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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

BEING FEMINIST. LIVING WITH A MAN

by

HEATHER CLARE BAIN



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Psychology

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1986

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Liking Men

It's time to like men again. Where shall we begin?

I have a personal preference for the backs of necks, because of the word *nape*, so lightly furred, which is different from the word *scruff*. But for most of us, especially the beginners, it's best to start with the feet and work up. To begin with the head and all it contains would be too suddenly painful. Then there's the navel, birth dimple, where we fell from the stem, something we have in common; you could look at it and say, 'He also is mortal.' But it may be too close for comfort to those belts and zippers which cause you such distress, and comfort is what you want. He's a carnivore, you're a vegetarian. That's what you have to get over.

The feet then. I give you the feet, pinkly toed and innocuous. Unfortunately you think of socks, lying on the floor, waiting to be picked up and washed. Quickly add shoes. Better? The socks are now contained, and presumably clean.

You contemplate the shoes, shined but not too much--you don't want this man to be either a messy slob or prissy--and you begin to relax. Shoes, kind and civilized, not black but a decent shade of brown. No raucous two-tones, no elevator heels. The shoes dance, with the feet in them, neatly, adroitly, you enjoy this, you think of Fred Astaire, you're beginning to like men. You think of kissing those feet, slowly, after a good scrubbing of course; the feet expand their toes, squirm with pleasure. You like to give pleasure. You run your tongue along the sole and the feet man.

Cheered up, you start fooling around. *Footgear*, you think. Golf shoes, grassy and fatherly, white sneakers for playing tennis in, agile and sweet, quick as rabbits. Workboots, solid and trustworthy. A good man is hard to find but they do exist, you know it now. Someone who can run a chainsaw without cutting off his leg. What a relief. Checks and plaids, Jaconic, a little Scottish. Rubber boots, for wading out to the barn in the rain in order to save the baby calf. Power, quiet and sane. Knowing what to do, doing it well. Sexy.

But rubber boots aren't the only kind. You don't want to go on but you can't stop yourself. Riding boots, you think, with the sinister crop; but that's not too bad, they're foreign and historical. Cowboy boots, two of them, planted apart, stomp, stomp, on main street just before the shot rings out. A spur, in the groin. A man's gotta do, but why this? Jackboots, so highly shined you can see your own face in the right one, as the left one raised itself and the heel comes down on your nose. Now you see rows of them, marching, marching; yours is the street-level view, because you are lying down. Power is the power to smash, two hold your legs, two your arms, the fifth shoves a pointed instrument into you; a bayonet, the neck of a broken bottle, and it's not even wartime, this is a park, with a children's playground, tiny red and yellow horses, it's daytime, men and women stare at you out of their closed car windows. Later the policeman will ask you what you did to provoke this. Boots were not such a bright idea after all.

But just because all rapists are men it doesn't follow that all men are rapists, you tell yourself. You try desperately to retain the image of the man you love and also like, but now it's a sand-coloured plain, no houses left standing anywhere, columns of smoke ascending, trenches filled with no quarter, heads with the faces rotting away, mothers, babies, young boys and girls, men as well, turning to skulls, who did this? Who defines *enemy*? How can you like men?

Still, you continue to believe it can be done. If not all men, at least some, at least two, at least one. It takes an act, of faith. There is his foot, sticking out from under the sheet, asleep, naked as the day he was born. The day he was born. Maybe that's what you have to go back to, in order to trace him here, the journey he took, step by step. In order to begin. Again and again.

Margaret Atwood
(Shoes & Shit, Aya Press, 1984).

Abstract

The present study investigates what it means to be a feminist and to be intimately linked with men by looking at the life-worlds of radical feminist women who choose to pursue a committed relationship with a man as lover or husband. The exploration is hermeneutical in nature. Seven feminist women of diverse biographical experience participated in hermeneutical conversations with the author. These dialogues yielded eleven conversational topics--affirmation, ambivalence, difficulty, task division, economics, sexuality, relationships with women, relationships with men, children, coming to consensus and being feminist and heterosexual--which were analyzed firstly, for themes common across participants' distinct being-in-the-world and secondly, for themes that were unique to a particular experiencing of the world. The themes brought forth within this exploration were speculatively discussed in relation to four diverse areas of theoretical writing: a) the theory of compulsory heterosexuality as outlined by Adrienne Rich, b) psychological theory and women's development as formulated by Carol Gilligan and Jean Baker Miller, c) the existential-phenomenological work of Martin Buber and Maurice Friedman, and d) radical constructivism, particularly as it is being developed by Humberto Maturana.

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Many people contributed in different ways, directly and indirectly to the fabric of this exploration. Some will be quite unaware they ever touched my life and my writing. Yet their mark lies within this text. Here I wish to acknowledge those who have been most directly a part of these pages.

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I wish, also, to thank a number of other people for their contribution to the possibility, the content and the completion of this dissertation:

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Confluence of Two Commitments

Approximately a decade of what has been coined the "second wave" of feminism is now behind us. In terms of observable, practical change it is hard to assess what has been accomplished. While the media often distorts and makes light of feminism, it has also insured that few women or men in the western world have not heard of, been touched by, reacted to some aspect of the feminist movement.

Many people equate feminism and the cry for "women's rights"--that is, equality under patriarchal law. Certainly the struggle for women's rights has been an important part of the movement, and I think it is fair to say, the major aspect of the movement prior to the 1970's. Until the 1970's, the nature of feminism tended to be issue oriented--peace, abortion, childcare, equal pay, for example--and much of the political work of feminists was constrained within the male-dominated New Left of the sixties. With an increasing awareness of our unique oppression as women, a common oppression that crosses the lines of class and extends beyond the vision of Marx, women began to organize into consciousness-raising (CR) groups. With the coming together of women to discuss our common experience, our common being-in-the-world, the second wave of feminism was born and has yielded a radical feminist praxis that is at the same time encouraging and horrifying--encouraging because we are learning to "see the world unveiled", horrifying because we are learning what the world is, unveiled.

