine, are encoded, “points of many lines crossing all the time” (Naomi), difference that constricts and constrains, yet which presents openings for rebellion and the possibility of transformation. And I turn here to a consideration of friendship and its power to support this resistance and to effect the moral agency that is a function of self-identity.

What resources of the spirit can we unpack from those constitutive connections between friendship and identity? I have not found extensive references in feminist literature linking friendship with identity and moral agency. Marilyn Friedman (1993) notes, and I agree with her, that although friendship and its values have been the topic for various contemporary philosophers (pp. 195, 196), they have neglected to explore friendship as a

source of moral growth and transformation. And yet I deeply believe this relatively uncharted territory to be crucial ground for understanding and valuing personal relationships as we face a future where change and uncertainty seem the only givens. With the decline of the extended family and of fixed communal roles, and at a time of contested gender relations, friendship may well turn out to be, as Friedman suggests, “the most satisfactory and enduring close relationship” (p. 187).

In friendship’s “mutuality of affection, interest, and benevolence,trust, intimacy and disclosure open up for us whole standpoints other than our own” ((Friedman, pp. 199, 198). And friendship’s practices of empathy, trust, reflexivity and narrative connection (chapter 4 this document) offer opportunities for the crafting and shaping of the self in relationship with intimate others and with the wider world.¹⁰³

Friendship’s mutuality, then, calls for trust, an appropriate trust¹⁰⁴ that makes us *partial* to our friend; and invites us to invest our care and attention in her wellbeing. Our friendship *interests* us; etymologically, *interest* claims *to be in the midst of, to matter, to make a difference*. So we take our friend seriously, and give serious consideration to what she cares about.

Her concerns generate our commitment, and here I want to examine the moral possibilities that inhere in that commitment, and the extent to which they may enhance moral growth and embody moral agency. Moral growth “of the profound sort that occurs when we learn to grasp our experiences in a new light or in radically different terms” (Friedman, 1993, p. 196) is made possible in friendship because our trust and commitment enable us vicariously to widen our experiential base and to develop new standpoints from which we evaluate and re/evaluate our own frames for being. Our experience is enlarged by our trust not only in our friend’s good will, but also in her “epistemic capacity as moral

¹⁰³Empathy also suggests a field in which the care ethic might bloom, but the debates that surround this ethos are so multiple they would change the content and direction of this project. Nonetheless, I suggest that friendship’s equality and mutuality make reciprocal caring an achievable goal.

The difficulty in achieving that kind of balance, of care without exploitation, in even a mutually close, adult, heterosexual relationship, is that the activities of mutual caring are bound up in social practices of gender dominance and in the cultural devaluation of woman’s ‘natural’ caregiving behaviours.

Friedman (1993) suggests we compare, in a heterosexual caregiving couple, the relative power of a caregiver who fixes the car, and that of the one who prepares the meals. The mechanic controls the offered assistance, renders judgement, exercises respected skills; the object is to get the car working, not to placate the one cared for. Providing meals, on the other hand, “is driven largely by the expressed desires and tastes, the very whims, of those who are cared for [and may] devolve into servility” (p. 180)

¹⁰⁴Baier’s (1994) concept of appropriate trust, a “belief-informed and action-influencing attitude” (p. 10) is a form of care, and “allows the trusted to *care for* what one cares about” (p. 138)

witness” (p. 204) to her own narratives, even, or especially, when these narratives differ from those that frame our own lives. Felicia: “What I value enormously in a friendship is the constant exchange, and the things you learn from the other person, and the things that other person actually accepts from you.” And as Naomi points out, the “rebel band of friendship....actually [creates] another culture.”

To observe my friend and the consequences of her stance opens up a new standpoint for me; “I can try on, as it were, her interpretive claim and its implications for moral practice” (Friedman, 1993, p. 198). And to the extent that reciprocity informs our friendship, so our narratives open up standpoints for one another; we en/vision one another; we read one another into being.

Friendship and Moral Alternatives: “Living Options”

I return here to the “continual negotiation [of identity] in the fields of difference” (Meese in Hekman, 1995, p. 107), the insights by which a friend’s differences may enlarge my own, how her narratives and judgments, informed by her own socialization, experiences, meaning making, values, enculturation, become available to me. Our mutual intimacy may foster my “vicarious participation in the very experiences of moral alternatives” (Friedman, p. 199). “If you can see diverse points of view,” says Lucinda. “Then you’re capable of intimacy, because intimacy means that you can share, you can see things....you’re aware of the differing aspects”.

When we understand our friend’s experience as she chooses to narrate it, we enlarge not only our inductive base (Friedman, pp. 198, 200) for knowing, with all its original difficulties, but also our imaginative and interpretive capacity. As we observe how her actions and motivations enact her own moral guidelines, she becomes “a living option for oneself” (p. 100) to expand own’s own range of potential moral valuing. The lived experiences of friends have their own liminality and potentiality as they unfold, spontaneous at times, intractable at others. Their very unpredictability and diversity enlarge our own moral resources and so promote our own autonomy.

JOURNAL: For all the susu’s genial interrogation of our group’s congeniality, all so different and opinionated, it is that difference that so enriches our meeting. There are similarities and commonalities, true: our academic and cultural interests, our ages, our out-of-mainstream location, our ironic take on the world.

But each of us comes from a different geographic and political territory, with its own history; each of us comes from a different family structure, has had

different schooling. In Barbados,¹⁰⁵ we span the racial spectrum. We have sons; we have daughters; we are childless. Our sexual orientations differ; we have partners; we live independently. We differ.

Through the rich specificity, the spontaneity and authenticity of my friends' narratives, I have a vicarious sense of how it was to be a girlchild in the colonial Caribbean, amid a multiplicity of social forces that inscribe and constrain, or that empower and enable resistance. And through the intricate *métissage* of our connections over the years, I have been a strand in the Creole fabric of that culture, at that historical time and place.

No sociology text could transmit to me the tone and texture of my friends' perspectives: of Felicia staunching her gashed foot, God's punishment for running wild; of Lucinda standing in the hot sun to see Princess Margaret; of Elizabeth bouncing inflated condoms on the patio; of Naomi weeping at the White Cockroach scene and at the exclusion of humanity. We are all outsiders, but we all have different things to say about being outsiders. We all feel a deep commitment to the Caribbean, but we each have a different critique of our location within it. (March, 1999)

Sentimental and Political Friendship

At this point, I focus on the intersection of two trajectories, two discourses on friendship: that of Marilyn Friedman, whose insights I have discussed above, and that of Karen Hollinger (1998). Hollinger's intriguing survey of contemporary women's friendship films includes typologies of the kinds of friendships in those films, and she structures her discussion around those typologies. For the purposes of the point I shall try to make, I wish to reflect on two of the categories she examines: the *sentimental friendship*, an essentially apolitical relationship, nurturing, filled with personal nuance, psychologically enriching, and the *political friendship*, an alliance marked by low-key female bonding, and by political energy and commitment leading to action against some hegemonic social system.

It disturbed me that these two categories were set in opposition to one another, partly because I found Hollinger so engaging and informative I didn't want to disagree with her (and of course, Hollinger is describing the representation of friendship in film, not quite contending that all emotionally rich female friendships are "sentimental"), but mainly because I had to recognize that the dynamics of the *susu* would put it in a "sentimental" category from which I wish to extricate it.

I demur at this representation, the judgmental categorizing, for three reasons. First, the label alone suggests an injudicious prevalence of emotion over intelligence, mawkish tenderness. And Hollinger's text emphasizes the inferiority of the sentimental to the

¹⁰⁵Barbados' racial spectrum is a black/white one. Other, larger Caribbean territories who imported indentured labour on a large scale from Portugal, China, and India after emancipation have a more varied racial makeup.

political friendship:

Sentimental female friendship is frequently quite limited in action. It is often portrayed as stimulating personal and psychological growth, but it rarely leads to...significant social change....Political friendship portrayals, on the other hand, substitute political engagement for emotion. Freed from the intense intimacy that seems to replace political energy in sentimental friendship, political female friendships are able to move in more socially challenging directions. (1998, pp. 7-8)

Second, I would maintain (and here I am still arguing with an imaginary theorist trying to class the susu friendships as “sentimental”) that the division of friendship types like this is an artificial separation; it essentializes, it erases difference and particularity in each category, and “reproduces a rift between the personal and political...ingrained in Western culture” (Palmer in Hollinger, 1998, p. 9).

Third, I suggest that we need to enlarge our conception of political action; I maintain that the emotional fullness and reflective insight characterizing our friendships also informs our work and our communal being, and brings it into the realm of the political; I contend that the active imagination and intention of friendship are the stuff of agency, and that they give depth and meaning to political commitment.

Potential Countercultures

Friedman moves her discussion from the enlarged experiential base that increases our moral options to the transformative potential of friendships that support unconventional values. Friendship is the most voluntary of relationships; it is not inherited or ascribed by kinship, or by legal or cultural prescriptions; it does not by its nature have a stake in maintaining norms. Its only goal lies in the pleasurable processes of its own maintenance. Because of this freedom, “every friendship is...a potential culture in miniature and also a potential counterculture”(Hutter in Friedman, 1993, p. 219). The support and affection of friendship strengthens the marginal or unconventional person, encourages her critical moral reflection upon unexamined assumptions, encourages her to resist and disrupt oppression. If a woman’s self-esteem and confidence does not allow her a sense of choice and a conviction of responsibility, how is moral agency possible? Friendship confirms a person in her chosen selfhood, motivates her, militates against “grief, disappointment, lack of confidence, lost pride, failed trust [that]undermines our agency as surely as malnourishment or homelessness” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 122). Thus strengthened and shared, unconventional values may themselves promote change (Friedman, p. 217).

