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Teachers Writing About Themselves

by

Ann Victoria Dean



**A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations
at Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia**

June 1992



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ISBN 0-315-80241-3

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Illustrations

My daughter Jersua drew the illustrations which accompany "Teacher Under My Skin". I did not tell her what to draw; I simply read her my story and she created the pictures from her imagination.

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Abstract

This thesis, "Teachers Writing About Themselves" is about clear writing, the art of autobiography, and the misuse of autobiography in educational research. It is an account of my schooling as pupil and teacher, and is presented as educational research that deals with personal testimony and the unregarded in life, the only evidences relevant to fresh inquiry. It is written in plain English.

In it, I raise the following questions: What is clear language? What is the purpose of clear language? Why do most educational researchers not write in clear language? What is the relationship between autobiography and knowledge?

I argue against the use of jargon by educators and researchers and I attack the use of pseudo-scientific language by educators, whom, I believe, in their zeal to legitimate and to validate their research, knowingly or unknowingly, participate in the objectification and control of their research subjects.

This thesis is about memory, love and discovery. I explore the relationship between passion, learning and self-knowledge. Poetry is put forward as the clearest form of writing and the most difficult to comprehend and I argue that those who are not poets end up writing about writing because they can't write, and end up writing about people writing about themselves because they don't understand themselves.

The purpose of clear language is to reveal mystery. No thesis can ever be a poem. No poet would ever waste time writing a thesis.

Acknowledgements

I give my heartfelt thanks:

To Anthony -- who invited me to enter into a five year dialogue with him, which at times felt like participating in an ancestral conversation of educated minds; who showed me the difference between a true scholar and a careless one; and who offered friendship.

To Edgar -- who has taught me the true meaning and value of sincerity; who always makes me feel welcome in Hubbards; and who introduced me to **Sophie**, his canine queenly consort, of whom I have also become very fond.

To Harold -- who patiently encouraged my thinking and who shared his deep interest in phenomenology.

To Steve -- who brought music into my life again; whose friendship I greatly value; and who typed this thesis.

To Jerusa -- my daughter, who wondered, for the duration of time it took for me to write this thesis, if she did, indeed, have a mother. Thank you, Jerusa for forfeiting the time we might have spent together and for understanding. I also love your drawings.

To Patricia -- my mother, who, even in troubled times, never gave up believing in her daughter.

To Lawrence -- my father, whose love of poetry passed on to me during my childhood and whose Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (Unabridged) left me after he died, made all the difference to this thesis.

To Gloria -- my Calico cat and my muse; who has kept me company by making her favourite place to sleep the centre of my desk, amidst piles of papers, books and coffee cups. I found it comforting to feel her soft feline presence when she'd lie, curled in a circle, inches away from me, blissfully asleep, perhaps dreaming, with her head dropped back, her little pink tongue fluttering in and out, between two rows of sharp, tiny, white teeth.

The Nature of Autobiography

Autobiography is about a sense of self. People are defined by their institutions and cultural environs and limited by those bounds... especially by the kind of language they use. How do they escape? By writing in clear language and dealing with original ideas. This is mistaken for simple-mindedness and naivety. It is, in fact, simply effective writing.

This thesis follows my own life from beginning schooling to the final year as a Ph.D. student at Dalhousie University. It is written in clear language because I argue that the use of academic jargon presently proliferating in the specialized field of autobiographical research into teachers' narratives is inappropriate.

I contend it is inappropriate because true autobiography of any kind, like the writing of poetry, refers indirectly to the deepest strivings of the human spirit. Virginia Woolf (1976) writes in A Sketch of the Past:

It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending the splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive ... When I think of the early morning in bed I also hear the caw of rooks falling from a great

height. The sounds seems to fall through an elastic, gummy air; which holds it up; which prevents it from being sharp and distinct...

(pp. 64-66)

Such strivings cannot be captured by the artificial devices of academic discourse. Let me give a few examples of the misuse of language.

Butt, Raymond and Yamagishi (1988), who posit autobiography as a source of substance, process and formation and mode of educational inquiry, conceptualize teachers' knowledge as *autobiographic praxis* and the method of studying teachers' knowledge *autobiographical praxeology*. Richard Butt describes the "autobiographical course" as an approach to "collaborative research" in which the "teachers' perspective, interpretation, language and metaphors mature and prevail" in a paper entitled "An Integrative Function For Teachers' Biographies" (1987, p. 19). This clumsiness with words leads to a certain clumsiness in thinking.

The study of teachers who write their autobiographies, according to Butt, requires a rationale; he portrays autobiography in the graduate classroom as the "activities related to autobiographical inquiry ... framed within graduate course work in education to serve, in an integrated and synergistic way, the multiple functions of teaching, learning self-initiated professional development and research for both students and instructor" (p.20).

What is the experience of writing an autobiography like for teachers? Butt tells us

... the research aspect of the autobiographical course from

the point of view of the teachers is just beginning. One hopes that the skills and attitudes of thinking and inquiry developed during the course for reflection and reconstruction of experience as well as construction of hypotheses for the future will become part of teachers' professional repertoire and disposition. The substantive research, however, which has commenced during the course can be pursued in a more formal way in order to discern the nature, sources, an evolution of the practical knowledge of individual teachers and commonalities that exist among teachers. Danielle Raymond and I have collaborated with a number of teachers to pursue autobiographical research further. The process of elaboration of teachers' autobiographies through the course is considered as *Phase I* of the research process . . . It is a teacher-based activity giving rise to preliminary autobiographical data, analysis, and interpretations. *Phase II* of the process could be called the collaborative phase whereby individual teachers work with myself and Danielle Raymond to try to elucidate a further expression and understanding of the teachers' personal practical knowledge and how it was acquired.

(pp.19-20)

What comes out of teachers writing autobiographically? Teachers are "energized" and experience a "renewed commitment through the personal and collective empowerment generated by the autobiographical exercise. A self-guided analysis of the data revealed by autobiography enables students to express and unearth their feelings with respect to teaching, and to deal with them explicitly (cathartic function) and to give conscious form and explicit structure to their experience, where before, the daily routines, stresses and immersion in teaching had submerged the sense of their experience. This form-giving is enabled by and, in cyclic fashion, enables the discourse and communication among teachers about

their practice, serving the cognitive function" (Butt, 1987, p.2). I shall argue that the use of these pseudo-scientific terms betrays a deep misconception of autobiography.

I have heard it said by educational researchers (Lyttle, 1992; Neilsen, 1991) that when they write research proposals and reports of their research "findings" they are required to imitate the language of science in order to convince those who fund educational research that the research is "authentic inquiry". Researchers must clarify their "objectives", position their work historically in a "theoretical framework", describe their method of "data collection" in step-by-step "procedures", define their method of "data analysis" and demonstrate, at least on paper, the potential "outcomes" of their research. In this culture, to become eligible for funding, it is necessary for educational researchers to defend the "validity" of their research by making their message look like science.

An example of a recent educational research proposal, written up in pseudo-scientific language to satisfy those who "review" and fund research, was written by Andy Manning and Allan Neilsen (1991). Their research is based on their interest in "narrative inquiry" (Butt, 1990; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1983; Schubert and Ayers, 1991); they employ "life-history and critical autobiography to help us better understand the nature of personal practical knowledge and its relationship to our current beliefs and classroom practices" (p.4).

For their study, entitled "Teacher As Informant: Examining Dilemmas in Teaching", they intend to collect and to examine the "anecdotes, photographs, journals and transcribed interviews" of six

teachers to "produce a body of instances of dilemmas, justificatory statements and patterns of meaning making" which will be "recorded in a data base for analysis" (p.5).

Dilemmas are examined through a process of "dilemma analysis"; justificatory statements are searched "for patterns of variability -- differences in either content or form of accounts and for consistency -- features shared by the accounts. These patterns will be used to explain the function and consequences of the discourse"; patterns of meaning making are searched for "unifying patterns" described by Connelly and Clandinin (1988) which include: "metaphors; maxims; images; rhythms; principles; and themes" (pp.5-6).

Manning and Neilsen anticipate that this "initial coding and analysis should lead to further analysis; for example, the coding and analysis of the instances of justification should reveal other functions and consequences of the discourse collected" (p.6). The study is an attempt, they tell us, at a theoretical level to "help to expand our understanding of the ways in which personal practical knowledge influences professional practice ... and to understand the role that personal practical knowledge plays in creating, sustaining and resolving dilemmas of professional practice" (p.6).

They hope to "add to the body of knowledge that shows the subtle way in which language orders our perception of the world and is used to maintain constancy in that world." They tell us that this knowledge "will help illuminate the link between linguistic function with social role" and

... at the level of practice, it is hoped that the study will be

a vehicle to help teachers see and deal with the contradictions inherent in their work. It is a goal of the study to have the teacher informants reflect on and write about what they learn through participating in this inquiry project. These texts should make a valuable contribution to the professional literature on reflective teaching.

(p.6)

Why has it become unacceptable for educational researchers to write in ways that clearly communicate original ideas? Why do so many waste their lives writing educational jargon that is potentially hurtful to people?

Unfortunately new members of faculties of education are taught the insidious "publish or perish" thinking and forced to "produce" soon and abundantly so as to "get on the tenure track". Clarity and brevity are antithetical to the required "production" of publishable research that is expected of them.

Jacques Barzun (1991) in his essay "Scholarship at Gunpoint" insists "the present intolerable (and immoral) pressure on the young teacher has "produced" only an appalling amount of pointless papers -- junk research, to go with junk mail and junk bonds ..." for "what happens now is that a scrap of new information -- not knowledge -- is presented inside a rehash of the well-known to form a 10-page paper. That operation, repeated without end," Barzun observes, "accounts for the plethora of journals and books that crowd the library shelves at great expense. What else could be expected? How is it possible to *require* the discovery of truth?" (p.164).

Barzun describes such attempts at research as an "intramural game"

academics play for "points" that "earn coterie repute and raise in salary". For Barzun, scholarship in the nineties is

mediocre in language, in thought, and in aim -- the last, obviously, since it is for advancement, not discovery. The language is usually jargon, for specialism in imitation of science has made the non-sciences develop terminologies that permit the writer to sound deep when he is only wordy. There may even be an idea in the verbiage, but its value is lost in the affectation, which in turns suggests that research is not for the public increase of knowledge ...

(p.165)

If researchers feel bound to write in the currently acceptable jargon of educational research, they will be tempted to use the same empty language in reports, essays, books reviews and academic conference papers, and eventually they may expect their students to write the same drivel.

In my opinion, William Schubert's (1991) work in "teacher lore" is another example of the misuse of narrative knowledge and autobiography in educational research. The language of teacher lore is confusing (at times it seems straightforward and at other times it is weighted down by pseudo-scientific jargon) and the thinking behind teacher lore is politically naive. We need to take a long, hard look at "the politics of educational research when curriculum theorists, teacher educators and researchers work with the narratives of teachers", suggests Madeleine R. Grumet (1987), "for we too have been teachers and our fascination with the life of schools where we no longer teach, with the challenges and burdens that we no longer bear, is suspect. Whose stories

are we studying? Whose experiences are we interpreting?" (p.323).

Schubert defines teacher lore as "the study of the knowledge, ideas, perspectives and understandings of teachers ... an inquiry into the beliefs, values and images that guide teachers' work" (p.206). He has chosen the word *lore* because it specifically delineates that knowledge which has "guiding power" in teachers' lives and work.

To get at the sources of teacher lore, Schubert asks teachers "to tell their stories and reveal their understandings -- their personally created, experiential knowledge bases" (p.211). Teacher lore is educational inquiry that "engages collaborative efforts of teachers, scholars, and interested others to interpret praxis in ways that would not be possible without serious dialogue, conversation and sharing" (p.223).

The central purpose of the "Teacher Lore Project" at the University of Illinois at Chicago is "to understand the phenomena of teaching and curriculum" by entering "into the reflective conversations of teachers, to grasp something of what the transactions of their teaching experience have done for them, and to learn how their outlooks are being modified" (p.216). Five dissertations and two research studies have grown out of this "collaborative" style teacher research which portrays "teachers' narratives and interpretations of these narratives" (p.220).

One of the most problematic studies of teacher lore, in my opinion, is the work of a follower of Schubert, Judith Ponitelli, a consultant and researcher with the Foundation for Excellence in Teaching in Chicago. She has studied "both teachers who have received special awards for excellence and those who are considered at-risk for various reasons" (Schubert, p.221). Although Schubert believes "that

such a study affords a productive opportunity for contrast, and emphasis on at-risk teachers adds a new dimension to teacher lore" (p.221), I wonder what happens when you treat people this way?

First, you convince the teachers that you value all their stories for their intrinsic worth; second, you pit one set of teacher stories -- those written by "teachers of excellence" against the other set of teacher stories -- those written by "teachers at-risk", thus you treat both groups of teachers as objects and the important questions about the ideology of "teacher lore" may never get asked.

One of the unarticulated assumptions is that "at-risk" teachers will be able to "improve" themselves professionally and subjectively, through understanding how their lives differ from the lives of teachers who "fit" the criteria for "excellence". The taken-for-granted assumptions of the criteria are never scrutinized as long as the stories of "individual" teachers are the main issue. Through this insidious process, "teacher lore" may be used to perpetuate the ideologies of school culture that support and maintain the status quo thinking of the dominant culture.

Schubert touches lightly on "the politics of teacher lore" when he speaks of the "embeddedness" of the lives of educational researchers in their own work; he admits that "through interaction with their [teachers'] stories our own [researchers'] stories were more fully revealed to us (p.223).

In my opinion, this is not enough. Questions that Schubert does not ask are: Do researchers assume there will be congruence between their narratives and the narratives of teachers? What do they do if there isn't? What happens to the teacher stories that do not get told because

they might not "fit" the dominant scripts? Of what value to teachers are the stories they tell in "collaboration" with researchers -- stories that serve the interests of researchers such as William Schubert, who seek to understand the "transactions" of teaching and how teacher "outlooks are modified"? Why is the *lore* of educational researchers so rarely heard? In short, the script has been written beforehand, and so no true conversation, "dialogue", sharing or "collaboration" is possible.

D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (1988) who study the "personal-practical knowledge" of teachers in an attempt "to understand the ways in which teachers know their classrooms" (p.269) write extensively about the role of the "collaborative" teacher-researcher.

Although one of the stated goals of their ongoing study of the "personal-practical knowledge" of teachers is their attempt "to give an account of their [teachers'] knowledge as embedded within the culture and traditions of schooling" (p.269), Clandinin and Connelly disavow a critical stance. They say they have no specific curricular reforms in mind nor do they intend to "judge other practitioner's work" (p.271).

So influential has the work of Clandinin and Connelly become that the phrase "personal-practical knowledge" and the word "collaborative" have become buzz words. The critic, John Willinsky, shares some of my misgivings about this. Willinsky (1989) points out that Clandinin and Connelly have missed "the opportunity to deal critically with the subject" [personal-practical knowledge of teachers] and suggests that as researchers they should "examine the seeming transparency of their own representations and query what they would construct out of people (Clifford and Marcus, 1986)" through a process of self-examination in

which they would ask "to what degree the represented is invented, the decoded inevitably recoded" (pp.253-254). He suggests: "The process might begin with the construction and representation of the collaborative act between researcher and subject, before moving on to the making of individuals in the act of teaching and the narrative unity found within those lives (p.254).

John Willinsky's careful analysis reveals that although Clandinin and Connelly seem to intend an examination of "the personal histories of participants embedded within the social history of schools and schooling" (Connelly and Clandinin, 1986, p.296), they avoid revealing how the "individual" is "constructed with an ideology that determines the subject, as it sets the terms in which we would talk about ourselves as men and women, teachers and researchers" (p.258).

This absence of the social context in the work of the "personal practical knowledge" of teachers, bothers Willinsky, and he also expresses concern "that the research on personal practical knowledge risks becoming more *therapeutic* [my italics] and reassuring than diagnostic and critical" (p.263). I would go further than Willinsky. I would say it is now seen as therapeutic. It has been accepted, but it should not have been. It is immoral. Let me give an example.

The potential of the "therapeutic" use of narrative knowledge and autobiography in education came up at The 1991 Bergamo Conference of Curriculum Theorizing, sparked by Fred Dockerill's (1991) research paper, "Journal Writing: A Legitimate Educational Process or Voyeurism?"

Dockerill began by explaining the broad aim of the course he

taught in personal development for teachers which was "to enable students to identify real and potential influences on themselves as persons and as educators." The course was based on teachers keeping daily journals, writing autobiographies and sharing excerpts from their "reflective" writing in class.

Dockerill introduced us to "Wendy" [fictitious name], his student, through her reflective writing. Wendy "had been teaching for 22 years, was 49, divorced with four adult children and teaching at a rural junior high school. Her parents were eastern European immigrants and had farmed tobacco in Ontario" (p.4). He told us that his presentation was based heavily on "excerpts" he had taken from her journal and although it had been "a difficult task to reduce this woman's writing for a year to an acceptable amount of material" he hoped to present "a reasonable presentation of her".

He had identified three "themes" in her autobiographical writing: her vision of herself as a teacher, her relationship with her ex-husband, and her relationship with her daughter who has special needs (p.4).

In one of Dockerill's excerpts from his student's text she, the teacher, reflects on writing an autobiography and what it was like for her to read her autobiography aloud in Dockerill's class:

To me, autobiography was to be an honest accounting of my life, the experiences and people who shaped it and made me the person I am today. Through this reflection and probing, I was to understand how my professional life has been affected and shaped by my personal life. And more importantly, how the recording of my life [and] its acceptance can improve my professional development.

I don't know how I felt about making the disclosures [I made in class about my autobiography] ... The most important part for me was just saying what I had for so many years not said. I wasn't so much concerned with people's reactions as I was with following through with what I intended to do ... There were some things that I still wanted to say about how crippled, disease, my own and my daughter's and divorce can make one. How strong the urge to simply retreat from my life. My life ... lived in quiet desperation. I don't want ... to be regretful, or worse, resigned. I don't know if it's strength I have or simply "holding on" power ... I cling to pieces of driftwood and stay afloat. I'm still out there drowning.

As Dockerill read this student's work aloud I immediately recognized the author, a woman who had taken a graduate course in curriculum theory with me the year before. I was very familiar with her writing and the attempt to disguise the identity of the author by changing her name had failed, because it had been impossible to disguise the "voice" of the writer which came through clearly in her text. The student is not protected when her writing is made public in this way; it is the researcher who is protected and it is an unfair and dangerous practice.

Madeleine R. Grumet writes, "the politics of personal knowledge demand that we acknowledge that telling is an alienation, that telling diminishes the teller and that we who invite teachers to tell us their stories develop an ethic for that work" (1987, p.322). Although Dockerill's student had signed a "release form" giving the researcher permission to use her writing in any way he saw fit, I felt the absence of an "ethic" in this work.

At the end of his paper, Dockerill raised the following questions

about the use of autobiography in education: "Does the process [teachers writing autobiographically and sharing their "stories" in the context of his course] result in better teaching? Do the teachers feel better about themselves as educators? Do the students benefit from this process? Or are we all just "high" from the experience of exposing ourselves to each other? Are we delighting in the practice of voyeurism?"

I told the student about Dockerill's conference presentation and she asked me for a copy of his paper which she then read and discussed with me. She had not seen the text before the conference and she had not been consulted nor asked to comment on its contents. "How dare he reduce my life into three themes," she said. "And why those particular themes, my school life, my divorce, and my daughter?" She felt there was male bias in his interpretation. She was hurt. She was deeply hurt. She thought there was nothing to his paper but her work. Was this voyeurism, indeed? "It was," she said.

During the discussion which followed Dockerill's presentation at the conference, curriculum theorists who use autobiography in their educational practice and research considered the following questions: Are we "doing therapy" with teachers? Should we be "doing therapy" with teachers?

Some teacher educators were wary of taking on, as they saw it, a therapeutic, as well as educative role; some felt taking on an educative role was taking on a therapeutic role. Some, including Dockerill, make it a point to tell teachers during the introductions to their courses that they are not "qualified" to act as therapists. Others pointed out that the

"taboo against calling this work "therapy" has been lifted and that we should not be frightened of using the "T word."

One teacher educator shared a "story" of a student who had come to her in a moment of personal crisis. The student needed to talk to someone he felt he could trust and the professor responded to his need. Justifying her actions she said, "You don't have to be licensed to be a human being!"

Although I agreed with her "situational ethics" and I had faced similar situations with teachers who had disclosed highly personal "stories" of incest, physical and emotional abuse, rape, sexual "problems", alcoholism, and other forms of physical and mental anguish, I was worried that autobiography would become legitimized as "therapy" in the classroom.

While the "talking cure" (or in this case, the "writing cure") might help someone sort out her or his life, I feared the birth of a new branch "discipline" of autobiography in education in which people would become certified "experts" in autobiography and narrative knowledge in education. Vast new academic empires could be constructed, based on the appropriation of teacher "stories". This thought made me extremely anxious.

The image of Dockerill's teacher's "life of quiet desperation" stuck with me. I asked him if he had suggested to his student that she read anything that might have helped her to make sense of her life. I feel there is no point in writing your life if you have no theoretical lenses to look through after you have written it, to help you see the patterns that connect your life to the personal, social, historical and cultural contexts

in which we live.

Perhaps if this teacher had read Carolyn Heilbrun's (1988) Writing a Woman's Life or Marion Milner's (1987) A Life of One's Own she might have gained some insight into her experience and felt less like a person who must "cling on to pieces of driftwood to stay afloat" while drowning in the sea of her life. Both of these books explore what it is like for women to write their life stories and how stories are used to make sense of experience.

The "use" of teachers' stories has become a touchy issue for me. I have "collected" autobiographies from over one hundred teachers in Nova Scotia between the years 1988 - 1991, having acquired permission from The Human Ethics Review Committee of Dalhousie University, who concluded that my "proposed research is acceptable from an ethical point of view ..." I have interviewed seven teachers in depth about their writing and showed them the transcripts of these interviews as well as my writing about their autobiographies. (see Appendix; pp. 172-183).

But I still feel terribly uneasy about using teachers' stories. In fact, I have now come to realize that conducting this "research" into narrative inquiry is impossible for me. I have come to this decision through the important lesson I have learned, at the expense of Dockerill's student, about how not to treat people as "research subjects". Was it a misuse of a research subject as data, to base an entire paper on a teacher's life story and not to discuss the paper with the teacher? I feel it was and I feel implicated in this unethical practice and sticky research mess.

It is not as if we haven't been warned about these abuses in the past. The following example from literature, I feel, best illustrates the

power of storytelling in people's personal lives and the way in which narrative knowledge is often used to manipulate and to control people.

Crucial ethical questions are raised in Flannery O'Connor's second novel, The Violent Bear It Away (1955), a book in which she tells the story of Francis Marion Tarwater, a boy raised by his great-uncle Mason Tarwater. The old man had the fire of religion in his eyes and a "rage of vision" expressed in the conviction that his nephew would be "called as a prophet" if he (Mason) continued to teach him (Francis) the ways of Redemption. The old man kept this vision alive by the telling and re-telling of family stories, and although the boy "tried when possible to pass over these thoughts ... to see no more than what was in front of his face and to let his eyes stop at the surface", the tales of his family history penetrated "the darkest, most private part of his soul" (p.21).

One story in particular took hold of the boy's consciousness causing "a quick charge of excitement ... an almost sensuous satisfaction." It was of the time the old man had "rescued" him from his uncle Rayber, a schoolteacher. This story

always had to be taken to completion. It was like a road that the boy travelled on so often that half the time he didn't look where they were going, and when at certain points he would become aware where they were, he would be surprised that the old man had not got farther on with it. Sometimes his uncle would lag at one point as if he didn't want to face what was coming and then when he finally came to it, he would try to get past it in a rush.

(pp.65-66)

As the old man worked his way through the familiar points of the

story, the boy, impatient to hear the details would interrupt, "Well, go on," he'd say irritably, "get on with the rest of it". Or he'd prompt, "Tell about when ..." or he'd criticize if the old man "skipped all that part ...". Listening to the story about the schoolteacher inflamed the boy's desire to know the truth about his own past life. The old man had planted a seed in him, and it was there for good.

The telling of this family story also deeply affected the elder Tarwater; it fueled the old man's memory of his dealings with the schoolteacher -- a man whom he hated not only because Rayber had resisted and escaped the old man's attempts to "save" him, but because the schoolteacher had badly humiliated the old man by secretly making a psychological "study" of him and publishing that in a "schoolteacher magazine".

In countless re-tellings of this story to his nephew, the old man always remembered what the schoolteacher had written about him, and he

... would spit out of his mouth, like gobbets of poison, some of the idiotic sentences from the schoolteacher's piece. Wrath had burned them on his memory, word for word. "His fixation of being called by the Lord had its origin in insecurity. He needed the assurance of a call, and so he called himself."

This so enraged him that half the time he could do nothing but repeat it. "Called myself. I called myself. I, Mason Tarwater, called my self! Called myself to be beaten and tied up. Called myself to be spit on and snickered at. Called myself to be struck down in my pride. Called myself to be torn by the Lord's eye. Listen boy," he would say and

grab the child by the straps of his overalls and shake him slowly, "even the mercy of the Lord burns." He would let go the straps and allow the boy to fall back into the thorn bed of that thought, while he continued to hiss and groan.

"Where he wanted me was inside that schoolteacher magazine. He thought once he got me in there, I'd be as good as inside his head and done for and that would be that, that would be the end of it. Well, that wasn't the end of it! Here I sit. And there you sit. In freedom. Not inside somebody's head!" and his voice would run away from him as if it were the freest part of his free self and were straining ahead of his heavy body to be off.

(pp.19-20)

Old Man Tarwater discovers his own "story" printed in a schoolteacher magazine and, in his subsequent state of shock and revulsion, recognizes himself described in his nephew's text as "the *type* that was almost extinct", a categorization revealing much more about the schoolteacher's narrow way of thinking than about the psyche of zealous old men.

Rayber's research and the publication of the observations and analysis he made of Old Man Tarwater through telling his "story" in the "schoolteacher magazine" is a gross example of the subordination of a research subject as data. The work lacks any degree of "collaboration", self-examination or consideration of how the schoolteacher "constructed" the old man.

Old Man Tarwater remembers how it went: "The schoolteacher had appeared to have a great interest in his (Mason) being a prophet,

chosen by the Lord, and had asked numerous questions, the answers to which he had sometimes scratched down on a pad, his eyes lighting every now and then as if in some discovery ..." (p.19). Mason suddenly realizes "all the time he was studying me for this paper. Taking secret tests on me ... crawling into my soul through the back door" (p.29). Old Man Tarwater feels, and I think rightly so, that his life has been reduced to nothing but "a piece of information inside his [Rayber's] head", and he senses the enormity of the betrayal.

Writing about teachers "stories" has become an increasingly popular interest of educational researchers. Teachers' autobiographies are used to illustrate "themes", to support "theories" and to develop what is being called "teachers' knowledge". Latent meanings which may lurk beneath the surface of teachers' texts are being teased out by researchers who have devoted their academic lives to the task of collecting teacher stories. The point is to record those stories and to write them up!

As I delve further and further into the intricate webs that connect teacher educators and educational researchers who espouse such a strong interest in narrative knowledge and autobiography in education, I wonder if they can ever escape the sticky threads.

They can. It is possible to be a scholar and to write clear English. It is possible to be a scholar and to respect the writings of others. Fortunately there are scholars who have written intelligibly about the use of autobiography in education.

The *Art* of Autobiography In Education

The work of Peter Abbs was a joyful discovery for me. Peter Abbs became interested in the form and educational use of autobiography when he was working as a Tutor in the M.A. course in Language, the Arts and Education at the University of Sussex. He wrote Autobiography in Education (1974), a book in which he describes his use of autobiography with graduate students, and presents excerpts from their writing, from his own autobiography and from well known autobiographies of writers such as St. Augustine, Rousseau, Coleridge and Jung. He writes about autobiography in education in clear English without the use of jargon.

I agree with Abbs' (1989) assertion that it is vital that we have a subjective understanding of knowledge and that autobiography in education can serve, as a literary and aesthetic form, to lead students to "this kind of interior development".

Abbs maintains that the meeting point between the subjective and the objective, the individual and the outside world and the learner with his or her education is found in autobiography, which provides a way for individuals to make a search for personal meaning. It is through autobiography, he tells us, that we might "seek, through creative understanding, to reveal the intimate relationship between being and knowing, between existence and education, between self and culture" (1974, p.6).

Abbs formulated his ideas about autobiography in education through studying the autobiographical work of his students and in writing

his own autobiography. In the following passages he describes his response to the autobiographical work of his student, Rachel Ashman. In it he senses

... a formative process at work, at once intellectual and emotional, conscious and unconscious, objective and deeply personal. Through a variety of symbolic modes (through writing, reading, photography, drawing, dreaming, collage-work) she searches for a multiplicity of intersecting meanings (of childhood, of relationships, of memory, identity, time and death) which make sense of her contemporary existence.

(1989, p.162)

For Abbs "this is educational work of the first order, and, it is also expressive and creative work, an art process in its own right: the art of autobiography" (p.162).

Convinced "that we cannot ask others to risk themselves in the name of education, unless we have done so or are willing to ourselves" (1974, p.23), Abbs believes it important to share excerpts from your own autobiography with your students. In the following example he tells the "story" of his childhood passion for the priesthood, which he writes about in an autobiographical sketch, "The Vocation" (1974, pp.149-167).

Abbs begins: "At the age of eleven I decided I had a vocation. I decided I had been called by God ..." The news of this early vocation threw his mother "into a sustained state of elation. Her son -- a priest? The thought pierced her heart with a sharp happiness ..." (p.149). When an important letter arrives from the rector of Saint Paul's Seminary, offering him a place at the school, Abbs tells us he felt excited and

confident about this "great blessing" which his mother had described as "God's will".

But Abbs' father felt very differently about the boy's "calling". Abbs remembers his "father said very little. He never spoke easily about his deepest feelings. But I could see he was unhappy. His opposition expressed itself in fierce gusts of irritability which swept round us whenever my vocation was mentioned" (p.150).

