MAKING SILENCE KNOWLEDGE:
TOWARDS THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
OF INTIMATE CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ASSAULT

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1993

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Date Aug 31/93.
ABSTRACT

How can I know what I know if I don’t know what you have done to my body?

I am a woman victim, survivor, and healer of intimate childhood sexual assault. I remembered these assaults when I was in my early thirties, but did not deal with the assaults, family denial of them, or the emotional, intellectual, physical, sexual and spiritual consequences of the assaults and denial until writing this thesis. My own knowing – my thinking, confidence, memory, and my sense of being able to speak and contribute to the truths of the world – has been contaminated by the assaults, the family denial, and my lived consequences of the assaults. In this research, I work to make my silence knowledge through intimate reflective autobiography. First, I explore the literature of intimate assault from the perspective of silence and knowing. Then, I explore the educational literature of women and knowing from the perspective of intimate assault. Then, I relate my crone/ology of making silence knowledge. Then, I testify to my experiences of intimate assault and healing in a series of narrative poems. Finally, I conclude with theoretical frameworks of assault, silence and healing, and with implications for educators’ personal action and educational praxis. We are all implicated in the oppression and betrayals of intimate childhood sexual assault. Our silence as assailants, witnesses and victims protects and condones the assaults. When we develop our felt sense of intimate assault, we become knowing witnesses, survivors and healers able to resist intimate assault and other forms of emotional, intellectual, physical, sexual and spiritual abuse and create knowledge based on the truths of women’s experiences. This work of making silence knowledge stretches from individual personal awareness to the content, processes, relationships, structures, and goals of educational institutions. Making silence knowledge is the work of educators committed to naming and resisting women’s oppression and the related oppressions of race, culture, class, age, and sexual orientation within our educational praxis.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii

Table of contents iii

Acknowledgement ix

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION
LET US BREAK SILENCE 1

Weave Woman

PURPOSE 2
Knowing witness

READER'S GUIDE 6
Fury, terror and power
I, II
Knowing language

OVARYVIEW 12

PART TWO: BACKGROUND
INTIMATE ASSAULT, SILENCE AND KNOWING

LEXICON 15
Silence
intimate:
child:
sexual assault:
silence:
know:
knowing:
About knowing
And oh
knowledge:

INTIMATE ASSAULT, SILENCE AND KNOWING 21

THE LEXICON OF INTIMATE CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ASSAULT 26

INTIMATE ASSAULT AS THE TERMS OF MEN'S ENDEARMENT 31

SILENT WITNESSES: RESISTING KNOWLEDGE 34

BREAKING SILENCE 35
PART THREE: METHOD
MAKING SILENCE KNOWLEDGE

Crone/ology

TOWARDS MAKING SILENCE KNOWLEDGE

RE/MEMBERING KNOWLEDGE

conceive:
January 16, 1990
May 16, 1990
May 27, 1991

Re/collection
Winter, 1991/92
February 27, 1992
April 3, 1992
April 8, 1992
April 12, 1992
April 14, 1992
May 10, 1992
May 21, 1992 #1
May 21, 1992 #2
May 24, 1992
May 25, 1992
May 28, 1992
June 4, 1992
June 7, 1992
July 7, 1992
Thread, July 8, 1992
September 20, 1992
October 9, 1992
November 21, 1992
December 6, 1992
December 6, 1992
December 26, 1992
December 27, 1992
February 8, 1993

Our healing is our re/membering
PART FOUR: TESTIMONY
FROM SILENCE TO KNOWLEDGE

testimony:

SEALED IN SILENCE
Uncon/souled
 I, II, III
Secrets
 I, II, III
Suc/courl
Intestate
 intestate:
 I, II, III
Sports day cup
Familiar
 familiar:
 I
 II, III

REBETRAYALS
Was I a virgin
Trussed, sealed, and delivered
Soulviolation
 I
 II, III, IV
 V, VI
Detaching
 I, II
Cunt notes: questions to another survivor

RE/MEMBRANCE
Bodyhome
 I, II
Sub/merged
 Tremourknowing
tremour:
 knowing:
If passion/ate
Passionfusion
 I, II
 III
 IV
 V, VI
 VII
 VIII, IX
 X
I testify
remember:
test:
testes:
testicles:
testify:
I, II
III
IV
V, VI
VII
Re/membered innocence
I, II
III, IV, V
VI, VII
VIII, IX
X
remembrance:
to put in remembrance:
book of remembrance:

KNOWLEDGE
We find speech
I
II, III
IV, V
Not a luxury
I, II
III
IV
V
PART FIVE: IMPLICATIONS
A HOST OF WITNESSES

TOWARDS THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

127
If... then, what?

MODELS TO RE/MEMBER SILENCE

129
The silent patriarchal screw
I claim silence
Drawing: The Silent Patriarchal Screw
The howling feminist spring
To live, to witness, to re/member
Drawing: The Howling Feminist Spring
Writing for my life

PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

136
Paid help
Friends
Protection
Domestic nourishment
Place
Desk
Computer
Bulletin board
Close by
On my body
On my breaks
In my life
Bodyspirit strength
Resignation
resign:
Rage
Solitary woman

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

150
Teachers and teaching
The AdEd "Girls"
University support
I wonder
TOWARDS A WORKING AGENDA FOR RE/MEMBERING SILENCE
Wart dream
Personal action
Educational theory and practice
Our physical education
Supporting the healing process

FARE WELL

Nautilus

BIBLIOGRAPHY
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge here the strength and perseverance of women who struggle for the physical needs of their families, and of Canadian feminists who continue to struggle for our social, intellectual, sexual, economic, legal, educational, vocational, political and spiritual well being.

I acknowledge the fragility and pain of men, who, like the men before them, have found refuge in power and denial. I acknowledge the courage of men friends who are beginning to take emotional account of their pain and women’s oppression.

I acknowledge the love, respect, advice, and encouragement of my friends, and the playfulness and affection of my nieces and nephews, who have all nourished me throughout the four years of this work and the many years leading up to it.

I acknowledge feminist sisterstudents at the University of British Columbia who shared their resources, hearts, and intellects; faculty members who provided institutional support; and university administrators who provided legal support for this work.

Finally, I acknowledge my Aunt _____, and my research advisor, Dr. Kathryn McCannell, who at different times in my life have seen, loved, and helped me re/member my soul.

I dedicate this work to my aunt and my godchild.
PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

LET US BREAK SILENCE

Listen, then, as I weave for you
my soul squirming, body crawling, mind striding, heart leaping
peregrine dance of
   blood tracks across the desert
   seadeep immersion
   fingernail/held ascent
from disembodied silence to fullbodied voice.

I
cluster enfleshed tableaus, sound clips, tactile resonances;
unearthing memory remnants, dream scats, emotional jolts;
tenuous braids of silence, rage and love
to heal, Fimo style:
   colourful plastic dough
   embedding, encasing, enwombing broken watch faces and
   unprecious crystals;
transmogribaking soulshards to passionart.

I,
evocatrix story weaver,
speak tight-woven tales
   calling up dark/sodden spirits to
   earth-warming seed-sprouting life-engendering light.
My truth and protestation.
PURPOSE

Central to feminist theory, research, and educational praxis is the unnegotiable belief that the personal is political; that by telling the stories of our private realities we create knowledge of the social and political context in which women live. This long process of making visible the experience of women (Adrienne Rich, 1979) includes the integration of the private, secret dimensions of women's oppression, silences, resistance, and re/membering and knowing within public realities; it is the process of making women's private silence, public knowledge.

My goal in this work is to create a document that creates a passionately felt sense of the educational implications of intimate childhood sexual assault; a written work that is advocate, witness, and testimony to women's entangled, entwined, enfolded, in/twisted experiences of intimate childhood sexual assault, silence, knowing and knowledge. I do this for myself and other victimsurvivorhealers who are laying claim to their own re/membering of memories, passion, and integrity. I do this for abusers in hopes that they might confront the consequences of their actions and begin their own process of breaking silence. I do this for all of us living within patriarchy as silent witnesses implicated in our protection of abusers and betrayal of their victimsurvivors through our denial. I do this for feminist educators and, in fact, all learners, teachers, researchers, administrators, and trustee/governors who recognize that a commitment to education for social justice is a commitment to re/member all forms of oppression within our private and public lives.
To re/member abuse and oppression is
to simmer resist/intuit ignore/sense
to feel the numbs silence and complicity
to call to mind
to name, to witness
to resist, reshape, reform, transmute
to create frameworks of theory
bodies of knowledge
qualities of relationships
to support and empower all of us
as agents of resistance, creation and change.

In this writing and thinking,
I focus on my own experience, which is also
the most common form of intimate childhood sexual assault;
that of a young female being sexually assaulted
by one or more family patriarchs
whom she knows, relies on, trusts or fears:
father, step-father, grandfather,
uncle, older brother, "family friend".

I trace the blood tracks
from silence and betrayal
to re/membering and knowing
that have been my healing.

Many of us victims feel we have no choice
but to cope, carry on, and forget;
    festering chaos
    murky painpuss
    scabsealed.

Growing numbers of us
are breaking silence
descending into the matrix
of secrets and survival
speaking our truths.

The consequences of this betrayal
of trust, love, dependence, sexuality, and knowing
are unimaginably profound, complex, and interwoven
within each survivor,
and greatly varied amongst us all.
In our schooling, for example:
for some of us, our formal educational progress was "enhanced"
by our experiences of intimate sexual assault,
as we funnelled our denial, shame, and powerlessness
into academic achievement.
For others, our educational progress
was muffled, compromised or halted
by our crazed silence:
our fears, depression, disassociation,
split personalities, suicidal desires, substance abuse,
health problems, absenteeism, sexual promiscuity, and pregnancy.

For most of us, the cost of breaking silence is enormous.
Those of us with the personal and financial resources
that enable us to risk breaking our silence
are speaking and writing
of our memories of the moment-by-moment realities of intimate childhood sexual assault,
and of denying, compensating for, forgetting, recalling, confronting,
and healing from these assaults.

Doing so is reshaping our knowledge of women's experiences,
and our understanding of the dynamics of the patriarchal society
which creates, maintains, and protects
intimate childhood sexual assault
as a first and essential lesson in women's subjugation.

We are all implicated.
We are all silent witnesses, victims, or assailants.
We can begin to break silence.
We can all heal and resist intimate childhood sexual assault.
We can begin to know the silences
in our stomachs, our hearts, our souls.
Knowing witness

In your reading of this work, I invite you to become knowing witness to the embodied intellectual, emotional, sexual and spiritual resonances of intimate childhood sexual assault and healing. By participating in this work as observer, companion, or soulpartner, you may attune your felt sense of intimate assault through explorations that will include:

- the realities of intimate childhood sexual assault and its emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual consequences;
- the connections among intimate childhood sexual assault, silence, knowing, and knowledge;
- intimate assault as womenchildren's first lesson of patriarchy;
- personal, academic, and legal pressures that mitigate against the process of making silence knowledge;
- how language and academic forms need to, and can be reshaped to help make silence knowledge;
- my ongoing process of making silence knowledge; a spiralling journey from silence through rebetrayals through re/membering through knowledge and, sometimes, back to silence;
- the importance of creating knowing language and knowing witnesses;
- the connections among the silence of intimate childhood sexual assault and the silences of other oppressions based on race, culture, class, age, and sexual orientation.

I hope that this felt sense will enrich your personal development and educational practice regarding the individual and collective work of making silence knowledge.

The focus of this work is my personal process of re/membering silence; from this personal exploration I suggest implications for educators which may reverberate into the work of counsellors and health professionals and, more widely, the social and political action for us all. More particularly, I focus on
my experience as a woman victimhealersurvivor of intimate assault and other forms of abuse, mostly by men. This in no way detracts from the reality and personal experiences of those of you who are women who have been assaulted or abused by women, and men who have been assaulted or abused by women or men. I hope that this work will contribute to your explorations, healing, analysis and action.

READER'S GUIDE

Fury, terror, and power

I.

*Powerful.*
*Leading edge.*
*Groundbreaking.*

*Of no value as academic research.*
*Raw data.*
*Lacking analysis.*
*Not sufficiently academic.*

*If you can't say this, who can?*

II.

Maybe I should have known when she showed me her journal: wallet sized, to fit into her purse, her only private place. Surely I should have known from the look in her body as she shrunk at the sight of my thesis when I offered it.

Like a canvas tent holding taut against torrents lightly touched from the inside, I bleed and bleed and bleed.
As I thrust my hand deeper into the swirl of this stream -- history, nightmare, accountability -- I feel the current angrier and more multiform than the surface shows. There is fury here, and terror, but there is also power, power not to be had without the terror and the fury. We need to go beyond rhetoric or evasion into that place in ourselves, to feel the force of all we have been trying -- without success -- to skim across.


There are many reasons why we -- you, reader, and me, writer -- find this work challenging. The content is emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually disturbing: most of us have recognized the frequency of intimate childhood sexual assault, but few of us have come to emotional terms with its visceral realities. The autobiographical approach and spiral poetic format are unconventional. Researcher and respondent are one; the terrain of experiences includes early memories, current experiences, dreams, visions, body tremours, critiques of literature and roughsketched models. The spiral framework of this exploration may be more felt than understood, more resonance than reason. Language has been condensed, rejoined, and reshaped; formats include poetry, journals, personal and editorial comments, and artwork. Rigour is reshaped from objective measure of reliability, replicability and validity, to cohesion, adhesion, tightness of weave.

My friend Ian Alexander commented, near the completion of this text, on its radical politics of content and radical aesthetics of form (telephone conversation, July 8, 1993). I have come to understand that the struggle to make silence knowledge is largely the struggle to speak the unspeakable to witnesses able to hear. To do so requires new language, new forms, and the courage to feel, then understand, the darkness of silence and the power of healing and resistance. Our reward in doing so can be profound.

Each reader will bring not only their own experiences and understandings to this work, but also their own silences, denial, and self-protection with regard to their own abuse, witnessing, and abusing. I
forgot my own abuse for about thirty years, tried to ignore it for ten more, wrote of it, then took another year before I could read of other women's experiences. Participating in this work, as reader or writer, is like picking at a scab of an abscessed wound. We can be sure of two things: things will get messier before they get better, and we may help the healing.

This is feminist research. This is intimate reflective autobiography, which explores the explicit physical, emotional, spiritual realities of intimate childhood sexual assault, and the implicit interplay of assault, silence, and knowing. It is intensely emotional. Readers' experiences of this work may be similar to my experiences of reading the literatures of incest, sexual assault, and sexual abuse: I wanted to know about it, but I didn't want to feel it. Approaching completion of this work, I am absolutely convinced that the only way to know about this is to feel it. When we feel the disgust, anger, helplessness, emptiness, pain, troubled sexual arousal, muffledness, fog, terror, betrayal, trappedness, abandonment and silencing, we begin to witness the reality, consequences, and implications of intimate childhood sexual assault in our personal and working lives. From my experience of this research, I believe that we need to venture beyond knowing the numbers regarding the frequency of intimate childhood sexual assault, beyond even understanding dynamics of assault, to actually feeling others', and our own silences, betrayals, rememberings, and knowledge. Within that flow of thought, feeling, and spirit, we are empowered to create educational theory and practice grounded in our darkest individual and collective truths.
Knowing language

I have created a variety of forms of text and language to make my own silences knowledge. Words and forms had so long failed me in claiming my experiences; now the creative power of

\[ \text{the chant; the incantation; the kenning; sacred words; forbidden words... the ritual telling of the dream... words gouged or incised in stone or wood... or traced in sand (Adrienne Rich, 1979, p. 248)} \]

held me, danced with me, en/couraged me to name and feel lost experiences and develop understandings of them.

I have created new words to conveying feelings, qualities of experiences and ideas. Compound words join or embed parts of conventional words (feverenfeebled, expelloding, in/twisted, crone/ology, textwork) and flowing clusters of words (simmerresist/intuitignore/sense). Divided and spelling-altered words (in/testate, re/memberance, un/consouled) serve notice of rethought, or refelt meanings of conventional words. A few (ovaryview) are mostly for fun.

I have also altered a number of other language conventions. I have punctuated quotes in italics, rather than quotation marks. Somehow, italics help others’ textwork flow with mine, rather than standing apart from it. I like the flow. If I am referring to conventional expressions, ("unencumbered"). I do so in quotation marks. Discussing the process of breaking silence, I have used the plural pronoun (we) with singular referents (our family, our child’s...). I didn’t think about the reason when I wrote this section, but, again, it sounded right; probably because when one woman is assaulted and remembers, somehow we are all assaulted and remember, and still, it is all an acutely solitary experience.
Academic poems are sections of text which I originally wrote as academic prose, for example,

_In this writing and thinking,
I focus on my own experience, which is also
the most common form of intimate childhood sexual assault;_

While rereading these as prose passages, usually some time after having written them, I realized that I had embedded a number of ideas into one sentence. When I had read other feminist authors with this same style, I'd had to map out their ideas, phrase by line, to make full sense of them. I wanted to preserve the connected, embedded flow, but also wanted to provide some space for the reader to pause and ponder. Spacing the prose into poetry seemed to accomplish this. Because these poems are a part of the flow of the academic prose that precedes and follows, I have not titled them separately.

I have felt intimidated by the idea of presenting formal theoretical models since I started this work. This is a gabalash of moveable quilt frame, tacking, basting, and sketched outlines which suggest designs for tighter stitches and firmer designs to come. I have drawn my frameworks by hand, rather than on computer, so that they feel more inviting of further input/enrichment/adaption... perhaps by me, and perhaps by you!

Metapoems such as _Silence, Weave Woman, and Healing is not a luxury_ reflect on the creation and implications of this work. I wrote _Silence_ and _Weave Woman_ near the beginning of my narratives, and they are still two of my favourites. Poemdefinitions explore key notions such as _assault, knowing, and testimony_. The title of each poemdefinition ends with a colon (:). I have formatted them on the right margin. Unless otherwise indicated, I have created poemdefinitions by extracting, usually in the exact order they were presented, words and phrases from definitions in the _Oxford English Dictionary_ (1980).
I have included a number of personal commentaries throughout this work (And oh, it is not this simple.) These are thoughts and feelings that came to me while I edited a section of text, often months or years after I originally wrote it. These are all in italics. In narrative poems I explore, ruminate, confess, and celebrate telling moments of my pain, darkness, warpedness, hope, and healing. These narratives are distilled discrete events -- memories, images, interchanges, and dreams -- which have slowly settled themselves into four stages of silence, rebetrayals, re/membrance, and knowledge.

These spiral stages are both progressive and recursive. Generally, my life and healing has been a slow progression from silence through rebetrayals through re/membrance to knowledge. Many times in this research process I have experienced intellectual, emotional and legal rebetrayals that have tumbled me right back to the depths of silence. Over this time, I have been increasingly able to name, understand and recover from these experiences, and have included some of them (Fury, terror and power II, for example) in this work. As this work wends towards completion, I am becoming less personally engaged in this spiral processes, and more aware of its possible usefulness as an educational model.

I wrote these poems in the order they came to me. During the writing process, I felt like an air controller at a hectic deep consciousness airport, with poems stacked and circling six or seven deep, waiting to be called in to land. As I wrote one poem, I could sense its soulsisters waiting to descend into my fingers and taxi onto the computer screen. My final organization of the narrative poems in Part Four and throughout the rest of this work has been on the basis of a blend of chronology (Un/consouled I, II, III), theme (Intestate, testimony;), and quality of experience (Secrets, Detaching, Re/membering innocence).

Journal passages are taken from my personal journal. In them, I reflect on my personal life, feelings, dreams, and research/writing progress. I have included dates for each passage, and written them in
italics. I include a miscellany of documents in Re/collection at the end of Part Three to chronicle my work during 1992 and into the beginning of 1993. They are all in chronological order and include two memos, a long narrative poem, a letter, journals, drawings, an advertising poster and a prayer of confession. The drawings from my sketch book portray daydreams, visions, and real life problems drawn with my dominant and non-dominant hand. Some also include text. The originals were done in colour, with no intention of publication, so that their reproductions lost detail and clarity. I did them all for my own healing, but decided to include some of them in hopes that they will add insight into the healing process, suggest alternative sources and formats of knowing, and perhaps encourage other victim/survivor/healers to explore their own drawing processes.

Finally, I have whited out specific names and relationship references regarding assailants, witnesses, childhood neighbourhood friends, teachers, relatives, and my current church affiliation. For you, reader, the physical blanks in the text may be distracting and even annoying. For me, they are very painful testimony to the years of censored knowing within my being.

OVARYVIEW

Please find your own way through this text. For some readers, this will be a path that follows the page numbers from beginning to end. Others may start by reading all the academic text and coming back to the poetry; others may read the poetry then return to the academic text; others may read the beginnings of each part, then the middles, then the ends; others may first read all of the poetry in Part Four; for others, the implications of Part Five will be their first read.
In Part One: Introduction (Let us break silence) I have invited you to join me in making the silence regarding intimate childhood sexual assault knowledge. I have explored some of the challenges of this undertaking, discussed some of the ways I have created language that helps us know the resonances and realities of intimate assault, and shared my hopes for you in your reading of this work.

In Part Two: Background (Intimate assault, silence and knowing), I measure and fasten the parameters of lexicon that frame this work (intimate, child, sexual assault, silence, knowing, knowledge). I then explore the realities of intimate childhood sexual assault in poemdefinitions, discussions of silence and knowing, and the adult consequences of intimate childhood sexual assault. I discuss intimate childhood sexual assault as womenchildren's first lesson in patriarchy, and the process of re/membering.

In Part Three: Method (Making silence knowledge), I summarize three approaches to researching women's experience in education: women's knowing, a critical feminist framework, and the integration of intimate experience. I then narrate the crone/ology of this research: how I came to the topic, wrote poetry, developed a series of conceptual frameworks for my poems, prepared to disclose the abuse to my family, did so, revised this work in anticipation of legal action, and worked towards completion. This process, undertaken with the financial support of my teaching career, the emotional/intellectual support of friends and my research advisor, and the institutional support of the university, illustrates some of the ways women are silenced, and some of the ways women and educators can begin to resist silence and come to knowledge of their lives. I discuss how claiming language and form has been important to my claiming knowledge, and conclude with the difficult issues of rigour and ethics with regard to intimate research and knowledge.

In Part Four: Testimony (From silence to knowledge), I narrate, in poetry, some of my experiences of silence, betrayal, re/membrance, and knowing. Most of these poems are arranged in chronological
order. The first experience was when I was an infant; others progress through my childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, and my current life. One exception to this sequence is Re/membering innocence. All are my own personal experiences; a few describe my experiences of other people. Towards the end, in the Knowledge section, I shift from narration to reflection on importance of healing, resisting, and generating knowledge.

In Part Five: Implications (Knowing witnesses), I conclude by exploring how we can implicate ourselves in witnessing, healing, and resisting intimate childhood sexual assault in our personal lives and educational praxis.
PART TWO: Background

Intimate Assault, Silence and Knowing

Lexicon

Silence

Silence
not knowing that I know
knowing, but not knowing to speak
knowing not to speak
knowing to speak, with no one to listen
knowing no one to speak on my be/half
not hearing when someone does.

