VOICES FROM THE PAGES: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF A WOMAN AS LEARNER/TEACHER

by

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ABSTRACT

Interpretive narrative in the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, this autobiographical thesis traces the development of the writer as a learner/teacher. Chapter One identifies the "voices" embedded within the writer's personal journal texts from 1962 to 1993. Chapter Two discusses the development and integration of these voices and their relationship to the writer as a learner/teacher. Seven of the writer's "Chorus" of women friends speak of some of their learning experiences through found poetry in Chapter Three, and in the closing chapter personal/political, learning, teaching and methodological implications are discussed. Such implications ponder the personal experience of a woman learning and teaching in a patriarchal education system.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Poets of yesteryear invoked muses for inspiration, feminine spirits of aesthetic sensibilities. My feminine spirits of aesthetic sensibilities, not to mention good old-fashioned straight-talking common sense are my female friends, my Chorus. To all of them who contributed by writing, chatting, questioning and encouraging me with this thesis, I say "Thank you!" It belongs to all of you. I say thank you also to all those women and men who, as part of my Chorus in the past, contributed to my shaping of myself.

To my committee, whom I often referred to as "the committee made in heaven", I give my respect and affection for their assistance in matters ranging from discussion of questions about the nature of personal identity to my overlooked typos. Without the gentle questioning of Dr. Verriour, the inspirational suggestions of Dr. Leggo and the insightful comments of Dr. Kelly this narrative thesis could not have been born.

To you, the reader, I acknowledge your contribution to the creation of meaning by your interaction with my text.
VOICES FROM THE PAGES: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF A WOMAN AS LEARNER/TEACHER

INTRODUCTION

I used to feel that the earth was echoing that voice within me which kept on whispering: "Here I am."

(de Beauvoir, 1958, p. 82).

On July 31, 1993, out of a large cardboard box, I retrieved my first diary, written at the age of ten. I crawled back into bed setting the diary, enveloped in its original fake snake-skin box, on the covers before me. On the side of the box facing me was a dark brown label reading:

ONE YEAR DIARY
IVORY H & P #1051
MADE IN CANADA

I lifted the lid. There it was. Its ivory, gold-flecked face and the gold lettered "ONE YEAR DIARY" staring back at me. I half expected it to blink, like a magic-spirited mummy unearthed from its sarcophagus. I opened it. I read from its neatly lined pages with the date printed by the publisher at the top centre of each page. I felt I was eavesdropping on "me" talking to myself at ten years old. What a kaleidoscope of feelings: wonder, embarrassment, frustration, joy and affection. What I had excavated from the cardboard box was a fragment of my history. How was I going to make sense of this
diary and the sixteen other diaries and journals buried in the box? First, I read. Read them all. And listened, for I was hearing voices.

**VOICES FROM THE PAGES**

First breath, a soft and distant
breath of life, a whisper of words
from inner voices, soft and low,
to and fro, private talk,
a chat, a banter, a laugh
a whistle, a whine, a shout
a scream and a whimper
talk time
intimate talk, baby talk, big talk,
tough talk, soft talk
talk to, talk at, talk with, talk among
talk it through
my body-voice, spirit voice, voice of wisdom
croaking, wheezing, rattling, clipping, slurring,
stuttering, mumbling, speeding, hesitating...
throaty, harsh, strident with fear,
smooth, soft, soothing, clear
strong, powerful, resonant,
HEAR!

she gossips and recalls
debates, argues, clarifies, justifies, testifies
pontificates, reiterates
explains, describes, narrates
questions
overlapping, latching, interrupting
speaking from the heart with the voice of reason
a literate, literally lilting voice
speaking up, speaking out
serious talk
girl talk

The voices from the pages speak with force. The voices struggle to integrate and be a cohesive "me" voice. My voices whisper, speak, or shout among themselves in the pages of my journals and in my head, they speak orally to other people's voices. My voices inform "me", the learner. The learner informs "me" the teacher. I literally talk myself into
learning much as James Britton (1990) suggests when he speaks
of the movement from describing to explaining as a journey in
words "that each must be capable of taking himself [herself]--
and that it is by means of taking it in speech that we learn
to take it in thought" (p. 124). So talk with others and talk
within myself can create learning transformation and this
transformation process recreates me as a teacher. The more I
learn, as a whole person, the more I develop as a teacher and
"learn" myself into teaching. Now, I ask who or what are my
voices? What are my most influential learning experiences?
Because I am intimately connected to the talk of other women
close to me and because their talk negotiates meaning in my
life, I ask them, "What are your most influential learning
experiences?" What is our language of learning? How do our
ways of learning inform how we teach?

So what, who cares, why bother?

So many women want to know. Scholarly women, single
women, working women, teaching women want to know about other
women's experiences. After centuries of being silenced in
most cultures women want to know about themselves, from
themselves. Who says so? Spender, (1980); Gilligan, (1982);
Bolen, (1984); Cameron, (1985); Belenky et al., (1986);
Heilbrun, (1988); Weiler, (1988); Gaskell, (1989); Luttrell,

Many male as well as female teachers, teaching in formal,
informal and non-formal situations (Courtney, 1991) who are
dedicated to encouraging women's voices in all their
diversity, want to know. The knowing that is so desperately needed is at the microcosmic level of women's daily personal lives where the struggle for meaning occurs. It is from this personal level of learning that our theory of women's learning should grow. "Among the most pressing items on the agenda for research on adult development is the need to delineate in women's own terms the experience of their adult life" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 173). In this interpretative narrative thesis I plunge into my two diaries and sixteen journals spanning 1962 to 1993; surface to ask, listen, and learn from other women who interact in my life and try to swim with the current of my own learning process.

Although focused upon myself, my purpose relates to that of the authors of Women's Ways of Knowing who state, "We describe the ways of knowing that women have cultivated and learned to value, ways we have come to believe are powerful but have been neglected and denigrated by the dominant intellectual ethos of our time" (Belenky et al., 1986 p. ix).

For this learning journey into my journals I have chosen narrative style because, as Mary Catherine Bateson (1990) says so aptly, "The narratives about individuals provide a framework for musing about the shape of individual lives, about relationships, and commitment and about gender. Extensive scholarly apparatus would be inappropriate for this format" (p. x).

So I dive into this lived experience of my own learning as it is captured in the pages of my journals. I relate how I
orient to my lived experience of learning, and show how I interpret the "text" of my life regarding this phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). The development of and the relationship between myself as learner and myself as teacher provides the narrative that unfolds below. I hope it will resonate for other teachers and inspire them to re-search or re-view their relationship with themselves as learners/teachers, so they can approach their students, clients and their own lives as educators with more insight, humor, and compassion.

My main "text" is my journals, my voices from the pages. As I re-searched each journal I dispensed with the awkward system of Diary 1 and 2 and Journals 1-16, opting instead for more reader-friendly names that would attempt to catch the essence of each journal's spirit. Some had quotes on the title pages that indicated the initiating thought, but many had no quotes or the quotes didn't represent the whole of the journal very sensitively. So, let me introduce you to my diaries and journals by name. (See Table 1.).
### TABLE 1. LIST OF DIARIES AND JOURNALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOURNAL NAME (Named during re-search)</th>
<th>OPENING QUOTE</th>
<th>DATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Happiest Girl in the Universe</td>
<td>&quot;...I am made unlike any one that I have ever met; I will venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different. Whether nature did well or ill in breaking the mould in which she formed me, is a question which can only be resolved after the reading of my book.&quot;</td>
<td>Jan 1 - Feb 15 /62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fab Riot</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb 17 /65 -Jun 6/66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Miniature Odyssey</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug 1 /73-Oct 7/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>&quot;...to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.&quot;</td>
<td>Oct 13 /74-Apr 25 /77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ulysses, Tennyson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring</td>
<td>&quot;...a beauty growing since the world began...&quot;</td>
<td>Aug 1 /77-May 5 /79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Larger Life, A. Lampman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journeying</td>
<td>&quot;Wisdom is better than weapons of war.&quot;</td>
<td>May 79 - Aug 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 9:18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 25 /81-Jul 13 /82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jul 14 /82-Aug 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOURNAL NAME (Named during re-search)</td>
<td>OPENING QUOTE</td>
<td>DATES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasures</td>
<td>&quot;For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.&quot; Matthew 6:21</td>
<td>Aug 5 /83 - Jan 6 /85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demeter Rising</td>
<td>&quot;The first lesson of philosophy is that we may all be mistaken.&quot; Our Oriental Heritage, W. Durant</td>
<td>Jan 24 /85 - Dec /85</td>
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<td>Howling</td>
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<td>Dec 17 /85 - May 29 /87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homing</td>
<td></td>
<td>May 31 /87 - Dec 31 /87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 1/88 - Sep 5/88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personals (after the musical I directed)</td>
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<td>Sep 25 /88 - Jun 30 /90</td>
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<td>Shifts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jul 2 /90 - Jan 1/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost half-filled Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 30 /93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitudes</td>
<td>&quot;My need to be alone is balanced against my fear of what will happen when suddenly I enter the huge empty silence if I cannot find support there.&quot; &quot;I have time to think that is the great, the greatest luxury. Therefore my responsibility is huge.&quot; The Journal of Solitude, May Sarton.</td>
<td>May 25 /93 - Sep 1/93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So now you've been introduced to the text "characters", a synopsis of the plot. In Chapter One, I'll let you hear the voices from the pages of my journals for yourself, share when and how I first hear them speaking in my journals, and what each contributes to "me" the learner. Chapter Two tackles how these voices interact and create my "learner". I'll share the learning experiences of my Chorus of close women friends and how their voices influence mine in Chapter Three and in Chapter Four I'll explore the implications for my teaching and finally share the personal, learning, teaching and narrative methodological implications of my voices.
CHAPTER 1: VOICES FROM THE PAGES

I could not ever cease to...talk to myself.

(de Beauvoir, 1958, p. 48).

THE ACHIEVER

This snippet of a first diary, The Happiest Girl in the Universe, began January 1, 1962 and ended February 15, 1962. I am ten years old and in grade five. In it I hear the strong, happy, eager, proud voice of the Achiever.

Dear Diary,

Again today I've got A in arithmetic and A in spelling. At Brownies we played squirrel in the tree and I went in for button sewing. That evening after doing my work I read in my book. And went to bed tired but happy. (See you tomorrow).

January 30, 1962

Dear Diary,

Today school went well. And I just couldn't wait until the weekend. Ground Hog day went really well for he didn't see his shadow. That evening I went to Aunty Evelyn's for the night and Roger, Gordon and Jill were there. My highest point in scrabble was 24.

February 2, 1962

The Achiever is a good girl voice. She is conscientious and eager to please and the major way she seeks approval is through the achievement of good grades. Of the 31 school days
recorded in this first diary, I state my test or report card marks on 20 of these days. It seems I was preoccupied with my marks. My mother in an interview October 1, 1993 says, "You were always willing and anxious...to succeed and be up there at the top. That was your ambition always...and maybe I encouraged it...umm, but I think you would have done it anyway."

Sometimes I attribute my success as an achiever to myself. "I think I did quite well...", "I was very proud of my report...", "I got an A in arithmetic." However, the repetition of "I got..." suggests that these marks were given to me, thus implying a "giver", the teacher, and a "receiver", me. Learning is perceived by my Achiever voice at ten as being received from authorities such as teachers, parents or church leaders. At ten I, "equate receiving, retaining and returning the words of authorities with learning" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 39).

Despite the action of the Achiever in studying, often luck is considered as her ally.

But I wasn't too lucky at school. I had 1 wrong in arithmetic and 3 wrong in s-s-spelling. It seems Thursdays don't go too well at school.


Today I wore my blue dress hoping it would bring me good luck. We had a Language Test.

January 12, 1962.
It all seems a game or show in which the object is to work hard and be seen as "highest". Other learners are viewed as either teammates in a competition with other teams, "Jimmy's team (which I am in) is second", or as individual competitors.

The Achiever is constantly surveying how she stands compared to others.

Today I went to school and received the highest mark in the class on a review test of Chile. My mark was 42/50. Tommy got 41, the next highest.

January 8, 1962.

I got 44/64 which was quite good compared to the others...learned I [tied] with JP for the highest language mark, 93.


Today I became the happiest girl in the universe. You see I learn that I ranked first, with 4 others...I met mom...the first thing I told her was I ranked 1st.


After discovering this comparison activity so entrenched in my diary at ten, I literally jumped off my seat when two days later I read in Women Who Run With the Wolves:

...a natural slumber...comes upon humans at a certain time in their lives...I saw this sleep...descend
upon children at age eleven or thereabouts. That is when they begin to take acute measurements about how they compare to others. During this time their eyes go from clear to hooded, and though they are always in motion like Mexican jumping beans, they are often dying of terminal cool.

Whether they are being too cool or too well-behaved, in neither state are they responsive to what goes on deep inside, and a sleep gradually covers over the bright-eyed, responsive nature.

(Estes, 1992, p. 397).

So, Clarissa Pinkola Estes' words have resonance for me. I am the too well-behaved, self-centered child, only superficially aware of my human connection to others. Although my initial reaction to this first diary was embarrassment at its self-centered achievement fixation, soon humor and then affection seeped in to soften my attitude to this little girl who was, after all, doing exactly what her family and school system encouraged - a "good" job.

The Achiever's success measurement scale was internalized, from the school environment surrounding me. No one mentioned in my diary or no one in my memory told me to be the highest or best. No one specifically pressured me. I seemed to pressure myself, although I am aware I likely learned to do this to please someone else. I suspect that I felt inadequate. Perhaps I felt I should have been a boy.

My father paid little attention to me as a child, so I thought I would be a success. I picked academic achievement
because I liked studying and felt success was attainable. This didn't earn me any flamboyant praise from him, just a nod over the newspaper as I recall, but meanwhile I found I liked the game because I could win and plenty of other people praised me.

I remember the Grade Five year, at the time of my first diary, as one of great excitement. Other than the fear of incorrectly answering oral math questions, I seemed in the journal and in my memory, quite the happy Achiever firmly set in my determination to be the best by following the Achiever recipe I learned by osmosis from my microcosmic culture: follow the rules, work hard, study, fill in all the answers, figure out what the teacher wants, if you don't know guess, do your homework, be on time, keep busy and strive for the top.

Despite the insecurity of needing approval from others, I read and studied because I loved ideas. That my view of learning was the accepted educational philosophy of the time was almost inevitable considering my age. I, like the educational system I reflected, was predominantly goal, more than process oriented, challenge or competitive rather than support based, solitary more often than collaborative, and outwardly rather than inwardly validated (Belenky et al., 1986). It was the only game in town. The only one I knew. Even though I was intuitively oriented and constructed knowledge from my interaction with my environment throughout these years, I did not give this knowledge credit; received knowledge was what I thought earned me the marks. I acted as
if impersonal objectivity was the ideal style of learning.

This competitive, goal-oriented, objective style of schooling suited my Achiever voice well, and she eagerly embraced this style of learning in other settings too. As an elocution student at ten I was eagerly competitive. "On Saturday I went to Elocution and I earned a star. I need one more star before I get the dollar." At Brownies, although I enjoyed the social aspects, I happily substituted achieving "badges" rather than "marks". As to Sunday school, I attended regularly and mention three positive comments: "worth going to...", "I enjoyed Sunday School" and "we had a good lesson". I don't, however, say why I enjoyed or found the lessons worthwhile. Since marks weren't given, my Achiever must have enjoyed other aspects - stories, art, books, or discussion and achieved in some other way the confirmation that she was worthy.

The results of being an Achiever, however, meant having to devise innovative ways of dealing with failure, error or mistakes, that inevitably occur in any learning process. What I did was make my mistakes in a safe place, alone with myself, or possibly with my mother, but never before the class. I also avoided what might cause me any public humiliation - sports and later mathematics (which I dropped as soon as the curriculum requirements allowed). I found what I was good at, or what the school system told me I was good at and got better at it, avoiding areas and activities that were too risky. A touch of mockery, a word of scorn, a laugh even of light humor
at my learning struggles at baseball pitching, bicycle riding, or tennis serving, and I quickly pretended I didn't really want to learn that skill anyway. This "sour-grapes" approach worked well because I had ample language skills to make the excuses sound plausible. The Achiever was running away from failure as much as running toward success. She hadn't yet learned that "from every failure imperishable experience survives" (James, 1964, p. 146).

So by age ten the voice of the Achiever is very clear. She seems to be an interaction similar to the two archetypal goddess forces described by the Jungian analyst, Jean Shinoda Bolen, in her book Goddesses in Every Woman (1984). First, my Achiever voice sounds like Artemis who "personifies the independent, achievement-oriented feminine spirit" (p. i) and secondly, she bears a resemblance to Persephone, the maiden who tends toward "compliancy, passivity, and a need to please and be wanted by others" (p. i). Persephone is far more prevalent in my childhood Achiever voice, especially "the need to please" quality, than in my adulthood Achiever voice where my achievements are far more oriented to pleasing myself than pleasing others. I still catch myself, however, picking up the phone to tell my mother what I got on my latest university paper. I still glow when praised, I just chase praise somewhat less than I used to do and am not quite so surprised when I get it.
The Achiever speaks with her enthusiastic voice through all my journals, but she does develop her "tone". She matures. On January first, 1966, aged 14, I began my second diary, a bright sky-blue volume complete with metal lock and keys. Etched into the cover are warnings to would-be snoopers, "Private. Stay out! Do not enter!" In the pages of this second diary I call The Fab Riot, the Achiever accepts credit for her work without the luck factor. 'A' in Socials was a big surprise, but a lot of work has gone behind those marks and I hope it always will." She is subtly changing and developing a more varied cadence. Now, she does not record every test mark. She befriends or incorporates the poet, painter and dramatic personas and adds the paid worker (babysitting) to her repertoire. She is more bold and determined. She mailed poems off to a magazine for publication and despite rejection wrote, "...don't think I'm giving up. On the contrary it makes me want to work that much more." At elocution, the Achiever is not only pleased with the excitement of successful competition in speech arts festivals, but enjoys and acknowledges the process of learning. "Drama is so wonderful its (sic) challenging, rewarding and significantly frustrating at times." Within school as well she said, "I enjoy collecting A's but I enjoy working for them and learning more." She accepts not being number one, if there is some treat to look forward to. "Mrs.
R. thinks I can do Shakespeare. Isn't that mint!"

In later journals she is still achievement oriented, but not necessarily for immediate social or scholastic rewards. She achieves inwardly in self confidence as well as outwardly in the material world. Many years later at a women's retreat in 1979, I tell of a guided daydream or visualization session in which we were to formulate a question and take an imaginary journey to find a sage. I write:

When I arrived, after the arduous journey, and entered the dark cave burdened with my ponderous question, I faced, not a wise old man, but myself as an old woman and my question’s answer was - me!

(1979, Exploring)

So the Achiever finds resources within as have so many other women. "...Everything that has ever helped me has come through what already lay stored in me..." (Rich, 1986).

In the larger social and political sphere, Bateson (1990) urges that women, besides valuing sensitivity, value their own self-centeredness in a world that often demands sacrificial acts of women. "If women were brought up to be more centered on themselves, many of the conflicts and discontinuities that disrupt their lives would be irrelevant, peripheral to the central definition of self." (Bateson, 1990, p. 40-1).

In many ways the Achiever begins to embody qualities of the armed goddess Athena, the practical, confident strategist. My Achiever is the first voice to speak of "surviving" exams.
"All education stimulates the development of this archetype [Athena]. Learning objective facts, thinking clearly, preparing for examination, and taking the tests themselves are all exercises that evoke Athena...She [Athena] may learn to observe and strategize in order to survive" (Bolen, 1985 p. 83/84).

Waiting...for fears to subside, new events to brew, new hopes and dreams, so as I'm waiting, I'd best do some planning.

October 15, 1978 Exploring

Plans, lists, and goals jump out of the pages like uniformed privates on parade, an army that shapes and crafts my dreams. Nonetheless, questioning increases and mistakes gain status as a learning tool.

So great individuals must be able to live facing ruins and seeing in those ruined dreams the material, not of rubble, but of building materials for future triumphs. It is then that failures and heartbreaks become the catalysts and tools of ultimate success, whose nature is not so much "triumph" as peace of mind, body and soul.

December 18, 1977 Exploring

My Achiever in her building-from-the-rubble metaphor, anticipates Bateson's call to make the self central in my own narrative and to use "the arts of improvisation, which involve recombining partly familiar materials in new ways" (Bateson, 1990, p. 2).
Despite her eager enthusiasm my Achiever arms herself against "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" with three body-soul guards: skepticism, humor and religion. Skepticism she uses to protect or defend vulnerability:

new romances - the dessert is at the beginning so we'll have to see how the main course goes...