Tempers flared and in an argument between his mother and father his father pleaded:

"Can't you see, he might just as well want to be a sea captain or an all-in wrestler, like other boys."

"Like other boys!" sneered my mother.

"Yes," said my father, "like other boys."

Abbs observes:

Father said no more. He seemed content. What he had said was obvious to him as the dark stain of Brylcream round the edge of his cap, as clear as the yellow stain of nicotine which spread down his first two fingers. He assumed, I think, that he had pulled down to earth the dizzy heights of my vocation.

(p.154)

During the night, Abbs' parents continued to argue, his father not shifting from his position that his son must wait: "Let him see what he feels at twenty."

Abbs "couldn't bear to listen to them" and he "lay back in bed

longing to fall asleep". He recollects how he felt:

Then I could see above me a boulder, falling, falling. Although it was much wider than my arms and altogether bigger than me, I managed to catch it and hold it. But then I was too afraid to let go of it, so that wherever I went, whatever I did, I was obliged to heave this burden from me.

I fell in a restless sleep until morning.

(p.165)

As a boy, Abbs went to the seminary, but he never became a priest. Twenty years later, while rummaging through a box of childhood belongings, he found a letter he had written during the middle of his first term at Saint Paul's College. In it the young boy had written:

Dear Mother and Father,

How can I tell you about this place? It is -- if you can understand what I mean -- like a silent station. We must do everything on time but we are seldom allowed to talk. We are not allowed to talk in the dormitory or on the stairs or at meals or in the study or in the class-rooms ...

Then, at the end of the day, we have night prayers and night study. I am so tired when we get to the dormitory I fall asleep straight away, only the last five nights one of the boys has been crying, keeping most of us awake. He says he wants to return home but the rector says he must stay for at least another year to be sure of God's will.

Last night I dreamed that there had been a drought and that the world had shrivelled and dried up. Where there had been rivers and oceans there was now only dry deserts cracked like jigsaw puzzles.

I am posting this letter secretly in the village ...

The seminary is testing my vocation. I will not give in. We shouldn't cry at night but listen in the dark to what God has to say to us.

I think of you nearly all the time.

(p.166)

After reading the letter to himself several times Abbs wonders: "Did I write it? Did I really go to the seminary? I sit in my study listening to the wind as it somersaults over the fields. And the past seems never to have been. And yet I know if I am to move forwards I must possess myself. And to possess myself I must scan backwards ... I look back on that day when the letter arrived. Beneath the words and gestures, beneath the hopes and fantasies, my life is hidden. There I must look ..." (p.167).

Abbs captures again, in sonnet form, his childhood experience at the seminary in Icons of Time, An Experiment in Autobiography (1991), his third published volume of poetry.

VIII St. Peter's College for Catholic Vocations: 1954

**I mourn the child I seldom was. Precarious
At birth. Washed up, at last. At St. Peter's
College. Freshfields. Liverpool. A pale
Face elongated with piety. Alabaster
Hands clutching the plastic beads. Or clasped
Before the fourteen Stations of the Cross.
Baroque actor straining to shed the child
Who seldom was. Who cried himself to sleep**

While the Mill-Hill fathers' red sashed cassocks
 Cracked and slapped against our wooden cells.
 And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds
 And binding with briars my joys and desires.

Dear child, I would tell you if I could ...

A stricken deer makes for the shadowed wood.

(p.22)

Throughout all his writing, Peter Abbs remains faithful to autobiography, as a literary genre and aesthetic form, and to the use of autobiography in education which, because it is preoccupied with the realization of self and inner truth, has the potential to move us from the certainty of knowledge into the mystery of our being. Autobiography can transport us to new ground where it is possible to explore the elusiveness and uncertainty of identity.

For Abbs, education must not be "primarily concerned with the accumulation of facts and techniques", but should reside in the experience of the individual and be concerned with the expression and clarification of individual experience. He defines education as "that power within experience which seeks to develop, refine, increase and deepen those truths created by experience" (1974, p.5).

I argue that it is not only a misuse of autobiography but it is unacceptable for teacher educators and researchers to use autobiography in education in a research race "to accumulate facts and techniques". I also share the position taken by those who see "storytelling as negotiation of power" (Grumet, 1987, p.320), thus daring to question the

ethics of narrative inquiry and autobiography in education, (Grumet, 1987; Pagano, 1991; Willinsky, 1987). Peter Abbs reminds us there are "enemies of education" who "are to be associated with those powers which for whatever reason -- commercial, political, social -- blunt, desiccate, corrupt and destroy the positive urges, the hidden longings enfolded in each [person's] response to the world ... "and that we must be aware that "education, in its institutionalized form, can be the enemy of education in its true form" (1974, p.5).

Institutionalized Education: Learning to Not-Learn

Most students become socialized in ways sanctioned by the authority of the school which serves the dominant class of the culture; it is an experience almost impossible to escape, unless your parents have enough money to keep you out of schools altogether or they are resourceful enough to try "home-schooling" or brave enough to send you on a continuous trip by yourself around the world. Other possibilities for evading the influence of the school might result from your being born into extreme poverty and homelessness or a situation where your caregivers have to move around a lot. In or out of school, the "education" of today's students depends largely on influences received outside the institution of the school, such as television or the seductive ethos of the fast food restaurant or shopping mall. But what happens in schools?

In I Won't Learn from You! The Role of Assent in Learning, Herbert Kohl (1991) writes about how some students in schools manage to successfully resist being "educated". Kohl points out that by refusing to pay attention, by scrambling their thoughts and by overriding curiosity, it is possible for some students to actively, wilfully and often ingeniously reject some aspect of their experience.

This comes in handy if a student loathes the people who are in control of him, people he correctly senses do not respect him, people who will never let him, under any circumstances, be himself. A student learns to close off parts of himself to limit potentially humiliating

experiences; basically, he learns to refuse to learn. Kohl calls this refusal to learn, "learning to not-learn":

Not-learning tends to take place when someone has to deal with unavoidable challenges to her or his personal and family loyalties, integrity and identity. In such situations there are forced choices and no apparent middle ground. To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-learn and to reject the stranger's world.

(p.15)

While a student may become a victim of her choice to not-learn, not-learning can also be used successfully as a strategy to help her take control of her life and to get through difficult times. Kohl illustrates this with rich "stories" of students' lives that demonstrate how not-learning can "strengthen the will, clarify one's definition of self, reinforce self-discipline and provide inner satisfaction" (p.15).

I write about the experience of learning to not-learn in the autobiographical sketches which follow. It begins with my return to graduate school to do a Ph.D. in education, my most recent experience of learning to not-learn.

Learning to Not-Learn In the Ph.D. Programme at Dalhousie

The School of Education at Dalhousie University is housed in a comfy old building which reminds me of the Main Street School of my childhood. Professors have odd-shaped offices whose shabby decor is eclectic and inviting. Full-length, many-paned windows let in abundant light and most windows are filled with green plants. Faded Mexican blankets cover ancient couches and there are real paintings on the walls. As I walked through the halls the first week of classes, I noticed floor-to-ceiling bookcases in every room and I heard the rhythmic rattle of Image Writer 11's printing out new texts. I sensed the heady vapors of intellect and the tension between people who are writing to publish.

In 1987, when I enrolled in the Ph.D. Programme, I was plunged into a stormy world of words. Long lists of books and journal articles whirled about in the air above my head. Conflicting "paradigms" flashed on and off in brilliant electric arcs through my dark mental sky. We would read Apple, Bateson, Bloom, Clifford and Marcus, Giroux, Habermas, Hare, Heidegger, Kuhn, Lonergan, Mead, Rousseau, Smith and Willis. We would learn the academic lingo of phenomenologists, philosophers, psychologists and sociologists. We would learn to be critical, reflective and open-minded.

Every week I met with teachers who were there to discuss philosophy of education. We sat in a semi-circle of dark brown wooden desk-chairs, the kind with the paddle arms for resting notebooks. The underlying theme of these talks was the explication and defense of the

philosophical ideal of open-mindedness -- the disposition to form a belief, and if necessary to revise or reject it, in the light of the available evidence and argument. We spent the semester examining this ideal and what it means to be reasonable.

Although the professor was thoughtful, fair and thorough I found it very difficult to fit my way of thinking into the philosophical framework of open-mindedness. The notion of practising a sincere concern for truth and a willingness to consider, argue and revise on the basis of evidence was enticing, but I was terribly confused about how to go about applying this philosophical position to my life.

Questions formed in my mind about the nature and grip of bias. What happens when you are committed to comparing rival views? Can you be fair to one view and not bound to support it? Can quite different views be held sincerely by others? How does open-mindedness deal with ambiguity?

One night in class I voiced my first and only question of the course: Does an open-minded attitude take feelings into account? The cold stare and torrent of "values-neutral" language I received in response to my question shut me up for the rest of the semester and made the prospect of becoming "rational" a delusive and terrifying ideal.

While I battled with the impediments that made it difficult for me to see open-mindedness clearly I was reading widely for other courses, including the Graduate Seminar which required reading a minimum of two to three full length books a week. Students quickly discovered that what was of most value in this class was the ability to cite newly published works and fashionable authors. I recovered a survival strategy

I had learned twenty years before in undergraduate school where I had first become adept in the art of name-dropping. My passion for "The New York Times", "The London Review of Books" and other more obscure periodicals helped me straddle the critical fence in heated discussions of the nature of educational inquiry. I quickly learned the language, the logic and the rules of "the graduate school game".

There were only a handful of new recruits to the Ph.D. Programme that year. We had all returned to university, mid-stream, mid-career, mid-life. Many experienced the return as a terrifying dive into chilly, unwelcoming waters. Most felt raw and vulnerable and the reflection we saw of ourselves as "graduate students" in the eyes of powerful, tenured professors did not help to strengthen a much needed sense of identity.

Inane remarks were delivered in condescending, sing-song voices as those in charge began to wield their "authority". Some students acquiesced. Others actively questioned what to us seemed peculiar behaviour; in some cases students were met with verbal abuse or other more subtle forms of institutional harassment. But eventually it was made clear to us who was in control and students took to varying methods of resistance and subterfuge in order to survive. Hadn't we been through this before in public school?

Teacher Under My Skin

If you had asked me in high school if I had plans to become a teacher, I would have fainted dead on the spot. Teaching was a career so far from anything I could ever have imagined for myself that the mere mention of the then repugnant word, "teacher", would have knocked me over. More about those feelings later. I had lots of time to make up my mind about teachers and schools during elementary school, and that is where I shall begin.

Grade one at the Main Street School was a blur. I spent most of the time in the hospital having eye surgery. I do remember the horror I felt when a fidgety little girl, who had said she was my "friend", pressed her thumbs into my doll's eyes in a spiteful fit. I wondered at the time if she had pushed in my eyes, as I stared sadly into the black holes in Tiny Tear's face.

The following summer, I noticed some men bull-dozing the large piece of land next to ours and pouring the concrete foundation for a new house. I saw a girl playing on a sand pile by a tall stack of lumber. I ran next door and met Gail.

Every morning for the next two weeks we climbed mounds of earth to watch the men as they worked under the hot sun. We carried buckets of water to the newly turned soil and dabbled and stirred deep pools of mud life, as the wooden frame of a large, two-storey house went up.

Gail's family moved in a few days after sticky black-top oozed its way around their circular driveway and set, thick and hard, like treacle taffee. Landscape crews reshaped the property and her mother

supervised the planting. Trellises were put up and hundreds of hybrid rose bushes were inserted into ready made holes, evenly spaced into waiting flower beds.

She and I quickly became inseparable. We made daily visits that summer to the public library in town, an octagonal shaped building with dark, tudor-style beams. We irritated the elderly librarian with our questions as we scurried back and forth between the children's section and the reference-reading room. We climbed on the revolutionary war cannon which jutted out to the side of the library's massive front door and exchanged the amazing books we each had signed out. On the way home we threw crusts of bread to the ducks, which swam in the murky green lake at Hecksher Park, and we stopped for a drink of water from the cement fountain near the tennis courts.

After lunch we sped down Maple Hill Road on our bikes, past the Victorian house at the bottom whose massive three storeys were covered in egg shaped, pinkish-white stones. We rode along the bay road to Halesite Harbour. A floating dock, half submerged in rippling brown seaweed bobbed on the tide. We played in the dinghies tied up to the dock.

Sometimes we rode further on to Ferguson's Castle, a fairy tale like structure with turrets and arches and an underground tunnel to the sea. The iron gate was bolted to keep children out. It had been built by a movie star in the nineteen twenties and stood empty. We peered through the iron bars of the fence, and made up stories of slaves who were trapped in the dungeons, sealed off from the world.

Our friendship grew and even Gail's mother couldn't spoil it. Gail's mother was a school teacher from a small town in upstate New York, a staunch Presbyterian. Her marriage to Gail's father, a very wealthy Long Island banker, had driven her to scrupulous investigation of not only her own motives in life but to the details of her daughter's life, and this included me. It was impossible to escape the questions she asked innocently: "Do you go to Sunday school? Which church do your parents attend? Do you read the bible?"

I finally gave in to Gail's mother's nagging and signed up for Daily Vacation Bible School. It was held in the annex of the Central Presbyterian Church on Main Street, five mornings a week, for the last three weeks of July.

The first dreadful class consisted of memorizing passages from the New Testament and cutting and pasting paper dolls in the shape of shepherds, lambs, Joseph and Mary and child Jesus. We could hardly wait to get out of that hot, stuffy room.

Afterwards, we jumped into the Adamson's steaming hot Oldsmobile and sat back as Gail's mother drove us to the beach. We opened the windows and the salt-air breezes cooled us as we passed lush marshes, tall, yellow-spiked sea grass and the large, weather beaten homes along the shore road. We sang a lusty "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "Three Blind Mice", all the way to the private beach club.

It was cramped and airless inside the narrow wooden cabana. We ripped off our shorts and pulled on threadbare, elastic swim suits. Underpants were kicked under the seat, inflated rubber animals looped

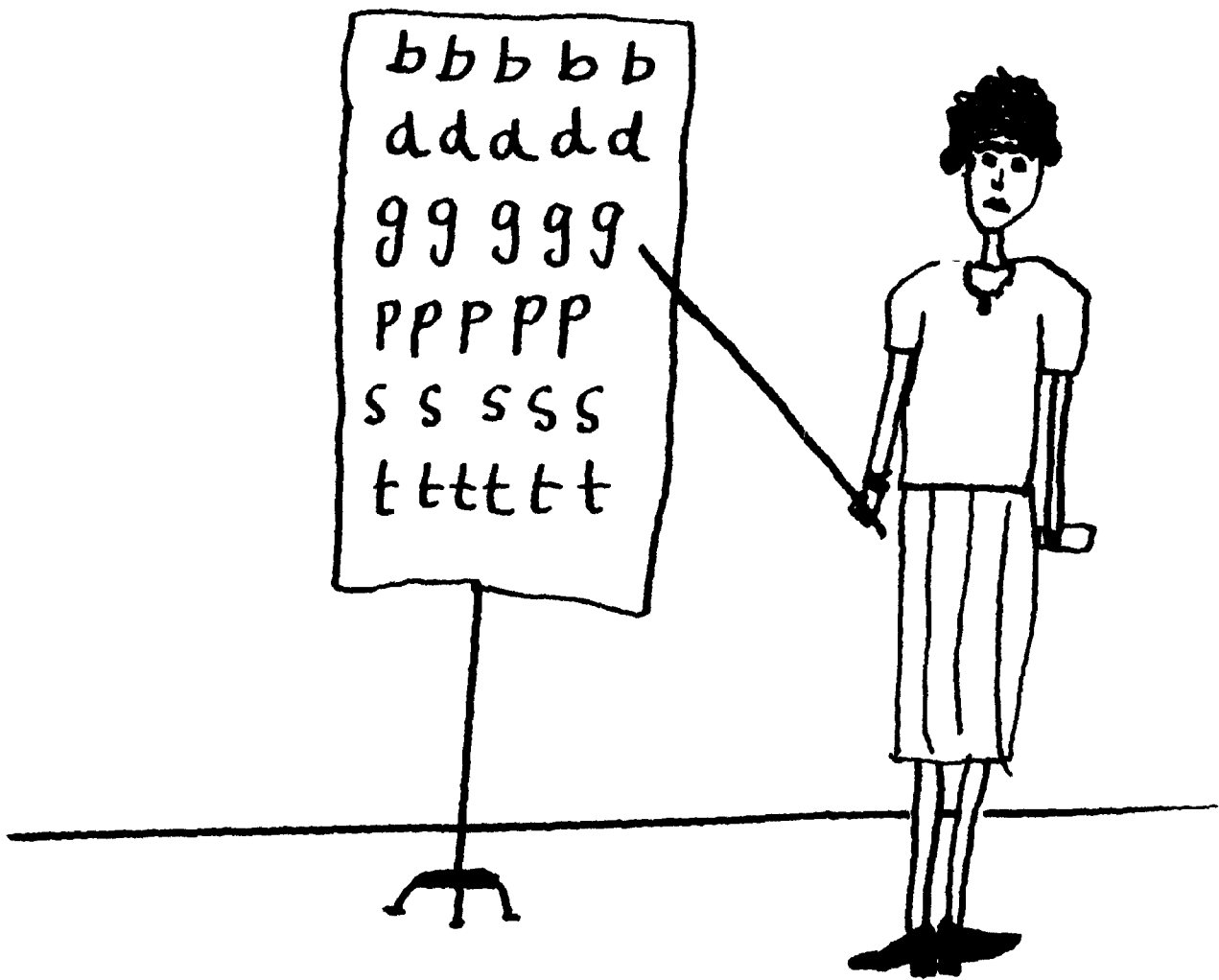
under our arms and faded towels dragged over the hot boardwalk as we made our way over the dunes to the water's edge.

We splashed in water battles and emerged from the sea with sand-filled bathing suits. We were ravenous for the egg salad sandwiches wrapped in wax paper. After lunch we examined the bloated bodies of small dead fish caught in the tidal pools and we tried to trap funny, blue-green crabs in the shallows.

Three weeks passed quickly. I loved that summer. Grade two glowed. We thought our young female teacher was pretty, as well as gentle and kind. We felt the calm warmth of her classroom. It was a year of yellow -- the lustrous shine of her silver-blond hair; the golden-yellow leaves on the trees outside the classroom windows; the brand new lemon-yellow pencils and pale-yellow writing paper with the thin lines that guided our first attempts at cursive writing; the yellow beeswax we applied with soft rags to our desks before we left for summer vacation, rubbing and rubbing until we could see our faces in the polished wood.

In grade three we moved across the hall to the corner room. The woman who was our teacher was older. She had short, dark curls and thin, cherry red lips. She jabbed at the phonics chart with her long, white pointer and we had to ask her permission when we wanted to go to the bathroom.

That fall, a young school boy had been shot by mistake while on a hunting trip with his dad. Our teacher warned us about the dangers of hunting in the woods wearing drab coloured clothing. I owned a red jacket so I decided I was safe.



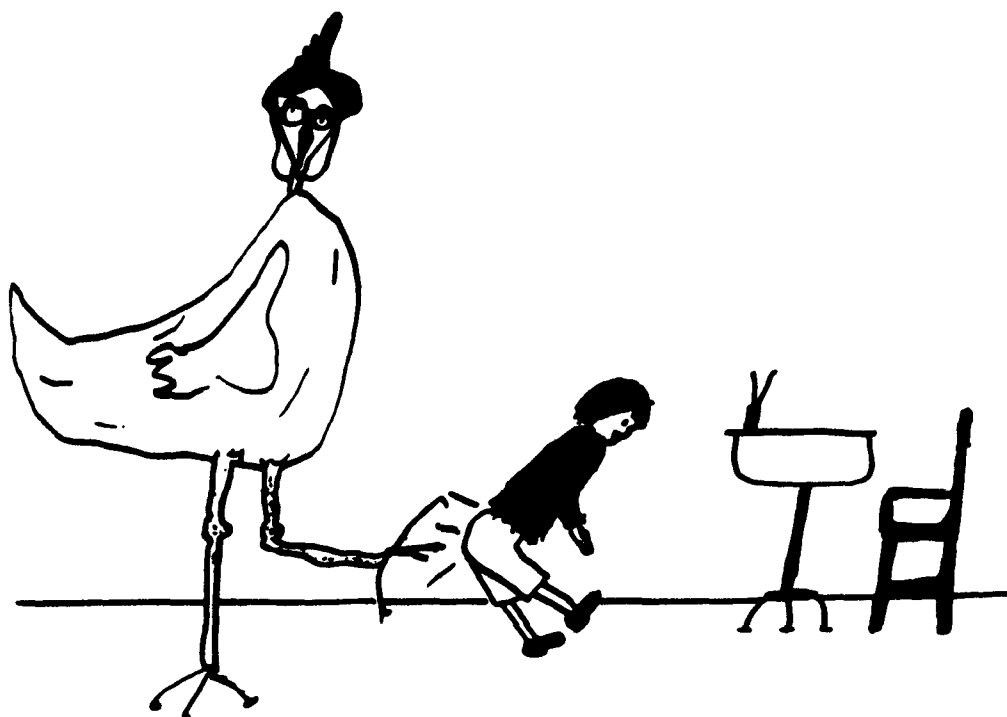
Grade Three: We had to ask the teacher's permission if we wanted to go to the toilet.

Around the same time as the hunting accident, fluoride was introduced into the drinking water in our town. The grade three teacher lectured us on the wonder of this recent scientific discovery and our bright futures sans tooth decay. Dentists terrified me and as I had for eight years stubbornly refused to have my teeth checked, I walked around with a mouth full of cavities. When I finally did climb up into the ominous dental chair for the required school checkup, I thought of the boy hunting with his father. I pictured him running through the pines, the large brown elk in view; I heard the shot and saw the flash of red as the boy and the animal fell.

In grade four, we moved to the newly constructed Village Green School. Three weeks after school opened Miss Lilly, our new teacher, a sixty-three year old veteran, kicked lazy Larry in the backside and he fell on the floor knocking his head on the corner of his desk. Some people said he deserved it, but I never believed that. Miss Lilly reminded me of a scrawny old barnyard hen. Patchy, sallow skin hung from her elbows like the leather legs of an aging Plymouth Rock. She retired at the end of the year.

After school, Gail and I often walked home together. We'd cut across the green in front of the school, pass the small white clapboard church belonging to the "coloured" people and try to balance on the stone wall in front of the red brick hospital on Park Avenue.

When we heard the high pitched whine of an ambulance siren, we'd start running. The sleek white ambulance would finally come into view, red lights flashing as it whisked past and made the turn up the



Grade Four: Retirement couldn't come soon enough for some teachers.

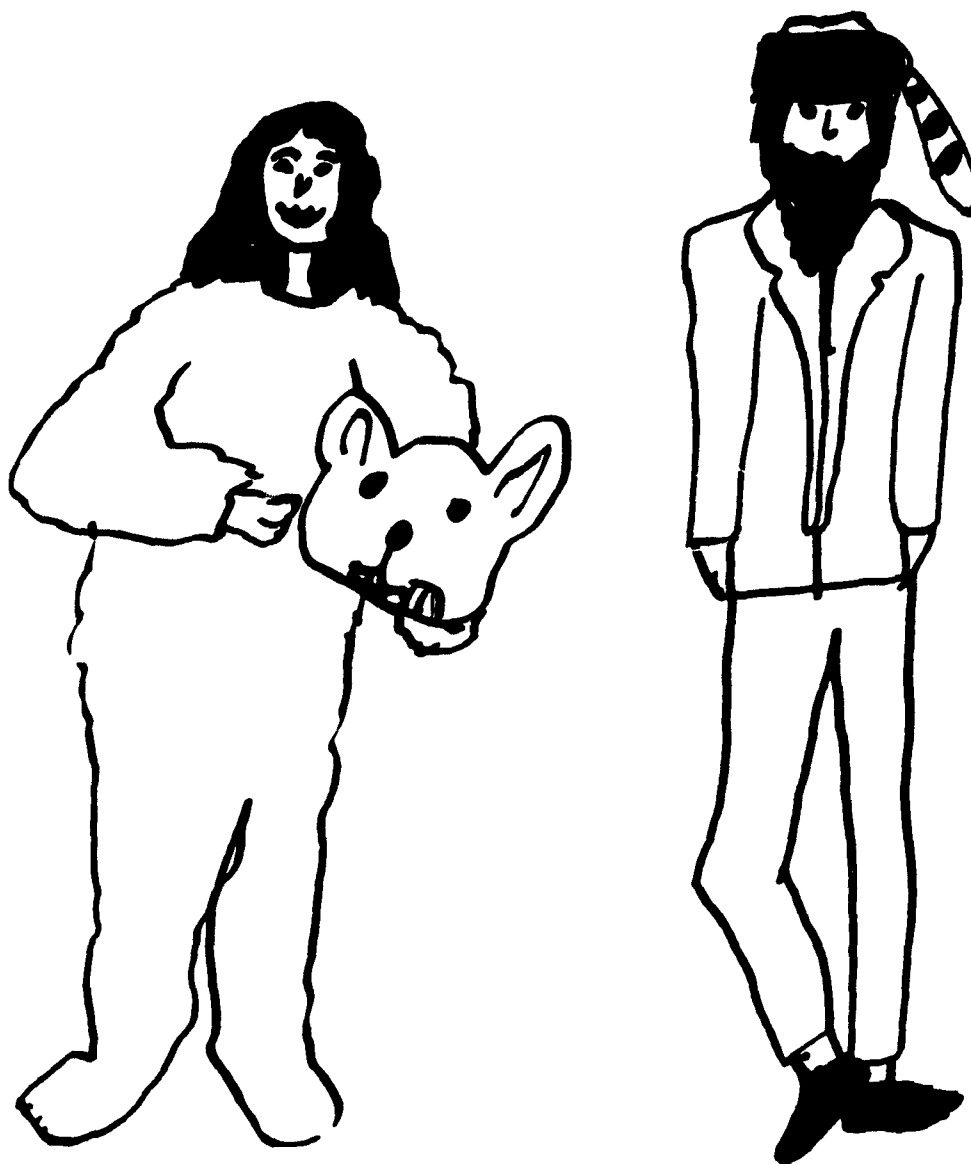
steep hospital drive. We'd hang around outside the Emergency entrance and ask each other gruesome questions: What horrible accident had happened? Was there a bloody victim to be stitched up? Was that a whiff of ether we smelled?

In grade five, one of the kids whose name was Marshall Stigletts, died two days before Christmas. He rode his bicycle down West Hill Road without holding on to the handle-bars and was crushed under a sand truck.

I was mad with Marshall because he had let me down badly the week before. The kids had arranged to buy each other presents and to give them out on the last day of school before the holidays. Marshall had drawn my name, and Gail had tipped me off. I was deathly worried that he'd forget me, not buy a present and force me to face the rest of the class, empty-handed. It was worse than that. Marshall's gift to me was a huge roll of torn, dirty comics, wrapped in bright paper.

I was more curious than shocked at his death. Marshall Stigletts, whose knees gripped the center bar of his bicycle, whose bare hands waved tauntingly to the traffic. What time of day did it happen? What was he thinking when he plunged down that steep, icy hill? What was I doing then? I felt guilty when I looked through the tattered comics.

Miss Hubour, our grade six teacher, gave me the class mural to take home; a room length village scene created by twenty eager kids in vivid pastels on brown paper. It hung in our basement, until I went away to college. I was eleven years old when she told me that I'd either be a famous artist or a famous writer when I grew up.



Grade Six: **The elementary school became a hunting ground.**

Grade six was the year that the other grade six teacher, Mr. Hunt, who was also the first male teacher employed in our elementary school, became engaged to the kindergarten teacher, Miss Bear. It became the year of the "bear hunt" jokes.

We graduated from grade six, left the Village Green School and went on to Toaz Junior High School, a brick building surrounded by a high chain link fence and located in the run-down neighbourhood of Huntington Station. It was situated near the homes of the families "on welfare" and the "coloured" peoples' territory. There was a family story told about this school and this neighbourhood.

When I was eighteen months old, my grandmother had taken me for a walk in a stroller. We stopped at the steps which led up to the big, red front door of the school. Grandma reported that I climbed out of the stroller, toddled over to the steps and began to climb, shouting "sool! sool!" It was hard to imagine that at any time in my life I could have felt excited and positive about that place.

In grade seven, Babs Steiner, a mouthy girl whose protuberant, new breasts strained against her school sweater, developed a mad crush on Mr. Stentor, the young, good-looking English teacher. Babs was a good talker. She had no trouble convincing us to go along with her plan to drive Hugh Stentor crazy, crazy-in-love.

She asked four of us for help: Donna Morris, a tall blond, who played the flute and always wore high socks over her knobby knees; Lynne Courtemanche, a tiny, dark-haired Roman Catholic who wanted to be a nurse and whose brother became a priest; my friend, Gail

Adamson, and me. I'm not sure why I was asked but I was happy to be included.

Bab's plan was to create a mammoth scrapbook of romantic poems, pictures, and clipped texts; the "special" lines and words of love we could find in magazines. This scrapbook, which captured her tender and emerging erotic feelings, was dedicated to Hugh Stentor and reflected Babs' secret longings. How could he fail to respond to its message?

We five sat near each other in the second row of Mr. Stentor's English class. Part of the curriculum in those days was Greek mythology, which we read greedily, taking careful note of particularly moving literary imagery that might help Babs express her romantic feelings for her teacher. Nothing escaped our scrutiny as we searched for passionate rhetoric.

Grade seven whizzed past. Feelings burst forth in all directions and Mr. Stentor was sensitive and kind enough to accept the scrapbook without comment.

We were streamed into groups in grade eight based on academic potential. I found myself in the bright group, but located on the margins. Most of these kids had made high scores on national achievement tests, held positions on the Student Council, played musical instruments in the school orchestra, or sang in the all-state choir; wrote and edited the school newspaper and produced the school literary magazine; had regular summer jobs and already knew where they wanted to go to college. They were "cool".

I was reasonably content with my position in the group if I wasn't wildly popular with my peers, then at least I was quietly accepted. But after we started the term, I realized that there was a lot more at stake than popularity, and that competition, which had been playful in elementary school, was now mean and vicious.