Silence
crazy glue that binds; papier mache that casts
dis/membered tissue to a life/death mask
which imprisons the abused
and shields the abuser.

How was I,
robust body/heart/mind/soul creation of godde
secreted into silence?
Why did I, betrayed/abandoned/exhausted/defeated
not break silence earlier?

I feared my truth, rising from lungs
through throat, mouth, tongue, and lips
would rip/slit the soft warm dry/moist underbelly
of our swollen union:
my complicity
your power-braced vulnerability
your terror of my passion.
I feared the expellosion of
pussy tumours, acrid infections, pungent cysts
through that unsutured slit.
I feared my blood would cover the earth.

Then.
The slow tide shift from fear
the peregrine dance from silence.
Radically accompanied and essentially alone,
breaking and diving, floating blind in the coldseadark,
homing back to the matrix, retracing the nautilus
chamber by in/spiralling chamber
re/membering myself.
intimate:
essential, intrinsic,
pertaining to or connected with
inmost nature or fundamental character of a being
proceeding from, concerning, or affecting one's inmost self
entering deeply or closely into a matter
characterized by familiarity
involving close connection or union
one who intimately belongs to something
(verb) to make intimate, to familiarize
euphemism for illicit sexual intercourse

child:
Newly borne human being; fruit of the womb
a young person of either sex below the age of puberty
Descendants; members of a tribe or clan
One of the spiritual or moral progeny of a person;
One who inherits his spirit
and hands down the tradition of his influence

Expressing relation to a circumstance or characteristic quality,
eg. children of light, of wisdom, of truth,
of darkness, of disobedience, of adultery,
of shame, of tears, of sorrow,
of prayers, etc.
sexual assault:
  Kissing,
  fondling,
  sexual intercourse,
  anal intercourse
  and oral sex
  are all examples of sexual assault,
  if done without consent.

Consent to sexual activity must be freely given.
You did not consent
if you were afraid to fight back
or if you were frozen with fear.
Your lack of resistance
does not mean
that you consented
to the assault.

Watch, allude, expose
play, pressure
position, stimulate
persuade, demand, threaten
arouse, kiss, lick
fondle, rub, vibrate
urinate, masturbate
ejaculate, penetrate
breast
nipple
clitoris
bottom
mouth
anus
vagina
mind
heart
soul.

(With extracts from Liz Hall & Siobhan Lloyd, 1989, p. 12)
silence:
the fact of abstaining from or forbearing
from a speech or utterance;
muteness, reticence, taciturnity

in silence, to put to silence
to keep silence, to break silence

the state or condition when nothing is audible;
absence of all sound or noise; complete quiet or stillness
omission of mention, remark, or notice in narration
failure to communicate or reply
to cause to compel to cease speaking; to overcome in argument
to cause (an animal or thing) to cease giving out its natural sound
to suppress, restrain, prohibit, repress, disable, stop
to leave unmentioned or unnoticed, to pass over, to omit
to get rid of (a thing) by maintaining silence
to cease speaking, to become still
know:
wissen, kennen, erkennen
savoir, connaitre
(there is much difficulty in arranging
its senses and uses satisfactorily)
to know with the sense;
to know with the mind

knowing:
acknowledgement, recognition, personal acquaintance
the action of getting to understand
being aware or informed of anything
something known; an experience

About knowing

We believe our cells; trust our underthoughts.
Casting off the soulchilling veil
of lies, lunacy, and invisibility,
we begin to bear witness.
And oh

And oh, it is not this simple.

You will need courage in your solitude when no one can hear it; you'll need to encourage others who need brace for your long draws of bitter rage...

and you'll need time and money and not even courage or determination but some quality, some assumption, some unseen vision sense that you have no choice but to keep on through the pain, depression, and not knowing if things will ever get any better.

I can't tell you when and how it will end, only that I slowly became accustomed to seeing a little light, then a bigger light, then the rock scree that I'd be soon clambering up to the end of the tunnel dark; that my vision got clearer and my energy stronger and my humour deeper and my loneliness more profound, pure, and resilient, and that if I'd ever known what all this would require of me, I would have never have started it all, and if I'd never started it all, I wouldn't now be truly alive.

knowledge:

confession

acknowledgement or recognition of the position or claims (of anyone)

to take cognizance or notice of; to observe,

personal acquaintance, friendship, intimacy

sexual intimacy

acquaintance with a fact; perception or certain information of a fact or matter, consciousness (of anything)

acquaintance with facts, range of information,

intellectual acquaintance with, or perception of, fact or truth;

clear and certain mental apprehension;

to one's knowledge: as one is aware, as one can testify

to come to one's knowledge: to become known to one

to come to one's own knowledge: to recover one's understanding, to come to one's senses

information, intelligence, notice, intimation

a sign or mark by which anything is known or distinguished; a token.

to own the knowledge of, to confess or recognize or admit as true
to own as genuine, or of legal force or validity

to make oneself known to, or bring oneself in acquaintance with a person
to recognize, to identify (a disease); to diagnose
to take legal cognizance of (a cause, etc.)
INTIMATE ASSAULT, SILENCE AND KNOWING

I was "lovingly" seduced, violated, discovered, and disappeared;
invisible and voiceless.
**It never happened!**
They acted as if it never happened.
Where did that leave me?
Violated to my core, by something that never happened.
If I didn't know that; if I was wrong about that,
how could I know anything?
How could I connect with anything or learn anything or trust anything
I thought
I thought, or understood, or experienced, or felt, or did?

The consequences have been profound.
I have spent much of my adult life
alone, isolated, detached, undeserving, compliant, foggy, hazy, hollow, empty, mildly depressed;
vulnerable to sudden deep depression
unable to connect with much of twenty-two years of formal education
believing, profoundly, that I was stupid
repeating myself when speaking
unable to try to persuade others of my views, to disagree, to say "no"
permitting men to approach me, touch me, and penetrate me without resisting
aroused by degradation
in abusive relationships
having made and lost dozens of friends
moving homes thirteen times in twenty adult years
unable to follow current events
sabotaging my professional work
hollow and useless after visiting members of my family
unattached, marginal, unheard, unrecognized, unconnected, unbelonging to
family, friends, school staffs, churches, neighbourhoods, organizations,
even a sexual abuse support group,
chronic participant in personal growth courses, counselling, and/or therapy.

Nothing was ever true that I learned or did.
My first masters degree:
my course work, my monograph, my papers
at the Canadian Council of Teachers of English
and the American Educational Research Association
was all just stuff I thought about, applied, analyzed and synthesized,
lke controlling robot arms that reached into a plexiglass box
and manipulated the substance of my intellectual and professional work.
Intellectually, personally, and sexually, I never knew when I was safe, or when I was being invaded; I had only a vague sense of gut feeling or intuition. I was powerless to verbal, psychological, physical, and sexual violation, which I could not sense, protest, or resist.

*This is not easy to say; I've rewritten this section to make it less self-disclosing.*

I had no boundaries, and therefore, no integrity; not integrity/conscience with regard to harming others, but integrity/wholeness with regard to protecting myself.

*It is very hard for me to acknowledge this to myself, let alone make it public. I feel so ashamed of all this.*

It wasn't until I began writing my poetry and reading other women's experiences that I began to believe that this wasn't *me*, who was chronically troubled/disturbed/"having problems", but *me-living-through-the-consequences-of-abuse*.

Silence is a response of the vulnerable to abuse and betrayal. At times, we have all been vulnerable, abused, betrayed, and silent. For some of us, silence is a temporary state; for others, it is the stony reality of her knowing and being. The silence surrounding intimate childhood sexual assault of women is profound and pervasive. The truth of intimate assault is denied, and the silence maintained, by victims, assailants, accomplices, witnesses, other members of a household, close family and friends, and others who have regular contact with them, for example, educators.

How has my knowing been implicated/insinuated/penetrated by the violation and silencing of intimate assault? I want to stop feeling stupid, to be conscious and creative in addressing intimate assault and other social justice issues within own teaching practice, and I want to help others develop their understanding, awareness, and intuition regarding intimate assault.
As chronicled in the bibliography, I gained a general understanding of intimate assault and its consequences through reading the personal stories of adult survivors of intimate assault, narrative/prescriptive/research accounts of healer/clinicians, and research by social scientists. I had some problems with these works. Most of the accounts were of assaults that seemed much "worse" than mine, in being more violent, involving other obvious forms of abuse, being repeated more frequently and/or over longer time periods than my own. No one examined experiences of intimate assault on a fine enough scale to help me account for my feelings of complicity and loss. Beyond mentioning feelings of stupidity and uselessness, no one explored the interweave of silence, denial and knowing. Few writers developed a feminist analysis that explored intimate assault within patriarchal oppression of women.

Over time, I was able to integrate my learnings from these readings with my own experiences and reflections to develop the synthesis that follows below and in the next sections, The lexicon of intimate childhood sexual assault, Intimate assault as the terms of men’s endearment, and Silent witnesses: resisting knowledge. This process of creating an analytic framework of the literatures and an analytic framework of my intimate experience, then integrating the gaps of one into the spaces of the other, was one of the many large challenges of this work. My research advisor, Kathryn McCannel, continued to be confident in my ability to accomplish this emotional and intellectual task, even though neither of us knew exactly what the task was when I was in the middle of it. I see this section of text as a testament to the importance of academic advisement that nourishes courage and confidence in the face of the unknown, and academic programs that budget enough time and resources for such explorations.

The personal consequences of intimate childhood sexual assault are different for each survivor. These consequences are influenced by her dealing with many realities, pressures, and threats, including the
nature of her relationships each assailant, the nature and duration of their assaults over her infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, and the responses of others if and when she discloses her experiences.

No part of the victim is untouched. Her childtrust, boundaries, physical/intelectual/spiritual integrity are violated. During the assaults, she may savour the rare "special" attention being given her, enact roles her assailants assign to her, numb herself, or split her consciousness, leaving her body for a safer place, such as the ceiling or doorway, until the assaults are complete. She may create a "normal" life between attacks, by depressing all knowledge of them. This depression may also envelop her creativity, joy, spontaneity, resilience, confidence, intellectual clarity and curiosity. If she retains an awareness of the assaults and tries to tell someone else, she may not be heard, believed, defended, or protected.

She may block, fog, depress, or dissociate her awareness of the assaults during and/or between their occurrences. As verified in the literature regarding adult survivors of intimate childhood sexual assault, many victims suddenly and traumatically recall assaults after years or decades of having silenced all our knowledge of them. Even when other children or adults witness her being assaulted, or confront physical evidence of the assaults, they often deny any awareness of them. The victim's coerced silence during and after each assault can serve to reinforce these witness' denials.

She may be intimately assaulted in many ways, from visual spying or exposure, to verbal seduction/harrassment, to sexualized touching and fondling, to masturbating her or having her masturbate the assailant, to having her give or receive oral sex, to vaginal or anal intercourse, to sex performed in front of others, to ritual abuse.
The assaults may be coupled with degrading emotional, mental, spiritual abuse and violent physical abuse. The actual intimate assaults may be a more extreme and privatized version of other forms of abuse, such as excessive tickling, sexualized touching, comments, or visual contact which occur within the presence and knowledge of other family members. They may be the only form of individual contact, attention, or "affection" victims receive in an emotionally, physically, and verbally barren family system. In whatever particular constellation, the web of guilt, shame, complicity, coercion, threats, fear, denial, and apparent permission regarding intimate assaults can silence not only the victim's telling, but even her conscious knowing of the assaults.

The emotional, physical, and sexual consequences of these assaults have been documented with regard to violent, systematic, frequent, or extremely degrading assaults, and to those extended over a long period of the victim's infancy, childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. The abandonment, confusion, guilt, terror, pain and fear may take the form of super-achievement in areas of the victim's life, in the abuse of drugs, early and extensive sexual involvements, and withdrawal from social organizations. The intellectual consequences for victims include depression, feelings of stupidity, amnesia, and the development of split existences or multiple personalities. Academic consequences that range from sporadic schooling and early dropping out to withdrawal of attention and underachievement, through to pleasing/ proving/ finding refuge/ excelling in academic pursuits.

My knowing is my sense of who/what I trust as sources of truth; my soul/soil of consciousness, awareness, and sense in which all my learning and creativity and exploration takes root. As a victim of intimate assault, this soil was contaminated by betrayal and leached by denial. How could I know what I knew, if I didn't know what had been done to my body? I couldn't believe my self, and I had to believe the words and actions of others; everyone else seemed to. I can remember many times in my life when I have believed peoples' words in the face of their directly contradictory actions; I have put enormous stock in others' language. My knowing is the base of my confidence in my thinking,
memory, knowledge; my sense of being able to speak and contribute to the truths of the world. The more I heal from my experiences of abuse, the more I reclaim and recreate this knowing as a composite of my own intuition, feelings, values, insights, and boundaries, and the less willing I am to brook the contradictions between others' words and actions; the more able I am to discern the knowledge of use to me.

THE LEXICON OF INTIMATE CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ASSAULT

This section and the one that follows have been among the most intellectually difficult parts of this whole work to write. I am completing them quite close to the end of my writing process. Here, I synthesize my understanding of the terminology, or lexicon, of sexual assault; the body counts of the frequency and extent of sexual assault; the dynamics of intimate assault that I have come to learn of through my own reflections and my readings of other survivors' accounts; and my, and others', analysis of sexual assault as the wounding/wounded matrix of women's oppression in patriarchy.

After many attempts to summarize specifics with appropriate references throughout, I finally deleted almost all specifics and references, writing from my insides. Doing so, I am climbing without a rope; I feel vulnerable, exposed, excited and strong. I give shape and substance to the silence that surrounds all aspects of our knowledge of intimate childhood sexual assault, from the victim's own not knowing, to the denial of witnesses, to the embedding of men's oppression of women within our social structure and our living bodies.

Among the writings of survivors, practitioners, researchers, educators, and lawyers, there is much confusion regarding the lexicon of sexual assault, including the realities and dynamics of what I have come to name intimate childhood sexual assault. The sexual assault of a baby, child, adolescent, or adult by a trusted, older, or more powerful individual has been variously termed incest, rape, child abuse, sexual abuse, and sexual assault. Each of these terms both emphasizes and muffles some of the nuances, dynamics, and realities of intimate childhood sexual assault. I have found all of them unsatisfactory with regard to the naming of my own experiences, and have therefore created the term used in this work, intimate childhood sexual assault.
Incest describes, very badly, any sexual relationship between people too closely related for legal marriage: anything from the sexual flirtation of cousins to father-daughter rape. Just as the term itself names the sexual trespass of boundaries within a family system, the current usage of this term crosses boundaries of connotation/denotation that I find very disturbing. First, incestuous relations may be consensual, coerced, or extremely violent; having one term for all is the equivalent of having the same word for mercy killing, accidental death, suicide, and ritual abuse murder. Second, incest is often toggled with taboo to make incest taboo. A taboo is something that isn’t supposed to happen, or, if it does, holds dire consequences for the perpetrator. As many have noted, the only taboo against incest in our society is against its disclosure.

Rape is the term used by some writers focussing on the outrage of father-daughter sexual assaults. This word carries enormous power in its recognition of the terror, violence and degradation; however, this same power overshadows the subtleties of seduction, love, reliance, and compliance in which victims of intimate childhood sexual assault may be enwebbed.

According to the British Columbia Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook (cited by the British Columbia Task Force on Family Violence, 1992), child abuse is the term for a child’s on-going lived experience of physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, spiritual, mental/intellectual abuse, and neglect is the

failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional, or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child’s health, development or safety is endangered... Society has a responsibility to detect, to intervene, and to protect. Such a societal response can occur only if enough people are aware of the signs and dynamics of abuse, know of their responsibility to report, and care enough to get involved. (p.133)

Child abuse is the distorted, spongy, warped, tainted, unsafe context of relationships in which specific acts of sexual assault may be planned, perpetrated, denied, and protected. These assaults occur in
the normal, daily, routine locations of the victim's life: in the bathroom, bedroom, classroom, basement, garage, or yard of her home, her neighbourhood, her friends' and relatives' homes, her daycare, her religious center, and her school. Each instance of sexual assault or other forms of abuse may be located along a continuum, from sanity- or life-endangering acts, to the quiet corrosion of her confidence, dignity, privacy, safety, and integrity. At every point on this continuum, witnesses neglect to recognize and respond to intimate assault.

Perpetrators of extreme forms of abuse have been protected, in spite of the clear verbal and physical evidence of their victims, by the literally unimaginable nature of their acts. Sexual abuse of large numbers of children by religious, sports, community, and educational leaders, and the sexual perversion, spiritual destruction, physical assault and even deaths of children by ritual abuse have only begun to be acknowledged.

Conversely, and somehow similarly, the closer child sexual abuse comes to overlapping the bounds of "normal" behaviour, (observing, teasing, hugging, kissing, bathing; sibling rivalry, manipulation by older peers, child sex play), the more difficult it may be for victims and witnesses to identify the abuse as abuse. The less visible the scars or bruises, the more difficult it may be for both victims and witnesses to recognize, name, and respond to abuse.

I name myself as a survivor of child sexual abuse because I was sexually assaulted by my ______ and my ______. However, I have come to recognize that these assaults took place within a constellation of intermittent intellectual abuse, spiritual abuse and chronic emotional neglect. I have come to believe that this whole constellation is important with regard to my experiences of silence and re/membering, and that a fine scale examination of others' experiences of intimate childhood sexual assault, as well as other forms of child abuse, would reveal an equally complex constellation. I realize that this constellation of abuse violated my fundamental sense of what I did and did not, and what I could and
could not dare to know of the truth of my own experience. These "relatively mild" assaults have had profound consequences in my life.

While I feel very strongly that outside measures of the severity of intimate assault and attendant abuse are inappropriate and unhelpful, I want to note here that my experiences were less extreme than virtually all the survivors' stories of physical, sexual, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual abuse I have read and heard about: I don't remember being directly threatened with physical harm, there were few assaults, and I was penetrated orally, not vaginally... and these assaults and their attendant silences have profoundly altered my life.

During this research process, I have been confused about the difference between sexual abuse and sexual assault. In many articles and books, the terms are used interchangeably, but I developed the sense that abuse was soft tissue damage to the broken bones of assault; that children were abused but women were assaulted; that abuse was unfortunate, and dealt with by a social worker or counsellor, but that assault was a criminal act. I eventually learned that sexual assault is the legal term for non-consensual sexual activity which violates the sexual integrity of a person. It includes a range of behaviours from verbal comments to assault with a deadly weapon. This term lifts assault out of the realm of interpersonal and family dynamics and places it unequivocally within the framework of the law. However, with regard to sexual assault within the intimate sphere of a child, something is lost with the use of this term: like rape, this term denudes recognition of the intimate nuances of terror and love that may be embedded within intimate assault.

My memory of my _____'s sexual assault of me is framed in the mist of my five year old's longing to love and be loved, my need to be seen, valued, touched tenderly, my desire to please, my childcomplicity... and it was sexual assault. My memory of my _____'s luring me into the back seat of the car in the dark garage, and doing something like sitting on me and shoving his penis into my
mouth, is filled with vagueness and confusion and profound isolation; he was an older kid and I was a younger kid, and it, too, was sexual assault. Today, I could initiate an investigation and lay charges against both of them. I would probably not be successful in proving these charges, because I have no witnesses and no proof, other than my memory and the lived consequences in my life. Most of the members of my immediate family deny even the possibility that I could have been abused by them. My _______ has threatened to launch a civil law suit (slander and libel) to prevent any publication of this work. Although I have legally changed my name to publish this work, and eliminated all specific references, the only way I could be totally safe from this lawsuit would be to wait until both assailants died, or to successfully lay criminal charges against them.

I developed the term intimate childhood sexual assault to recognize that the sexual assault of children is perpetrated by those whom they love, trust, or are dependent upon; that it is both private betrayal and criminal offence; that, like other forms of assault, it ranges in degree from leering to squeezing to kissing to rubbing to penetration to intercourse and worse; that a victim’s compliance may be achieved through threats of harm to others, threats to reveal past compliance, emotional manipulation, seduction, emotional or economic power, the assistance of a co-assailant, and/or physical power.

It is the intimate, private, secret nature of this crime that is so hard to imagine and so easy to deny. Intimate childhood sexual assault (or intimate assault) locates sexual assault both within the legal system and within the victim’s private sphere; in her own bedroom at lights-out, in the basement bathroom when the washing machine is on, or on the living room sofa on Thursday afternoons when others are out. The victim usually lives, and continues to live, under the same roof as the assailant. The assaults may be fleeting or prolonged; they may be tender, degrading, or vicious. The victim may survive through denial, resistance, or emotionally entangled compliance. The necessary constant for intimate childhood sexual assault to continue is that victims and witnesses who could, should, or do, know of the assaults, remain silent.
INTIMATE ASSAULT AS THE TERMS OF MEN'S ENDEARMMENT

The confusion of terminology in discussions of intimate childhood sexual assault reflects the dearth of coherent analysis regarding men's sexual aggression, and more particularly, their sexual aggression towards women, in Canadian and American society. The arithmetic of men's violence towards women is staggering. Boys and men abuse babies, girls and young women with impunity. Given the dynamics of silence, we do not yet know the full extent of intimate childhood sexual assault in terms of numbers of victims, numbers of assailants, and the frequency and the nature of the assaults. Sexual assaults of all types are among the least reported and prosecuted crimes; intimate childhood sexual assault may be even more so. I hesitate to include any statistics regarding intimate assault in this work: given what I have learned about the dynamics of personal, family, and social denial, I believe that these estimates dramatically underestimate the numbers of women and children of both genders who are victims of intimate assault.


Regarding wife assault:

*At least one in eight Canadian women is (physically) assaulted by her husband or live-in partner.*
*62% of women murdered in Canada in 1990 died as a result of wife assault.*
*95% of the victims of "spousal assault" are women.*
*It is likely that between 50,000 and 75,000 school-age children in B.C. have witnessed violence directed against their mothers.* (p. 73)
Regarding sexual assault:

In 1989, 26,868 sexual assaults were reported to police in Canada. This was a 68% increase in seven years.
It is estimated that only one in ten sexual assaults is reported to the police. A Winnipeg study found that for date rape, only one in a hundred cases is reported to the police.
90% of victims of sexual assaults who come forward are women; most of the offenders are men.
80% of sexual assaults happen in the victim's home. (p. 111)

Regarding child sexual abuse:

At some time in their lives, about one in two females and one in three males have been victims of unwanted sexual acts. About four in five of these incidents first happened to these persons when they were children or youths.
98.8% of child sexual abusers are male.
The number of reported adolescent sexual abusers is growing, currently constituting about one quarter of all child sexual abuse offenders. (p. 133)

The invasive looks, words, fingers, hands, mouths, and penises of fathers, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers, neighbours, and family friends are the first lesson in men's oppression for victimized women infants, children, and adolescents. It is both seed and microcosm of the sexual harassment, wife battering, acquaintance rape, prostitution, violent pornography, and spousal homicide which maintain men's power and women's silence.