A feminist perspective provides a critical analysis of the subordinate status and resulting oppression of women under patriarchy, such that, in the oppression of women it is men who are the oppressors; in the conscientization of women it is the personal that is politicized; in the development of a revolutionary praxis it is individual fathers, brothers, sons, and lovers who are included in the class of men, the oppressors, the patriarchy.

The relationship between oppressed and oppressor in a revolution concerning class is generally expressed in terms of economics, in the work place. The relationships between oppressed and oppressor in a revolution concerning sexism are expressed not only in terms of economics and the workplace, but also within the family, the home, and the bedroom. In no other revolution has almost every member of the oppressed class

been affectionally and/or sexually linked with a member of the oppressing class.

Almost all women are attached to men by one or more emotional ties, whether it be as a mother, a lover, a daughter, a sister, or a friend. Although some feminists will deny this, I have known virtually none, even among the most ardent separatists, who doesn't harbor at least a memory of some man who occupied a place of affection in her life. Though it is difficult to ignore both fear of reprisals and remembered love, feminists have learned we must harden ourselves against these feelings if we are to accomplish anything at all for women, we must agree, at least temporarily, to shove such considerations aside. (Fritz 1979, p. 10)

Our inevitable ties with men have certainly delayed women in the penetration of our "culture of silence." Accordingly, it has been necessary for feminist women to separate from men in order to effectively unveil the patriarchal consciousness that has been imposed upon us and sedimented around us. It is always difficult to see clearly that which shapes and surrounds us, that within which we are deeply immersed. It takes an element of distance, a moving out of, a stepping back from, to provide a new perspective, to precipitate the process of reflection. In moving our position, different elements come into view. The contours of the landscape change, some being newly illuminated in sharp relief, others fading til barely discernable. It is the difference between playing the game and moving to the sidelines for a while. It is this alternating of positions, being both player and spectator, that has spawned a feminist construction of reality.

It is important for women to step back from their interactions with men for a number of reasons, not least of all to look at things with new eyes, from a different seat. Similarly, some distance has been important in enabling us to turn the spotlight on ourselves for a change. Focussing on men is a sure way not to see ourselves. Furthermore, maintaining the spotlight on women becomes imperative when men begin to grumble that their performance is inadequately lit; that it pales in comparison. Men are undoubtedly affected by the rise of women, and not always in ways they consider pleasant. Too generous a compassion for their suffering, on our part, inevitably inhibits women in the reconstruction of our world. The spotlight is pulled from us back to men and we bump into each other in the dark once again. Discussing men's problems is but a

diversion, although it may serve, in some instances, to assuage our guilt and our fear. And as feminists we all fear the fate of Lot's wife. However, as Leah Fritz states

when we put from our minds the consideration of how women appear in the eyes of men and how feminist decisions may affect men, it is well to remember that ambivalence toward men is still a reality for most of us. Not referring to this ambivalence is a deliberate choice. Consciousness-raising has incorporated certain rules to prevent its leading to personal solutions. Considering men's reactions obfuscates the issue feminism strives to emphasize, the oppression of women by men, mankind, the patriarchy. When we stop agonizing over men's problems, we lift a cloud which has threatened to suffocate us--but we lift it only hypothetically. (1979, pp. 14-15)

In reality, for most of us, concern about men is still with us in some form or another. To speak about men does not deny the experience of most feminist women, but it does violate an agreed upon rule of the movement. Or it did. Now that women have begun to detail the structure and extent of our oppression by men, the early eighties has seen more feminists begin to confront our ambivalence around our affectional ties with men (e.g., Hamblin, 1983; Kates, 1982; Lazarre, 1980; Morgan, 1984).

Imagine a stage with both women and men players. The men dictate the script and act in full expression of their personhood. The women hover as shadowforms of the male cast. There comes a change of lighting, a bright focus on the shadowforms. Some of the shadows are blinded, frightened by the light and merge even closer to the shadow casters, the shadow definers, in order to hood their eyes. Others relish the light, the illumination of their shadowforms, the transformation of shadow to form. They discover their form and its relation to the shadow casters. They discover their acting, creating form and begin improvising the script of this play, initiating changes. But, of course, there are those on stage who do not want a part of this new play and they adhere strictly to the old script. They do not see women but rather, shadows in mutiny. Then there are those who play predominantly in the old play, but as looking at a figure ground form, at times they glimpse, involuntarily, the alternate picture. The alternate drama is being played off to the side of the stage, with a minority of actors. Their backs are turned to the others. There is an intensity in their movement, a knowledge that the existence of their script is somewhat

fragile, the realization that if they were to stop playing there might be no understudy waiting in the wings to replace them. There's little room to take a break; little room for a soft and gentle turn of phrase, to stop speaking loudly would mean their voices drown in the dominant script. There's little turning toward or interaction with the other side of the stage, too long a consideration of the dominant play might mean a halting or even a discarding of their alternate drama.

Some feminists would argue that the existence of a feminist construction of reality is too tenuous yet to entertain any consideration of our ambivalence towards men. There is a very legitimate fear, that in opening that question, we remove the spotlight from women and merely illuminate the world of men once again. Yet for other feminists, living intimately with a man is an aspect of our daily lived experience, and questions around our affectional ties with men, both real and immediate. With the coming together of a commitment to feminism and a commitment to an individual male lover we cannot but confront our ambivalence towards men. This dissertation asks what it means to be feminist and heterosexual. The question is situated within the feminist analysis from which it arises and it illuminates the everyday experience of women. It explores a being-in-the-world that represents the daily living situation of many women. Fundamentally this thesis is concerned with women and it maintains the spotlight upon women.