One day, Dr. B. Horowitz, who had his Ph.D. from Columbia University and a reputation for eating garlic and turning out merit scholarship winners, wrote several math problems on the board. The other kids understood what to do immediately. Electric sparks of "who can get the answer first" galvanized the students to life. But I drew a cold, sweaty blank. My sense of despair deepened as heads were bent low over desks, pencils pressed deeply into foolscap and students scratched out the answers, lickety-split. I didn't have the nerve to ask for help, and sat paralysed, staring off into space as the class leaped through the work.

This fatal disease, which had infected my mind, spread into the social studies classroom, where, for the life of me, I couldn't remember the names of the world leaders whose smiling faces had made the covers of Newsweek. The magazine covers were pinned up on the wrap-around bulletin board and we were required to memorize all thirty-two. It wasn't long before I received a summons from the guidance counsellor's office for a talk about my "bad attitude".

Had these teachers and counsellors understood Herbert Kohl's principles of "learning to not-learn", they might have been saved from practising their damaging pedagogies based on the humiliation of young people. Schools would have been vastly different places, and many

students would have been saved from the terrors of regular interrogation by adults on specious psychological grounds such as "You have a bad attitude!"

But as no one understood then that I was fighting for my life in that social studies classroom because I had not figured out "what the teacher wanted", (as the successful students had), my "case" was reduced into their popular education jargon -- "under-achiever".

The social studies teacher had been invited to join us in the counsellor's office. Her cruel summation of all my faults was carefully recorded in my cumulative record, an ongoing file kept on each student from grade one through grade twelve. This teacher's weasel-like face haunted me for weeks. It seemed obvious that I couldn't keep stride with the college-bound achievers. I sensed I was on my own.

Grade eight became my year to escape. Ten minutes after the first period bell jangled in my ears, I'd run down the 'V' behind the school, past the soccer fields, past the tennis courts, through the wooded lot and back home. I was "sick" a lot that year and the guilt I felt was indescribable. There was something about school that didn't make any sense. I couldn't put the jagged pieces of the school puzzle together.

I had little help in understanding what was going on because it would have been sacrilegious for teachers "to explain how the system works" and impossible for students who had "figured school out" to help me, because they, too, were caught in the tangled webs of competition and conformity. All I knew was that I hated school, that school was toxic to my sense of myself, and if I had to continue to accept the poisonous

messages I was receiving, I needed a new strategy to survive. Not realizing it at the time, I practised learning to not-learn.

I quickly slipped out of favour with the top group of students and fell like a heavy stone to the bottom of the well where the slime-balls ("toughs" in those days) hung out. My friend Gail and I drifted apart as her increasing popularity and academic success gained her access into enviable social circles. I made friends with several new girls who initiated me into their "crowd" by successfully daring me to smoke an unfiltered Camel cigarette in the alley next to the school.

The kids in this group spoke a new language. They talked about sex a lot and they "fooled around". It was rumoured that a fourteen year old girl had become pregnant after having sex with a high school boy, in the back row of the local movie theatre. Her story was food for our fantasy lives as we listened to the undulating pelvic beat of popular rock and roll hits: "Wake Up Little Suzy"; "He Wore A Pink Carnation"; "Rock Around the Clock" and "Don't Be Cruel". The following summer the rumour was confirmed. I served a dinner tray to a young, new mother on the maternity ward of the hospital where I worked as a "candy-striper" (volunteer junior helper). It was necessary for the girl to drop out of school to have her baby.

In grade nine I was still not working up to my "potential", whatever that was. No one explained. The guidance counsellor switched me from biology to general science and I took Spanish instead of French. Dr. Baty seemed to appreciate my term paper on fire ants but I dropped Spanish after the third excruciating class. What did I need Spanish for anyway? I told the guidance counsellor that I wanted to be an interior

decorator. "Do you think you have the 'aptitude'?" he replied. I didn't know, but I'd soon find out.

Grade nine was the year for state-wide testing of vocational potential. The Department of Education had gotten hold of a battery of tests from the University of Minnesota which promised to be a helpful source of information on latent vocational aptitude. It enabled guidance counsellors to pinpoint a student's future occupation, an occupation for which he or she was undoubtedly suited and destined, according to the test.

The test was fun. I enjoyed filling in the little empty circles with the heavy number four pencil distributed to us before the test began. It was possible to "read between the lines" and plot your own vocational propensities by making the right choices from the seemingly transparent answers.

I carefully avoided answers that dealt with the great outdoors, which might predict a career in forestry; answers that pertained to the use of office machines, which might mean a career as a cashier or a secretary; answers that indicated an interest in helping people, which might predict a career in social work or the Salvation Army; and answers that might be designed to reveal a latent talent for teaching. My range of answers was spread out so thinly that it was impossible to pinpoint my vocational future, except to say that I seemed significantly drawn to the arts.

Several weeks after the state-wide vocational testing, I was called into the nurse's office. The small, square room was a fairly familiar place, as I had executed many an officially approved dismissal from

classes from that very spot. But this time I was there for a different reason.

Nurse Greene leaned back in her swivel chair and pointed to the seat in front of her big mahogany desk. I sat down, feeling a sickening thud at the bottom of my stomach. What now, had she discovered last Friday's ruse?

She opened with questions about the careers inventory. What were my vocational interests? Had my vocational future become clear? Was I planning appropriately for college entrance? It seemed a bit odd to me to have the school nurse asking these questions. Surely she didn't think I was interested in nursing.

Finally she came to the point. She had heard of a special scholarship to a state vocational school, which would be offered to some unique and deserving student, one who suffered from sight impairment. Was I interested in applying?

I'm sure she meant well, at least on the surface -- she had to do her job -- another one of those people in schools who are hired to sort and categorize people -- "overweight", "underweight", "mentally retarded", "dyslexic", "gifted", "learning disabled", "special needs", "this child has an xxx-syndrome or a yyy-syndrome, - we must do something!"

But Nurse Greene's startling question had numbed me to the bone. I felt her closing in on me -- I was being objectified -- put into one of her special boxes marked "visually impaired". She might just as well have asked me if I needed a braille typewriter or a seeing eye dog.

What could I possibly learn in a vocational school -- to weave a basket or to make a broom? As I thought about her question, my pulse

picked up speed and I felt the once dormant volcano of feeling in my chest begin to erupt, shooting molten lava up my neck and out to scald my wan cheeks.

I was trapped! I had given the impression that I could barely see during previous encounters in the nurse's office, when I had wormed my way out of classes. This time I quickly thanked her for her interest and beat a hasty retreat.

The next morning I made an appointment with the guidance counsellor to review the results of my vocational aptitude test; I had to get back into the college prep classes before it was too late and my life was ruined!

In grade ten we moved into a brand new two million dollar high school and I moved into the "Double X track" with the college-prep kids. We were encased in a shiny, new, glass, brick and stainless steel building that was the pride of the community. My body recoiled at the shrill blast of the first change-of-class buzzer, which reminded me of a factory whistle; my nerves were on edge and I found the air hard to breathe.

There were hundreds of new kids everywhere. I watched them through the thick lenses of my bifocals; the girls swirled past, full-skirts ballooning out over multiple layers of crinolines, "bobby" socks neatly folded down over their brown and white saddle shoes; the boys marched past, spic and span in neatly pressed chino pants, bright new pennies gleaming in the slits at the front of their polished loafers. Down the long, school halls they tapped, clicking their shoes on the new tile floors. Cleats were "in" and two cleats nailed to the heel of each shoe was the norm. Members of the Student Council decorated the gym for get-

acquainted sock hops and Sadie Hawkins dances. However, not everyone could break into their social circle nor get their dance steps down.

I remember two people in particular in grade eleven, a girl named Rivka Siegal and my old friend, Gail Adamson.

Rivka Siegal had stringy brown hair which hung forlornly, framing her angular face. Two shaggy eyebrows hovered over her glistening black eyes which peered out from the soft pouches of mottled skin on either side of her hooked nose. This porous proboscis was dotted with blackheads. When she spoke, you caught a faint, warm whiff of fetid air exhaled between her misshapen front teeth. She'd call out in a deep, raspy voice, "How're yah doin, Nadine? Haven't seen yah in a long time, Frankie!" A small group of seniors snickers as she passes, her tall, skinny body swaying as she zigzags down the hall. They quickly turn to open their lockers; to be seen chatting with Rivka is anathema.

She was genuinely friendly, which made it so much worse. She never took the hint, however blatant, that people did not want to have anything to do with her. Even the Jewish kids, who made up sixty-eight percent of the student body, avoided Rivka Siegal. What was so special about Sigmund Sachs, Claire Weintraub or Stephen Silberfein? Wasn't she "one of them"?

I liked Rivka from a distance. It seemed to me that she had a keen sense of humour, that she wasn't afraid to talk to teachers, and that she questioned decisions which seemed to her to be unfair. But short, chirruped greetings were the best I could muster as I hurried to get away from any public contact with her. Why did she have to smell so "bad"?

We got to know one another in the Foreign Correspondence Club. Members were a part of a vast international network of teenage letter-writers who wanted to develop global friendships. The teacher in charge of the club enkindled our interest in diverse cultures and we became familiar with the art, music, literature, food and films of "foreign" countries. The club included a mixture of kids almost as exotic as some of the out-of-the-way destinations of the hundreds of letters we posted each week to places around the globe.

Letter writing for me, is, and always has been a life-line from loneliness. I managed to escape long periods of crippling depression as a teenager through writing and receiving letters from "pen friends".

Club members made trips to small ethnic restaurants in lower Manhattan. We sampled very carefully, delicacies such as hot East Indian curries and chapati; then went to watch the strange, dubbed, "foreign" films sitting in the balconies, and drinking thick black coffee out of tiny, gold-rimmed porcelain cups in the lobbies.

Rivka's "sense of herself" seemed to expand and take on new dimensions during these excursions to "the city", as did mine. There was something about her strong, ethnic image -- a pure and charming beauty, mysteriously submerged beneath the surface usually repugnant to us, that captured us once we boarded the train for Penn Station. We could accept her marvellous *chutzpah* as we sat around little marble-top tables, chatting freely with one another in cafes in "the Village", quite a different atmosphere to the repressive school environs. We could all relax together in the safe shadows of the back rows of foreign film cinemas.

Back at school again, we found Rivka's loud voice grating, and she embarrassed us by drawing waves of disgust from the rest of the school population. When the other kids would verbally attack her, she'd shrug, pull her grimy pink short-sleeved sweater down over her narrow hips and shout defensively, "So what's the mattah! You never saw a Jewess before? You wriggle like a snake! Your mother didn't teach you any manners?"

Two weeks before graduation, in May of our senior year, a small group of girls whose mothers were "Daughters of the American Revolution" decided to "clean Rivka up".

They undressed her and thrust her into the showers in the girls' locker room and scrubbed her clean. Someone washed her hair and cut it short. Someone shaved the thick black hair from under her arms and from her legs. Someone trimmed her fingernails. A new set of underwear was provided, a cotton dress, a pair of nylon stockings and a second-hand pair of black Capezio slippers, standard-wear for high school girls. I never saw Rivka again.

My old friend Gail Adamson came back into my life briefly in grades ten and eleven. When Gail turned fifteen she was just over five feet tall. She wore her chestnut brown hair in a "page boy" and she applied heavy black mascara and emerald green eye-liner which brought out her dark, nearly almond-shaped eyes. The thick pale pink lipstick she wore made her look a bit like the photographs of Elizabeth Taylor we admired when we flipped through her pile of film star magazines.

According to Gail's mother, Gail "went wild" in high school. Loud music and late night phone calls broke the normal sanctity of the

Adamson household. They were awakened after sleepless nights to the cacophonous sounds of "souped up" hot rods, their triple chrome tail pipes roaring thunder. The Simonized bodies of the cars gleamed in the morning sunlight as the hopeful drivers invited Gail to hop in for a ride to school.

Gail shocked everyone when she began to date one of the "coloured" boys. I was a sympathetic friend who listened attentively to her alternating tales of happiness and woe. She was interrogated -- daily at home and daily at school -- and she was put under a lot of pressure in the guidance office. After all, Gail was the daughter of an important man in the community, her mother was a "pillar" of the church, and Gail had had all the advantages that "old money" could buy. Why on earth did she want to throw her life away by going out with some Black kid?

That relationship broke up after several months with the help of the new interest shown in Gail by several lighter-skinned seniors. Gail's new "steady" had a cream coloured '59 Ford coupe with a bench seat in front. This seat ran on a greased track and when the driver wanted to make more room up front he would push with his feet and the entire seat would lurch backwards. A long, bushy racoon tail hung from the rear-view mirror, and two pink satin pillows decorated the back window. It was a home away from home for Gail and her new Puerto Rican lover.

In the spring of grade eleven, Gail's mother insisted that her daughter submit to a complete gynecological examination, as the mother was deeply suspicious about her daughter's sex life. Pre-marital sex was taboo for Christians. Gail and I had joked about her mother and father's coolness towards one another. They slept in separate beds and

Gail wondered if her mother had had to be "intoxicated" to conceive her and her brother, Harry.

The gynecological examination, which was performed by the family doctor, was humiliating for my friend. Afterwards, she came over to our house to talk with my mother, who offered her warmth and support after the painful ordeal.

At the end of the school year, Gail was married and on her way to an army base in North Carolina with her new husband. I wondered what it would be like for my friend to give birth to her baby so far away from home. As I look back, I see Gail's ordeal as a form of parental punishment because Gail had had a need for expressing love.

Grade twelve provided another lasting memory of high school. Miss Cronk taught physical education to the girls. Tall, in her thirties, Miss Cronk had cropped, short brown hair and wore tailored navy blue slacks into which she tucked her regulation white, short-sleeved blouse. A silver whistle hung on a chain around her muscular neck.

I can see Miss Cronk's menacing silhouette now, through the paper thin curtain in the girls' shower room. The hot steam fills the room as twenty-five naked girls battle for space under the nozzles.

"HUrRY uuuPPP!! Five minutes! Get a move on!" she shouts. The shrill whistle rings in our ears. We slip and slide on the green tiled floor, clutching the tiny white towels around our bosoms and behinds. We frantically pull up dripping underpants, fasten sodden bras and throw on the rest of our wrinkled clothes, in the mad race to get to the next class on time.

I knew I would never be completely safe in the gym, safe from the intrusive gaze of this teacher, from the penetrating looks and the orgasmic whistle blowing. The rapid movement of female thighs and legs pounding up and down the basketball court, the bitter-sweet odour of the sweaty gymnasium after practice, the cloying heat of the warm locker room, stirred up feelings about female bodies about my own female body. Something felt a bit strange. The only chance I had to escape was in speed and an attitude of nonchalance. I was adept in both.

Grade twelve also had two bright spots for me: the art department was a safe place in which "to hang out" and the English class, which was taught by Miss Lorraine Paticky, a young, new teacher who served as faculty advisor for the school literary magazine, "Etcetera", was heaven.

I discovered I could breathe again in the large, white, open rooms of the art studio. The sophisticated, soft-spoken art teacher, leaned casually against his desk as he spoke to us in a light, southern drawl, "What is beauty?" The class spent weeks talking, writing and painting in response to the most important question I had heard in four years.

I wrote a paper on Mayan art and fell passionately in love with a handsome Blackfoot Indian boy who sat in front of me in the class. When he stood, he towered over six feet tall, which made me feel, at five feet eleven inches, normal. He could bend over backwards completely, touch the floor and grasp a feather between his teeth, all part of an intricate tribal dance. He wore heavy, handmade silver and turquoise jewelry, and his paintings were bold brush strokes of brilliant colour.

We went with the art class on wonderful bus trips into New York City where we roamed the beehive-shaped Guggenheim, the

Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, the Frick, and many little galleries which flourished in Greenwich Village. It was almost enough to make me forget the rest of high school.

The grade twelve English class went into Manhattan to see first-rate on and off-Broadway plays such as Hamlet, where we sat in the first row and watched the actors enter, stage centre, up through a trap door in the floor; as they brushed past us, their flowing costumes beckoned us to follow, at least in our imaginations. Thornton Wilder's Our Town was playing at the Circle In The Square, and we went to West Side Story, which had just opened on Broadway.

I was beginning to feel a sense of euphoria as graduation came into view. By the end of the year I had squeaked through my high school courses. At least my verbal score on the S.A.T.'s was high and I had passed the required number of New York State Regents subjects to gain college entrance. I smiled serenely to myself as I walked down the aisle at graduation, clutching a diploma in my hand. Twelve years of schooling down and four to go.

Let me digress for a moment to say something about the difficulties of writing autobiography for a woman.

Most men who write autobiography write their life histories chronologically; we follow the development of his thinking, the unfolding "epic" events of his public life and the important contributions he has made to the culture.

In some ways, writing autobiography is quite different for women, who are perceived differently and positioned differently in the dominant culture. Sidonie Smith (1987) explores the idea of women writing

autobiography in A Poetics of Women's Autobiography, and according to Smith, women find it problematic to write their autobiographies because a woman has no *autobiographical self* in the same sense a man does; no "public story" to tell. She "looks from within and without through another pair of eyes, if often dimmed by the dark glasses of language's convention" and in her creative gesture, a woman speaks to her culture from the margins ..." (p.176).

Here I am describing myself walking down the aisle at my graduation! When I think of a "woman" reading my autobiography, I begin to write a woman's story; I start by meandering through my life story, revealing little bits of plot here and there, introducing new people haphazardly and turning back occasionally to retrieve others or to embellish an event, following and capturing memory, as memory comes to me. When I think of a "man" reading my life story, I begin to write a man's story; suddenly, I step briskly on a straight path, forward march. At times it makes me furious to have to worry in this way about the way I represent myself. I feel caught in a trap. I can please no one, least of all myself.

Smith comments on the conflict experienced by a woman, who in writing autobiography must come face to face with the problematic figure of *male selfhood*:

Acutely sensitive to her reader's expectations and to her own often conflicting desires, she negotiates a sometimes elegant, sometimes cramped balance of anticipated reader expectations and responsive authorial maneuvers. Particularly in the dramatic passages of her text, where she

speaks directly to her reader about the process of constructing her life story, she reveals the degree of her self-consciousness about herself writing in an androcentric genre. Always, then, she is absorbed in a dialogue with her reader, and to justify her decision to write about herself in a genre that is man's.

(p.50)

I continue my life story chronologically because I believe the mind-dulling effect of year after year of mass education is best hinted at this way. I walk down the aisle with my diploma! Nowadays, they hand out diplomas at graduation ceremonies in kindergartens.

In grade twelve I had applied to a small, co-ed liberal arts college in Westchester County, New York, where I had spent a "get-acquainted" weekend with hundreds of other prospective students. At first sight I loved the old college buildings which were perched high on a hill, and had a sweeping view of fields and wooded grounds, and large, private estates. At the bottom of the hill was the little town of Briarcliff Manor.

The school had been the popular Briarcliff Lodge in Victorian times. Every summer, wealthy families had come north on the New York Central railroad to escape the heat of the city. They disembarked at Scarborough Station, climbed into waiting horse-drawn carriages and were driven up the winding, tree-lined lanes to the luxurious hotel. Later on, hotel patrons began to venture further afield in their newly-acquired automobiles, and the lodge lost business and had to close.

Briarcliff Lodge was sold to the trustees of the college, and included in the sale of the hotel was the hotel furniture. The spacious

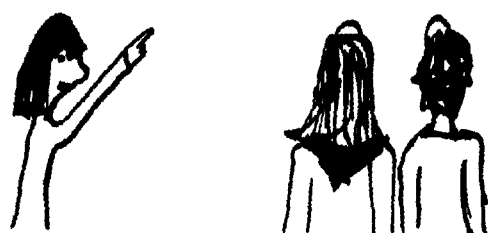
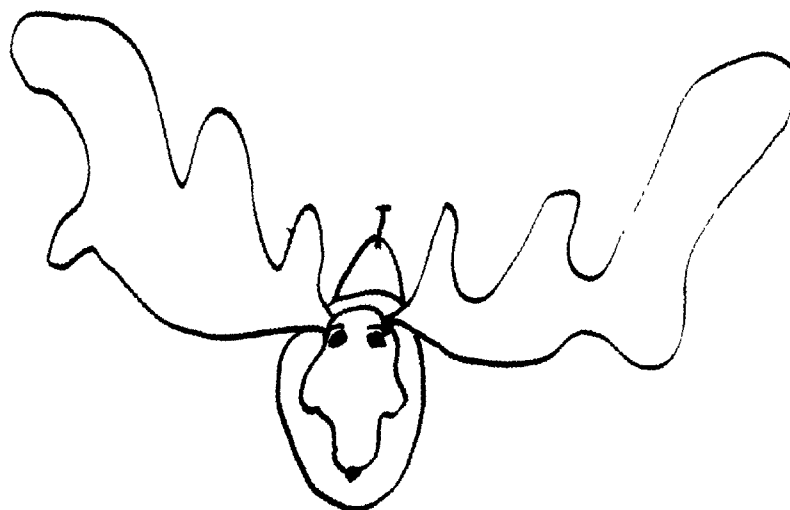
bedrooms contained mahogany four poster beds, chests-of-drawers and desks with brass hardware, and cosy, cushioned window seats which overlooked the grounds. The floors were covered with wall-to-wall wool carpets. The connecting bathrooms were thickly layered in Italian marble and had vast porcelain tubs supported on heavy, round cast-iron paws. These remnants of Victorian elegance suggested a proper college, perhaps not one of the "Seven Sisters", but "Ivy League" enough for me.

Chapel was compulsory, each day at ten a.m., unless you were ill. Dinner was served every evening at five o'clock in the college dining room, a formal, sit-down affair. These and other small formalities signified to me, at least during my first year of college, an environment conducive to "real" undergraduate life in an eastern college.

I had longed to be a student at Bennington, Barnard or Sarah Lawrence, institutions I imagined I might have attended, had I applied myself in high school; but I hadn't, and my grade point average was nowhere near to those of the successful applicants to "good" colleges. I had to be satisfied with this small liberal arts college, and I did have high hopes for the place.

When I entered the ornate, wood-panelled lobby of the college, I noticed an ancient, stuffed moose, whose head was mounted over the cavernous, open fieldstone fireplace. It was impossible to miss his glistening glass eyes and his sharp, moss-covered, grey-green antlers as you passed through the front door of the school.

I soon learned that the College Moose provided a convenient meeting place for all sorts of people who arranged to meet under his omniscient gaze: professors, friends, college roommates, foreign



"Moosey's" glass eyes were all-seeing.

students, visiting scholars, or lovers; "Meet me under Moosey!" they all cried. He was all-seeing.

After the new students registered, our courses began. We had to get used to making our way down narrow staircases into the long, dark catacombs beneath the L-shaped main building, where the classrooms, book store and snack shop were situated. This was convenient during the winter months, as we didn't have to walk outside in the snow to get to class, and we merely had to climb another set of winding stairs to reach the dormitories. Like moles living under the earth, it was rarely necessary that we come out of this protective habitat.

A girl from Texas lived in the room next to mine in the women's dorm. I can hear her crooning her favourite song, as she sat on the edge of her bed, twirling her ex-boyfriend's ring round and round her plump, pink finger:

Someday when I'm free from the chains of love,
I may fall in love again.
Someday when the torch for you grows dim,
I may find happiness then ...

Someday if you realize you've made a mistake
And want me back again,
My heart will be yours to keep or break --
I'll take that chance again.

She lasted one semester. Then a girl from Hong Kong moved in, who later became my roommate and good friend.

Lin Chang was a thin little thing who hated the cold. She spent an hour each morning in a steaming hot bath, trying to revive her circulation. Then she'd rush out of the bathroom, wrapped in a huge

terry cloth bath towel, her short, thick black hair plastered to her head, her blistered skin, cracked and raw. She'd dip into a huge blue jar of Nivea cream and daub the painful surface of her body before she braved the trek down the hill to the Music Building. Lin was a dedicated musician and a concert pianist. I loved her bell-like laugh and warm smile.

Carolyn Sweetzer, my other roommate, was a short, nervous, pimply-faced girl from Connecticut. Carolyn was intellectually brilliant, self-disciplined, a sharp thinker and a ruthless critic.

One summer, between our freshman and sophomore years, she became infatuated with a dark, round-faced gentleman from Ghana, who was serving as the assistant curate in the Episcopalian Church. That summer, Carolyn experienced a profound religious calling. She dedicated herself to a future of evangelism and she hoped to work in the jungle carrying the gospel to unsuspecting tribes who had not yet heard The Word.

By the end of my second year in college I had attracted a bit of attention by my loudly broadcast aversion to evangelism. "Prayer cells", which were small groups of students who prayed over people formed, and my name was put at the top of the list. Christian students, and I suppose they meant well, set up a meeting between the leader of the Youth for Christ organization and myself.

I was cajoled and manoeuvred into a "talk" which would take place in the student lounge. It was led by a tall, thin, Ichabod Crane-type young man who challenged me to explain why I wouldn't accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour. But I was well-prepared for this public

confrontation, and I quoted heavily from Bertrand Russell's Why I Am Not A Christian and laughed in a disgustingly superior way. Resisting the passionate plea of an evangelist is as difficult as it must be for a Brahma bull to resist a red rag waving right in front of its nose. Once into the debate, I found it difficult to walk away, and my defensive and argumentative stance only fed the appetite of the dedicated little group of Christians for a conversion.

One night, several weeks later, when I was already dressed in my pajamas and ready for bed, I received an invitation to join a few of the Christian women in Joan's room on the third floor. Joan's father was the school pastor and Joan's mother had three of her missionary children "in the field". I had been invited to a prayer cell meeting.

Seven young luminaries, including my roommate Carolyn, kneeled next to one another in a circle on the floor. A single candle burned on a table in the middle of the otherwise darkened room. The women were dressed in their pale terry robes, their fluffy hairdos rolled up in giant pink plastic curlers. They turned their opaline, make-up-less faces toward me and motioned for me to join them on the carpeted floor.

I sank to my knees in a corner, too much a coward to resist this late night invitation, and began to listen to the embarrassingly personal prayers. As time went on, the hum of the women's voices ceased to be as vulgar as I thought it would be, and I actually heard myself stammer a few unintelligible syllables out loud. In that split second, I felt some sort of "presence" wash over me from head to toe. No one said anything, but the next morning at breakfast a girl threw herself on me and congratulated me for having been born again! Little did she realize that

the experience the night before was still unclear and mysterious to me. I might have dreamed the whole thing.

That year I found myself drawn to the music of the great churches of New York City: The Riverside Church, St. John the Divine, the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian, and St. Patrick's Cathedral. I enjoyed Sundays in New York City, where I hopped from one recital to another.

Eventually, I became a member of The Riverside Church. My black wool cape flowed regally around me as I walked down the long centre aisle to the chancel railing with the other members-to-be. The rich stately trumpets had sounded our entrance, and Virgil Fox, who was resident organist, released the deep, thunderous notes of the organ pipes, which were situated an entire city block away from the organ console. My ruby velvet cloche was perched on my head in ecclesiastical style as I recited the Apostles' Creed and became a member of that esteemed congregation.

I also took an interest in the college newspaper, soon becoming the editor-in-chief. It was a case of no one else wanting the job, not any particular expertise in writing or skill in reporting. But I did love working on "The Page".

The school paper was published by a small, off-set press called "The Creative Printery" located in Hastings-on-Hudson. We delivered the copy and photographs to Mr. Alger Adams, the owner, who did the printing. I learned how to do the lay-out and picked up part-time work doing lay-out for other college papers, such as the "Emanon" of Sarah Lawrence College, a school in nearby Bronxville, New York.

A close friendship developed between the Adams' and myself. I was invited to their delightful hill side home, and I often stayed the night. Jessie was a talented cook who wrote books about food and wine. Alger accompanied her on her frequent trips to far away places, and Jessie's articles about the cuisine in these exotic spots were published in magazines like Gourmet. I remember her standing in front of the huge red enamel Agga in her kitchen basting a succulent leg of lamb.

I felt completely at home with this couple. I thrived on the stimulating dinner conversations in which people really listened to one another and I felt nurtured by the warm generosity they offered me during the school year. It came as a total surprise when someone at the college asked me, "How do you feel about staying over, the way you do, with Black people?"

What was she talking about? I knew Jessie as a "motherly" woman who had sprinkled fragrant essence of pine in baths for me and had made up a bed in her daughter's room for my use. Alger was the friend who brewed rosehip tea for our break from work on the lay-out of the copy for the newspaper. We'd sip tea together, nibble cookies and chat while the presses rattled on in the back room of the printery. I had no thought of skin color. I loved these people. I ignored the question.

But my friendship with the Adams did eventually come to a painful end. One of the college instructors, John Craig Cooper, a popular, young composer and music teacher, who worked part-time at the college, had hired me as his "manager" for the summer months. His work as a concert pianist, composer and teacher needed a lot of organizing, telephoning and paper work. I had taken piano lessons with him the

year before, and had audited his class in the history of modern music. I was a frequent visitor to musical soirees held in his upper West Side apartment, which was within earshot of students practising at The Julliard School of Music.

In the early spring of my junior year, the premiere of Cooper's The Sick Rose (text by William Blake) was presented at the college. It was part of John's larger work, "Four Seasons of Love", written for wind and string instruments. His Easter cantata, Exaudi Domine, was performed later, in May, 1963.

The exact details of the episode I am about to describe, escape me, perhaps because the whole issue and the results were catastrophic. Full-time faculty at the college were required to sign "The Pledge", as were full-time students. This meant no smoking, no drinking, no card playing, no dancing, and no attendance at movie theatres or stage plays. As a part-time faculty member, John Craig Cooper was not technically bound to keep the pledge. He spent a little time on campus and little was known about his personal or professional life.

When Cooper's most recent work, The Sick Rose was performed and dramatized in the lobby of the World Council of Churches, it was attended by all the music majors of our college. Someone described this performance back at the college. The administration and the board of trustees used the incident as an excuse to fire Cooper, based on their interpretation of his breaking "The Pledge".

As editor of the college paper, I felt obliged to write the story and to help in the efforts to have Cooper reinstated. I worked on the article

that summer and it was ready for publication in the first issue of the college paper that fall.