March 12, 1985 Demeter Rising

Humor is more abundant and protects by distancing the Achiever voice from feelings of blame or shame associated with less successful endeavors. Her humorous inflections are gently self-critical, but I still smile as I read them again. On my 27th birthday I write:

27 years! Where has my life been all my life? Would anybody mind if I started over again? Why, at 27, am I still not past puberty?...[I list a "miracle" for each of my 27 years]...

Miracle 21 I "fell" in love.
Miracle 22 I didn't live "happily-ever-after"
Miracle 23 Rediscovered my desire to learn and teach
Miracle 24 Got the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow (new residence, new job, new man)
Miracle 25 Lost pot at end of rainbow (well, the man at least)...

May 11, 1978 Exploring
The Achiever's third protective companion is like the two-faced Janus because he provides protection at one moment and shame at another. The most evident of all the protectors of my Achiever, my religion, was an internalized selection of patriarchal ideals filtered through the sieve of my own consciousness. Religion gives the Achiever voice inspiration to achieve altruistically, and to strive for long term goals of character improvement.

God calls all the time even when
I don't choose to listen. Someday
I won't distract myself with all
the nonsense of worldly chaos.
So many temptations and yet it's
all so very simple. Submit to the
will of God - lose your life and
you will find it. There are new
horizons and a new sunrise.

May 18, 1985  Demeter Rising

However, my religion ironically and often insidiously abused me with needless guilt and shame, for I could not filter out all the patriarchal beliefs on which my Protestant Christian faith was derived. It muted the very voice it claimed to protect. In the context of women approaching education, this contradiction of the male protector/ violator image is brilliantly explained by Linda Briskin (1990) when she says, "The widespread violence against women concomitant with the continued power ideology that women will be protected and cared for by men constitutes [a] contradiction (p.2).

So, too, my religious beliefs that evolved from my childhood until the end of 1985, surrounded my Achiever voice
with inspiration and degradation; protection and violation. A culmination of crises in my life at the end of 1985 and in 1986 brought this patriarchal cohort of the Achiever into demise. Now I am in the process of replacing the protector with a spiritual power that nurtures without violating.

Throughout the hundreds and hundreds of journal pages, the Achiever voice is primarily a cheerful voice and future-oriented but some of the tension between success and failure as an Achiever is still evident in my life at 42. On August first, 1993, I write in my journal, Solitudes:

   Eternal Circus
   Like a tight-rope walker
   I balance deftly sending all my energy
   into the long balance pole
   I hold in clenched hands
   far above the sawdust floor.
   Walking in the tension of
   exquisite pain
   holding just the right amount of slack
   beneath my feet
   the right amount of tension to walk this rope I inherited
   sturdy, endurable rope walked before.

   All this effort in the show
   stepping triumphant onto the platform
   extending arms
   back arched,
   legs posed
   in that classic "ta-dah"
   cameo for the crowd who give polite applause.

   I turn and like Sisyphus
   do it all again
   wondering why such effort?
   how nice it might feel to fall
   at least in theory.

   They don't notice the tear in my stockings
   the sequins repaired on my bodice
   I'm too far away for careful scrutiny.
   They're bored easily
   So they'll gawk at someone else now,
the acrobats who balance families in chairs on shoulders and arms. More is impressive.

I lose the crowd No one wants a solo performer repeating a competent routine over and over again No flash and show in that. Very true.

What will I dare, to be reunited with the crowd me who performs solo?

As an adult of 42, I realize the sham, the price of performing some of the Achiever's routines, but at times the thrills of bounding into new places are still as vital as they were at ten.

I had the chance to be initiated into the wonders of the Education Center at Van Dusen Gardens. I'm thrilled. It's just where I need to be, a place to learn and two marvelous teacher/mentor figures... It's fun re-awakening all that old botany stuff - but doing it in such a magnificent garden.

September 25, 1993 Improvisations

So, the Achiever voice is recognizable by her enthusiasm, determination, conscientiousness, practicality, organization, systematizing, record-keeping (the journals themselves are a product of this), and love of success. Although she often seeks safety, takes "risks" only when she knows the odds are very high for "winning", and is still approval oriented, she has evolved into a "doer", an "Athena" from a passive "Persephone" voice. She is resonant, rich and lively; and although she can bark out military march calls, she loves
andante arias. Her undertone is the Worrier.

THE DEMONS: WORRY, TERROR, AND SHAME

There are, lurking in the shadows of the pages, the dark voices, I'll call the Demons: Worry, Terror, and Shame. Worry squeaks out like the sound of a gopher fearing danger, usually imagined rather than real. She speaks first in *The Happiest Girl in the Universe* diary in such phrases as: "...was nervis [sic] about reports...", and "shaking in my shoes about the S.S. [social studies] Test tomorrow for next report." But, the Worrier was balanced by the Achiever at this age. In fact, some of the Worrier squawks have heightened the joy that occurred shortly after the worry. This fascinating relationship of the Achiever and Worrier voice is captured when I am on a leave of absence from my high school teaching and have a lead role in an amateur play.

It [acting] seems with me, at least, a voyage of discovery, an adventure, for each new role is a chance, a gamble one has to pioneer, being aware each time that failure is a strong possibility. But, it is that very essence of pitting oneself against failure and succeeding that makes it so rewarding...

November 9, 1981  *Taking Leave*

However, the other Demons are more than a stimulus or an annoyance. They do more dramatic things than squeal. They
are so powerful that they either scream at me deafeningly so I cannot hear any of my other voices, or they paralyze me into silence quite literally taking my breath away. The screamer voice is Shame and the silenced voice is Terror. There are two traumatic incidents recorded at age ten. Both are indicated by underlining or numerous exclamation marks. The first incident stated so simply as to sound trivial now, is, "I lost a sock." Put in context, however, I gather going around all day without socks was not only cold in January, but humiliating. I was on a weekly school swimming lesson at Percy Norman Pool. On dressing to leave I couldn't find a sock. I write, "I shedded [sic] 4 tears and [illegible] I learned an experience I'll never forget." Except I did. Forget that is. In fact, even reading this entry again I can't understand what it was I say I've learned. Whatever it was it made enough of an impression for me to refer to it again one week later. "Today when we went swimming I had a good lesson and I didn't lose anything." This voice is screaming a message, "Idiot! Trust you to lose a sock. Weirdo!" It is the voice of Shame. Shame for not being appropriate, and capable.

The second incident begins, "Today was a horrible day." At swimming class "I got a mouthful of water and was stranded in the pool." To this day I recall going down three times, visions of the gallery bleachers empty, my classmates off to one side of the pool staring in amazement, the smell of chlorine, the choking sensation, and my feet churning water
desperately seeking solid ground. "I got out safely (but!!scared!)" So much of this is such a contrast to my Achiever voice - for I quite literally have no voice at all. Like being in a dream, wanting to scream and nothing comes out. Three girl friends rescued me. I needed no resusitation. My body recovered quickly, but my psyche was more wounded. This was the antithesis of the Achiever voice; this was failure. It was the non-voice of Terror. I stopped journal writing for three years.

Shame and Terror have lurked within all my journals. My Achiever voice questions and clears her throat indignantly at Shame causing ideas, especially when she encounters them in print. For instance, in Exploring (1977) I begin an intensive study of the book of "Genesis" writing my own observations and then referring to other literary and religious critics. I refer to Genesis 3: 15-22, the punishment after the "fall". I write, "Horrible and ironic. Sex and child bearing, are blessings in my eyes yet from this story guilt has been associated with them."

However, the Shame voice within my own life experience is not as easy to hear or analyze as when it is read and pondered in written form. Many of my Shamer voice's caustic attacks are swift, deep and personal; not detached and intellectual. They are seldom directly recorded in my journals. Occasionally though I recognize not the Shamer's voice, but see evidence that he was present, like seeing footprints in the snow.
Memorial for my father. It would have been his 81st birthday had he lived. [He died at 79]. I'm reading the novel *Shame* by Salman Rushdie. Rick has not called...the tool of association of these 3 seemingly unassociated pieces of information? Dad shames me, I shame myself, Rick shames me - all done with love so close by, but just out of reach.

March 31, 1985  *Demeter Rising*

Here I recognize some crucial things. That the Shamer voice is male, that it came from male authority figures (of which my dad was only one), that I internalize my Shame and perpetrate it myself, I seek men who will shame me, and that Shame is intricately intertwined with heterosexuality and keeps love and sexuality separated. In retrospect, I realize that my father was only acting a patriarchal role assigned to him, a role that taught him to keep women in their place with shame, a direct inheritance of Biblical views passed on through the secular. As a person beyond this role, he was exceedingly fond and very proud of me.

The non-voice of Terror is also difficult to find. It is easiest to access in my vivid dreams. In day to day life, Terror is evident when I pinpoint moments of outrage or anger yet am silent. One such, is at the time of an abortion where the only reference, even in something as personal as my journal, is indirect. The Terror silences me. The anger and rage associated with an unwanted pregnancy are stifled and silent. Such emotions are not permitted in a society that idealizes motherhood. I have internalized that message and keep the rage hidden, even from my journals. This is in total
contrast to my voice of howling grief that emerged when I faced my first abortion because I discovered at the five month point of my first pregnancy that the foetus had hydroencephalus and would, if it survived birth at all, be hideously malformed and mentally incapacitated. I vividly remember tears flowing down my face as I left my business office, crossed the parking lot oblivious to the stares, entered my car and sat there, head thrown back howling and howling. Howling for all women who have lost children. Howling until exhaustion calmed this deep and primal voice of grief. This grief was voiced; it was allowed. The anger/rage reaction was not. Thus, the non-voice of Terror is based on a socially constructed fear of expressing taboo emotions. The Terror is a fear of crushing judgment, or social sanctioning of a personal or professional nature.

During my first year of teaching I had a pupil who disrupted class, defaced school property and littered. After discussion with an administrator it was mutually agreed that the student would be taken out of class, have a talking-to by the administrator and be asked to clean an area of the school. I arranged for all the cleaning paraphernalia to be available. When I sent the student to the administrator as arranged, the student returned with a smirk on his face saying that the administrator wasn't there. The principal had forgotten so he admitted sheepishly later. After all my careful collaborative discussion with him, he carelessly undermined my position. I was furious, but silent. I watched. Such irresponsible
promises were his forte I soon discovered. I was silent. Oh, I spoke to friends about this betrayal, but never to the administrator whose manner of ignoring, trivializing, or contradicting were well known throughout the district as well as our school. The silent buried rage dissolved over the years to quiet cynicism about support from this high school administrator. The Terror was not against speaking out, but about being laughed at for my rage, or being ignored yet again.

Nowhere in my journals, however, do these incidents with Terror get recorded. They do form part of my oral repertoire of stories seared into my psyche.

My Demon voices—Worry, Shame, and Terror—lurking, frightening, demeaning, need to be heard, exposed at full volume. Only then can they be understood and expiated or expelled. Only then can they be shared with other women who compose that supportive group, my chorus.

THE CHORUS

There is a voice that is clear from the pages - the helper or supporter voices. I call them the Chorus. At ten, the Chorus is composed of female companions, the strongest member being my mother. Her voice speaks as a helper - very active and practical "worked on my Argentina project [a play dough map]. Mum made up the dough Sat. night and we neaded [sic] flour in and coloured it when [sic] we finished it
turned out well." I can still remember that map mounted on a piece of plywood with its reddish-brown colored dough into which were stuck miniature cattle and sheep on the pampas and toothpick oil derricks between the red-dot cities and blue-lined rivers. Quite a piece of perfection down to the exquisite tip of Tierra del Fuego. So, the Achiever was not truly a solo voice, just as she had a Worrier voice nagging at her, so, too, she had a Chorus of supporter voices humming in the background.

After school mum and I read out of my library book Album of Horses.

Cindy came over a[nd] we worked on our clothing booklet, and after stud[y]ing Socials mum asked us some questions.

That evening mum and I worked on the library work sheet.


I hear my mother's quiet steady song of support singing up through the pages of my diary. I learned from my "Chorus" and incorporated and internalized their voices into my own, often subconsciously. They were and are incredibly powerful, a force that enables me to meet achievement challenges within a supportive context and because I could internalize them, I could carry them with me at any time to any place.

My mother told me recently that Grade Five was the only time she ever spoke to my school principal. She voiced her opinion that the work load was too heavy for the children.
She said I had some home support, but what of the children whose parents didn't or couldn't help? Good old mom, the stress relief Chorus girl! Ironically, however, I loved the challenge as I recall, but maybe I could revel in those challenges only because my Chorus of support made things safer.

Never, have I been without the Chorus - which cautions, ponders, listens, cajoles, believes, empathizes, and even if not fully understanding, always loves.

Dear Beth,

In all the time I have known you you have brought fun and enjoyment into my life. Before I met you my life was an example of a poor wretched girls [sic] life. But you with your warm friendly spirit brightened me up.

A typed note from a Chorus girl, August 17, 1965.

At 14 I share and accept help far more readily from the Chorus than I did at ten. Ironically, a similar "lost sock" incident occurs at age 14, just as it did at age 10, but rather than Shame screaming at me, I incorporate with my Chorus and use "we". I write:

We had a panic today because I lost a nylon in gym and I had to attend Math with no nylons! What a laugh! Ellen and Cheryl got me some nylons...at lunch.

I am much less concerned about being ridiculed. I trust my friends more. It is my relationship with my Chorus that
nudges me gently out of my own self-centeredness as I become aware of their personalities as individuals. In 1966 I write of the "leader of the Chorus", she is "genuine, sweet and prudish. She gives of herself and this entrances me." The Chorus is often mentioned as a "gift".

Friendship is a truly blessed gift and to me an old friend is a rare old vintage, perhaps to be sipped, not gulped. For one can become drunk on past memories and hopes and a friendship must be an active force existing in the present - active not in the sense of having the person physically present, but having a strong positive force between the two friends whether they are together or apart. Such is my friendship with Alexandra - positive, powerful, though distance divides us.

January 25, 1981  Taking Leave

The Chorus provides praise, and tribute.

Thank you for the tasty dinner, the beautiful flower arrangement ...sharing your poetry...and the laughter and great conversation...

As I strive to find my place in the universe, and come to terms with my womanhood, I cannot think of a better woman friend to share the journey with. Your thoughts and opinions are a constant source of information and inspiration for me.

From a handwritten Thank You card of a Chorus member, November, 1993.
Thank you so much for being helpful and supportive in my job search. The names you have given me have provided the inspiration I need to focus and change my job hunting techniques.

Also your invitation for walks in the park have given me the much needed breaks between the sometimes monotonous and endless work I face. Thank you for this and for being a great friend...

Thank you card from a Chorus member, April 15, 1993

I refer to my main Chorus members in nearly all decisions and crises. I report their advice and feelings and use this in weighing out my own moves in life. In my journals their voices are reported or quoted as separate individuals speaking to me. Most of the time I dialogue with my Chorus voices in person, orally and directly and their wisdom, advice, reprimands and humor are seldom recorded in my journals because it is imprinted upon my very being. Yet, I feel that this Chorus resource is barely tapped, because I often want to help them rather than receive help from them. If I can ask and listen to their responses more than I do, I could learn valuable insights about who I appear to be to others. The voices of the Chorus so influence my voice as a learner that I've dedicated to my present day Chorus, Chapter 3 of this story.
THE LANGUISHING LOVER

I weep, therefore, I love
(de Beauvoir, 1958 p. 172).

From the pages of the 1965 diary, A Fab Riot, are entries at age 14. The even right-slanted flow of an adolescent hand very akin to my present handwriting style, greeted me invitingly, like an old friend. Quite a dramatic difference in look from the child's uneven-slanted, labored letters of the diary entries at ten years old. Dramatic differences also jumped out to greet me from the content as well for the first two sentences read, "It's nice to be writing again. I saw Franco and Mark at their lockers today and I also saw Greg in music."

Because my life environment is expanded, my pages chant the old voices the Achiever, the Worrier and the Chorus, but new voices vie for recognition too. One emerges when the Achiever meets boys. Boys, however, are not "projects", textbooks, essays or teachers, the phenomena with which the Achiever is familiar. For me, the only child, males were fascinating, confusing beings. Before I'm 14, they are mentioned in my diary only as teammates or academic competition. So what on earth did the Achiever do? Well, she dreamt, looked, wrote, and talked with her Chorus, now led chiefly by a female classmate, not her mother. She kept hoping to "luck out" and stumble onto the right way to secure "a guy of my own" even though I don't speak clearly in the
pages as to why I want a guy or what I want to do with him. Certainly every song on our favorite radio station C-FUN, every advertising image, and every cultural ritual stressed the idyllic heterosexual couple. "Love, Love Me Do", the Beatles' first release was the cry of my Achiever, but all the tools I'd learned so faithfully - studying, passing tests, and pleasing authority seemed useless in this endeavor of securing a boyfriend and I began to think that it was all luck. For awhile I enjoy the excitement of spotting the momentary "object" of my affections, much like spotting wild life in a game farm. In retrospect the talks with my Chorus - the sharing of feelings, fears, hopes and dreams were as significant in terms of emotional life, than were the boys, but in the culture of our time boys, just by being boys, had top billing. So, the Languishing Lover voice emerges at this time. Ironically, after receiving my first kiss, having my first "boyfriend", and falling in "love" for the first time, I seem anxious to stay in Languishing Lover voice despite her anguish rather than switch keys to the voice of the real Lover. The Gothic-romantic ideal in Franco, the unattainable heart-throb of our school, or Paul McCartney of the Beatles seemed easier to live with in the imagination, than the rollercoaster ride of reality with my 19 year old first "love".

The Languishing Lover is constantly ecstatic or melancholic as a result of the action of one or more boys. Usually melancholy prevailed. Looking back now I can see that
the boys had most of the power - the power to initiate the relationship, to phone, to drive, to drink without getting into trouble, travel, and to decide when and where we'd meet and usually what we'd do. Perhaps I could have vetoed or negotiated, but that never dawned on me. No one taught me that I had power too, so I quite willingly allowed my power to be ignored. My vanity was too awed by the attentions of a handsome 19 year old "man" to assert much of my own wants, if I could even identify what those wants were at that time. When my "love" and I break-up, he does so according to my diary because he's used to dating older girls (translated by me then as meaning that he had a better chance of having sex with older girls) and because he was going away to college in the States. I seem relieved. Sweetly sorrowful. No doubt it was a relief because my sexual feelings were very strong and very frightening for me. There was underneath the melodious Languishing Lover a very sensual-sexual voice laboring to be born, but with no allowable birthing song to sing, for "good girls" didn't sing such songs. Clarissa Pinkola Estes identifies this "wild underground of women natures...our sensory nature" as the Goddesses of obscenity, the sacred sexual that has been so maligned and repressed in evolving modern cultures (Estes, 1992 p. 334/5). So the songs of the sensual were squashed into hymns instead of mating songs and laments instead of songs of joy. I learned the dilemma of being human, the paradox of wanting intimacy yet wanting freedom.
When I do have a "boyfriend" the Languishing Lover voice has little opportunity for arias because the Worrier sings in a frightened falsetto, "I'm trying to pretend I'm calm and cool but just between you and me, diary, I'm scared." "I hope he doesn't think I'm cheap." "I pray he's not just using me." Another bluesy melody comes from the Languishing Lover, "how I need him so" and "Sometimes I think I miss him and sometimes I don't". The Languishing Lover does not sing with gusto, she moans and wails, she sighs and broods, joining in harmony with the Worrier.

I get the feeling I should break-up with Terry he's [sic] not my kind. But I hate the idea of losing him. What a mess.

June 16, 1965 The Fab Riot

Ironically, the word "panic" seems to apply here, yet we used the word "panic", my Chorus and myself, to mean having an ecstatically good time.

All the time from the pages the curious Achiever tries to find out how the game of cause and effect works in romance so I can figure it all out and know how to stay happy. No one ever told me cause and effect only operate in carefully prepared Physics 11 demonstrations and that in the rest of life, learning is a hodge-podge affair of stumble-bumble as much as cause and effect. That love is not another subject of the curriculum I discovered fast enough. (The only "sex" education I recall was films shown in a windowless basement room. These warned us against the danger of venereal disease
by scaring us with horrible medical photos of diseased victims!