B. The Question and Its Organization

The present study¹ intends to explore what it means to be a feminist and intimately linked with men, by looking at the life-worlds of radical feminist women who are heterosexual, who choose to pursue an intimate relationship with a man as lover or

¹Engaging in a research process that is relatively unfamiliar to the researcher and to her discipline, inevitably invites a noticing of language. I do not particularly like to use the word "study" to refer to this creation. For me, "study" carries connotations of hard work, of arduous endeavour. Furthermore, it implies distance and non participation on the part of the researcher, a looking-at in separation from an object. Also, it refers to a product, in its noun form, a static completion. In trying to come up with a replacement for the commonly used word "study," I wanted a concept that might embody some of the enjoyment I experienced in creating this dissertation, that would acknowledge the co-participation and accordingly, non-objectification of all participants, and that would embody the notion of process, of coming to form, as opposed to product, the cemently formed. I played with different terms--for example, exploration, investigation, discourse, reflection, contemplation, engagement, endeavour, creation--and I use each of these during the course of the text. At times I also resort to "study." However, my preferred substitute is "exploration."

husband. The nature of the question, what it means to be feminist and heterosexual, is such that it seeks a deeper understanding of the life-experiences of these feminist women; it demands insight into the women's being-in-the-world, their embeddedness in the world at the confluence of two commitments--one to a movement, the other to a man. It seeks to understand feminist immersion in the world at the point at which commitment to a revolution against the patriarchy and affectional/sexual ties with a member of the patriarchy overlap.

This discourse initiates an exploration of the subjective meaning of heterosexuality within the context of a radical feminist commitment. Its starting point is not ideology, but women's experience. Its focus is on what women actually do, how they act and react, what they feel and perceive, the joy and the pain, the ease and the difficulty, the hope and the despair, the change and the sameness of their everyday being-in-the-world.

This dissertation is born from the womb of a question--what does it mean to be a feminist and to live intimately with a man? Questions inevitably arise out of a particular context, a certain half-knowing which in turn moderates the question's direction. Chapter II provides the context for this exploration, the background to the question as it has emerged for me. It situates the question within ideas about the construction of reality in general, a feminist construction of reality in particular and heterosexual feminists' silence concerning their specific construction of reality. Chapter II speaks to the legitimacy, the relevance of the question. It answers the queries, For whom is this a question? Why does this question need to be asked anyway?

Chapter III describes how the question was asked, how the parameters of the question were explored. It unfolds a process little known within psychology, called here, the hermeneutic conversation. This process was chosen because it acknowledges the participatory aspect of coming to an answer. It allows the exploration of a relatively uncharted phenomenon without objectifying the participants, without drawing lines of separation between a questioner and her "knowledge" and respondents and their "lack of knowledge." Rather, it values the conversationalists, their individual histories and experiences. It values "not knowing" on the part of the questioner, an openness and humbleness in the face of what is revealed. It acknowledges the contribution of both questioner and respondent in the construction of the resulting "truth." And its medium is

that of dialogue such that it values talk, woman-talk, the very vehicle of women's recreation of the world.

Chapter IV presents the themes, as they emerged for me, from conversations with seven feminist, heterosexual women. The organization of this chapter has arisen from careful attention to two highly important considerations for me. The first is that of confidentiality. Without exception, these women opened intimate chambers of their souls and spoke in trust that their identities would not be revealed. In a community that is small, the slightest personal detail can reveal identity. Thus, the decision not to provide summary descriptions for each of the participants, but rather to present themes and illustrate them with a wealth of quotations. The decision to include multiple quotations came as a result of my second consideration--a desire to portray, acknowledge, and value the personal individuality, the rich and beautiful timbre of each of these women. These are ordinary women; yet they are extraordinary women. In listening and speaking with them, I came to a deep appreciation of the wealth and vividness of their experience, the penetration of their strength, the aliveness of their changing, the loving of their spirits. In paying tribute to the very wonder of these women, it is important for me that the spirit of their being-in-the-world weaves through the pages of this tapestry.

Chapter V represents a stepping back and a reflecting upon the picture that emerged from interaction with the conversationalists. Once painted, it deserves comment. Because this dissertation is exploratory, it stands initially within a particular context, but without relation to a specific literature review, the results of relevant studies. What is relevant can only be assessed after the fact, after the portrait has emerged. Thus, in chapter V, the study's themes are discussed in relation to other writings, writings from both the feminist and psychological literature. Inevitably, this chapter is also speculative. Interpretation always offers the luxury of going out on a limb, creating possibilities for some of the missing parts of the puzzle, asking more questions than one began with.

Chapter VI presents my personal reflections upon the process of my involvement in this endeavour. It outlines the importance of the engagement for me. It details the journey from an initial curiosity, an initial personal position through transformation of my individual horizons to my current construction of the world. It speaks about my changes as a result of immersion in this dissertation. It brings into view the threads of myself that

weave their way through the work, that hover in the background shaping and being shaped by the questioning, listening, reflecting and writing. It represents some of the unsaid out of which the said arises. Thus, chapter VI completes the picture, offering a glimpse of the author's being-in-the-world through the process of giving birth to this text.

II. THE CONTEXT

It has often been commented, usually by women, that women and men seem as different species, that they inhabit different worlds~~at~~ are located in different realities. I say, "usually by women," because men tend not to notice the differences or if they do, not to be seriously interested in them. Robin Morgan (1984) suggests that it is the word "noticing" which captures that quality that most distinguishes women from men in this patriarchal world. Women notice, men can afford not to. We notice the slightest change in expression, the hesitation of a voice, the dirty toilet bowl, the child straying into traffic. We notice that men don't notice and we notice their reactions when we demand they do notice.

Feminist women are demanding that men notice, take heed of some of the things they notice. They are demanding that men notice an alternate reality, a women-centred construction of the world, that they pay attention to women's experience of the world. Now, what is not noticed is generally not taken to exist, to be true. What is not noticed is certainly unknown, alien. So, for a man to first stumble upon a feminist reality is much like a stranger falling upon a linguistically and culturally alien world. Except it's here, in their midst. Like the proverbial bookcase that was always just a bookcase until it was shown to be more, the entrance to a secret chamber. Noticing is sometimes a conscious choosing of perceptions also. It's pleasant to notice this, not so pleasant to notice that.