I brought the copy to "The Creative Printery" during the last week of August, hoping to have the first issue printed for the first day of classes. The following day I received a phone call which sent me into a hot, blinding rage. Mr. Adams said that the administration had confiscated the "copy" and although he was sorry, he couldn't print the paper. I begged him to get it back and to print it. I even offered to pay for the publication myself.

Of course he couldn't reverse his decision, but there was no way I could accept his actions. I wondered how they found out about the contents of the paper in the first place. I felt betrayed. Shortly after, I was called into the Dean of Discipline's office for a chat.

But what was at issue was much more than the cold, intellectual issue of "academic freedom". My personal world had been constructed around meaningful relationships with people such as Jesse and Alger, and in an instant my world had fallen apart. I was in love with John Cooper, and in retrospect I believe I was in love with his wife, Ruth, a concert soprano and voice instructor. At least I was in love with the way they lived their lives as artists.

The "student relationship" I had with Cooper wasn't an objective relationship, free from desire. I knew I could never "really" learn anything from someone if I didn't love that person in some way. It has always been that way for me.

Memories of the Cooper's apartment return: there is a grand piano jammed into a small front space; off that, a tiny living room, and

a galley kitchen which leads to a small composing room; next a narrow, New York apartment-style-bathroom with the cat's litter box under the sink, and a folding clothes frame extending out from the wall, nylons and underwear drying; piles of diapers rest on the back of the toilet; and there is a square room with a double bed. Things happened in that apartment; the minute I stepped through the door I felt myself coming alive.

I hear Ruth giving a voice lesson at the grand; I hear her vibrant voice and the tinkle of the keys as her student tries to imitate her "Ba,Ba,Ba,Ba,Ba" and "Da,Da,Da,Da,Da,Da" as they work their way up the scales; Ruth's nine year old daughter plays with the baby on the floor in the living room; a stew is cooking on the stove in the kitchen. John greets me and then dashes down to the corner store for a loaf of Italian bread, while I sit on the couch to "take it all in".

Sometimes, on a weekend, they'd invite me to take a drive in the country. Ruth would pack a lunch and we'd all squeeze into their ancient Saab and get out of the city for an afternoon. I remember walking through a yellow wood. It was fall; we were completely surrounded by leaves of ochre, some of which had dropped to the ground making a thick, golden carpet. I felt "yellowness" through all my senses.

One night, John and I were on the subway; he had invited me to a concert at Carnegie Hall. He was a handsome man with thick, black hair. His dark eyes flashed. I wanted to lean closer, to touch him. Just to be with him was to me a divine gift.

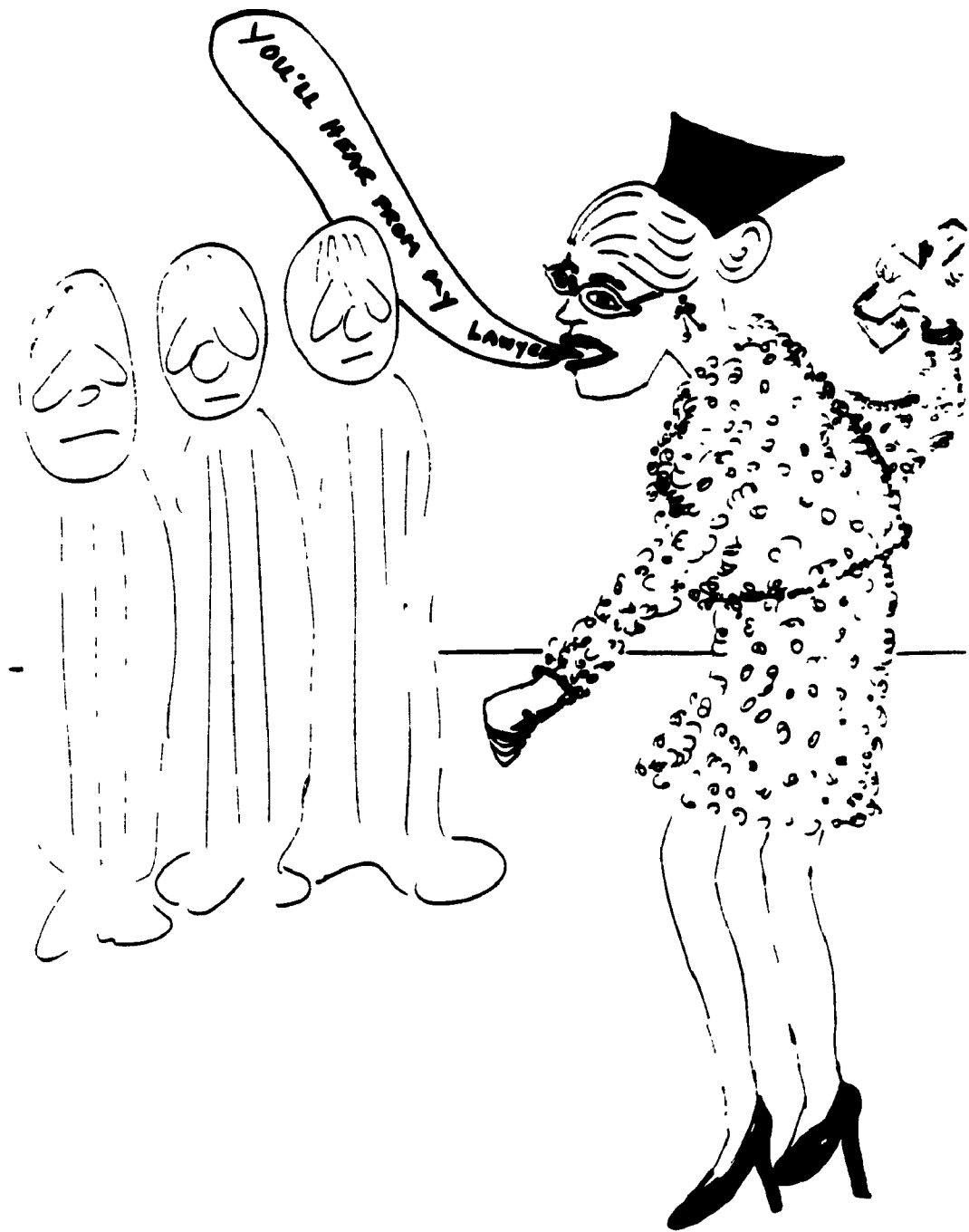
I felt equally physically attracted to Ruth, a tall, buxom, passionate woman, who had been married twice; a Mother Earth figure in her Indian print shift and leather sandals. But what I really wanted was to be able to live the way they did -- to travel to Puerto Rico and to India to study music, and to compose; to live in a great city surrounded by other artists, to acquire grants from foundations that support the arts and to spend summers at the MacDowell Colony; above all to feel so passionately about life.

So when the college administrators called me into the Dean of Discipline's Office to discuss the newspaper "issue", there was a lot more at stake than "academic freedom".

The condemning evidence was displayed on his desk. A long, drawn-out interrogation began. I was immediately removed from my position as editor and put on college probation. That night I packed my bags and moved out of the dorm to stay with a friend in nearby Tarrytown. It was the weekend and I didn't bother to sign the overnight book. Let them sweat it out!

I was still stinging inside from Adams' perfidy when I stalked into the president's office on the following Tuesday afternoon. But I kept those feelings contained in the outward image I tried to create of cool sophistication. I wore a cranberry coloured, Coco Chanel style, mohair suit, gold jewelry and black leather pumps. I had done my hair in a flawless, swept-back style, and a tiny, black, pill-box hat completed the unnerving ensemble.

The Dean of Discipline fiddled with the reels of his tape recorder and started the meeting with a short prayer. Throughout the next



Editor-in-Chief: The interrogation began.

gloomy hour, I sat stiffly at the edge of my chair, legs crossed and hands joined together on my lap. My heart rose and fell tossed about on great waves of anxiety provoked by their questions. At the end of the meeting, I shifted position, leaned forward and peered at these men through my tortoise shell spectacles, turning my head slowly so as not to miss one of their smut-hungry faces. I got up, pivoted on one heel and stepped through the door, declaring loudly, in a tone reminiscent of a Hollywood star: "You will hear from my lawyers!"

In the next four days panic overtook me. If they kicked me out I would lose too many college credits to transfer to another institution. If I stayed, it couldn't get much worse. Would it really hurt me to eat some humble pie? It would simply be a matter of "serving time" in this academic prison until graduation.

I convinced myself that sticking it out was the right course of action. I knew, if I had to, I could put on another convincing performance, beg for forgiveness and accept it willingly when it was held out to me. I did and they did and I did.

The following summer I took a Shakespeare course at Adelphi University on Long Island. The class met for three hours every day for four weeks and we read sixteen plays. The professor was loud, shocking and funny. At night, I listened to recordings of the plays as I read the texts. In class, we read parts aloud, listened to the music of Shakespeare's day, compared "themes" and issues of Elizabethan life with contemporary issues, and talked our heads off. I wished I had chosen this university in the first place, instead of the insular, mean-spirited little

place I had chosen, where you count the number of faculty members in the English department on your right hand.

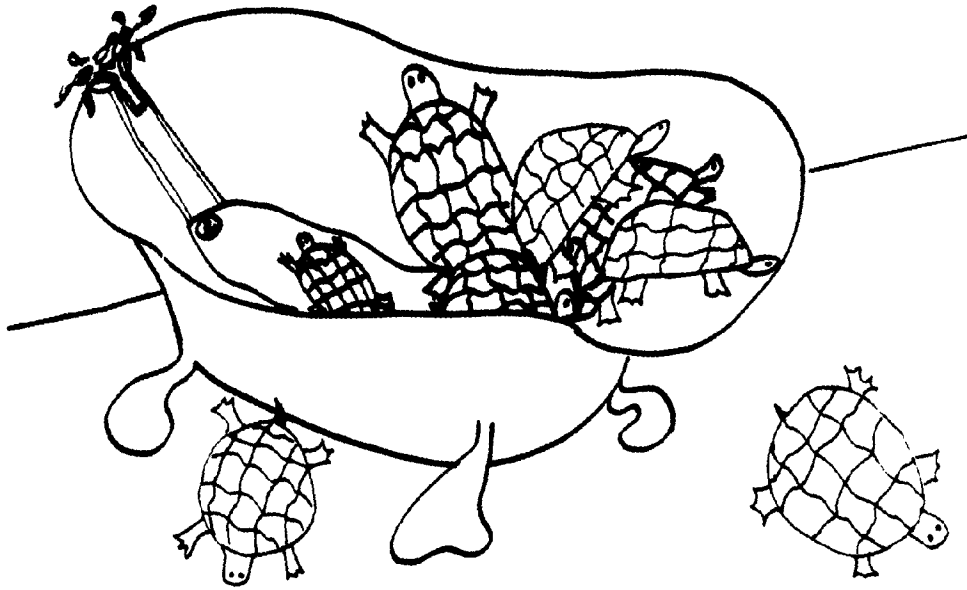
Marilyn Mollesque taught half of all the required English courses. If you got on her wrong side at the start, you were doomed. She was a short, dark haired, heavy woman who always wore black or variations on black. She'd stride into the room, heave her huge leather book bag on the table, pull out a fat notebook from one of her graduate courses at N.Y.U., where she was working on her Ph.D. and begin to lecture.

It is said that dogs sometimes resemble their owners. If you had examined English majors carefully you would have found an amazing number of Mollesques.

Although she was married to man from Munich, Marilyn's gaze was usually directed in a more southerly direction -- towards the Island of Lesbos. If you happened to be a slender, light-haired, passive beauty, you knew you could easily achieve an 'A'. If you weren't, you had to work your ass off for a 'B', and most ordinary mortals received a 'C'.

The only 'A' I got from Mrs. M was the one I received from my paper on the final exam in American literature. That was the exam I took in my pajamas. That morning, I had dropped off for a few winks at five a.m., after re-reading more than half the course work, studying my notes, and memorizing a great little book by D.H. Lawrence on American literature.

I awoke at seven forty-five a.m. and as the exam was to start at eight a.m., I grabbed a few pens, wrapped my raincoat around myself, and shot downstairs to the testing room in the catacombs. I was just in



Room 104: The baby loggerheads escape.

time for the test, but my 'A' on the examination wasn't good enough to earn an 'A' for M's course. *C'est la vie!*

College consisted of learning French under Madame Sammis, a seventy-year-old missionary teacher who trembled violently if asked a question; general psychology from a retired I.B.M. man; and biology from a famous turtle scientist (if you opened the wrong door in the catacombs, you might come upon a huge bathtub full of baby loggerheads, waiting for their daily blood transfusions).

I took all the required courses, and learned the academic survival tricks along the way. It was rumoured on the campus grapevine, that the professor of Old Testament Studies never read any of his students' papers. He may have missed the wonderful recipe for oatmeal cookies I copied out for him in the middle of my essay in the blue examination booklet as he gave me a B+ for the course.

Becoming A Teacher Of Sorts

I drove a small, red sports car during my senior year and as I needed money for its upkeep, I turned to tutoring as a source of income. My first student was a nine year old boy named Hayden Holmes who lived in Scarborough, a village near my college in Briarcliff Manor, New York.

The Holmes' estate was set back from the road, a large white house set off by beds of flowers and ornamental shrubs. I arrived for the interview and drove up the long drive to park my car in front of the four car garage. An African-American housekeeper greeted me and took me into an all-white, high-ceilinged living room. Mrs Holmes floated down the open marble staircase. She was dressed in yellow -- the Liberty silk dress, calf slippers and the velvet bow which caught back her long, blond hair, all shades of lemon. I "read" encounters with new people as I would read a chapter in a good novel -- they were like food for my hungry imagination. The luxurious Holmes' surroundings became a stage and I became as much an actress as Hayden's socialite mother.

During coffee I noticed Mrs Holmes taking in my suit, bag and shoes. I had dressed very carefully for this interview and wore clothes which I thought would make the "right" impression. I was hired on condition that I talk to Hayden's psychiatrist, to which I agreed.

The psychiatrist came straight to the point. The parents were wealthy. They paid a tutor even if the boy no longer needed tutoring. I mustn't be tempted by the situation. I said I would tell him if I felt the boy did or did not require extra help with his school work. This must have been satisfactory because I was hired.

Thus I became a "teacher of sorts" -- without stopping to think that I was putting myself in a position of power where I might do the same dreadful things done to me by teachers over the years. All I could think of was the five dollars an hour and the whisky sours and New York strip steak dinners I would treat myself to at the rustic steakhouse in Pleasantville. I did not see myself as a potential oppressor.

In fact, I envisioned being able to unravel the oppressions this student laboured under; I would help him to understand his textbooks, to learn how to study properly, to take a test successfully in school, to know what to say and when to say it in the classroom, to avoid being picked on and humiliated, and above all, I would help him to feel confident about himself. How was I to know that as a teacher I would be making a major contribution to the socialization of this boy into the suburban Westchester County school system, the very demoralizing culture I thought I would save him from!

I saw the boy twice a week for the rest of the school year. He was talkative; he showed me the fish in the large tank in his room, and I took him with me to the college chemistry lab and bought him an ice cream cone in the college snack bar. We soon became friends and he moved quickly through the chapters in his text books. The maid gave me a pay envelope every week and I never saw the parents. As far as I could tell there was nothing "wrong" with Hayden. Perhaps that was what the psychiatrist was trying to tell me. I began working with Hayden's younger brother and I had enough money to run my car.

The college offered a minor in education with which you could qualify for New York State certification to teach school at the secondary

level. I wasn't interested in becoming a teacher so I applied to the English Department of the University of Mississippi where I hoped to study William Faulkner. I was accepted into their master's program but with no offer of financial assistance -- the registrar informed me that my grades were as mediocre as Faulkner's had been when he was a student at "Ole Miss".

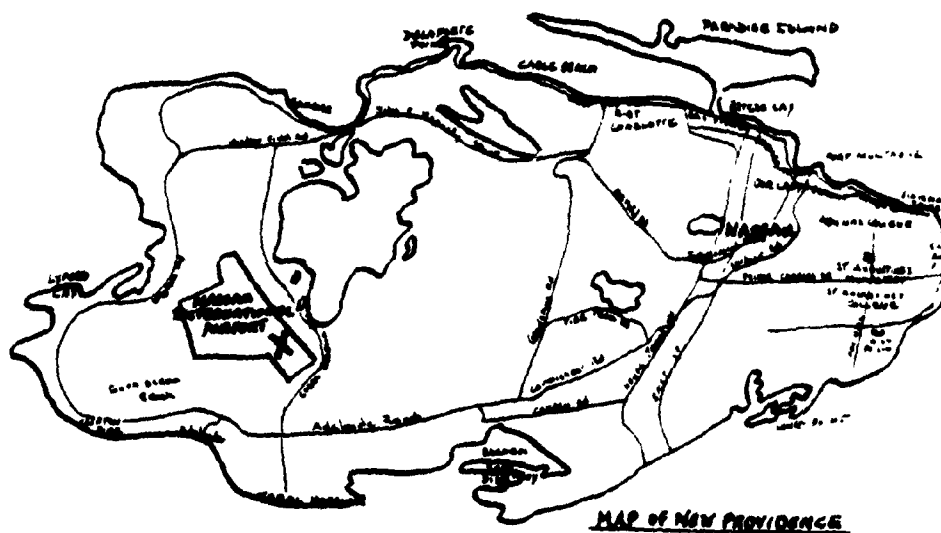
After graduation I returned home to Long Island for the summer. An old friend had recently returned from a year's teaching in a Roman Catholic boy's school in Kingston, Jamaica, and as he told me about his experience, I began to get excited. I wanted to get away from New York and a possible adventure in "the Islands" was very appealing.

My friend Chuck introduced me to Brother John Darby, a warm, sincere Marianist who had been the principal of Chaminade High School on Long Island, and who was currently serving as Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Bahamas. Brother Darby told me the mission schools were desperate for teachers. Teaching credentials were not required. The diocese offered the volunteer teachers round trip transportation, room and board, and two pounds sterling a week. Was I interested?

Time was running out. It was a hot, humid day in July. In my left hand I held the acceptance letter from Mississippi and in my right hand the acceptance letter from the Bahamas. That afternoon I decided to book a flight on B.O.A.C. direct to Nassau. I would become a real teacher.

The New Teacher Arrives

78



She thought she saw a tiny strip of rock in the middle of the ocean.

Becoming a "Real" Teacher

In her autobiography, **Myself** (1971), Sylvia Ashton Warner is critical of her own teaching which she describes as a "homicidal intrusion ... that's what my teaching is most of the time, especially the reading, intrusion on their [the students'] inner thoughts and feelings, but I do it every day, every school hour of every school day and it's the pain that makes them naughty" (p.100). As she tried to sort out in her own mind, her life as a teacher in the classroom, she confessed "I'm not a real teacher but rather a lunatic with wings" (p.235).

Talking about "real" teachers was Sylvia's attempt to put into perspective her creativity, her intuition, her imagination, her vision and the passionate feelings she experienced when working with children -- powerful emotions that ran from love and tenderness to rage and hatred. She was also aware that these emotions exist in students and that emotional life is suppressed in schools.

I hadn't read Sylvia Ashton Warner's first important book about teaching, **Teacher** (1963) before I began teaching in the Bahamas. I wish I had. And I now see Sylvia's "lunatic with wings" as an appropriate metaphor with which to begin the story of my life of learning to become a "real" teacher.

It was dusk as my flight approached the small island. We flew into the burning rim of the setting sun. Suddenly it went dark and the only light I could see was a bonfire on the beach below. In my mind, the island was a tiny strip of coral in the middle of the ocean -- nothing on it but a few coconut trees and hopefully a few friendly "natives".

The plane came in for a landing on the bumpy landing-strip, and as the mammoth jet reversed its roaring engines I caught a glimpse of the miniature arrivals building. I stepped out of the plane straight into a hot, thick wall of tropical air. I could smell the sea all around me.

Black baggage men who had rolled a worn trolley to the opening in the side of the plane eyed the female passengers as they descended the steep mobile stairs. "Hey, darlin'! Yah from N'h York, eh?"

Blind Blake and his band of Calypsonians serenaded us at the entrance to the Immigration and Customs shed. They played lively local tunes while we drank sweet Bacardi punch and had our passports stamped.

Two Sisters of Charity met me, dressed in antiseptic white, ankle-length habits and starched bonnets. The shorter woman had an impish grin. She held out her hand in a warm gesture to her new member of staff. The taller woman had a tight, square jaw. She heaved my bags into the back of the convent van and we set off for The Priory, my new home.

I said nothing during the long ride into town. I was put off by the "sisters" who had begun the journey with a "Hail Mary, full of grace ...". Finally, we pulled into the big yard behind St. Francis Cathedral and they helped me carry my things down the path to the screened-in cottage at the bottom of the priory grounds. I fell asleep that night breathing the heavy perfume of the night-blooming star jasmine which grew outside my window.

The next day my senses buzzed. I was struck dumb by the colour and the smell of the Island. Royal Poincianas ignited the sky with their

flaming red petals; plump, white beaded blossoms clustered together among the dagger-tip leaves of the Spanish Bayonet; the velvety tails of purple fur hung in long tassels from the green, heart-shaped leaves of the Chenille plant; and crisp, pastel paper flowers of the delicate bougainvillea flourished on every rocky wall.

New and unfamiliar fragrances poured from these tropical blossoms; the seductive musk of the yellow hibiscus, the ambrosial essence of the waxy blossoms of the Frangipani, and the heady scent of the pale, salmon coloured trumpet flower at twilight. I was in paradise.

Then I began to notice other things, like the "pot cakes" (mongrel dogs) stretched out in the sand, behind the church. The sagging dugs of a weary female swung low to the ground as she made her way to the shade under the trees. Her scrawny pups fell over each other trying to get to their mother. The eyes of the other canine wretches narrowed as they watched me cross the yard. The patches of hairless skin on their gaunt frames crawled with sand fleas. The beggars who lined the stone steps in front of the Bishop's office cursed these animals and threw sharp stones at them. The straight-legged, stiff bodies of dead dogs were left to rot at the side of the road.

This stink of carrion in the gutter, on the other side of the thick, pink stone wall surrounding the priory grounds, blended with the aromatic odour of the flowering trees and the salty smell of the sea air, a fickle bouquet, depending on which way the breezes blew.

"Dat stink good, eh, lady?" muttered Out Island Sally, one of the regulars on the Bishop's stoop, one morning when she noticed my nose twitching. "Dat stink good."

I screamed when I saw roaches as big as horseshoe crabs cover the kitchen counter at night, and a large rat run across my bare foot as I opened the door to the pantry. A sleepy-eyed frog peeped at me, as he hung from my bathroom mirror. He watched languidly as I swept out a huge, hairy ground spider from the back of the toilet tank.

Pesky mosquitoes found their way through tiny holes in the screens; flying termites shed millions of silver wings which covered everything in the house with a luminous sheen; long, creeping centipedes emerged from the drain in the bath tub, and thousands of tiny, pin-prick ants circled the crumbs we dropped on the floor. But there were no poisonous snakes, for which I was deeply grateful.

Each day began and ended with the angelus. At the sound of the bell, the young teachers walked up the hill to the cathedral, heads were covered in lacy mantillas, hands held small, black missals and fingered carved ivory rosaries. While my co-workers worshipped, I stayed behind in the cottage, wrote letters, read, and ate Cadbury's chocolate bars. I was the only non-Catholic in the group.

St. Francis Xavier, although a cathedral, was a simple, open church with a clean, green and white tiled floor and plain pine pews. The first time I went to mass I sat directly behind the nuns, who took up the first three rows. I watched as row after row of nuns bobbed up and down during the long liturgy. When they went down on their knees a fifth time, I felt I would faint. All sense of colour vanished as I stared into the folds of the voluminous white habits in front of me. I heard the priest's muted voice at the altar, the tinkle of tiny bells, the rhythmic rattle of rosaries and the monotonous murmur of whispered prayers.

I met with Sr. John at the convent twice a week. She had been chosen to be my mentor. The convent was a beautiful old French-style building situated on the crest of a hill overlooking Nassau harbour. Just inside the wood-latticed front door, to the right, was a long hall of receiving rooms where the nuns entertained their guests. Each small room was identically equipped with two rattan chairs, a table, a lamp and a bookcase full of old books. I had read many of them, and found two old favourites: Dorothy Day's life story, The Long Loneliness, and Thomas Merton's autobiography, The Seven Storey Mountain.

To the left of the front door was the large convent kitchen, and there were always good smells coming under the door -- a bubbling pot of chicken *souse*, a skillet of sizzling fish, or a sweet-smelling pan of johnny cake. The native cook bought her fish from the "Fish Man", an old fellow who rode his bicycle past the convent every morning before breakfast, having come straight from the market at Potter's Cay. He might hold up a fat grouper or two plump, red snappers, or several small jack, or a large, speckled crawfish. The nuns ate well, but I noticed the children in their schools didn't.

I loathed the meetings with Sister John. "How to Teach Penmanship" was the topic of our first meeting together. She instructed me to print the alphabet in upper and lower case letters until I had filled a small exercise book with page after page of capital A's, B's and C's. She thought that once I mastered each letter, I would be able to teach my kids to do the same. She thought it was good pedagogy, but it didn't seem to me to be the way to teach children to write. But how could I protest? I was uncertified.

Sr. John's classroom, which was next to mine, had a connecting door. Every morning we exchanged classes so she could teach my kids religion, but I knew her real interest was in snooping around my classroom to examine the children's workbooks. I introduced her kids to crayons, clay and paint (I had come to the Island well-stocked). The children drew bright pictures of themselves and made clay replicas of the nanny goats which roamed in the schoolyard. Every part of the goat was copied in exact proportion, which may have upset Sr. John.

A showdown came one Friday morning. Sister had assumed she had gathered enough "evidence" to prove what an *"at-risk"* teacher I was, "doing art" and reading to the kids all day long. A talk was arranged with the Headmistress, Sr. Richard. We three would meet after school in the tiny, unventilated "staff room" to discuss the problem.

I was beside myself with anger at the stupid nun. How could a person who called herself a "teacher" not be aware of the damage she was doing to kids by insisting six-year-olds have perfect penmanship, colour within the lines of stencilled "art" patterns, learn to read by memorizing word lists such as "cat, mat, fat, hat" and by reading boring stories about white, blond, middle-class kids riding on trains. (The Bahamas is ninety-six percent Black, and there are no trains.) What seemed most important to the teachers in that school was the performance of lessons instead of the substance of knowledge.

But she certainly had no reason to listen to me. I had no teaching license and had never taken a reading "methods" course in my life. Consequently, when I began to argue that the first story in the Ronald Rideout Reader, entitled "My Dog Nigger" was inappropriate for

African-Bahamian children, I had no educational credibility to back my position. It was more important for most teachers to "get through" basal readers without missing a chapter, than to censor reading material that would damage the self-esteem of the children.

Things haven't changed all that much. Although it is now nearly 30 years since I first stepped into that primary classroom, I recently heard a conversation between my 14-year old daughter, Jerusa, and her friend, Angie. They were talking about a junior high school teacher who had manipulated them by first praising them -- "Oh, you really understand that concept, don't you!" -- and then failed them when they didn't present their work in a binder that was the right size, shape and colour.

In their "gripe session", the young women compared life in junior high school with life in a "concentration camp", and they complained that the teacher was not only vindictive, but that she didn't know anything about the subject she was teaching, other than the lessons and answers provided in her Teacher's Guide.

What continues to be of importance to so many teachers is the performance of lessons and not the substance of respectful conversation between teacher and child.

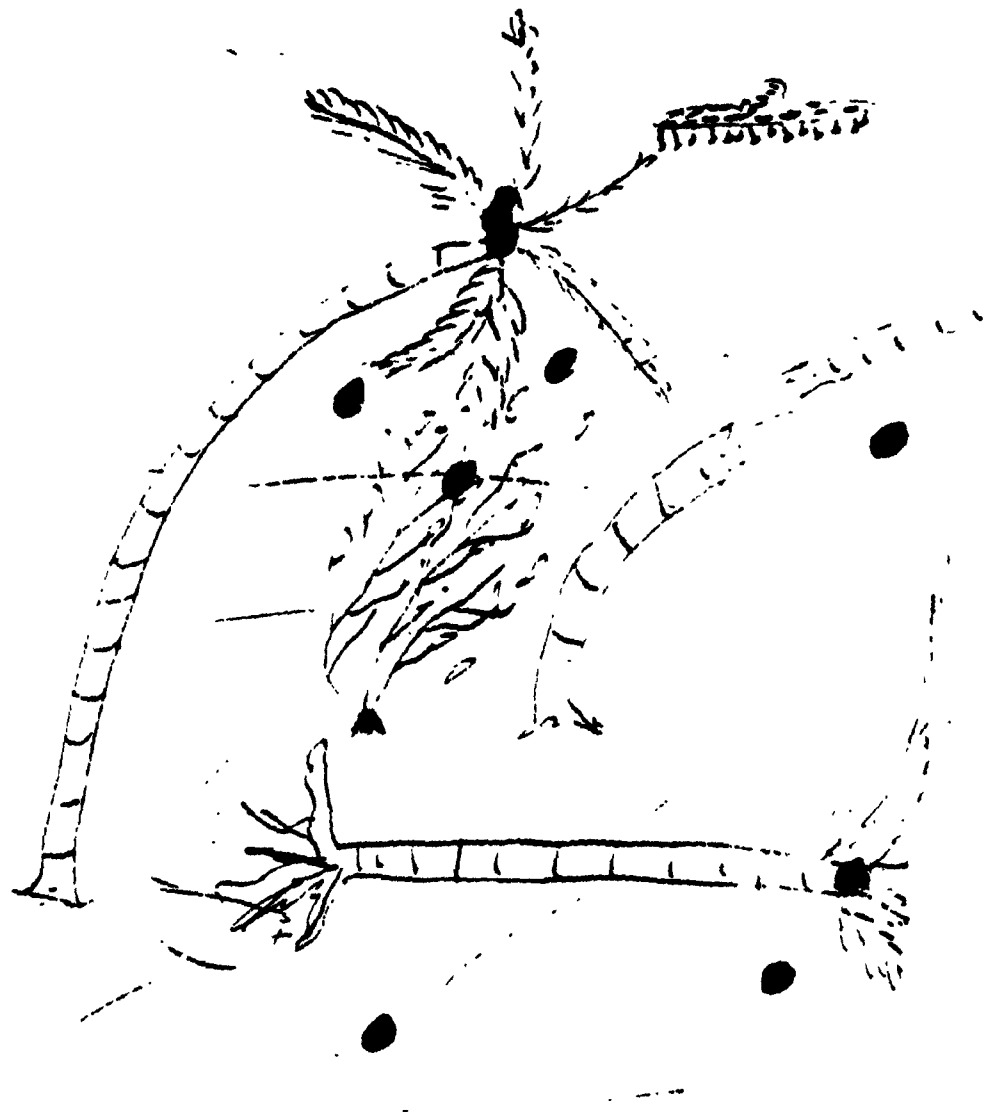
But fortunately for me, the Headmistress, Sr. Richard, recognized some latent potential in her youngest teacher, and asked me to give a talk on "Art in the Primary School" at the next Catholic Teachers' Conference. Sr. John fumed and fussed but eventually I began to feel sorry for her because I could see how unhappy she was, trapped in the confines of her parochial thinking.