So: we shape both our own and our friends’ identities through our moral choices, and through our understanding of those choices. Such growth is a recursive process; it

enlarges our subjectivity, our sympathy, and further increases our capacity to choose and change.

Friedman (1993) recognizes that friendship is a “culturally idealized relationship”(p. 210), and that in its actual working out the particular friendship will fall far short of these ideals.¹⁰⁶ Yet its mutuality and trust suggest the direction in which the friendship should aim, and provide the values by which we may assess it (pp. 210-211). Just so, our *susu*, a culture and counterculture of difference, has brought us to thresholds beyond the norms of our birth cultures and beyond the culture in which we have lived our daily lives. Friendship as a catalyst for both identity and moral agency, then, is also a social good, generating space for difference and alterity to flourish.

“Identity-conferring Commitment”

However short our ethic may fall of the ideal, there remain values and relationships to which our commitment is so strong that they constitute our moral identity. In the application of our friendship practices to a wider social sphere, we embody the moral agency of our miniature countercultures “going forth in the world” (Tomm, p. 1992, p. 108). Here, I believe the practice of friendship to be an “identity-conferring commitment” (McFall, 1987, p. 13) –our trustworthiness in friendship makes us who we are; its betrayal would be an undoing of self-identity as well as of the relationship.

CONVERSATION WITH ELIZABETH:

WENDY: ...so for whom have you been a role model?...I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it seems from our endless conversations ...you are embodying a kind of personhood for your students, for your clients...

ELIZABETH:...I really don't know...I can't articulate that...I can't think, okay, role model, hero, Spiderman or whoever, I haven't got a sense of... being looked up to in a particular way...

WENDY: Well, your very highly developed sense of duty....

ELIZABETH: Yes, but I don't have a sense of that as a criterion...that's just me. So I don't sense a pattern of behaviour; that's just what I think I must do....So you're seeing this pattern over ten or fifteen years that we have spoken?

WENDY: Definitely, I mean (laughing) you're a role model to me.

¹⁰⁶It could be argued (and Hollinger, 1998, does) that such an idealized vision of friendship is unrealistic, that it mythologizes an impossibly unproblematic affection, that it ignores the complexity and ambiguity of real-life relationships, for which it is a fantasy substitute, that its intimacy can be “a palliative coping” (p. 24) serving patriarchy by confirming women in their “private” spheres.

ELIZABETH: Oh my gosh! No, no. I find role model a very difficult word because I don't think anybody should or could embody the values that another person should follow....I still don't get it....it's just something you *do*....There's no sense in which I see "dutiful", "off to duty", it's so funny to me you see a pattern in my behaviour. On occasion when I say I'll stick with the situation because it's what the situation demands...there's no characteristic in my mind which says, Duty above all, role model above all... You're making me out to be somebody I'm not...

WENDY: Both you and I know in this particular social climate how little work in certain situations we could get away with, in teaching or civil service, how minimal an effort we could make. And very unlikely it is that anyone is going to say, Oh, this is wonderful. So we do it for our souls or something.

ELIZABETH: I don't do it *for* anything. I don't know how to do it differently...but as you said I don't need to do it to the point of falling apart. But if I stay for a child, or till whatever hour, I don't know, I do it because it has to be done...if it is situational, I don't have to make the decision each time, it's not contingent upon particular circumstances, it's a response that is second nature...it doesn't come from anywhere.

The trustworthiness that I perceive as so salient a quality in Elizabeth seems second nature in her, so deeply embedded in her way of being that she shrugs it off: "I didn't know how to do it differently." Similarly, Naomi did not see her devoted care of her parents as self-sacrifice, but simply "what I had to do to continue being myself"—a perception that withstood her awareness that the eyes of the world would possibly see only an aging Cinderella.

NAOMI: In the last five years of [my parents'] lives, I leapt with great gusto into taking care of them. The piece I wrote called *Meditation on the Subject*¹⁰⁷ is an attempt to go into that experience....but caring of others, let me talk about that. With such determination and passion, to see the need that they had, and leap into that...I shocked myself, how important that was to me....My identity...was tied up with my ability to take care of them when they were vulnerable.

I didn't really notice my parents aging. I suppose I didn't want to see. I had been away from the Caribbean for sixteen months. When, on what I'd intended to be a quick visit home [St Vincent] I saw my father's deterioration and my mother's determination not to see it, it wasn't just that I couldn't turn away and get on with my life—every force in my being flew to their side. But also, I somehow knew what to do, not all at once, but I knew I must create the circumstances in which we could be together. This was not out of altruism, duty, or my love, or theirs for me, it was what I had to do to continue being myself....

I had to relearn myself as subject in this new place. A woman who was myself, but until then, obscured...suddenly born to my recognition, capable of

¹⁰⁷A quandary arises concerning Naomi's pseudonym and anonymity for the purposes of this project. Her elegiac memoir of her parents, unpublished when she gave me a copy, has since been published. How to attribute it? I will maintain her anonymity in this document; with her permission, however, I will contact her for publication details on behalf of anyone interested.

more than I knew of myself to be. The hardest part for me was not learning this new occupation...it was learning to live with a new contradiction between the sense of defiance...the power of empathy to which I was joined...and what I deduced I saw in the eyes of the world when it looked at me: Cinderella without a prince, an aging daughter, the assumption of my role as unfortunate, a waste of my abilities, passive.”[from *Meditation on the Subject: Rethinking Caring Labour*]

As I have worked on this project and struggled to understand how it is that we come to identify the self, I have turned neither to psychological paradigms of identity nor to the sociological rubrics of race, class, and gender that might seem to offer answers. While such epistemologies offer valuable insights, to have my inquiry directed by them would take me into the constraints of disciplines in which I am not versed, and would do little to address the nuances of what it is like to be who I am, or what it is like for my friends to reveal themselves as they believe themselves to be.

No “disciplinary” prescription approaches the authenticity they enact through their own voices. The contexts in which I am attempting to portray them are those by which they have chosen to define themselves; the complexity of their historical and cultural location, their friends, their work, literature, knowledge of self and other.¹⁰⁸ The first two of these topics have been discussed above; the “truths” of the others comprise the remainder of this chapter.¹⁰⁹

Identity and Work

....shunted aside
 those needed to teach, advise, persuade, weigh arguments
 those urgently needed for the work of perception
 work of the poet, the astronomer, the historian, the architect of new streets
 work of the speaker who also listens
 meticulous delicate work of reaching the heart of the desperate women, the
 desperate man
 --never-to-be-finished, still unbegun work of repair--it cannot be done
 without them
 and where are they now?

Adrienne Rich (1991), *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, p. 11

¹⁰⁸It was remarkable to me that in our discussions my friends reflected upon these themes independently of one another; I interviewed each friend separately, and do not believe they discussed the substance of our discussions amongst themselves. Indeed, because of our confidentiality, I do not think any of them is certain who the other *susu* participants are.

¹⁰⁹O’Dea’s (1994) account of truth and authenticity has supported my understanding of their narratives in this light. She speaks to the truth claims of literature that honour “the irreducible complexity of the world” (p. 163) while offering insight into lived experience. To live authentically, she claims, is to acknowledge the given of our particular historical location, yet to conceive of alternatives, to be “self-legislating”(p.164).

Labour, Work, and Power

What are these ceremonies that we should take part in them?
(Virginia Woolf in Binhammer, Henderson, Seaman, & Servinis, 1997, p. 6)

I want to embark upon this discussion of work with a consideration of Hannah Arendt's (1958) distinction between *labour* and *work*¹¹⁰ and its implications for understanding how our own lives of endeavour shape our sense of self. Arendt's division aptly restates the variance between dominant culture and *petitrécit*, between the sphere of worldly accomplishment, and the "natural" domain of women's labour. (In academe, it also echoes the academic dictum of publish or perish; tenure may result from a CV with an impressive list of publications, never from the repetitive nurturing attentiveness of teaching and mentorship.)

"Our work divides us," say Binhammer, Harou, Henderson, Seaman, & Servinis (1997, p. 7). It divides us from one another, divides us gender from gender, divides us within as we strive for coherence and integrity in our lives. I want to examine the direction these divisions take, from Arendt's separation of work from labour, to occupations coded as male and female¹¹¹, to Naomi's understanding of *occupation* and *caring labour*, to my friends' endeavours to bring love and work together in their lives.

But the world, with its relations of power, is always with us; it cannot be erased by caring labour or female agency, or, alas, by friendship. "Belonging and connectedness [is] never beyond power," says Doreen Kondo (1990, p. 305). "The work of art, the work of labour, the work of parenting, the work of language, all remain ultimately defined by the economics of work....Value remains defined by a gendered and racialized elite" (Binhammer et al, pp. 7, 8).