Noticing a feminist construction of the world, and continuing to take notice of it, is not always so pleasant for men. It challenges their construction of the world and makes them uncomfortable. Mixing a feminist version of reality with the dominant masculine version of reality has been likened to blending oil and water. Yet the two come together for women who are feminist and heterosexual.

A. The Construction of Reality

While both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is (our) vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity.

9

(Freire, 1970, p. 28)

The "lost humanity" of women has been variously captured in phrases such as "the second sex," "the other," "the invisible class," "the culture of silence." Feminism, women's struggle to become more fully human, is a struggle of emancipation, a struggle to transform reality. The intersubjective nature of reality is both the gravest obstacle to, and the most powerful tool for, women's transformation of the world.

Reality as we experience it, is a socially constructed, maintained, and changed phenomenon. The nature of commonsense reality, that self-evident taken-for-granted state of being, appears firmly sedimented subjectively and objectively in and around us. It is both created and sustained by our social interaction, our apprehension of others. Berger and Luckmann (1967) suggest that reality comprises an ongoing dialectic embodying the three moments of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. That is, social order is a continuing human production in which any individual member of society simultaneously externalizes her own subjective being, verifies this externalization as an objective reality which is experienced as existing "out there," and internalizes that external reality into her own subjective self.

However, while it is true that we simultaneously create and are created by society, this is not equally true for all members who share a common world. Some are more the creators; others are more the created. While it is legitimate to acknowledge the paradox that humankind is capable of producing a world that is then experienced as other than a human product, it is also true that those less involved in the creation are generally the more alienated from the product. In the ongoing evolution of a social order in which the power to create is monopolized by one class of society to the exclusion of another class, an oppressor / oppressed relationship is established. Any such relationship necessitates a dialectic in which the oppressed exist as the antithesis, the complement to the oppressor. Without the oppressed and their submission, the oppressor could not exist. This does not mean, however, that the oppressed are to blame for their lot, but rather, that the oppressors have systematically created a dominant, carefully legitimated reality that will ensure the continuation of their power.

One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of

one (person's) choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the (person) prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (Freire, 1970, p. 31)

It is typical of an oppressed class that they are positioned passively in the world. That is, the role of the oppressor becomes that of prescriber or domesticator as he carefully tailors the reality that will "enter into" the oppressed, who are deemed properly "socialized" when they fit the world the oppressors have created, when they adapt to the dialectic imposed, partake of the dominant world view. The oppressed is spectator, not creator, less a conscious being than a possessor of a consciousness. However, it is the very nature of consciousness, the fact that the intentionality of consciousness is rarely fully destroyed, and that integral connection between consciousness and language, that allows the possibility of ever adopting an alternate world view.

One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (Freire, 1970, p. 36)

It is undeniable that language determines the limits of our world, that we are never in a position to know a world outside of discourse. Language is reality--and consciousness--constituting. It is also our means of reflection about our reality. It is the metaphorical or polysemic aspect of language, that pregnant lack of correlation between reality and meaning and therefore, within shared meanings, that serves as our primary instrument for the discovery of "new" meaning, for the refocusing of experience and consciousness. Our use of metaphor and analogy are essential in our attempts to think the world. They enable us to see beyond our sedimented common world perspective to express a new viewpoint. As Freire suggests, the word is more than just the essence of dialogue. A word embodies both reflection and action, a praxis, the potential to transform the world. Thus, language is able to refer with new intention to a previously undisclosed aspect of experience such that it reveals a hitherto unnamed or indistinct perspective. As-

Suzanne Langer (1976) puts it "Most new discoveries are suddenly-seen things that were always there. . . a new idea is a light that illuminates presences which simply had no form for us before the light fell on them."

Reality is created and sustained primarily through talk (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Spender, 1980). Those who control the talk, shape and control the dominant reality. Recent research has left no doubt that it is men who control the talk of this world (e.g., Daly, 1973, 1978; Lakoff, 1975; Rich, 1979; Spender, 1980).² However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s women began to get together to talk. Coming together to dialogue in consciousness-raising groups, a radical refocussing of experience and consciousness occurred. Women's experience was now being illuminated by women themselves. Previously unseen phenomena came into view and a feminist way of seeing the world, a feminist construction of reality, emerged.

B. Feminists Construct Reality

Bardwick (1979) distinguishes between feminists in the following manner

1. conservative feminists who are essentially content with the status quo but wish some change in their personal lives, such as the redistribution of housework or equal pay for equal work.
2. reformist feminists who wish to retain but modify the institutions of society (e.g., familial, legal, educational).
3. radical feminists who claim that society needs basic changes in its vital institutions.

Both reformist and radical feminists extend personal goals and solutions into the political

²There are many excellent analyses of the sexism inherent in the English language. These references represent but a few of my favourites. I'll elaborate here, only briefly, with one common example. With the introduction of the generic he/man in the mid-sixteenth century the linguistic and, therefore, everyday dominance of man became a sedimented part of our common world view. Consequently, the semantic space reserved for women is negative in the sense that language sets up a "plus male/minus male" dichotomy. For women who do not wish to be compared to men, there is nowhere to go in the English language. In the language in which we are immersed, women are made invisible. "Since the female pronoun always designates females while the male pronoun designates all humans as well as males, patriarchal language, as manifested in the pronominal system of English, extended the scope of maleness to include humanity, while restricting femaleness to "the other," who is, by implication, nonhuman. Any speaker internalizing such a language unconsciously internalizes the values underlying such a system, thus perpetuating the cultural and social assumptions necessary to maintain the patriarchal power structure" (Stanley & Robbins, 1977).

arena. Radical feminists, however, view society as embodying a patriarchal order and see their task as changing that sedimented patriarchal structure.