That learning goes far deeper than the Achiever ever dreamed, or the Worrier ever cared to know, I realized even at 14. The Achiever and Worrier made a comfortable marriage in an academic bed. But when the Achiever wandered to romance, however, she was ill equipped to find happiness, so she relinquished to the Languishing Lover who settled for survival — always on edge, seldom relaxed, apologetic and startled by her own sexuality, projecting rejection, gulping up the joy before it disappeared ("I've known all along that all good things must come to an end") and giving away her power over her own happiness to the male of the day.

Once I found this melancholic, and at times self-pitying voice in my early diaries, I smiled smugly thinking that this childish voice would disappear in my later journals. But, no, she's still there grown and matured but still soft and haunting, harsh and throaty.

It has come to me that I am quite alone, but for my parents. No one else is close to me... despite their friendliness... Sometimes it is frightening not because I can't meet people, but because although one meets people there are few with whom one becomes truly close. It seems only God, Himself, is the constant companion.

December 18, 1977 Exploring

It is the first time I've travelled alone that I've felt lonely...
melancholy, aloneness...I may find them more companionable than I at first had thought.

August 18, 1993 Solitudes

THE LOVER

...from the center of my body a voice bursts...

(Rich, 1986. p. 94)

The Lover is, like the Achiever, a major voice. The two do not always confer or harmonize well until recently because the Achiever has for years been approval oriented, whereas the Lover is healthily self-centered. She is boisterous. She is as strongly rooted in pleasure as the Achiever is rooted in work and approval. By 20 years old the Lover eventually leads me into adventure that pulls me away from home to hunt, to do battle, to quest. Now, like two old matriarchs the Lover and the Achiever still occasionally argue over my soul like a passionate, anarchistic gypsy and a conservative sentimentalist both of whom never quite won the tug-o-war and today just snipe at each other now and again for the sake of old times. The Lover voice blends, shifts, weaves in and out of the journals. She has many moods. Although the Shamer tries to insinuate she is fat, self-indulgent and lazy, the Lover smiles and sings of the domains of nature, creativity and sensuality.

Mellow, mellow, mellow. Four days of sleeping in, cuddling, wood burning fires, lingering meals,
luxurious duo bathes, Duke Ellington tunes, crisp wine...sweet, comfortable, lingering sensual love.

January 1, 1989 Personals

I need, not a check list again, but... a sip of delight.

December 16, 1989 Personals

La Jolla, California, outside the Museum of Contemporary Art...

I adore the trees...all explosions of shapes with scaly bark and plumed and spike foliage. One tree is like dark green fingers to the skies; another...a series of sausage-link branches exploding into yuca crowns with dripping rust-colored flowers. Wish I'd brought my sketch pad.

August 8, 1993 Solitudes

The Lover is a very tolerant, accepting voice but because of her sensuality in a culture inherited from the Puritans, she faces persecution from the Shamer. This often creates a dilemma.

It's all so horribly ironic. Without a lover I'm lonely, unfulfilled; with one I'm a neurotic, insecurity case. What a dilemma!

December 8, 1985 Demeter Rising

The dilemma has been one of expressing sensuality and creativity in a DO NOT WALK ON THE GRASS culture and education system, that fences me out, as much as it fences me in.

The Lover is energetic, restless, sensual, sexual, spontaneous, experimental, experiential, wild, fun-loving,
unorthodox, spiritual, curious, adventurous and creative. She, like the Achiever, is a doer. She too is resonant, rich and lively; she is chaotic and impulsive. Her critic is the Shamer.

AN "ALMOST" VOICE

At one point I thought I identified a Rebel voice developing at fourteen. It was however, only a neophyte Rebel who never is more than an occasional clearing of the throat, rather than a fully formed voice. She is in evidence at 14 by refusing to attend Sunday School now and again, complaining about teachers with expletives such as "retard", "old man", or "hose-nose" and school as "Alcatraz", arriving home slightly late from evenings out and studying with more reluctance than earlier. Not a very rebellious repertoire, but inklings of annoyance at the bonds of respectability that hem me in, as well as a reaction to the passivity of waiting for boys to "make moves" that will affect my life (supposedly to transport me into raptures). Later she appears in a few protest rallies, writes letters for Amnesty International, and refuses to attend bridal "showers" as a protest against the exclusion of societal celebration of homosexual and lesbian coupling. Nonetheless, this "voice" of rebellion is very low key, very conscious of herself and much more in tune with the Achiever than any truly defiant spirit. She is the Achiever digging in her heels, more a staunch defender, not a Rebel slashing into
new, dangerous territory.

THE COMFORTER

One voice that is more evident in the pages of my life than the pages of my journals is the Comforter. She speaks in short, repetitive phrases in a firm but soothing voice. She speaks in times of extreme emotional crisis, as if the voice knows that it is time to stop crying uncontrollably; it is time to ease back gently to a state of balance. She never analyzes or blames, she soothes. She says, "It's alright; it's OK; it's OK; let's go to bed; it's gonna be ok." She also rocks me. It is a combination of mother, sister, nurse and guardian angel. She is very kind but very powerful for she can pull me back from the brink of madness or suicide. She is heard less often than most of the voices. By the time I'm ready to write after the crisis, she's gone, but she leaves a few words on my journal pages like angel footprints in the snow.

She is the only voice that has a visual image in my imagination, which leads me to suspect that she may be an internalized, composite Chorus voice. She is older than I am, but only by ten years or so, and she is blonde, attractive, with gently lined, tanned skin. When she appears in my dreams, she takes on a more complete and complex characterization, usually an ally, advisor, rescuer.

She is not the only voice, however that comes to me in crisis. When I was twenty-one and in a deep fever in the
hospital one winter, I vaguely realized that they were erecting a huge Christmas tree on the lawn outside. The voice that came and quite literally called me back from death was the Achiever who said something like, "Enough of this crap! We're getting outa here! Now!" The near-death fever broke. A few days later I was home. Whatever the crisis there is a voice, be it like the Achiever's slap in the face, a no-nonsense, sergeant-major tone or the Comforter's clear, simple, soothing lullaby tones. The voices are inner resources richer than earth's primal oil fields.

THE METAPHORS OF THE VOICES

The voices from the pages are like internal music. The Achiever sings opera; the Lover, improvisational jazz; the Worrier moans, the Terrorizer is a non-singer, the Shamer shrieks; the Languishing Lover sings the blues, while the Comforter hums lullabies and the Chorus sings harmonics supporting the main voice that is singing.

So too are the voices akin to nature. As the Achiever is like a mountain, so the Lover is like a river. The Worrier is like a dark cloud, the Terrorizer a snow storm, and the Shamer a booming thunder storm. The Chorus is the song of the birds, not the "birds" as derogatory sexist labeling, but "birds" in the ancient sense of spirits. The Comforter is a soft, refreshing rain shower.

All of the voices change over the years. None of them
are ever lost, discarded, or left behind. I do not grow out of them. They may become less or more vocal, but they are always there. I do not think I have gained any new voices since I was in my mid-teens, but the voices have learned to hear each other and sing together, occasionally changing a cacophony into a symphony. In the efforts to sing together they have had to learn, from other voices outside of me and from themselves. They become altered by this process. They attempt and at times succeed in forming a composite voice, a "me".
I want life, the whole of life

(de Beauvoir, 1958, p. 307)

I'm convinced that my positive "space" or outlook is partly due to my program that I've established that attempts to balance the physical, creative, intellectual, spiritual and social. All are represented every day in some small way.

October 13, 1981. Taking Leave

THE COMPOSITE VOICE AND THE LEARNER

All the voices from the pages of my journals do not speak as separate entities, any more than a person exists separately from her environment. The voices interact; they argue, laugh together, listen to each other or ignore each other. They react and interact and in so doing create an "I" voice. This "I" is created through interaction of thought/feeling channeled through the voices by language and synthesized into one voice or "I". This synthesizing process is like a dance where each voice is an individual dancer. Sometimes the dancers dance solo while other dancers are off stage; sometimes the dancers do a sensitive improvisational dance together where each dancer watches and responds to the others; occasionally the dancers flow together like a corps de ballet with practised patterns of movement all in the breath-taking unison. The music is like the language, and the dancers'
response and interpretation of that music is like meaning-making. The entire group of "dancers" or "voices" are the composite voice that is "I". The "I" voice is the voice of myself as a learner. I learn with the whole of me, with and through all my voices. This composite voice is complex. If one of my voices is affected, all the voices are affected even if that occurs indirectly like a chain reaction.

THE COMPOSITE VOICE AND THE TEACHER

The voice of "I" as teacher is difficult to pinpoint in my journals because it is so comprehensive, speaking through all the voices as a whole or composite "me" and also because the formal "teacher" as instructor in a school setting is seldom directly mentioned despite my seven years teaching high school and ten years in adult education. The voice of the teacher is either the composite voice, the "I" that is the same as the learner, albeit with a different purpose perhaps, or one particular voice dressed in her costume who leaps forward onto the dance floor. Naturally, this voice is that enthusiastic prima donna voice that says, "Look-at-me-dancing-mom" that take-charge voice of the Achiever. After all, she was the one who got me through formal schooling, who brought me back from a cross-country love affair at 21 to complete university, who made me accept the position of Director of my school district's Professional Specialists' Association in my second year of teaching high school, and who urged me on to
challenge my students. Often the Achiever comes out solo to "do her thing" and she is good at it.

...an excellent teacher who really knows her subject and presents it in an entertaining and amusing way.

I particularly enjoyed Beth's enthusiasm.

Adult participant evaluations
Vocal Fitness course, 1989

These two comments acknowledge that enthusiasm and knowledge base from which the Achiever works. However, the tell-tale phrase that says "presents it" may point to a teacher-center performance style, not inappropriate on occasion, but I fear often over-used. The Achiever can hog the spotlight. I was particularly aware of this recently when teaching an adult education class. I had negotiated with the participants about what would be most useful to them, and as a result I divided the participants into groups for an hour so they could coach each other. I circulated as unobtrusively as possible to gain a feel for how things were going. They went very well. My instinct told me not to butt in (this was probably the Achiever/Lover working together). However, I noticed how strange I felt, as if I wasn't talking so I wasn't teaching. My body and mind were racing. I was "hyped" the same way I used to be when I was acting in theatre. I began to wonder if all these years I had really been teaching at all or just delivering information via my performances. Was that why my mate would tease me if I was getting crabby around home and say, "Hey, you need a 'fix', go out and teach"? Was I indeed
addicted to teaching, the preparation, expectation, nerves, excitement, performance, and feedback?

UNDERSTANDING THE "I" THAT INFORMS THE LEARNER/TEACHER

To understand myself as a learner and a teacher it became imperative that I understand my "I" voice. It came as a shock to me to realize that my voices were not truly mine.

My voices are informed by borrowed voices of others, society's synthesized, monolithic voice, as well as the voices of my parents, friends and even enemies. These voices become uniquely me because the borrowed voices interact with one another in new combinations and...clash and blend with the environment in which "I" uniquely exist, thus, acting as cataclysmic elements that metamorphosize "me". My "blended" voice is a cacophony that occasionally becomes a symphony. In writing this thesis I am attempting to catch both the cacophony and the symphony as they create and re-create me as a learner, for it is the learner that teaches me, the learner is the mother of "me", much as Wordsworth said, "the child is father of the man".

November 6, 1993 Improvisations

So my voices are not really "my" voices at all. The realization engenders a strange feeling at first, as if I'm in a science fiction plot invaded by alien beings. In one sense that is quite accurate. However, from birth, the given or inherited voice of instinct, plus all the voices of others that are borrowed and internalized, are actively engaged in
creating the "I" voice. The interaction of borrowed voices began very early in life. By the time I was four and have memories, the composite voice was already well formed. Thus, there has not been a time where I did not feel like "me". What an incredibly vulnerable process this is, especially since I am a woman, because the powerful societal voice is patriarchal (Spender, 1980; Gilligan, 1982). I have been fortunate because many of my borrowed voices have been positive, but for many people the borrowed voices are severely abusive and the "I" that results is numbed by negativity much like the women that Belenky et al. (1986) describe as "being locked into a world of silence" (p.23). This only happens to me now and again when the Shamer voice gains control over my conclave of borrowed voices and screams me into numbness, or the Terrorizer voice frightens me into silence. Most of the time the composite or "blended" voice that is "me" allows an appropriate voice to gain dominance for a particular situation, or asks two or three voices to speak in harmony. It is as if the voices are in constant conference. When two or more voices are in a "dead-lock", then I imagine what my Chorus would say, or I talk "live" with my Chorus of friends.

LANGUAGE AND THE VOICES

The main tool of all the voices, borrowed or blended, is language. And, language is not a neutral tool. I write:

How very special my J's [journals] are to me, like children that I
have helped bring forth and who reflect my nurturance, but who have lives of their own and are not only written by me, but write themselves...

September 17, 1993 Improvisations

And I should add, write me, for the journals reflect incomplete jigsaw pieces of my life narrative and not only reflect my narrative, but craft it as well. I write the language and it writes me. As Helene Cixous says, "One is born in a language and the language speaks us, dictates to us its law." (Cameron, 1985, p. 114). Our language makes our "reality", and my inherited language is a patriarchal or "man-made language", and I suspect a racist language as well. Men have the power to name and do so from a male perspective of the world, making "maleness" the norm and "femaleness" the deviation from the norm, a minus maleness (Cameron, 1985). This has permeated all fields of study (Spender, 1980). Although women have been speaking out against this male bias since Mary Wollstonecraft and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, only recently have such learned women's attacks on this male bias been taken seriously by many males as well as females. Here women from diverse backgrounds such as Spender (1980), Bolen (1984), Gilligan (1982), Belenky et al. (1986), Tannen (1990), Cameron, (1985), Kramarae et al, (1984), and Estes (1992), among others, have contributed to the reassessment of language, image, metaphor, learning and knowledge from a female perspective. Although this shift in awareness to include the female perspective is still a small beginning, a
chipping away at the brick language walls of the patriarchy, it is significant and persistent.

\[\text{[W]e share a commitment...to the power of language and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally important for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation.}\]

(Lorde, 1984, p. 43).

Within the rigidity of language boundaries, however, is room for some maneouverability. The words, metaphors, stories and arguments I write in my journals and in this thesis are not concrete and unchanging in meaning; they are fluid. The moment the words flow from the pen to the page they are read and re-read in context which includes, not just the context of the other words on the page, which does not change, but the context of my world as a reader, which does change. The words and images in my head interact with the written text. As a reader my context changes in time, place, and mood each time I re-read. The language I write is constantly in flux because every time I read it I am engaged in meaning-making anew.

The language I choose to use, and I do have some choice within the patriarchal framework, has a profound influence on the development of my thinking. For example, when I write in 1978 of female-male romantic/sexual relationships in metaphors of "battle" using words such as "break-up", "long and lonely
battle", "a reserve of defense", "oncoming turmoil", "power over", "survived", there is a sense in which I am not just recording how I think-feel, but am creating my thinking and feeling by the very metaphors I use to describe events. By 1988 romantic/sexual relationships are described much more in metaphors of growth, nurturing and learning. My writing does more than reflect my "reality", it creates it.

THE LEARNER/TEACHER INTERACTION

The learner is not separate from all of me but a woven thread in the tapestry of my life. This learner thread is a strong color in my tapestry - a tapestry still being woven. When I am truly brave enough to teach not just with the Achiever performing but with the whole of me, then the voice that emerges is the internal struggling learner voice made into an external, more coherent, if tentative speaker voice. The teacher-me attempts to bring together my internal learning and share or even more daringly, question this "learning", in speech, demonstration and action with the group of people I am engaged to "teach". However, it does not end there or I might be only a transmitter of my inner knowing. What happens, when I teach with the whole of me, is the teacher speaks but the speech act is not a dead act. It is, rather, a living act and as such occurs in a context of place, time and culture. Then, my teacher speech act is not an act so much as an interaction, for it is heard and/or seen by the students, clients,
listeners, friends or participants who are not empty looms, but living tapestries, as is the teacher. If I teach with the whole of me, the composite voice, then any students I teach, no matter what their age, are not "students" so much as participants in the andragogical sense outlined by Knowles (1980), not students in the pedagogical sense.

...[A]ndragogical practice treats the learning-teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learner and teacher. In fact, the teacher's role is redefined as that of a...resource person, and coinquirer; more a catalyst than an instructor, more a guide than a wizard. Andragogy assumes that a teacher cannot really "teach" in the sense of "make a person learn", but that one person can only help another person learn.

(Knowles, 1980, p. 48)

These participants ponder, disagree, daydream, reject, question, ignore, cajole, reinterpret, misunderstand, empathize, or recreate meaning. In short, even if outwardly silent, they respond and interact with the oral or written text of the teacher. In doing so, they respond with actions, reactions and speech interactions of their own, thus, informing me as teacher with their voices (or silence) and a cyclic process is kept in motion. I, as teacher, act upon the students, who in turn act upon me, the teacher. In a sense my teacher speech act is a shuttle shooting a colored thread into the loom. The participants slap their own pedals and bars and create a small warp or woof piece of their own tapestry. In seeing some of the learners' tapestries, I, as teacher, begin
interpreting, thinking, feeling, intuiting to card new colored thread that in turn shoots through the teacher's loom to create more learning threads in my own tapestry. Although he uses the metaphor of struggle or battle, Bakhtin expresses for me the point at which the shuttle shoots into the loom, suggesting the point at which learning is most likely to take place: "All of each individual's words are divided into the categories of his [or her] own and others; but the boundaries between them can change, and a tense dialogic struggle takes place on the boundaries" (Bakhtin, 1986 p. 143).

I venture to suggest that when this dialogic struggle illuminates the conscious mind, a comprehensive or wholistic knowing is created, what Virginia Woolf described as "moments of being" (Woolf, 1985). As Jeanne Schulkind reports in her introduction to Moments of Being, Woolf believed, "The individual in his daily life is cut off from 'reality' but at rare moments receives a shock. These shocks or 'moments of being' are not, as she imagined as a child simply random, manifestation of some malevolent force but 'a token of some real thing behind appearances'" (Woolf, 1985, p. 17).

Although this belief has existed from Plato through many idealist philosophers, Virginia Woolf sets this belief in the uniquely personal context as a woman in a particular culture at a particular time.

Yet the personal context is not an easy one to express in academic writing. It has, up to recently, been rejected as unsuitable or trivial in the academic setting. It was with
certain excitement tinged with fear that I engaged in this thesis in a narrative form, despite my commitment to making my academic writing wholistic and accessible. I still keep expecting my English twelve teacher to come popping out of a cloud of smoke, shaking an accusative finger and saying, "One should never use the first person singular pronoun in any academic essay."

But, despite the objectivist academic urgings to separate and distance oneself from research data to prevent bias, ample testimony exists that the personal and professional do weave together (Belenky et al., 1986) as do the learner and the teacher (Knowles, 1980). The Japanese have a proverb that says:

Oshieru wa manabu no nakaba nari
Half of teaching is learning.

(Feiler, 1991, p. vii)

In keeping with this proverb, I'd like to invent a new word. The word is "tearning", a combination of the words learning and teaching. For me it represents the intricate interaction of the processes of learning with teaching. It is also a pun on its own homonym, for I envision "tearning" as the "turning" point where learning and teaching collide dramatically or interact gently to create a metamorphosis in individual consciousness, to create "moments of being".

HELPING THE TEACHER IN ME GROW UP

I have not always been conscious of the "tearner"
connection. When the Achiever voice dances on stage to perform "the teacher" role, the separation between the audience of learners and me as teacher-performer can be vast. This teacher as performer concept also separates or disconnects the intricate interactions of the learner-teacher within my own psyche. This separation or compartmentalizing was learned from my culture as I grew. Schools were places of "learning", separate buildings from home. Teachers were separate from me. They taught, we learned. They stood up, we sat down. They spoke, we listened or pretended to listen. Occasionally we discussed, participated together or interacted and learning would happen, almost by accident while we were busy acquiring information. So it is no wonder that when I was very young and played school, I always wanted to be the teacher because the teacher got to tell everyone else what to do. I loved to be in charge and I recall spelling words in large awkward letters on my blackboard in the basement as my class of three or four neighbourhood children copied laboriously. It wasn't long, however, before they wanted their turns as teacher. After all, being in power was much more fun. So long after I and my fledgling "pupils" had forgotten the words on that old blackboard, I recall the unexpected or incidental learning (Little, 1979/80, p. 8) that seeped into my consciousness: teachers are perceived in my culture as persons with power over others and being the powerful person is more desirable than being the powerless person. It wasn't until much later, looking back, that I remembered a
few of the children playing the roles of "students" didn't want to be the teacher. I did not notice this at the time I was five or six. So, long after the event, I learned that not everyone wants power over others. Not everyone feels the same way I feel. So besides incidental learning as an unexpected result of my playing teacher, I experienced retrospective learning. This learning by reassessing past events in new ways, like the after taste of a fine wine, adds rich meaning to the original event. It is one of the main ways I learn. The journals themselves stimulate retrospective learning.