Felicia, who has known since childhood how to "wriggle into the space that's

¹¹⁰*Labour*, Arendt (1958) sees as "the human condition...of life itself" corresponding to biological process, and bound to the necessities of the body. It produces nothing to leave behind; "the constant unending fight against the processes of growth and decay....are among the toils that need the monotonous performance of daily repeated chores"(p. 100).

Work, on the other hand, is durable; it bears witness to our endeavours; it produces the artifacts of the world that withstand, to some degree, time, and that may outlive their makers and users. We objectify, reify, our thought and activity in what we *make* and "we retrieve identity through relation to these objects"(p. 137).

¹¹¹NAOMI: What is it that an individual is occupied in doing in the world? Occupations that have status, and invest power and control...are occupations that are culturally coded as male....other occupations are coded inferior or female. We repeat, in...the making of a life, domestic activity....the characteristic repetition associated with inferior work, inferior occupation, right?

allowed,” understands the manoeuvring the less powerful must do to resist the dominant:

...because I was trying to fit into someone else’s role....it meant no one was taking care of me....Ever since the point at which that hit me, I have been thinking about myself. And so I...get myself fitted in somewhere.

[To live by my own values] the bottom line is: Learn the system well. Understand how it works, because the only way you can make it work for you is to understand fully how it works.

Regulations are there, but you have to know exactly how far you can go... You have to know what was the spirit of that regulation so you can make it work for you.... You have to be able to move. There is always a way to manipulate [regulations] if you understand them well.

Women’s work, then, concrete domestic skills and nurturing responsibilities, is work that those with power may choose not to do. Women’s work is Arendt’s “labour”; it exists within patriarchal relations of power, and its insignificance gives those relations substance. So, ironically, the more successfully women are defined and identified by these roles, the more their work is dismissed as *natural*, and “excluded from moral and political considerations” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 155), “the more invisible it becomes to men as distinctly social labour....[or as] distinctly human culture and history”(Harding, 1993, p. 55). Women’s work is difficult to problematize because the dominant discourse “render[s] invisible, unspeakable, or trivial the routine moral activities that we sense...are central to goodness” (Calhoun, 1992, p. 117); it erases the mediating caring for domestic harmony, for the *other’s* moral wellbeing, that she calls *emotional work*.

Work, Resistance, and Identity

Nonetheless, women’s work offers the opportunity for resistance on multiple levels, through multiple discourses. Work is not so much a separate compartment as another process in our lives, permeable to our intellectual, spiritual, and embodied experience, constituting our identity amid the cultural context in which we function. These four women construct their own identities as working, caring subjects, and disrupt the dominant discourse by investing it with love. Lucinda “will do anything to make my children and my students aware of the need to fight exploitation and subordination....I am aware of how jobs are given....that women are exploited in the society, and that the only way we can change it is for the students, children, young people, to be aware of it and fight it.” Naomi speaks of the motive and agency in caring labour and “suggests a feminist understanding of the labouring subject as a possible doorway into rebellious consciousness”; she recounts how her own caring labour brought her to “understand better that political consciousness comes profoundly during a process that moves the subject to

the site of disempowered activity” (*Meditation on the subject*, see footnote 22 this chapter).

Hannah Arendt (1958) represents labour as ultimately futile:

The daily fight in which the human body is engaged to keep the world clean and prevent its decay bears little resemblance to heroic deeds; the endurance it needs to repair every day anew the waste of yesterday is not courage, and what makes the effort painful is not danger but its relentless repetition. (p. 101)

Naomi would not agree:

I saw Hercules when I witnessed my mother’s determined figure....I saw Demeter when we walked together into Hades to fetch my father from chaos and bring him home. But this heroism is not remarkable because it leads to a particular destination—the golden fleece, the happy home, the conquest of fear—but because it has the quality of a continuing miracle. Making and remaking, redoing what has been undone—ingredients as common as bread and fish (*Meditation*, p. 19, see footnote 22 this chapter)....It is in this disregarded labour that the daily renewal of one’s being for physical, intellectual and spiritual existence is done (p. 4).

Naomi disagreed with me, too, when I spoke of the meaninglessness of Penelope’s weaving and unweaving. I had disagreed with Hirshfield’s interpretation: “[Penelope’s] fidelity is a fabric of unweaving and unknowing, not mere refusal; who more than she has dwelt in uncertainty?”(1997b, p. 121) It was almost a squabble:

NAOMI: Okay, stay with me here, it’s difficult....what I would love to do, is the Penelope myth with you, with the subversive understanding....She was, if I remember, awaiting Ulysses’ return, and there were all kinds of problems with her son, and the suitors...but let us just take that image of the unravelling and the ravelling.

I think that the point of that is not that it is meaningless and therefore appropriate to a woman....The meaning of that is to do with the point I’m trying to make about being occupied.... You’re making a comparison between Alex’s [Naomi’s father] behaviour and Penelope’s. I am making a comparison between what Penelope was doing and what those of us who take care of someone who is vulnerable are doing. We repeat, in the structure of domestic activity, the same things over and over again. We must get up in the morning, clean our teeth, bathe, cook, tend to ourselves, water the plants.

...That point of view of, the characteristic of repetition is associated with inferior work, inferior occupation, right? And I’m saying that the characteristic of repetition is, in fact, the basis of *everything*....earth going around the sun, moon going around the earth, breathe in, breathe out...

Caring labour, loving labour done at will, is manifested not only in undervalued domestic nurturing, “the heroic quotidian remaking of the world” (Melinda Maunsell, personal communication, June 16, 1999); it also constitutes that domain of attentive affection with which the resisting subject may then infuse the professional world of work. We craft ourselves in the processes of work and our sense of its ongoing generativity. “The flowering of life depends upon finding a reflection of oneself in the world,” says Thomas

Moore (1992, p. 186), “and one’s work is an important place for that kind of reflection.”

FELICIA: the ability to love...is very important...because we always go back to *caritas* and it’s that kind of love which ties in with work and with existence. I can’t imagine [work without relationship].

The approach I took [to teaching], it was my duty not to apply a whole set of rules, but to focus on the...details of each individual person and see what was my role in helping that person...to grow, or to achieve.

LUCINDA: [speaking of mental health as the capacity to work and love] I would quote Robert Frost to say how I feel about the work that I do, that when your avocation is your vocation, that’s a good thing. And I have certainly found the teaching of literature to be both a source of joy and a source of income....This part of my life has been very satisfactory mainly because of the work that I do....

Love, well, I have that, *agape*, yeah...My women friends have satisfied that, because through my work I’ve met nice people, people who have supported, people who march to similar drums...a source of comfort and affection to me have come about because of my work...

The question of discerning how a student is responding to something [here Lucinda told of two distressed students for whom the study of *Tess of the Durbervilles* brought up memories of their own rapes]...we have to discern and react to our students’ responses so we don’t force them to a reliving, and if you don’t have the discernment, if you aren’t able to judge not just the writing, the critical things, but the feelings that go behind them, you can’t help your students.

ELIZABETH: I don’t think work is about the acquisition of things; I think it’s about leaving your mark. Love and work?...I’m so interdependent in my own mind...it’s hard for me to see them as separate, totally independent....If I had loving...respect of friends...warmth, unconditional regard, would I still need to be productive and make my mark, or could I be productive and make my mark with my friends, would that be enough?

Maybe for me it does overlap...you’re sort of incomplete without one or without the other.

NAOMI: I hope I never have to go back to an office....When I came here today and we went to get some orange juice in the kitchen...I thought, imagine, I could have been in an office, and I’m here instead. I want to do everything, Wendy, to protect myself from having to work in that environment again. I want to work on the terms where love and work are combined in a way that means something to me. I don’t want to be abused in that way any more. I don’t want my imagination sullied. I don’t want to be stuck in some box...I want to thank God for what ability I have...and really apply it to my own pleasures.

The centrality of meaningful occupation to one’s sense of identity can be measured by the devastation that accompanies the loss of employment. The loss may manifest itself *in extremis*, as with Naomi’s father

...unable to set the table for breakfast. The simple actions of placing mats on a surface were beyond the ability of a man who had built houses, worked on a theory of prime numbers, and knew his way around the Orinoco basin with a compass. I found him crying with his mats askew. (*Meditation on the Subject*, see footnote 22)

A more mundane loss of self comes from the kind of dislocation I have experienced in my literal, geographical movement from a place where my work offered me “a reflection of [myself] in the world” (Moore, 1992, p. 186) to a milieu where any such employment will be tenuous and uncertain at best.

JOURNAL: A friend’s doctoral defense: the meaning of the teaching self in the world, the difficulties of engagement. It’s led me to uncomfortable reflections on my own sense of self-as-educator, and the extent to which that self has been left behind—the work, the engagement, the professional relationships and accomplishments, the reputation and recognition, my sense of self as constituted in them—all that has gone into the void.

If my friend’s journey has led her, as she says, to a new lightness of being, mine has led me to an insubstantiality, like those old Star Trek shows where Captain Kirk said, Beam me up, Scottie, and the only part of me that came through was composed of little shimmery dustmotes. What do I mean in the world without my pedagogical self?

A valued field of self of course is that of the learner, but my present learning is framed by a project that of its very nature will direct it and bring it to closure.