To trace the indelible track from intimate childhood sexual assault to the vocational and financial and social and economic and cultural oppression of women is to recognize this:

The lexicon of intimate assault is the primer of men's terms of endearment.

Not their endearment for women, but their endearment for the power they exert over women through sexual assault and the threat of sexual assault.
Non-consensual sexual activity is neither intimacy nor pleasure nor ecstasy; sexual assault of any degree is, as song writer and survivor Shari Ulrich has testified, a humiliating, controlling act of power and cruelty and hatred (Task Force, 1992). To trace these connections from private to public oppression of women is to recognize that our society is not only silent regarding men’s intimate assault of women, but structured on the embodied wounds of women’s fear, pain, denial, and silence.

Men sexually assault women and less powerful men. Many men have not, do not, and will not sexually assault women. Some child men, adolescent men, and adult men assault other men who are smaller or weaker than themselves, very likely with a frequency we have yet to recognize. Men who assault usually do so more than once, and to more than one victim. Although many men who have been sexually assaulted do not assault others, the majority of male sexual assailants are child or adolescent victims of sexual assault, usually by other men (see Vanderbilt, 1992). Homophobia and fears of perceived complicity make it even less likely for young males to disclose assaults than for young women to do so; I can only speculate from my own experience about the other forms of abuse, betrayal, and denial in which a male victim could be enwebbed.

Recognizing assailants’ background experiences of abuse, however, in no way absolves them of responsibility for the horror of their actions or detracts from the larger social context which protects and maintains their victimization of women. It is men who directly continue the cycle of sexual assault through their assaults, and it is their physical, social, and financial power that allows them to do so.

Women are sexually assaulted by men, and become victims, not assailants. Women who are assaulted are usually assaulted more than once, and by more than one assailant. Women victims of sexual assault rarely assault others; they may self-abuse through depression, substance abuse, prostitution or suicide attempts; they may marry abusive spouses and they may parent children who
will, in turn, be sexually assaulted within their homes (Task Force, 1992, p.111). Women contribute to the generational continuation of intimate assault and other forms of abuse through their denial, silence, powerlessness and fear.

SILENT WITNESSES: RESISTING KNOWLEDGE

The victims are not the only ones who remain silent about intimate assault. Silent witnesses ignore clear physical evidence as well as more subtle changes in a child’s demeanour, unexplained absences and upsets, unusual responses, comments, drawings, or resonances. Many know the statistics regarding intimate assault; very few of us choose to take the next step of daring to make the visceral understanding of how these staggering numbers people our daily lives. Responsible adults, both women and men, choose to be unaware of the reality of sexual assault embodied within baby, child, adolescent, and adult women whom they parent, live with, teach, work with, care about, and love.

At least
one in four women
friendsdaughtersniecesgoddaughters
granddaughtersneighbours
studentscolleaguescommitteemembers
supervisorsdepartmentchairsinstructors
professorsresearchersadministrators
ministryofficialsboardmembersgovernors
onetwothreefouronetwothreefouronetwothreefour...

Silent witnesses allow the assaults to continue. We could sense it, feel it, hear it or about it, see evidence in body and behaviour, understand the possibilities of abuse, denial, knowing, speaking, and healing, be versed in the pragmatics of support, intervention and legal action; largely, we choose not to. The result can be that the assaults, or the denial of past assaults, persists.
The fear, experience, and consequences of men's sexual assaults of women is the keystone to patriarchal social organization. It is the wound that keeps on bleeding with women’s silence and victimization, and with men’s pain and power. We must all feel this wound, see it, sense it, and know it, if we are to heal it.

BREAKING SILENCE

Breaking the silence of intimate childhood sexual assault is as complex and terrorladen as the silencing itself. Women keep silence for good reason; to speak our truth is to collapse the intimate underpinnings of our lives. As we re/member the truth, we may destroy our world.

For survivors, intimate childhood sexual assault insinuates itself in every aspect of our lives, including our self concept, sexuality, the dynamics of our intimate, family, and work relationships, and our fundamental confidence in ourselves as a learners, knowers, and sources of knowledge. Some of us may have no conscious memory of the assaults and events surrounding them, perhaps losing years of childhood memory. Some of us experience fog, confusion, depression, disorientation, anxiety, and powerlessness as we struggle to keep our memories suppressed or minimized. We may redefine the assaults as normal behaviour, recognize them as sexual assaults but minimize their importance, or try to bury the conscious memories we do have, and just "get on with life".

When women remember being assaulted, we re-experience loss, grief, rage, violation, and pain beyond words. Uncertainty, denial and resistance are frequent inner companions, as is the feeling that we may be losing our sanity. The fear is profound: of believing what we know, of others not believing, of never getting through the rage, of falling apart and never pulling together again, of losing our job, of never having a healthy sexuality, of not controlling who will hear of our experience, of not being able to control others' responses to us, of losing our family, of our assailants attacking, destroying or killing us.
The remembering may simmer below conscious awareness, as random or persistently recurring dreams, daydreams, confusions, doubts, nagging questions, memory fragments, odd associations and inexplicable distresses reconstellate themselves into an unarguable truth. It may be a traumatic bolt/realization, stimulated by a comment, sight, odour, touch, or movement, by learning of another's experiences, by our child reaching the age of our own assaults, by discovering our child's having been assaulted, or by a significant physical, emotional, or spiritual loss, trauma, or death.

The recognition of intimate assault may be the experience of "blanking out" all thought and feeling. It may be a quiet, clear, unemotional cognitive awareness or a profound shock. Flashbacks, during which the physical, emotional, mental experiences are suddenly seen, felt, and even relived, may occur as the first remembering or throughout the remembering processes. Private journal writing, drawing, painting, claywork, music, rhythm and sound, counselling, group work, regression therapy and body work can assist in loosening, freeing and making sense of these experiences. Our realization may or may not be supported by those in whom we confide.

We each choose how to deal with our assailants and family members. We may continue or sever contact with them. We may chose to confront certain selected family members and assailants or perhaps none at all. We may confide in some, and have others be told without her permission or knowledge. We may begin a process of recognition, restitution, forgiveness, and reconciliation with our assailants and witnesses, or we may be met with alienation, denial, aggression, threats. We may disassociate ourself from assailants and other family members, or, more likely, they may disassociate themselves from us. We may consider or undertake legal action in the form of a civil suit or criminal charges, or be threatened with a civil law suit if we continue to speak or write of the assaults.
PART THREE: METHOD

MAKING SILENCE KNOWLEDGE

In this part, I discuss the readings that most influenced this research, the process of writing, framing, and revising both my poetry and this entire work, the interplay of my intimate, personal, birthfamily, and academic life over this research process, and issues regarding intimate reflective autobiography as research method.

Crone/ology

reflective narration of a woman's journey of knowing; spiralling events, thoughtfeelings, and simmering knowings spun into a raggedly time-sequenced yarn; autobiography of a wising, healing woman. (orig.)

Mine goes something like this:
moving my home, moving my home, moving my home, moving my home,
retracing, letting float, sprouting soul tendril/rootlets;
silence, isolation, fear, throbs,
talking, reading, musing,
settling, formulating, recognizing, fearing,
borrowing, remembering, tracing,
writing, creating, tightening, editing,
co-creating, verifying, being believed,
reframing, reading, reframing,
ceasing writing, confronting, being denied,
fearing writing, fearing speaking,
finding new advisor,
writing, reframing, grieving, drawing, dreaming,
paying to be listened to, heard, seen, touched, held, questioned;
harassment, fear of lawsuit,
hungering for belonging, understanding, acceptance,
scorching a legion of friendships,
finding new advisor,
tried and tortured withdrawal from my habit of yearning for family.
TOWARDS MAKING SILENCE KNOWLEDGE

Beginning in the fall of 1987, and continuing through 1988 and 1989, my entry into the academic world of adult education included a great deal of reading, most of which I could not connect with on any kind of personal level. I was used to graduate work, having completed an Master (sic) of Education at McGill University in Educational Psychology in the early 80's, and was accustomed to feeling somewhat separate from the content and processes of formal education. However, in one core course in the Adult Education program, I found that the more personally excited, satisfied and connected I became with my written insights, the worse my essay marks would be. This mini-trend climaxed with my Adult Education M.A. comprehensive examination results. After completing the day-long exam, I felt almost cocky about my originality, fluency and grasp of concepts... and later found that I failed the exam.

What was wrong with this picture?

Looking back, I now see that even the preliminary research reading for this work was a quest to answer numerous, and largely unformed personal, intellectual, spiritual, theological, educational, and political questions inside me. Why did I so often feel stupid? Why did this academic work make so little personal sense to me? Could I find any written work or lived educational practice that made profound personal sense to me, that fit and nourished me?

I began this search in the literatures of popular education and its theological roots in Christian liberation theology, and the literature of Christian feminist theology. Paulo Friere's early work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and the experience of participating in a week-long workshop on popular education/ liberation theology led by educator/activist Denyse Nadeau and theologian Dr. Ann Greer Ng, at Regent College, at the University of British Columbia, seeded a number of notions inside me. These included understandings that our personal/ social/ economic realities are, in fact, political realities; that we may break the silence of oppression by gaining language, analysis and
solidarity through education; that within educational praxis we reflect on our actions and act on our reflections as educators and/or oppressed peoples; that education for social change is also spiritual work; that drawing, singing, dancing and eating together are integral to education for social change; and that, within the context of Christian liberation theology, God is unequivocally on the side of the oppressed, marginalized and silent.


Their analyses of the implications of patriarchal assumptions and structures in every aspect of the Christian church gave voice and shape to much of my chronic questions, pain, and yearning regarding my own United Church background, and balm to two profound betrayals of my own spiritual-personal life. The first was my being forced, as an adolescent, to become a member of the church against my will. The second was about ten years later, when I was forced to marry someone I didn’t love. This wedding was conducted by a church minister who knew how I had been betrayed and pressured by my family, and did nothing to intervene.
Towards the end of my Christian feminist reading, I came across Maria Harris' *Women and teaching: Themes for a spirituality of pedagogy* (1988). In this slim and profound volume, Harris traces the movements of silence, remembering, ritual mourning, artistry and birthing which she names as the steps in the spiritual dance of women's teaching and learning. From her work, I gained a number of empowering notions, including an understanding of teaching as the spiritual work that leads to the harmonization of self and body, self and other, self and world (quoting Rosemary Reuther. p. 13), an appreciation of the importance of women's silences and our dangerous remembering, and a recognition that suffering is always a collective act.

Around the time of reading Maria Harris, I also read Joanna Macy's *Despair and personal power in the nuclear age* (1983). Like Harris' work, Macy's is deeply spiritual. She draws on a wide range of religious traditions to nourish spiritual strength within our educational practice and lives. Macy focuses on the educational process of breaking the silence of despair regarding the possibility of nuclear destruction of the earth. She sees this as the first step in turning from despair to personal and collective empowerment regarding personal, neighbourhood, social, and political change.

I can't remember exactly when, in this exploration, I read Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind* (1986). What I remember vividly is that all my women student colleagues were extremely excited about it, that it was impossible to borrow from the library because of waiting lists, and that I could hardly wait for this work to account for my many questions, gaps, and silences regarding my personal sense of knowing, voice and authority. I expected that this book would complete the process that the popular education and Christian feminist, and spiritualeducational readings had begun. I expected it would help me name, shape, and resolve my struggles regarding my own knowing and silences. I hoped it would help me stop feeling stupid.
I was initially excited about their five positions of knowing: *silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, constructed knowledge*. It wasn’t a Bloom’s taxonomy or a Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, but a notion that could address women’s inner experiences of knowing! This excitement was shortlived. I felt frustrated and incomplete when I began to sense that even though these positions were offered as non-hierarchical, I could not see them as anything but a staircase that started with silence on the bottom and climbed to constructed knowledge at the top.

The authors offer these positions as *epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world*, and state that they *leave it to future work to determine whether these perspectives have any stagelike qualities* (p. 15). Hmmm! I found that each position is characterized as additive to the previous one, and that I couldn’t help but see the positions as both developmental and hierarchical.

While almost half of the women interviewed were predominantly “subjectivist” in their thinking, the authors never seem to wonder why so many women have been unable to develop as procedural or constructed knowers. The page margins of my copy quickly became filled with my scratched and angry annotation arguments including, *Development without stagelike qualities?... ignores patriarchy!... traces and threads of truth – but mismatched!* The authors recognize particular forms of women’s oppression, such as poverty, physical abuse, and intellectual domination, but do not grapple with the intellectual, social, economic and political enstructuration of this oppression within patriarchy. While they say they are part of the ...Zeitgeist... of feminist theory about voice and silence (p. 19), they seem to view woman as simply different than men, rather than as being silenced, marginalized and oppressed because they are women.

It gets worse. The authors quote poet Marge Piercy (1978, p. 38) to describe one of the tasks of a procedural knowledge woman as,
She must learn again to speak...
starting as the infant does
with her own true hunger
and pleasure
and rage.

Yet, they do not name their own. Aside from the cover jacket's references to their academic positions, I know nothing else about the authors' involvements with the women they interviewed, nor their personal connections with the results and frameworks they generated. I have to assume they have never felt silent; I don't know if they have been received, subjective, or even procedural in their knowledge. I agree with the authors' conclusions that educators need to emphasize connection, understanding, acceptance, collaboration, firsthand experience, and the evolution of students' own patterns of work. However, I feel no personal connection with these powerful and liberating notions, or the disconnected research process that led to them. This book left me feeling empty and kind of achy.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's understanding of women's silences was extremely disappointing to me. To describe the position of silence, the authors use words such as deaf, dumb, underdeveloped, uncultivated, unable, separated, diminished, cut off, unaware, unexploring, isolated, misguided, and limited. They appear to have had considerable difficulty imagining such a zombie-like state: In trying to understand the experience of voice for the silent women, we searched their stories for all references that had, by the broadest stretch of the imagination, any association with the idea of voice... (p. 24). There appears to be a glass wall between their observing and the "silent" women's reality. The authors note behaviours, but have no sense of the depth, darkness, and resonance of the silence that traps and even protects oppressed women, nor any appreciation of the courage and tenacity of women who see no alternative to their silent and depressed knowing.

As I later explored and re/membered my own silences through the process of writing my poetry, I developed a profound awe for myself as the child and woman who survived intimate assault in her prison and womb of silence. I will never fully understand the braiding of silence, remembering and
resisting that has been my healing, but I do know that silence is not passivity. It is tenacious survival.

Despite these considerable frustrations and disappointments in reading *Women's ways of knowing*, the five positions of knowing, voice and authority did provide me with fathom markers for my own deep dive into silence and knowing in my poetry writing. From them, I took assurance that if I began to remember my own silences, I might not lose my sanity and might possibly progress to other experiences of knowing. I used the five positions as the initial organizing framework for my poetry, but I eventually found they could not embrace the fundamental dynamics of intimate childhood sexual assault.

In the summer and fall of 1989, I studied descriptions, explorations, and critiques of women learning, teaching, and researching; feminist educators examining themselves as educational agents by sifting through the tensions and contradictions of their own educational practices to name the underlying commitments and characteristics of their work, and analyze the dynamics of silence, invisibility, marginalization, and empowerment. I found in this literature that writers would speak directly from their own experiences as educators, students, and researchers: Lewis and Simon (1986), Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and Kathleen Rockhill (1987) all use their own experiences as educator/researchers as the subject of their work.

Magda Lewis and Roger Simon describe and analyze the silencing of women in a graduate seminar in which Lewis was a student participant and Simon, the professor; Elizabeth Ellsworth reflects on her own teaching for social change during a period of campus political upheaval. Closest to my heart is Kathleen Rockhill's "The Chaos of Subjectivity in the Halls of Academe" (1987) in which she scrutinizes the schism between her own subjective sense of self, experience and knowing, and the academic/intellectual pressures which work to numb that sense. This rich, dark, passionate and analytic work influenced my own explorations profoundly.
Just as some readers may do with my work, I avoided reading Rockhill’s work for months. Eventually, I read it quickly and filed it away, then returned to it, read, absorbed, and deeply reverberated with the work. This work disturbed, disquieted and encouraged me; it was the first and only work that embedded intimate childhood sexual assault within an educational context.

Over the following years, one notion from this work nourished my own. It was the connection between Rockhill’s theorizing and research and her own history of childhood and adult abuse. Years after completing research on literacy with the Los Angeles Hispanic immigrant community, Rockhill broke through an almost forty year cycle of abuse which had begun with her being psychologically, physically and sexually abused by her father. Going back over her personal journals, she realized that denial of her own experiences of abuse had made her unable to understand her own personal history beyond an intellectual framework of being "socially constructed"; I had an intellectual understanding of my oppression that in a very bizarre way made it possible for me to reproduce it (1987, p. 15).

About a year later, she reviewed the literacy study interview transcripts and realized that the violence the women experienced was not peripheral, as she had originally indicated in her research analysis, but central to their struggle for English literacy.

Now, weeks from completing this research, I reread this (1987) article and my original notes on it. I recognize Rockhill’s sourcevoice was deeper than these two stories; that her vision has largely become my bones regarding breaking ranks with conventional academic form; speaking from and of the darkness, of our sexuality; naming the abuse of our sexuality, as the first place of men’s oppression of women; and finding new forms of academic discourse, logic, and structures. I now identify key passages in her writing which I don’t remember having read before, but now resonate deeply with my own work:

No! Someplace, somewhere you must follow your heart and break out of these forms -- at the very least stretch them enough to be mindful of how it is that they limit, shape and even jeopardize... (Kathleen Rockhill, 1987, p. 13)

And if we do speak from the belly, if we do talk our terror and despair, our hope and our fears, we do so at great risk as we make ourselves vulnerable... (p. 13)
... for if our sexuality is the primary site of our oppression as women, what does it mean when we cannot talk about it in our work unless it is in terms of those women and children, out there who are battered and abused... If this is the primary site of our oppression, then it is a central political problem to address... (pp.13,14)

How can we move toward developing academic forms which can take into account the ways in which our gendered subjectivities are constituted, which allow for the construction of new educational, political and scholarly forms, and which enable us to open up, to claim and to fight our sexual subjugation? (p. 14)

By the time I read the jacket of Stanley and Wise's (1983) standard reference for feminist educational research, which features descriptions of the authors' various "dead-end jobs", including work as groom, filing clerk, and children's nanny, I was convinced that I wanted to do this, too! It was alive, vital, funny, fun: from the introductory dialogue (... and we were both pissed off...) to the concluding paragraph (... as we are women and people, so will we be researchers...), the authors include personal experiences which have informed their passion for research methodologies that generate detailed analyses of the personal and everyday oppression of women. Undergirding the vitality and charisma of Stanley and Wise's work is the recognition that women's everyday experience is the lived microcosm of our oppression and marginality within patriarchal social, economic and political structures, as well as our experiences of privilege, access, advantage, and agency. Our research includes our personal intuitions, conscious thoughts, emotions, and physical responses throughout the research process, and recognition of the deep inner play of hegemonic ideas, critical consciousness, resistance and transformation. This, in turn, calls for modes of research writing that integrate intellectual with physical, spiritual and emotional knowledge.

Through this reading I became passionately committed to the feminist research goal of making women's silence knowledge; of making the oppressions of women's lives visible and understandable in ways that would lead to our healing and emancipation. When we recognize that the personal is
political, when we examine the mundane, daily "quotidian" of women's realities and when we knit connections between private realities and the social, political, economic realities that press upon them, then we illuminate, as Kathleen Weiler (Women teaching for change: Gender, class & power, 1988) states, "...the dual processes of social and cultural reproduction on the one hand and resistance and the production of meaning on the other" (p. 59). To do so, we describe the particulars of women's lives, analyze the connections with the larger reality of patriarchy and other forms of oppression, and create theoretical frameworks that can guide and inform action.

My first reading of Weiler was a profound emotional/intellectual experience. Her resounding analysis of feminist teachers and administrators, their backgrounds, working and social context, practice, theory, and visions was affirming and astounding to me. First, she was writing about something I was and did -- woman, teaching high school -- as if it were a significant subject of research. Second, she brought me -- fledgling feminist/exhausted womanteacher -- home to a critical analysis of feminist educational praxis firmly grounded in both personal and political realities.

While Kathleen Rockhill had integrated the intimate with feminist theory and imperatives, Kathleen Weiler integrated the daily realities of students, teachers and administrators with critical social theory. Weiler observed and interviewed eleven women teachers and administrators in a number of American public schools. Her enunciation of critical educational theory, feminist analysis of gender and schooling, and feminist methodology is the fertile matrix for her own exploration of the dialectics of gender in the lives of these feminist teachers and their students. Re-reading her work after writing most of mine, I now realize how solidly this matrix has become my own, including her understandings that:

... theory articulates the categories, inquiries, and conclusions that give meaning to experiences, and that if theory is to engender emancipatory change, it must address both the reproduction of existing social, gender, and class relationships as well as individual and collective agency in the production of counter-hegemonic meaning, class, race, and gender identities through resistance and emancipatory knowledge, relationships, and structures;
... feminist teachers need to move beyond individual practices of resistance to the building of a counter-hegemonic movement, and that such a movement be based on a critical understanding of both individual agency and the structural forces acting upon teachers in their personal and working lives;

... feminist research methodology begins with women as referent, recognizing both women’s oppression and women’s agency within patriarchy, acknowledging the relationships among power, knowledge, and language, and challenging the methodology, assumptions, and language of the male intellectual tradition (p. 58);

... feminist research emphasizes the connections between the personal and the political and connections between resistance and reproduction embedded within everyday life;

... feminist research is consciously subjective and partial, and therefore calls for new relationships between the observer and the observed, and acknowledgement and validation of all involved (p. 62, citing Renate Deuli-Klein, 1983 and Maria Mies, 1983);

... feminist research is politically committed to social change, which includes changes in social structures, educational practices, and in consciousness, language, and ways of knowing (p.60);

... an exploration of women’s ways of knowing include our subjective experience and knowledge that lies silent and invisible, prior to expression and conscious knowing, and that new forms of expression and nonconventional topics are essential to the exploration of women’s ways of silent and invisible knowing;

... we begin a critical elaboration of women’s reality by recognizing what one really is, and traces of our individual and social history; that the work of revealing women’s everyday realities is an almost archaeological endeavour — that of discovering and uncovering the actual facts of women’s lives and experiences, facts that have been hidden, inaccessible, suppressed, distorted, misunderstood, ignored (p. 62, citing Barbara duBois, 1983).

My only small problem with this work is that despite all the analytic power of Weiler’s exploration of other women’s personal and political educational practices, Weiler keeps her own experience to herself. She summarizes her personal relationship with this work as, My experiences as a woman and teacher have clearly led me to this topic (p.v)! Nonetheless, her work affirmed the importance of my own life and work as a topic of research, established very rich theoretical notions with which I would frame my research, and legitimated my explorations of sources, formats, and language.
Through these, and other feminist writers and teachers, I came to understand that we research women’s experience rigourously when we tell tales, publish secrets, and reframe private pain as political oppression; when we integrate our thoughts, feelings, hearts and souls; vulnerability with passion; humour with profanities; loneliness with excitement; pain with nourishment; constraints with possibilities; cautious care with unbridled rage.