I became a good friend of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Brother John T. Darby. "Brother" lived in a small, blue clapboard house in the "over-the-hill", poor section of the Island. He named it "Chateau Chaminade" after Chaminade High School, the well-known Catholic boys' prep school on Long Island, New York, where he had served as headmaster. He had always been keen on education and had spent his early years as a teacher in Africa, and later on as an educational administrator in other third world countries.

He was a true missionary at heart, and his philosophy was summed up in the following advice he gave to incoming volunteer teachers: "Let us do all we can to better the situation in which we find ourselves and to quickly train local persons to take over our jobs." "Brother" was no slouch. He served as Superintendent of Catholic Schools of the Bahamas for six years, resigning only when he could nominate a qualified Bahamian replacement.

I think Brother Darby liked my direct approach to things. Some of our most fiery, yet good-natured debates, hinged on the theology of the Blessed Virgin, as Brother was a Marianist from Dayton, Ohio. I didn't give two hoots for the Virgin Mary, depicted by the Church as the woman to have had both a theological and a biological immaculate conception, which seemed absurd to me. I covered the hideous plastic statue of Our Lady, jutting out of the corner of my classroom, with a bright poster from Shell Oil, Ltd.

Soon after school started, Hurricane Betsy hit the Islands. We had eight hours to prepare for the storm to strike. The windows and doors had to be boarded up and those that weren't had mattresses propped up



Hurricane Betsy

against them to keep out the driving winds and rain. For three days and three nights, fourteen of us lived together in a two room bungalow with no electricity and no running water.

We kept sane by tracking the storm's path on a hurricane map. The radio signals, which were broadcast from the Miami Weather Station, were picked up sporadically on our small, battery-powered transistor. Then, in the seven hour dead calm of "the eye" of the hurricane, we ventured out to see what had happened to Bay Street.

Giant palm trees were bent double, smaller palms completely uprooted and thrown haphazardly about the beach, and the monstrous waves had pushed six feet of sand up on the main road in front of the tourist hotels. We stood on the esplanade and watched the grey, rippleless water, scarcely believing its incomprehensible force and power. Then it was time to make our way back to the priory to "batten down" for the tail end of the hurricane.

When it was over, the Island was whistle clean. The wooden shacks, the abandoned cars, the oil drums, the garbage and the old lumber that had been piled up in peoples' yards had been completely stripped off the island's surface by the powerful, two hundred mile an hour winds. The people rallied, and in a few weeks New Providence Island was restored to reasonably habitable condition. Only the smaller Out Islands suffered irreparable damage and loss of lives.

Next door to Our Lady's School was the Hardecker Clinic, run by Dr. Julie Weising from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. My classroom was so close that "Dr. Julie" told me she could hear everything that went on, from roll-call to the voices of the thirty-five children

responding in unison to the question, "Who made you? **"GOD MADE ME."**

One of the medical services Dr. Julie offered was a pre-natal programme for Haitian women. A large number of people on Deveau Street had spent their life savings to come to the Bahamas, illegally, from Haiti on overcrowded, leaky wooden sloops. The captains sailed their frail crafts as close to shore as possible and then dumped the human cargo overboard. Those who did not know how to swim drowned, and the bodies of women and children often washed up on the beaches. Those who survived lived in "the bush" on the southern end of the Island until they slowly became assimilated with the rest of the immigrant Haitian population who lived in crowded shacks in town. These shacks had no running water. Children were sent to collect water in tubs or bottles at "the pump", which was a single water spigot, usually found "t'rough the corner" in every neighbourhood. People defecated on the bare, rocky ground of their "yards", which started a vicious cycle of disease.

Many of the children's bellies were painfully distended with intestinal worms. Dr. Julie gave these children free medicine. We were asked to take note of who was "passing" worms in the small cement outhouse behind the school. Children ran to tell me, "D'debbil dere, d'debbil dere." "D'debbil", I soon discovered, was some sort of internal parasite, flushed out by the strong new drugs. The work of the clinic was funded, in part, by a large U.S. pharmaceutical company, testing its products prior to approval for release on the American market. We all thought the drug testing was a "super idea".

The hot, exhausting days in the classroom dragged by slowly. Drenched in sweat, I day-dreamed of enormous vats of cool water. I counted the minutes until lunchtime, and when the tangy smell of conch fritters boiling in oil in the Lunch Lady's pot wafted through the open windows, I'd push all the kids out, bar the door and rush over to her little wooden stand.

What delicacies: puffy, golden, peppery fritters; thick, glistening wedges of macaroni and cheese; heaping plates of hot peas and rice; crunchy sesame seed cakes called "benny", and smooth coconut cream set in buttery pastry shell tarts. The coconut candy was made from pure cane sugar and thick curls of freshly grated, milky-white coconut meat, the outer edges tinged a deep pink; one piece was guaranteed to get you through the afternoon.

The water in the taps was salty and brackish so I kept myself going on a local drink called "White Lightning". It was a ginger brew sold in tall, plain green bottles, and tasting slightly soapy. After lunch I'd stretch out on my desk in the dark, airless classroom, close my eyes, and drift off until "sister" rang the brass handbell and it was time to let the children back into the room.

A small, chunky, Black boy named James Joseph, fought and scrapped to be first in line. He was a tough, stocky six-year-old who lived on Deveaux Street with his grandfather. The boy's head was bandaged most of the time to cover small lacerations and ring worm; his legs had running sores and he rarely wore shoes. My heart went out to him.

James Joseph was the only child who learned how to read in my class that year. One day he just stood up and read an entire page of the ancient "school reader", loud and clear for everyone to hear. From then on, he could read just about anything. I was euphoric.

I didn't have much luck teaching the other children to read. I wish I had known about Sylvia Ashton Warner's work then. Her "organic" method of teaching and her use of what she called the "key vocabulary" to teach reading to Maori children might have worked with Bahamian children. My method was simply to tell lots of stories and to read to them, hoping something would brush off. But it didn't, and I was learning a lot more than the children.

I recorded the children's voices on Brother Darby's tape recorder and they listened to themselves in wide-eyed wonder. "My name is Tony Carey. My name is Daisy Flowers. My name is Peter Bowleg. My name is Donald Symonette. My name is Tyrone Butler. My name is Barbara Pinder. My name is Ruth Hepburn." Many of the surnames originated with American Loyalists who were given large holdings in the Bahamas in 1783 as a reward for their loyalty to the Crown during the American Revolution. They gave their names to the Black Bahamians, the majority of whom were slaves of relatively unmixed ancestry from West Africa.

The children taught me "Old Stories", with the well-loved characters "B'Rabby", an underdog trickster, who reminded me of his American relative, Br'er Rabbit and "B'Booky", B'Rabby's stupid, greedy foil. There were a great many other characters that embodied both



"My name is Tony Carey. My name is Daisy Flowers. My name is ..."

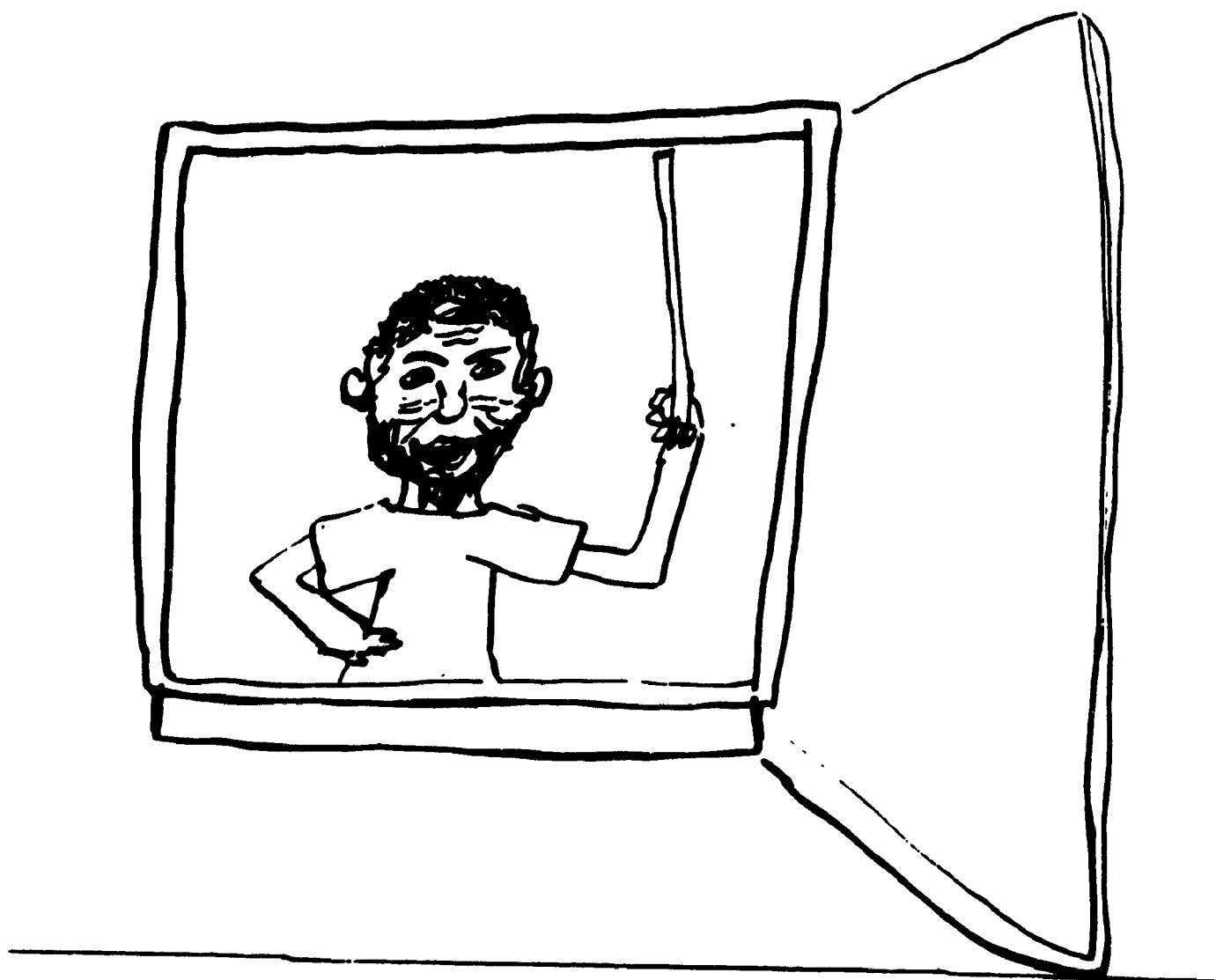
animal and human characteristics: B'Dog, B'Cat, B'Monkey, B'Parakeet, B'Rooster and B'Roach. Classroom chatter ceased the minute the rhythmic opening line of an "Old Story" was spoken: "Once upon a time, a very [weary, berry or merry] good time, monkey chew tobacco, and he spit white lime ..." These "Old Stories" could have been a natural starting place for developing the children's interest in learning to read. Unfortunately, I didn't see it at the time.

I was fascinated by the "ring play" songs and dances which they joyfully performed in the school yard: "There's a brown girl in the ring, tra,la,la,la,la. There's a brown girl in the ring, tra,la,la,la,la. A brown girl in the ring, tra,la,la,la,la,la. And she looks like a sugar in a plum, plum, plum ..." and the naughty favourites: "Bang, Bang Lulu" and "Shame and Scandal in the Family".

One afternoon, James Joseph did not return to school after lunch. His grandfather appeared at my window, bellowing in a deep, gruff voice, "Miss, Miss, Miss!" He waved a thick, heavy stick back and forth over his head.

I was terrified. How could I possibly communicate with this angry, old man. This is it, I thought, I'm finished. The children sat stiffly behind the narrow wooden desks, not daring to breathe and waiting to see what would happen next. I walked over to the open window and leaned out. My face was within inches of the grandfather's fierce glare. I could smell the strong rum on his breath. "Good afternoon, sir! Where is your boy?" I spoke with the calm authority of one in charge.

The old man tried to tell me what happened. "A cart run over d'boy, d'boy knock down, d'boy mash up!" I sympathized. I thanked him



"Miss! Miss! Miss! Muh boy mash up!"

profusely for coming to tell me about it, for coming to tell the teacher. I stalled for time, trying to diffuse the time bomb which seemed ready to go off outside my window. Then the old man put the stick down and walked away. I was lucky.

I had witnessed a stick confrontation several weeks before, between two thirteen-year-old boys in the school yard. There had been an unsettling calm as the two boys eyes each other coldly. Then one boy mumbled a challenge through tightly drawn lips, and the other "cut he eyes" (lowered his angry eyes halfway) and "suck he t'ee" (sucked his teeth). The first boy grabbed a narrow board lying in the sand and in a passionate rage struck the second boy on the brow. A girl screamed and in twenty seconds two hundred kids appeared forming a tight circle around the two boys. The fight was on. The crowd of children pressed closer, barely giving the two boys enough space to move. "Fight! Fight! 'Jook' him! 'Jook' him good!" they shouted; it was their way of saying slash him, rip him open. I stood back. The crowd, hypnotized by the two boys, moved in one great mass, first to the left, then to the right, then to the left again. The nuns stood helplessly in the background, their voices drowned out by the screaming mob. Finally, Fr. Pat, a big, white Irishman, pushed his way through the bodies and the two boys jumped over the stone wall behind the school.

Physical violence was a common occurrence "over the hill". (This is the area of the Island behind West Hill Street which had been, a hundred and fifty years before, the dividing line between Government House, the big homes of the wealthy whites, and the slave quarters.) Emotions ran close to the skin "over the hill", and a sudden slap or

"knock" was expected when hard feelings were expressed. I heard the story of a wife who threw lye into the face of her husband's lover, scarring and blinding the woman for life. The neighbours believed the husband's sweetheart had deserved it.

I had a taste of physical violence one night as I walked up Delancey Street to the Buena Vista Hotel, where my mother and father were staying. It was a perfect night, a delicately cool sea breeze nudged the palm leaves as I passed through the iron gates at the entrance of the hotel drive. I was casually dressed in a linen shift and I carried a soft leather shoulder bag. I was looking forward to a delicious meal, as the Australian owners of the hotel had a reputation for serving the best conch chowder and guava duff on the Island. I heard pleasant guitar music, the tinkling of glasses, and the gay laughter of hotel guests having their pre-dinner drinks in the Canary Bar. I could see the soft, flickering blue lights of candles in glasses on the outdoor tables which were set out on a patio under stately coconut palm trees.

As I rounded the curve in the drive, I heard footsteps advancing behind me. I thought it was another guest hurrying to meet someone. Suddenly my handbag swung up in the air. I managed to hang on to the strap and yank it back. "No, you don't!" I shouted, not realizing how strong my assailant was. My hairbrush fell out of the purse and the thief picked it up and bashed me in the face, knocking my glasses in pieces before he ran off through the garden. I was left alone, standing in the shadows of the hotel, in a state of shock.

I called out into the dark to the man I could hear running through the shrubs behind the Canary Bar, Give it back! I'm not a tourist! I'm here to help Bahamians! I'm a lay missionary! I'm not a tourist!"

It was an important moment of self revelation, such as the blinding personal insight Gandhi experienced when he was thrown off a train for being the wrong colour, or the stab of spiritual conscience Saint Augustine experienced when he remembered why he stole the pears:

Fair were the pears we stole because they were Thy creation, Thou fairest of all, Creator of all, Thou good God; God, the sovereign good and my true good. Fair were those pears but not them did my wretched soul desire; for I had store of better, and those I gathered only that I might steal. For, when gathered, I flung them away, my only feast therein being my own sin, which I was pleased to enjoy.

(1952, p.26)

Virginia Woolf writes about the experience of similar important "moments of being" that came upon her as a shock:

As a child then, my days, just as they do now, contained a large proportion of this cotton wool, this non-being. Week after week passed at St. Ives and nothing made any dint on me. Then, for no reason that I know about, there was a sudden violent shock; something happened so violently that I have remembered it all my life.

(1976, p.71)

One of Woolf's "exceptional moments" occurred when she ...

was fighting with Thoby on the lawn. We were pommelling each other with our fists. Just as I raised my fist to hit him, I felt: why hurt another person? I dropped my hand instantly and stood there, and let him beat me. I remember the feeling. It was a feeling of hopeless sadness. It was as if I became aware of something terrible, and of my own powerlessness.

(p.71)

Woolf described these "sudden shocks" as being particularly valuable because they are a "revelation of some order"; she believed

that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we -- I mean all human beings -- are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock.

(p.72)

As I think back to the assault on the grounds of the Buena Vista Hotel, I realize now that this shocking experience was, for me, very like one of Virginia Woolf's "exceptional moments" or "moments of being". I felt indignant at the time -- how could a Bahamian steal "my purse" -- I had been working for just over five dollars a week, suffering all kinds of deprivation, and for whom?

The C.I.D. came in an official black Austin and drove me back to the priory, where the detective recorded the details of the assault. Ten days later, my bag was recovered by one of my students. The word had been sent out that a missionary teacher had been robbed. Not a tourist. Everything important was still in the bag when it was returned: Bahamas Work Permit, driver's license, etc., but three pound notes and a handful of coins were missing.

Over twenty years has passed since this incident and it has taken me that long to realize what an arrogant fool I was to believe myself superior to that thief.

Two of the female lay missionary teachers died that year in a freak boating accident. They had ignored the gale warning flags at the Hurricane Hole Marina and had gone sailing anyway. We stood on the beach in the driving rain and watched as the men dragged for the bodies from a small tug, the only boat capable of staying afloat in that rough water. They found the body of one young woman, but the body of the other young woman must have washed out to the open sea.

Cathy's was the first funeral service I had ever attended. St. Francis Cathedral was filled with banks of white flowers and every pew was tightly jammed with mourners and locals who were curious about the white girl who had drowned in Nassau harbour.

Butler's Mortuary had prepared her body for the funeral mass. We walked single-file past the open casket. Cathy stared up from her blue satin pillow, a severe look on her pretty round face. I heard a nun comment, "How lovely she looks! They've done such a nice job on her hair."

The main Celebrant moved slowly down the aisle towards the altar. Clouds of sweet incense rose from the priest's censer to mingle with the oppressive scent of the flowers and the sweating congregation that packed the church. An usher rolled the open coffin up and down the aisles for all "to catch glimpse", and we raised our voices to the final hymn, the words of which begged for mercy for the poor souls lost at sea.

When the Bishop asked us if wanted to return to the Bahamas to teach the following school year, I said yes. "Brother" had told me he needed an English teacher for Aquinas College. I'd had enough of teaching small children and I badly needed a change. I wanted the job.

Back in New York again for the summer, I read all the current books and journals about teaching English that I could get my hands on, and I combed the second-hand bookstores for reading materials for adolescents. I kept myself going spiritually by reading the religious writers, St. John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila. I returned to the Bahamas in late August with several crates of books for the kids and for myself.

Several of the volunteer teachers had left the group at the end of the previous school year, and two teaching couples and several other single teachers joined us in September. The new group of people seemed to have a lot more life, intellectually and spiritually. I began to realize how lonely I had been the previous year.

One of the new couples had undergone Missions Training at the University of Dayton, and had learned the psychological techniques of "group dynamics". Ben and Laura tried to apply the new theory of

other. Belonging to a group had never appealed to me before, it had even terrified me, but I enjoyed these gab sessions. This new group wasn't bad, even though one girl "cracked up" and chose to go back home just before Christmas vacation. It was never clear to me whether it was just cultural shock or her days spent in the classroom, or the rigours of the nightly "group sessions" that convinced her to leave the Island.

I was deliriously happy with my new teaching position at Aquinas College. I was teaching the books I knew and loved and there were men on the staff. Richard Cure, a tall, thin Jesuit novice, from Worcester, Massachusetts, taught religion and was sympathetic to my current interest in contemplative writers. He was also a fabulous dancer.

It was the year of "the Flying Nun", a popular movie about a rebellious young Dominican. The nuns at Aquinas didn't do much "flying", but they treated us well. A hot breakfast and a hot lunch were provided each day in the spacious dining room of their convent. The nuns also had two enormous freezers full of food imports such as Sarah Lee Chocolate Fudge and Pecan Coffee Ring, and gallons and gallons of Howard Johnson's creamy ice cream.

Brother Darby's cottage, Chateau Chaminade was visible from the upper balcony of Aquinas College, and I enjoyed dropping in on "Brother" after school. He went out of his way to get tapes, records and sets of books for my use in my English classes.

I had asked him to buy me a class set of Black Like Me, the autobiography of a white man, who had disguised himself as a Black and travelled through the southern United States just prior to the Civil

Rights Movement. I used the book with my grade ten classes. The kids loved the moving story which was written in colourful "street language".

Once they got over the novelty of reading aloud the four letter words in school, the students became deeply involved in the man's life story. The Black kids talked about him as if he were kin -- it was as if they had all lived his story. The white kids were intrigued by the author's skin -- how did he turn himself black? They all wanted to know what it was like to be black in the southern United States. They began to talk about being black in the Bahamas. "Black Awareness" ideology hadn't "reached", but the kids were eagerly receptive.

The book was a school-wide hit, but just as I was patting myself on the back for picking a winner, disaster struck and my career was put on the line. A "Conchey-Joe" (indigenous white) parent had examined a copy of the book, and shocked by the content, had complained to the headmistress. Teachers began complaining about my loud classes -- there was a lot of "fool discussin' goin' on" and they were "plenty sick" of the "skylarkin". If reading Black Like Me stirred up too much racial pride in Black kids, what might happen when the same kids showed up for work, "cocky and biggoty" in the hotels that depended on white patronage? No one wanted any "race trouble" on Bay Street.

Black Bahamians didn't know they were "Black" yet. Black children still played with white dolls. Black women straightened their hair regularly and used bleaching cream on their faces to appear "lighter". Black men sought white mates so they could "marry up" and lighten the family line. The "lighter the better" ...

The parents lodged a formal complaint against me and the headmistress called in the judicious Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Brother Darby. We were all to meet at "Chateau Charminade" for a confrontation.

A familiar pattern emerges in my autobiography at this point, as the story of "My Dog Nigger" returns from the grave.

There were no "set books" on the grade ten English curriculum for the "slow" students; teachers chose texts randomly from the stock -- whatever they could find in the college storeroom. I had discovered a few ragged copies of "Hiawatha", eight or so copies of Oliver Twist, and a new, untouched class set of White Fang in hardcover. Although I knew Oliver Twist was a big favourite with Bahamians, as I had taught the novel to my adult B.J.C. (Bahamas Junior Certificate) classes at night, I wanted each day student to have his own book, and there just weren't enough to go around. "Hiawatha" was out, and as far as White Fang was concerned, I couldn't read the fine print.

My choice of Black Like Me was influenced by my desire to get the kids "hooked on books". I was certain that kids needed to "see themselves" and their lives represented in the books they would read before they could be asked to make the leap into reading about people in other cultures.

As far as I was concerned, the traditional British works which were being forced down the throats of Bahamian high school students were not only off-putting but degrading. I felt outraged by the idea of "set books" (set by whom?) and the entire G.C.E. Cambridge examination

system. It was a classic case of the British divide-and-rule technique of perpetuating racial distinctions while pretending to disavow racism.

I had vehemently refused to teach the blatantly racist story, "My Dog Nigger" to my grade one pupils, and I was now vehemently committed to teaching Black Like Me to my high school students. But I felt frightened as I walked over to Chateau Chaminade. I knew the book had touched a sensitive spot in these white Bahamian parents, a very raw spot beneath which festered hundreds of years of feelings. (I had never thought to question my own deeper motives for choosing to teach the book, nor had I thought through my own privileged position as young, white, American, female teacher.)

"Brother" asked me to describe how I handled the book in class and what my own feelings were about the students' responses. I described lively class discussions and mentioned the complaints of other teachers. I had been upset by the complaints, but I still believed I had made the right decision. I was convinced that finding a book to read that meant something to you, in your heart and in your guts as well as in your mind, was vitally important. I was convinced that reading a personally meaningful book could produce miracles and I thought I had discovered the perfect method of teaching English.

Brother Darby took a big chance on me by supporting my decision to teach Black Like Me. He listened to the parents who had complained and put them at ease in his tactful and conciliatory manner.

About halfway through the school year, I decided I wanted to become a Roman Catholic. This pleased "Brother" immensely, and in a way I think I did it for his sake. I had also been influenced by the other

lay missionaries who were eager for me to convert to Catholicism. I would need a spiritual advisor, and a young, Black Benedictine priest, who had given a spiritual "retreat" to the lay teachers came to mind. He had annoyed me during the retreat -- he seemed too cocky, and I had disagreed with more than one point of his theology. When the retreat was over, I had asked him if I could talk with him privately. Alone on the patio, my first impressions changed. Fr. Bonaventure was friendly, and I was impressed with how well-read he seemed.

I began my catechetical studies under his guidance, making the long drive "Out East" on the Island, to the monastery in Fox Hill. Saint Augustine's Monastery was a Spanish-style, white stucco building, built into a hill of rough coral rock that overlooked the then-prestigious boy's school, run by the Benedictine monks.

During our catechetical lessons, Fr. Bonaventure and I discussed the ideas of religious thinkers such as Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, Paul Tillich, Hans Kung and Teilhard de Chardin. I wanted to share my love of the writings of the mystic poet, St. John of the Cross whose image of the solitary bird stretching its beak toward heaven and soaring to spiritual heights seemed an apt metaphor for my own lonely quest.

I kept a detailed journal of my "spiritual thoughts" and the efforts I had made to rid myself of all forms of concupiscence. This writing the priest thought a bit overdone. He became distant when I attempted to share my thoughts on spirituality. I don't think he understood my "dark nights of the soul"; perhaps I had stirred his own doubts about Christian faith. In any case, one night he advised me not to join the Church.

Converts are notoriously passionate about their faith, but perhaps I had gone too far!

I remember stepping out of his office that night into darkness that wrapped itself around us like a cloak. Glancing up, I saw the monastery, a hazy, white, moonlit silhouette on the hill. This uncanny vision never left me, nor the intense longings that swept over me when Fr. Bonaventure took my hand in his as we walked up the path towards my car. I was so young and I wanted so very much to be loved.

Still determined to join the Church, however, I approached an older priest, who agreed to baptise me. Just after the ceremony (which was captured on 8mm black-and-white film), several nuns came up to me and presented me with lovely gifts: a mother-of-pearl rosary and an "authentic relic" -- a tiny sliver of bone of the Saint Martin de Porres set in a silver locket. One nun whispered in my ear, "Pray for me." My first Holy Petitions would have that extra spiritual punch because my baptism had made as sinless as a newborn babe, in the eyes of God.

I invited my friend, Fr. Bonaventure, to the baptismal barbecue, and as I handed him a heaping plate of peas"n"rice and grilled grouper, he chuckled loudly and leaned over to comment, "I knew you'd do it anyway, Ann."

The lay missionary teachers were beginning to be seen as "trouble-makers" in the ecclesiastical quarters of the Island. The Bishop resented some of our ext^{ra}-curricular activities which he had correctly interpreted as subversive.

For instance, we were helping Fr. Guy, a Haitian priest whose life was devoted to rescuing the illegal Haitian immigrants who had arrived in droves in the Bahamas on small, leaking sloops. Government officials regularly rounded-up these people and delivered them to be returned to Port-au-Prince on some of the same boats that the refugees had paid dearly to carry them to the Bahamas in the first place. Just before sailing, the Church gave each "poor soul" a new set of clothing and five pounds (quite a large sum in those days). It wasn't long before Fr. Guy was shipped out of the country himself, to a Haitian apostolate in New York City.

The Bishop was irritated by the "familiarity" developing between the white female teachers and the young, black college-educated Bahamian men. One of the Bahamians had been a pro-baseball player in the United States and was teaching physical education at Aquinas College. He fell in love with one of the "Bishop's girls" and the couple had announced plans to marry. Unlike the nuns in the diocese, we had made no vows of obedience or chastity. We were, however, interested in poverty, and this also outraged the Bishop.

We started talking about moving off the priory grounds to live in store-fronts in the "over the hill" section of the Island. We wanted to live with the people we had been brought to the Bahamas to help. What a revolutionary idea! The Bishop had his ways of handling such impertinence, and when we had our next planning session, we were shocked to discover we had been betrayed. Everyone left the country at the end of the school term except for one couple and their two young children who were sent to teach on remote Cat Island.

I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I left Nassau in 1967, so I returned home to Long Island. I read the classified job ads in "Newsday" and I drove out to Riverhead where I took the New York State Civil Service Exam for Social Workers, which I failed by one point.

In July, Fr. Bonaventure called me from New York City. He was studying that summer at Columbia University and we made arrangements to get together. I remember sitting on a bench in the sun near Grant's Tomb where we discussed the books he was reading. Fletcher's Situation Ethics was then the talk of the town.

After dinner in a West Indian restaurant somewhere on the upper West Side, it was time for me to catch the Long Island Railroad, and for him to return to the Harlem parish where he was staying for the summer. As I stepped through the brass turnstile at the entrance to the subway at 116th Street, Fr. Bonaventure called out, "When will I see you again?"