In retrospect too, I see that to be different, marginalized, visible, can also be a paradoxical source of strength, if an uncomfortable one—just as muscle responds to weight and stress but atrophies if unused. I was never unaware of the consequences of my acting towards or away from specific ends; I had a solidity. Here [in Canada] my dust-mote self flickers dimly or brightly, briefly, in classroom encounters, in seminars.
(October, 1997)

The relations of power that shape our working world inform us that women’s “emotional work” (Calhoun, 1992), “labour” (Arendt, 1958), nurturing (Ruddick, 1989), caring discernment (Noddings, 1987, 1989; Gilligan, 1986, 1988, 1995), caring labour (Naomi), that these “natural”, invisible forms of labour are *petits récits* to “real” work’s Grand Narrative of economic viability.

But we can disrupt relations of power when we invest work with love. Practices of friendship, of caring labour, of nurturance, are central to existence. To labour with love, to insist on infusing work with love, is to craft our selves, to insist on self-care, and to understand and resist the relations of power that would define our working world.

Identity and Literature

While I was working through the interviews, drawing out the concepts that helped me frame an epistemology of friendship, a particular implicit refrain recurred: *These things make me who I am. They call me to behave in a certain way.* I found it difficult to separate how my friends described themselves and how they said they felt impelled to act in their lives. Their identity and their moral agency seemed to be inextricably interconnected.

I have followed the pattern that emerged from their narratives rather than trying to

shape their “data” into psychological paradigms of identity. Repeatedly, they speak of cultural texts that they have appropriated and absorbed into their lives, changing themselves in the process, enabling them to make meaning from a larger base of experience and understanding. They speak of sites for identity in the discrepancies between the Grand Narratives of their education and the evidence of their lived experience. They speak of friendship, of work, of literature. Their accounts so resonate with my own experience that I have structured this chapter around them. What I feared might be repetitive proved to be recursive, as the productive processes of their choosing, resisting, inscribing, and reinscribing worked through their layered lives.

In particular, the susu’s love of literature has been an ongoing bond. No meeting takes place without lively updates on everyone’s reading, debates on shared reading experiences, complaints over what we *haven’t* read and the time we haven’t had to read it. Here I want to address our shared love of language as it contributes to the conversation of this chapter: our sources of identity and moral agency. Does this passion for the written word shape our ways of knowing, understanding, being, in a way that a mutual obsession with, say, bridge, or golf, would not?

FELICIA: I think if I don’t read I can’t talk actually. I’m sure that if I were to have a period of about a month of not reading anything, that I would run out of words....I feel as if I’m not living if I’m not learning.

LUCINDA: My reading has always been a source of great comfort and pleasure to me, and most of my house is taken over with books and reading material of all kinds. I read two, three books at the same time...even though my work is reading.... Whenever I go abroad I buy books, and now I’m involved in a book club where I’m reading all kinds of books...that have contributed to the richness of my life.

ELIZABETH: I can read and see the screenplay in my head as another reality....I’m Catholic in my tastes, so I read X-Man comics...Tolstoy, philosophy...junk fiction....I don’t understand people who either cannot read fluently and easily or don’t like to read, we’re just not talking the same language.

NAOMI: I am trying to regain the power of reading....I would say my formal education damaged my reading ability enormously....But...how important is reading? Absolutely essential...to link your thing about friendship...it is our reading of each other, each of us writing...each other’s lives...that is enriching what we do.

Canonical Reading

JOURNAL: When Peter Rabbit found himself trapped on Mr. McGregor’s fence, caught by the brass buttons on his new jacket, *he gave himself up for lost, and shed great tears. But the friendly sparrows flew to him in great excitement, and implored him to exert himself.* Or so I remember it. Oh, the weight, the cadence of that

language! How satisfying, the thoroughly modernist closure of that tale, the guilty exiled to bed with camomile tea, the obedient sisters (who, we are reminded, “were good little bunnies”) rewarded with bread and milk and blackberries for supper. It spoke of order in the universe.

It spoke, too, of gender roles, and of their incommensurate respective virtues, for the good little sisters are never as interesting or admirable as disobedient, feckless, wasteful (read: mettlesome, high-spirited, *manly*) Peter. For boys will be boys.

Of course, hearing it nightly, we children knew the texts of our small store of books off by heart long before we could read, had them verbatim for life, and I would wager that the quotation above is accurate. Literature is language at its most compelling, its most seductive; literature is a way of knowing. Even as a small child, I experienced the narrative through the language (and of course through its evocative illustrations, through the feel of the small hardcover volume I was allowed to hold while it was read, if my hands were clean). It would not have “meant” the same to me to be told that *Peter Rabbit* was about a rabbit who disobeyed his mother’s instructions, wandered into danger, and became stuck in a garden fence. (September 1996)

As children we were all passionate little bookworms; my friends recount their early literary epiphanies in chapter 3. We all devoured, enthusiastically and uncritically, the children’s classics of the day, that is to say, English children’s literature, the myths and imaginary versions of the real relations of power that structured our taken-for-granted world. Wonderful tales of derring-do, of quests¹¹², of hardships nobly borne. How we identified with all those brave heroes, boys of course. How invisible the irony of that identification remained to us. And with what a shock I recognized its mechanism in Patricinio Schweickart’s (1998) account of *immascultation*, the “endless division of self against self” (Fetterley in Schweickart, 1998, p. 199) that occurs as “the male text draws its power over the female reader from authentic desires, which it rouses and then harnesses to the process of immascultation” (Schweickart, p. 200). That is, the male reader is empowered by identification with the “universal” male agency represented in canonical fiction; the female reader is reminded that to have that agency, “to be male—to be universal—is to be *not female*” (Fetterley in Schweickart, p. 200).

Through a process similar to Schweickart’s immascultation, literature that represents

¹¹²The only Caribbean equivalent of this sort of “quest” adventure that I could think of from my teaching years was Jean d’Costa’s (1975) *Escape to Last Man Peak*. This well-constructed young people’s novel follows a plucky group of Jamaican orphans left homeless by a virulent epidemic as they trek across the countryside in search of refuge. The text has not been widely used in schools, a pity, as it takes up issues of power and difference: the girl narrator is a strong character, and an albino boy finally gives the children’s efforts direction.

It is intriguing that another children’s novel, *Black Albino* (Namba Roy, 1961), also represents the albino of African descent as the despised outcast who must prove his worth to society. The ultimate in Otherness? They are both boys, though.

the values and power relations of dominant discourse also harnesses “authentic desires” for ethnic and cultural identity; at the same time it discourages the reader’s understanding of how she is constituted in these relations. Indeed, literature can make the values of the dominant seem right and natural “precisely to the extent that it obscures its provenance” (Jehlen, 1981, p. 578). Felicia recalls that “you never read about people that you knew in any of your books, but yet...you identified with [English children]. Naomi was “completely given over to the delights of these Others”, and Lucinda knew “a lot about daffodils, Bath, you know, from reading Jane Austen and so on; I really wanted to go there and see.” This is not to conflate discourses that resist dominant ideologies, nor to suggest that feminist and post-colonial discourse are ideological twins; I do however note that they have features in common.

Resistant Reading

When we were children we read and understood as children, but as we learned to read resistingly, we began to take custody of our literature and of the reflection of self we found in it. Literature is indeed a way of knowing, but it is a way of unknowing too. The subtlety and nuance, expressiveness and complexity that serve ideology also weave threads that can effect their own unravelling, subtexts that can resist, “write back” (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1989) its (assumed) original intentions, text that can be read “against itself”(Schweickart, 1998, p. 197).

Literature provided us with the discursive tools to interpret, to resist. Above all, love of reading gave us the desire to know, the desire for understanding and thus, as my friends’ accounts demonstrate, the desire for substance and agency. Lucinda needed only the awareness that Caribbean literature existed to re/vision her cultural framework; Naomi was enraged by “the way we were spoken of...[and enthralled to find literature] about us...a proper thing in the world, but it’s about us”. Our worlds were enriched, our subjectivity expanded by our engagement with the literature available to us; we experienced the “epistemological and moral lean toward an other” that Schweickart delineates (1996, p. 318). “At the moment of reading, [meaning] passes to the custody of the reader.” (p. 318); it encourages an “imaginative extension of understanding” (Belenky et al, 1986, p. 121), enhances Benhabib’s “enlarged thinking” (1992, p. 9).

We can change our knowing selves as we enlarge our normative ways of seeing, examine our unexamined assumptions and interpretive strategies, become more deeply aware and self conscious; reading “catalyzes a more critical view of our own identities” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 79). Naomi’s insights from her reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1968),

as “instructive of the path not to go” demonstrate the “imaginative identification [that Abel, 1981, posits as] the essence of literature and of moral growth”(p. 423).