Radical feminism was born out of women's talk. Although it embodies varied expression and thereby eludes definitive explication, the fundamentals of radical feminism are common across its numerous forms. When women got together to talk we began to see the collective nature of women's experience. Through a discussion of our common experiences we began to see and name the dominant ideology that holds women to be inferior. Feminism has its roots in women's attempts to evolve meanings that matched our experience. It grew out of the vision that women needed to reconceptualize the objects and events of the world, needed to reorganize the dominant ways of making sense of the world. Adrienne Rich (1979) succinctly captured feminists' emerging vision when she declared that the dominant world view or "objectivity" is nothing other than male "subjectivity." The patriarchal order is the product of male subjectivity but it has been legitimated and made "unquestionable" by conceptualizing it as "objectivity." She says

Feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to our fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world.

Masculine ideologies are the creation of masculine subjectivity they are neither objective, nor value free, nor exclusively human. Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition. (1979, p. 207).

As women talked and began to see the similarity of our experiences, we came to define ourselves as a distinct group, a class. One of the germinal insights of feminist thought was the discovery that "woman" is a social category, one that has been constructed historically and socially, one that has subordination at its core. With the illumination of women as a class, women began to look at social and political explanations of their situation, rather than resorting to personal and psychological notions of responsibility, that is, blaming ourselves. Thus, the sexual politics of radical feminism blossomed, representing a form of direct struggle against man's construction of "woman," and a penetrating analysis of the systemic, structural subordination of women, that is, patriarchy.

Patriarchy refers to 'male subjectivity' the 'prescriptions of the oppressor class'. It is the dominant ideology that creates and maintains women as 'other'. Patriarchy hovers on the crucial underlying rule that the world can be divided into plus male and minus male categories. It is a symbolic order into which we are born. As we become members of society and begin to enter the meanings which the symbols represent, we also begin to structure the world so that these symbols come to make sense: we enter into the meaning of the patriarchal order and we then help to give it substance, we help it to come true. Béechy (1979) defines patriarchy in this manner:

The concept of patriarchy has been used within the women's movement to analyze the principles underlying women's oppression. . . it has been used . . . in the search for an explanation of feelings of oppression and subordination and in the desire to transform feelings of rebellion into a political practice and theory. . . . Thus the theory of patriarchy attempts to penetrate beneath the particular experiences and manifestations of women's oppression and to formulate some coherent theory of the basis of subordination which underlies them. (p. 66)

It is the concept of patriarchy that coherently unifies radical feminists' analyses of subjects as diverse as language, pornography, motherhood, sexuality, economics, violence, housework, femininity, eating, or prostitution.

Because men have had a monopoly on the production of meaning, we exist within, what Mary Daly (1978) terms, monodimensional reality. With the enforced silence of women, any possible meaning alternatives have been pre-empted so that the male view of the world has been accepted by both sexes as the view of the world. Yet, I expect women have long known that the dominant reality is not the one and only reality. As the muted class, women inevitably see more. We are required to know and operate within man's definition of the world, and thereby come to appreciate the parameters of male reality. In this sense, marginality provides access to a broader range of meaning. Men, however, who have accepted the definitive nature of the dominant reality are unlikely to be familiar with any other focus. Whereas multidimensional reality may be a daily lived experience for

I agree with Mary Daly (1978) that patriarchy appears to be everywhere. As a sex-class system and a symbolic system which supports male supremacist social arrangements, there is currently no aspect of our lives that I know of which is outside patriarchy.

many women, it may be nothing less than an absurd and abstract concept for many men. For them, the implications of the possibility of multiple reality can be extremely threatening, partly because it exposes the illusory nature of male supremacist reality. Roberts (1976) has said

Because of female exclusion from thought systems, the hardest thing for a man to know IS what a woman wants. But it is harder still for him to listen and to accept her thoughts because they are certain to shake the foundations of his beliefs. (p. 19)

The existence of feminist meanings undermines our immersion in monodimensional reality and challenges patriarchy at its core. For the dominant meanings of society even to be open to question represents a shift in power, because males find themselves in a position of having to react--defend their meanings as the incontestable reality or accept women-defined meanings and the possibility of multi-dimensional reality. In effect, for the dominant class, this can amount to the disintegration of their world. Thus, it is to be expected that many men will not want women to talk, nor will they want to hear what women have to say as we break our silence.

The revolutionary nature of woman-talk, of the early consciousness-raising groups can be seen within this context. Many women have commented on the conflict created by their attendance at these meetings. Men were feeling threatened and uneasy. Spender (1980) has documented what some women have had to say about their male partners' reactions to their developing alternate world view. For example:

Every time I went to a CR group, there was a hassle. . . well, really, it was more than a hassle you know. I didn't understand at the time that he was really frightened. I used to just think he was being difficult. . . you know, just plain nasty, that he didn't want me to go out. . . but did we have some fights? He tried to make me promise that I would *never* talk about him. He would get so. . . so angry. He didn't want his private life "paraded in public" he said. And when I wouldn't promise, of course I *couldn't* promise not to talk about him, he was, well, uncontrollable. . . I didn't realize the significance of it all at the time, you know. If I did talk about him. . . warts and all, you know. . . how could he keep his image of superiority? He thought he was being exposed. . . that his

superiority would be seen as a fraud. . . (laughter) And he was right of course

That was what it was all about (laughter). (Spender, 1980, p. 109)

Just about every woman I know who lives with a male has problems. They want to know what you are doing, where you are going, what time you will be home, what you are going to talk about. . . you know, every little detail they can. As if knowing it all is somehow going to bring it all under their control. They feel pretty insecure at times. My guy thinks there is some sort of conspiracy going on and that he is going to lose. He is vague about it but that's really what it is. I find I have to put a lot of energy into convincing him. That's why, I think that's why, women are finding it easier to form relationships with other women, because well women aren't threatened in the same way by the independence of other women as men are. Most of the men I know want women to be accountable, otherwise they think they don't know. . . where they stand. They can't control things if they don't know that. (Spender, 1980, p.