I came to believe that at its most essential, feminist research is women doing research in the manner Virginia Woolf longed for us to write, *...rigourously as women,* with passion and colour, out of our own experience (Annas, 1985, p. 361); creating knowledge of self and self in relation to others, the formulation of theories, and the generation of political action and social change.

Recognizing the silencing of women in patriarchy, this is research *...committed to a politics of transliteration,* *the methodology of a mind stunned at the suddenly possible shifts of meaning* – *for which like amnesiacs in a ward on fire, we must find words or burn.* (Olga Broumas I986, cited in Walsh, 1986, p. 1)

I came to understand that we research rigourously as women when we name the lies, secrets, and silences that have enshrouded us (Rich, 1979), the pain, healing, strengths, vulnerabilities, clarity and fog that we bring to our work, as women and researchers; when we write in high relief our learnings, struggles, limitations, emotional/physical/intellectual/spiritual peregrinations and revelations as we integrate our own lives with our research.
From this recognition and reflection on our personal involvement, we can generate both passionate theory and vibrant action.

I came to know that I could reflect on the tensions, contradictions, and possibilities in my own educational work, to generate a fuller understanding of the silencing, contradictions, insights, sparks, and love that were my experience.

I came to know that my most important understandings were lodged in my deepest silences and fears.

I came to know that the topic of my feminist research is assault, silence, and healing.

**RE/MEMBERING KNOWLEDGE**

**conceive:**

of a female: to receive (seed) in the womb, to become pregnant to take or admit to mind to become affected or possessed with to form and entertain (an opinion) to form a purpose, to plan, devise, formulate an idea to grasp with the mind, to apprehend, understand, comprehend to perceive by the senses, to observe to form an opinion; to imagine to think a thing to be so and so to institute an action in law to form and utter spontaneously a prayer to take an oath

In the fall of 1989, I decided to focus on power in feminist educational practice for my masters thesis in Adult Education. For the previous fifteen years, I had worked in a variety of roles and educational settings: as high school teacher in two Canadian provinces and overseas, graduate student and research assistant in two Canadian universities, educational workshop leader, course instructor for
university students, teachers, college instructors, health professionals and adult educators, and faculty
advisor for student teachers. I knew that despite having the multi-layered protection of being able-bodied, white, upper middle class, educated, and professional, I often felt powerlessness and silent. I
felt that by somehow understanding these feelings, I could better understand tensions and
contradictions in my educational praxis. I remember having a vague constant uneasy thoughtfeeling
that it could become very personal. In early January of 1990, I began.

I dove deep, recalling and writing events, thoughts, and feelings from infancy, childhood, adolescence,
adolescence, and my current life and work. Early childhood scenes came to me most insistently. From
there, my recall danced from childhood to adulthood to adolescence in a logic beyond conscious
control. These reflections took the form of telling moments; small and emotion-laden memories of
incidents in my life that were significant for reasons I didn’t consciously understand. A montage of
muffled silence and skin-tingling voice developed, vivid in detail, perspective, colour and emotional
nuance.

I began to write about these moments, first in prose. I quickly changed to poetry, which I’d never
written before; I realized I was slouching towards writing about my earliest experiences of
powerlessness, being sexually abused as an infant and child. I thought that by writing in poetry, I
could convey the essence of these experiences without revealing the identities of my abusers. The
actual process of dredging, re/viewing, sifting and describing these recollections quickly became one
akin to automatic writing; as I would finish one recollection, the next would begin to press on my mind.
The poetry editing process was a fusion of disinterested craft and intense emotion; my eyes were often
blurred with tears of joy or pain.

It was when I wrote the poem Suc/cour that I realized that intimate childhood sexual assault and its
attendant silences was central to my being and knowing. The actual sexual assaults occurred over a
relatively short period; the emotional abandonment and psychological abuse seems to have begun at a very early age and continued throughout my childhood. The consequences reverberated throughout my childhood and adolescence as feelings of isolation and detachment, then into adulthood experiences of an emotionally abusive marriage, chronic mild depression, and an eventual reactive depression.

Early in the writing process, I realized that the conventions of academic prose and dictionary-validated vocabulary were failing me. When I shifted to poetry and allowed myself to compound and embed words, I began to experience the power of my created language to name, describe, and therefore fundamentally re/create experiences and understandings that had been lost to me. The poetry helped me remember the pain and betrayal, and make sense of it. Heal from it. Healing is as interconnected and complex as abuse. As I wrote, and was read by friends and advisors, I became more bold. Like a gardener tracing the extensive roots of a pernicious weed or a surgeon tracking a web of cancerous growth, I traced the reverberations of the abuse in my body, mind, and soul; in my every intimate, working, and public relationship; in my life choices, my sense of myself as a learner, knower, educator and researcher. Doing so, I named names and described specific instances in my life and relationships. I wrote through the winter and spring of 1990.

The process of generating my framework for the poetry was a natural, integral part of the writing process. As I wrote, I became attuned to the themes of voice and silence, power and powerlessness, body and disembodiment, passion and betrayal, protection and abuse. Sometimes, I would be writing from my guts and observing myself write, monitoring themes and trying on frameworks, all at the same time. Other times, I would look through the growing body of poetry and consciously wrestle with the fit and sequence of poems and frameworks.

The five positions of knowing developed by Belenky and all (1986) provided the first phantom/fathom
markers for my own deep dive into silence and knowing. However, when I tried to use silence, received, subjective, procedural, and constructed knowledge as the organizing framework for my poetry, I felt dissatisfied. Only silence, subjective, and constructed knowledge seemed to fit with my own experiences, and I couldn't find any mention in Women's Ways of Knowing of the themes that were becoming central to my work, including passion/betrayal, protection/abuse, body/disembodiment, testimony, and re/membering.

Refining the framework was a slow process which was, initially, collaborative. In the early stages, mentor Barbara Blakely resonated with, questioned, and reflected on the poetry and framework that I was developing, holding them up to the light of her theology, personal experience and educational and counselling work with other women. A triptych of disembodied silence, embodied voice, and passionate praxis developed at our fortnightly kitchen table visits. It later evolved to betrayal, remembering, vision, passion, and praxis, and like a house settling over the following three years, settled into the final shape of silence, re/betrayals, re/membrance and knowledge.

January 16, 1990

Planning and writing this thesis is continuing to be a painful spiralling out from the safe center of intellectual analysis into the vulnerable margins of personal reflection and disclosure. I now see that this is an essential challenge of feminist research; the process of discovering and constructing what I deeply yearn to do, awkwardly and fearfully integrating my logic, intuition, and bellydeep feeling within public text.

When I fail, word by phrase by sentence, I consume my self in anger and worthlessness. When I succeed, I re/conceive the world.
The process of my healing had begun, very slowly, about twelve years earlier, with five years of useless marriage counselling and group therapy. It had continued with individual therapy to support my leaving the marriage, during which I had my first recollections of childhood sexual assaults, and continued for the next decade with counselling. Although much of this counselling supported me in dealing with day to day issues and struggles, I never dealt with the fundamental issue of intimate assault. I don't remember ever being encouraged to do so, and I do remember just wanting to "live a normal life".

On entering the graduate program in Adult Education at UBC, I met, for the first time, a vibrant group of feminists. Conversations, exchanged readings, clothing exchange parties, jokes about not shaving underarms, reports on committees and organizations as well as political actions all contributed to the making of this feminist over my first years at UBC, until I finally came to my own history. Among this group was one woman who eventually identified herself to me as a survivor and encouraged me to deal directly with the consequences of my own abuse. Although I continued to have some counselling support in this area, I did most of this exploration through my writing. This write/remembering took me to depths I had never been; I spent much time doing nothing but sitting, sorting, and re/memembering. My silence regarding the sexual assaults had been my prison, womb, protection, and survival; this process of breaking silence was often — no, mostly —extremely painful.

By spring, 1990, I had completed my first fifty pages of poetry and text, outlined the conceptual frameworks and identified the key themes in my poetry. My thesis committee read it and told me to carry on. In the summer and fall of that year, my writing slowed to a halt as I took a new teaching job, bought a house, became pregnant, miscarried. At a deeper level, my writing progress was hampered by the limits of my own healing process.
May 16, 1990

Dreamvision:
I have a vaginal infection, probably a yeast infection. I go to a medical clinic that I've heard is very progressive. I am misdiagnosed and given the wrong treatment. I return for further diagnosis. The doctor, a young woman, tells me that I would actually be better off diagnosing and treating myself. She reaches to an open bookcase and pulls a small bright coloured, very robust plastic microscope. It looks like a Fisher-Price toy; one of those indestructibles. She tells me they were developed and produced for a women's self-help health project which is no longer funded.

She shows me how to prepare and examine a slide of my own vaginal tissue. Looking through the microscope, I see shapes and colours in striking and repeated abstract designs: a test tube/condom shape with a pink ball inside, small cloud/wisps, blue triangles. They are all distinct; I am convinced that I could learn what each shape in this rich small world indicates regarding my inner health and imbalances.

I wake, aware that this is both my thesis and my love life: the work of concentrating, learning to identify shapes and patterns, taking responsibility, taking control. No mean feat.

I realized that I had to confront my assailants and other family members. In preparation for this confrontation, I finally had no choice but to read Ellen Bass and Laura Davis' (1988) The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse. I highlighted passages, pencilled in extensive marginal notes, wrote pages in my journal as I devoured its 500-odd pages. Over the spring break, I confronted one of the assailants; I was too afraid of the other. I confronted other family members and told them of the assaults, my thesis, and my intentions to publish this work as a book.

Their reactions included astonishment, compassion, disbelief and anger which, for most of them, quickly shifted to vehement denial and withdrawal. Nothing had prepared me for this; it was the most painful experience of my life. I eventually found, and was able to afford, two counsellors, a support group for women survivors of sexual assault, a series of women's healing retreats, a massage therapist and a chiropractor/naturopath.
May 27, 1991

This is so awful. I feel so bad. Lonely. Isolated. Not knowing what to do, who to ask for help. How to move forward. I dread weekends, I muddle through weeks. I am so alone. Do runes. Garden. Sleep. Write. Haven’t read for a week. Haven’t jogged much. Don’t know how to/who to pray to. Maybe that’s the worst. No shell of a family. HELP.

I AM DOING INTENSIVE RECOVERY WORK FROM CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE. I am beginning to lose it. I am having nightmares and waking each morning early and worrying. I am mixing up my words when I am teaching. I am very lonely and isolated because the family has cut off contact with me. I am cracking. I can handle everything but losing my family. I can’t stand that. I feel like I can either back off or I can keep on going. I don’t want to back off. I am in danger of becoming depressed; I can feel the slippage.

I trust this process. I have support. I have two therapists and a support group and some weekend retreats and some friends and Don. But not having family is almost more than I can take.

In the summer of 1991, I finally felt able --compelled, actually -- to read what I had avoided for over a year, a collection of popular and academic articles, files and books by survivors, helping professionals and researchers on childhood experiences of incest, father-daughter rape, sexual abuse, and sexual assault that I had gathered over the previous year. I lived through works including Florence Rush’s (1980) study of the historic context and current realities of child sexual abuse, The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children, Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton’s (1983) I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and Women’s Resource Centre’s (1989) Recollecting Our Lives: Women’s Experience of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Although this was extremely difficult reading on an emotional level, I found that after going through my own pain so deeply that I could almost plane along the surface of each story or analysis, gathering information without reliving the depths of the pain.
Re/collection

In the year of 1992, I worked through the legal and emotional barriers to publishing this work, as well as further separating from my family and mourning the death of my lover. The following re/collection includes journal entries, a university memo, a poem, my letter to the Women's Education des Femmes journal editors, published in the Summer, 1992 issue, a series of drawings from my sketchbook, and a poster and prayer for a church service commemorating the December 6th Montreal massacre. The section concludes with my letter to my thesis committee regarding the selection of an external examiner for this work.

Winter, 1991/92
Now, in the winter of 1991/92, I move towards completion; the task of making linear the multidimensional intuitive organic weavespiral of writing, remembering, feeling, analyzing, healing, slipping, empassioning and envisioning which has been this work. I find this extremely difficult to do, particularly with regard to the settling of research questions, claims, territory, and limitations, a standard intellectual process that for me is charged with fierce healing, pain, fear, and vulnerability. What does it mean to speak my personal truth with intellectual care?

Even though a lawsuit is very unlikely, given all the publicity it would generate, I am still very afraid. This fear has also eroded my confidence to discuss my work in an academic oral defence; maybe there will be other men like them who will want to destroy me. I need another five or ten years of healing to be able to publish my poetry in its complete form.
Administrative, Adult & Higher Education  
Faculty of Education  
University of British Columbia  
Vancouver B.C.

Memorandum

To:  
Dr. J. Hills  
Dr. K. McCannel  
Dr. A. McClean  
Dr. L. Peterat

From:  

Date:  
February 27, 1992

Re:  
Meeting of February 19, 1992

Because of the subject and the source of data of ________'s M.A. thesis and because of threats of legal action against her and the university which have been made, her thesis committee requested this meeting with the university's legal advisors and the Head of the Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education.

The thesis is an examination of the educational implications of intimate childhood sexual assault and the primary data to be used in the thesis is ________'s own experience of intimate childhood sexual assault in her family. The data are presented as prose and poetry descriptions of the experience and are linked to feminist and other analyses of the impact of childhood sexual assault and theories of power and powerlessness.

The committee (with the exception of Linda Peterat, who is on sabbatical) met on February 19, 1992 with Jean Hills and Bertie McClean to seek their advice. ________ provided an outline of the thesis, the beginning pages of the introduction to the thesis and examples of the type of poetry that would be included in Part 4: Testimony.

Bertie McLean made it clear that the thesis' clear naming of specific individuals as assailants constituted defamation in the sense that "if this was said, it could lower the accused in the eye of right-thinking people." It is also clear that the use of a pseudonym in presenting the thesis might reduce the possibility of a lawsuit by making the accusation less clearly directed to ________'s family but that it offers no certain protection against a lawsuit nor protection in the defense of such a suit.

In defense against a libel suit, the responsibility for proving the allegation lies with the person making the statement. Because the incidents described in the thesis occurred so far in the past, there is no possibility of proving their truth. Some evidence can be offered in terms of ________'s 10 years of therapy for recovery from sexual abuse, but in Bertie McLean's view, this would be a difficult thing to prove. Another possible defense lies in a claim of "academic privilege," but such a defense has not yet been used in the Canadian context, so its strength cannot be judged.
Essentially, if members of the family choose to pursue a libel suit against the university, the committee members, and ______ herself, the issue will be focused on the extent of the damage and the exposure the thesis has brought rather than on the truth of the claims of the thesis.

The meeting then turned from a description of the legal situation of the thesis to a discussion of Bertie McClean’s advice to the committee and ______ on writing the thesis. He voiced his extreme reluctance to advise against the writing of the thesis, citing the importance of not having work in the academic community distorted by the threat of a libel suit. The central question in obtaining the [legal] insurers’ coverage and in hoping for a judgement in our favour in the event that a suit was pursued would be that of academic judgement: is this a piece of work which is academic and which the university is prepared to accept? The defense of the thesis in a lawsuit would very likely rest on our ability to demonstrate that the methods used and the topic chosen are regarded by at least some members of the academic community as valid. Kathryn McCannell and ________ expressed their opinion that the thesis is a valid and important piece of work and that, although critics of such work could undoubtedly be found, very strong and reputable support for such work could also be found.

The specific issue of the practicality and usefulness of writing the thesis under a pseudonym was then addressed. A number of practical questions were raised in terms of future uses of the work and the need for ______ to continue to live a life restricted by the use of a pseudonym for her work. The advantages and disadvantages of the use of a pseudonym, of ______ legally changing her name and writing the thesis under that name, and of her writing the thesis under her own name were discussed. It was left to ______, in consultation with the committee, to decide whether writing under a pseudonym to reduce the chances of a lawsuit was a reasonable and workable notion for her personally.

Both Bertie McClean and Jean Hills supported the notion that writing the thesis as proposed was a reasonable academic and legal risk to take.
April 8, 1992

It is two days before the submissions date for *Women's Education des Femmes* special issue, and it's 10:30 at night. I've known about this call for contributions for at least six months, and I've known which part of my thesis I can rework to send in... and have put it off for as long as possible, so that maybe I'll miss the deadline.

I don't know if I'll ever know all the levels of fear within me regarding this writing. So far, I have dealt with the fear of not being believed and of being rejected by friends, family, the university, and with the threat of a civil lawsuit. I'm afraid of colleagues at school discovering me; I'm afraid that somehow the publishers will forget to use my pseudonym. I can't think of what else I fear, but I know there is more. I wonder if I will ever stop feeling afraid.
April 12, 1992

Editorial board
Women's Education des Femmes
Special issue on violence and learning

Dear Sisters:

Your call for contributions to the Women's Experience of Violence issue of Women's Education des femmes has had a stronger influence on me and my writing than I could have anticipated. I am, therefore, not sending you my originally intended contribution, but a brief recounting of my experience of trying to send it to you. I think this experience shows what may be one of the most profound ways that violence affects women's learning: its making us so afraid to tell the truth that we do not.

I have been working for over two years on my MA thesis in Adult Education, exploring connections among power in feminist educational praxis, knowing, and experience of intimate childhood sexual assault. This work is autobiographical. I had planned to send you part of the thesis introduction, in which I weave connections among these issues in the literature and in my own life as a child, woman, student, researcher and educator.

I put off final preparation of this contribution for as long as I could (until two days before the due date) when I finally realized how afraid I was to send it in. Over the past two years, I have dealt with many levels and forms of that fear: fear of not being believed, understood or academically supported, fear of being rejected by my family, of a threatened lawsuit against myself and the university. I had, I thought, resolved these fears by adapting a pseudonym, gaining unequivocal academic support from my department and the university administration, and dealing with the loss of most of my family through naming my abuse and abusers to them. So I thought that I didn't have much else to fear.

Through preparing this contribution for possible publication, I realized this was not so. The largest fear now is the very small possibility that one of my assailants would make good on his threat to sue me, destroying my financial security. The protection of a pseudonym in no way allays this fear.

On a more immediate scale, when using the printing facilities of my school (where I teach), I feared that someone would come up and start reading the computer screen and I wouldn't be able to clear it fast enough, that I would leave one stray sheet on the xerox machine, paper cutter, printer, or fax machine that contained a detail of the abuse with my name on it, that I would inadvertently leave an identifying detail on my work, or that you would mistakenly use my real name. At 5:30 on your deadline day, with no one else in the school, I tried to fax my work to you. I couldn't get the machine to work. I drove home, sobbing and screaming, railing my pain, fear and anger that I should feel this precious, beautiful, powerful lifework to be illicit and dangerous.

One day later with the help of my friend Shauna, I realized that if I ignore or try to tough myself through these fears, I am abusing myself. I have invested enormous time, money, and spirit in my healing process over the past number of years in group work, private therapy, art work and mostly in my writing. This past week's experience has brought me a new respect for the depths of the abuse and the time and protection my healing still requires. So, for now, I must remain silent. I wish you all well in your important work.

Sincerely,

Morgan McClung
He is vibrantly loved and passionately remembered by Morgan, his friend, companion, lover, playmate, and lover.

He lied to me, kept himself from me, longed for me, immersed himself in me, joined inside of me, separated himself from me, pleased himself with memories of me, and lived with me in his mind, body, and soul. And decided—ad—knew that he could do no more; stopped full hearted loving me, pulled away from me, and tucked his pain deep inside. “I’m becoming eccentric; I’m rich enough and old enough. I’ll be eccentric.”

And then, pulling for his own breaths, he just came in entered my soul. Thank you, Don! Stay HERE IN JOY AND PLEASURE AND FEELING.
I WILL THRIVE.

GRIEVE

LOVE

REMEMBER

WORK

LOVE

MONI

Mentor

May 23/93
Don, be with me.
Stay with me... this peace,
this knowing, this imparting of my soul
with your spirit, with our spirit.
You are giving me your presence,
your love, your caring, your calm.
You are giving more than you ever
gave me during our lifetime.
I am open, I am receiving,
I am ready and I am able.
And we are both still amazed.

I am full, I have come home.
Stay with me.
Love
Peace
Healing
Respect

WE ARE THE WORD.
Be in the spirit.
Go with God.
I greet the God with in you.
Blessed be!

You are invisible.
We hate you.
Bitch!
You are nobody!

You don't count!

I love and protect myself, exactly as I am.
Don has chosen his love, protection, and presence.
I heard myself, read, the foreign poem, until human
and past, I could not look at them. I heard
myself recite notes, and my impact reverberates. I
heard a beautiful and profoundly creative thing.
I am deeply gifted.

Will the circle be unbroken
By end by lead by end by
If came to quit and receive, comfort
and be endured. It came with a
sudden dream and memory, with
reverberation in the memory, and in
the memory of our dancing
at times, the music, the song. I needed to fly
quite quickly.
The quality of silence was gone
and our dancing for our presence and
of you, you, you, you, you, you,
you, you, you, you...
And Morgan went, over again, into the wilderness, alone. Empty and hollow and in so much pain and anger. The weight of loneliness.

The ache of being not touched, not held – without the lubrication, cushion, or sustenance of love, understanding, belonging, presence. None, and so much work. So all work. Chinese effort. Where is ours? Why wouldn't I just give up? Why would I keep on? How did you survive as a child; how did you get through it, on your own?

I just kept on. I just kept trying. I didn't have any other choice. I guess this is Russian dog.

I will not phone. I did not get a card. Absence.

Finally, about Mendeleviuk, the media tells about the coven of survivors who speak out and are not heard. Finally! I want those voices in my ear. Very much. I need to hear how it just keeps rolling on.

The Family

[Handwritten signature: Mogen]
July 8, 1992

Thread

His eightieth birthday party,
at the country place.
All the functioning family would be there:
sisters, complete with men and children,
down from the interior,
and the gang from here;
trampoline laughter, swimming,
walking through woods, admiring gardens,
comparing spring achievements and making summer plans.

I would not.

Sister, with her kidz whom I love passionately
packed in the car and ready to head out
"I'm phoning to ask you again if you'll come.
The kidz will be really disappointed if you don't.
His health is failing;
we don't think there is that much more time."

I finally saw it, clearly,
the forest of the lie:
warped, gnarled, twisted, thick-maned bramble,
bats and flying black ants,
brownslicked snakes and wispy veils
through which I have
sidestepped, ducked, bellycrawled;
alert on every side, in every sense
to every word spoken and anticipated.

All I'd wanted was enough space for my small body
and my thread of silver truth.
But the lie kept pressing,
deep and dense and dark.
They have all done so well by me, 
repositing their pain on my soul.

I don't know how we made the agreement, 
nor how very long ago; 
I know that it was sealed in a silence stronger 
than the adhesion of barnacles to seaboulders.

Over the years, they have watched with some pity 
as I lived out their dividends: 
my forced, abusive marriage, 
depression, divorce, herpes 
therapy, counselling, therapy-and-counselling 
sidelined career, sidelined writing, 
sidelined living, sidelined intimacy.