I was less precocious than Naomi; I found *Robinson Crusoe* a rousing yarn, and took much longer than she to “get vex.” I was adolescent before I registered that Crusoe had been shipwrecked while on a slaving expedition. It took longer still to be disturbed by Friday’s subjectivity, to realize that after Crusoe’s years of isolation, when he finally had the possibility of human companionship he unhesitatingly constructed a master/slave relationship. Since then, the whole range of our youthful reading has been read into new meaning by Caribbean readers and writers. Caliban has become an iconic figure in Caribbean fiction and poetry, resistant to Prospero’s arrogant imperialism and writing back the canon of privileged knowledge¹¹³. The Caribbean reader brings a new, ironic reading to Jane Austen’s genteel settings, embedded in a capitalism fuelled by the fantastic profits of the slave trade.¹¹⁴

Responsive Reading

Perhaps our histories as readers, and the impact of those histories on our identities, also enact the spectrum of reader-response discourse. Does the text control the reader? Is the text’s meaning fixed in place for all time by the author’s intention? And does the text then shape the reader’s identity? Or does the text’s meaning evolve from the conscious and unconscious experience the reader brings to it, from her historical, cultural, and social conditioning?¹¹⁵ In this case, the reader’s subjectivity, the consciousness which is the source of her beliefs and actions, is productive, and it dictates the nature and significance of the reading experience and constructs the text’s meaning. It brings us new modes of

¹¹³A female version of Caliban has taken longer to appear. Marina Warner’s *Indigo* (1993) sites Sycorax as the central Amerindian consciousness of an Edenic Caribbean island (a geographically recognizable St. Kitts).

Sylvia Wynter (1996b) claims that with no sexual/erotic equivalent for Caliban, the “demonic ground” of Native woman functions to actualize both the gendered and the racial difference of the dominant.

¹¹⁴Caryl Phillips’ *Cambridge* (1991) portrays the devastating implications of this prosperity through his Austen-like persona, a genteel unmarried woman sent to the Caribbean and absorbed into the oppressive social machinery of the plantocracy.

¹¹⁵Catherine Belsey’s (1985) unfolding of the part fiction plays in the construction of subjectivity has generated much of my reflection. Terry Eagleton’s (1983, chapter 2) and Patricinio Schweickart’s (1996, 1998) approaches to reader-response (reception) theory have been enlightening for their survey of the terrain, and for the ethical and epistemological questions they raise.

perception and interpretation, new ways to encounter and decode the unfamiliar.

The discursive connections between friendship and literature that recur throughout this inquiry are also epistemological and ethical connections. Several writers whose work has mentored my own inquiry echo this understanding of readerly receptiveness as a moral process, a self-defining process based on knowledge and self-knowledge. Belenky et al speak to the “deliberate imaginative extension of understanding (1986, p. 121); Seyla Benhabib stresses “enlarged thinking” (1992, p. 19), the capacity to reverse perspectives. Reader-response reflects, too, aspects of Nel Noddings’ (1988) construction of the caring relationship, in which relations are *inherently* asymmetrical. “Listening and reading, like caring, involve an epistemological and moral lean toward an other” (Schweickart, 1996, p. 320). It is this recursive capacity to encounter, interpret, integrate, re-read, that, transferred to the “texts” of our friendships, enables, as Naomi says, “our reading of each other, each of us writing...each other’s lives.”

LUCINDA: I remember [during a dispute] saying, They think I’m a character in a third person novel, where they know everything about me. They don’t; they don’t know everything about me, they don’t know where I’m coming from....

I’m always aware that literature is not life, it’s only a mirror of life, but when you read literature...you see that people have dimensions you’re not aware of....A novelist can do things with characters...has created them and knows, supposedly, everything about them, but in life we don’t know everything about people no matter how often we see them, no matter how much they tell us, there’s always some part they don’t tell us, or there’s some part they’re not even aware of.

One of the things I learned from that year in the States is how a knowledge of feminist philosophy helps you to see things in books that you never saw before. Toni Morrison...said that she is filling in the spaces and I kept thinking of art...you have to have positive and negative spaces in art...so you can’t just have the man’s view....

For example, in *Beloved*, I wasn’t aware that she was rewriting, revisiting as they say in the trade, the Huck Finn story, that she’s turned it around ...the white girl who helps Sethe to give birth to her baby is like Jim...and the Sweet Home is a rewriting of the plantation in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*....It was a rewriting of the attitudes that are reflected in *Home Sweet Home* and in *Huck Finn*. And then by putting the slave narratives in the voice of a woman, it’s filling in a negative space. because nobody had seen slavery from a woman’s point of view before....bringing it to the foreground...a very popular term now in feminist literature.

In a novel you have particular situations from which you make generalizations about people, so it’s quite understandable that you can make...general judgements about women’s lives from the particular experiences that women have....Things like, what they think about, what they write in their diaries or journals, what they say to their children when they’re talking, just working together in the kitchen, those are important.... And that’s what feminists are saying and have been saying so long.

Literature has been central in our lives, crucial in the construction of our knowing selves. It has offered us canonical, “immasculating” (in Schweickart’s, 1998, phrase)

perspectives, but it has also offered us vicarious aesthetic, imaginative, and moral experiences that gave us tools to decode, resist, revise, subvert, and appropriate that canon.

Identity, Self-knowledge, and Knowledge of Other: Active Agents

Oneself behind oneself, concealed--

Should startle most.

Emily Dickinson in Hughes (Ed.), 1968, p. 40.

Much of our identity is ideologically inscribed; seemingly "natural", it remains invisible to us. And the extent to which it remains invisible to us is the extent to which identity may remain "an idea sustained for the purpose of social control" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 94). Braidotti is right if our identity rests in filling the assigned role of the respectable citizen, the good wife, the loyal soldier. Identity lies, it would seem, beyond our conscious, willed control, structured by unconscious, socially prescribed connections to "a series of vital (even when they are lethal...) identifications" (p. 181).

If this is indeed so, if identity is not willed and conscious, how can we change, and why would we change, and where does agency lie? I want to argue here that inscriptions of identity are not a form of predestination. I contend that they are offset by self-knowledge. Further, I believe that self-knowing sees contextually, that it recognizes its knowing to be partial and situated, and that it is also foundational to knowing and understanding others.

The writers I consult offer a conception of self which is perpetually in the process of construction, "the unconscious a constant source of potential disruption of the symbolic order....In the fact that the subject is a *process* lies the possibility of transformation" (Belsey, 1985, p. 50). They speak of movement and process, of growth and transformation, of a human being who is also a human *be-ing*. They use metaphors of webs and nets, of multiple branching rhizomes, of spirals.

Winnie Tomm (1992) argues that moral agency requires self-knowledge--that is, an awareness that both the self-determined and the socially-constructed subject, both the emotional and the cognitive aspects of experience, must be permeable to one another. The way the structures of subjectivity connect one with another determines the reality that can be perceived, determines the meaning that will be made. So autonomy and interdependency connect, and the *self* evolves, autonomously "going forth into the world" and interdependently "meeting other selves" (p. 108). Moral autonomy, then, is "identical with self-knowing," and with recognizing one's own responsibility "for contributing to an evolutionary drift toward integration rather than separation"(p. 109).

Bateson (1990) concurs; she writes of a spiral "shaping and re-shaping of identity as

gradually we have more to work with and we become skilled at reconstruction (p. 214). The forging of a sense of identity is never finished...It feels like catching one's image reflected in a mirror next to a carousel--'Here I am again'"(p. 219).

"Where," asks Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Does the need for change come from, the inner push to walk into change?" (1988, p. 16) I have traced, in previous sections, how the multiple, permeable self is enriched by friendship's "incitement to discourse,"¹¹⁶ how empathy and reciprocity expand the base for moral choice and therefore for agency. At this point, I want to address agency, the capacity to act as it is shaped through knowledge of self and other. I suggest this knowledge, not as a "component" of identity, but as another layer of the knowing that infuses our friendships, our work, our reading.

Finding the Metanarrative

The knowing self, then, is in process, always open to flux and change, always aware that a different story is possible. I know that to write my own narrative, to name and identify myself, empowers me, but I also know that the limits of my understanding of my own reality mark the boundaries of my insight. I hope that these boundaries are expanding and flexible (like Elizabeth's amoebae), for they enclose and disclose the centrality of my thinking work to my life, work that has fuelled my need to change.

If we see ourselves acutely, authentically, contextually, we locate ourselves in a larger frame. In fact, only if we are aware of our standpoint (through, for instance, the narratives we assemble from our practices of friendship, of work, of reading) is change possible.¹¹⁷ To have an understanding of how and where we are located is to perceive the metanarrative. What we choose to notice, to remember, to interpret as pattern or as epiphany, is the meaning we create; and with it we create disruptive possibilities. We enlarge our *petit récits*, stain the Grand Narrative map with our watermark.¹¹⁸ And as we absorb into our selves the text that we have created, *we* change as well. In this multiple and unpredictable process lies our agency. To perceive this process is to perceive a metanarrative. To understand it is to see the metanarrative.

Where is the gap, the crevasse, the hinge, the hook that gives us access to change.

¹¹⁶Lather (1991) did not use this phrase in precisely this way, but I do not think she would object to my application of it.

¹¹⁷As Nel Noddings (1989) argues in her introduction to *Women and Evil*.

¹¹⁸Michaels, 1996, p. 137. See footnote 19.

that enables adaptation and possible transformation? What happens to people so that they can move beyond rules and see themselves and other people in some kind of context?

LUCINDA: Perhaps that metanarrative comes from seeing how other people...react....If we only see things from our perspective then we cannot see the larger picture....We have [all] gone away, broke the bonds....The capacity to walk in someone else's shoes, maybe that's what we have, or perhaps wide reading reflection....When we read, we don't just read; we read, we reflect, and we talk about it....If you have a reflective cast of mind, you're going to see diverse points of view. And if you see diverse points of view, you're capable of intimacy, because intimacy means you can share, you can see things.