110)

Men began to worry about what women were saying, what was moving from private into public discussion. They had a vague sense of the first crack in their image of dominance. Not used to being without control, they worried at their lack of control over what "their" women might say in the consciousness-raising groups. When directly confronted with women-centred meanings, many men showed considerable anxiety as they perceived that events were moving beyond their control; as some women gained confidence, understandably but not inevitably, some men became unsure.

You might say that he wasn't at all subtle. I began to see that I had these choices, you see, that there were options open to me. I tried to talk about them, you know I really made an effort. I began to think it was all right for me to work, and not to be a housewife. . . I was excited, and I wanted to explain, and to communicate. But that wasn't any good and. . . he just got more and more confused, and. . . he just did. And he got upset. He said I wasn't sticking to the bargain. I mean I didn't know what bargain he was talking about and I said so. I said I didn't remember making any bargain. But that was when he said it went without saying that we had made a bargain, that everybody did, and he

thought I wanted to have children, and that, well, that I had misled him. I'd been sort of... deceitful.

It was very difficult. It all changed, our relationship did. The basis changed. He had always been the sort of initiator, in a way, and I had reacted. Now he didn't know what to do, then, not when I started saying what I wanted. Of course, you know, I tried to make it more equal, like equal decisions, but it didn't work. It was like he didn't know what to do if he wasn't the centre. He couldn't really deal with anything unless he was in the driving seat. Things were becoming more clear for me and more confused for him. We could both see that. But he believed it was my fault. That it would go away... you know, if I could just be the girl he married. (Spender, 1980, pp. 118-119)

Many men just could not accept, as their lived experience, a multidimensional reality. Many relationships were unable to adjust to the changes women were making, unable to incorporate women-centred meanings within their interactions. Some women chose to hold to their new definition of the world and leave their partnerships. Other women, however, did not have that choice.

I am dependent on him. It's as simple as that. He can call the tune. I have to think of the kids... if he says you don't go to those bitching sessions, I don't go. And he was right, it was causing us problems. I was, honestly, sometimes pretty discontented after them. I try to put it behind me now. I couldn't have kept going to the sessions, that is, I couldn't go on with them and stay in the same relationship. He would have had to change, and he didn't want to. He didn't see why he should. I think I can see his point. He had planned his life and I was, well, just upsetting the plans. So, that was it. (Spender, 1980, p. 117)

For many of the women who participated in the early consciousness-raising groups, the coming together of a feminist definition of reality with attachment to a male partner, was indeed akin to mixing oil and water. As the dominant class men have, at their fingertips, a variety of arguments and sanctions designed to reimpose the monopoly of their construction of the world. Not least amongst these is the economic dependence of most women. Further strategies, such as sexual violence, have become publicly visible and acknowledged in recent years. Others, however, remain largely invisible except for

isolated feminist debate. Amongst these is the notion of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, which Rich (1980) posits as one of the most successful strongholds of patriarchy.

C. Compulsory Heterosexuality

"Compulsory heterosexuality" was first named as one of the "crimes against women" by the Brussels Tribunal on crimes against women in 1976. In 1980 Adrienne Rich published a paper which has been of considerable influence in the radical feminist community, titled "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence." In exploring the parameters of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, she says

The lie is many-layered. In Western tradition, one layer--the romantic--asserts that women are inevitably, even if rashly and tragically, drawn to men. . . in the tradition of the social sciences it asserts that primary love between the sexes is "normal," that women *need* men as social and economic protectors, for adult sexuality, and for psychological completion, that the heterosexually constituted family is the basic social unit; that women who do not attach their primary intensity to men must be, in functional terms, condemned to an even more devastating outsiderhood than their outsiderhood as women. (1980, p. 657)

Rich presents a powerful and convincing argument for viewing heterosexuality as a social institution key in perpetrating patriarchal order. She sees heterosexuality as enforced by diverse means--for example, by denying women our own sexuality, by means of clitoridectomy and infibulation, punishment for lesbian sexuality, strictures against masturbation; by forcing male sexuality by means of rape, wife beating, incest, the socialization of women to feel that male sexual "drive" amounts to a "right," arranged marriages and the idealization of heterosexual romance in art, literature, pop music, media, and advertising; by commanding women's labour and controlling their produce by means of the institutions of marriage and motherhood, as unpaid production, the horizontal segregation of women in paid employment, sexual harassment in the work place, male control of abortion, contraception, and childbirth--to briefly name but a few of her examples.

Patriarchy turns on the hub of heterosexuality. It is part of the dominant meaning fabric constructed by men and it emerges as the only practical means of survival for most women. Heterosexuality is less a "natural preference" for most women and more a systematically imposed and carefully managed state of being. This frequently leads to what Rich calls "the double life." "We may faithfully or ambivalently have obeyed the institution, but our feelings--and our sensuality--have not been tamed, or contained within it." (p. 654) While women marry or ally with men for practical reasons, it is most often women who make life endurable for each other, who comfort and advise, confide, laugh and cry together, give physical affection without causing pain, stick by each other.

Rich hedges on the question of whether or not all heterosexual relations should be condemned but she does imply that all heterosexual relations are coercive or compulsory relations.

Never is it asked whether, under conditions of male supremacy, the notion of consent has any meaning. . . sexual intercourse normally occurs between economic (as well as physical) unequals. . . the apparent legal requirements that violations of women's sexuality appear out of the ordinary before they will be punished helps prevent women from defining the ordinary conditions of their own consent. (MacKinnon, 1979, in Rich, 1980, pp. 642-643)

Accordingly, the degree to which a woman is sexually and emotionally independent of men, while bonding with women, measures her resistance to the patriarchy.