In August, one of the lay teachers, Gary, who I had worked with in Nassau came to Huntington to visit. My father and Gary painted the exterior of our house, and then Gary suggested that I drive with him to Ohio in his old '57 Ford. I thought that was a great idea because I liked Gary and secretly hoped there might be romantic possibilities. We got as far as Anderson, Indiana, where we visited Ron and Cathy Cole, teachers who had served in the Bahamas. I was stunned when Gary abruptly said "goodbye" and dropped me off in Fort Wayne.

However, I found a teaching job in St. Mary's, a Catholic elementary school which was located in a Black parish in the inner city. I lived in a one room flat which had a Murphy bed. The house was set

on the corner of a major truck route, and I was kept awake at night by the air brakes of the big interstate six-wheelers.

I learned about poverty in my own country -- the first lesson came while I was shopping in the market at the end of my street. The run-down condition of the place and the garbage that was being sold as food, made me sick with disgust. This was the United States ... how could they get away with this? I could feel the deadening despair of the people standing in the food lines, and I didn't know what to do.

My next lesson came in my classroom. I was put in-charge of two Black boys, ages nine and ten, in a situation that was the equivalent of what is now called "special education". Leo would run around the huge classroom and jump onto the high window sills, dropping paper clips out the open windows, yelling obscenities at the top of the voice. Marc sat quietly at his desk, staring into space.

I tried everything with the boys. I wanted to "connect" with these kids. I read aloud; I told stories. I asked them to tell stories. I brought in crayons, clay, candy. No response.

Home visits were part of the job, and I got to know their mothers who lived on the same block as the school. I heard stories about guns and drunken relatives who had been left to rot in the Indiana State Mental Hospital. Everyone was polite, but as a young, white woman, I knew I didn't really exist for them.

The classroom quickly became oppressive for all of us. One day I grabbed Leo and shook him; as I held onto his skinny arm, daring him to leave the room under pain of death, I knew it would be better if I quit. The principal tried to talk me out of it, saying things would

improve, but in my heart I knew I had failed those boys. I packed my trunk, listening to Peter, Paul and Mary sing "Leaving On A Jet Plane", and I caught the next flight to New York. In my purse was a letter from Fr. Bonaventure, who had written to invite me to spend Christmas in Nassau. He said he thought I had "sand in my shoes", which to a Bahamian means it is your destiny to return to their islands in the sun.

The priest had lost several teachers in mid-year, and Brother Darby had told him that I was a talented and dedicated teacher. Fr. Bonaventure asked me to consider teaching English at St. Augustine's College. I booked my flight and packed my summer clothes. A vacation in the sun was exactly what I thought I needed! Fr. Bonaventure met me at the Nassau airport and we drove to the monastery. In the simple guest room he had prepared for me, I found a large bottle of apricot brandy; and we sat together sipping the delightful liquor and talking about the latest Island politics until midnight, when we went down to Bay Street to celebrate "Junkanoo", the traditional Bahamian Boxing Day celebration, when hundreds of people dress up in costumes, as exotic birds, insects, fish and "chickcharneys" (half-bird, half-human folk creatures from the Andros Island), and rush through the streets to the intoxicating rhythms of whistles, cow bells and goat skin drums, until daybreak.

The next morning at breakfast, Fr. Bonaventure introduced me to the other monks as the new Form Five English teacher. I would be responsible for preparing students for the G.C.E. "O" levels, and I would have to guide them through Milton, Orwell, Shakespeare and Trollope before they faced the dreaded External Examinations.

My life fell into a simple pattern: up at 5:30 a.m., chapel at 7 a.m.; breakfast in the monastic refectory at 8 a.m., walk down the hill to the school to teach at 9 a.m., back to the chapel for an early evening service followed by a light supper with the monks, who were friendly and gracious hosts.

As I had left New York in mid-winter, I was again in awe, as I had been when I first came to the Bahamas, of the beauty of the Island. Bright orange blossoms, thick moist green leaves, the inviting warmth of the sun, the deep purple sky at sunset. Fr. Bonaventure and I spent a lot of time together. I might accompany him to a public talk or to a preaching assignment in one of the parishes. We were becoming close friends and I felt quite "natural" with him. He called me, affectionately, his "little sister". I was very happy.

One morning he asked me to drive him to an area of the Island called South Beach. It was an isolated place with one or two large homes and a string of "summer" cottages scattered along a sandy "track" road which bordered the sea. The houses were camouflaged behind rows of sea grape trees, casuarinas and stretches of rough "bush". Near the end of the road, right on the beach, was a small outdoor bar, called "Stokes Place". Local gossip linked this place with sinister events -- sometimes, depending on who was telling the story, it was a robbery, sometimes it was a murder. In any case, when people talked about Stokes Place, they talked in "hush" tones that made you feel they knew a lot more than they had told you. On weekends, past midnight, daring couples drove out to the little bar in big cars, to drink and dance barefoot on the sand.

I drove Fr. Bonaventure out past Stokes Place to a small, weather beaten house on the sea side of the road. He often needed to go into seclusion, to get away from the constant demands made of him at the school or in the monastery, where his time was never his own. That morning he intended to do some thinking and some writing. I dropped him off at his retreat saying I'd return for him after school.

When I came back in the early evening, I was surprised to see two people step out of the house. Fr. Bonaventure held up a thin, "light skin" boy, who struggled to free himself from the priest's grasp. "Lemme go! Lemme go, you bastard!" the boy cried.

Fr. Bonaventure pushed the boy into the back seat of the Volkswagen and held onto him firmly. As we drove off he told me what had happened. He had been writing for about an hour that morning when he heard the sound of breaking glass. He went outside and followed the sound down the beach to another cottage where a young boy was standing near a stone wall smashing beer bottles. The priest grabbed the kid and dragged him away.

The boy was deeply troubled. His father was white and his mother was black. He hated his father bitterly and he wanted to end his own life. I drove the car, listening to the boy's sobbing.

When we finally arrived at St. Augustine's, we put the exhausted boy on the couch in the headmaster's office and called Tim McCartney, a Black Bahamian psychiatrist, who gave us a sedative for the boy, who slept for several hours while we sorted out who he was and what should be done for him.

Eventually we returned the boy to his home, and although Fr. Bonaventure did all he could to help him, the boy killed himself several weeks later with a set of mathematical instruments from his school.

I had two strong impressions at the time. I thought about the "bad blood" that must have existed at home to cause the boy so much pain. He seemed to have no one to talk to about his life, no one to really listen to the concerns that swirled around in his head. I thought about Fr. Bonaventure and the patience and tenderness he had shown the boy, which although it had not been enough to save the boy's life, did reveal something important about the priest's character.

My "story" is deeply intertwined with Fr. Bonaventure. I was a woman who fell in love with a very powerful man in a time when there was no real "public" life available to women like me. I look back and see how I began to live through his seductive, male narrative -- to participate vicariously in his public career by supporting him intellectually; and to participate in his private life by making love with him.

Bonaventure and I had become lovers in "Snug Haven", my tiny, one room furnished apartment which I sublet from an English woman who wrote the Society column for "The Tribune", the oldest of Nassau's two daily newspapers.

An important part of recollection for me is "setting the scene" properly. I have to get the colours right -- the deep, Prussian blue of a particular bowl, the exact tone of faded pink chintz slipcovers ... The tiny living room of Snug Haven starts to appear ... It amuses me now that my most vivid memory of the momentous occasion of my first love-making experience, is of the place and not the act.

I think it came as a shock to Bonaventure that I was still a virgin. He told me that when he first met me he had thought I was a sexually experienced, sophisticated young woman. I may have given that impression because I had a finely-tuned literary appreciation of sex. I had gone to bed with hundreds of men and woman of all shapes, ages, races and desirabilities; I had read ancient texts that describe endless varieties of human copulation, and I was dying to try a few of them. God knows I had been waiting long enough. It had been a case of "now or never", and I was passionately attracted to this man.

The priest had the respect and admiration of Catholics and non-Catholics throughout the Islands; his views and opinions were often quoted in the local newspapers and broadcast over local radio. Television had not yet reached the Bahamas and most people listened to ZNS 1 and ZNS 2, or the BBC. Fr. Bonaventure was a regular panelist on "Let's Talk". He asked me to help him research and write many of his scripts, which I did willingly because I perceived helping him in this way as a natural extension of our relationship. I found I was content to live "invisibly" through his public texts, and to feel the pleasure of the public's acceptance and admiration of this man.

Together we wrote an important speech on "Black Awareness" which was given to the Guild of Graduates in Nassau on April 22, 1969. Fr. Bonaventure had given a similar talk at the Newman Centre at the University of Minnesota. The talk had been billed by the local press as a talk on "Black Power", but Fr. Bonaventure opened his address by explaining how he preferred the terms "Black Awareness" and "Black Consciousness" to "Black Power", not because he was afraid of the term

"Black Power", but because he was convinced that "Black Awareness" and "Black Consciousness" more accurately characterized what the proponents of the Black ideology were really trying to say.

He felt it would be to fall prey to complete insularity to believe, as many Bahamians did, that the beautiful Bahamas could remain impervious to the "Black Awareness" movement. He advised Bahamians to face it as soon as possible, creatively and with an infusion of Bahamian "soul". He compared and contrasted the African-American with the African-Bahamian, and the difference between the experience of negritude in the United States and in the Bahamas, through an examination of the Black person's situation at certain moments in his or her history, and in the face of various practices and institutions. Black women were largely invisible in the literature then, and there was nothing about them mentioned in our speech.

I had been reading books by Black men, like Franz Fanon, Langston Hughes, Le Roi Jones, Elridge Cleaver, Malcolm X., Martin Luther King, Jr., Eric Williams, W.E. Dubois, James Baldwin, Benjamin Quarles, Richard Wright, Chester Himes, and Kenneth Clark -- to name a few of the important contributors to the formulation of a Black ideology -- and my lover and I enjoyed discussing these writers at great length.

While reading Fanon's (1967) Black Skin, White Masks, the Experiences of a Black Man in a White World, I came across the following quote: "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (p.18). Fr. Bonaventure and I felt the sting of Fanon's insight as we

began to recognize and to critique the attachment most Bahamians felt to the cultural values and practices of Britain. How long would there be blind allegiance to a white British Governor? How long would there be solemn imitation of the pompous public ceremonies in which people wore heavy, dark European robes and ridiculous wigs in ninety-degree-plus Fahrenheit weather? And, more importantly, how long would an education system that served the needs of the white elite be seen as the only way to educate a Bahamian?

I enjoyed working behind-the-scenes in this way. I felt a fusion of our minds as well as our bodies, and I loved listening to Fr. Bonaventure speak in public. Bahamians love a good speaker -- a good preacher -- a person who can "turn" a word. There was always a sense of drama when the priest stepped up to the podium. His rich, deep voice and confident tone captured everyone's immediate attention and interest; he established an intimacy with his audience, and the crowd would approve his speech with loud, enthusiastic "Amens" and "Yes, Father!" He was a born speaker. He was a born leader. And he was a born male.

Sex was never freely discussed at home when I was growing up. My parents must have been painfully embarrassed when, at ten years old, I lay on the living room rug, one, perfect, oval testicle of our pet dog in my inquisitive hand, and asked, "What's this?" My next question, "Where did I come from?" was answered by my father, who told me the human race originated in the sea. I found it hard to imagine myself as a piece of seaweed. Over the years he shared his poetic thoughts on creation, and I did end up feeling a sense of connectedness to Nature, but I was never clear about how babies were made.

Of course I picked up a range of feelings about human sexuality. If my friend Gail's little brother rolled about on top of another child during a playful tussle on the grass in the backyard, his mother would knock on the kitchen window and shout, "Stop that! You stop that!" My mother said that boys who played with themselves would turn mental.

As for myself, the earliest focused memory of anything close to genital pleasure took place in school. I remember standing in the hall at the back of the line of grade four kids at the Village Green School. As I leaned against the wall and pressed my buttocks against the cool, green tiled surface, I felt an immediate sense of pleasure. It was a delicious feeling, and I rocked back and forth in contented bliss as we waited to descend the stairs to the gym.

I fell in love for the first time with Raymond English, a little Black boy who sat next to me regularly on the school bus. One day, the bus lurched and we both fell forward, bumping our heads on the seat in front. Ray pulled me off the floor and I patted the pale, silky-soft ribbon of skin that covered his narrow wrist and his firm, round, cinnamon arm.

I fell in love again when I was fifteen. Uncle Bob was about forty-five, a short man, married to my father's sister who was a good eight inches taller than her husband. Women worried about things like that in those days. My relatives lived in the Laurentian Mountains. They owned horses and a new Chrysler Imperial. I visited them one summer between my junior and senior years in high school.

Uncle Bob was a chain-smoker, he drank at least a case of beer a day, and he had been a Communist and a bigamist at the same time.

He was also warm, funny and willing to talk about anything that interested me, from philosophy, religion and art, to politics, literature or life. Things went very well that summer until my aunt discovered my writing box in which I kept my "romances" and personal jottings. She read the "stories" I had written about my Uncle Bob and myself -- romantic elaborations of our perfectly innocent country walks, and incidents when we had often stopped for "shandies" at the local hotels.

Uncle Bob was in his office in Montreal the day my aunt discovered my journal, and my aunt waited until he returned to Ste. Agathe on the five o'clock bus to break the news to him. She had confronted me with her findings and told me to leave Canada as soon as possible. That night I heard her downstairs, screaming at him as I lay on my bed, wondering how I could ever face my uncle again. She threw a heavy glass ashtray at him and fled the house. She drove the Chrysler madly around the horse track until she finally exhausted her rage. It was dark by that time and the house was dead quiet.

I returned to New York. Uncle Bob knew the whole thing was nonsense, but my aunt and I couldn't live under the same roof. Perhaps the incident had stirred up old memories for her; memories of a Christmas Eve in a hotel in Roanoke, Virginia, when a letter had arrived addressed to her husband. The return address read "Mrs. R. Fields". My aunt drank a bottle of Johnnie Walker that night, but she did manage to go on with her life.

I was very interested in sex, but I could never figure out the rules of the game. This hopeless situation changed for me in the Bahamas. There was a popular night club in Nassau called "Charlie Charlies". We

lay missionary teachers caused quite a stir when we walked in on Friday nights. We knew we were "hot stuff", and as young, white women, we made the most of it. The first time I visited Charlies, the rum was flowing and a merengue band was in full swing. I danced with a huge man who enveloped me in his butter soft, brown skin. Heseekiah Rolle made it very clear that intelligent conversation wasn't required and that our bodies were perfectly capable of taking over our minds.

I became addicted to making the rounds of the clubs, from The Banana Boat and The Cat and Fiddle, to Peanuts Taylor's Drum Beat Club and the Rum Keg Room at the Nassau Beach Hotel. Then there was The Big Bamboo on Bay Street, where there was "plenty big bamboo" for everyone.

It was thrilling to dance with men in the clubs, even though I sensed that it was my white, young woman-flesh that they really cared about. I took their attention as flattery, since no males had ever shown an interest in my body before. Truth was, I loved the feel of a hot, sweaty, male body pressed against me, shaking with desire. I loved the texture, smell and touch of Black skin. I couldn't stand dancing with white men, who seemed all angles and "uptight" by comparison.

When I fell in love with Fr. Bonaventure, I was ready to surrender completely, and as he was an expert lover, I couldn't have made a better choice. The priest had several women in his life simultaneously, something I suspected but was afraid to acknowledge. Shortly after I returned to the Bahamas for the second time, he introduced me to one of his women "friends" who taught Geography at St. John's College. Vivian lived in a fourth floor apartment of Victoria Court, a posh, pale

pink, colonial style building in downtown Nassau; one of two buildings in the entire city with an elevator.

We three had dinner together, and several days later Vivian called to invite me to a beach picnic. I liked her and we soon became friends. I became her confidante and felt torn apart as she described her affair with the priest. Her tearful confessions had the effect of arousing in me a heightened interest and desire for a sexual relationship with Bonaventure.

Vivian told me the details of her sex life with her lover. She described how late one night he had come to her apartment very upset. She listened to his story and tried to comfort him. She felt moved by his youth (she was much older), and the "needy little boy" look in his eyes. As they lay on the couch listening to the heavy rain drumming on the roof, he lifted her cotton frock over her head and "took her" violently. When it was over, he seemed very young and sad, and she loved him even more.

Their affair continued, but Vivian was troubled by the secrecy and the need to live a lie. A Polish psychiatrist prescribed heavy doses of tranquillizers for her shattered nerves and advised that she leave the country. At the end of the school term she returned to England, but not before she warned me that Fr. Bonaventure could destroy women emotionally.

I rejoiced when she left; I even bought her Volkswagon. A Saturday night ritual developed between "The Prior" and me. I would spend the morning shopping and cleaning my apartment, preparing a delicious meal in anticipation for his visit. In the afternoon I'd walk

down Village Road to the Fort Montague Hotel Beach Club and take a long swim and sun bath.

My lover had to park his car some distance from my apartment lest someone recognize the monastery plates. "Snug Haven" became the perfect love nest. As the intrigue thickened, my telephone would ring in the wee hours of the morning, "Come for me, darling!" and I would fly in my little car over the unlighted, isolated, winding back road to Fox Hill, the only sounds being packs of dogs barking and roosters crowing in the distance.

Dimming the lights as I approached the steep hill in front of the monastery, I'd slow down in front of the refectory and swoop up my lover, who waited in the shadows. We'd coast down the hill, past the silent chapel and the arched casements of the monastic building, full of somnolent monks, and return to my home. I lived for those calls and the nightly love trysts. I also experienced a boundless source of new energy and enthusiasm for teaching. I was in love.

This continued for two years as I changed apartments several times to keep a modest degree of privacy on an island where everyone knew everyone else's business. During summer vacations, we lived in New York City where my lover studied at Columbia University and I took courses at The New School for Social Research. In July, 1970, we decided to get married, secretly, in a civil ceremony in Huntington Bay Hills on Long Island. Two days after "tying the knot", we flew back, separately, to the Bahamas. I lived with a friend in a large house in Sans Souci, and my new husband returned to The Prior's suite at the monastery.

Three months after we were married, Adam Crabtree, a bearded, ex-Benedictine, who had been a classmate of Fr. Bonaventure at St. John's University in Minnesota in the 1950s, called his old friend from Canada. Over the phone, Adam described a community of lay psychotherapists, to which he belonged, who were living and practising in Toronto. Many of the men and women in the group had left religious orders to found a radically new form of communal life. Adam flew down to Nassau for a brief visit and spoke with the monks about his therapeutic community, called "Therafields".

Adam talked about the art of "theradrama" -- the "therapeutic practice concerned with bringing to consciousness the hidden patterns that influence the life of an individual -- patterns that derive from family structures handed down from generation to generation" (Crabtree, 1989, pp.195-196). He told us about "house groups", which were temporary living situations usually for one or two years, where a group of people lived together with the expressed purpose of being as honest as possible about their feelings towards one another and their own lives. He said that through the process of grappling and struggling with the every day frustrations and the problems that would "come up" between the group members living under the same roof, a lot could be learned about people's assumptions about themselves and the sources of their troubles.

It all sounded fascinating to us. Perhaps it was fascinating because male and female religious were trying to disentangle themselves from the practice of chastity, while maintaining the best elements of communal living. Adam was worried about his old friend, Bonaventure, and he invited another group to come south from Therafields to talk with him.

This time, Lea Hindley-Smith, the English psychotherapist who had begun the organization, her lover, Visvaldis Upenieks, her son, Rob, and his best friend, b.p. Nichol, and Adam's girlfriend, Janet Griffith, all flew down to Nassau for a week.

I invited them to my home for a private talk, at Fr. Bonaventure's request. I served them Bahamian food: conch chowder, grilled crawfish tails, baked grouper and guava duff, and following the meal, we drove up to the monastery where a group of nuns, priests and lay teachers had gathered to hear the visitors talk about the intriguing therapeutic community in which men and women, many of them ex-religious, were living and working together happily.

Lea was a short, striking, middle-aged woman who wore her silver-blond hair swept up in a frothy swirl. She was dressed that night in a mauve silk caftan; long, gold earrings dangled from her ears; her smooth, tanned arms were covered in bangles, and she wore bright orange sandals on her tiny feet. Her partner, Visvaldis, a sexy-looking Latvian, wore tomato red slacks under a tailored linen jacket, which was the same blue of his eyes. b.p. wore a long, natural cotton robe and leather sandals. Curly blond hair framed his gentle face. Rob was dressed in subtle shades of yellow, and sported a panama hat. Janet wore a shimmering emerald body suit.

The sombre audience waited nervously in the monastic refectory for the speakers to arrive, and when the spectacular guests made their entrance, a burst of colour flashed through the room, like a brilliant parrot diving through the dusty branches of a casuarina tree.

At once, Lea's penetrating voice filled the room. She had an uncanny ability to zero-in on people's deepest, well-kept secrets and unconscious troubles. Things happened very quickly. I was mesmerized by her ability to cut through the thickly layered conventionality and repressions that were choking most of us to death.

On the way back to the hotel, Lea told me she thought I was living a life of fantasy and that I was in a very dangerous position. It was as if I were fighting to get out of a room by bashing my head against the walls, when, if I had only looked, I would have noticed a door which was wide open. As I listened to her, I felt dreadfully frightened, but I also felt an enormous sense of relief. By the time we reached the Nassau Beach Hotel, I felt I trusted her completely.

Several months later she invited me to visit her at the Safety Harbour Spa in Clearwater, Florida so we could talk further about my relationship with Fr. Bonaventure. I flew over in March for a weekend and began therapy with her. When I told Lea that the priest and I were married, she understood why she had felt so concerned about me during her visit to Nassau. We worked together for two days, analyzing dreams and talking about feelings. When I returned to Nassau I felt raw and vulnerable, but somehow hopeful.

Bonaventure and I were invited to Canada to participate in several summer marathons -- week long meetings of therapists held at Therafield's Farm, a four hundred acre property north of Toronto in the Caledon Hills. We left Nassau for a three week vacation in July 1971.

We met the therapeutic community in Toronto, and after a night in a "house group", we were driven to the farm. An old barn had been

renovated and made over into sleeping accommodations and lounges; and there was a mammoth kitchen where organically grown food was prepared for marathoners.

The first group session commenced in the group room at "The Willow", Lea's country home. We sat on brightly coloured cushions in front of a field stone fireplace. Lea sat in a blue recliner in front of the group. She began by welcoming Bonaventure and me to the "Hypno I Marathon" (the name was derived from the use of hypnosis in therapy). Lea felt we both needed intensive psychotherapy -- and the sooner the better. She was, she explained, picking up our anguished psychic vibrations.

I didn't say anything that night because I was terrified someone would show me up to be the liar and the phoney I thought I was. Speaking at large group gatherings was torture for me, and I was amazed to watch the people around me open up and talk freely about their relationships and the things that were troubling them in their daily lives. The members of the group responded to each individual, and in many cases the speakers broke down and wept. This was described as "getting in touch" with deeper feelings.

One man kneeled on the carpet and faced his wife as she tried to speak to him about their relationship. He was cool as a cucumber, and he answered her in measured, toneless syllables. His manner was suave and controlled. They appeared to be getting nowhere and I felt the woman's mounting frustration. Did this exchange represent the level of their daily communication?

A large, beefy man broke in, his deep voice booming the length of the room. An older man called out from the stairs. A short fellow spoke from the sidelines. Then the three men got up and moved closer, surrounding the husband. He stood up and tried to joke with them, but he could see they meant business. They taunted and baited him verbally, repeating key words from the man's life experience, until he "came out" of his shell. A huge wave of anger that had been trapped inside him broke forth. He talked about his life for a long time, and when it was over, he hugged the three men. He was too raw to talk with his wife at that point, but it didn't matter. He had made a first important therapeutic step and he had broken out of the cold, emotional encasement that held him and had begun to feel again.

The second group session was held the following morning in a miniature, grassy amphitheatre just outside Lea's house. People sat around on the soft, green bowl of earth under a brilliantly sunny sky. I could see the large barn and a narrow dirt road that ran through a field behind the barn where horses were grazing.

Bonaventure was invited to tell his "story" during the morning session. The group listened spellbound, but I felt myself sinking into the ground when he described, in vivid detail, his recent sexual adventures. I was furious. I felt betrayed. Lea noticed my discomfort and asked me to talk about how I was feeling.

I said I felt humiliated, and I wanted to kill Bonaventure. The mere expression of words offered little relief for my embodied rage. "Body therapy" was required to release my pent-up hostility. A young woman with long, blond hair and a wiry, gentle-looking young man

escorted me over the field to the beach at the Willow pond. They were both practised therapists in "bioenergetics".

They asked me to lie down on the sand and to kick as hard and as fast as I could. The man dug his thumbs into "pressure points" in my neck and I screamed in agony. The woman encouraged a further release of my fury by repeating some of the recent material from Bonaventure's sexual history. Powerful "voices" emerged, bringing the drama to life. We fought with our fists and trounced the sand with heavy steps. They told me I "fought dirty" and prodded me in the ribs, trying to keep me going and my energy flowing outwards instead of inwards. After about an hour of mock battle, I fell to the ground and sobbed. I felt completely done in.

I still believe in this sort of painful catharsis, strange as it may seem, although I would never want to inflict this form of therapy on anyone now. The technique seems sadistic, but it is an effective way to help people drop their "defenses" and to revert to levels of their infancy when their emotions were first tampered with or controlled. This type of therapy was going on in Europe and the United States -- as, for example, Janov's (1971) primal scream therapy -- and R.D. Laing's (1961; 1969) work with young people who were encouraged to "break down" in his sheltered group homes in London. I believe it is possible to have a similar cathartic experience in response to forms of art that move us; artists help us to experience the agony and joy of seeing and feeling on many different levels of consciousness.

When we returned from the pond, I felt completely naked. My sense of *self* was delicate and tentative, as I experienced the return to my

body from what felt to me like a state of pure feeling. I felt tenderness towards Bonaventure, no residue of anger in my system.

In the group session that night it became clear to Bonaventure and me that we should not return to the Bahamas at the end of our vacation. The group felt that if Bonaventure returned to the monastery and his marriage were revealed, he might be used as a scapegoat for the hostility of the hierarchy of the Church, which had already admonished him for other minor, un-priestlike behaviour they had found scandalous. I was keen to stay in Canada because I saw this move as a chance to "keep my man".

So we remained in the country for the summer, and participated in five summer marathons; and in September we moved to Toronto to try "house group" living. Bonaventure told the monks he was ill and needed time off to recuperate. Local Nassau newspapers reported that Fr. Bonaventure was "on leave" in Toronto where he was suffering from a "heart condition", which I found amusing.

The house group experience was a total disaster from the first day we moved into the three-storey Victorian house on Walmer Road. It was a filthy place, the last house group members having moved out the week before, leaving their dirt and trash behind. It's true that the new people who moved in were all "creative" people, but we were also all "nuts"...

There was a film-maker who made "westerns", two young actors and the owner of a small neighborhood theatre, a philosophy professor from York University, an ex-priest, his wife and infant daughter, two "folk" artists from Quebec who freelanced for wall-paper companies, a

medical doctor from Boston, a young girl who worked for Proctor and Gamble, whose father was a "lifer" in a B.C. prison, a gay man from Newfoundland, a carpenter, and a paraplegic switchboard operator. And, of course, Bonaventure and me.

I hated communal shopping, communal house cleaning, communal babysitting, and communal birthday parties; but most of all, I hated the weekly communal house group meetings!

Ideally, these events provide a forum for people to talk honestly with each other and to confront any "behaviours" that people had noticed in the context of therapeutic house group living. Patterns could be identified in the way individuals related to one another, and if you could see the patterns of your life, you could work towards freeing yourself from the "scripts" of old "dramas". This process opened up the possibility of changing subjectivities. If a person slipped into too many "regressive" behaviours, he was chastened by the group and helped "to live in the present". We were to face our pasts so that we could live more responsibly and more productively in the present.

But we were rarely honest with one another. The situation was far too contrived, and instead of achieving personal clarity and growth, we "acted out" our feelings in most destructive ways. I was sensitive to the unconscious messages flying about in the house group atmosphere, but I used my insights to be cruel to people, especially the young mother. I believed that she should never have had a child in the first place -- whose feelings was I re-living?! I dominated house group sessions and threw tantrums to get my way. The therapists were ineffectual, and the house group disbanded in six months.

In February 1972, Bonaventure and I moved to Therafield's Farm near Orangeville, Ontario, where he was hired as "Farm Manager". I knew instinctively I could never work for Therafields, and I picked up a teaching job at Sheridan College of Fine Arts and Technology in nearby Brampton, Ontario.

Living in the farmhouse was no picnic. The living conditions were rough and crude. There was cat hair and dog shit everywhere, and piles of dead flies on the window ledges. The furniture consisted of broken antiques and plastic cafeteria modern. I resigned myself to living there, although I would have given anything for my husband and I to have our own house or apartment. We had moved to the farm for the unique opportunity to do therapy and to learn about ourselves, hadn't we? I knew deep down that I would lose him if I put up too much resistance to this new life-style. The power of the communal voice kept me in check.

The Farm Group was composed of people who had been sent to the Farm because they couldn't fit in anywhere else. Some needed protection, since they might have landed in mental institutions or prisons had they been left to deal with life on their own. They were good people; they just couldn't make it in the larger society. They needed emotional support and time to heal themselves. Otherwise, it seemed inevitable that they would "go crazy" in institutions like the family, the school, or the work place.

In 1974, Therafields Community numbered over 800 people. We were interested in creating an "environmental centre" in the country.

People began to consider moving from Toronto to the country. "Back to the land" was the cry ...

Our organic vegetable growing enterprise thrived, and we opened a farm stand during the summer, where we sold top quality, much coveted, produce. Every weekend, hundreds of Therafieldians came north from the city to stay at the Farm. They worked in the gardens, planting, weeding, pruning and picking; learned to make bread and bake pies; can fruit, bottle pickles, and produce huge wooden tubs of sauerkraut. They built wooden furniture in the shop and when they finished for the day, swam in the pond. It was quite a sight for people driving past our property on the Airport Road, seeing hundreds of young people working together in the rows of raspberries, strawberries, beans, zucchini, cabbages and corn.