They reeled in horror when, 
from within the muffled, muzzled, fogdense 
forest of the lie 
I stood and said: 
"He sexually abused me, he sexually abused me, 
she knew, and did nothing."
Doors slammed, telephones died, postbox emptied, 
unless I'd recant voice, sanity, and self 
in resealed silence.

I reeled in pain. 
Over seasons, reached out and received 
tentacles, rootlets, resonances 
of news, contact, or caring; 
alluded only to my pain and "our" problem 
but staked no claim on my truth.

He, vicious, cocky with his threat of lawsuit, 
if I should try to publish, enquires, solicitously, 
"Oh, is she going to come to our Christmas party? 
I'm concerned! Should I phone and invite her?"

She, whom I love deeply, 
who refuses to see me without him, 
"Easter is the time for new beginnings. 
Come out and have a meal with us. Come out for a visit. 
We don't know what you're doing anymore!"
Healing survivor,
feeling the sludge and excrement squeeze cleansing,
pore by pore by pore, from my soul, replies:
"No, I cannot come. I've tried. It makes me crazy.
You couldn't understand unless you were me.
If you want to help, please start dealing with the problem.
I appreciate your calling. I hope we can talk again.
Good bye."

Thread!
Cape Island Oct 992: dream.

In my hand, I see that I have a long-thighed spirit-creature, the same inside my left hand. Its head seems to be still growing from the back of my middle finger. I realize that if I can get it to bend its head just a little, above my finger, it will not retract totally inside my hand, that I'll have to control it at all. But I have so few new legs it will become to hold onto my right hand. (Looking at my own hand, I realize that the leg/foot follows the line of the new acting vein.)

I know I can try to squeeze those veins, but that the leg is too much deeper I can slip through, that I would strangle my own right hand's function.

My only other option is to try to force it out, but a paper can, as it seems.

voluntarily. If I try to pull, it will be held a Chiruji finger-pull trap. I am surrounded with people who are all present and not elsewhere.

The one ever after what I am trying to deal with, here alone. Of course, I am alone, and against, because I have never dreamed or imagined

that such a thing was possible.

Suddenly, the problem is manifest any more. I don't feel relieved, because I don't know if it has been discovered, if it has visited me, or if it has gone deeper into my body... if I just don't even at any more, and will be able to see at you.

I don't like it!
I give me his 13rd ring!!!
Protection
December 6: A service of Mourning and Healing

We invite you to join us at

UNITED CHURCH

Vancouver

10:00 a.m. December 6, 1992

Coffee and homebaking to follow.

Wheelchair access: northwest entrance.

All are welcome.

Please share with friends. See you soon.
December 6, 1992

Prayer of confession:
Service of Mourning and Healing

United Church,

Vancouver, B.C.

Writing this prayer has been particularly challenging: ______ and I have written it together, blending our different perspectives, understandings, and concerns. We share this prayer with you in the very difficult recognition that within our midst, we have been, and we are

- victims of...
- perpetrators of...
- silent denying witnesses to...

men's violence to women and children.
Please silently join us in this prayer of confession.

Dear God, who feels our pain and longs to protect and nourish us,
"We are not alone",
yet we are terrifyingly alone
in our fear, our anger, our helplessness, our memories;
we have had no one to protect or defend us
in the barren wilderness of our denial.

We sense out friends and family to share our pain
and their fear resonates in their quick reassurances;
if they cannot hear us, we cannot speak.
We are sealed in silence.

Our pain and experience is
unspeakable, unacceptable
unimaginable, unsupportable;
we remain your silent victims, abusers, witnesses.

When others cannot hear and respond,
how do we keep faith in the womb of your nourishing, healing, and radically empowering love?
December 27, 1992

As I near completion, I find it very difficult to describe the matrix of relationships among my self, my knowing, my healing, and my writing. I cannot separate this writing from my healing from my self. Every word of it is me, transmogrified from blood and flesh to text and paper; every word. My writing has necessitated my healing by forcing me to confront my family regarding the assaults (which I could have otherwise put off forever); I needed to do so in order to complete my poetry. My writing has been an ongoing affirmation of my clarity, pain and growth. My feelings about each piece of this work have been amazingly consistent over the past three years; I love some (Silence, Weave Woman) as I did right after I first wrote them, and have felt incomplete about others (I testify) until I could finally edit them, years after the original draft.

February 8, 1993

Memo to: Thesis committee members
From: Joanna Wisewoolf
Re: Follow up to January 28/93 committee meeting

I am writing to request your consideration and action regarding the selection of the fourth reader, and the timeframe for completion. These issues are very upsetting to me and are impeding my writing progress. I request that the committee meet as soon as possible to take action on these issues.

I am concerned that the choice of the fourth reader for this work be finalized as soon as possible. A number of factors, I believe, are complicating this process, including the number of changes in the membership of this committee, the unexplained resignation of my former committee chair and research advisor, the absence of participation of an Adult Education faculty on this committee, and the fact that the research advisor is in Social Work, not Education.

Before the January committee meeting, the coordinator of graduate students' work within Adult Education told me that a specific professor from the Adult Education department should be the fourth reader. At our meeting, I understood from Jean that the choice of this fourth reader was the responsibility of the committee and the faculty of graduate studies. Last week, Jean told me that the committee decision needed to be supported by the Adult Education department.
I am not clear. Could you please bring clarification of the selection process to our next meeting -- i.e., exactly who chooses? What are the criteria Adult Education will use for the selection of a reader for this specific thesis? What exactly happens if the committee and the department are not in agreement with regard to selection criteria for this fourth reader?

At our upcoming meeting, I request that this committee finalize its criteria for the selection of this reader, and the name of the reader her/himself. I request that the following considerations be included in this decision:

This is research strongly informed by feminist perspectives and analysis: the reader should have a solid working familiarity with educational research and practice from a feminist perspective, and with feminist theory.

This is intimate reflective autobiography, which explores the explicit physical, emotional, spiritual realities of intimate childhood sexual assault, and the implicit interplay of assault, silence, and knowing. The reader should have solid grounding in both the method and topic of this work.

This thesis integrates traditional academic text, poetry, journals, editorial comments, and artwork. Narrative poetry provides both the story of my own experience and the implicit conceptual framework of this experience; this poetry is not analyzed and theorized in an explicit manner. The reader should be familiar with post-modern academic text.

Within the autobiographical approach, this thesis explores educational implications within the author’s own reflections and experiences of the research process, text, and practice. The reader should be versed in feminist, or related approaches to such implications.

This research is grounded in the author’s personal history, life’s work as an educator teaching in the public school, college, university, and adult education contexts, and in readings in adult education and feminist educational praxis. The reader should be versed in adult education literature and practice as well as broader educational and feminist realities.

In order that this decision is made as soon as possible, I would ask that everyone also bring names of available and appropriate individuals to our next meeting.

I am very concerned about the time frame for spring graduation. I am getting mixed messages from committee members. I have already taken a very expensive unpaid leave from work, and am preparing to take another in order to complete for spring. My own personal resources, both financial and emotional, are becoming extremely limited with regard to this project. I need a very clear timeframe which also recognizes the realities of my working schedule.

Thank you for your ongoing support.
Our healing is our re/membering

Over the process of remembering my own experiences, and reading of others', I have come to know that to be a woman is to experience assault, silence, and the possibility of healing. The assaults may be vague wisps/minor annoyances floating on the margins of our consciousness, a numbing reality over long periods of our lives, or soulsplitting traumas from which we might never expect to heal. The assaults are of our body, being, integrity, mind, spirit, heartwholeness. They are breathed, looked, insinuated, implied, threatened, anticipated, depicted, eroticized, enacted, ignored, condoned, emboldened, encultured, and enshrined. They may be initiated by intimates, familiars, or strangers. Our silence is our inuring, muffling, depressing, bending, warping, fearing, preparing, cowering, seducing, accommodating, submitting, resisting, defending, revenging. Our healing is our re/membering: our knowing, naming, proclaiming, protecting, connecting, organizing, envisioning, resisting, creating, and acting.

My commitment to this undertaking was shaped by reading the literatures of feminist literary theory, research methodology, and educational praxis before beginning my own writing. It was nourished by sisters evocatrix, advisors, and further readings during my research, and soulaffixed by my experiences throughout the research process. Making secrets knowledge has had profound consequences in every aspect of my life: my fears, depression, writing, creativity, sexuality, clarity, strength, courage, determination, integrity, joy, and power. I never could have imagined how much this process has demanded, nor how strongly I now feel about this textwork: it is my sometimes souljewellery, babychild, and activated bomb.
PART FOUR: TESTIMONY

FROM SILENCE TO KNOWLEDGE

testimony:
Testimony, in the strictest sense of the term, therefore, is the communication of an experience made to those whose own experience has not reached so far.
1838 Sir W. Hamilton Logic xxxlii II. 177

Personal or documentary attestation in support of a fact or statement any form of evidence or proof any object serving as proof or evidence

expression of disapproval or condemnation of error a protestation.
SEALED IN SILENCE

Uncon/souled

I.
I can't tell the earliest parts.
I know that now, I feel trapped
when a lover places both hands over my ears.
I know that then, there was someone sitting on my chest,
his knees nudging against my splayed underarms,
his hands covering my ears, his cock shoving into my mouth.
I know I gagged in silence.

II.
I was about two years old
standing at the top
of the chipped cement stairs that led to the basement door
of my friend's house
when I felt her hands on the small of my back
giving me a little shove.
My baby-rounded body bounced down the steep steps.
No scrape, cut, or tear. No proof.
My soul screamed.

Her mother was standing at the concrete sink inside, doing laundry.
I ran to her, ragewailing.
She looked down from wringing clothes
to my up-turned, tear-streaked, thigh-high face,
impatiently.
"Go home to your mother."

III.
I have no childmemory of comfort;
being held, hairstroked,
assured, reassured, con/souled.
No one gathered up
my heart, body, soul shards
splintered and still bleeding
on the tile floor.
No one spoke to me, held me, saw me,
placed their tremouring, enraged, and tear-wet cheek to mine
in consoulation and mourning.
I.
Every afternoon during rest time,
She would creep into my room, up to my bed,
and make me let her touch the whites of my eyes.
I'd squirm and whimper, but do it:
"Keep your eye open. Wide open. Don't blink."
I learned to not blink.
I didn't tell.

II.
I had climbed to the very top of the garage roof,
clearly breaking the Climbing the Garage Roof From the Tool Shed Rule,
which specified a maximum height of two rows of shingles.
Setting astride the peak, masked by the maple tree,
I saw my mother come to the back porch
and call us home for lunch.
She didn't look up. She didn't see me.
Invisible!

III.
Roundfaced kindergarten school girl
Maroon blazer and beret; navy tunic
One chubby hand clutching a tin lunchbox
with a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II;
the other holding his, as we walked
our secret backlane route
to his bus stop and
my School for Girls.
Our special secret backlane route.
Suc/cour!

Him, shaving.
Me, still five, standing on the lidded toilet
stirring up the cup of shaving foam
with the ivory-handled bristle brush,
moosh-brushing soap onto his face,
and on my chubby cheeks,
longing to infuse my face, my head, my body in his
by shaving, too.

Doorlocked secret time.

Warmloving, fusing, merging, submerging
without boundary/ division/ hesitation;
immersing my permeable soul in
the soft diffuse early morning light
of his un/divided attentions.
Then.

One of us sitting on the toilet seat,
the other standing, facing
(Was it him sitting and me standing
or me sitting and him standing?);
joined, connected, coupled,
sucking, suckling, succouring his penis
in my small soft baby-teethed mouth.
His testicles sealing my lips.

The door suddenly yanked open.
"Stop that!"
Exposed! Betrayed!
Saved?
Me, wretched away, shoved into their old sweatsmelling bed.
Silence.
Intestate

intestate: that no man will take as a witness disqualified from being a witness or giving evidence

I.
I had recurring dreams.
Of the courtroom:
looking up so high my neck hurt;
up a towering wooden panel to an unforgiving judge
pleading his innocence.
"How could a man with all these children... how could he possibly..."
Of his return from prison through the back gate:
of standing by the porch step and seeing him
walking through the back gate,
just walking through the gate, suitcase in hand;
dreaming the miracle, fiercely!

Then waking to realize that the gate was empty.
That he wasn't walking through the gate.
That the gate was empty and the yard was empty.
Waking, soul aching. Telling no one.

II.
I was allowed to rest in bed
to calm crippling stomach aches before school;
I was allowed to "leave the room" whenever I needed to,
without Mrs. __________'s permission;
I sat endlessly on the second toilet from the sinks,
tracing the tiny floor tile patterns of pink, yellow, grey, white
until my bowellinks released.
No one came to check on me;
no one ever asked what was wrong.

III.
The day of the IQ tests in grade two
My tummy ache was so bad that
Mrs. __________ sent me down to the nurse's.
As I lay in the harsh comfort of a scratchy grey wool blanket,
the vice principal showed me, page by page, the "test".
I, who later clocked in at one hundred and thirty-something,
knew then that I knew nothing.

Weak spelling.
Slow reading.
Poor comprehension.
Inaccurate arithmetic.
Stomach aches.
Sports day cup

Junior sports champion in grade two!
Rustling, scratching, small billowing
my favourite charcoal and pink cotton skirt
with the crinolines underneath
I tore through the back gate, up the porch steps
through the green screen door and into the kitchen
bursting pride, excitement, joy!

She kept ironing, silently.
My bliss dried to a scab.
Familiar

familiar:
- pertaining to one's family life, on a family footing;
- extremely friendly, unduly intimate.
- of animals: accustomed to the company of men,
  tame, on a domestic footing

I.

Around the age of ten,
I developed blackheads
in the crease of my chin.
Sunday mornings after church
he would lay me down on their bed.

He'd find a bobby pin in the bathroom,
dip the rounded end in peroxide, lean over me,
and squeeze the week's crop from my skin.
His head and shoulders filling my vision,
his face an amalgam of guilt and disgust.

When he was done, we'd join the rest for Sunday lunch;
Welsh rarebit or soup or grilled cheese sandwiches.
No one asked why we were late, or why my chin was so red.
II.

In his office on the second floor, Broadway and Granville, Dr. N., after drilling my fillings with that horrid thick, slow drill, kept me in the chair, and looked closely at my chin: a crop of pudgy little blackheads nestled in the crease, ready for the harvest. He said nothing, took Kleenex, and began squeezing them.

I sat/lay there, on the green naugahyde, imprisoned/ held/ embraced by black bakelite arms thinking, How come he's doing this?
They're on the outside of my mouth!
He's not allowed!
...Is he allowed?
I never told.

III.

In the spring of first year, hitchhiking from the university I was picked up by an older man in a grey Austin. As we drove down Broadway he took his right hand from the gear shift put it on my miniskirt-naked knee, moved slightly up my thigh, and said "I like the feel." I sat there, very still, until he let me out at the corner of Larch.
REBETRAYALS

Was I a virgin

"Are you a virgin?"
I served him old coffee at the arborite counter,
Mile 1118, Alaska Highway,
and he, road crew, smiling in cocky anticipation,
softly whispered, over and over again,
"Are you a virgin?"
"Are you a virgin?"

Tent, sleeping bags, and Kleenex;
getting down to the business
of penetrating me.
After ten o'clock, Yukon summer light.
I heard a couple nearby
talking with their kids
as he gave his final
shove.
I bled.
As I rose to clean myself,
he, smirked, soft/mocking,
"Are you a virgin?"

He joined a midnight cardgame drunk
at a nearby cabin
and I, viscerated,
walked the hollow twilight woods.
Trussed, sealed, and delivered

University "boyfriend":  
sweaty kisses, grunting, gasping, pumping.
Body basics.
I remember going to his kitchen to take out my contact lenses before having sex; each time, thinking that maybe this time ecstasy might roll them over to the inside of my brain where I could never retrieve them.
I needn't have worried.
One night, tongue beerloosened,
he admitted that yes, we were fucking.

Father's come/rage
not white, thick, salt/sweet
but clear, watery, toxic
hosed into every orifice of my being.
He ranted of shotguns and murder,
then sank into total silence.
Hostage to silence, I prepared to marry.

The bride's wedding gown was quickly borrowed.
During the pre-marriage counselling session,
the minister told the young couple that
although they had never thought of marriage until the father of the bride threatened to buy a shotgun and kill the young man for fucking his daughter,
and although they didn't really know if they loved each other, he was sure that everything would turn out fine.

The mother and sisters and aunts and cousins of the bride arranged flowers, nails, and hair,
photos of the bride putting on her makeup,
music, hall, and tributes,
No one asked the bride, are you okay?

Empty, stunned hollow,
I met him in the echoing concrete-grey sanctuary.
I reached through the gaping air and put my arm through that space between crooked arm and hip, entered the chapel of turned and smiling heads, and walked down the aisle, trussed, sealed, and delivered.
Soulviolation

I.

Passionate, committed, fully engaged,
humming like a high tension wire
I'd come home from classes
to find him spirit-sucked, deadman floating, suspended in silty despair.
One night, sitting on the bed, as we argued
he raised his arm poising to hit me,
hate firing his eyes.
First, disbelief shielded my vulnerability: this could not happen!
Then, desire to have him strike, giving me
concrete visible admissible embodied testimony
to soulviolation.
Ten years of marriage.

The last time I walked out of that house, I swear
I drag/crawled like a feverenfeebled serpent
on belly, hands and knees
summoning every drop of spiritblood from the deepstores of my being
to shove me, nudge me, slide me, stumbundulate me
out the door;
peradventure, percase, perchance, perhaps
to new life.
II.

Barren skin untouched
dustbowl longings in hopevoid heart;
the watertable of desire
shrank to the center of my soul.

Then, passion immersion.
Licking, sucking, stroking, press/penetrating
to be/ing beyond thought, reason, fear or protection;
permeable, penetrable, scrutable;
depths of immersion/submersion,
crests of agony/ecstatics;
willing suspension of disbelief, judgment, boundaries, identity;
I lose my self.
Swollen and sated, I jellyfish float in anticipation
of my next passion immersion.

III.

Burning, itching, redness, rash,
fever, daze, telephone unanswered.
Doctor's office.
"Herpes... recurrences... emotional trauma...
fever, exhaustion, inflammation, constipation...
eventually you'll do just fine. Some of my friends have
herpes and they live normal lives..."
Betrayed
abandoned
exhausted
defeated.

IV.

Dull haze.
What is the half-life of healing
after thirty years of numbed and silent dis/memberment?
"You are experiencing a reactive depression
from an emotional trauma...
it will run its course, no matter what you do...
this medication will mask some of the symptoms...
I prescribe this often for professional women;
and they can function normally.
Be careful when you are driving."
V.

Suddenly, one night, sitting alone,
before me and within me,
a lion,
full-maned, head twisting grotesquely,
mouth clawsavaging the air in visceral rage.
Heart-racing, brain-throbbing, eye-glazing terror!

Another night, flossing my teeth, I fell into darkness:
the infinite black vortex coring through the center of the earth,
out the other side somewhere between Australia and China,
and continuing through the universe forever.
Losing lifehope by the nanosecond, I pushed through viscous air
and clawed the seven digits of their number.
Anita?? It's me!

Life line.

VI.

"I'm changing your prescription to something that will deal
with both your depression and your anxiety...
I'm concerned that you are becoming clinically depressed..."
Detaching

I.
I could feel his danger when we first danced;
the cold sheen of his eyes.
The usual shuffling, a few feet apart,
then suddenly he moved closer, his eyes steelholding mine, his face set impassive,
raised his right arm, and slowly brushed his hand over my left breast,
lingering, just below my nipple.
Incursion complete, he dropped his hand casually
back to his pants pocket and slowly looked away.

The music continued, others kept shuffling, he kept shuffling,
and I kept shuffling, off balance:
Was this some kind of mistake?
Did I imagine this?

That night, I let him fuck me. I wanted him to fuck me, badly.
He did so, badly.
The emptiness.

II.
A.k.a.demic conference.
Power currents;
Names connecting, exchanging, dueling, clustering.
I, silent, witness to the lucre exchange of
committees, appointments and grants.

Who is that man, the fat older one
who squeaked his chair throughout Sue’s session
and cock-preened throughout his own;
who is offering reviews, chapters, and contracts?
Oh; that’s Jarvis.

Noname woman in fading relief
  fading spirit, fading anger, fading voice
I hover at doorways, all senses alert;
thirsty, weakening, detaching.

That night I dream travel to a southern land, alone.
I suddenly weaken, and, in three days, die of jarvis,
rapid, irreversible, dehydration of the soul.
Cunt notes: questions to another survivor

The newsarticle was about
the foster father who picked his two girls up from school
and fucked them and had them fuck him
and gave them money and nice things.

Well, you accepted them, didn’t you????
What were your flashbacks?
What did he do to you?
Did he take... “precautions”?
Against pregnancy?
Against getting caught?
Did he care about your getting your period?
Did you take precautions?
Against pregnancy?
Against getting caught?
Did you think about it during the day?
During your lunch period?
During the last class in the afternoon?
Did your friends ask you how you got the nice things?
How did you feel? What did you say?
Did you talk about it between the two of you?
How did he smell?
How did he get hard?
Did you make him hard, or did he come to you erect?
Did he rub himself as he drove the truck home, talking to you and looking at you?
Did he slowly push your skirt up, or brush your breasts, or cup your crotch?
Did he talk about it, crooning, threatening, seductive, promising, hinting?
Did he pull your pants down, push your bra up, or did you do it yourself?
Did you get juicy or stay dry?
What did he say to you before, and during and after?
Did he call you by name?
By endearments?
By fucking names, by cuntnames?
Did he cockpreen after fucking such young cunt?
Did your mother know? Suspect?
How did he look at you at the dinner table?
Did he do it before meals, or before you slept?
Did you ever ask him to help you with your homework after he had fucked you?

My cunt throbs as I write this and edit this.
This is so filthy, and so important:
the abuse of desire; the desire of abuse.
Body home

I.

It was a "drug sensitivity". When I lessened my dosage by the normal increments, I became suicidal in forty-eight hours; on the evening of the second day. The psychopharmacologist that Vicky talked to on rounds at her hospital had heard of two such cases with that drug; many more with Valium. He said I’d have to get off it very, very slowly. I weaned myself, two milligrams at a time.

Alchemist, I crushed tablets, mixed the fine powder with gelatine, did careful calculations, filled capsules with 118, 116, 114, 112, 110 milligrams. In four months I was free.

II.

Breaking through unfeeling haze to sharp clear views; coming home to my body: body connections body parts, body solid, body tremouring in knowing, knowing in tremours.

Breath, skin, and soul: back-country skiing. Anorak, knapsack, knickers, Snickers, ascending, massaging, loosening, squeezing, depression sludge through soulpores, enrobing, then softslipping from me.

Sub/merged

To cross the bay
I could go by land,
with all in I-sight,
curving the well-travelled way.
Or I could go by sea, through tidewombed flats,
where path sense/wends, unseen, submerged,
by quicksand, deepools, undercurrents.

The soulsensed way;
I choose the sea.
Tremourknowing

tremour:
involuntary agitation of the body or limbs resulting from strong emotion or excitement trembling, agitation, vibratory movement caused by some external impulse shaking, quivering.

knowing:
acknowledging, confessing, owning, admitting making known; disclosing, revealing, manifesting perceiving with the senses having experienced, met with, felt, or undergone being intimate with having carnal acquaintance or sexual intercourse with learning by committing to memory (more fully, knowing by heart) comprehending with clearness and certainty taking notice, regard of looking after, guarding, protecting.