Rich touches an aspect of women's oppression that has created emotional and intellectual rifts amongst feminists. The first focus of feminist theory, in the late sixties and early seventies was a radical critique of the family, and the dissection of the structure and function of phallogentric sexuality. Radical feminists explored the price women pay for male love claiming that love can only exist between equals, not between oppressed and oppressor. Many concluded that within the current context of inequality, heterosexual love can only be destructive for women.

Women must unite--we must learn to love ourselves and each other, we must grow strong and independent of men. . . the idea that women must teach men how to love, that we must not become manhaters is, at this point in history, like preaching Pacifism to the Viet Cong. (Shelley, 1970, p. 127)

This early dialogue was fierce and very painful. Many women opted for lesbianism "feeling that the price of maintaining sexual relations with a man in a sexist society was too high. For many who continued their heterosexuality, the pain and insights involved in this dialogue led them to withdraw from radical feminism. There was division between lesbian and heterosexual feminists and the politics of personal sexuality was more or less evaded for ten years.

There seem to have been two main reasons for heterosexual feminists' reticence in discussing and examining their sexual choice. Firstly, the politicization of intimate female-male relationships, represents the most explosive and threatening aspect of feminist sexual politics for many women.

As heterosexual women, many of us feel we have a stake in backing away from an analysis that threatens to arrive at the conclusion that life-with-a-man the central expectation of most of our childhood dreams of adult life, is not merely unprogressive, but unviable as well. Whether or not decent relationships with men are possible remains an open question. But the fear that men may look like a bad compromise for most women leads us to turn away from our experiences with men and from using our own life dilemmas as the basis of political theory and practice. (Harber, 1979, pp. 423-4)

An immersion in radical sexual politics can lead to an illumination of the "rather not seen." Continuing to see the previously unseen precipitates a quest for change and change is rarely painless. An exploration of heterosexuality can create considerable questioning for a feminist--Have I really chosen my heterosexuality? Have I just not emerged from my primary socialization?--guilt at perpetrating a patriarchal structure, conflict around desiring and enjoying shared sexuality with a man, shame at feeling somehow less of a feminist because of being attracted to men.

On the other hand, there is a whole area of women's experience of men which feminist theory and politics has not successfully addressed. The experience of feminist women who seek, enjoy and feel equal in heterosexual sex, who are attracted to, feel in love and claim fulfilling relationships with men, cannot always be reduced to "false consciousness." Heterosexual feminists have also been reticent about exploring their experiences with men, because there has been little forum within feminist sexual politics

to acknowledge the positive components of heterosexual love. The joyful experiences of these women are invisible within a radical feminist framework. They are often not heard because the ideology suggests they are unlikely. Thus, when radical feminists imply that all heterosexual relations are coercive or compulsory, they "deny the experience of feminist women who claim to maintain an equal relationship with men, women who deny that their involvements are coercive or even that they have to put second their own needs, their self respect, or their relationships with women." (Ferguson, Zita & Addelson, 1982, p. 159)

D: Heterosexuality and a Feminist Consciousness

Deep down, heterosexuality is, for a feminist, the desire not to write off the male half of the species completely. Such an insight is (a) hypocritical, (b) visionary, (c) the ultimate liberalism, or (d) Famous Last Words. (Morgan, 1984 p. 165)

The last few years have seen a softening of some of the initial splits within the feminist movement. There has been some loosening of ideological parameters and a renewed attention to women's actual experience. The early eighties has seen a refocusing on accounts of personal sexuality and a fresh look at their political ramifications. A small number of these articles have touched upon some aspects of women's experiences of combining feminism and heterosexuality (e.g., Hamblin, 1983; Kates, 1982; Lazarre, 1980; Morgan, 1984). These nascent writings suggest a number of images.

The first image is these women's perceptions of participating within their relationships as an equal. They write of the freedom and expansiveness inherent in their daily being together with their male partners, the satisfaction of being able to feel and express their strength, the richness that comes from being able to be expressively oneself in all shades of mood, the experience of feeling equally powerful:

I live with a man and I love him dearly. . . I do not live with this man because I need his money or because I will be damned as an old maid otherwise. I do not fear he will leave me if he finds out how strong I really am, because I didn't make myself weaker in order to attract him. . . this relationship is built as much on my power as it is on his. (Kates, 1982, p. 78)

Secondly, an image of intensity, of aliveness, and a sense of common movement emerges. Perhaps that is inevitable within an "examined marriage," to use Robin Morgan's (1984) expression,⁴ living with awareness embodies the possibility of constant reflection and action, constant change. Perhaps it has to do with that fluid balance between the need for intimacy and the struggle for autonomy, the pivot upon which Lazarre (1980) suggests feminist heterosexual relationships turn. However, what is apparent is a rich and dynamic interaction, the freedom to express oneself, to give rein to diverse emotions, whether they be joy, fury, lust, or fear.

A committed relationship that is as vivid as it is dimensional is not impossible, as we've always suspected. . . . The time comes when a sag does occur in the middle of a marriage, where the novelty has gone and yet some bold new shamelessness is yet to emerge, this can either end the relationship or else implode into an intensity that is not muted or dull, that doesn't settle for anything--that is, experimental, sexually passionate and totally unpredictable. It's hard work. It's perilous. It's exhilarating. That, dear reader, is why I've stayed married. (Morgan, 1984, p. 183)

For many women, being a feminist and loving a man brings the conflict inherent in juxtaposing two perspectives,--the one, of man as individual lover and friend and the other of Man, member of the privileged, oppressing class. This elicits the unpredictable experience of having a beloved turn into an enemy; the ambivalence of living at one and the same time, two apparently contradictory truths.

I frequently feel contradictions, because I hate all men. I hate the way they oppress and sexually abuse us, and when I am deeply in touch with this part of myself, I feel distant and alienated from all men, including my lover and my son. This can be very difficult for me (as well as for them) because, at the same time, I also love them.