ELIZABETH: When you said that most of us who hang out together do have a sense of the bigger picture, it struck me, well, maybe that's why we hang out together...why we are drawn to each other, because we are sort of outside ourselves, so we don't need to get a gilt-edged invitation to things, because we operate in a different way....Travel, exposure....maybe that's the mechanism or hinge, that we all had to go outside [our own culture] and that straightaway leads you to question assumptions.

Metanarrative Conversations

To see the metanarrative also expands our capacity for reciprocity, enables us to know the other through *her* own inner and outer dialogue. If we don't reflect, we are more susceptible to the reflections others manufacture for us: "The conversation of friendship with others can only be had by those who have learned to think with themselves" (Raymond, 1986, p. 222). As Lucinda says, "Conversation is not a monologue; it means you must listen, you must hear the other person. So...it comes right back to taking away from egocentrism."

ELIZABETH: Hmm...I think I get to bore you to death with endless inner dialogue; I'm always on [about] what I thought in the middle of the night. I don't...think it's interesting enough for the tape. I know we've done this so many times, but here on your porch, reflected on the meaning of life...So to me that's an essential part of our friendship, but...is it a necessary and sufficient condition, is it essential to the intimacy of friendship? And I suppose in some sense, yes, you do have to share yourself.

Think *with* myself?....*With* is a very connecting preposition. I was trying to think if I'm two people, sort of doing a Jekyll and Hyde...getting myself into all kinds of knots as to who I was thinking *with* if not myself....I do like to think we're not confetti all over the place, a jigsaw puzzle. But I would say the extent to which we are self-aware...in a sense of standing back a bit and being able to have a conversation with yourself.

NAOMI: Isn't it true that if you, Wendy, through the process of doing this [research] are a wiser person...isn't it true that that makes it a better place? Even

though I am anonymous, even though I am N--¹¹⁹, who I would rather be than who I am in the text you're doing...isn't it true that...you couldn't do it if I didn't, and I wouldn't be able to say that if you weren't?

But how do we relate to this metanarrative and situate ourselves and our stories in it, for it is no more an immutable essence than are our own narrating selves? Life goes on outside our stories, and we may seek to map the narrative landscape by asking: What is happening historically, culturally, ideologically as our narratives unfold? The large perimeter of the material and social world holds us; we cannot deal with *its* immensity, but it holds *us*. (Christina Baldwin, personal communication, May 1999)¹²⁰

Tetsuo Aoki¹²¹ also sees the apprehension of metanarrative as crucial to siting one's research. The text of the metanarrative within which we position our research, he says, is already there. As we re-read our storied experience to deepen our understanding, themes suggest themselves; metaphors map the terrain. Questions are generated as we strive to convey what it is like to experience something; what is it *like* to be a friend, to experience friendship? Those questions in turn suggest a methodology. (The vulnerability and trust evinced in my friends' stories call for a "friendly" methodology driven by reflective empathy, trust and narrative contextuality, not by, for instance, quantitative analysis.)

And when we ask "What are the conditions that allow me to ask these questions?" we have found a fissure, a crack, a threshold into our metanarrative. The tensions and discrepancies between the metanarrative and our own stories reveal cultural values and assumptions that encase our lived experience. We have found the larger terrain in which we may situate and thus understand more deeply our experience.

The insights and understanding that make us competent to understand our selves in context (especially in relational contexts), also enable us to see more clearly the friend who is *other*. And she in turn is another source of self-knowledge—I imaginatively rework her

¹¹⁹ "Naomi's" real name. I was a little taken aback at this comment.

WENDY: But the girlhood memoir I constructed out of your interviews, did it ring authentically for you?
NAOMI: Yes I would say it does seem like Naomi rather than N--because there's so much else that I didn't say or couldn't say or that you had to filter...but yes...for the parameter that you've set up.

¹²⁰Discussions during a writing retreat/workshop, *The Self as Source*, facilitated by Christina Baldwin, Thetis Island, B.C., May 3-9, 1999.

¹²¹Discussions during course ED-B 591, *Writing/Rewriting Texts of Lived Experiences*, given by Dr. T. Aoki, University of Victoria, summer, 1995.

consciousness; I perceive myself from her point of view. A recursive process, inescapably relational, and therefore inescapably moral; the caring intersubjectivity that reads another into being also defines the self.

Crisis and Transformation

Some days you and I go mad,
 Our bellies get stuffed full,
 Hearts break, minds snap.
 We can't go on the old way so
 We change. Our lives pivot,
 Forming a mysterious geometry.
 Deng Ming-Dao, 1992, p. 149

Often curiosity and desire drive our need to change and our will to knowledge, which in turn constructs the capacity for agency, for resistance. Openness to difference, change that enlarges understanding, is its own reward, and its difficulties can be generative: "I gain truth when I expand my constricted eye that has only let in what I have been taught to see" (Pratt, 1988, p. 16). "Every time we expand our limited being, it is upheaval, not catastrophe...an expansion, some growth, and some reward for struggle and curiosity"(p. 39). So, the challenges of our work, our reading, our friendships catalyze our curiosity and our sentient life.

But we do not always choose to change. Change may be thrust upon us so unexpectedly and with such violence that it takes us to the very limits of our way of knowing the world. When we cannot find or make meaning, we experience a traumatic loss of self; as Kegan (1982) puts it, our inability to compose meaning is, literally, "the loss of our *composure*" (p. 11).

Can that which fragments us, shatters our identity, be a source of identity? We strive to make visible and disrupt the oppressive energies of worldly power, but sometimes the world can disrupt *us*. And often the most devastating blow comes, not from the identifiable opponent, but from an unexpected source that leaves us utterly vulnerable. It may come from the silently metastasizing cell, the drunk driver, the flood. It may come in a gradual corrosive form that allows for no speaking: alienation, gradual disillusionment in the integrity of a cause, an institution, a friend or lover, a beloved child. What are we to do with the crumbled shards of a commitment by which we once defined ourselves?

Midway on our life's journey, I found myself
 In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell about these woods is hard--so tangled
 and rough

And savage that thinking of it now, I feel
 The old fear stirring: death is hardly more bitter.
 (Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, tr. R. Pinsky, in Hirshfield, 1997b, p. 122)

JOURNAL: There is no public forum,¹²² says my friend M, for certain kinds of grief and loss. Most cultures have some ritual framework--the keening, the wake, the memorial--for socially inscribed bereavements. M compared her situation, living in a non-English-speaking country, when her husband left her, to that of a friend suddenly widowed. For the young widow there was an outpouring of ongoing sympathy and help; casseroles and babysitters appeared; the practicalities of paperwork, of packing and moving, were attended to; rosters of friends provided comfort and company.

For the abandoned wife there was an equal bereavement, a shattering of future hope and expectation, the loss of a loved partner compounded by the sense of repudiation and rejection. All the "couple" friends dropped her, and she had had few other. The neighbours who had seemed so sociable ignored her on the difficult weekends and relegated her to an occasional women's coffee morning.

In this state of shock and grief, she was left to cope with a plummeting standard of living and all the bureaucratic complexities of moving within, and then from, a foreign culture.
 (September, 1998)

I am told that the components to the Chinese character for *crisis* signify both *danger* and *opportunity*. It is very hard to read opportunity into the pain and grief of extremity. Minnie Bruce Pratt's' (1988) account of the loss of her sons sears me at every re-reading. Yet from this loss she schooled herself to a profound understanding of oppression in its myriad forms, and a fierce commitment to oppose oppression as it mutates to reassert itself. Her struggle gave her "a way of looking at the world that is more accurate, complex, multi-layered...more truthful"(p. 17).

Attentive Spirit

An imaginative and spiritual consciousness can come from naming the pain and grief that thrust us into a new place; to see the world truly, our consciousness needs to have travelled away from the familiar landmarks and well-trodden pathways of self. "Despair is *in/formation*" (C. Baldwin, personal communication, May, 1999) that can destroy or quicken, grounds for hope as well as for trepidation. "It is hope that makes possible patience and peaceful waiting in the midst of turmoil and unsettledness" (Huebner, 1985,

¹²² "I think more and more that we have lost immeasurable comforts in our rejection of ritual. We need to create new ones with relevance to our new self-consciousness." (Melinda Maunsell, personal communication, June 1999)

n.p.).¹²³ Despite the sorrow that the unexpected may visit upon us, the “more-ness” (Huebner, personal communication, July, 1998) of life also gives it the transcendent dimension that nourishes creativity and insight. As Lucinda says, “Spiritual to me means other, otherness.”

CONVERSATION WITH NAOMI:

NAOMI: I’m hesitant to talk about spirituality because it has associations with religion and all sorts of oppressive structures....The only way that I can get out of my unhappiness...is through my imagination; that is the access to creativity....How would you actually not be stifled by that structure of society? It seems to me that the only way you cannot be is to have *spirit*, to be *spirited*. [That] can fill me with something other than my history....The prisons that we’re all in are not inevitable, but they can’t be escaped by logic. (Personal communication, November, 98)

WENDY: Well, Bateson talks about attention having a spiritual dimension...You know, *to attend* is etymologically to stretch toward, to direct one’s attention to, to accompany, to pay heed, to be present....And then whats-her-name¹²⁴ says hope is the spiritual drive through which all other drives are related. And then Keats with the holiness of the heart’s affections...so, paying attention, attentiveness, has a spiritual force. And Huebner spoke, I think, of a spiritual “reservoir for transformation”.