Besides playing "teacher" at five or six years old, by Grade Six my Achiever voice experimented with being the teacher. I recognized quickly others' Achiever potentials and wanted to bring them out both for the chosen individual as well as my own glory. Here, my Chorus of female peers provided my first real teacher practice. I recognized with Jane and Louise's singing ability and with my elocution training and newly discovered fascination (fortunately short-lived) for American musicals, I had a chance to take a "safe" risk and prepare Jane and Louise for a talent show in our class. I remember sessions in my "rec" room at home by the hi-fi going over and over "Surrey With the Fringe on Top" as Jane and Louise sang valiantly along. The big day came, performance before the entire class, and although I recall Louise's hands shaking and Jane's voice quavering we all pulled through, or I dragged them through. My Achiever voice became hard for others to say "no" to. Perhaps I looked silly
by the record player conducting my friends and mouthing every word in a frenzy of anxiety-excitement, but I wasn't aware if anyone found me strange or funny when I heard the applause. I do know that this arrangement made it possible for me to be involved with music but avoid the risk of singing, which by age ten, I clearly realized wasn't assessed by others as my forte. I know, too, that my Chorus friends, Jane and Louise, faded from my life, maybe a natural occurrence since they went off to a different high school, but maybe my loss of these friends was partially the result of their encounter with my Achiever-teacher, that pushed others to achieve, especially in areas I liked but felt too fearful to venture myself. Like a stage parent I pushed a surrogate "me" through the paces. It was another way to achieve while minimizing that chance of failure. What a clever girl I was indeed. How courageous. I could have used that courage to face failure, but my Achiever saw failure as the direct opposite of success, and thus, to be avoided.

Looking back at age ten, I don't feel hostility to the teacher as performer concept, although I often wished the teachers I had would be better performers than they were. In retrospect I feel that my teacher as performer was a useful place to start. After all, I don't think it was the time to introduce existential, or post-modern chaos theory. I was young, I was trusting. I needed stability and clarity at this stage. Perhaps my critique would be that the formal schooling system didn't know when to change, possibly because the system
believed its own positivist, functionalist philosophy and burrowed in like a mole, seldom to see the sun again. Just as the system of education seemed satisfied with teacher as expert performer, I too was satisfied with teacher as performer for many years in my own teaching. Once upon a year or two or three, however, I wanted to grow up. This began when I realized the very negative side of the teacher as performer image, the teacher as malevolent "god" with sufficient power to coerce or to humiliate. This image was reflected back at me from society at large.

When I was a certified British Columbia secondary teacher, sitting in the lounge at a golf club, a new male acquaintance beamed cheerfully at me until I was introduced as an English teacher, at which time his smile drooped and he replied, "I guess I'll have to watch my grammar." This image of teacher as wielder of power over others, the "catcher of errors", the "humiliator" of the vulnerable student, rather doused the flames of any kindling relationship.

One of my Chorus on reading a draft of this thesis, wrote in the margin that in her Chinese-Canadian community, a teacher is often introduced to a family group by her professional title in hopes that the teacher will exercise control and authority over the children present or that the children will be intimidated into behaving properly by the presence of the teacher. She laughed when she discussed this with me, saying that the implication is that a teacher is a powerful babysitter at best and a "boogeyman" at worst.
This image of "teacher" as a frightening authority figure is one of the prevalent stereotypes. Yet few teachers see themselves in this image. I was completely stunned when a counsellor tactfully implied that I was intimidating a grade ten girl in my honors English class. The girl, the counsellor said, was terrified and had experienced frequent nightmares and anxiety in relation to her participation in my class. I was speechless. I couldn't imagine what I had done. With permission I audio taped the next class. I found my volume, speed, emphasis and vocabulary all could easily be interpreted as frightening or dominating. Yet, some students felt my style was enthusiastic and challenging, one set of parents reporting that their son simply wouldn't stop talking about how he enjoyed the reading, writing and discussions in our English class.

Since I can only teach in a manner consistent with how I perceive the roles of learner and teacher, it is essential for me to discover how I perceive these roles. I began at a very young age by playing teacher. I modelled my teaching on my view of what I thought a teacher should be, an authoritative, "power over" person who directs activities, imparts her knowledge to students, and evaluates and corrects her students' errors. Gradually by helping peers and sharing ideas with friends, I altered my concept of teacher without consciously being aware of doing so. I began to let my integrated wholistic personal world inform me as a learner and let that learner inform myself as teacher. That "the personal
became professional" (Belenky et al., 1986) is evident when I write:

The most wonderful thing has happened: Mrs. Rutherford has chosen me as one of the two girls which she considers will make good drama teachers! She wants us to pass exams, get lots of acting experience and help her as assistants! Isn't that WONDERFUL! OH, IT'S SMASHING, LUV!

March, 1966 The Fab Riot

This ecstatic entry is nestled in my second diary written at fourteen. This admixture of the personal and emotional, in connection with the professional, plus the intertwining of the persona of learner and teacher is the first and possibly the most poignant example of my unconscious acknowledgment that the learner informs the teacher. So for me, the learner became the mother of the teacher.

A clear acknowledgment of the learner/teacher interplay appears in my journal written during my third year of teaching high school. I write that I am touched by

...the brilliance of my acting students...I realize how fortunate I am to be blessed with witnessing such talent and sensitivity.

God knows I love the theatre and I love teaching or should I say sharing and learning with my drama students.

July 11, 1978 Exploring

It is interesting that I write of being "fortunate" and
"blessed" as if I had little to do with the students acting performances, yet I actively teased, cajoled, pushed, and encouraged a performance out of them far beyond all of our wildest dreams. This belief in my luck in having these talented students is reminiscent of my belief in luck first attributed to my own academic successes. It is a sign of my immaturity. The latter half of the above quote, however, is a testimony to my emerging belief in sharing as a learner with my students. Interestingly this happened particularly in my teaching of drama rather than in English. The former allowed far more curricular freedom and, although a marked course, demanded no final exams. English had so much information to impart for final exams that chances to share, experiment, and grow by discovering were limited.

Preparing to go back to teach high school after a vacation in England I write:

My career, although I seldom write about it, is my greatest joy even though I feel I'm not a successful English teacher. This year as usual I shall try my damnedest and perhaps the secret will be not "pushing" myself so hard...

August 23, 1978 Exploring

At this time in 1978, I can accept joy even while feeling partially unsuccessful. This suggests the Achiever although still striving, has come to live with imperfection and even contradiction. She begins to recognize the Lover voice who says, "ease off, enjoy". Gradually the composite voice eases
the domination of the Achiever in teaching situations. At times a cynical anger emerges about the whole educational process.

...I worked years to graduate. Why? To go to UBC, of course. Then I worked 4 more years. Why? To get a theatre degree and 1 more arduous, loathsome year in the faculty of education, why? to become a teacher. I even studied in "ye olde school of harde knocks" Why? So I could be a sexy, witty, companion for a latent super stud. Now I've got it! I'm educated (but foolish), I'm educating (but passing on bullshit), and I'm being sexy (but I'm damned lonely). Depressing? Yes!

January 2, 1979  Exploring

I had achieved a great deal in teaching, developing curriculum, initiating a district speech arts festival, chairing a Canadian literature conference and the list goes on. But, what did it all mean? Something was missing. I yearned for something. In a calmer mood, I express the yearning as a need for learning challenges to reassess my role as teacher.

My career and satisfaction I receive from it is a great God given gift and I do appreciate it, but like a child I want to learn again - from someone, somewhere who can make me sweat and think my art anew.

January 26, 1981  Taking Leave

Obviously, my "teaching" is a kind of giving to students, but I am not being fully replenished. The learning component is yearned for. So, I take a six months leave of absence. I do
theatre summer stock at the University of Western Washington. From 1981 to 1983 I search and wander. I am happiest when living with a male friend who is mostly out of town on work. This meant I could act, dance, write, read, and pursue friendships, while only teaching (as a substitute teacher) part time. This six months leave was "a continuous flow of happiness that stems from action, accomplishment, friendships and peace" (October 4, 1981). I become a self-directed learner setting my own wholistic goals and seeking my own people with whom to share learning. My learning is experiential and informal. But the leave ends. I drive the 500 miles north to Prince George. Back at school I toy with resigning. I daydream about teaching privately. The experience which most provides me with the collaborative, sharing and learning experience is "directing" the high school festival play. Although I chose the script and cast it, the students contributed their time, talent, imagination, insights and curiosity that crafted our productions.

I love directing - must be a fool - [in reference to the amount of extra unpaid overtime at school], but I adore digging my imagination into a lyrical, economically crafted piece of literature that comes to life before me. It's like giving birth complete with all the nausea...and pain, but with the marvelous delight of learning and achieving.

March 27, 1982 Taking Leave

The voice yearning to have more room is the Lover voice. She
speaks in birth imagery and wants to create. Most of that energy is channeled into drama. Occasionally, I got daring enough to let the Lover come through into my curriculum planning. Years after leaving high school teaching I ran into four or five of my English 11 students. I asked them what they had done in my class that they remembered most positively. All of them remembered the reading "blitz". This was a unit where they all chose a theme from topics such as Love, Nature, War, or Freedom and simply read ten novels, 20 short stories, ten non-fiction articles, and 30 poems. These were chosen from long reading list suggestions, but students could choose some material not on the lists. The only assignment was to keep an annotated bibliography. There was no marked evaluation. This stunned the students at first. How would I know if they'd done anything? I told them that we'd have a discussion group over coffee once a week. If they hadn't read anything, they'd just sit there feeling left out and it would be obvious they'd done nothing, so no one would bother with them. What happened was quite extraordinary. Students read and read and read. Even students who seldom read anything but Coles notes. They read classics, science fiction, history, poetry. They read in the halls, at home and on the bus. What's more they loved it. No book reports. Just sharing the excitement of finding a good book and telling others about it. So years later when I met a few of these students I was surprised, but pleased that they found this reading for enjoyment so profound. One ex-student of mine
 bartending in a lounge told me that if it wasn't for me introducing him to Ayn Rand he'd never be taking his philosophy degree. Others spoke of the tremendous sense of freedom to choose and enjoy learning without the pressure of constantly being marked. I smiled then. I smile now to realize that I let the Lover take over from the Achiever when doing this reading-for-the-love-of-it assignment. Ironically, the Lover's way achieved more in a life-long learning sense than did the Achiever herself. Allowing creativity to flourish rather than passing on information was what I wanted teaching to be about. Eventually, in 1983 I resigned from seven years of teaching high school, moved back to Vancouver and started my own business in adult education.

Looking back on my high school teaching experiences, there were "moments of being" where learning occurred for me as well as for many of the students. Despite the routines, superficialities, tremendous conservatism in the profession, and endless paperwork, my discontent was more with the trappings of the "profession" than with the experiences with the children. I recount some of these "moments of being" as I reminisce:

Only the first year and the last year were hell. The wonderful students, Rick and his cohort Danny, all those bright, individual faces in the tapestry of my learning to teach. I'll never forget in my second year 76-77 in Drama 9 as I improved my technique by allowing the students more intellectual and creative "space" to produce puppet plays based on "jazzed-up" fairy tales and Rick and Danny, Gretchen and two others
did Jack and the Giant Marijuana Plant! All the characters including a giant and a giant chicken were called Jack or Jacqui, so mistaken identity was more hilarious than Comedy of Errors. By the time I saw their show it was too late to censor it, besides it was definitely terrific. I do recall my furtive glances at the window of our door, hoping the principal wasn't going to pick this time to visit our classroom.

August 27, 1993 Solitudes

This incident was a complex learning experience for all of us. The students learned skills in everything from sewing to script writing, memorization to group negotiation skills, but the change that occurred at the deepest level affected us all: we trusted our own creativity. I trusted my own ability to create the atmosphere for creativity, I trusted myself to dream up creative examples, and I trusted the students' ability to create solutions to the myriad of problems they would face. The students trusted me, trusted their own ideas, and trusted that I would accept their creative gifts. We had learned to trust each other. From then on this class, which other teachers noticed had so many "difficult" students in it, blossomed in its drama work and eagerly shared their creations with peers and parents. This was a huge change from the belligerent, disruptive competitive show-offs that straggled into the class at the beginning of the year to an energetically creative, caring group of artists at the end of term. The exciting part was they brought about their own learning. I set up the atmosphere and the tools, they created the
"moments of being". We had ventured into the world of andragogy's collaboratively engendered learning and left behind the world of pedagogy of "child leading" (Knowles, 1980). Often these "moments of being" were directly traceable to the voice of the Lover, the creative experiencer, being given leave to play. Another memory that reflects this spirit is recorded in retrospect:

I recall my third year of teaching when I did a whole hour of relaxation and trust exercises of such depth that the grade eight students became so immersed that groups of six students delicately lifted and "floated" a classmate off the ground and through the air with all students showing tremendous sensitivity and trust, while being totally silent and responsive only to touch and music. It became a spiritual, sensually religious experience. When one of the rambunctious kids said when leaving that he felt so wonderful he would float through his day, I felt almost like crying with joy that I had somehow helped to create such an atmosphere of beauty.

August 27, 1993  Solitudes

The fascinating thing about this "moment of being" was that when another teacher who had wandered by and seen the class in action asked how on earth I had managed to keep these bundles of energy so focused, I had to reply that I had no idea. It all seemed magical. In retrospect, however, I realized it didn't happen in isolation but after weeks of earlier trust building exercises.

Many of the "moments of being" learning that occurred during my years of high school teaching involved the
establishment of an atmosphere and environment, the presentation of a problem or task, and the students information sharing, studying, reading, talking, negotiating, and discovering or creating solutions. Sometimes the learning involved all of us in the class, sometimes only a few members. Certainly the learner extracts some information from the environment in the form of meaning and this meaning is new, a kind of epiphany that changes the learner's perception of the environment itself. It seems that this "ah-ah" moment creates a relatively permanent change in how the learner acts, interacts, thinks-feels. I recall such an incident in an Acting 12 class in 1981.

I remember a grade 12 girl in tears because her fellow students had reamed her out for skipping acting class. They pointed out that in acting ensemble work means everyone's contribution is essential. If anyone is missing it seriously affects the entire group. She said she had never felt needed in any class before and thought no one cared if she was there or not. She was so affected that she never skipped any more classes.

August 27, 1993 Solitudes

This revelation that she was important and her contributions and presence were valuable had a profound effect. She had experienced and continued to experience genuine learning "that activity whereby the learner extracts from material his learned-content, which is a meaning-idea of which he had no previous knowledge and which he posits as
true" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 125). This experience of a "truth" from the point of view of this student learner had a strong emotional affect. As Colaizzi (1978) says, genuine learning, as opposed to the acquisition of information, "hits us hard" and "pertains to our very lives" (p. 129).

Sometimes as a teacher I was not directly involved with the learning at all. In the case of the grade 12 acting student just mentioned, I had decided that absenteeism was a serious problem. I suggested that students who found any of their group members missing, obtain the phone number of the absentee, and give a polite phone call home enquiring after the health of the missing "actor". The class thought this was a good idea. They role-played speaking calmly and politely to parents, the absentee, or an answering machine. Then, when a group member was absent they took responsibility for phoning and enquiring about their peer's whereabouts. This relieved me of extra "policing" work, gave the students considerable responsibility, and had dramatic effects on their feelings that the class was indeed "their" class, not Miss Coleman's class. So, my suggestion started the process or helped create a framework of action, but other than initiating, I was not involved in teaching absentees that they must attend classes, the absentees discovered this in interactions with classmates.

At other times, I, as a teacher, was directly involved with creating the learning experience by intervening in events.

I recall, too, the confrontation with a girl - plump, dark-haired, shy girl,
who we (the class and I) had treated with tender loving care for several months, on her first solo sharing of a mime. She came on and part way through stopped saying she couldn't go on. I, in a powerful voice, told her she was robbing us of the experience of enjoying her work and it was time she stopped being so self-centered about how she felt and cared about how the audience felt. I then told her to release three deep breaths then start again and do the mime and complete it. The silence was devastating and I suffered agonies wondering if my impulsive response wasn't going to crush the poor girl forever. Then, she appeared, pale, but there, and performed her two minute mime for which she received thunderous applause. Next year, she became such a devotee of drama that she helped earn money to go on the student cultural trip to Vancouver...

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In this experience I reacted intuitively and spontaneously out of anger. I took a risk. I was frightened by the student and by my own feelings. My professional training prevented the anger from lashing out irresponsibly, but the anger was evident to the students. In a way it was like instinctively knowing that the bird balancing on the edge of the nest could fly and all I needed to do was give a push. A I-know-you-can-do-it, now-get-on-with-it, attitude. It worked. I learned to trust my anger in the classroom, to know that it would be tempered by reason and expressed with force but not destructive force. I learned to trust my sense of timing and appropriateness. The student learned to face her fear and keep going. She told me later that she learned she
could be afraid and still do a performance. She learned feeling fear doesn't mean failure, feeling fear is experienced even at moments of creating success.

All of these experiences recalled years later in my journal *Solitudes* may well be colored by nostalgia and romanticism about my own teaching. I do, however, feel that the essence of each of these experiences points to some fundamental concepts about genuine learning simply because out of all the possible stories these are so vividly remembered and because they do not all show me in the spotlight or as the shining heroine, but as a struggling "tearner". Indeed, much of my professional teaching was a journey of mediocrity based on cramming information at students, filling out forms, marking, and "lecturing" students. The Shamer voice rightfully comes out when I recall my witty but frightening tirade at beginning grade eight English classes to put "the fear of God" in them so they would behave themselves, when I ignored the silent students, or blamed students for not learning when the material or environment was totally irrelevant to their lives. Yet even here surprises awaited. I remember teaching noun clauses in English 11. I looked out over the group waiting for an answer to my question. My gaze rested upon a young woman whom I knew to be pregnant. Suddenly the triviality of noun clauses threatened to overwhelm me. Later, however, this young woman told me that my teaching as usual and demanding what I always demanded, gave her something to hold on to, some routine of duty that helped to hold her
chaotic life of that time together.

As a learner-teacher in high school, in adult education, and in incidental learning within my personal relationships there are some songs my voices sing that foster although do not guarantee learning. Whenever learning creates my own transformation, then my best teaching becomes possible. Without personally learning, my teaching can become a passing on of information rather than an experience that changes me as well as the learners. It is no wonder that when I feel myself bereft of a challenging, risky learning environment I become restless and want to move on, yet at the same time feel the voice of Terror numbing me and causing me to remain in stasis. Such a crisis occurred when I agonized over leaving my high school teaching career.

I almost hope I won't get the job... [a transfer of high schools] as that will force me to get my lethargic rear-in-gear and go to Burnaby to start my private teaching and hell, why not. I die here with no artistic nourishment.

March 28, 1982  Taking Leave
Home - retching this morning, knowing it's psychological fighting anxiety and decision to go or not to go... didn't matter which as long as a decision relieved the overpowering terror.

January 11, 1983  Reaching
I have resigned! The move has finally come and I'm sure - that gut-feeling sort of way - that it was the right move. ...I feel a great burden lifted. I may face new problems but at least they'll be new!

June 3, 1983  Reaching
Here the voice of the Lover yearned for freedom and creativity, while the Achiever sought new challenges. The same cycle occurred again when I closed my business as a self-employed teacher of voice and speech. Again, as in teaching high school the cycle lasted a full seven and a half years. The inkling of wanting a new learning environment surfaces about the fourth year, the tentative planning in the fifth year, frustration steadily increases in the sixth year often with a temporary or pseudo-change instigated, and by the seventh year the Demons of Terror, Worry and Shame make life so miserable that I move on and instigate a real change by the seven and a half year point. What is different with the second career teaching-change cycle (when I close my business office) is that I sought change more actively by taking personal development courses, instead of waiting for the Demon voices to make my life totally miserable. The courses I sought were wholistic in philosophy and non-formal rather than formal academic courses. By doing this I kept my self-esteem more intact and was thus more able to face fear and risk. I also actively tried more alternatives. I worked in two other fields to see what my voices said. Nonetheless, the torturous decisions were still there being argued between the Worrier (the "head") and the Lover (the "heart").