The skin, the largest organ in the body, knows in tingleshivering microconvulsing nano/orgasmic tremours. Tremourknowing.

Sitting in a church pew, legs crossed at my knees, I listen to a peace worker recently returned from El Salvador, describe despair as a luxury of the non-oppressed and hope as the necessity of the oppressed who endure torture/technologies that leave no visible testimony to the rape of their soul. A tremourknow bubbles at my shoulders sheets down my arms and back spills down both my legs. Tremourpathic eyes would see sparkleshimmers.

Body knowing.
If passion/ate

You continue to insist how passion/ate I am; I continue to insist how passion/ate I am not; that my keening moans, my eyes bulging in astonishment, my mouth gaping open to receive and enclose, my nails deep/indenting your flesh, my legs entwining to entrap, my hair snarled beyond untangling, are not my being passion/ate, but embodied testimony to my love, your love, our love, to my trust, your lust, our surrender to anything; I will confess to anything but passion/ate.

If passion/ate is this lushtunger for red satin stretched across undulating ass black leather encupping hairy groin; stolen mid/days suspended connection illicit betrayals and whispered sweet lies, I will not confess.

If passion/ate is this ravening desire that displaces containment dissolves resolve dissembles soulanarchy I will not confess.

If passion/ate is this aching appetite that swells caverns of echoed longing within, spreads soul thin on my upturned hand, and suffers fears gladly, I will never confess.
Passionfusion

I.
This passion punches fistholes through the tarpaper roof of my control, rending it ragged.

This passion plummets me beyond thought to the unbounded, where, spiritsuspended beyond words, I keen, moan, yelp, whine. I hear my self and wonder.

This passion fuses pain with ecstasy, chaos with transcendence surrender with omnipotence.

This passion mocks precautions, considerations, best-laid plans.

This passion slaps my studied, struggled, sturdied friendsisterdaughterauntmentorteacher being: I sting with desire.

II.
With vulva/sprung leap from womb/depths through water, then air, to ground; the serpent cobra-headed, brown/black dreamserpent, passion embodied pulsates, constricts and stretches sinewed bodyself into quarter and counter/quarter moons across the floor, winds around my neck three times (my life suspended on one little squeeze), unwinds, and propels into the closet.

I slam the door behind it knowing, as I do, that nothing will impede this passionfusion.
III.

I return from the unbounded.
I lift your limp arms and fold them around me,
sounding you to hold me, press me, encase me.
I root, ground, embed.
Fear subsides, sting cools, aching calms.

I take you for granted;
leased, ceded for foreseeable future.
I expect no more from you than I do from myself.

Sharon says the everyday smothers passion;
that separations sharpen
our savours and tongues,
piquing desire.
Sharon says the alignment work of
healing/retuning
discerning/discarding
is passion's daily bread.

I wear our passiondepths under my everyday,
as permeable lubricant, supplement.

I begin to know I could live post-you, post-us, post-lust;
I begin to know I am passion.

Serpent sensuous
selfentwoned, selfenwombed
pressing selfflesh to flesh
sunthrobbed in spiralsmooth caress:
I am passion.

Serpent magnum
cresting, thrusting, pulseundulating,
vibrating, sparking, tremouring
in memory and desire:
You are passion.

Serpent caduceus
tensionbalanced, groundrooted and passionerect
entendrilled, curveunioned, embodied staff
of healing and ecstasy:
body collective,
We are passion.
IV.

Naming, claiming my body; exploring, mapping, cartography.
How can I learn to say *do this here*, and *no like this*,
when we don’t have words?

We begin to map me, the insides of me.
*Yoni, jade gate*...
I’m still not sure which means vagina, and which labia,
but they sound so much more spiritualorganic
than *vagina*, or, in one book, *vaginal barrel*,
like a gun barrel or a rain barrel or a whiskey barrel.

What are those ridges,
like ripples of hard tidepacked sand on Spanish Banks,
on the roof of my vagina?
What is their name?
I want to see and know and feel,
minutely, in slow passionmotion,
you penis knowing me, there.

But how can I even say *roof* and *up*,
when we usually have me lying down?

And what is the name
of the place, the space, the moment in time
at which you enter me?
I know that labia is door, and vagina is sanctuary,
but what, in woman’s name, is the name
of my holy place of receiving, joining and parting;
my passiongranting, lifecreating, mooncleansing gateway?

*Vaginal opening?*
*Vaginal doorway?*
*Vaginal entrance?*
*Vaginal narthex*
*Vaginal port?*
*Vaginal gate?*

Why don’t I have that name?
How can I claim the power
of my permission, choice, refusal, welcome, and farewell
if I don’t have that name?

Is it my other
...*mouth*?
V.

ClitOris.

KLETORIS. KLEITE.

Long vowel on KLE to reclaim power.

How often have I heard the word?

I don't know how to say it.

Is it only a urban sex legend,

the story of the twelve women

who got to talking girl talk

and found that they had each been told by "lovers"

(using the term loosely)

that she had a "smaller than average" size of kleitoris?

For years I've gotten uterus and cervix and vagina mixed up,

like the outer and inner forks for main course and dessert or salad.

And then there's urethra... and then there's

that space between vaginal opening and anus

that would be cut in an episiotomy...

VI.

After the doctor's appointment

I stood crying at the crosswalk

and a kind woman came up, concerned,

and helped me cross the street.

She didn't understand when I tried to tell her

through sobs and tears and unblown nose

that I was pregnant and

that this was the happiest day in my life.
VII.

The waiting; the waiting of women
For birth, for death
For passings of life,
for passings of life unlived.

6.5 on the video screen, and no heart beat
"Are you sure of your dates?"
Yes, I'm sure of my dates.
Declining interventions
Receiving vague answers and assurances
I prepare pads, pain killers, schedules of friends.

Groceries put away, spaghetti sauce simmering.
Gentle cramps, wet flow, and the holy silence
the holy holy silence
of loss, and death, and passing.

My mind still
my soul full
my body quietly cramping, working
in this warm clean bathroom
in this large and empty house.
I sat on the toilet seat
and held a small strainer
to the flow between my legs.

No one here but
me
my blood flowing
my tiny deadbaby, delivering

Goddepresence.
VIII.

The next morning, October 19,
I took her, in a plastic urine specimen bottle, to the doctor
I was bleeding so heavily
I had to slip an extra maxi-pad
through my coat, under my skirt, slip, and panties
as I was sitting at my steering wheel
parked on Granville at 16th during morning rush hour
just so that I wouldn't walk a river of blood
as I crossed at the light.

She dumped out the blood,
the liver-like clots with edges and flaps,
and a grey brainlike piece
into a small kidney shaped stainless steel bowl,
and rinsed it all at the sink
while I watched.

*I'm used to this because of all my abortion work*
she said, not unkindly.
She showed me SarahLuke;
the size and shape of my silver Haida broach;
translucent red oval sac,
and a small dark crescent within.
I touched her with my finger.

IX.

This week's wearing of panties,
draped over the lip of a mixing bowl
on the kitchen counter.
Arranging each crotch downward into the soaking solution,
I could trace the slow changes
from red to brownred to brownyellow to peach to yellow flow
as I body slowly cleanses and begins to forget
her nested smallchild.
X.

Our coming back to oneness...

I was writer/membering:
meeting my father in the steel light sanctuary
before he gave me away, and you came to my door.

Come in,
take off all your clothes
get into my bed and wait for me.

I escape transfer save,
unzip unclasp remove,
then smoothslip into
my sheets, your arms, your legs,
our holy healing embrace.

Then ringsbandscircles of pain as you penis nudge deeper.
We stop, then recommence with tender explorations
of angles, pressures, depths:
Blind cartographer diviners
depthdiving oursoul within me.

We are one:
you penis, wesoul, alive, inside me,
where my small baby has passed.

It's alright can get pregnant again
its nature’s way
better now than later
this gives me time to finish my thesis.

I, muddling, guilty at my own relief,
logic shield against barbarian pain...
until finally, in our oneness,
I break through reason to grief.

My baby has died.
I testify

remember:
to retain, to bear in mind
to recollect, not to forget, to think of
to recall the memory with some kind of feeling or intent,
to record, to commemorate,
to make mention of by way of reminder,
to think or reflect upon,
to put together again,
to supply with a new member.

test:
an earthen vessel or pot
a shell of a mollusc or tortoise
means of trial
that by which the existence
quality, or genuineness of anything is determined
a witness; evidence which is witness-borne.
The action by which the physical properties of a substance
are tested in order to determine their ability to
satisfy particular requirements
testes:
the witness or evidence of virility
testicles:
Each of the two ellipsoid glandular bodies
constituting the sperm-secreting organs in male mammals
and usually enclosed in a scrotum.
testify:
to profess and openly acknowledge a fact
belief, object of faith or devotion
to constitute proof or testimony
to display, manifest, express emotion.
I.

Fears on the prospect of testifying:
abandonment, no family, no nieces, no nephews, no babies, no one who has known me
since my beginning, no family meals on holydays, no celebrations, no gatherings, no
homebaking, no canning, no visits, denial, attack, death, you really are crazy, everyone
else is doing so well, they only have a few more years to live.

II.

Over the telephone, discussing school kids cheering a rape scene,
I tell her the statistics:
how many physically abused, how many sexually abused.
Well, I just can't believe it.
Do we know any children who...?
Do you know any children who...?
Yes (I hear myself say), I do know children who...
Later, after a dinner visit,
the conversation turns to my research.
After two years, no one knows its topic or purpose.
So how is your... latest program... going?
Thesis. Fine. (brightly, firmly)
So why are you doing this?
Will you get more money?
It is important, and I will publish it as a book (PERIOD).
Silence.
He looked at me. I looked at him.
I then looked at her, her eyes. She looked at me.
Mostly I saw her silver hair.
I couldn't really see her eyes,
which are usually brown, brown, deepbrown.
They looked dead.
Pause.
Change of subject.
I, blacksheepscapegoatsacrificiallamb, decide.
Finally.
III.
At the point where granite breaks open
and darkness flows out like blood;
where language falls away from hot bones
and bones know they are hollow;
where the word splits
and doubles in thunderechoes:
at that point, my body becomes my mouth.
Price of silencing, price of speaking.
Seeds crack rock.

I speak.
IV.
Terror
wet rigid phallus
thirsty for touch
yearning for
love
power over
power shoved into
power sweating
power grunting
power penetrating
power invading
power groping
power rubbing
power pushing
power shoving
power inching
power sneaking
power looking
power brushing
power planning
power hiding
power paralyzing
power trapping
power distorting
power laughing
power crippling
power binding
power warping
power cankering
power sludging
power soiling
power staining
power binding
power crippling.

I am innocent!
V.
The walled city:
water, food, shelter, company, trade, help, support,
baking, knitting, homemade beer, copies of tapes, help on moving days,
fruit brought back from the Okanagan,
leftovers from Sunday dinner offered for Monday’s lunch,
kids naming me in photo albums.

The walled city:
each word, look, tone, hearing and silence
shaped, placed, pressed to protect the abuser.

Leaving the walled city:
light cottonweave bag over my shoulder,
cool dusk and darkness falling,
I begin my desert journey.
My soullscars surface;
tears, bruises, burns,
cracked and spiral-splintered spiritbones
make manifest.
I namethem
writethem
drawthem
speakthem
feethem
know them
and I begin to know myself.

VI.
The barrenness.
I am arid, flat, scorched, granular,
razed, uprooted, burned, cleared,
untouched, unconnected, unintertwined, desolate.
The struggle to believe that I am empty but not barren.
The fear of weeds,
of torrid leaching floods,
of infestation or degradation
of this holy empty wilderness place.
Barren bed, barren dreams, barren desert where I live.
VII.

Too little sleep, too little food
Too few dreams, too few people
Too little cooking, cleaning, shopping
Too little play, exercise, stretching, breathing
Too little meditation,
Too few angels and small truths
Too little nature, too little home
Too much loneliness for my self
Too many worries, too much work, too much no balance
My center off center: fear.
Re/membered innocence

I.

Favourite photo:
Me, one, sitting on the piano bench
bright deep dark eyes alight
chubface, blonde hair,
pink dress with pink slip,
round small fists
open to receive the world.

II.

Fondwarm memory:
As if standing in the hallway, behind us, I see
two brown-haired brown-eyed women
ironing in the kitchen.
Mother and daughter.
Mother at her fold-down board,
iron steam-wheezing,
piece by piece by piece
pressing amplerounded baskets of laundry
into tall square piles.
Daughter, me, at my little foldup ironing board
with my little iron,
warm to the touch, like baby bottle milk,
plugged in to the same socket,
sock by sock by sock
matching, pressing, tube folding
a snakenest of socks
into a mound of claimable pairs.
III.

Crepepaper pink kindergarten ballet butterfly
who led the class
in marching and dance
and sat in the honours desk.
Seen, placed, accounted for.
Belonging.

IV.

Just Mrs. _______ and me, no one else, after school,
making a plaster of Paris impression of my hand.
Fingers splayed wide
with the webby part taut;
square palm pressed
to the welcoming white muck.
Hand shape, depth, lines, fingers, thumb.
Me!

V.

Flush with red double holsters
tied with string around my trousered thighs
silver bullets snugfitting in loops on my belt
red vest, widebrimmed hat, ready to draw.
Best cowgirl in the neighbourhood!
VI.

That afternoon, the day before my Grade One sports day races, after you came home from work, and before dinner, we went over to the school field (gravel and grass), so that I could practise my starts and finishes.

You *On your marks Get set Go!*’ed
and I bolted, ran, and kept on running
right through the finish line,
just like you told me.

So proud and so loved.

VII.

Walking through deep forest
Lagging behind on the wetcedarchip trail, alone.
Fernfilled hollow enwombed by trees
Bowels softrumble
Pants down
Squat
Intimates exposed to mother ground
Yellow pee absorbed, splashless, into moss
Milk chocolate brown and bumpy poo
plopped atop, steaming.
Brown on green on brown;
me joining earth,
nourishing earth.
VIII.

I went searching for him at the whalepools.
The girls were safely ensconced at the beluga feeding.
I found him alone with the killer whales, watching
their slow backs arcbreaking the water surface.
Holy moment for this aunt who,
he says,
sits all day writing at her computer,
collects geodes, and
loves her nephew.

IX.

Five days in this world.
Square flannelette bundle with rounded corners.
Unseeing teal eyes.
I hold her.
Tears, gentle tears
at the meeting of heaven and earth
softfill my eyes.
Wonder.
In mid-September of 1991,
I dreamed a new dream with a familiar figure,
who is in life, a small, spry, bright-eyed nephew.
In my dreams, he has figured as quickness and intelligence
that most other people don’t notice.
In this dream, he had grown taller, fuller and rounder,
and become soulconnected with me.
He figures in this dream as my scribe, my memory, my bodymemory,
my journal, my thesis. I love this dream:
Sept 22/91

__________ came back -- fuller and rounder and more solid, AND HE HAD A
NOTEBOOK IN HIS HAND. HE HAS BEEN RECORDING EVERYTHING, ALL THESE
YEARS. Hidden in a recessed doorway, he showed me what he was holding, a steno
pad full of his detailed notes. He said nothing, and smiled very knowingly. I was
overjoyed. I’d dreamed of being physically attacked by a student at school, by some
jerky man who held me so I couldn’t move my arms and he could do anything he
wanted, and had no witnesses of the attacks.
Now I saw that everything had been recorded.
KNOWLEDGE

We find speech

I.

Our kitchen table intensity: comfort and discomfort.
I admire you, love you, hopefear reciprocity.

Tide shifts.
Mentor evocatrix,
you now need to tell me
about work, darkbelief, psyche, lover.
I fear being sucked into
the dark vortex
of your pain and passion.

Your now be/ing in
    the absence of god
    the inviolability of god;
    the void incarnate.
We have no language...
and yet, you sculptarticulate your pain,
its notions, nuance and genealogy
with neural precision.

I wasn't ready for this.
I'll surely say something stupid or disrespectful;
I'll try to con/soul too soon.
I don't understand/can't imagine;
I have no perspectives/angles/strategies.

The migraine in your hip;
some days you can hardly move for the
dense devils pressing every pore.
No white space/white sound/empty possibilities;
all text with no margins, but you want no relief.
"This is my body talking. Body as mouth.
I'll listen and wait...
I don't know how to say this without sounding dualistic but
I am very close to my body. I am very present in my body."

When we prepare me to leave, we notice we have the same Italian shoes.
Yours are green; mine, brown.
II.

Once we were rolling, had
weathered mistrust and fear
proposed, now had to produce;
Once we were rolling,
we'd bring baking to our meetings
make quips in unison
finish each others' sentences
call each other by an other's name
talk of men and desire
Once we were rolling, we found speech.

Sister No. 1: So what about,
In this presentation, we explore ways
in which the ideology, structures and discourse
of the discipline of adult education have...
Sister No. 2: ...fucked us around as women!

Soulgasmic laughter.
Shoulder to shoulder; arm to arm
a legion, a power of fine women
in full voiced courage
telling our truths
Birthing us softly.

III.

Ibody quiver as I stand to speak.
I see/immerse in the cleardeeps of my first comments and poems;
I cannot see your faces.
You know the silences I will speak.
I don't know how each of you readied your selves;
bracing/ tensing/ opening/ anticipating.
I know your readiness.
Reading, I hear my sore throat sound,
I feel each phrase anew;
I receive the gift of your bloodrich, painrich, knowingrich silence.

Finally, surfacing from my immersion,
I see your faces encircling, greeting, accompanying me;
a power of fine fine ladies.
Softpermeable as nautilus,
you have taken me into yousoul.
Circle of holy silence, we are one.
IV.

The lift in your voice on the phone:
fresh lipstick, shadow, gel; a date.
When our feet met sidewalk, you begin.
Explosions of pain;
the gushing and oozing of shame, anger, fear.
I recoil, then prepare to accompany you.

Not without memory or desire, but with my self;
sketching out contours, borders, sign-posts:
You are courageous.
This is the most difficult.
Your courage will grow.
You will get support
You can trust your self.
You are... fine.

Take my pain as a backpocket guide,
but translate loosely;
figure me in the distance
as one who has gone before,
and take heart.
I en/courage; you are courage.

V.

Neon shimmering, body glimmering
waver ing wall of incessant colour movement
oscillating through salt sea
quivering in exploration
knowing collective presence
sensing collective beauty:
we are tetra.
Not a luxury

I.

unveiling our complicity is not a luxury the truths of our pain are not a luxury poetry is not a luxury solitude is not a luxury clarity is not a luxury sisters are not a luxury brothers are not a luxury anger is not a luxury safety is not a luxury justice is not a luxury joy is not a luxury integrity is not a luxury intimacy is not a luxury godliness is not a luxury

(Resonances from Audre Lorde, 1984, p. 36)

II.

Sensing and naming our complicity, through our silent witnessing, our disempowerment of girls and women, our failure to releasepurgetransform our own pain, and our failure to honour minutely the integrity of infants', girls', and women's bodies, is not a luxury.

It is essential to our own healing and empowerment as hollering actively-resisting witnesses to the betrayals of patriarchy.
Men are the perpetrators and women the victims of most intimate childhood sexual assault. Men have created and continue to take full "advantage" of their economic, social, and physical/sexual control over women by touching, fondling, beating, raping, and murdering them in the privacy of women's trusting places; their friendships, family, and homes.

Healing, for men, includes a profound recognition of their complicity as men in the social enstructuration of men's power and women's fear in our home, workplace, streets, and bones.
IV.

Solitude and poetry are not a luxury
if we are to re/member our betrayals and our integrity.

We are trapped, like insects in amber,
by the silences we created to protect ourselves.
We have kept silence
from fear of our assailants,
from fear of our complicity,
from fear of our unspeakable truths.

We have kept silence
so long and so well
that we no longer know
the secrets encelled within us.

We begin to reclaim, reform, reshape our integrity
when we begin to remember how, when, where, and by whom
we have been betrayed.

Solitude and poetry offer safe/intimate places
where we twinge know courage
to name our assailants, our innocence, and our truth.
In our poetry drawing music dance wood chopping
(any of the wild womanly arts)
we soften knead dissolve our silence
to e/merge our rage, passion, pain, and terror,
who are nothing less than
the children of our deepest integrity.
V.

Sisters are not a luxury.
We witness, en/vision, and chart the pain;
We are food for the wilderness journey
and comfort on the return.

Brothers are not a luxury,
knowing, naming, and healing
the resonance, hints, shadows, and darkness
of their pain and ours.

Healingsafetyjusticejoy
is not a luxury.
PART FIVE: IMPLICATIONS
A HOST OF WITNESSES

TOWARDS THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

If... then, what?

You have no proof.
Prove that he put his penis in your mouth when you were five, in the bathroom.
Prove how he spoke, moved, positioned, stroked, hardened, dripped, slipped, inserted.
Prove it.
Who saw? Who heard? Who suspected?
Whom did you tell? Who else was assaulted?
Wouldn't someone have done something, said something?
Wouldn't they come forward now?
You must have done drugs in the 70's and imagined this.
You are crazy.
You are unhappy and made this up
to compensate or get revenge because of your bad marriage,
or because you don't have any children.
You are possessed by an evil spirit.
You are mistaken; it was someone else, not me.
You have False Memory Syndrome.
This is slander and libel. I'll stop publication. I'll sue.

IF
intimate childhood sexual assault
is women's first lesson within patriarchy,

and IF
intimate assault is so private, so compromising,
so profound in its betrayal,
and so deeply embedded within the social enstructuration
of men's intimate violence towards women
that even the victimsurvivor herself
may not know what
he andor he andor he
has done to her body
and IF
warrantable, verifiable, tangible evidence
-- proof as smoking gun/ drooling penis --
is demanded and cannot be supplied
THEN,
what do we do?

How do we begin to re/member the silence regarding men's intimate assault of women? We can do so by creating personal lives, educational practice and theory that dares to take visceral account of men's assault of women, the silence of abusers, witnesses, and victimsurvivors, the intimate and social enforcement of silence, and the lived consequences of breaking silence in all its enquiries and undertakings. We develop theoretical and practical models of resistance, agency, and healing that provide sustenance to women breaking silence and educators standing witness to them. I conclude this work with two models, the Silent Patriarchal Screw and the Howling Feminist Spring, which incorporate the principle themes of this work. I reflect on the personal significance of this research, acknowledging sources of personal and educational support that have enabled me to begin, persevere with, and complete it.

My re/membering silence has been supported by a host of witnesses; people, content, processes, and institutions within the formal education system, from kindergarten to graduate school, have been essential to this undertaking. The many faces and facets of this support are a principle implication of this work. They range from moments of kindness, to lives of committed passion, to creative perceptive research advisement, to my own employment security as a teacher to the legal support of the University of British Columbia.