And we were good at entertaining ourselves. We had bands, rock groups, quartets, trios; guitarists, flautists, mimes, sound poets, puppeteers, comedians and magicians. We held dances, sing-a-longs, poetry readings, picnics and craft fairs, and every summer we had an Open House for the neighbours. We filled them up with luscious lemon meringue pies and homemade apple cider, and took them for rides around the property in open surreys pulled by horses. It seemed a good life.

I ran the Therafields Book Shop, where we carried writers such as Bettelheim, Freud, Fromm-Reichman, Henry, Jung, Klein, Isaacs, Laing, Lindner, Montague, Neill, Rank, Reich, and Reik. We also stocked novels, and books about holistic medicine, and cook books. I adored

selling books, and it gave me the chance to meet and talk with many people from the therapeutic groups.

In the fall of 1976, Bonaventure and I moved into a recently acquired farmhouse on a one hundred acre parcel of land. "Capricorn Farm" was shared with another married couple and their two sons.

Janice was an attractive woman who had definite ideas about running a house: She never accepted that I had a professional life outside the home, and resented my resistance to total involvement with her family. Bonaventure seemed to thrive at home with baby Teddy and his adoring mother, Janice.

I felt more and more excluded; and Janice's eccentric eating habits drove me crazy. I wasn't ready to give up meat, chicken or fish which were prohibited. We didn't have a toaster because toasted bread wasn't supposed to be good for us. Coffee was taboo, being replaced by Inka, a herbal coffee substitute, and we drank non-alcoholic beer and wine. What we did have in abundance were fifty pound sacks of brown rice, and lots of organic popcorn.

I began eating hearty lunches in the Brampton Mall, and I completely lost interest in cooking at home. I felt I had no voice in the household, and in order to survive, I resorted to sneaking in and out of the house at odd hours, hoping Janice wouldn't notice. But Janice's strong intuitive "radar" picked up my slightest movements. She would dash up the stairs to our "suite" (Bonaventure and my two rooms) to confront me for "spoiling" her day. Everything revolved around Janice, but I was the only one who saw that at the time.

Janice began an affair with Martin, a guitarist in her band. I sensed her husband's distress, but I was frightened to talk with him about it. When we were all gathered in "house group" talks it was customary to talk about all our feelings, even in the presence of a spouse, in this case I felt I was in the grip of a "drama" that had to be played out to its bitter end. Such is the power of old life patterns ...

Just before Christmas, Bonaventure's father died in Nassau. I took the call and broke down when I told my husband the news. He decided not to go home for the funeral, and since we had planned a trip to New York City, we went ahead with that. When we returned to Canada, I was feeling irritable, distracted and miserable again.

Bonaventure "read" my moods as rejecting him. He renewed a friendship with a woman who was living in Toronto, with whom he had had an affair in Nassau. As far as he was concerned, I was to blame for this affair, presumably because I didn't love him anymore.

What was actually going on with me was that I was pregnant.

Becoming A Mother

My pregnancy was an emotionally evocative piece of news for all of us living at the Farm. Having babies was taboo. The restriction was grounded in women's fears of "messing up" by repeating the horrendous child-raising practices we had experienced as children. Few of us would even dare to think of becoming pregnant, and abortion had been recommended to many women who found themselves with child; and if not abortion, then adoption. The "best" parents would need to be found for the infant.

This attitude seems odd when examined in the historical context of what was happening in the Feminist Movement of the 1970s. However, since Therafields was a subculture, most of us missed the consciousness-raising of women that was spreading across North America at the time.

Strong gender messages were being sent however, to both men and women. Lea Hindley-Smith encouraged women in the community to model themselves after the "wise and virtuous woman" of Proverbs: 31:10-3. As Lea would recite the following lines to us, I would feel myself "carried away" by the rhythm of the poetry and captivated by the image of a strong woman who serves others. Lea would tell us that this woman

... is always busy with wool and with flax,
she does her work with eager hands.

She is like a merchant vessel
bringing her food from far away.

**She gets up while it is still dark
giving her household their food,
giving orders to her serving girls.**

**She sets her mind on a field, then she buys it,
with what her hands have earned
she plants a vineyard.**

**She puts her back into her work
and shows how strong her arms can be.**

**When she opens her mouth, she does so wisely;
on her tongue is kindly instruction.**

**She keeps good watch on the conduct of her household,
no bread of idleness for her ...**

And one of her favourite lines oft repeated:

**Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who is wise is the one to praise.**

(The Jerusalem Bible, 1966)

Who among us would be considered "wise" enough to have babies and to be mothers? Janice, Lea's daughter, was one of these special women.

But Bonaventure and I had somehow managed to create life, and after we heard the miraculous news of my pregnancy, we became intimate again.

I looked at "parenting" through rose-coloured glasses during that summer. I thought about my future life with a baby, as I held Janice's child Teddy and rocked him to sleep. Teddy was solid, and one night

after he had fallen asleep in my arms, I could not get up out of the chair, and so I sat with him in my lap for the entire evening. As the room darkened, I felt myself participating in a different life rhythm -- a rhythm defined by the child's soft breathing and relaxed body nestled into mine. It was a rhythm uninterrupted by clocks, timetables or schedules. What would the world be like if each one of us could be held in another person's arms for as long as we desired? I felt a razor sharp pain -- a longing for the human touch -- inside myself. Suddenly, touch became the most important thing in my life, and the lack of touch intolerable.

In Ashley Montague's (1971) book, Touching. The Human Significance of Skin, he writes about "the stimulation of the skin as an important factor in the development of the individual" (p.80); and elaborates on the meaning and importance of intimacy, connecting the need we have for touch with survival.

I went into natural labour on Thanksgiving Day, 1977. It was a long, slow delivery, and by the time the final "pushing" began, I wanted to die. All the colour seemed to drain out of the hospital room as the four white walls began to close in on me. I felt myself disappearing to a tiny pinpoint of consciousness in a sea of pain. But when someone yelled, "Here comes the head!" I revived; my legs were thrown over my head like a circus acrobat and every inch of my body was forced to work at full capacity. It was terrifying and at the same time exhilarating; I was like an athlete running full-out on the track. I felt my body performing one hundred percent and I saw myself finally accomplishing something in life that really mattered.

We followed the birthing suggestions of Frederick Leboyer (1975) who, in his book Birth Without Violence, promotes certain practices in the delivery room to lessen the birth fright for the baby. Leboyer writes:

What makes being born so frightful is the intensity, the boundless scope and variety of the experience, its suffocating richness.

People say -- and believe -- that a newborn baby feels nothing. He feels *everything*.

Everything -- utterly, without choice or filter or discrimination.

Birth is a tidal wave of sensation, surpassing anything we can imagine. A sensory experience so vast we can barely conceive of it ...

Admittedly, these sensations are not yet organized into integrated, coherent perceptions, which makes them all the stronger, all the more violent, unbearable -- literally maddening.

(pp.15-16)

The lights in the delivery room had been dimmed, it was quiet and as I watched in the overhead mirror, the baby slid out, bloody and covered in a white, greasy substance. She was immediately immersed in a shallow, warm bath after which she was placed on my belly and put to the breast which she began to suck vigorously. The umbilical cord was left in place until later. No chemicals were put in her eyes. We called her Jerusa.

The baby and I were moved to a room where she rested in a tiny bassinet next to my bed. Bonaventure broke open a bottle of champagne and we celebrated by telephoning our relatives to give them the good news of our daughter's birth. Then he left and I was alone with this new human being, who lay motionless on her side, wrapped tightly in a white cotton blanket. I prayed that she would stay asleep until I could get myself together enough to do what you were supposed to do with newborns. There was no instant rush of maternal feeling nor instinctual maternal knowledge to help me face the awesome responsibility I now faced in taking care of an infant.

Real trouble started at three a.m., when a nurse barged into the room, snapped on the overhead lights and woke me up for the first hospital "regulated" feeding. She leaned over the bed with an officious, tight-lipped expression on her face and pulled down my night dress. "Let's feel those nipples, dear," she squawked.

I was shocked when she grabbed my breasts and started to knead them with her big, square hands, but I was so tired and groggy that I could do nothing to resist the cruel intrusion. She brought the baby to my breast and watched as I inexpertly handled the awkward feeding. I felt humiliated and totally vulnerable and I was so furious by the time she left that I could not go back to sleep. I vowed to get back at the sadistic "bitch".

I became aware of other, what seemed to me, inhuman hospital routines the following morning: interns drifted in and out of my room when my legs were spread open under the sun lamp, exposing my anatomy to full view. A young nurse came blithely into the room

carrying a small tray on which she had two small paper cups containing laxative and iron pills. (One of the requirements for a maternity patient to get out of the hospital is to have a bowel movement.) Her phoney cheerfulness reminded me of the Head Nurse in Ken Kesey's (1962) One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. I refused to take either pill, explaining that I was eating a variety of fresh and dried fruits that would serve the same purpose; the woman nearly collapsed. I heard, later, that she had gone home for the day.

During the second day in hospital, my doctor noticed that Jerusa had jaundice. We had been preparing to go home that afternoon so the news came as a shock. She was taken to the nursery and put in an incubator under a small electric light. I was very upset to have her so far away from me and to have to depend on the nurses to bring her to me for feeding.

When the same night nurse came into my room with my child, I gave her my "look of death" which conveyed a message: "Come near me and I will scratch your eyes out!" She got the message and left us alone for the feeding. I felt I was beginning to get some control over the situation.

The most irritating part of the nursing routine, which was enough to dampen any new mother's confidence, was the practice of *weighing* the babies to see how much fluid had been consumed. If the amount wasn't up to hospital standards, the infant was given a bottle of sugar water to make up the difference. This mad practice interfered with the breast feeding process and could discourage women who were having difficulty establishing breast feeding routines. No one questioned the use of a new

technology; no one asked whose interests were being served -- the child's, the mother's, or the hospital's.

The third day I noticed a tiny red scab on Jerusa's nose. It seemed to me that she must have been left on her stomach too long and that she had rubbed her nose raw on the crib sheet. I was seething mad. I had hung around the nursery so that I could watch when nurses took the daily blood samples from her tiny heels. I had observed them extract blood from that sensitive spot in the other babies, and I had heard their screams of pain.

I was terribly frustrated because I did not have the medical knowledge nor the authority in the hospital setting to question the procedure, but I felt that there was a better way of handling these infants. I decided I had to do something about it, and just before Jerusa was due to have her blood sample taken, I held her close to my chest and rocked her in the nursery rocking chair. I sang to her and told her how much I loved her. I told her that I would be near and that I was there to protect her. She mustn't be afraid.

The next time blood was taken from her heels she whimpered, but her body remained "soft". She didn't go scarlet in the face nor did she stiffen her back as the other babies had done. I felt I had communicated with her and I had helped her relax. I also felt the inexcusable lack of sensitivity and knowledge about newborns in the medical profession. I experienced the inner terror many women feel when their feelings and insights are challenged by those in patriarchal medical authority, who define and reduce them to hysterical, powerless, females.

The healing process for the jaundice seemed to me to be taking too long. I was a nervous wreck and I felt like a trapped animal in that hospital. I felt I had given over my body and now my child's body, and had lost all my rights as a human being. It had gone too far. I had to get her out. I was also furious with my husband, who seemed gutless and compromising. (I wasn't consciously aware at the time that he was sleeping with his lover after leaving me at the hospital, and that he suffered guilt as he tried to sort-out his feelings.)

At the end of the fourth day, a friendly nurse told me that I could sign myself out of the hospital and that I could sign my baby out with me. The hospital didn't care what happened once you took responsibility for yourself and your child. If only I had known two days earlier! I would set up the electric light for the jaundice treatment at home and have the blood samples taken at the local hospital. What was I waiting for?

I had become paranoid in the hospital setting; I felt betrayed by my doctor who let me go on believing that we had to stay; I felt betrayed by my husband, who seemed so "out of it" that he was useless. I knew I had the right to leave, but I felt like a convicted criminal planning an escape from maximum security.

I told the doctor that I wanted to leave after lunch, and I quickly packed everything and got dressed in my street clothes. I wore a long hospital robe over my clothes. Although I knew we would be free to leave once I signed the release papers, I was worried that something would go wrong. My terror nearly suffocated me; I was in a cold sweat. Minutes became hours as I tried to make the arrangements to leave.

Not a happy picture; no nuclear family leaving for home, father pushing the wheelchair containing smiling mother, new baby in her arms in hand-knit coat and cap, a basket of flowers in her lap, delphiniums and baby's breath.

Just when I was making the final preparations, I got a call to go down to the nursery to feed Jerusa. I had forgotten this part of the routine and had put on a dress that had no front fastening. I ran down to the nursery and picked up the baby, turned to the window, reached inside the hospital robe and pulled the dress way up over my shoulder and pushed Jerusa's head to my breast for an impromptu suck.

The tense atmosphere changed the second I signed the release paper. I had taken responsibility for myself and for my child. The nurses relaxed, my doctor congratulated me, and Bonaventure arrived with the car to take us home. Had I been completely mad the whole time? I don't think so.

We hired a wonderful nurse from Cape Breton to help at home with the baby for the first week. She was just what I needed to get Jerusa through the jaundice treatment and to help me establish a nice rhythm with the child. Then I was on my own.

It was a difficult, lonely winter. Although Bonaventure and I were trying to work out our relationship, he was spending large chunks of time with his girlfriend, a person I was only dimly aware of in my unconscious; I had been dreaming about "a stranger" in my husband's life, but I consciously knew nothing about this woman's existence.

I sat in the large, brown stuffed rocking chair -- the same chair I had rocked Baby Teddy in the summer before -- rocking Jerusa as snow

fell outside my bedroom window. The farmhouse was very still and I felt trapped and desolate. Suddenly my entire life seemed a lie. The only reality was a tiny baby who needed my attention twenty-four hours a day. Bonaventure and I waited a month to resume our sexual life. It wasn't a problem for him, as he was "getting his" elsewhere, but I felt awkward and hesitant. My body seemed a very different body than it had been before giving birth.

After my husband expressed his interest, "I've got to have you!" the renewed sexual contact began, but I could feel a dramatic change in Bonaventure's feelings towards me. Was it because he now saw me as a "mother" as well as a "lover"? Some of the sexual spontaneity had been lost, and I am not sure he felt comfortable caressing breasts that were gorged with milk. I had experienced a heightened sense of eroticism because I felt more "in tune" with my body which seemed more sensuous to me, but my husband had other, more ambivalent feelings.

Bonaventure and I fell back in love with each other during a spring holiday in Florida. The warm sun and ocean helped patch some of the tears in the fabric of our troubled marriage. Jerusa splashed in the pool and turned a rosy brown. My husband and I went dancing at night and it seemed like old times. But this wasn't to last. In the next two years we made two more major house moves.

Looking back on it, I wonder if the marriage suffered as a result of the communal settings we lived in; we didn't have the privacy we needed to build something solid between us as a family. There were always people expressing their feelings about our rocky relationship or the way I was raising Jerusa, as the house groups were obsessed with the

issues about parents raising children "the right way". We held group meetings to talk about so-and-so's feelings about Jerusa's pudgyness (she was a strong, little "tank", full of goat's milk); group meetings over so-and-so's feelings that she felt no love between Bonaventure and me (how could we express any affection when we were under such heavy scrutiny?).

But I had changed, and perhaps I am blaming the others when I should be examining my own behaviour. Having a child had brought me down to earth; I wasn't able to keep up with my former life style. I was no longer a scintillating companion; I worked for Ginn and Company writing Teacher's Guides and text books, at home in my study, and spent more and more time with the young children of friends, changing diapers, sterilizing milk bottles and making heaping bowls of Red River cereal. All of this consumed a great deal of my time, and perhaps it was too much to ask of Bonaventure to take in his stride. He was loyal to Jerusa and took her for long walks and played with her in her room, but having a family just didn't seem to be his "style".

I didn't seem to know what to do to help him or myself. So we broke up. It was then, torn open with grief, that I realized how much I loved him. It was too late; he had another woman in his life whom he said he loved and wanted to marry.

We moved house again and lived together for one more year. Bonaventure spent two or three days a week at home with Jerusa and me and the rest of the week in Toronto. We tried to be kind to one another, and we made a great effort to support the home-schooling

venture my friends and I were attempting with our small children. Jerusa seemed to thrive in the situation.

In 1982, Jerusa and I moved, by ourselves, into a third floor apartment of a friend's house in the Annex area of Toronto, and Bonaventure moved into his lover's luxury high-rise apartment. I went back to graduate school and into individual psychotherapy. Jerusa started kindergarten at The Toronto Waldorf School in Thornhill, and Bonaventure began a new career as the vice-principal of a Catholic high school in the city.

In the course of my private therapy sessions I kept visualizing an "image" of a long, white room with a window that overlooked a turquoise sea. I realized I longed to return to the Bahamas, so Jerusa and I flew to Nassau during the Christmas break and I began to look for a job. By March 1983, I had been offered two jobs teaching English at the high school level, and a position as lecturer in Humanities and Education at The College of the Bahamas. I finished my master's degree, sold all my furniture, and packed our bags for the return trip to the Bahamas. I would be a "teacher-trainer".

Becoming a Teacher-Trainer

There is only so much of yourself that you can write down. The next few years passed quickly. Many of my life themes and patterns were repeated. I would ask myself: "I wonder if I am living the same scripts over again?" And I wondered what inner pain does a young child feel, not seeing her father whom she dearly loves, because he now lives 1500 miles away? Jerusa did not seem, to me, to suffer in the move. She had other relatives around her, including Rosalie, her Bahamian grandmother, and she did fly back to Toronto at Christmas and during summer school holidays.

But adults do underestimate the strength of feeling in children. Some dismiss the possibility of childhood trauma with the claim that children are "resilient". Perhaps it is because children lack language with which to express the range of their feelings, or perhaps it is too painful for adults to remember how they felt as children.

We arrived in September, and stayed with Rosalie. Just before Christmas, I rented the top floor of a house on Eastern Road which had a long, rectangular shaped white room with windows overlooking the sea. I could hear the waves lapping the shore when I went to sleep.

I loved my work at The College of the Bahamas, although I was appalled by the students' inability to read, write or think clearly. I found the public schools to be in worse shape than they had been in the early nineteen sixties, before the majority Black P.L.P. government had come into power; and the level of corruption was shocking. My students, who were teachers-in-training, were being paid by the government to learn

how to rid the Island of the problems of illiteracy, but were, themselves, semi-illiterate.

The faculty of the College came from diverse backgrounds, a rich cultural mosaic. I dated an attractive, middle-aged Jewish intellectual from New York who taught Physics. He moved into my house and rented the large bedroom which had an adjacent screened-in porch. Ed put his bed out there and enjoyed sleeping through all types of weather - still, hot nights, tropical breezes, and even torrential rains (he rigged a canvas awning that he could pull down when necessary). He was an "odd duck" and I was very fond of him.

Ed lived with Jerusa and me for ten happy months. He loved books, and I have happy memories of "book talks" that would last through the night till daybreak. Ed claimed he cooked "only Chinese", and often, in the midst of discussing a book, would leap up and run into the kitchen to wok us a huge bowl of shrimp chips. There was much laughter, and I found great pleasure in cooking for him -- my rice pudding, he said, would make Isaac Bashevis Singer cry for joy. Ed was kind and generous to Jerusa; he had gone to the Horace Mann School as a child and was committed to developing the intellect in children. Ed approved my habit of reading stories aloud to my daughter and sometimes the three of us would sit at the table and read a story by Tolstoy or a folk tale from China. He also adored "Poley", our black Labrador, and he would sit on the tile floor for hours de-ticking him before taking him for a bath in the nearby sea.

In December 1984, Ed was fired from the College when he uncovered a gross misappropriation of College Library funds. As a

member of the Library Committee he had made it his business to find out why a major library supply company in the United States had sent thousands of dollars worth of microfiche to the College, filled with outdated scientific journals that were useless to anyone. Ed claimed that it was a "scam", similar to the frequent dumping of imperfect and illegal goods by American and Canadian companies onto Third World countries that do not have the same standards of production or laws to protect their consumers. (In the nineteen seventies, for example, when it was discovered that the lead coils used in electric tea kettles manufactured in Canada were hazardous to its peoples' health, the company, rather than discarding the entire inventory shipped the kettles to the Barbados.)

College officials were furious with Ed. His "findings", if made public would jeopardize their World Bank Funding. (The World Bank had funded the new College library and everything in it.) They had to get rid of him, and Ed had made it easy for them by refusing to sign the College teaching contract back in September, which required faculty to agree to keep silent about all College business.

Ed and I began to fight. I didn't want him to leave Nassau and at the time I felt he had set himself up for "the shove". There was so much corruption at every level -- was the library scam that important? Of course it was. I remember how just before he moved back to New York in January 1985, we stood in the upstairs hall and screamed at each other. Perhaps it was too painful for us to say goodbye peacefully.

Then my father died in New York, in September 1985. I sold the house in Long Island, and my mother came to live with us in Nassau. Suddenly we had money. I was terrified of it and left it in the bank.

I was appointed assistant chair of Teacher Education -- the only white expatriate on the college administration. Shortly after, there was a major upheaval in the Ministries of Education and Immigration, and many "foreign" teachers were kicked out of the country with only 48 hours notice. My friends in "high places" assured me it would never happen to me, but as I had no permanent status in the Bahamas (and even though my daughter holds a Bahamian passport), I decided I had better look for alternatives. I applied to graduate school in Nova Scotia and I resigned my post, effective at the end of the school year, 1987.

My choice of Dalhousie was partially based on serendipity and partly on intuition. A friend had invited me to visit Nova Scotia for Christmas in 1986; I hadn't visited Halifax since childhood summer vacations, and when we took a drive past the University, I liked the buildings!

When I scanned the University prospectus and the names of faculty members in education, I noticed Edgar Z. Friedenberg. I knew Edgar's book The Vanishing Adolescent (1959), and I decided to write him about the possibility of his taking me on as a graduate student in the Ph.D. programme.

Edgar was out of town, having suffered a heart attack that required bi-pass surgery, and he didn't receive my letter. Several months later, after he had returned to his home in Hubbards, N.S., he called me in Nassau. He said that he regretted he couldn't serve as my Ph.D. supervisor, but he would be happy to be on my Ph.D. committee. He also recommended Anthony Barton as supervisor, whom he said was "off the wall enough" to suit my scholarly interests. (At the time, I had been

interested in continuing my study of the pedagogy of Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner.) From this conversation and a quick trip Jerusa and I took to Halifax in May 1987, when Anthony Barton agreed to work with me, I decided to attend Dalhousie.

I disposed of most of my household belongings in a series of "patio sales", and we moved to Halifax in August so that I might begin the Ph.D. Programme at Dalhousie University in September.

Preparing for the Doctoral Examination

I woke up one morning; it was early fall and already it was bitter cold. I looked in the mirror and I did not recognize my pale face. I felt old and worthless. I tried to make myself feel better by telling myself life in Canada would be better for Jerusa -- safer, anyway. At least we did not have five locks on the door and bars on the windows.

I took the required courses, wrote the required papers, and listened to the people I was supposed to listen to. Although I met one or two people I liked, I became increasingly aware of the competition underlying academic discourse and the everyday conversations with other graduate students, which depressed me. When I was alone I cried into a towel in the bathroom and asked myself over and over again if I had made a horrendous mistake. I did not like Halifax.

I got a part-time teaching job in a university; I worked with practising teachers. Knowing how powerless some of them felt in their graduate courses, I tried to make them laugh. Sometimes we talked and they wrote about things that seemed to really matter to them. I started to feel human again. As I put more and more of myself into teaching, I felt myself coming alive. I was asked to teach a graduate course at the University of Prince Edward Island. I became the first "flying professor" at St. Mary's University; I flew every weekend in a tiny plane, through rain, snow and ice, to Charlottetown.

My approach for teaching this course was based on my own experiences, both teaching and as a lifelong student. I ask teachers about their lives, about what was it like to grow up in rural areas; and how they viewed their roles as teacher, both personally and as a

profession; and how they "saw" their students. Some teachers came to regard me as a "teacher advocate", others as a "teacher critic"; some were glad to have taken my course, others were relieved when it was over.

I joined the academic conference circuit. Swept off my feet, I felt happy because I felt accepted by the "critical pedagogues". Two conferences later I became aware of the phenomenon of "allegiance to peers" that operates as a subtext to conference agendas, even the feminists practised it ...

I lost sight of my original reasons for attending academic conferences, when I believed people would share their thoughts and experiences honestly and openly. Conferences were reduced to stages where tenured professors would "strut their stuff" -- it was important to be the first to say it, write it, publish it; it didn't seem to matter much what "it" was. Even though I was becoming fluent in the new "language games" and I still felt like an outsider. I didn't care if I went to the conferences anymore.

I began to drift around in downtown Halifax, spending long hours browsing through the many used book shops. Grace Paley and Flannery O'Connor stories kept me alive. I (re)discovered women poets: Atwood, Plath and Rich. May Sarton's journals got me through another long, frozen winter. And my friends, Edgar and Steve fed me books by and about men that kept me balanced.

I got to know Edgar Friedenberg through Dalhousie University where is a *professor emeritus* on the faculty of education, and a member of my Ph.D. Committee. His retirement in 1986 meant that I never took a course with him, but I found it easy to imagine him in the classroom.

When I first met him in 1987, his brilliant mind and watch dog habit of growling ferociously if he heard you say something thoughtless, or if you missed the point by the second time around, was daunting. Edgar fell asleep during my Ph.D. Oral Examination, in May 1989, which was just as well, since the ritual was a fiasco. I did not know how to negotiate the "codes" of academic behaviour of such events and it must have been torturous for my professors to witness my ineptitude.

Shortly after this painful ordeal, I visited Edgar at his home in Hubbards, Nova Scotia. It was a warm, sunny day and we sat out in the garden. Sophie, Edgar's huge, cream coloured, part-St. Bernard, part-Husky dog, flopped in a cool ditch she had dug behind Edgar's chair. There was a small pile of magazines on the grass -- recent copies of *The New Yorker*, *The Utne Reader*, *Katallagete* and *The Village Voice*.

I was nervous. The stinging humiliation of the oral defense was still with me, but I felt I had to face my terror and broach the topic of the "orals" with Edgar if I wanted to get on with my doctoral work. "Could you suggest any readings that I might do to help "firm up" my scant background in sociology? During the orals I floundered ..."

"It's not a question of 'firming up' anything at all!" Edgar exploded. "First, you should read Authority by Richard Sennet (1980)!" Then he went on, "You really irritate me, if you were dropped in the middle of a war in Cambodia, you'd probably comment on the helicopters and miss what was really going on!"

At the time, I experienced his remarks as the start of major surgery. He cut me open with a deft swipe of stainless steel, then put down the scalpel. I sat still and remained silent for what felt like a very

long time. Edgar chatted about something else and asked me if I wanted a glass of sherry. When he returned from the house with drinks and a bag of Cajun flavoured chips, I had made up my mind to tell him what I really felt, although I realized I might be throwing away my academic future.

"I don't think I can go on with this doctoral shit. For me it's all a big charade! I don't think I can play this game to the finish, and maybe I should quit while I'm ahead," I confessed; just the act of speaking puncturing the heavy pressure I felt inside me.

I don't remember the rest of the conversation that followed, but I do remember Edgar smiling and saying something like, "Well, I don't know about that." I also remember my feelings: My skin burned from the comment Edgar had just made about my lack of political awareness, but in retrospect I can see an important change that began to take place in our relationship, minuscule yet vital, when during our conversation I could feel Edgar reach out to me, ever so slightly.

During the next two years I "stuck" with Edgar (perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he stuck with me), and I visited frequently in Hubbards. At times, I still felt distanced and nervous about what he might "see" in my writing or in my thinking, but I never felt cut off from him. I felt he was inviting me, on some level, to join his "family" -- the close circle of mostly young men Edgar had around him; and although, in the beginning, I searched for the "reason" for my inclusion, I soon realized that analyzing his invitation would get me nowhere, except perhaps a deeper understanding of my own mistrust and fear of

relationships. Edgar includes people in his life "naturally" if he likes them, and all I had to do was relax and be myself.

I did not fully realize how much Edgar was beginning to mean to me until his friend Steve moved back to Hubbards from New York City. There was something essential to the complex relationship between Edgar and Steve that helped me to see Edgar more clearly. It took nearly two years to get an inkling of what that was, and much depended on my establishing a relationship with Steve. I felt it was Steve who first came towards me; his warmth was unexpected and I didn't know how to respond. In a long walk we took by the ocean, he talked about his life, and I was struck by his openness and humility.

The dialogue continued through what was a dark emotional winter, in different ways, for both of us. I began to feel I was making a small difference in Steve's life. (I couldn't imagine how because I didn't think I had much to offer to the friendship, but I had followed my intuition which had told me to try to "be there" ...) This was especially hard for me to do because I was beginning to have that "old, familiar feeling" that at any moment, either -- or both men -- would shut the door in my face. This is an emotional pattern for me -- whenever a feeling of warmth, affection and respect develops between me and a man -- then suddenly the "deep freeze". This is a horrible way to live, in constant unconscious *anticipation* of rejection, but I haven't been able to break this pattern; if anything, as I get older, it gets worse; and I fear that I actually am responsible for bringing it on.

But Steve's consistent warmth and honesty had a thawing effect on me, and I began to believe I could trust him, no strings attached. I felt

I had more to lose in trusting Edgar; it seemed at the time, a far greater risk. On the surface, the risk was tied up with Edgar's position of power as a member of my Ph.D. Committee; below the surface, the risk was tied up with my growing affection for this man. I knew I didn't want to risk losing him, and this fear of losing him often influenced me to deny my feelings for him entirely. That way I was protected and I would never be hurt. I was caught in a trap.

In the course of our friendship, the complexity and depth of the relationship between Edgar and Steve unfolded. As I observed the subtle forms their commitment to each other took, I began to examine my fears of intimacy and commitment to people I care about, although this examination, at times, created in me an unspeakable terror. Meanwhile, I tried to write my thesis, but it did not go well. My Ph.D. Supervisor, Anthony Barton, praised me, trying to massage some life back into my paralysed mind. "Write a real book," he told me.