Blocked on career. Every time I sit down to get down to the details I get stuck in circles on paper and get fed up. I don't think I want to do my business anymore. Yet the need to do it for financial reasons is causing a conflict. Head is saying "Look, ya
need the money and it's pleasant work that everyone says you do well" and my heart says, "I'm finished with that. Set me free. All I want to do is set up our household [a commonlaw marriage] and work at something new when it feels right." Well do it — follow my heart. What would happen?

December 31, 1990 Shifts

Eventually, after establishing a household with the man in my life, I came back to graduate school. Although I preferred non-credit, informal learning opportunities, I knew that if I wanted to move on in my profession, I needed the credibility of another degree, and my Achiever was delighted with the idea, even though the Worrier Demon kept me out of graduate school for years on the pretext of it being financially unfeasible. Finally, when my Lover voice felt that the atmosphere of the university would nurture her creativity I was ready to make the commitment.

The composite voice is, however, most shaken at these times of change and she seems to let the borrowed voices argue and when at a dead-lock the composite voice seeks the Chorus as a mediator. Often I go directly to my Chorus voices and say "Help. I'm confused. What do you advise?" Over the years I have been very impressed with the words of wisdom of other women that form my Chorus. They have helped me hear my own voices more clearly. They have made me laugh at my woes and gain perspective on them. They have faced me with truths I have wanted to avoid but need to face. They have helped banish the Demon voices that bring me to a stand-still.
Sometimes the Chorus repeats back to me what I am saying. They extract my own wisdom like wheat from the chaff of worry and confusion. At other times they give me a new perspective I hadn't considered. Sometimes they function by letting me see that it is not a matter of thinking, analysing or even deciding, it is a matter of acting. The Chorus gives me the courage to act by providing a net of love and support as well as a tremendous belief that I can do what I want.

In the process of writing this thesis I discovered my Chorus was very valuable to me, more valuable that I had realized. Their learning was interacting with my learning. Since I had let my other voices speak either through journal excerpts or directly through reminiscences and meaning-making, I felt it essential to let my Chorus speak for themselves. I wanted to know what they could tell me about their learning. I wanted to see how I would interact with their insights. Would they validate some of my own learning? Present new perspectives? I wanted to escape the narcissism of burying myself in my journals, reading my words and listening to my voices. I wanted to hear the Chorus voices and invited them to speak. This invitation occurred at the point it would in any problem in my life, after tossing ideas around myself and before coming to any conclusions. So, in my quest to discover who I am as a learner it was inevitable that I would want to ask my Chorus about their learning. The least that could happen would be I would learn more about them as friends, the best that could happen would be that their experiences would
trigger new questions or insights into my topic.
CHAPTER 3: MY CHORUS AS LEARNER-TEACHERS

Why is it that you can sometimes feel the reality of people more keenly through a letter than face to face? Is it because the letter is focused spirit while in conversation...one is distracted by outward things and loses the essence?

March 1, 1928


METHODS OF INTERACTION

In interacting and reporting my Chorus' insights, I acted and reacted intuitively. I followed what I would normally do with any task, problem or challenge in my own life. I listened to my voices, talked with those with experience in the matter (my committee), decided on a topic and general approach, read, pondered, wrote, pondered, re-read, got discouraged, confused or just plain tired, then asked my Chorus members for help. This cycle was repeated over and over again throughout the creation of this thesis.

Before I chose the Chorus members, I selected the question I wished to ask them: "What are your most influential learning experiences?". The question seemed to be chosen quickly, but now I reflect back, I was probably in the process of formulating it for weeks. It was a large, open question that invited a personal response, which is what I always value from the Chorus, their precious subjectivity. No mention was made of how detailed the response should be. This
was left entirely up to each participant. Most wanted to respond in writing, at least one, sharing directly from her own journal. One wished to respond in an oral taped interview.

The Chorus members were chosen as they would be in any of my life decisions. First, all of us had to feel comfortable, respected, consulted, and cared for. Next, the Chorus members had to be fairly easily accessible by phone, for quick clarification of our ideas. This eliminated several long standing Chorus members who were outside of the Vancouver area. Finally, I wanted a variety of women from those with whom I was intimate, to those whom I knew only slightly but who attracted my interest because of their personality. Again this reflected the improvisational way I act in my everyday life. I tend to chat easily with those I find sympatico whether I've known them for years or hours. A new Chorus member is no less valuable to me than a long standing member.

Each of the women was asked the research question on the phone and each wrote it down. None of the women shared their writings with each other, although two had read my first two thesis chapters at the time of writing their response to the question. Each woman mailed or gave me their responses. I transcribed the one interview, then followed it up by a second interview on the phone. Other Chorus members I interviewed based on questions that arose from what they had written. Each woman was, therefore, asked different questions depending on what needed to be clarified for me within her writing.
Often I probed gently for deeper answers or for more context. Then I looked at all this marvelous and varied material and wondered how on earth I was going to share it with my thesis readers. Finally, I decided to name each document much as I had named my own journals. I chose the name from words used within the Chorus writers' documents. Despite the vast variety of experiences discussed within each document, I tried to extract a word that would best express the essence of the attitude to their own learning experiences. Then, because each woman is a unique individual, I decided the best way to preserve the essence and power of her words was to let these wonderful women speak for themselves. Poetry seemed to be the answer; poetry quoted directly from the women's own words so as to synthesize but not meddle with the essence of what they wished to say. I have edited and occasionally reordered their words from the documents and interviews into their own personal learning poems. Before putting any of the poems, or my comments about their poems, into this document, I sent each poem back to the woman who had originated it. I listened to their reactions.

One told me that on reading her poem, and sharing it with her teenage daughter who was visiting her, she cried because she had never felt so "heard" before.

Another laughed and said jokingly, "Did I say that?" She wrote on her copy of the found poem:

Dear Beth,

I think it is your interpretation that has the most impact on me. It
is so succinct and I think rings true of me. I've never had it so clearly expressed before. I always knew I was an "integrator"...but I used to call it fate until a friend pointed out that really I made the choices. The other feeling I had was one of "exposure"--that someone can, through a little free writing, almost know me...Your interpretation also makes me feel I must be a fairly together person--it comes across that way to me--a lot more than I think though, in reality.

The poem:...I feel as if my thoughts are there, the highlights hit, but that my voice is lost [or] a voice is lost. I think one of the reasons your interpretation touched me so is because your voice is so strong in it. It is the voice of friendship and wanting to understand.

Paula

Since Paula is a graduate student too, our discussions on "voice" were more extensive than with other Chorus members.

Another Chorus writer added more explicit details to an incident of abuse she experienced and reported in the poem, an incident that I had "softened" by editing and one put question marks by one line of the poem that wasn't in her words. That kept me honest. One kindly edited the poem for tightness and impact.

One said the poem was definitely "hers" alright, but she agreed with my comments about how negative the tone was. This realization about the negativity seemed to surprise her slightly. Most said they enjoyed the experience of assessing their own learning and helping me with my thesis.
Thank you so much, Beth! I loved this experience. I thought your written description was absolutely accurate and so perceptive, neither of which quality surprises me about you by now!

I hope you don't mind, but I did make changes...I cut the found poem to a more "spare" representation of the original piece...

Talk to you!

"Marcia"/ [then, her real name]

The whole interaction Chorus experience flowed very smoothly once set in motion. There were two difficult moments. One occurred during a phone interview. I was playing the role of "investigator" rather than friend. I tried too hard to pinpoint the woman's responses and get logical "answers". This made her feel cornered, put on the spot, and me frustrated because I wanted quick, clear easy to report responses. Fortunately, I relied on openly expressing feelings. I told her I was feeling frustrated and asked how she was feeling. As soon as we both vented, I felt able to let go of the role of "researcher" and relax into the role of Chorus friend letting our dialogue become more fluid, spontaneous, and less directed by me. Comfort was restored for me and I hope for her too. I knew this discomfort was a result of the "researcher" role because never in all our talks before, even during discussion of deep, personal issues or matters about which we disagreed, had such a rift of discomfort occurred.

The second difficulty was trying not to meddle with the
poems. The more I knew about the writer, the closer we were emotionally, the more I wanted to fiddle with things. I often found myself saying out loud to the computer as I typed, "Yes, but..." or "Yeah, but what about the time...". I wanted to omit what I thought was trivial and expand on what I thought was most profound. Sometimes I wanted to make things better, happier, or more positive than they were in the Chorus documents. Fortunately, for the most part, I resisted the urge to tamper. Certainly as one Chorus member so aptly put it, some aspect of voice is lost simply by changing from the prose of the original documents into poetry, but at least the alterations were less dramatic than restating in my own words, or commenting only on similarities and differences in the women's experiences. By tampering as little as possible, I experienced one of the most valuable, emotional/cognitive moments of being that has occurred during the preparation of this thesis—I listened. I realized how profoundly important listening is in relation to hearing "voice". There is no dialoguing without listening, without attempting to meaning-make from the perspective of the speaker.

Before I received any "answers" from my Chorus, I wrote in my present journal discussing my most influential learning experiences. After turning the Chorus documents into "found" poetry, I adapted my own prose journal entry into a learning poem and added "fresh" poetry as well.

So here they are, these "found" poems of my Chorus: their poems, their lives, their learning.
THE CHORUS SPEAKS

From letters, from journals, from conversations handwritten, typed, copied and spoken shaken out memories from "the most influential experience...life" a tumbling of learning experiences some from minds that at first "went blank" and then poured forth in profusion, some from "right away I see myself" imaginations some long, some short, some scan panoramas of their lives some binocular-focused views all speak with voices I know about places I have not visited before I listen to

JENNIFER - LEARNING AS REVELATION

Learning as I write you, variety of teachers not chosen presented to us in different ways, when the student is ready gifts from the universe.

My father taught walking properly in high heels. I resented it at the time... huge hunky heels I wanted the hourglass-shaped spikes of the times. frustrating lessons I have been grateful now walking with class confidence posed in any shoe without feeling vulnerable, perched on high. I learned I like to feel confident together.

My brother-in-law taught me the guitar creative or methodical music you make yourself is most soothing to the soul.

Trip to Disney World the child in me
experiencing awe, amazement
modern robotics
operation of things
handling of crowds
keeping people happy
action

Toastmasters
speaking
offering my thoughts and opinions
to any audience
poised and confident
running
sharing
creating
It's a fabulous freedom
from fear.

Alcoholics Anonymous
self-
understanding
coming out of me
enough to live with others
to separate love from sex
to laugh on the journey in sobriety
thirteen years now

A project
insulted and negated
in a huge management meeting.
Hurt,
I ran crying from the room.
anger is better
cchanneled through logic,
gains more respect
in business.

An abusive relationship
showed
"me"
showed me,
allowing
myself to be in such a place
showed me
angry, loud and violent
nasty awakening
capable of killing
changed my perception of me
even knowing the thought is possible
never
again
in that place
to that point.
Women
did not feel I had a 'use' for women
until Women's Interaction Network
an amazing revelation to me
women are fun, smart, interesting
surprising
they were interested in
me
supportive
getting past my jealousy first
to be willing to learn and share
with all women.

Life
The first time is always the best!
first boyfriend,
first job
first time away from home
first pregnancy elated me
reading
planning
the clothes
and then
miscarried
devastating
loss
became pregnant again
afraid to be happy
never again as joyful
lost that one too.
Lost love
can never truly be re-captured
not the discovery
willingness to give
trust.

My mother died
I was eleven
surely I had learned something from her?
She, by providing
taught
warmth, caring, tenderness, love.

So many teachers
and
me
graced with
the willingness to learn.

Of Jennifer's ten most influential learning experiences,
which she numbered and listed chronologically, she mentions "wonder", "awe", "amazement" or "surprise" in five of them. She refers to learning as if it is a revelation, a new way of looking at things. This is certainly reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's "moments of being". This almost instantaneous insight feeling she experienced, I'll call "wow" learning. It occurred for her during three positive, uplifting experiences and two negative crises. The two other types of learning revelations are experienced either as a gradual unfolding over time, an "oh, I see" or a shift of understanding based on retrospecting and reinterpreting past events, a "now I see".

Within her most influential learning experiences she mentions skills as important but seems to have picked out these particular skills because they have deeper significance. For instance, public speaking she says has "served me well, both personally and in business" because it has given her confidence, poise and contributed to leadership ability. All the skills she mentions are more than acquisition of information or honing of abilities. These skills are tools that interconnect the cognitive and motor to the affective. It is not just important that she can public speak, but that in doing public speaking she feels more confident and capable in her life journey.

In writing her response to my question Jennifer says she jotted down ten items which immediately came to mind but trying to choose the most influential proved impossible, so she described them all. She divided them into categories:
"me", "business", "women" and "life in general". Her stories indicate she learned from crisis involving fear, risk, humiliation, illness, miscarriage and abuse as well as through women friends and male relatives, sexual life, the arts, and through teachers she discovers as an adult, whom she sees as guides who gave her "direction at a time when I was flailing around".

**JULIE - LEARNING AS ENCOUNTERING**

Doing
You can read a thousand books
talk to a million people
but learning is
achieved
through...

Separation and divorce
of my parents
I was 12.
The most impact this
abandonment by my father
memory dim
mother's constant reminders
shaped me

"never trust a man"
"learn to stand on your own two feet"
"be independent"

My mother ensured I was aware
he had let us down, cheated and was caught.
her "advice" worked
in reverse for I
trusted too quickly
men who would
let me down.
So round and round.

Off the pedestal
I had placed her on
fell
my mother,
when my son was born.
This second greatest learning influence changed
my perspective.
She became a human being
with ideas amazingly different from mine,
ideas not for me or my son.
My perfect parent not so perfect after all
crashing down
disturbing for her
revealing for me.
Never the same
between us
since.

Christ, number three,
done to death thinking, talking about
feeling about that
second abortion.
The lover of many years with the vasectomy
that didn't work
repaired itself
and left me pregnant
the second time
and disbelieved.
I must be the one fooling around
so he thought
called names and reviled
before it was discovered the
cause
him.
Long haul
from there
toward peace again.

Encounters sexual,
the first time
I decided
when
felt like the only thing
I could give
or withhold
of significance--
sex and power
I liked the feeling of control.

And boarding school
separation again
crying to my mother
"take me outta here"
forced learning
subjected to rules
never faced before.
Imposed curfews
mandatory times
from study hall
to bedtime
yet...
learning to live with other personalities
me, the only child
I welcomed this

that Grade 10 English teacher
"You have talent. You should be a writer."
not stupid after all!
proved to her
my mother who
wanted five boys had a girl and quit.

And, my first affair
a married man
I was only twenty
with Scarlett O'Hara over confidence
that I could do anything
cope with anything
but power
held out consequences
I didn't want to be responsible.
He left his wife
I lost my job
painful
necessary learning
I got
but sacrifices
payment too high.

Learning
it is a choice
but we're not good at choosing.
It is a weapon
but weapons wound.
It is change
and sometimes I have trouble going with the flow.
Learning
emotionally involving
learning greater looking back.

I've created my own crisis
so I've learned
now
I re-learn.

In Julie's poem, six experiences are ordered from most to least influential according to information gathered in the interview. Within the document she gave me she listed events chronologically as: "1) my parent's separation and subsequent
divorce, 1967-1973  2) entering boarding school 1970  3) my first sexual encounter, 1971  4) my first affair 1975  5) birth of my son 1982 [although this event concerns more of her relationship to her mother than to her son] and 6) abortion #2, 1987."

Julie's six most influential learning experiences reflect considerable learning through crisis as well as learning about power in relation to female sexuality. Three of the lessons learned involved a shattering of trust between herself and a loved one and the trauma that results when as a girl or woman she attempts to find her balance and re-establish her own power. In the interview she said that these experiences meant that she was quite skeptical. Skepticism seems to be the mildest form of reaction to her learning traumas and agrophobia, dating from the time of her second abortion, the strongest. Yet, in rather stoical mode when asked if she viewed learning as painful she replied, "No, just necessary".

She feels that at one time she wanted "control" over people and things, but now she views control more in relation to herself and responsibility. Her deepened realization that her actions have consequences upon others, including herself, has heightened her responsibility as she matured. Although her ideas about sexuality and power are now uncertain, she has coped with many incidents by using logic and reasoning as well as consideration of all involved.

One experience she writes about could be called an "ah-ha" or "wow!" experience as she realized that her mother and
herself do not truly hold the same opinions. She uses the word "revealing" and seems to mark this as powerful transition away from dependency and idealization of her mother. In the interview she said that when her mother began to try to impose her philosophy of childrearing onto Julie and her baby, Julie said, "I became irate, although I did not verbalize this to her. It was an internal learning shock".

I'm aware that Julie's writing caused me considerable uneasiness because it seemed so painful and negative. I wanted desperately to intervene and say "yes, but..." as if to update over the last five years I've known her and include all the self-development, courses in everything from knitting to marine biology, the exploration and improvement of her agrophobia, not to mention her tremendous gathering together of the forces of all her learning to end a negative long-term romantic relationship, begin building a more positive relationship with her mother, and explore options in career and education. Despite all of my desire to balance the picture, Sandra's most influential learning experiences remain on the paper before me written with candor and the touch of cynical humor I know so well. They are her significant learning memories. They are painful for me, the friend who can only stand by and listen and cannot redress the wrongs, but they are hers these memories and she can and does deal with them. I am learning even as I write these words on the page that I must let each Chorus member speak while I listen; that participation in anyone else's learning is negotiated by
both parties. I can support, but not advise unless asked.

ELLEN - LEARNING AS OWNING

As a young girl

Like an only child, lonely child
starved for friends
brothers so much older
and away.

The small country school
with eight to ten pupils who lived far apart
the Baptist Sunday School,
my chief interests.
Strict times
yet emotional
revival services in spring
my total immersion baptism

The teens

Mother anxious
I obtain
an education beyond public school
so to boarding school in Nova Scotia
strict Baptist rules
I conformed,
good girl that I was
"conscientious" stuck all these years
but the social life! missing from home
and my English teacher
such enthusiasm for language
such polish...

My twenties

Loneliness, illness overtook me
at home
after graduation
lethargic, unambitious
catered to and spoiled.

The opposite sex
my choice frowned upon,
annoyed, frustrated
I burst out in righteous indignation
new for me -
no one could understand why,
especially father.

My mother endorsed
visit to my brother in Vancouver
September 1927
via CPR across Canada
exciting
all my own!
kept a journal of the sights
and oh, the Rockies on a clear and crystal day.
I fell in love
with Vancouver

My sister-in-law encouraged me to join
young people's at the United Church
No more Baptists for me!
friendships with many
young women
A wonderful experience
friendship
after years of loneliness.
In my new family.
I became less selfish
Not spoiled here

Then in 1928
I
decided
UBC for one year
but, oh, the math
my brother, a math teacher,
helped me through
then, teacher training.

The thirties, forties, fifties and sixties

So came the great depression of the nineteen-thirties
I, teaching license in hand,
no jobs
substitute for six years
dental assistant
housework
paying very little
glad of mother's words
years before
"save in your piggy bank",
still think twice about spending money
even in my golden years.

Finally
a teaching position
in Burnaby
$780 a year.
What a relief!
Wonderful
classroom of my own
my own desk!
children and I
close
one still writes me every Christmas
these fifty years

taught Sunday School
Lead in CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training)
participated in plays

In 1947 I married
moved into a bungalow in Vancouver
big turn of events
Nice a home
of one's own,
own decisions
rather than others' wishes.

Then in 1951 motherhood in my mid forties,
a daughter
adjustments
no regrets
much thankfulness
loving, ambitious daughter
loves books
a scholar
a teacher.

My seventies and eighties
Travelling after my husband retired
Hawaii, Alaska, Reno, the Maritimes
then his accident
hit by a drunken driver
nine weeks in hospital
enduring much suffering
And me?
mill more patient, sympathetic, understanding.
1983, he died.
I was a widow!
I had to make
my own
decisions,
different somehow.
My home of forty years,
I sold
moved
I am here
on my own
in my own condo
in 1993
living
relaxed comfortable
life at 88.

Ellen is my mother. I know this greatly colored what she
felt she could reveal. I'm sure it influenced her response to the question. However, all the Chorus members, including myself, are highly subjective. It is from these subjective, personal views that I listen, react, argue, question, and adapt my own views. The "polite" response that was likely to occur, was well outweighed by the insights I received about my grandmother and about my mother's own feelings and her cognitive/emotional development.