NAOMI: And attentiveness keeps us closer to the area of faith, so I agree, I agree. Because...to become more attuned to spirit is to pay attention to spirit. And I think that has something to do with faith....I think it is the attention that you pay to God that is at the beginning of all this....I can’t believe I’ve lived for 47 years without really being conscious, paying attention to this huge part of my personality...the inner energy of me...it’s such a delight to just be conscious of it, to pay attention, it’s a place that I like to spend some time now. It’s a company with myself that I really enjoy....It’s like an attention....My whole body has a sixth sense now that I didn’t know before. And it’s really kind of lovely and mellow, a nice feeling. And when I’m afraid in the middle of the night, about whether I’ll get Alzheimer’s, or whether I’ll be able to pay the rent next month...I have a belief in my continuity....the actual pleasure of feeling the beginning of faith.

In this chapter I have been attempting to unpack the layers of experience my friends identify as important constituents of making them who they are: A sense of evil arising from the particulars of everyday life; their location in the gendered, racial realities of a particular historical time and place; their friendships; their insatiable reading; their work: a

¹²³I have cited Dwayne Huebner from his unpaginated essays, which were provided for course reading during ED-B 691, a doctoral seminar he offered at the University of Victoria, Summer, 1998. The date refers to the document’s original date of publication, noted in the bibliography. The essays are available in the University of Victoria curriculum course file, in the Curriculum Library, and they have since been published (1998) as *The Lure of the Transcendent*.

I also make reference to his comments and discussions during the course.

¹²⁴ Raymond, 1986, p. 213.

desire to know themselves and others more deeply.

A common element braiding all these dimensions is a capacity for wider cognitive, emotional, and spiritual experience and the potential for deeper understanding and enlightenment. Of course, all that sheds light also casts shadow. As I bring the light of my understanding of friendship to each threshold, I know it is accompanied by its shadow, by my shadows of fearfulness, confusion, unrecognized “narcissism in all its subtle guises” (Baldwin, 1998, p. 183) lurking just beyond my peripheral vision. And yet I do hope that I “expand my constricted eye” (Pratt, 1988, p. 17), as I see my friends doing in their creative and intrepid lives.

Active Passion

Hekman (1995) claims that moral agency emerges from identity, agency, and resistance. I have shown how that which we identify as components of our identity expands our options and our competence to discern and to act. It is the informed will, the intention to *act* in the world that foregrounds our *petits récits*, that manifests our agency in *resistance*.

One of passion’s multiple definitions is “an eager outreaching of the mind” [OED]. In this sense, friendship is an active force marked by heightened awareness, deep attachment. It is a thoughtful passion.¹²⁵ And I am saying that moral agency is an active force, not merely a concept. I cannot, for instance, create a friendship from a *theory* of friendship;¹²⁶ I can only theorize from the *practice* of friendship. It is this active, enacted understanding and critical consciousness that provide both foundation and catalyst for agency.

Felicia’s moral agency manifests itself in her knowledgeable disruption of administrative and bureaucratic procedures, in her knowing “the spirit of the regulation so you can make it work for you.” Lucinda “will do anything” to make the young people in her care aware of the structures of oppression. Naomi finds it crucial “to nurture the working sensibilities of younger people,” and moving seamlessly from practice to theory, has transformed her years of filial devotion into a numinous reflection on caring labour. Elizabeth is called by an “overriding totality....not to create a negative impact...in the

¹²⁵Raymond (1986,p. 223) speaks to the productive tensions that friendship maintains between thought and passion.

¹²⁶I am indebted to Melinda Maunsell (personal communications, 1999) for enlivening discussions in this vein.

world;...to make a positive impact on any fellow traveller, anybody who is in my path”.

And it is so that I have endeavoured to act in the making of this document, to be mindful of perception as an active moral undertaking that represents my friends as they would choose to recognize themselves.

Conclusion

What *is* it like to understand through friendship? For this inquirer, it has been to discover that my interviews offered a lens to inter/view my self, and to arrive at aesthetic, reflective, and ethical criteria by which I interrogate the validity of my work and of my life. It has been to revisit the fertile ground of family narratives, my own and others, and to ponder the source and meaning of those first seeds of resistance and self-knowledge.

It has been to discern how we are embedded in relations of power that shape our (always partial) knowledge. It has been to become convinced that friendship offers us ways to inquire, ways of knowing that offer an alternative to the positivistic models in which many of us were trained. It has been to learn that friendship’s practices enlarge our experiential grasp, enhance our “epistemic capacities” (Friedman, 1992, p. 199), encourage experimentation, and inspire praxis. To believe that friendship offers a particular context for the life narrative helps me accept that the most intractable, the most incommensurate events of our lives present us with opportunities for a new apprehension of critical thought.

To understand through friendship is to recognize subtle forms of its shadow and their manifestation in projection, obtuseness, thoughtlessness, exclusion, and erasure. To understand through friendship is to strive to bring an emotional and reflective fullness into our inquiring, social, and political life.

Terminus

Deepen night; halfmoon hang on chestnut branches
 fold the map
 gather the journey
 unpack the heart

recall the shining bay, sunspray through the breakers
 dwell in the word’s bright world
 that sprouts and burgeons, wilts and fallows
 in its seasons

whose devious roots and tendrils
 so carefully pruned, I thought,
 emerged unfathomably
 green and innocent
 in my housed life.

Dark voices lurking on the mind's edge, come forth
 Come, loss hold fast, grief
 know handholds lost, known terrain a chimera,
 landmarks a mirage, grounding an illusion

Balance gingerly on the moving earth
 recall the sunlit space
 with welcome clear and unadorned
 as running water
 knowing the tethered moment will
 slide over the present's cusp toward
 tomorrow's horizons of meaning
 dragging cargo, freighting us with
 the unspoken, the unthinkable

Hallow voices' polyphony
 honour the hands' making, the soul's labour.

A small rain fingers the window.
 That which was made
 comes to closure.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Letter of invitation to participants

This research project is an inquiry into women's understanding of identity, ethical commitment, and relationship, through the stories they remember and tell. The inquiry has three strands. The first focuses on the fiction of four contemporary Caribbean women writers; they speak, in very specific historical/cultural contexts, to the meanings of race, class and gender in the construction of identity. The second strand will evolve from open-ended interviews with Caribbean women who are also longstanding friends of mine. By giving voice to their disparate experiences, they too "fictionalize" their narratives, and, I suggest, blur the distinctions between fiction and non-fiction, story and research. Like the writers, they too locate their experience in a particular social and historical landscape. The third strand will derive from my own memories, reflections and interactions with the stories of both writers and friends. By using personal data as primary experience and personal reflection as the mechanism for analysis, I dismantle the "researcher-subject" relationship and become a co-participant. Narratives from all three strands will provide the data for my Ph.D. Dissertation. I shall argue that the dynamics of friendship have the potential to model, not only self-knowledge and moral subjectivity, but also forms of critical academic inquiry.

Your participation will involve four or five one-hour interviews. Your involvement is completely voluntary and you can decline to answer interview questions or withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation. If you withdraw, I will destroy all the interview data.

Any data collected in the study will remain confidential; interview transcripts, to which only I will have access, will use coded names, and be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. Your signed consent form will be stored separately from the transcripts. I will not discuss your participation with other participants or with mutual friends and colleagues.

The interviews will be audiotaped, and the tapes will be erased immediately after I have transcribed the interview. I shall make two copies of the transcripts. One I will send directly to you; the other I will use as a working text. As the dissertation develops, I will send you those completed portions in which I have used your narrative. I will not proceed further without your approval.

However, it is the dynamics of relationship I will focus on; that is, the specific tones and interactions of personal reflection and friendship as they are revealed by your narrative. This means that, despite the coded name, if the dissertation is read by someone who knows us both well, it is possible that she/he may identify you. Please sign below and return this form if you are willing to be interviewed for this project. Whether or not you choose to participate will have no bearing on my respect and affection for you, or on my pleasure in our continuing friendship.

October, 1996

Appendix B.

Taking Leave

1

In October we stood hand-in-hand
 under a soft rain. We watched the salmon run,
 raddled, silver-crimson, floundering homeward,
 thrashing deathward, swerving
 under the cold fishy air,
 under the lowering cloud of ravens, shrieking gulls
 that settled, insatiable, on whatever ceased to twitch, and cried
 to this we come.

You knew. I knew. The cedar-chip path spongy beneath our feet.

2

So we planned the last great escapade,
 trekking upstream, inland
 with your twin, with my cousin;

the frail harboured strength squandered joyfully
 in the German restaurant at Hope.
 Overtired, excited,
 you both drank too much wine, told mildly off-colour jokes,
 rosied with delight at your own wickedness.
 The mirrored wall showed quadruplets;
 we laughed like drains; the waitress said
 We can hear you all the way in the kitchen.