I offer the beginnings of a working agenda for personal action, educational praxis, and the work of counsellors and health professionals. I conclude with personal fare well comments and the poem, Nautilus.
MODELS TO RE/MEMBER SILENCE

The silent patriarchal screw

I claim silence

*How can I know what I know*
*if I don’t know*
*what you have done to my body?*

I am silence: fissured, scraped, torn, bruised, soul-disjoined.
I breathe the stale air of denial.

I claim my gentle silence, numb white scar tissue
congealed in every corner of my being,
filling soulhollows of betrayal, penetration, terror,
freezing the pain of complicity,
shrinkwrapping fissured cellwalls.

I claim my parasite silence, whose bloating mass
sucks confidence, creativity, and integrity.

Silence, whispers, hollowness
and a thin fog of depression
have been my chronic companions,
sapping the passions of
my academic, professional, community,
personal and intimate life.

The first model, the Silent Patriarchal Screw, illustrates my understanding of the connections amongst
intimate assault as the first lesson of women’s oppression in patriarchy and the importance of demands of
tangible *proof as a drooling penis, embodied silence, silent witnesses and silenced knowledge* in
maintaining intimate assault. The fractured sphere at the base of this model represents the intimate
betrayal of childbody, soul, integrity and knowing for each victimsurvivor.

My family members’ denial regarding my assaults while they were occurring, their denial of my recent
disclosure, and their legal threats regarding this text are lived examples of how these demands for "proof"
and dynamics of silence work to protect and maintain intimate assault.
As educators our first work as knowing witnesses
is to focus on knowing, on a day to day and moment to moment basis,
that the threat or reality of men's sexual violence
towards women and children
is occurring as a lived, breathed, skin to skin reality
for all who live in this patriarchal society.

This is science and soulwork;
it is our cells and our stomachs and our skin that know.
We re/member intimate assault by sensing it
in our own body, emotional resonances, verbal tones,
looks, chests extended and shoulders bowed.
We can become clear enough, strong enough, and resolved enough
to know the resonance and reality of intimate assault and other forms of abuse
within our own lives, our educational work, our culture and our society.

My tracing the blood tracks back to intimate childhood sexual assault,
and being unable to legally verify those assaults
and being under legal threat if I published my "allegations"
is one tiny tale that illustrates
the multilayered personal, emotional, social and legal pressures
which keep victimsurvivors silent.
Intimate childhood sexual assault as women's first lesson of patriarchy.

**SILENCED KNOWLEDGE**

Social enstructuration of assault and silence that calls for proof on a drooling penis. Men's sexual and physical violence towards women in pornography, prostitution, sexual assault, harassment, stalking, intimidation, intimate childhood sexual assault. Educational theory and practice that fails to acknowledge sexual assault.

**SILENT WITNESSES**

... family, friends, neighbours, teachers, community leaders not seeing, hearing, sensing, inquiring, inviting, protecting, knowing.

**EMBODIED SILENCE**

"What do I know if I don't know what you have done to my body?" Muffling, depressing, self abusing, hazing, hazed into repeated abuse. Boundaries compromised, instinct injured.
The Howling Feminist Spring

To live, to witness, to re/member

This spiral journey has been a peregrination, a pilgrim wandering through places of silence, places of voice, places of silencetvoice and volcanicstonerience, and some collective hollering. I live silencesecretsliesbetrayalabandonmentabuse in my body as emptiness, hollowness, disembodiment. I witness truth, testimony, nourishment and substance in my body as wholeness, fullness, connectedness, cellintegrity.

To re/member intimate childhood sexual assault is to soulsense the instinct sprained, bruised, tainted, injured, limping, soul silenced, glazed, deadened, too quick, hollow bright... the impinging, insinuating, invading, taking space, privilege, advantage, for granted, too close, too intruding, too assuming, too unhearing, too confident, too diffident... and, sometimes, the "perfectly normal".

To re/member intimate assault we need to become knowing witnesses to it, in our minds, bodies and souls. With no drooling penises as proof, we can create personal lives and educational practices that re/member intimate assault by sensing, recalling, and recreating theory, knowledge, and relationships that claim our silence, our language, our witness, our knowledge.
The Howling Feminist
Spring!

Re/membering is making silence knowledge

RE/MEMBERING KNOWLEDGE
...icon calls, wolf howls, music, art, chants, poetry, myth, story.
Soul sisters, ritual, circle, community, culture, institution.
experience, theory, food for the journey, wilderness, courage.
Home, security, time, nature, solitude, healing.
reframing, reconstituting, resisting, fearlessly.

KNOWING LANGUAGE, KNOWING WITNESS
I am victim, survivor, healer. Speaking, being heard.
Writing dreams, visions, betrayals. Body places, permission.
Witnesses to darkness, fear, and courage. Respect.
Making words, art, text, love. Being shoved back to silence.
and re/membeing, re/membeing, re/membeing.

BODY KNOWING
...dreams, flash memories, visions, connections, touches, smells, postures, movements, breathing, colours.
body impressions, body betrayals, body strength, cellular trickle healing, tremor knowing, passion ecstasies.
pasion betrayals, texture, skin, teeth, small & back...
coming to focus, clarity, senses.

instinct, injured, soul soiled, depression fear. stomach ache.
I'm stupid, I'm stupid.
I don't know anything. I'm stupid.
Fear. Fear. Fear. Fear. Fear.
silence, frozen, silence, fog, silence, fog. SILENCED KNOWING.
I offer this spring
as a model of understanding how
our intimate experiences
of silence and coming to know our silences
feed and are fed by
our creation of language that names our experiences and
witnesses who can respond to them,
and how knowing, language, and witness,
in turn, nourish and are nourished
by the collective project of
consolidating, framing, chronicling, and
celebrating women's knowledge.

The Howling Feminist Spring is the healing, creating, resisting reverse of the Silent Patriarchal Screw. The howling feminist spring embodies the essentials of my own healing process, and the feminist project of re/membering intimate assault by making silence knowledge. This model shows the relationships among my experiences of healing that range from the mucky, muffled haze of silent knowing (at the bottom), to the embodied knowing of dreams, tremours and postures (body knowing), to the spoken and heard naming of experience (knowing language and knowing witness), to the shared creation of community, theory, and action (re/membered knowledge). This is not a linear progression that simply happens to be curved into a spiral. As indicated by the slippage/sabotage arrow, at any and many moments, a touch, word, or action has tumbled me back to the depths of silent confusion. Other times, I have been nourished by a cassette tape, book, or collection of homedried herbal teas that has healed my bones.
Writing for my life

I had no choice but to complete this work. Early on, it became something far more essential than an intellectual project or an academic contribution/requirement. Earlier in this text, I have written that doing this work has had profound consequences in every aspect of my life: my fears, depression, writing, creativity, sexuality, clarity, strength, courage, determination, integrity, joy, and power...that it has been my sometimes souljewellery, babychild, and activated bomb. It has been, and is, even more. I realize now that as I began to write poetry about my own experience, I had begun to write for my life. Throughout this three and a half year writing process I have had a non-negotiable knowing that I either complete this work successfully or stay in the fog forever. At my current age of forty-three, this work has given birth to my second life.

As illustrated in the feminist spring, my experiences of knowing have been highly interrelated in this research/healing process. Experiences of silent knowing have recurred up to the completion of this document (see July 26, 1993 journal entry at the beginning of Part Five); my experiences of body knowing are becoming more consistent and grounded through my yoga/meditation practice; my creation of this text and its academic acceptance are my current experiences of knowing language and knowing witnesses; feminist theory and reflections on practice, other victimsurvivorhealers’ stories, and UBC’s legal support of this work are some of the forms of re/membered knowledge that have helped initiate, sustain and disseminate this work.
PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

Paid help

Over the past seventeen years I have received an enormous amount of professional and paraprofessional support in individual counselling, retreats and support groups, and intensive personal growth courses and programs. Fees have ranged from $10.00 (student sliding scale) to $70.00 an hour for personal counselling, and from $70.00 to $1000.00 for retreats and courses. Few counselling services, and none of the retreats, groups, or courses are covered by government medical plans or employee benefits.

I began personal counselling in 1976, five years into my horrible marriage. By that time, I had ground my teeth flat, had trouble breathing full breaths without gasping for air, had five years of nonorgasmic sex, and had no personal friends. I don't remember even knowing I had any problems until I began to vaguely connect what felt like small events. A male colleague in my teacher certification program commented that I acted like I never got hugged, and the comment just stuck in my head. He had said it a little unkindly, but I slowly realized it was true: I never did get hugged, or any other form of affection. Then, my husband started to shift from emotional and intellectual abuse (alluding to my IQ of 77, and my being a cuntfaced whore) to physical assault, poising to strike me once when we were arguing in the bedroom, and picking me up during arguments in the bathroom and dropping me, on my back, into the empty bathtub.

In the spring of 1976, I went to see a psychiatrist. Since then, I have worked with at least seventeen counsellor/ therapist/ psychiatrist/ minister/ body worker/ spiritual counsellors, and participated in at least six intensive group program/ retreats for personal growth. I had negative experiences with four of these seventeen: the first psychiatrist said and did nothing when I reported, in the presence of my husband, the physical threats and assaults; a counsellor invited me to give him a massage; a "bodyworker" kept cuddling up to me during a session, despite my whimpered protestations; another counsellor interviewed me with such curious excitement that I felt like an exotic insect: a survivor of intimate assault who spoke
coherently. The rest of the professional support helped me to at least "carry on", through my marriage, leaving my marriage, my herpes and other disasters with men, and through the process of confronting and dealing with my family. Mostly, they listened and listened and listened.

I have had experiences with three massage therapists and a chiropractor who all helped me release tension and pain. Only one, a woman in her fifties who was massage therapist student, demonstrated a sense of the physical/ emotional dynamics of intimate assault within my body.

The personal growth groups included a series of "t-groups" focussing on expression of anger regarding current and past experiences; the Context Training program, a series of courses entitled "The Pursuit of Excellence", "The Wall" and "The Advancement of Excellence"; a support group for survivors of intimate childhood sexual assault run by a woman who was a survivor herself who was apparently self-taught regarding her group leading; and a series of retreats run by this woman which encouraged, through breathing and music, regression to early experiences of trauma.

In one of these programs I was verbally attacked, at length, by a male group leader for exaggerating the importance of my experiences of intimate assault. I don't know exactly why I was expelled from sexual assault survivors' support group, but it was connected with my breaking unstated group rules, my being more analytical than others, and my doing a thesis on the topic of intimate assault.

The "Mastery of Self Expression", an intensive weekend course based on acting principles which encourages release of inner feelings and truths, was my most recent and productive personal growth group experience. I was deeply heard, sensed, and felt. I witnessed and benefitted from the program leaders' feelsense of the realities and consequences of intimate betrayal in both women's and men's lives.
**Friends**

A special aunt, a lover, friends, some teaching colleagues, my neighbour and my hairdresser are some of the people who have supported me in my earlier days and through this work. Within my extended family, I always felt enormous tenderness, love and generosity of my Auntie [Aunt's Name], who called me "Dearie", saved money for my first (Salvation Army) furniture purchases, and confided in me, not long before her death, that *although aunts weren't supposed to have favourites...* I miss her deeply; her presence and strength remain with me.

Similarly, I continue to be nourished by both the memories and spirit of Don [Friend's Name], with whom I shared a passionate relationship during the first two years of this research. I was beginning to write my poetry in January of 1990, when Don and I first met. For about the first months, my days were dark dives into memory and wordlessness and my evenings were cheerful witty telephone visits with this chartered accountant in his fifties, who didn’t know, didn’t ask, and when he did know, didn’t understand or respect what I was writing about. It was an incomplete, imperfect union: shortly before our final break-up and his fatal heart attack, after I’d shared my writing with him for over two years, he told me that he thought my *ideas were stupid*, but that he would *defend to death my right to be stupid* (!!!). I recognize now the intellectual abuse and emotional neglect I experienced from him, as well as the mystery of our early passion and his spiritual presence in me after his death.

I have leaned on and lost many friends, and retained a precious, slowly growing, core of them. They have written me letters, helped me move, helped me vacuum when I was too depressed to do so, accompanied me cross country skiing, hiking and kayaking, drawn with me, cried with me, played catch with me, camped with me, given me legal and spiritual literature, introduced me to yoga and to the songs of musicians who explore the resonances of intimate violence (Tracy Chapman, Tony Childs, Daniel LaNois, Ani DiFranco), and spent hours of long distance telephone time, finescale editing and heartresponding to the penultimate draft of this work. The curmudgeonly good will of my neighbour/building manager, and
the magic scissors of my hairdresser have provided other small moments of humour, grace and solace.

Protection

It is extremely painful for me to write about the protection that has been necessary for the writing, completion and publication of this work. I have often felt like a woman who has given birth to a beautiful child, then had to disguise, hide, and even disown my babychild until it was safe to acknowledge it. I have often felt angry, helpless and bewildered at the enormous gap between what I knew and what I could publish. To complete and publish this work I have changing my name, removed sections of completed text, and withheld names of individuals who have both supported and hindered this work.

I have gone through many stages of renaming myself as author of this work. I developed the pseudonym of Morgan McClung to protect myself from legal threats from family members and to protect my privacy in relationships with students and staff in my teaching work. I found it to be a powerful and liberating persona in my artwork and asked some close friends to call me by that name. This sense of liberation collapsed when I approached completion of this work and became depressed in anticipation of living two separate identities. With the help of my yoga teacher, Dharm Kaur Khalsa, I realized that I needed to claim my own work within my public life, and that this would involve abandoning my family name and taking one name for my writing, private, and public life. The terms pseudonym, or false name, or nom de plume, are hardly appropriate for such an undertaking. I have, over time, thought of this protective renaming as nom de guerre, veilname and spiritname. It has now become an important part of my new life (I can hardly wait to hear my students having to call me Ms. Wisewooff in the fall) and, in the spiritual, legal, and personal sense, a protection name.
Domestic nourishment

Place

Sense of place, my place, my places.
Handmade woman, wildworld, crafted world,
artistic world, spirit world, world of words:
Antiques, paintings, masks, carvings, old silver, baskets, brass, and balance scale,
light, prisms, stained glass, quiet, safe,
Joshua Canary, fish tank, balcony birdfeeder, plants,
huge trees lining the street;

Desk

Large ammonite spiralfossil,
bees' wax candle that I have to keep relighting,
currently chosen Angel card
(joy, abundance, discipline, responsibility...),
Crayola tin holding sweetgrass and sage,
bottles of blue and black ink, favourite stapler and three hole punch,
sharp scissors, frosty Scotch tape, glue stick, silver mechanical pencil,
choice of fountain pens and small leather "quill" to house them,
Joshua feathers sitting on the base of the brass lamp,
basket of felt pens and watercolour pastel crayons,
brown leather blotter with candlewax, frameworks,
and my goddechild's colouring,
old oak deskfilebin with dovetailed corners piled with my favourite books
and bills stuck in them that I know I can pay,
pottery byre for burning smudge and memories,
black, silver and deep pink bag for travelling stones
summer softball pitching trophy;

Computer

Printer (with access to Adult Education laser),
and, on keyboard, my talisbeings:
white wax woman Sharon made from dripped candle,
bronze Buddha, from Auntie Jen, ruby in matrix,
smooth dark blue healing stone, from Diane,
cut crystal ball, polished abalone shell, clear crystal point,
elephant with trunk raised, from Jane
bulbous green fertility stone;
Bulletin board

Recent pay slip, RRSP contribution slip, advice of taxes paid, painted fabric of Geishawoman with paintbrush contemplating an empty scroll, letters, cards and postcards received, clipped quotes, quote from the city gardener written in my left hand, about gardening as composting, watering, mulching, weeding, and clipping deadheads, booklet on Instructions for Preparation of Graduate Theses (revised, 1992), my notes on Ian's praise and reflections on my work (Jo, it's been 28 years that I've known you...), a spiral.

Close by

Tape deck with chanting, soothing, rousing sounds, my guitar and music, my huge spiral shell, bookshelf with my own reference books, row of my fifteen bound journals since 1988, and three sketch books from 1992, my leather or woven bags to carry my work out to UBC, my other three degrees and B.C. Teachers' Federation membership all framed and hung in a column over my computer printer, and a poster with the daily phases of the moon;

On my body

Cotton or wool and the art of personal spiritpower adornment the justright combinations of silverbronzewoodleatherstonebead earrings, bracelets, rings;

On my breaks

Going for coffee, maybe a cappucino, maybe a cinnamon bun... Benny's Bagels? Max's Delicatessen, Starbuck's... the seating, the music, the staff, the light, the people reading books, writing journals and letters, talking earnestly about he said... then I said...;
In my life

Solo/ solitary/ isolated/ solitude.
Alone, all one.

Is anyone still wondering why women haven't done more of this work?

Bodyspirit strength

My physical and spiritual strength for this work has been nourished in a number of ways throughout this research process. My affiliation with the United Church of Canada has been a source of spiritual/social/political strength. The constant political stands and social actions taken by this institution, and a number of feminist ministers and theologians within it, have nourished this work and my determination to complete it.

Since I was a small child, I have always been an athlete. My early physical strength was developed with general tomboying and cowgirling, family arm and leg wrestling, baseball, bicycle lacrosse with croquet equipment, and all team sports played throughout elementary and high school. The last school-based team sport I played was varsity women's fieldhockey in my first year at UBC. After that, I hiked, ran, swam, canoed, cross country skied, cycled, did aerobics and played recreational volleyball, but never maintained a rigorous program of physical activity. I also tried, and abandoned, hatha yoga, meditation, karate and tai chi. I found it extremely difficult to struggle through the initial feelings of heavy depression I would feel when starting any kind of exercise session, game, or physical outing. Looking back now, I realize that this heavy depression/sludge was the silent knowing and pain embedded within my lungs, muscles and cells. Physical or meditative activity would begin to work the pain and knowing loose, and I couldn't handle it. Only the roughness and aggression of ball hockey with two male teachers and a gang of high school boys felt thoroughly and fabulously cathartic; a few seasons of squash came close.
The more I have healed and written of my experiences, the less emotional sludge I need to push through when I become physically active. By this spring, I had become somewhat more disciplined in exercising, but still found it to be an incredibly lonely undertaking, until I began Kundalini yoga in April. This form of yoga integrates prayer, chanting, meditations, breathing, inner and outer body movements, and relaxation. People are attracted to this practice for stress reduction, increasing clarity and creativity, and building a spiritual/physical discipline in their lives. During my first month of yoga, I never knew how I would react during and after each class session. At any time, I would sob or cry, feel sudden fear or remarkable peace. As the exercises stretched the narrow boundaries of my physical experiences, I felt afraid of any unusual sensation, such as increased body heat during the rapid breathing (breath of fire) tingling in my arms, and slight dizziness. After watching the teacher, Dharm Kaur, extremely carefully for a number of sessions, I began to ask for her help and direction.

Me: I'M GOING THROUGH EXTREME EMOTIONAL STRESS FINISHING A VERY DIFFICULT THESIS AND I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE MY FAMILY AND WORK IDENTITY... 

Her: YOU NEED TO GET STRONGER. DO MORE YOGA. ALOT MORE YOGA.

So I did. Through this yoga practice I have gained more emotional, spiritual and body strength than I have had in my life. I now do brief exercises in the morning and at least half an hour per night of yoga with Buddhist chanting, attend a few formal yoga classes per week and usually attend one early morning (4 a.m.) Sahdna session per week. I am now swimming a number of times per week, in a more relaxed way than I have in my life, and playing recreational softball, but it is the yoga and chanting that strengthen and cleanse me daily. There is little sludge now, but I know I will need to maintain this level of yoga and exercise for the rest of my life to maintain my clarity and energy.

Finally, a radical source of spiritual nourishment has been Clarissa Pinkola Estes' Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype (1992). I began reading this book, slowly, in January, 1993 and chewed my way through it until the late spring of this year. Having a borrowed copy didn't stop me from marking key passages throughout the text as I read, although many of them, such as What poor bargain does every woman make? (p. 394) adhered to my bones on
to my bones on our first encounter. This book has affirmed, enriched, and emboldened me, in spirit, body, language, and vision. Although I read this work more than a year after developing the patriarchal screw and feminist spring models, I find I can relate many of her key notions to the Howling Feminist Spring:

silenced knowing:
  Shame-filled secrets, interred knowledge, instinct injured, disjointed, losing soulskins, poor bargains.

body knowing:
  Who is the wild woman?
  Medial woman, wild mother, creative fires
  Reclaiming/retrieving wild woman:
  do not fear the 'not know', the voice, memory, dreams.
  Making descent deep within the body... the mind... the soul:
  homing, disintered knowing, calling up/commingling with the soul.

Knowing language, knowing witnesses
  To truly heal, we must say our truth:
  not only our regret and pain
  but also what harm was caused.
  Stories create and embed knowledge hauling up, paleontologic endeavour, medicine, lifelong healing art.
  Call back the hawk: endurance means we are making something.

re/membered knowledge:
  The howl.
  Go gather bones, wounded healer.
  Finding our pack, dancing in handmade shoes, marking territory, taking right action, asking questions, impelling dialogue/accountability.
  Refusing to be captured.
  Rage, collective rage: you are free to go.
Resignation

resign: to relinquish, surrender, give up, or hand over something aimed at or desired, to give over, desist, or refrain from, to give up an office or position to retire, to abdicate

The flow of longingyearningneedingaching for family recognition respect understanding solidarity support intimacy knowing hearing feeling understanding deeppain, deeplaughter, my soul hemorrhage, subsides.

I slowly carefully gently resign my position of need.

No member of my immediate family has told me they believe my experiences of intimate childhood sexual assault. My relations with family members reside at the conflux of my truth, their denial and the day to day life realities of aging parents and growing nieces and nephews. Their denial is not simply about the reality of events that happened many years ago, but of the family system dynamics that created, hid, and now protects the abuse, and of my healed identity, power and vitality. I have told them of my writing with a protective name, and that identities will be hidden. No one mentions anything about the disclosure, and my writing is rarely alluded to, even in the most general sense.

I have almost stopped hoping for anyone in the family to believe me. I feel concerned about the effect of this entire issue on my parents’, particularly my father’s, health. I don’t know if any members of the family will seek this work out from the university library to read, and what impact it would have if they did, and I haven’t begun to seriously consider the emotional implications of publishing this work as a book. My aching need to be close to my nieces and nephews has subsided somewhat, and I have some contact with
them. I don't know how they have interpreted my extended absences, or what they have sensed from others about me. I feel an emotional closeness with one brother, and some kind of emotional resignation towards the rest. This resignation/acceptance does afford me some sense of peace, and cessation of the emotional drain of wanting to be understood and believed, but I am still angry towards them.

Rage

The larger phenomenon related to my own family’s denial and amnesia is the development, organization and publicity of "False" Memory "Syndrome", which, I suggest, might be better understood as False Denial Syndrome. While I have come to some emotional acceptance/resignation towards members of my family with regard to their denial of my ______ and ______’s sexual assaults, I am enraged by the development and promotion of this concept. One of my abusers has sent me literature on this "syndrome" and has offered to help my "cure".