When asked to respond to her most influential learning experiences, Ellen turned to her life, writing in chronological sections. At first, she told me, she felt like she had nothing to say and then was surprised that she wrote five pages. When I told her that I found the phrases "of my own" and "on my own" repeated numerous times in her account of her life she concurred with the interpretation of her learning in terms of a gradual journey to be her own person, to make her own decisions, consulting her own needs and wants rather than pleasing family or friends. She said that she hadn't noticed it before, but her life had twenty year patterns. In 1927 she came to Vancouver, in 1947 she married, in 1987 she became a widow.

When I questioned her during the interview more about what the events in her life taught her, she mentioned that loneliness taught her about the importance and value of friendships. Friendship taught her to "not take myself so seriously" and to have more confidence in herself and her abilities to lead and organize. She is still connected to two
women friends she met in the late nineteen-twenties shortly after arriving in Vancouver. Another of her friends seemed to be books and stories for she mentions how as a child the Bible stories filled her with awe. "I was fascinated by the stories. They gave me something to grasp for - ideals." Her mother looked after the church library so Ellen steeped herself in *Anne of Green Gables*, *Nancy Drew* and *Marjory Dean*. In her treasures she found a handwritten notebook of quotations her mother had copied out for her edification with quotes, mainly from Shakespeare, the Bible and famous men of the age. She commented that she didn't know how her mother, a very busy farm woman, ever found any time to read and write out these quotations.

Like Julie, who was fifty years younger, Ellen found boarding school a powerful influence because she learned the art of socializing and sharing with other young women. But, like Julie, Ellen mentions the strictness. She relates once being caught for a minor misdemeanor. She felt she was punished even though she was honest, while others went unpunished even though guilty because they could manipulate their way out of things. This made her angry.

She felt she was unambitious, but when she did make a choice about being innocently friendly with a young man that was working on the farm, she was chastised. She blew up. The adults, especially the men, seemed unreasonable. They were either too busy or if they listened, they seemed incapable of "seeing my point of view".
Teaching grade three and four she learned confidence and gained comfort from the knowledge that she could be a leader and still retain affectionate bonds with the children. One student still writes her over fifty years later!

About marriage she laughed and said it brought considerable freedom to set up her household her own way, but ironically she learned that total freedom was simply not available, at least inside marriage. Motherhood, too, brought joys, but due to illness and surgery after delivery there was much pain for her for many years.

So for Ellen, the circles of freedom gradually widened as she journeyed through life. She saw learning as very much transmitted from the adult to her child world and accepted passively what she was taught, until she began to notice the unreasonableness of things in her late teens and early twenties. Her journey across Canada opened her eyes to nature, brought her into vitalizing friendships, new ways of being and negotiating with her new "family" of brother, sister-in-law and their three children. Learning became more obviously experiential in her mind and this learning brought her more into contact with herself as a capable person who could interconnect with others, especially women. Although "wow!" learning occurred in her life, her main mode is one of gradual and patient unfolding discovery, a "now I see" mode of learning as she travelled from a more passive, isolated life into a more active, connected and open life. I left her in peace to return to her mystery book.
WENDY: LEARNING AS CHALLENGING AND STRUGGLING

My library of good learning
mental and emotional memories
facing fears of failure
risking
forcing the "good" uncomfortable
investing in myself
working hard
building
a new business I've never done before
no financial backing
struggling to start a new career
goals
and struggle
and attainment
and success
gives me the guts to do more and more
each time a little easier.

The bad
remembered
not repeated
the "bad" uncomfortable
like buying the unneeded
buryed under burden debt
making a promise that cannot be kept
wounding others with disappointment
letting someone take advantage of you
So,
new criteria
to spare me from
the bad.

Searing a brand in my library of memories
the ugly
traumatic,
emotional wounds
forming my values
guidelines for how I want
to treat and be treated.
in childhood
the shame - caught lying
taking something
the pain of being falsely accused
anger, frustration, humiliation
of being beaten by bullies
fear
being stalked by a madman
fear
of school, an unsafe place to be,
teased
attacked by boys to see if my breasts were real
forbidden to go to university.
not allowed French
slotted into
a "commercial program" girl
fear
my brother
the Hell's Angel...
some searing frightening "uglies"
lost even to memory
being kidnapped at four years old...
but, naivete gone
the ugly taught me
sharpened awareness
prepared me for the worst
protected me with a wall of caution.

All learning - the good, the bad, the ugly
useful for
life building.

When I asked Wendy to respond to my question, "What are your most influential learning experiences?" she took time out from her fledgling business and whipped off on her computer a titled and dated, three paragraph answer dividing her learning experiences into the good, the bad and the ugly.

For Wendy learning is a challenge and a struggle, but in no way does she back down from these challenges or struggles, in fact, she views them as not only necessary, as does Julie, but as useful at worst and thrilling at best. The difference between her good, bad and ugly learning experiences is one of choice. The good experiences are chosen challenges that may involve breaking through fear or taking a risk, but are done with eyes fully open and with awareness of possible problems and rewards. They are energizing for her; work, with a thrill of self challenge. The bad experiences mean the learning is a result of a shock or realization that an action was done without being aware of the consequences or responsibilities
involved. A choice was made, but foolishly or naively without enough information to make an informed choice. The consequences may be upsetting or annoying, but she analyzes where she went wrong so next time she will be aware of any warning signs. The ugly experiences have much less of an aspect of choice. These are the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", those events that happen to her, especially at times of powerlessness such as in childhood. They are painful but can be useful in shaping her values. A type of reverse Golden Rule, knowing what not to do to others because of what was done to her.

There are definitely examples of "Wow!" learning, and "oh, I see" learning. She accepts the ugly and protects the wounds these experiences caused; she uses the bad experiences to prevent further unhappiness; and she seeks or even forces herself into the good experiences of challenge. She says she knows when to get learning, because she feels bored or apathetic and knows it's time for a change. She says, "you have to create it" [learning] which suggests she feels responsible for her own learning, or at least responsible for setting up the environment that will likely foster learning. Wendy says if she wants learning she interacts with people, but her writing also shows that time for reflection and understanding are equally essential. Interestingly most of the "ugly" learning experiences seemed to have occurred in childhood, whereas the bad or the good experiences are more prevalent in her adult life.
Paula was already keeping a journal in relation to her own learning/teaching experiences. She printed my question in bold block letters at the top of her page and wrote:

Circles
Years quickly by
changes
cannot recapture the time
or quality of change.
Yet change inevitable
so I adapt
or my spirit will die.
I trust the circles
past the variables beyond our control
a purpose out there
greater than myself
engenders
a need to give back
to the community
for the children

Your question put me on the spot
I write
you are my friend
I help.

Influential learning...
Motherhood
intense, unpredictable
forcing adaptation
causing loss of control
forgiving
trying again.
Learning to accept
I make mistakes
I fail
but I am not a failure.
Life not linear
not controllable
forever fraught with
crisis
forcing learning through fear
so you surprise yourself.
Crisis simplifies things
smelts down to the important
one or two.
You find out
you survived
came out stronger
more empathetic
more understanding
that you could be
decisive when it mattered
and that many people
help
Peter's stroke
mother's death when I was twelve
forceps delivery childbirth
unconscious in a car accident
people you didn't expect
would come to your aid.
And others' crisis
hearing their stories
seeing how they cope and triumph.
Crisis tries but simplifies.
It's everyday life that is harder.
But there's the special ones
the friends
one who encouraged me
to take up a challenge with her help
always treating me like an equal
when the ability wasn't equal
yet my strengths complemented her strengths
many times one person dominates
the other, through lack of self-esteem
just stays
as if that's where they belong.
so bravo
for friends willing to teach
what they know
and learn from what you know
most influential these
friends
In teaching too
the horrible first practicum
finding my own sponsor teacher
who accepted me for who I was
taught me by allowing me to take charge
stayed late to help me plan
modelled her beliefs
gave so I could give
so again circles.

Then there's
marriage
the reality of relationship
of give and take
compromise
living with the unpredictable
lows
and lights at ends of tunnels.
And the odd teacher
who saw me as an individual
encouraged me
took the time out to be personal
  Sunday field trip
  introducing a new author
  the great teacher who made
  history live
And recently
challenging
grad school
the opportunity to link
by questioning
evaluating
  re-evaluating
  wrestling with what I value
  what I want to do
I didn't expect it
re-facing things I thought I'd left
again at the crossroads
career choices
stressful,
  draining
but no turning back
friends and teachers help me through
the people of academic rigor
who value
choice and growth.

Learning
forced through crisis and change
choice
and deeper learning
often gradual
retrospective
reflective
bringing the learned to the full light
of consciousness
long after the event
like a planted seed
flowering years later.
All learning
all pervasive
  intensifies
  learning is relationship
with values at the core of it all
So planting the challenge
  watering with encouragement
  sunning with belief
the flower of learning
integration
blossoms.

Paula's view of learning has an optimistic tone, for even
though she acknowledges learning through crisis such as illness, death of loved ones and accident, she points out that many people come to your aid, that there is a "greater purpose out there" and that much of learning is a result of choice. The impression I intuit from her writing is that learning is bringing to consciousness the web of interconnection of beings - the discovery of the links of relationship and the coming to terms with personal choice of values based on an understanding of these links. She indicates that the links, relationships, choices and values may have to be unexpectedly "re-faced". They cannot be made once and forever left, for life changes bringing new knowledge and understanding. Her optimism is never sentimental, but infused with the awareness that "it's everyday life that is harder" than crisis. She sees learning as a complex experience that for her was deeply involved in motherhood, crisis, friendship, teaching, marriage, school and career. Her learning has taught her that all learning is pervasive, affecting all areas of a person's life. Failure has a valuable part within learning, and all learning connects to growth and the very essence of living fully.

CLAIRE - LEARNING AS JUMPING

Everyday experiential learning my biggest teacher.
Like jumping into a new culture
the opportunity to visit Greece on my own.
Like a dog understanding only intonations of voice
gradually understanding
the words.
Where are the busses going?
can't even read the script
You learn
in a heck of a hurry
You teach yourself
a mental
physical strain
different experience
seeing your culture from outside
seeing yourself as others see you.
Even the bad side of life
you jump
into action
Caring for my ill parents
coping
not pleasant
but once out
better able to cope with
the next tragedy
the next crisis
we've all got more resources than we know
Retrieving learning you didn't know you had
as if life's trivia
stored in your memory
from other people's experiences
pulled out of your subconscious
maybe just programmed survival
maybe not really learning
I don't know.

Learning
through common sense knowledge
cultural knowledge we all have
common
"sense"
knowledge
bodily knowledge
skiing
you know
by feeling
that defies description
"This is it!"
People delight
feeling "oh, yeah! I did it!"

Learning circumstantial
not planned
understood in looking back
like Coventry cathedral
blitzed
rebuilt in modern idiom
I will never forget
Claire, who chose an interview rather than writing, spoke of learning as experiential and circumstantial. She felt that either forced or chosen "jumps" into new or different environments facilitated the rate of learning and made people utilize their wealth of inner personal resources. Learning for her is a varied experience from the culturally passed on knowledge or
common sense knowledge, like looking before crossing a street, through bodily awareness learning that is similar to what I have earlier termed "wow" learning. She refers to learning as a tool for surviving spiritually as well as physically and for coping successfully. It can be a more instantaneous feeling of rightness or a deeper understanding based on reflecting back over time. Her schooling has been a series of high jumps, but her graduate school learning jumps have been personal challenges involving strain, but choice and the resulting delight of accomplishment.

**MARCIA - LEARNING AS BEING TRANSPORTED**

Powerful feeling:
Transported by powerful feeling
to a woods
my child's body swaying
the music
Teddy Bears' Picnic
there
in the woods
my body
transported
emotion
Saturday creative drama
the verge of flight
imagining
flying
feeling
through feeling
knowing better what I did not know before.
"Hooked"
I would always look
for powerful feeling
in anything I learned
feeling that could carry me
so many places
beyond.

And so
I teach the arts
I write
I am shaped by
music
art
drama
am still being shaped.

Other influential learning
giving birth
love, pain, sacrifice
intensity, devotion, loyalty
passion
forever changed
miscarriage
nothing can be planned
taken for granted
forgotten.
All happiness rooted in pain.
To be a woman
a painful pleasure
the woods
not just
teddy bears on picnics
regardless
I want
to be
in those woods
transported.

Marcia's writing brings out personal learning experiences of significance such as motherhood, miscarriages, teaching and the arts. One of the main experiences she describes, being a child in a creative dramatics class and being transported from the reality of the class through the media of music, movement and imagination into the "woods" of The Teddy Bears' Picnic. Here she describes the tremendous powerful essence of her learning as being "hooked" on the feeling level. She says she looks for and tries to create this feeling in anything she learns. From her description it involves a connection between "what [she] held inside" with the stimulus such as music, writing or dance that would allow or enhance her creative
inner being to "fly". The experience she describes is intensely personal yet, it touches on an essence of learning through and from the arts. Its effect upon the learner is wholistic and it brings deep joy. The joy is of the spirit and the body acting together, and is reminiscent of Claire's explanation of bodily knowing.

Marcia's learnings gleaned from her reproductive life are paradoxical. She describes being a woman as "a painful pleasure". The pain relates in part to the precariousness of reproductive life, "miscarrying...influenced me to the extent that I no longer believe that anything can be planned or taken for granted". She still realizes the joy of being transported through imagination to levels of feeling and awareness, but as she says, "the woods are not just full of teddy bears". Despite pain, loss or feelings of powerlessness, she still seeks her "transporting" experiences in her life, her own learning and her teaching, the latter of which she acknowledges as a process that has and is still shaping her.

ME--BETH - LEARNING AS DIALOGUING

Learning in dialogue about issues, events, decisions, feelings quality of life death.

Decisions at crisis not all instinctive, instantaneous intensify dialogue choices facilitate learning
Retrospective learning -
relaxed pace
calm
looking back
to see the picture

The tool of learning
intimacy
through talk
even talking to myself is a
dialogue
inside my head
in my technicolor dreams
in my journals
as I read
I dialogue with the author
the characters
I dialogue with "enemies"
real or imagined
present or absent
people who leave behind
stumbling rocks in
the garden of my growth

Picturelogue in daydreams and visions
that bypass words
I ride my magic English sheep dog
who flies me
on adventures to find
bones in gardens
mansions beyond hedges
and peace under the leaves
of a large oak chestnut tree.

all the talk helps
with the big crises
loomed around me
reproductive/sexual life
birth control,
abortion,
fertility
celibacy,
choice of sexual partner
tubal ligation
or illness and facing death
or dancing circles of hurt
with myself or others

Often learning seems like
one grain of sand at a time,
sometimes an avalanche of sand.
I acquire grains of information
but learning
well...
it is deep
powerful
tingles my toes
changes
the chemistry of my "me-ness"
momentarily I glimpse
not individual grains of sand
but a sand sculpture
I hear not single waves breaking
but a symphony of nature
I taste not the tang of salt
but a whole bite of
bittersweet
life.

I learn, therefore I am.

My learning poem was written prior to collecting my Chorus's documents and turning them into poems. Although it is uniquely mine there are some noticeable similarities with some of the other Chorus members words. Six of us directly mention crisis as a catalyst that forces learning and one woman implies that crisis, although sometimes self-created, is a main way of learning. What we learn from crisis varies, but crisis itself is a major force providing opportunities to learn. The main forms of crisis mentioned directly are reproductive/sexual and sudden or prolonged illness or accident.

Experiences within the sexual life of four of us related to crisis with power - seeking to gain, keep or use power to equalize a previous sense of powerlessness or victimization in relation to men in our lives, often fathers rather than present sexual partners. The emotions of anger and revenge came out strongly not so much against individual men, as against a paradoxical destructive system that encourages
female sexiness at the same time it denigrates women for being sexual. Ellen, admittedly easy-going, when in her early twenties felt provoked into lashing out verbally against the unreasonableness of parental repression of innocent walks with a fellow known to the family. The result was the sting of being treated as temporarily deranged. Her father couldn't or wouldn't see her point of view and even her mother seemed to desert her. She became silent; depression was already common for her. Two of us used our sexuality as a weapon in a battle of control. Both admitted that even if we did win the field, we won only the corpses of possible relationships forever lost. Two of us, possibly three, fractured ourselves into pieces, alienating our sexual life from our spiritual-physical well being. Out of all the pain-crisis of sexuality little is mentioned in the eight documents collected of sexuality and joy. Even those who do not place sexuality and crisis together do not mention sexuality as a positive learning experience.

Of the seven of us who have been or are married the only one who refers directly to marriage as a significant learning experience uses terms "give and take", "compromise", of having to live with "the unpredictability" of lows with the belief in "light at the end of the tunnel." Not too glowing an image of marriage as a positive learning experience. But, marriage fares slightly better than sexual relationships.

Reproductive life is mentioned by all of us. Two mention the devastation of miscarriages; two mention the personal
physical, spiritual and social shock of abortion and one mentions the crisis of forceps delivery, but also links this to learning how people, often those you least expect, come to her assistance. Although three of the five mothers mention motherhood as a significant learning experience, only one mentions birth as a powerful learning experience of "love, pain, sacrifice, intensity, devotion, loyalty and passion."

One woman speaks of the early times of motherhood, but not in relation to what she has learned about, or through her child, but what she discovered about her relationship to her own mother.

The second major learning through crisis category relates to illness or accident. Three of us mention illness or accident that we experience personally and two women mention the illness of loved ones and the crisis of caring for the physical, emotional, and financial needs of these loved ones. For most the outcome is greater confidence in personal abilities to cope, but one woman says she learned the supportive role that others provide in helping her cope.

After crisis, the second most mentioned significant learning experience is female friendship. Four of us say so directly and one by implication. It is seen as a sharing, encouraging, supportive learning relationship, and one woman, Paula, suggests that the potential for learning is heightened if the friendship is devoid of judgment and hierarchy and becomes one of reciprocal learning/teaching exchange. This friendship inspired learning seems to become more "wonderful"
as we grow older. Jennifer mentions that she was in her late thirties when by joining an organization made up entirely of women, she discovered, to her astonishment that women were caring. Before she had viewed other women as "enemies" or competition for men in her life.

Akin to friendship is a learning relationship with a significant or special teacher, usually female and often an English teacher, but also a drama teacher and a sponsor teacher in a student teaching program. Often this special teacher is deemed "encouraging" and recognizes the individual talents of the woman, giving tremendous hope for the future often at an otherwise bleak time.

Schooling receives mixed reviews as a learning experience. Wendy refers to elementary and secondary school as "an unsafe place to be", Claire mentions elementary and secondary education as something one had to go through, Ellen now cringes at the oppressive boarding school rules of the 1920's, and Julie still can't quite decide if the evils of the 70's boarding school repression balanced the self-discipline learned and the enjoyment of companionship with other girls. Once outside of the required schooling programs, however, education fairs better. All of us have continuing education courses of every description imaginable from herbology and tai-chi to Japanese and creative visualization. Some have followed a continuous program of study leading to diplomas at various colleges and undergraduate and graduate degrees from universities. Choice made this phase of education most
appealing. We wanted to learn, chose our places of learning and negotiated many of our own experiences during the introduction, practise, and evaluation phases of our chosen educational experiences. Two of the graduate students mention the stress of university, but also value it as a time for growth and re-evaluation of their own life directions. This relates to another significant learning experience four of us mention, reflective or retrospective times for looking back to ascertain new perspectives or significances.

Crisis (of reproduction, sexuality, and illness or accident), motherhood, female friendship, special teachers, schooling, and reflective times are each mentioned by four or more of the eight women. However, there are other significant learning experiences. Three of us mention learning by facing fear or risk, three mention learning as a result of travel or relocation, and two describe learning through financial transactions. Two or one mention learning from or through enemies, mistakes, parental divorce, religious training and choices of religious beliefs, relatives (especially fathers, mothers and brothers), nature, imagination, arts and expressing anger.

My Chorus women learn through "forced" and "choice" learning. That is, they are forced by the crisis of life to learn, as for example, in the event of death or divorce of a parent or through the crisis of female life such as miscarriage or abortion. Here the crisis is present, no ignoring it, it must be dealt with whether pleasant or not.
"Choice" learning involves willingly entering into an environment with the purpose of wanting to stimulate learning, such as reading a book on infant care, taking a course in Japanese, or joining Alcoholics Anonymous. Of course, learning may not occur at all, only the acquisition of information, but the women are trying to facilitate learning by choosing a conducive environment for them. The categories are not rigid, however. Some women seem to choose to create a "forced" or crisis situation to accelerate or intensify learning, as for instance in quitting a job and having no other job offer, moving to another country without knowledge of the language, or leaving an abusive relationship.