3

But your fall, your downfall.
 All the good fairies left: grace left,
 wit left, humour too; they slipped off into the evening
 and called to your empty face
 O my lovely lady, follow
 quickly, don't stay
 stranded here.

Wary, you waited their return.
 Yours manners remained, your gentle stubbornness.
 your unwillingness to be a burden.
 And sometimes, as fireflies glimmer the bamboo,
 your lost selves flickered.

4

Till stubborn down the forbidden stairs
 in the garden you'd once magicked into scent and bloom
 you gathered peonies, an armful.

Did you think: Now, now is enough?

So the stairs flung you off
 and the petals, slower, followed;
 drifted,
 says the neighbour who saw,
 around you
 in beauty.

5

I had already said goodbye
 in January, when you wept in my arms
 and we both knew
 there was nothing to be said.

So I was surprised there was still
 goodbye to be said
 to the box that hid you,
 surprised I could have
 howled to the sky.

All day my mind's eye saw you in the flames.
 Everything was translucent that day. I saw through the glassy
 street, through transparent supermarkets, through shimmering
 conversations
 to the purifying fire
 until it guttered out
 till you were
 indiscernible.

After the service
 the March sun, cold and brilliant,
 shuddered the garden.
 Spangled gusts shattered the sunlight,
 puffed the last of your ashes
 into bright motes.
 And you were truly
 gone.

Appendix C. Epistemological questions

- 1 How do I understand the Western knowledge claims of rationality and universality?
- 2 How has the “epistemological crisis of the West” (Harding, 1996) called into question the legitimacy and authority of “universally” accepted understanding of the good, the real, human subjectivity, understanding, knowledge itself?
- 3 In a context of local, relative, contextual knowledge, then, how to link my interests:
 - Friendship as a model for self-knowledge;
 - Moral agency;
 - Literary inquiry?
- 4 What sort of epistemological shifts permit this change/development in paradigm?
How to validate truth claims when the epistemology we have delegitimated is no longer available? Have we thrown out the baby with the bathwater?
- 5 How do standpoint epistemology and inevitable paradox suggest a methodology?
- 6 How will a feminist ethic influence methodology?
- 7 How can I connect the epistemological and moral realms?
- 8 What does it imply, morally, methodologically, and epistemologically, that I locate myself in my research, that I use friends’ interviews as text, and that I interpret the meaning-making of Caribbean writers?
- 9 How does literature fit this epistemological/moral frame?

Appendix D. Interview questions

I **MICROSYSTEM: ROUTINE ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT OF YOUR IMMEDIATE SETTINGS**

Looking back to your childhood:

How would you describe your family structure and your understanding of your place in it?

How were the routines of your childhood determined by

 school/homework/exams

 chores

 church

 friends?

How did *being responsible for* structure your activities?

Who modelled behaviour for you? Who were you expected to be like?

Did your family move around? Did your family structure change? How did this affect you?

Describe your schooling and your understanding of your place in it.

What do you remember studying? What do you remember reading for pleasure?

How did you become aware of the facts of life? How did this affect you? What was the teaching on sexual morality, explicit or implicit?

Your adult life:

Describe your present family structure.

Did your relation with your mother change? How?

For whom are you a role model?

Has your relationship with your birth family changed?

How does your parenting style differ from that of your parents?

What do you see as the essence of homemaking?

How does *taking care of* structure your activities? What about self-care?

To what extent has your life been determined by others' needs?

How important is reading in your life?

How important is ongoing learning in your life? What forms does it take?

What place has friendship in your life? What qualities do you value in a friend?

II MESOSYSTEM: RELATIONS AMONG THE ROUTINES OF YOUR LIFE

Childhood/youth:

What demands and expectations did you sense coming from
 parents/relations
 church/school/friends?

What messages did these systems send? Were they consistent? Conflicting?

How important was it to be “respectable”? What did “respectable” mean?

What meaning did you make of the contrast between your childhood reading and the social/cultural realities around you?

How/when did you become aware of your family’s relative standing in the community?

What do you recall of any early awareness/understanding of class, race, social positioning?

What was your vision/expectation of your future?

Maturity:

What demands/expectations do you perceive coming from your?

Children
 birth family
 colleagues
 employers
 friends

How do these parts of your life interact? Is there a conflict?

Is there a constant “you”?

What are your responsibilities to yourself?

How have you experienced conflicts between ambition and domestic responsibilities?

What has your family’s response been to your career aspirations?

Do you see Caribbean literature as a mirror or a hammer? (Function to reflect or deconstruct?)

III EXOSYSTEM: EVENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OUR IMMEDIATE LIFE HAVE AN IMPACT

Childhood/youth:

How did you understand your place in the education system? What effect did the 11-plus and the British exam system have on you?

What was your understanding of Britain?

What was your understanding of Africa?

What plans for higher education did you have? Did you follow them?

To what extent was critical thinking encouraged by family/church/school?

Do you remember older relatives talking about the '37 riots? What was your understanding of the disturbances?

Where were you at Independence? Do you remember how you felt?

How aware were you of the American civil rights movement?

Maturity:

Has the trajectory of your education and career taken the shape you expected?

How aware have you been of power structures affecting your life?

Is it possible to live by your own values within the ethos and power structure of your employers' institution?

Has education/work/friends changed the way you think about yourself?

How have you experienced being an outsider outside the Caribbean?

How have you experienced being an outsider in Barbados?

IV MACROSYSTEM: IDEOLOGY MANIFESTED IN THE CUSTOM AND PRACTICE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Are you aware of having been affected by any economic/legal constraints because you are female?

Has your education/career/lifestyle met with approval from your family/community/colleagues? To what extent has their response been informed by gender?

What was your experience of becoming aware of Caribbean scholarship, Caribbean literature?

(If applicable) How have you been affected, legally, by being non-Barbadian? Does being an outsider have its upside?

Given the rising crime, violence and unemployment of the last decade, how safe do you feel?

What is your understanding of feminism and of its relevance in the Caribbean/ its impact on your life and goals?

Mental health has been described as the ability to love and to work. To what extent have you found this to be true?

What place has a spiritual focus in your life?

What do you experience as evil?

How important is it to trust? Others? Oneself?

Appendix E. Girl

Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the colour clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk bare-head in the hot sun; soak pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil, soak your little clothes right after you take them off...it is true that you sing benna in Sunday school: always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to *wharf-rat boys*, not even to give directions...this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking *like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming*...this is how you sweep a corner; this is how you sweep a whole house; this is how you sweep a yard; this is how you smile to someone you don't like too much; this is how you smile to someone you don't like at all; this is how you smile to someone you like completely; this is how you set a table for tea; this is how you set a table for dinner...this is how you set a table for breakfast; this is how to behave in the presence of men who don't know you very well, and this way they won't recognize immediately the slut I have warned you against becoming; be sure to wash every day, even if it is with your own spit; don't squat down to play marbles—you are not a boy, you know; don't pick people's flowers—you might catch something; don't throw stones at blackbirds, because it might not be a blackbird at all...This is how to make a good medicine for a cold; this is how to make a good medicine to throw away a child before it even becomes a child; this is how to catch a fish; this is how to throw back a fish you don't like and that way something bad won't fall on you; this is how to bully a man; this is how a man bullies you; this is how to love a man, and if this doesn't work there are others and if they don't work don't feel too bad about giving up. (Kincaid, 1983, At the bottom of the river, pp. 3-5)

Appendix F. Planet Earth

*It has to be spread out, the skin of this planet,
has to be ironed, the sea in its whiteness,
and the hands keep on moving,
smoothing the holy surfaces.*

In Praise of Ironing

Pablo Neruda

It has to be loved the way a laundress loves her linens,
the way she moves her hands caressing the fine muslins
knowing their warp and woof,
like a lover coaxing, or a mother praising.
It has to be loved as if it were embroidered
with flowers and birds and two joined hearts upon it.
It has to be stretched and stroke.
It has to be celebrated.
O this great beloved world and all the creatures in it.
It has to be spread out, the skin of this planet.

The trees must be washed, and the grasses and mosses.
They have to be polished as if made of green brass.
The rivers and little streams with their hidden cresses
and pale-coloured pebbles
and their fool's gold
must be washed and starched or shined into brightness,
the sheets of lake water
smoothed with the hand
and the foam of the oceans pressed into neatness.
It has to be ironed, the sea in its whiteness

and pleated and goffered, the flower-blue sea
 the protean, wine-dark, grey, green, sea
 with its metres of satin and bolts of brocade..
 The sky--such an O! Overhead--night and day
 must be burnished and rubbed
 by hands that are loving
 so the blue blazons forth
 and the stars keep on shining
 within and above
and the hands keep on moving.

It has to be made bright, the skin of this planet
 till it shines in the sun like gold leaf.
 Archangels than will attend to its metals
 and polish the rods of its rain.
 Seraphim will stop singing hosannas
 to shower it with blessings and blisses and praises
 and, newly in love,
 we must draw it and paint it
 our pencils and brushes and loving caresses
smoothing the holy surfaces.

P.K. Page. (1996). *Hologram: A book of glosas*,¹²⁷ pp. 42-43

¹²⁷The *glosa* is a Spanish poetic form dating back to the 14th century. The opening quatrain is written by another poet. It is followed by four 10 line stanzas whose concluding lines are taken consecutively from the quatrain.