Could or would counsellor/therapists induce memories of assaults that never occurred? Would a woman voluntarily choose to rend the fabric of her most intimate being and the social fabric of any semblance of family life by making something like this up? After the personal, emotional, and financial cost of my disclosure process, I cannot imagine anyone choosing to make this up. Given the dynamics of intimate assault as portrayed in the Silent Patriarchal Screw, I anticipate that the membership and power of the "False" Memory "Syndrome" organization, and the notion itself, will become yet another means of silencing victims and protecting abusers.
We are just beginning to chart the territory of intimate childhood sexual assault and other forms of intimate and sexual assault. Some of the rough sketched boundaries are scratched out in a confusion of entangled fear and good intention, such as teachers' and other working peoples' current reluctance to initiate any private, physical or affectionate contact with children and women for fear of misinterpretation and accusation. I know that I am conscious of every moment of physical contact I have with a niece, nephew, neighbour, friend's child, or student. I am conscious, too, of feelings of vulnerability -- mine and theirs -- when meeting a student, for example, in my portable classroom, alone, after school. Other actions are much less benign. Direct incursions on the fragile ground of women's rememberings include the development and promotion of "False" Memory "Syndrome" and recent legal decisions allowing accused assailants access to their victims' private journals.

To end the oppression of intimate childhood sexual assault and reclaim and reformulate the depths of women's knowing now embedded within our individual and collective silence, we must develop a profound, cellular, and critically sophisticated understanding of the personal, family, social, economic, social, and cultural dynamics of intimate assault.

**Solitary woman**

I live alone. I am heterosexual. I have no male partner, no constant female companion, and no children. My being a **solitary woman** has made this work possible in a number of ways. The social and physical vulnerability I feel as a **manless woman** has increased my awareness of the underlying realities of women's lives in this patriarchal society. My feminism has become more radical as a result. It is commonly observed that women with children are **one man away from welfare**. When I was in an intimate relationship with Don, I felt a sense of emotional belonging which made me less aware of the possibility and reality of men's social, sexual and physical aggression. Without this one-man buffer, I have developed a heightened awareness of men's power (or the possibility of their power) over women.
Socially, when a man gives me his full name or phone number, he offers an invitation. If I do the same, I feel at risk: *He can find out where I live. If I make him mad, or something goes wrong...* During a recent summer holiday trip, I drove logging roads alone and camped alone in a somewhat isolated campsite. Memories of being accosted by a man while I was cycling on a Quebec country road, by another man while I was sunbathing on a Yukon lake shore, and of being warned about a rapist while I camped alone in a busy New Hampshire campsite all came flooding back to me. Instead of absorbing the nourishment of the wild natural beauty, I battled my fear that another man would attempt to molest me. Finally I found an elderly couple in a trailer, and pitched my tent nearby. All I wanted was time alone in nature!

I have had no constant woman friend whose life was similarly "unencumbered" on whom I could rely for unconditional roundtheclock support or for wisdom born of similar experiences, and whose comfort and solace I felt I could take completely for granted. Friends and my research advisor have provided enormous support, particularly during crises, but there has been no one to *show me the way*, with regard to my writing or healing. My not having children has also contributed to my being able to undertake and complete this work. I cannot imagine how I could have sustained the lengthy and profound stillness that this work has demanded, had I been caring for a child or children. I have had a great deal of open time, flexible time, followmymuses time which has invited and sustained the creativity of this work. My vulnerability, solitude and independence have freed me from false allegiances, sharpened my senses of fear, pain, and healing, and created the space and necessity for my creativity to take root/bearfruit.
I am not clear about what the above implies for others who may undertake similar work. I would not wish for anyone the loneliness and isolation I have often felt doing this research. Are there other ways we can create the physical, financial, spiritual, intellectual and emotional space, time, clarity, strength, resources and independence that this work demands?

As I observed in the introduction to this section, I see the many forms of personal and educational support I received for this work as one of its principal educational implications. As an individual project, re/membering silence is lengthy, expensive, solitary work that few women would be able to undertake. Individually, within informal groups and within educational institutions, educators can be -- no, must be -- central to the collective work of re/membering intimate childhood sexual assault and women's oppression.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT OF RE/MEMBERING SILENCE

Teachers and teaching

The three educators who first supported this work were my kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Two teachers, Mrs. _______, Mrs. _________, and Mrs. __________. With each of these women I remember feeling visible, heard, and recognized. I wanted to please them and I wanted them to love me, and they did. They were extremely important to me then, and somehow, still are. My high school students have been a vital source of energy, honesty, and creativity. My teaching career has provided me with economic security and personal time during vacations and unpaid leaves to do this work. Some of my teaching colleagues, my school principal and the school board assistant superintendent have encouraged this work.
The AdEd "Girls"

I have discussed how the writings of feminist researchers and educators have influenced this work. At a more immediate level, feminist administrators, educational consultants, academics and activists whom I met as students in Adult Education graduate studies at UBC have taught me about embodied feminist consciousness, theory and action through their political, social, organizational activism, spiritual depth, intellectual analysis, shared readings, personal support, our collective writing work, and, of course, our clothing exchange parties. Their passions, strength, energy, caring, anger and humour have figured largely in the making of this feminist and the initiation and completion of this work.

University support

Earlier in this text, I have noted or alluded to ways academic structures and thinking have confused or silenced me. I have felt intimidated, discouraged and devastated by professors who have been unable or unwilling to understand the nature of this work, and ascribed this lack of understanding to the work, not themselves. Both the shape and substance of this work have undergone a number of lengthy and fundamental revisions because of legal, emotional, and academic pressures.

On the other hand, the struggle to create a form of text that would be true to my experience and meet the rigours of academic discourse have taken me deeper into the darkness of my experiences and further into the development of an analytic framework than I would have ever done on my own. By choosing to work within the boundaries of conventional academic research and theorizing, I have integrated the finescale narrative accounts with analysis and theory. If I had written this on my own, it would have probably been the poetry alone; I now see that this integration of the intimate and the reflective/analytic is a principal contribution of this work.
I don't know where else, aside from within the Adult Education program, I could have undertaken this work. Adult education approaches to education for social justice, reflection on adult experiences and values, theories of learning and teaching, and the development of critical social analysis was the soil in which this exploration found root.

The academic support has been sometimes hesitant, sometimes heartfelt, and sometimes suddenly withdrawn. I have worked for long stretches on my own, with carry on directions from my committee. There have been a number of changes in the membership of the committee. Dr. Linda Peterat, professor of Home Economics Education, has provided consistent intellectual and moral support since the beginning of this undertaking. Dr. Jean Hills, now retired from the Department of Administrative, Adult and Higher Education, joined and chaired the committee eight months before my completion. The non-woman, non-feminist respondent to this work, he has given me early ignorant responses (his words, not mine) that left me dumbstruck in the worst sense: intellectually paralyzed. Our interchanges since that time have helped me see the necessity of sharpening my discussions of some key themes, including the relationship between knowing and knowledge, proof as a drooling penis, and the importance of focussing on re/membering, rather than proving intimate assault. Dr. Bertie McClean's commitment of UBC's legal support for this work is one example of the critical role educational institutions must play in making silence knowledge.

I could not have completed this work in its present form -- perhaps, not at all -- without the creativity, "chutzpah", commitment, emotional generosity, spiritual humours and feminist vision of my research advisor for the past two years, Dr. Kathryn McCannell of the UBC School of Social Work. I don't know of anyone else who could have supported this work as she has; nudging me to become even nervier, nourishing me with literature, and witnessing my fear and exhaustion. In her company I have come to learn that rigour in this work is personal integrity, tightness of weave, seaworthiness, a felt sense of
deep personal completion, and responding to impossible problems with creative solutions that begin with, *What I really feel like doing is...*

These are not simply words of praise from a grateful acolyte/admirer/friend: Kathryn’s academic background, professional training, personal qualities and abilities, and current tenured status embody the qualities necessary for advisement of this type of work as academic research. She is a skilled social work practitioner who, as evidenced in her own published writing as well as her day to day life, has clearly felt, observed and analyzed her own pains, struggles, and frustrations as a woman, mother, and academic. She is passionate, creative, resourceful, inventive, angry, resilient, and uncompromising in her feminist analysis and vision. She is tenured, and has also been willing and able to take on the considerable demands of this advisement, which are in addition to her full workload within the Social Work department. She has stood witness to me: deeply caring, deeply respectful, and consistently describing the limits of her own involvement. The work was always mine; she would allude, suggest, tease, but the problems and their solutions were always my own. This was not a therapeutic relationship: during emotional intellectual/legal crises, she would name her concerns and suggestions, but leave it to me to garner the personal support I needed to deal with them.

The most obvious implications of her advisement are that universities must hire and support more Kathryn’s, that the advisement of interdisciplinary/crossdisciplinary/metadisciplinary must be actively supported within university departments and research centers, and that advisement of women's intimate reflective research demands profound integrity born of personal growth and awareness, passionate feminist commitment, and clearly developed social and political analysis.

The next implication is that we cannot wait for, or rely on, such institutional support. I suggest that we can make our individual and collective silences knowledge in an infinity of ways, all of which demand/engender courage, creativity and passion. The four loops I have described on the howling feminist
spring, silenced knowing, body knowing, knowing language/ knowing witness, and re/membering knowledge may be helpful tidemarkers in this endeavour.

I would love to be a part of a small ongoing group of women who develop, maintain, revise, persevere with goals to make silence knowledge by reflecting on experience, building theory, ritual, and social action, finding and sharing resources, developing clear boundaries in the sharing of pain, and encouraging each other to develop strength and clarity through yoga, tai chi, or meditation. We could encourage each other to chronicle our journeys on an on-going basis, through drawings, clay, fabric, writing, videotape, audiotape, scribbled point-form notes. We would read, howl, enrage, laugh, scheme, organize, protest, comfort, and sing. We would weave these creations into larger, more public demonstrations of women's intimate knowings. I have enjoyed glimpses of these possibilities through my associations with my feminist academic friends, my advisor, a loose-knit Christian Feminist group, and my friendship with Jane. I want more.
I wonder

I'm 43 now, almost 44.
I wonder what it would have been like
if every place of learning,
every hallway, meeting room, library,
resource center, office door,
program of studies, course outline, administrative office, policy, budget, facility, conference,
awards ceremony, handout,
workshop, panel, symposium,
theory, model, framework,
research project, test, assignment,
arrangement of seating, discourse, and thinking
throughout my kindergarten, primary, elementary, high school,
undergraduate, professional training, these many years of graduate school,
and my school board employers
had taken into account my/ our silences?

I mean, what would that
look like?
be peopled like?
act like?
feel like?
sound like?
smell like?
move like?
talk like?
think like?
accomplish?

When could I have started doing this work?
What could I have been doing since?
Towards a Working Agenda for Re/membering Silence

Wart dream

April 3, 1993

I am on a large rock outcrop on the edge of the primal sea. Smoothly, suddenly, the clear deeps rise and lift away my travel bag. I easily swim/retrieve it, but am in awe of the spiritdepths below and beyond.

Next, I am on land and looking at a horrid warty outcropping on the right side of my middle finger on my left hand.

I see how easily I could slice it off then hear the voice that knows explain that no,

it is a virus from the deepsandpast, and it is throughout my being and I must heal/cleanse throughout every pore, and then it will be gone.

As educators and researchers and learners who are victims, witnesses, and assailants in patriarchal structures which protect, educational practices which ignore, and discourses which inhibit knowledge of, intimate childhood sexual assault, we must know our silences and betrayals, taking unobtrusive measure: be/coming still, senseopen to receive a thousand tiny points of life: shiver, ache, firefly, shadow Morse code, semaphore, braille, telling this is where we wound this is where we silence this is where we heal.
My conclusion in this work is that intimate childhood sexual assault is the first silencing of women in a patriarchal society that is structured upon the oppression of women, and that educators have a vital role in re/membering this silence, and resisting this oppression. An important step towards this goal is for educators to develop a personal *felsense* of silence by reflecting on their own experiences of silent knowing. This felsense can become the nourishing matrix of creative personal action and educational theory and practice.

**Personal action**

I have developed this felsense by reflecting on my own silences and betrayals in personal therapy and in this academic work. Measured in financial terms alone, let alone the other losses, demands and challenges, the cost of this work has been more than most women could afford. Over the past seventeen years ago I have spent many thousands of dollars on personal support and group work. I also count a significant portion of the salary lost during my four years of fulltime graduate studies (totalling around $160,000) into the cost of this healing process.

What smaller incremental steps of personal action can women and men take towards making silence knowledge? I offer this list as the beginning of a suggested working agenda, based on my own experience and the actions of many others:

Develop a personal practice, such as yoga, meditation, chanting, or tai chi which integrates your body, mind, and soul. This is solitary and collective work that demands, nourishes, honours, protects, constrains, holds in awe, shares, questions, consults, and recognizes pain and limits; it is learning that requires time, strength, and courage to float, shift, wonder, and cleanse, cell by cell, in deep sea changes.

Reflect on your own betrayals, silences, and abuses. They may seem to be trivial or too dangerous to even name; do so. Draw them, shape them, dream them, write them. Grow to speak them in private. Grow to speak them in public.
Develop listening/being skills that maintain boundaries, depth, honesty and grace in the face of the unspeakable.

Become aware of the power dynamics of conversation, particularly between men and women. Who speaks? Who is heard and responded to? What qualities of voice, volume, tone, sentence structure and word choice reflect/create a sense of authority, or apology?

Befriend a child or woman whom you sense has been, or is being abused. See what you learn about strength and survival from her, and about ignorance, denial, judgment, disgust, and fear from yourself.

Read anything feminist; particularly, radical feminist. Develop an appreciation of the diversity of feminist perspectives. Study the literatures of feminist educational theory, research, and teaching, feminist literary theory, feminist writers such as Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, and feminist theologians in a range of faith traditions. Learn to ask feminist questions.

Develop an understanding of the relationships among oppressions on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, age, culture, physical and intellectual ability, and more subtle differentiations, such as marital status. Become attuned to the dynamics of multiple oppressions, for example, the extremely high incidence of sexual assault of poor, mentally disabled women.

Immerse yourself in the literatures of sexual abuse. View National Film Board videos, read personal accounts of survivors and healers of sexual abuse. Work towards feeling and understanding possible interrelationships among sexual, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual abuse as well as alcohol, drug, food, and sex dependencies, depression, and low self esteem.

Become attuned to the eroticization of men’s sexual violence and women’s sexual victimization, in advertising, films, music, literature, language, fantasy and experience. Sense your own emotional and sexual responses: numb? disgusted? interested? entertained? aroused?

Develop and sustain a community of educators committed to re/membering silences. Talk and work together.

Learn about and actively support the work of front line women’s advocacy organizations such as battered and homeless women’s shelters, rape relief crisis centers, sexual harassment offices, and international women’s human rights advocacy campaigns.

Women, don’t I’m a feminist but... Wrestle with your identity as a feminist, pro-feminist, woman- or man-identified women and find language to name your struggles without detracting from the truths of women’s oppression, resistance, and strength.
Men, become aware of your privilege of relative physical safety in your public and private worlds; your immunity to fear of walking alone, entering a deserted underground parking lot, being raped on a first date. Extend that awareness to the understanding the impunity abusers enjoy; their knowledge that they may harass, intimidate, cajole, seduce, fondle, and penetrate babies, children, adolescents, and women in their intimate and unprotected spheres, virtually without fear of consequence of any sort; that they may, in fact, gain their victims collusion, cooperation, protective silence and amnesia regarding the assaults.

Men, do something about men's violence, working with friends, men's groups, sports, community and religious groups. Consult with women's groups about your work. Support men who are helping establish and maintain sexual harassment policies; learn about and actively support groups for battering men; support enquiries into sexual assault of boys; gather together a group of male colleagues for a discussion, study group, or workshop on men's violence.

Men, work to re/member masculinity in ways that acknowledge and radically re/form your long history of violence towards women. Struggle with your identity as a feminist or pro-feminist.

Men please release yourselves from tyranny of defensiveness (NOT ALL MEN ASSAULT! SOME OF US DON'T!!! DON'T TAR US ALL WITH THE SAME BRUSH !!!) and realize that if you are not an active part of the solution, you continue to be a part of the problem of men's violence. I have seen one car with a bumper sticker that reads ANOTHER MAN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. Why doesn't every man in Canada who is not violent towards women have that affixed to his car, briefcase, computer, lunchbox and/or apartment door?

I can imagine that many men may anticipate that the cost of feeling the collective shame of men's violence is too great for you to bear. That may be true; if it is, become spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and socially strong enough to bear it. Until you do, the violence will not end. Women cannot do this work alone.
Educational theory and practice

How can educational theory and practice contribute to making silence knowledge? As educators, our work is enormous. The framework has been clearly established by feminist researchers, writers and practitioners for the development of educational theory and practice committed to re/membering women’s silence and oppression, and creating knowledge that liberates, nourishes, and makes us whole. When we approach all aspects of our educational praxis -- our institutional structures, policies and procedures, values, beliefs, and theoretical frameworks, courses of study, selection of resources, structuring of assignments and evaluation protocols, advisement of research, formal and informal relationships -- with a passionate commitment to making silence knowledge, we engage in healing, revolutionary work.

In this work, I have broken silence regarding my experiences of intimate childhood sexual assault. In the silent patriarchal screw, I have named this experience as the first and fundamental experience of my, and women’s, oppression/ silencing in patriarchy. I offer this radical claim as a starting place for further explorations of both women’s and men’s silences. I offer this work as a quilter would offer a wooden framework, fabric, warm filler, and the tentative long loosely basted stitch of a gabalashed design to a quilting circle. I offer it in anticipation that others’ autobiographical reflections will enrich it with multiple perspectives.

From my readings of feminist educators and theorists, and from my experience of this research, I would suggest that the following be included among the working agenda of educators committed to making silence knowledge at every level of educational theory, research and practice:
We commit ourselves as learners, teachers, researchers, advisors, counsellors, administrators, trustees, and governors to developing in our minds and souls a profound felt sense of silence: what it is, what it does, and what we are prepared to do about it.

We legitimize private experience, particularly intimate experience, as essential public knowledge.

We create dialogue between personal experience and educational, social, and political theory.

We invite, in our research and teaching and learning and advisement, the further creation of our knowledge of women's intimate truths. Recognize, at a visceral level, that girl talk, personal anecdote and confidences, can become real and essential knowledge.

We develop relationships and structures that create and maintain safety, confidentiality, protection, nourishment, respect regarding the exploration of intimate experience.

We develop understandings of
- evaluation/ rigour regarding intimate reflections,
- the process of creating and challenging conceptual frameworks based on intimate experience,
- the process of exploring practical implications of intimate experience.

We work to make malleable the rigid structures of knowledge (breaking and joining ranks of individual academic disciplines, re/conceiving notions of logic, research, and "proof") which have served to maintain silence.

We develop critical imaginations to create new modes of expression of private knowledge, including "nonacademic" forms of text, texture, colour, shape, sound, and movement more suited to communicating and reflecting on silenced knowing.

We make the process of creating knowledge more transparent by including self-reflective passages within academic text.

We name ourselves, our histories, our biases, our assumptions, our vested interests and our limitations known, particularly when we wish to become researchers of others' experiences, or respond to their research.

We bring to every discussion of educational theory and practice -- not only explorations of women and knowing -- a silence audit, with queries such as: How does this discussion account for all the oppressions of women in patriarchy? How does this discussion take into account the reality of women's silence as well as our resistance to these oppressions?
Our physical education

Athletics and outdoor activities have been an essential source of strength and revitalization for me. In the fog of chronic depression, it has often been difficult for me to be physically active. In the past more contemplative physical activities, such as yoga and tai chi, have been too emotionally painful to pursue. Through my recent yoga "immersion" I have realized that daily yoga, meditation and physical exercise is a non-negotiable part of my emotional, mental, spiritual and physical health. My next step will be to take part in a Model Mugging course, in which women are trained to defend themselves against attackers. I need to teach my body new instincts of maintaining boundaries and protection from assault -- subtle or violent. I’m coming to see that learning, practising, refining, playing and celebrating the joy of defending our bodies is at the center of women’s knowledge.

Supporting the healing process

In our personal lives and educational praxis we can support our own, and others’ healing by:

- knowing and healing from our own betrayals/ silences so we can establish and maintain rigorous boundaries in our emotional, physical, intellectual, social (and, obviously, sexual) connections with others;

- coming to deeply know that healing is a physical, intellectual, emotional, social, political and spiritual act, and weaving this knowing into every moment of our healing and work;

- developing our instinctual sense of the sacredness of woman’s body, ours and others’: my physical space, my sense of privacy, my skin, my mouth, my breasts, my breathing, my labia, my vagina. These are the places of my betrayals and silences and healing. How do we minutely honour this fragile holy ground?
FARE WELL

I find it difficult to conclude this work. The process of thinking, feeling, struggling, celebrating, mourning, creating, talking, writing it has been central to my life for the past four years. Having received responses from Ian Alexander, and Dr. Shauna Butterwick, I feel the realization that each reader will bring different experiences to this work and create different understandings from it. Aaaaarg! I want everyone to sense/process each thread and nuance exactly as I had! I am frustrated that there is much I haven’t developed more completely, and much that I still don’t know. Shauna, and others, have asked for more specifics about the direct implications of this work with regard to classroom practice: I have small examples from my own recent teaching experience, but not enough to offer as guidelines or parameters. I am frustrated because I can’t write of a personal miracle/victory cure through this work: I am still lonely, I still wonder where I belong, I still long for a knowing, respectful family, and I still feel shadows of thinking I am stupid. I recently received my acceptance as a member of Mensa, an organization for people who score in the top two percent of standardized IQ tests. I laughed in joy and amazement when I read the letter, thinking If I’m this smart, where is it?

This writing has demanded creativity, strength, determination, courage, perseverance, and tenacious care that I never dreamed of myself as embodying. Meeting these demands has been central to my healing process over the past four years. When I completed the first draft of this text, I felt an inner ending so profound that I thought I might die. I drove with extra caution for a week afterwards, anticipating a fatal automobile accident. I kept thinking Who will be able to find my computer diskettes and publish my thesis?
This feeling passed, and I realize now that it was deathbirth throe, a passing/ shedding/
metamorphosis. I stand now on different ground. I think clearer. My voice is stronger. I am funnier,
freer, and more radical. I've made my first protest telephone call to a politician's office. My earrings
are more outrageous. Maintaining this clarity will be a part of my daily practice for the rest of my life.

I hope that this work has nourished your felt sense of silence, knowing, and creating knowledge; that
you have felt affirmed, enriched, disquieted, disturbed and challenged to further make silence
knowledge in your personal life and educational praxis.

Thank you for accompanying me.
Nautilus

"This is the face of Godde"
softspoke the voiceless voice.

There, suspended, fullframed in dreamvision
grey-beige as Yukon hills at winter dusk
shell as soft as a cheek's caress;
soulsen interior chambers
sturdy, flexible, resilient to despair;
the chambered nautilus.
Encircling, enwombing her/self.
Creating a safe walled chamber only to pass through it
to the cold salt-nourishing waters beyond.
This is the face of Godde.
Peace.
The peace which undergirds all understanding.
The peace which undergirds all passion.
Spiral.
Spiral-knowing.
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