A second way of looking at learning that emerged was as either instantaneous revelation ("wow" learning) or reflective ("oh, I see" or "now, I see") gradually unfolding learning. Reflective or retrospective learning seems to be more common. In a sense even the "wow" experience is based on previous sensations, perceptions and knowledge or beliefs, it's just that the moment of realization is intensified. It's as if a barrier or block was removed and suddenly connections are clear and learning is realized, like a light bulb switched on. Paul Colaizzi (1978) expresses something similar when he says, "the existential movement toward a genuine learned-content may even be totally concealed from the learner during the learning-activity. This is why the outcome of genuine learning often surprises us in terms of both the fact that we have learned and in terms of what we have learned" (p.130).
Reflective learning is often less dramatic but just as powerful. It keeps trying and struggling toward understanding, but accepts that this is an ongoing, never fully realized state. Genuine learning as opposed to the acquisition of information "recognize[s] that its objectives can never be completely achieved, it continues its efforts in resolute patience. Genuine learning is patient; it is able to wait and hope" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 130).

Although my Chorus women include skill acquisition as related to learning, they express a deeper, far more powerful level of learning that affects them as integrated emotional-cognitive-physical beings. The essence of the genuine learned experience is captured by Julie when she said, "it's never been the same...since". The learning that happens at this deeper level changes the woman's world view, whether it is how Julie sees her mother, how Ellen understands self-made decisions, or how Wendy constructs her self-protection of caution. This change is not superficial, trivial or passing. It is profound. It affects the whole woman and her whole life.

The voice of each woman is unique and powerful. All have contributed to my Chorus, popping up in pages of my journals. However, the Chorus, individually or as a group, are not an internal voice within me. They do not speak directly inside my head. In fact, by learning through the experience of preparing this thesis I've realized that I, as an adult, have not borrowed the voices of these particular women; they are
not my voice. Their power for me is their very separateness. They contribute to the formation or growth of my internal voices by being distinctly outside of me. I would not hear them as vividly as I do if they were one with me. Yet, despite all their separateness they are connected to my voices. They provide a bridge to the outside larger social world, sending in messages from their own experience in language I can hear and begin to understand because these women are non-threatening, and non-judgmental. Enough crisis and shock happens in the course of any woman's life in dealing with the structure and functioning of the patriarchal society, so the Chorus provides a selection of resource people who learn/teach through gentler more supportive means. This explains why my Chorus has been composed almost entirely of women, and occasionally of men with gentle, non-judgmental personalities. The learn/teach interaction is important in the formation of my Chorus. A Chorus member has to be willing to receive as well as give. If the Chorus member has a know-it-all attitude that prevents my giving her anything or assisting her in any way, then gradually that friendship withers slightly, even if it doesn't die out. On the other hand, if the Chorus member is passively receiving from me and does not give to me in return then again the friendship withers.

The Chorus feeds back to me what I say so I can judge it for myself. They joke in a manner that makes me contemplate. They feed me with their stories, woes, dreams, experiences and
questions which act as a stimulus to my own growth. Occasionally I do think, what would Wendy say, or what would Paula do, but I do not hear their individual voices. Even if I do adopt their view or accept their insights I do so only after synthesizing it with my own ideas, feelings and experiences. The Chorus listens so I can hear my own voice if I choose to, and speaks when they must tell something about themselves or me. Each has given me valuable opportunities to learn, if I choose to do so. And choice is a key word here. As a baby and a young child I was far more dependent, far more accepting and borrowed the voices at a subconscious level. As I grew from dependence toward independence, the latter of which is never fully achieved, I developed a more and more conscious sense of choosing the external voices that inform me. I have also opened myself up to be chosen by other women.

What the Chorus forms for me is a support-learning circle. They enhance my "oh, I see" or "now, I see" opportunities because they are "teachers" who stay with me for a longer period of time than a few weeks or months. My Chorus, however, changes. Often distance will dim the friendship, either geographical distance or psychological distance. The latter usually involves more pain, but only three women in my life deserted or abandoned me. This startling desertion is very rare but may well be related to the fact that I loved these women very deeply and may have inadvertently imitated how I react when breaking-up with a male lover. I switched from the Chorus interaction pattern
which involves both love and separation but handles it differently, to an interaction pattern typical of the anger-hurt pattern I had learned in male-female love relationships. My society pays no attention to women loving women. All the more reason why my Chorus is so important to me; what society at large fails to speak about, the Chorus can speak or act upon. The Chorus is a chosen, thus self-directed, informal learning circle, essential to my well being and my "being well" in a patriarchal world.
CHAPTER 4: IMPLICATIONS

It may be objected that such an inquiry concerns no one but myself. Not so; if any individual—a Pepys or a Rousseau, an exceptional or a run-of-the-mill character—reveals himself [herself] honestly, every-one, more or less becomes involved. It is impossible for him [her] to shed light on his [her] own life without at some point illuminating the lives of others.

(de Beauvoir, 1960, p. 8).

I cannot claim the stature of a Pepys, a Rousseau or the estimable de Beauvoir, but as a "run-of-the-mill character" my personal implications as a forty-two year old, white, middle-class, spinster teacher of eighteen years professional teaching experience in secondary, post-secondary and adult education may resonate or, if you prefer the visual image, illuminate, the understandings of some readers. In my life, the full impact of the personal implications will reverberate long after the final revisions of this thesis and cannot be fully assessed until much later. Such is the generally slow process of retrospective learning. Nonetheless, I'll share my insights thus far. I'll divide the implications, into personal/political, learning, teaching and narrative phenomenology. This division of concepts is deceptive. It suggests by the very separation of the terms that the concepts exist separately. They are more like individuals on a water bed. One moves, waves are set in motion, and all are rocked gently or violently. So, these concepts overlap and interact in meaning and this meaning is created in context. They all
form a relationship ecosystem.

PERSONAL/POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The personal is political and women are involved in serious politics when they begin to talk about their personal experience from their own perspective.

(Spender, 1980, p. 118).

Journaling: Dialoguing Spirals that Legitimize my Voice

Development, as often happens, proceeds here not in a circle but in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level.

(Vgotsky, 1978 p. 56).

During my first reading of my journals I was overcome with a sense that my development was going around and around in circles going nowhere. Gradually I saw the spirals. I was repeating similar situations, involved in similar learning opportunities, but each circle was new and advancing. Details and scope changed, sometimes I slid or jumped back to an earlier part of the spiral, but overall I was spiraling to a deeper level. I doubt I would have grasped the nature of the spirals if I had not been journaling, and re-dialoguing with my journals to see overall, larger patterns.

These larger patterned spirals are developed and expressed, mainly through everyday experiences that can be all too easily dismissed as triviality, but for the fact they are semi-permanently recorded in writing in my journals. For me,
the writing of my journals has made the everyday experiences of my personal/political microcosmic world concrete and legitimate in a patriarchal macrocosm that discourages, denigrates, or ignores the voice of women (Spender, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Heilbrun, 1991) especially when women speak in the personal, colloquial, informal, conversational or narrative form rather than in the abstract language of "objective" science. The first legitimizing was the very writing of the original journals themselves as an outlet for silencing of my voice within my own culture. This made the experiences and memories legitimate to me. It was, as Alice James put it her age of Victorian repression, a "relief" (James, 1964), and I'd add: secret protest, way to blow off steam, safe haven, place to reflect, sympathetic confessional and playground to try new ideas and plan or test decisions. By its very nature, then, the journal became a delightful "hotbed" of incidental learning. From there, the sharing of excerpts of my journals throughout this thesis is another step in legitimizing my voice and, by implication, the voice of women in education and academia in general. I should add, lest you think me still as naive as I was at ten, that I am well aware that this thesis may gather dust. Although financially pleased, I was sad to find so many of the journals, diaries and letters, and autobiographical writings of women, famous women, in second-hand bookstores, some because they were taken out of circulation at local libraries! I am aware that Dale Spender (1980) warns that women's books, if published at all, are ignored over time. As I write these
words I am aware that a female friend's thesis, because it exposes patriarchal oppression, has been used as a weapon against her moral stand on an issue of grave import in university politics. Silencing is a powerful patriarchal weapon. I doubt I'll fully escape it, but I'll try.

My Journals: A Record of the Growth and Struggle of my Voices

My voices through internal dialogic struggle and harmony create a composite-voiced "me". The voices that get the most "air time" are the Achiever and the Lover. Interacting with these two powerful voices are the Languishing Lover, and the Comforter. The Demon voices: Worry, Terror and Shame are partly a microcosmic reflection of internal struggle with the patriarchal society in which I live. All these voices are mediated by each other and by the external voices of my Chorus, a group of sympatico friends. My voices, are at first borrowed, but almost immediately become mine by the age my memory develops, because of the unique nature of my individual experience of the world. My voices are a powerful force and resource; they change, shape and negotiate the nature of my existence. They are all present by the age of fourteen, if not before, and although they never cease to exist, they may mature, change mood, or become less or more vocal depending on the situation in which I find myself.

My Demon Voices: Internal Battles with the Patriarchy

My education, my culture, and the
present state of society all
conspired to convince me that
women belong to an inferior caste.
(de Beauvoir, 1958, p. 145).

My demon voices: Worry, Shame and Terror, were learned
at a very young age from direct conflict with the patriarchal
culture in which I live. I recognize these as having a
patriarchal root because they attack my self-esteem as a
woman. They attempt to shame or terrorize me as a woman, to
wither my growth as a female person. Fortunately, they seldom
stop my growth, although they impede it. There is evidence,
too, that the patriarchal element has and can sabotage my
Achiever voice by making me a "token" woman serving the
patriarchal system. When this happens I find myself getting
bored or angry because the patriarchy speaks to me in ways
that ignore my experiences as a woman. They speak in
Patriarchese. I can speak it, but it is uncomfortable to use
when dialoguing about deep phenomenon like genuine learning,
sexuality, and identity.

The Demon voices I've borrowed unconsciously at a young
age, then proceeded to construct or destruct throughout my own
experience. Worry I've borrowed from women and men around me
bowed down with the weight of surviving in a patriarchal,
functionalist system. Women try to survive in the
misogynistic atmosphere created in the system and men try to
survive in the cut-throat, do-or-die competitive atmosphere in
the system. I realize, retrospectively, that I grew up
surrounded by a fog of worry about money. My mother worried
that my father, with his grade eight education, might not be able to cope with his job, and my father worried about the responsibility of providing well for a wife and "unexpected" daughter. The whole problem was fenced in by the assumption that the father must earn the living for his family and the wife must stay home and raise the children and minister to the domestic needs. The patriarchal roles were clearly defined but their rigidity caused other solutions to be ignored. The result was a nuclear family, the waste byproduct, worry.

Shame in my life has the most direct link to the patriarchy. The Shamer voice, like an internal mini patriarch, a knight in armour, does battle with my Lover voice. This is evident in my early pedagogical schooling where the "knight" encouraged and strengthened the Achiever voice at the expense of the Lover. The Lover had a resurgence at the onset of puberty, but was often forced underground because the power of her sexuality was crippled by the Shamer, who lives in fear of female sexuality.

I have perceived this "knight" of Shame as deadly and frightening because he is supported by the vast army of patriarchal voices that dominate the world outside of the "me". Now, however, as I listen to wise women in my culture I realize he is in tarnished armour, is small and alone battling against the ancient and powerful force of my urge to be a full, complete person, recognized as such within my society. I let the Lover fight in her own way and time this onslaught of attempted humiliations directed specifically at my sexuality.
...when a woman makes efforts to intervene and fight her demon... whatever that demon may be it is one of the most worthy battles known, both archetypeally and in consensual reality. Even though she might...hit bottom...bottom is where the living roots of the psyche are...the best soil to sow and grow something new.


Terror, the non-voice, is a collision between my personal anger and outrage at the destructive aspects of the patriarchal culture around me and my fear of speaking out in such a culture. The result of the collision, Terror, is silence. For example, as a first year secondary teacher I lay awake in the night, tossing and turning with a nameless terror. When I asked myself what was terrorizing me I finally realized that it wasn't just the difficult group of students I had to teach, but the clash of fear at facing a hostile class, and anger at being totally betrayed by a patriarchal principal who promised support and then took no action whatsoever to assist me. This clash of the two emotions rendered me voiceless for days. I literally couldn't hear any coherent voices in my head, only a din of screams. I was so emotionally paralyzed I couldn't even write in my journal. I felt speechless whenever I saw the principal. I also had to contend with Shame that told me, if I was really a good teacher, I'd be able to handle it myself. Finally, my story burst with tears of rage as I collapsed inside the door of my apartment one evening when I returned from school. My mate found me in a heap, crying. He heard my story. Wisely he
said very little, just listened and rocked me. He urged me to
seek the support of a female colleague I could trust. I did
and a new Chorus member, my first in my new career, was found.
This gave me personal, intimate support to relieve the
pressure, but it did nothing to change or confront the
patriarchal principal who continued to promise support to
other women and then failed to act when needed.

At the same time these invader voices are distracting,
destructive and painful, they do, like conflict in a novel,
stimulate the plot of my life to move forward. These voices
are probably unavoidable even if the social order did not
oppress women and they possibly produce some positive results
despite their negative nature, much as an oyster produces a
pearl as a reaction to an irritating piece of grit or sand.
Nonetheless, it is the outside world that values the pearl,
not the oyster, who would have been perfectly pleased to live
without the grit or the pearl. So as a woman my extra
strength is built by layers, in reacting to the grit the
patriarchy sifts into my shell, but I would have lived a happy
oyster life without the necessity of having to build all this
extra protective strength.

My Chorus: The Voice of "Being Well" in a Patriarchal Culture

My Chorus is in evidence throughout my journals and
functions as a support network supplying information, advice,
a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on and even a kick in the
rear when I need to emerge from the cocoon of self-pity. One
of my male friends calls shooting the breeze with the guys at the pub as "attitude adjustment time". The Chorus provides most of my attitude adjustment, without fear of a hangover. They also stimulate my learning by sharing their stories. Often this validates my perceptions, a necessary reassurance in a culture that tends to portray reality as patriarchal reality, ignoring women's stories.

Recently a Chorus member and I attended a play with two female characters as the protagonists. As we left the theatre I saw a male acquaintance and after exchanging greetings he remarked that he enjoyed the play except for the second act which he described as "flat". My friend and I were actutely aware that this act had meant so much to us because it was about two women establishing a deep friendship in an alienating society. This did not seem to move, touch or interest him. We didn't even mention our point in the bustle of leaving, but we looked at each other, she and I. We didn't need to mention the countless novels read in high school or the movies we watched that dealt with male bonding. We were expected to appreciate the profoundness of this male camaraderie, yet, one twenty minute scene of female bonding and he "nods off". Our hopes were not totally dashed. At least the playwright was male.

The very look of my Chorus friend relieved my disappointment. So, the Chorus often acts as an antidote to patriarchal poisons. By its very dynamic, the Chorus creates an alternate power reality. I experience this power dynamic as a kind of energy radiating from the lived experience of my
life, shooting out the web-like structure of my personal interactions. At the same time it shoots out the web, power is being radiated by others whose power-energy shoots back along the web into my life. The direction the power-energy travels varies. Sometimes I receive power from another, sometimes I give power to another. Sometimes the power is circulated within and among the network of my inner voices with no direct external agent. However, like learning, I do not see this as passive at any time. It is dynamic. In a happy relationship the power is reciprocal. It flows back and forth with occasional, but never constant directional dominance. This applies equally to my inner microcosmic world where one voice may dominate momentarily depending on the nature of the task or action needed, but internal power, synonymous with strength, is maintained by balancing the dialogue of all my voices. This is not to say that each voice should be heard equally because some voices have more destructive energy that others, but even destruction has its place and if any destructive voices are to be calmed they have to be listened to, reflected upon and understood before they can be rendered harmless.

In my unhappy relationships power connections are blocked, withheld, or overcharged. So the unhappy connections are imbalanced. Reciprocity is impossible or extremely difficult. One person or the other poses in a one-up or one-down hierarchical role. Such is more often the case in personal-intimate relationships with men. With female relationships there is "shared with" power more often than
"power over", and thus the relationship has a better chance to keep energized, not burned connections. This is not to suggest that all women share and all men seek to dominate, but only that in my life, female friendships have a greater chance of finding the delicate balance of power sharing. When I enter the arena of patriarchally defined power dynamics, I come armed and ready to do battle. I play to win. I win, however, only in the sense that I keep my independence, my singleness. I do not "win" any connectedness or intimacy. By playing the battle game the victory is in patriarchal terms of separateness. Within Foucault's (1980) discussion of power he purports that:

Power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class. Power, if we do not take too distant a view of it, must be analysed as something which circulates, or... only functions in the form of a chain. It is never appropriated as a commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through net-like organisation... individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application (p. 98).

This discourse of power removes it from dualism of powerful and powerless, and brings power to the realm of personal interactions within the web or net-like metaphor that is more akin to women's experience of power with other women, at least the women I have encountered.

In Toward an Understanding of Language and Power,
Kramarae et al. (1984) identify two major thrusts in power theories. First, the type of theories that I would identify as akin to patriarchal patterns. These include the ideas that power is the capacity of some people to produce intended effects upon others through intentional means such as authority, manipulation, persuasion and force as well as through unintentional means. The second approach, which is associated with writers such as Rich and Gilligan, defines power "as autonomous action based on one's own beliefs and abilities not necessarily entailing domination of others" (p.11). This idea is expanded by adding that "acts of nurturance in interdependent relationship can be understood as acts of strength and power" (p.11). This second definition of power involves power from within, nurturance, interdependent relationship, and power more as a relationship than weapon.

The Patriarchy Tries to Limit Definition of Self

A woman may naturally be assertive, think well, know what she wants to achieve or compete comfortably. These qualities, far from being alien, feel like inherent expressions of who she, as a woman and not like the qualities of a masculine animus that does it "for her".

(Bolen, 1984, p. 43)

Like Gilligan (1982) and Bolen (1984) I reject the Freudian view that women are "maimed or inferior" men. I also reject the Jungian view that feminine personality is receptive, passive, nurturing and subjective and only rational
and decisive (positive "masculine" traits) or hostile and opinionated (negative "masculine" traits) when controlled by the animus (Bolen, 1984). When traditional psychology, therefore, would describe my Achiever voice as masculine, I would protest and say she is neither masculine or feminine in essence and is only feminine because I accept and incorporate her within my being and my being happens to be female. It is the measuring stick which is masculine, not my personality. The language and concepts of patriarchy do not allow or give space for personality definitions outside of, or detrimental to patriarchal interest. This is not to deny that other women may be or choose vulnerable, passive, or nurturing archetypes, it only protests that those of us who inherited or chose the independent, aggressive archetypes also deserve recognition as being women acting as women, not being masculine imitators.

By listening to the voices from the pages of my journals, the corridors of my mind, and the voices of my Chorus, I go further than Bolen and say that I am a person, a human being first and my womanness is an interwoven part of my being with no greater import than any other part of my being—for me. Womanness is an interwoven part of my tapestry of being. When I act aggressively, competitively, fiercely, I am not imitating masculinity or bringing out my animus or masculine side, but I am not being feminine either. Personality traits are neutrally available to any person. It is our society that makes certain traits desirable for men or women according to what the dominant ideology wishes to recreate. I am being an
aggressive person, a competitive person, or a fierce person, not an aggressive woman acting like a man or a female archetype that is not available for men.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) writes of the Wild Woman archetype as being at the heart of psychology, the study of the soul. She says:

She is all that is of instinct, of the worlds both seen and hidden—she is the basis. We each receive from her a glowing cell which contains all the instincts and knowings needed for our lives.

She is the Life/Death/Life force, she is the incubator. She is intuition, she is far-seer, she is deep listener, she is loyal heart...she is ideas, feelings, urges and memory...She is the source, the light the night, the dark and daybreak. She is the smell of good mud and the back leg of a fox. The birds which tell us secrets belong to her. She is the voice that says, "This way, this way".

(Estes, 1992, p. 13)

There is nothing insipid or passive in Estes' account of the Wild Woman or La Loba. She is the epitome of unrestricted femininity. Although the Wild Woman may in her cyclic manner be nurturing and care-giving, she is also clever, tenacious and fierce. To me, Wild Woman is woman as she could be without the coercive force of the patriarchy, who views "wild", especially in relation to women, as a derogative concept meaning, out of control (Estes, 1991, p. 8). Estes, however, is still creating a dichotomy that suggests that
there is an essence, a fixed property that is distinctly
temale or male (essentialism). La Loba, the Wild Woman, is a
gendered archetype portrayed by Estes as a primal force. Her
La Loba is far more appealing than the present day
patriarchally negotiated image of woman as "should-be-super-
woman" (wife, friend, lover, daughter, mother, care-giver,
career person - and perfect at balancing them all), but it is
still a feminine archetype rather than an archetype available
to both sexes.