Sometimes his comments made me feel all-powerful, but then I would feel immediately impotent when I thought of my prospective audience. I knew what kind of text they would be expecting, and I could not write that way and be true to myself. What would I write? What "stories" would I tell?

I could make a dozen stories of what he said, of what she said -- I can see a dozen pictures. But what are stories? Toys I twist, bubbles I blow, one ring passing through another. And sometimes I begin to doubt if there are stories. What is my story?

(Woolf, 1931; p.275)

Suddenly I realized it was year five of the Ph.D. I was desperate to finish writing, yet I felt I had barely begun. Woolf (1931) writes:

My book, stuffed with phrases, has dropped to the floor. It lies under the table to be swept up by the charwoman when she comes wearily at dawn looking for scraps of paper, old tram tickets, and here and there a note screwed into a ball and left with the litter to be swept up. What is the phrase for the moon? And the phrase for love? By what name are we to call death? I do not know. I need a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing and pick up some scrap of bright wool, a feather, or a shred of chintz. I need a howl; a cry ...

I began new chapters; I wrote and re-wrote, and I tried to patch together the piles of papers that were strewn all over my home "office".

Another day; another Friday; another twentieth of March, January or September. Another general awakening. The stars draw back and are extinguished. The bars deepened themselves between the waves. The film of mist thickens on the fields. A redness hangs by the bedroom window. A bird chirps. Cottagers light their early candles. Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again.

I felt myself changing as I wrote the "stories" of my life; patterns welled up in waves. I was tossed about in the swirling waters and pulled under by the force of the pounding surf.

And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising

beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand pawing this stretch of pavement? It is death. Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O death!

The waves broke on the shore.

(pp.381-383)

The Doctoral Examination

In 1673, Molière (1965) produced his last comedy, The Hypochondriack. The play is a bold attack on the foundations of the art of the *physic*, the practice of medicine by the esteemed medical doctors of his day. Molière tells the story of a hypochondriac named Argan, who is plagued by a host of bodily complaints (mostly imaginary and heavily influenced by his attending physicians, who have a vested interest in the patient's ailments). His brother, Beraldo, is convinced that the physicians "know nothing", and that Argan is a healthy man, free of any distemper and tries to explain to him that:

they [the doctors of physic] understand for the most part polite literature; can talk good Latin, know how to call all distempers in Greek, to define, and to distinguish 'em ... and all the excellency of their art consists in a pompous nonsense, in a specious babbling, which gives you words instead of reasons, and promises instead of effects.

(p.450)

But Argan is strongly attached to his daily "clysters" and doses of "cassia" and he is acquiescent under the "supreme authority" of the grand doctors, M. Purgon and M. Diafoirus, whom he believes "know more than other people".

It is impossible for Beraldo to convince his brother to question their authority, which he must do if he is to be delivered out of his "errors"; but Argan's bodily suffering appears symptomatic of a deeper, more serious malady, a lack of *self knowledge* which Beraldo alludes to

when he says: "Consider that the principles of your [Argan's] life are in yourself ..." (p.456) and not in the "rules" and "romance" of the physic.

The story unfolds as Argan continues to allow himself to be fooled by his physicians, daughters, potential sons-in-law, and his second wife, Belina, who has no real love for her husband and is after his money. Towards the end of the play, Argan insists that in return for his daughter, Angelica's, hand in marriage, his daughter's suitor, Cleanthes, must "turn physician"; thus Argan thinks he will insure himself against future bodily malady. In a stroke of brilliance, Beraldo suggests to his brother that he too can turn physician, and become a doctor to himself:

Argan: I fancy, brother, you banter me. Am I of an age to study?

Beraldo: Pshaw! study! why you are learned enough; there are a great many among 'em, who are not better skilled than yourself.

Argan: But one should know how to speak Latin well, to know the distempers, and the remedies proper to apply 'em.

Beraldo: You'll learn all that by putting on the robe and cap of a physician, and you will afterwards be more skilful than you'd wish to be.

Argan: What! do people understand how to discourse upon distempers when they have on that habit?

Beraldo: Yes. You have nothing to do but to talk, with a gown and cap any stuff becomes learned, and nonsense becomes sense.

(Scene xxii; pp.465-466)

In the final scene, Beraldo hires players to create an "interlude" to which Argan is invited to act the principal character in the performance, a ritual in which he will gain admittance as a doctor of physic.

After passing the examination, Argan addresses the body of surgeons and apothecaries:

Grandes doctores doctrinae,
 Of rhubarbe and of séné:
 'Twou'd be in me without doubt on thinga folla,
 Inepta and ridicula
 If I should m'engageare
 Vobis louangeas donare,
 Et pretendebam addare
 Des lumieras au soleillo,
 Et des étoiles au cielo,
 Des ondas à l'oceano,
 Et des rosas to the springo.
 Agree that in one wordo
 Pro toto remercimiento
 Rendam gratiam corpori tam docto.
 Vobis, vobis debeo
 More than to nature, and than to patri meo;
 Natura and pater meus
 Hominem me habent factum:
 But vos me, that which is plus,
 Avetis factum medicum.
 Honor, favor, and gratia,
 Qui in hoc corde que voilà,

**Imprimant ressentimenta
Qui dureront in saecula.**

To which they replied in chorus:

**Vivat, vivat, vivat, vivat, for ever vivat
Novus doctor, qui tam bene speakat,
Mille, mille annis, and manget and bibat,
Et bleedet and killat.**

(Interlude; pp.471-472)

Three significant and inter-related themes emerge in Molière's The Hypochondriack which, I believe, can help us understand the use of narrative knowledge and autobiography in education. The first is the theme (which Argan must wrestle with) concerning the need to become "a doctor of oneself". Michel Foucault identifies it as the Greek practice of *epimelesthai sautou* or "to take care of yourself"; the second is the need to have a concern for *self knowledge*, which Foucault attributes to the Delphic principle, *gnothi sautou* or "Know yourself" (in Martin, 1988; p.19), (a principle Argan strongly resists); and third, concerns the need to understand, and the implications of what it means to become adept in "language games", of the "post modern" practice which Lyotard (1984) has shown to be the minimum relations required for society to exist and a key to understanding the *self*.

Although Argan is not "tuned into" the frequencies of the specialized jargon of his physicians, Beraldo shows an awareness of the significance of their "language games" and of the specific "language game known to the West as the question of legitimacy -- or rather, legitimacy

as a referent in the game of inquiry" (Lyotard, p.23). For example, he tells Argan: "In talk, and in things, your great physicians are two sorts of people. Hear 'em talk, they are the most skillful persons in the whole world. See 'em act, and they're the most ignorant of all men" (p.451).

Beraldo puts down and puts off M. Fleurant, an apothecary who has brought Argan his daily syringe for a "little clyser". In revenge, M. Purgon abandons Argan to his "evil constitution" and predicts that "within four days' time," he will "enter an incurable state", he will "fall into a bradypepsia"; "From a bradypepsia into a dyspepsia"; "From a dyspepsia into an apepsia"; "From an apepsia into a lienteria"; "From a lienteria into a dissenteria"; "From a dissenteria into a dropsy"; "And from a dropsy into a privation of life ..." (p.455).

Argan is terrified by the doctor's prediction and complains to his brother:

Argan: You see, brother, the strange diseases he threatened me with.

Beraldo: What a simple man you are!

Argan: He said I should become incurable within four day's time.

Beraldo: And what does it signify what he said? Is it an oracle that has spoken to you? To hear you one would think that M. Purgon held in his hands the thread of your days, and by supreme authority could prolong it for you, or cut it short as he pleased.

(Scene VII;p.456)

In a talk given at the University of Vermont in 1982, Michel Foucault suggested that in his prior writings he may have "insisted too much on the technology of domination and power" and he told his audience, "I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of self" (in Martin, 1988;p.19). Foucault went on to trace the development of the hermeneutics of the self, from the first two centuries A.D. of the Early Roman Empire to the present, and described the "various practices to which cultivation of self has given rise" (p.31). He explored historically changing pedagogical "truth games" played by the masters and their disciples over the centuries and he described the practices they [the masters] employed for acquiring knowledge.

These "truth games" are "related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves" (p.18), which Foucault names "technologies". He divides them into four types:

- (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things;
- (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification;
- (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject;
- (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of

others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

(p.18)

Underlying principles, such as Plato's "Know yourself" and the Socratic notion "Take care of yourself", were shown to be the first steps in the theory of knowledge. It was good to be reflective and the principal activity of caring for yourself meant that you worried about your soul.

Foucault cites the *Therapeutae* as an example of a group of persons who acted upon the concern for taking care of yourself. He described them as an "obscure and enigmatic group on the periphery of Hellenistic and Hebraic culture; an austere community, devoted to reading, to healing meditation, to individual and collective prayer, and to meeting for spiritual banquet" (p.21).

In addition, writing about the self became an important practice for those engaged in this form of self-examination, as Foucault tells us:

Writing was also important in the culture of taking care of oneself. One of the main features of taking care involved taking notes on oneself to be reread, writing treatises and letters to friends to help them, and keeping notebooks in order to reactivate for oneself the truth one needed ... taking

care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) or writing activity.

(p.27)

As people recorded the details of their everyday lives "a relation developed between writing and vigilance" (p.28). At the end of the day people would examine their consciences by comparing what they had intended to do with what they actually did, as recorded in their notebooks. This practice pre-figured Christian *confession* which requires an examination of inner thoughts as well as actions, and according to Foucault, was a "well established [trait] and deeply rooted when Augustine started his Confessions" (p.27). The dynamics of self-revelation of the confession are also found in the psychoanalytic encounter today, and in other forms of narrative knowledge and autobiography in which the practices of self-excavation and self-construction or self-reconstruction occur.

Michel Foucault's understanding of what he has named the "technologies of the self (the specific techniques people use to understand themselves that have developed over the centuries), I believe, provide us with a screen on which we can project, view and question the current cultural interest in narrative knowledge and autobiography in education.

In asking myself about the possible social function of autobiography in education, I wonder, are we, as teacher educators who espouse the use of autobiography in our classrooms practising a form of

authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, and console?" (Foucault, 1981; p.61).

And if so, is it any wonder that I have concerns about "the potential use of narrative knowledge in education, to culturally 'enslave' people (or to culturally 'empower' people) so that they might break out of their various 'oppressions' and 'make choices' in their lives ..."; and that ... I think this is "the most dangerous consideration for those of us engaged in the use of life histories, personal narrative and autobiography in education?" (Dean, 1992; p.100).

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) writes about the importance of language in this time of history, which he has named the "post modern" era. He claims that there is a widespread discontent with meta-narratives or sets of traditional "stories" that were told to explain the growth of knowledge and the making and legitimizing of knowledge, but are no longer accepted; this discontent is experienced in the contradictions and uncertainties which appear on the shifting surface of academic discourses and break through in widening fault lines of academic disciplines. To survive, Lyotard tells us, under these anguished conditions, we must begin to recognize and to understand knowledge as a language game.

It would be easy to fall into a kind of despair of language games which seem lethal in "systems theories" such as Lyotard's. I have found an antidote in books such as Robert Coles' (1989) The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination, in which he writes about the mimetic power of a language -- the way a story can "work its way well

into one's thinking life" (p.204) and "the degree of moral engagement a particular text seems able to make" (p.190).

Coles believes that "the moral contradictions and inconsistencies in our personal lives more than resonate with those in our social order, our nation's politics, our culture" (p.203) but that literature can offer us a moral life, a moral understanding of things, and models of moral conduct; "stories" are seen by Coles as "a compelling part of our psychological and ideological make-up" (p.24). However, he feels "the whole point of stories is not 'solutions' or 'resolutions', but a broadening and even a heightening of our struggles ..." (p.129)

Coles traces his interest in the "storied life" to the experiences he had during his psychiatric residency as a doctor-in-training, where he met a supervisor who encouraged him to go beyond the professional jargon residents had to learn to summon up "abstractions within minutes of seeing a patient", and to assume the position of an active listener with each patient. Dr. Ludwig explained:

The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is *their story*.

(p.7)

One "story" I remembered vividly after reading Coles' book concerned a student who told Coles that he loved "to read stories and get lost in them". He described the characters in the stories as "buddies

get lost in them". He described the characters in the stories as "buddies of mine, friends, people I think of when having to face some big moral issue ..." (p.202) The student goes on to say, "Those folks, they're *people* for me. Nick Carraway or Jack Burden, they really speak to me -- there's a lot of me in them, or visa versa" (p.203).

I have had a similar "reader response" to many of the authors I have read and quoted in this thesis. I feel that I *know* many of these people, that if we were to meet we should have something to say to each other. Molière can make me twitter with laughter with parodies more than three hundred years old. Woolf's notion of "moments of being" that come upon her in a "shock" and seem to bring reality crashing down, also resonate with me; I often experience odd "instances" that give me insight when there are no "ordinary" explanations. I get caught up in the beauty and complexity of language in the autobiography of Gertude Stein, which I read aloud. And Michel Foucault captures my curiosity and engages my intellect because his writing is so clear. I feel he must have been a gentle person and I would have liked to have attended his lectures.

I have often wondered what it would be like to be able to introduce my favourite writers to each other; to invite them to meet and speak to each other through me, a reader of all their texts. When I think of all the books on my shelves, books piled up on tables, strewn over half of my bed, waiting to be read, books underlined and full of my own jottings; I imagine that as authors, we have all met.

What would we say to each other?

Gertrude Stein: You are never yourself to yourself except as you remember yourself and then of course you do not believe yourself. That is really the trouble with an autobiography you do not of course you do not really believe yourself why should you, you know so well so very well that it is not yourself, it could not be yourself because you cannot remember right and if you do remember right it does not sound right and of course it does not sound right because it is not right. You are of course never yourself.

(1971; p.68)

Michel Foucault: I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end.

(in Martin, et. al., 1988; p.9)

Marion Milner: Possibly the thing that matters that you are looking for, is like the roots of plants, hidden and happening in the gaps of your knowledge.

(1987; p.44)

Virginia Woolf: In all the writing I have done, I have almost always had to make a *scene* ... these scenes, by the way, are not altogether a literary device -- a means of summing up and making innumerable details visible in one concrete picture ... I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. This confirms me in

my instinctive notion: (it will not bear arguing about; it is irrational) the sensation that we are sealed vessels afloat on what is convenient to call reality; and at some moments, the sealing matter cracks; it floods reality; that is, these scenes ... Is this liability to scenes the origin of my writing impulse? Are other people also scene makers?

(1976; p.122)

Eudora Welty:

In Jackson it was counted an affront to the neighbours to start out for anywhere with an empty seat in the car. My mother sat in the back with her friend, and I'm told that as a small child I would ask to sit in the middle, and say as we started off, "Now, *talk*." What I loved about [the] stories was that everything happened in *scenes*.

(1983; p.14)

Annie Dillard:

Who could ever tire of this heart-stopping transition, of this breakthrough between seeing and knowing you see, between being and knowing you be? It drives you to a life of concentration, it does, a life in which effort draws you down so very deep that when you surface you twist up exhilarated with a yelp and a gasp.

Who could ever tire of this radiant transition, this surfacing to awareness and this deliberate plunging to oblivion -- the theatre curtain rising

and falling, who could tire of it when the sum of those moments at the edge -- the conscious life we so dread losing -- is all we have, the gift at the moment of opening it?

(1987; p. 17)

William Butler
Yeats:

If it is that the life of the heart, the life of love and hatred, of hope and forgetfulness is the true life, as it surely is, the real opening of epochs are not arguments but sounds and pictures. The rustle of lace, the lifting of an eyelid, even perhaps the sound of the wind or the light of a star upon the water have opened more epochs than any conflict of reason.

(1976; p.112)

We speak to each other about writing because that is what we all have in common, and autobiography, because in one way or another, we are all keenly interested in the relationship between subjectivity, consciousness, self and knowledge. If Molière's parody of the pseudo-scientific jargon of the professional doctors in The Hypochondriack didn't convince us of the need to write clearly, then the clear statements by the poets Stein, Woolf and Yeats would seem to provide comfort, in that the true and only object of human communion is to evoke mystery.

Pity the poor scholars who labour for a different end, who like Molière's doctors "lie buried in their drugs" and torture language as if to suck meaning from words like the leeches of M. Purgon.

Appendix
Tapping the Underground Currents:
A Researcher Tells Her Story

I will briefly describe my recent work with teachers who volunteered to write their autobiographies, and will identify and interpret the emergent "themes" or patterns I had hoped to uncover in the autobiographies of teachers writing about themselves.

Williams Carlos Williams (1948) writes:

... the difficulty is to catch the evasive life of the thing, to phrase the words in such a way that stereotype will yield a moment of insight. That is where the difficulty lies. We are lucky when that underground current can be tapped and the secret spring of all our lives will send up its pure water.

(p. 349)

As researcher, my search for themes began as a metaphorical "tapping the underground currents" of teachers' writing, as I attempted to identify patterns. I hoped to gather individual "threads" (or sutras, as the Hindu and Buddhists call the threads of their sacred books) and weave them into a finished tapestry, my thesis.

But how would I identify these themes? Where should I begin? Should I start with traditional themes of autobiographers, for example, personal subjects women tend to write about -- family, close friends, relationships, domestic activities; or the subjects men tend to write about -- professional, philosophical or historical events? (Jelinek, 1986) Or should I immerse myself in the "data" and let the themes "emerge" by

themselves, using what Max Van Manen (1984) calls the "highlighting approach" or the "line-by-line approach". Renata Tesch's (1987) method, which she describes as "panning" and "surveying" also appealed to me.

I read through several teachers' autobiographies and "highlighted" what seemed to me to be relevant phrases. I looked for specific incidents in teachers' lives that might capture "essences" of their lived experience. I looked for commonalities that I hoped would lead me to the themes I wanted to find.

This process is illustrated in the following two examples which I have called "That Person is Not Me" and "First-Born and Female". The titles are intended to suggest themes found in the teachers' autobiographies. Here are some passages that I highlighted:

"That Person is Not Me"

My story was one of becoming, "in spite of" ... This is a woman's story, a coping story, a survival story ... My parents courted for eight years, trying to outlast the Great Depression ... I can sum up my elementary school years by saying there is not a single episode among all the experience I had that I remember in anything but a negative way ... I thrived in high school ... I loved those books ... I wanted to go to university, but those lean financial years ...

In the following passage, the teacher describes her struggle to raise the money to attend university. She tells the story of her trip to the bank.

I slipped into the local bank and asked the teller (she was quite literally locked in a "cage") to ask the manager if he would see

me. He did. I presented my academic credentials and made the loan request for \$1000. The bank manager looked astonished and then in a condescending gesture he patted me on the head and said, "I'm sorry I can't. Why don't you marry a nice young farmer, dear?"

I can see him plainly: his gold-rimmed glasses were round and they gleamed. His fat, bald head was round and it gleamed. The links of the watch chain he wore across his paunch were round and they gleamed. The toes of his immaculate black shoes were round and they gleamed. The tears in my eyes were big and hot and round; they fell darkly to the marble floor and with them my dreams.

This teacher concludes her autobiography by saying:

I: is with a fair degree of irony that I note today the bank is a funeral home. By default, I settled on teaching as a career. I ran out of money and became a teacher. It might be more accurate to say I took a job as a teacher.

It is from these "highlighted" passages that the themes seem to me to emerge: awareness of self, consciousness of what it was like to be a woman growing up in Nova Scotia, survival. The essence of this teacher's life, as she wrote about it in her autobiography, is captured by Liv Ullman (1977), who writes: "I realize that I was brought up to be the person others wanted me to be, so that they would like me and not be bothered by my presence. That person is not me" (p.200).

Here is a different theme:

"First-born and Female"

In one of her poems about women's experience, Sylvia Plath (1960) writes, "Meanwhile there's a stink of fat and baby crap. I'm doped and thick from my last sleeping pill. The smog of cooking, the smog of hell ..." (p.228). This image of a woman trapped in domesticity is an apt introduction to the autobiographical writing of another female teacher who, at first, writes her story as if her life had been "ordinary":

I was a happy, well-treated little girl growing up under the influence of my wonderful grandfather, who was a sea-captain. As a small child, I would join him in the early mornings for a cup of sweet tea and watch through the tiny window of my upstairs bedroom as Grandad walked down to the dock, where his bright blue fishing boat was moored.

Her life unfolds. One sibling is born, and then another and another and another and so on until:

Mum suffers a breakdown ... I remember how Mum and I would walk to the end of the rutted dirt road on school days. Mum pushed the stroller that seated my younger brother, while I walked along with my new school supplies in one hand, holding the stroller in the other.

The following years brought great changes in my life. A new infant sister with a beautiful head of dark brown curls ... Too crowded for five ... No more space in my bedroom ... Dad travelled as a salesman and Mum found comfort in my company. There was always a promise of more, being the eldest and female, I was a "born" helper.

I was the friend who listened to problems and gave advice. They all came to me, the males and the females, for a shoulder to lean on. I was everyone's friend and that's how they saw me. Sometimes that

made me feel more like an outsider, although they didn't know my feelings ...

This teacher rarely spoke in class, but during a long interview about her autobiography, she never stopped talking. I nodded and smiled and made a polite little grunt at appropriate places or when she stopped to catch her breath. She told me a more realistic and painful side to her story during the interview. When she was in her early teens, her mother had been diagnosed as a "schizophrenic". Her mother was violent, threw chairs and cursed her daughter. In calmer moods she'd lapse into fantasy. On heavy medication, she was in and out of mental hospitals for years. The father was absent from their lives. The teacher's nineteen year old brother was killed when a garbage truck backed over him. Trauma upon trauma strikes the family, and she was left in charge.

Now she was an administrator in a residential school for emotionally disturbed and troubled teenagers. She works long hours in this all-too familiar setting of the emotional needs of others. Themes emerged in her writing and in the interview: awareness of self, developing a moral sense, relationships, and survival.

This teacher's life story moved me, reminding me of Spender's (1947) poem, "A Hall of Mirrors":

I search through a tunnel of past years
For a child who stands quite alone
Fallen from the care of the world's hands,
Exposed to all her fears,
Her face bright as a fruit with wet tears,

And I fall down the shafts of love
Into the abyss of something human
Something lost when the long nights advance,
Hidden behind the hands of chance.

(p.19)

These are two examples of the kind of "interpretive" work I attempted with the one hundred autobiographies I read, and the seventeen autobiographies which teachers had agreed to share with me for my research. But to me the work seemed laboured and I felt I was getting nowhere. Then something important happened.

Three days after another teacher handed in her completed autobiography, she told the class that although she felt she had "really gotten into" the writing, she had begun to feel "sick to death" of herself in the process. Everyone laughed.

After the class, I was invited to join a small group of women teachers for dinner. The conversation turned to the autobiographies they'd been involved in writing for the past five months, and I felt it might be beneficial if we could talk more personally about it outside the class.

The woman who had spoken about her writing that evening in class mentioned again how "full of herself" she felt as she wrote her life story. I said I knew writing an autobiography could be emotionally painful, but that I felt, from personal experience, that performing the "autobiographical act" gave writers the chance to see things about themselves and their lives that they may not have been consciously aware

of before. Through "making connections" with events we remember or memories we have chosen to forget (which are sometimes salvaged in writing autobiography), we become increasingly aware of our sense of *self*.

The student made no verbal response. I wondered if I had said too much or perhaps not enough. I noticed how her back stiffened and how large her eyes were as she stared at me. Then she blurted out: "I'm really sick of myself right now and I can't take too much more of this introspective stuff!"

When I had read her autobiography for the first time, her text yielded very little in the way of themes. I read it again, searching for "key experiences" that might help me to understand where her feeling of being overwhelmed emanated. Had a flood of memories washed over her while she wrote? Had she been on the verge of discovering something about herself that had frightened her?

The answers were not to be found on the surface of the forty-seven page life history the teacher had written. I knew I would have to dig deeper, to immerse myself in her writing, taking courage from Van Manen's (1984) suggestion that "when a person shares with us what a certain experience is like for him or her, then there will always be something for us to gather" (p.60). I was curious to see what themes and patterns of her text, I might gather to crack an opening into her inner world.

I would become a prospector, of sorts. *To prospect*, means to search, to explore, to mine an area for a mineral yield. Annie Dillard (1987) writes:

The rock I'd seen in my life looked dull because in all ignorance I'd never thought to knock it open. People have cracked ordinary New England pegmatite -- big, coarse granite -- and laid bare clusters of red garnets, or topaz crystals, chrysoberly, spodumene, emerald. They held in their hands crystals that had hung in a hole in the dark for a billion years unseen.

(p.139)

I would take up my pick-axe and chip away. I would "pan" the streams of this teacher's autobiography to find the "precious elements which take the form of descriptive expressions in the material that are at the centre of the experience, those that address its nature ..." (Tesch, 1987;p.232). I had felt their presence, as tiny, gold interpretive flecks, but the teacher had left to me "the task of spelling out, naming, languaging, making explicit, formulating or articulating those themes" (Tesch, p.232).

I returned once again to the teacher's autobiography and began to chip away at its rocky face, but the point of my geological tool barely scratched the surface. She revealed so little in her writing, writing filled with phrases like "very pleasant memories" and "fondly remembered events". I thought a small fissure had split open when she had blurted out her discomfort in class, but I was unable to find the chink in the smooth surface of her writing.

Early school days were described as idyllic: "I loved Miss Kegan, so much so that I often called her "Ma" by mistake ... I just loved lining up at the teacher's desk to get one of her fancy, one hundred percents

scrawled over the top of my page." There were other teachers in her life whom she described in less favourable terms, such as "the mean old screamer"; the one "who was completely nuts"; and "Mr. Peach, who conducted his class like the militia." She wrote about one of her teachers who had committed suicide by drowning himself in the harbour. Another teacher had been "an alcoholic who brought his Boxer dog to school and kept the poor critter locked up in a cabinet at the front of the room."

As I read, I wondered why her writing seemed so conventional when compared with the freshness and originality of one's early experience and memory. Was language her problem or was she simply resisting the autobiographical process? Another student had commented on her own writing, "I have all the memories inside my head. I can see vivid pictures and feel how I felt in the situation, but it's so damn flat when I put it into words." How true was this for the teacher whose life story I was attempting to interpret? I found myself in serious trouble as researcher because I couldn't identify themes in this teacher's life story; her writing seemed, to me, banal and impenetrable.

I was reminded of something May Sarton (1984) had written in her journal: "Now I hoped to break through into rough rocky depths, to the matrix itself. There is violence and anger never resolved" (p.38). Perhaps psychoanalytic theory would help me break through this teacher's "resistance". I thought of Freida Fromm-Reichmann's (1950) definition of resistance: "Resistance manifests itself against relevant communication and against interpretive clarifications" (pp.109-110).

Had this teacher sensed the potential "awakening-to-self" embedded in writing autobiography, the possibility that your personal foundations might be shaken by what you might discover about yourself? This essential *elenchus* of experience might have made her anxious. Not everyone seeks an enhanced form of consciousness of self; she may have been overpowered and compelled to write in a safe, flat and lifeless way.

How was I to "read" this teacher's autobiography? Was I "ready to see another meaning or pattern latent in the whole text, which conflicts with the manifest one .. fragile, peripheral, and unelaborated in the ordinary way" (Gunn, 1982; p.22)? I looked again.

I found a passage in her writing which seemed important. Writing about herself she says:

I am ten years old. My mother dies. My teacher comes to the wake and I cannot speak. I am ignored by the other children at school. I cry when they read a story about mothers.

And much later, at the end of her text she writes:

Writing autobiographically was very enjoyable. Great pleasure was derived as I recalled and wrote about those valuable memories. I consider myself one of the least creative people on the face of the earth. I can honestly say that now I am pretty tired of thinking about my past; it's been too self-indulgent. I am anxious to get into something that has absolutely nothing to do with me or my past life.

Perhaps this terrifying experience of waking to consciousness of self is not for everyone. Annie Dillard (1987) writes of it in her autobiography:

I never woke, at first, without recalling, chilled, all those other waking times, those similar stark views from similarly lighted precipices; dizzying precipices from which the distant, glittering world revealed itself as a brooding and separated scene -- and so let slip a queer implication, that I myself was both the observer and the observable, and so a possible object of my own humming awareness.

(p.12)

My work with teachers writing autobiographically was making me anxious; I felt there was something dreadful going on and I wondered: Were we engaged in a form of psychoanalytic analysis? Was I masquerading as an "analyst" in the relationships I had with teachers who then became my "analysands"? Why had I assumed so much "power" over the interpretation of their individual texts? Why was the entire exercise becoming so distasteful to me?

Madeleine R. Grumet (1987) points to the "inevitable alienation to storytelling" found in narrative work with teachers, and questions her own implication in it. She writes:

If my work permits the teachers I work with to examine their own work with a seeing that is more inclusive, that surveys an ever widening surround, that is a search I would gladly join. But if my work certifies me, as an agent of the state to peer into what is hidden from public view, if it is my look

that discovers and appraises, then I might as well approach the classroom with bloodhound as well as briefcase, and they ought to demand to see my warrant before they let me in.

An interrogation tactic of the police state is the refusal to tell the one who is questioned what the questioner is looking for. Kafka aside, even the criminal is entitled to know what she is being charged with doing. In a research paradigm that denies the agency of the subject, researchers are often afraid to announce what they are looking for because they are afraid of prejudicing the subject's responses. In such cases, the question and, ultimately, the answer both belong to the researcher and the subject of the research is merely the medium through which the question finds the answers. The process through which I induce you to feel or act out my own disclaimed intentions or impulses, we call sadism, and even though some have named that process pedagogy, I prefer teaching, where the sadism is up front, to research where it is equally present but disclaimed.

(p.324)

For me, the work described as "narrative inquiry", in which researchers use the autobiographies of teachers to establish knowledge claims, became increasingly problematic. I decided, on the basis of the "interpretive" work I had done with teachers' autobiographies, and the dangerous narrative practices I had uncovered, where teachers are not consulted about their autobiographies -- and yet their life stories are presented as research -- it would be unethical for me to continue. I felt I had no business telling their stories. So I stopped.

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