The reason I feel coerced into identifying myself so
strongly with and for women is the tremendous pressure, not
from within the composite-voiced "me" where being a woman is a
given like having grey eyes, but pressure from the outside
"otherness" of a world defined by masculine norms. Thus
Bolen's assertion that a fierce or competitive woman is highly
possible, not defective or contradictory, is one step in
refuting the frustrating "male's eye" view. However, such a
definition is problematic too, for to refute the male as norm
world view, I, like Bolen, am tempted to create a female
counter-cultural view separate, different and distinct from
the male. This contributes to the very dualism that the
patriarchy uses to separate, distance and stereotype the roles
of the sexes in my society. It seems sadly ironic that to
combat the patriarchy's dominance I feel forced into the
essentialist position, even when I seriously doubt its
validity. The feeling of difference of essence is in itself a
creation of patriarchal dominance. I would like to be seen as
a person first, not a woman person and this is not often the
case in my culture, even with other women or within myself. I still divide my voices into "me" (female) and "other" (invader male). I exist in a world that lauds essentialism, where many women would hold that woman is born not made and that "the natural is repressed by the social" (Fuss, 1989, p. 3). My experience has been that "the natural is produced by the social" (Fuss, 1989, p. 3). In my journals, especially the first five, this may be why so much learning energy is taken with describing and analyzing heterosexual relationships, because it is here that the "me", "other" divisions are so poignantly enacted and created and that the chance to break the "viva la difference" illusions are most profound. So many of my journals struggle with sexual/power relationships. Such struggles record for me the battle with meaning, role or definition produced by patriarchy. Perhaps if "essence" could be viewed as fluid and changeable I could be more comfortable with essentialism; otherwise, I have to be constructivist in my leanings, despite my tendency to waver.

LEARNING IMPLICATIONS

Re-Learning: Finding the Pieces and Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again

All genuine learning is the unlearning of bullshit.

(Colaizzi, 1978, p. 133).

Once into puberty I emerged from the naivety of dependence within a pedagogic system of learning. I realized
that my experience was just as important as that of the "expert", the teacher; that my learning was not just a matter of amassing subject matter content to pass exams; and that the patriarchal role messages delivered by the standardized curriculum were uncomfortable - they didn't fit. On facing adulthood, I knew my external life was fractured into compartmentalized, conflicting ideologies. I was the good girl in the classroom, the cynical sophisticate in the school hallways, the bad teenager on the weekends. So as I launched into adulthood I had the task of putting myself back together again like Humpty Dumpty, but without the help of the "King's men", who helped fracture me in the first place. Much like Julie says in her found poem, "I've learned/now I re-learn."

Spheres of Learning in my Life and the Life of my Chorus

Forced and Chosen Learning Environments

Pardon my Achiever, but she can't resist organizing findings into categories. Reviewing the first three chapters of this thesis, two large categories emerge: forced and chosen learning environments.

My own learning has been both forced and chosen. The forced environments are most often created by crisis, especially reproductive crisis. This is echoed by at least three of my seven interviewed Chorus members. These learning crises are traumatic events that forever change our view of ourselves and our society. They yield strength, but the price
is tremendous grief, grief that is particularly agonizing because most of these traumas are unique to women and are played out in a culture whose general tone is misogynistic, thus compounding the pain that might be far more easily absorbed in a culture that values and cares about women.

Of the chosen learning environments, the most common choice for me is with and through female friendships. My Chorus seems to concur.

**Learning Surprises: "WOW" Learning**

Cognitive wheels spin round and round covering ground I've covered before not until I skid sideways bum

P
a meridian
do
I experience
do I know existentially what I've said a million times before what I've lip-service known Now, accident stunned I know I know.

Genuine learning can mean understanding at a deeper level something espoused before at a superficial, cognitive level. A platitude mouthed before takes on full significance, sometimes as a complete surprise. "Wow" learning can be an unpleasant shock, such as when Julie realized cognitively and emotionally that her mother was not perfect; a pleasant surprise, such as when Jennifer is amazed at the wonders of modern robotics; or a bodily learning surprise or elation as
when Claire relates that feeling of "getting it" when skiing.

It is probably this element of surprise that makes many institutions of formal education uneasy because they cannot engineer such learning, and even when they think they have, the learner may have learned something totally different than the institute had intended. Genuine learning can't be manipulated, only encouraged.

As a teacher the most essential quality is trust - trust in the self, trust in the "students", trust in the process of learning itself. Since genuine learning cannot be predicted, it happens for different people at different times in different ways and at different rates, then teaching becomes an act of faith. The most I can do as a teacher is to create an environment conducive to learning for everyone, including the teacher.

Gradual Learning

"Making" Up My Own Mind: Reflective or Retrospective Learning

leave me alone,
get off my case
give me a break
get outta my face
time to
make
yes, literally "make"
my own mind

As May Sarton (1973) says in one of her journals,
"...What is strange--that friends, even passionate love are not my real life unless there is time alone in which to
explore and to discover what is happening or has happened" (Sarton, 1973, p. 11). This time to think is clearly mentioned by many of my Chorus. It is not, however, easy for many women to find time alone, especially women who have roles as care-givers, career-makers and domestic workers all at the same time. Somehow, with only subconscious instinct I steered away from marriage and avoided motherhood. I have time for me, and if I manage to shake the voice of Shame that tries to scream that I'm self-centered (a great crime for women in the patriarchy), I can and do have time for reflective learning which allows long term patterns to emerge, questions to be posed, learned processes to be re-examined, and core beliefs to be found under the rubble of amassed information. It gives me time to make up my own mind, confer with my voices. So genuine learning, as opposed to information accumulation, requires time, especially time alone to dialogue within oneself during the learning process.

Ironically, recent trends in teacher education encourage reflective teaching/learning for teachers. Yet, teachers are still asked to function in a system that leaves little or no time for reflective thought. The competent teachers will only be burdened with guilt that they aren't doing what they "should" be doing. But, how can they in a system that still expects them to be information givers in a world that is accumulating information at an amazing rate?
Listening to Learn

Battling to speak
to be heard
understood
in a place
where women's silence is
considered golden
I speak and speak
battle and battle
yet to win
is to defeat myself
for I learn too by listening
resting from throwing words at each other
so to gain the floor
I gain the ceiling too
that lid, that limits the ideas
that glass ceiling
through which I cannot hear the voices
of women on the outside
because in the battling to be heard
by men on the inside
I do not hear.

Transformative dialoguing, that is dialoguing which
engenders learning, is cyclic, not linear; dynamic not
passive; balanced not dominated. This means that the
transformative dialoguing that engenders learning for me is
more likely to occur in situations where there is a circle or
exchange of ideas, feelings and power between or among the
participants of the dialogue. The exchange is active for all
participants and is seldom dominated for long by one person.
Such dialoguing occurs rarely in life. The tendency for me is
to adopt a competitive dialogic structure, particularly
favored by my Achiever. This style has been traditionally
favored in academia, at least for men, and encourages debate
and logical argumentation. As a good student, I learned this
style. However it has served me, it has not invited learning
into the dialogue because the tendency is to concentrate on
the "opponent's" words so as to dispute them, find the flaw in his or her argument and counter-attack with a superior argument. The competition for talk time is intense, and although the whole procedure is exhilarating for me, and I can discover what I think by experiencing what I say, I realize it doesn't promote learning well, because it doesn't promote listening well to anyone other than myself. I may listen to my opponent, but only to refute, not to understand empathically. Now I can learn from listening to myself, but certainly learning from and with others is essential too. Perhaps I am recognizing what Deborah Tannen (1990) would term my "high involvement" conversation style characterized by fast paced dialogue, latchings (no pauses between turns) and overlapping and interrupting other speakers. Other high involvement speakers perceive this as enthusiastic talking. However, if others in the conversation are high considerateness speakers who prefer longer pauses between turns, slower pacing and no interrupting, then the high involvement speaker can be perceived as being dominating when that was not her intention at all. The apparent dominating is accepted by both men and women when men are doing it, but looked upon with more disfavor when women are doing it. So it is no wonder that I received the nickname "motor-mouth" when I was nineteen from a male "friend". The title hurt. I see now that it punished me for my talk style because I was a woman. If a male had exhibited the same talk style the label "motor-mouth" would not have been used. My reaction to this kind of labelling made me all the more determined to keep talking, not
to give in to the pressure of the patriarchy to silence me. The reason I wish to be flexible enough now to pick up high considerateness style is not because I wish to succumb to patriarchal pressure to be a nice, quiet female or because I think I am not considerate, but because I realize the high considerateness style allows me to hear more from those who are most likely to have been silenced and need dialogic "space" to bring out their own stories. Adopting high considerateness style allows me more listening and thus more reflective time built into the conversation itself and it allows the silenced more opportunity to speak.

So, personally I want to listen more to women and men who have valuable stories to share; andragogically, I want to engage in self-directed learning that explores concepts about active listening; and politically I want to expose that women who have high involvement style are mocked by the patriarchy and silenced, or, on being mocked, fight back by talking more, often ironically and sadly using this "fighting" style of talk to silence other women. It is as if by fighting the patriarchy we adopt a style that also silences the very women we wish, as feminists, to encourage to speak. It is possible that in becoming ardent, informed feminists we can become elitist and alienate women we say we wish to support. Certainly Gardner et al. (1989) make such a case in discussing teaching a feminist university class. In trying to encourage non-hierarchical classroom structure, she took a more passive role to de-emphasize the teacher-as-leader patriarchal mode. But, in doing this she admits, she helped set the stage for
the following classroom dynamic:

The feminist majority, or those students with a strong background in feminism, began to use their knowledge as a source of power. As a group they were articulate and dominated the class discussions. They often talked at rather than with the other students, and as a consequence, effectively silenced the nonfeminist minority...The students used differences in knowledge to create a distinct hierarchy...The feminist majority defined the class as their class and soon became the new caste of "men", while the remaining "women" sat passively, accepting their subjugation.

(Gardner et al. 1989, p. 65)

Opposing the patriarchal system is difficult and dangerous. There are many reasons why this is so. One is that we have internalized many of its lessons, such as: knowledge is a power weapon or expertise naturally creates hierarchy. Thus patriarchal culture can use women to keep other women in silence.

TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

"Pies" Not "Ladders" of Learning

in the cafe
at the gym
on the phone
between meetings
during bedtime stories
over the copier
under the covers
through the grapevine
beneath the shadow of the pyramid
of academia
flourishes the
informal
accidental
incidental
learning of the school of hard knocks
without diplomas or degrees
valuable
available
non-prestigious learning
eclipsed by the shadow of
that "venerable" old grandfather
Sir "higher" education.

Education is represented in my culture as a ladder to be climbed from kindergarten, ever upward to "higher" education. I see my education not as a hierarchical ladder but as a pie, each slice of which is as valuable as any other slice. The crisis reproductive learning slice is as crucial as the Masters thesis learning slice.

Although I do not regret my formal education, I am saddened by the lack of credibility given to informal, non-formal and accidental learning in my culture. Especially so because such manners of learning are accessible to all people, regardless of gender, class or race. When our society values certificates of "higher" learning, it is sending the message that other forms of learning are "lower" or not as creditable. Not only does the education institute imply this, but the message is internalized by many learners. Brookfield (1984) mentions "the self-deprecation of self-directed learning by the learners themselves" (p. 68). Educational institutes with the power to validate learning as creditable, are run largely by and for men's needs and by implication leave other forms of learning which are more likely to favor women, as "lower"
forms of learning. Women's coffee clatches, bridge clubs, gossip sessions, consciousness raising groups and even non-formal courses are at best labelled as nice or frivolous leisure time pursuits and at worst mocked, denigrated or even forbidden. Yet throughout these and many other activities women experience some of their most profound learning. My Chorus expresses that through friendship, most often, though not exclusively, female friendship, they have experienced some of their most influential learning experiences. In fact, Carlson (1980) suggests that three-quarters of all adult learning is unplanned and unorganized, incidental learning. It occurs in everyday life.

To give credibility to forms of learning other than the "formal", we don't need more courses, educational buildings, certificate programs and training in the business place. We need respect for non-competitive, non-hierarchical, non-marked ways of facilitating learning. At one time Canada was a place that fostered such a clime. The Antigonish movement in 1928 "proved so successful...that it gained international fame" (Selman, 1982). The Canadian Broadcasting Company's Citizens' Forum, the Women's Institute in Stoney Creek, Ontario in 1897, or the Caisse Populaire in Quebec in 1900 are all testimonials to Canada's andragogical life-long learning innovations.

Lately, I was elated to see a brochure announcing an upcoming "learning circle" about violence in our society. It invited small informal groups of friends who wished to meet once a week and respond to a wide variety of written and media materials. Bravo! Non-formal learning with its
accessibility, voluntary nature, and loosely structured format is seeking a come-back.

By recognizing people's learning stories we give people esteem and nowhere can this have more effect than in the realm of women's unique learning experiences such as their mothering, reproductive and sexual learning. My Chorus and myself indicate the struggles and loss that have characterized our learning via our reproductive life. Nowhere in my formal education has this been woven into the fabric of the classroom, nor have experiences of motherhood. Yes, they pop up in this novel, or that statistic, but seldom are they explored, discussed, or given any central focus and when a course is given it is often separated from the mainstream or as Mary O'Brien coined, "malestream" (Weiler, 1988, p. 58) education into women's studies courses where women participate and men ignore or ridicule. When the graduate course, Women in Education, was offered on the University of British Columbia campus in the summer of 1993, only one of the fourteen class members was male and he expressed frustration about dealing with other men who thought it a waste of time to take such a course, or stared in puzzled amazement at why he'd even bother enrolling.

So a dilemma emerges. Courses that focus on women's experiences, would they be separate from or integrated into traditional courses? Either way it has become brutally clear that most men do not wish to waste their time on women's uniquely female experiences of learning and if exposed even to facts of women's oppression tend to become extremely
defensive. Linda Briskin (1990) writes:

Male students often complain that my first-year course on Women and society is anti-male. This has puzzled me because I present a systematic analysis of gender discrimination that focuses, only in a very secondary way on the individual actions of men. In pursuing this issue, what became clear was that a statement like "Women earn 65 per cent of what men earn" was perceived as a criticism of men, an anti-male statement. Simply to reveal the gendered character of the social order is to threaten it! (p. 16).

Focusing Achievement Beyond the Status Quo

Education, like work, appears to be an achievement oriented activity...

(Cross, 1985 p. 116).

The personal struggles I have experienced as a "tearner" give witness to the need to balance the Achiever voice with other healthy developing internal voices of the person. Education so encourages the Achiever voice that it can topple the development of the composite voice which relies on inner voice conferencing. In so doing, the failure-fearing, competitive, insensitive ruthless traits of a hierarchical culture are reinforced, to the detriment of other voices. This can unbalance me as a person if I already have an Achiever orientation. If I do not, it could imply that I am unworthy or useless. Many students, I fear, get this message. As a teacher I have too often given the message - successful achievement in terms of the dominant culture is the goal. If,
as a teacher I believe such a message then I become a part of educational institutes that follow change, but do not create change. Definitions of learning often revolve around the word "change": "change in behaviour" (Berelson and Steiner, 1964); "progress of gaining or changing insights..." (Bigge, 1976); "...behaviour in the broad sense is originate or changed..." or "a change in human disposition or capability which persists over time" (Gagne, 1977). If learning involves change, then teaching inevitably must instigate, engender, coax, expose or provoke change. When I experienced teaching "moments of being" that was what I was doing. When I did not, I was promoting the status quo (which is not always, of course, inadequate). We need to do more than encourage achievements in maintenance learning "acquisition of fixed outlook, methods and rules for dealing with known and recurring situations" (Pipke, 1980 p. 18), we need in the tradition of Bateson (1990) to encourage achievement in improvisational life long learning, coupled with anticipatory learning's proactive position "promotes the active creation of alternatives" (Pipke, 1980, p. 19).

Teachers as "Tearners"

The teacher exposes his or her own feelings and contributes resources as a colearner in the spirit of mutual enquiry.

(Knowles, 1980 p. 5).

Learning is far more fundamental than teaching. It is experienced by everyone. Often in the vast majority of adult
learning the "teacher" is the learner herself, what is commonly called a self-directed learner. The self-directed learner may seek a professional "teacher" to stimulate or enhance learning, but mature learners realize that learning and teaching are partly to fully the responsibility of the learner. The learner either decides what she wants to learn, when, where and often how and organizes her own "programs", goals and evaluation; or the learner takes responsibility for reflecting upon, organizing, analyzing and acting upon accidental or incidental learning.

The separation of learning and teaching creates a dualism that is not conducive to exploring the dynamics of the learning-teaching relationship. Such a separation suggests a division rather than an overlap of learning and teaching, which are, in my reality, cyclically connected. At one time in my own development I subconsciously chose teaching as a career goal because it was presented as one of the choices for "good girl" careers (along with nursing or secretarial work), because my mother was once a teacher, and that given the choice, I'd prefer teaching because the teacher had some power. By thirteen or fourteen I gradually became aware that it wasn't as easy as that; nonetheless, considering the other choices where women served male "superiors" I felt being in charge of children in my own classroom would suit me far better. By fourteen, my female drama teacher mentor, introduced me to the joy of facilitating the learning of others and to learning myself through teaching.

Whenever I leave or change my professional teaching
situations it is because I have longed for genuine learning to augment information acquisition. This makes me suspect that society trains teachers to be "teachers" not "tearners". So in true life-long learning style, I've had to struggle through the depression that occurs with learning stagnation and realize that I must learn, genuinely learn, if I am to teach well. This genuine learning will give me information, but will not be just information amassing; it will significantly change the manner in which I perceive myself and my environment; though it may be "wow" or surprise in effect as well as gradual or reflective, it will reach the core of my life and being as a whole person; it will be fostered by the crisis of life and enriched by the validation, challenges and insights of my Chorus; it will involve risk; it will be the unlearning of patriarchal bullshit and the relearning of who "I" am; it will never be completed but always in an ongoing process of becoming; and despite the fact it will be rare, as opposed to acquisition of information, it will be sought with a constant, ongoing motivation that as my contributing Chorus of women friends says:

reveals
encounters
owns
challenges
links
jumps
transports
dialogues

me onward, downward, and inward
to the "me" inside the socially constructed "me"
the "me" who owns my learner
who reveals me as a teacher
who is my "tearner."
The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something.

(Van Manen, 1990, p. 77).

To realize this definition of phenomenology is to grab at butterflies; either the intriguingly beautiful creatures escape you, or if you do catch them you crush them or imprison them in a jar outside of the context of their environment. The only alternative is to follow them and glimpse their lives now and again, here and there in their natural setting. So it is with meaning, even within one's own life. Meaning is fleeting, not static; easily distorted when read outside of its context, and if truly understood, occurs in moments of vision then is gone. I cannot accept that "essence" is forever fixed. Like Diana Fuss (1989), I suspect it may be fluid, "...it may be time to ask whether essences can change..." (p.6). It is this possibility that resonates for me at the close of this thesis.

At first the interpretive narrative that forms this thesis unfolded with a power of its own. I felt it took over, but I realize that what I had learned about qualitative research was functioning beneath the creative thrust of the
thesis. Rather than triangulation I had adopted what Matheson (1988, p. 17) suggests is "holistic understanding" of the situation to build "plausible explanations about the phenomenon being studied". I had used an ongoing journal while investigating my past journals, and it provided "a record of insights gained" and a chance to keep "reflecting on previous reflections" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 73), and I had, through my thesis committee and my Chorus, kept ongoing "member checks - taking...interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results were plausible" (Merriam, 1988, p. 169). As to my "bias" I hope it is presented in enough context that the reader can sift for her or himself what resonates as true.

Generalization I believe comes much as Cronbach (1975) suggests as a "working hypothesis not a conclusion" (p. 124-25). I hope someone else runs after the butterflies I've chased here - relating them to his or her own life, or picks up threads about self, voice, patriarchy, essence or teaming that I have missed. For as I hope I have enriched my readers' understanding of their own reality as a learner, so I invite the readers to explore their own rich experience of life-long learning.
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