It sometimes feels to me that this part of me that loves them is the problem--if I could get rid of that and simply cut them out of my life and my heart, my life would be much simpler and less filled with contradiction. Yet, at

Robin Morgan says "I would say that ours is an "examined marriage," since I agree with Carolyn Heilbrun that, "an unexamined marriage is only slightly better than an unexamined life. Both are like Dante's hell: one goes on doing what one is doing." (1984, p. 153)

the same time the part of me that loves them is a very important part of me, which I don't want to get rid of. (Hamblin, 1983, p. 120)

The combination of feminism and heterosexuality also brings with it what Kates (1982) calls "feminist shame." There is an awareness amongst these women that living with a man is seen by many feminists as "politically incorrect," as bringing to question one's true commitment to women. Those women who have chosen to maintain their relationships with men and struggle to transform them are often seen as taking the easy way out, selling out on feminism or even as "collaborators with the enemy." This has led to heterosexual feminists being apologetic or defensive about their choices. In its extreme form it has created, within the women's movement, the "closet heterosexual."

Why is it then that I am ashamed of him? Why is my voice so defensive when I write and speak about my life companion? When there's a woman's concert or a feminist band is playing for a dance, I don't want him to come, even though I hate to reject him. When I go to a women's meeting or a women's dinner party, I always stay late, as if to pretend to myself and the other women there that I'm not going home to a man. I call this "feminist shame" and I'm not the only heterosexual in the women's movement who suffers from it. (Kates, 1982, p. 78)

Another image to emerge from these writings is that of the attraction to men as other; curiosity and desire for the unknown, fascination with a different way of being in the world. Men as other invite challenge and the opportunity to learn, whether that be how to fix a car or chop wood, construct an argument or yell when angry, walk with more confidence or live with less fear. Men as other also arouse desire sexually. These women enjoy male bodies, the way they look, feel, smell.

Much of the writing on feminism and heterosexuality has had to do with sexuality. Sexuality, of course, is the arena within which the two commitments most clearly converge. Expression of feminist heterosexual passion is frequently described as having to do with the balance between vulnerability and autonomy, an openness that holds possibilities for both connection with and transcendence of self on the one hand, and loss of self on the other hand. Honest sexual passion always involves a profound and vulnerable knowing and being known. It is not easy to be a feminist and to be sexual in this

culture. To be a feminist and heterosexual means risking wanting and being vulnerable with a beloved who may turn into Man, risking loss of autonomy in the search for connection and self.

...desperately trying to find the relationship between the need for intimacy and the struggle for autonomy, between the body-wide yearning for fusion with a man--the exhilarating transcendence of self that can, for me, accompany sexual union--and the more destructive loss of self that passion can bring in its often overpowering wake. (Lazarre, 1980, p. 213)

Passionate sexual desire always hovers as a threat to autonomy. For the feminist who wants a man, this interaction is played out within a host of social and political pictures

Do you know how much you can hate someone you love. . . we start to make love and he does some small thing that seems innocuous he touches my breast. I freeze. The image that flashes on my mental screen is like a hall of mirrors, multiplying thousandfold the sight of men grabbing women's breasts. I want to forget it all when he touches me, but I've seen those mirror images too many times. . . (Kates, 1982, p. 77)

The final image to emerge, for me, from a reading of these articles, is that of the possibility of change, experienced by these women as occurring in themselves, in their partners, and in their relationships, across lines as diverse as sharing domestic chores to expressing sexuality. Of course these women are speaking of relationships that have survived the course of time, such that adaptability and transition seem crucial components of an ongoing feminist and heterosexual union. Also, these women are all economically independent of their partners. Their experience does, however, suggest that in some instances, under some conditions, two very different ways of being in the world can come together and create a realm of shared reality consistent with the personal meaning and creative expression of both partners.

Inequality can be changed but only if both people are willing to discuss it again and again, only if they are willing to re-evaluate their own ideas and challenge themselves, only if they are honest with themselves and with each other. It sounds pretty daunting, but I don't think it's in any way impossible, though it may cause a fair bit of pain getting there. (Hamblin, 1983, p. 122)

Within the context of man's construction of our dominant reality, radical feminism's articulation of women-centred meaning, and a nascent literature on feminists' relationships with men, this study seeks to unfold, in some of its richness, a portrait of being feminist and living with a man. Because the dimensions of this experience are largely invisible--with the exception of isolated aspects that have been suggested by the sporadic documentation of women's experiences of consciousness-raising groups within the context of their heterosexual partnerships and the more recent personal accounts of feminist heterosexuality--an exploratory approach was engaged.

III. THE HERMENEUTICAL ENCOUNTER

A. Dialectical Hermeneutics

This dissertation came into being because of a question. Its being arose out of the knowledge of not knowing on the part of the writer. Its existence emerged in response to the query, "What is it like to be a feminist and to be living with a man?" Accordingly, this dissertation and the process of its coming to be, is hermeneutical.

The roots for the word "hermeneutics" lie in the Greek verb *hermeneuein* which is generally translated as "to interpret." *Hermeneuein* recalls the wing-footed messenger-god Hermes whose task it was to bring to human understanding that which was beyond the grasp of human intelligence. Modern use of the term "hermeneutics" dates only from the seventeenth century, when it came to refer to principles of biblical interpretation. This is probably still the most widespread understanding of the term today. However, the field of hermeneutics has evolved radically since its seventeenth century origins. Palmer (1969) suggests that contemporary hermeneutical thinking is polarized between those who would restrict the field to the generation of methodological principles underlying interpretation, thereby assuming the possibility of objectively valid knowledge, in the tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, and those who see hermeneutics as a philosophical exploration of the nature of understanding, thereby calling into question the possibility of objective historical knowledge, along the lines of Heidegger and Gadamer. The context for this thesis is found within the latter characterization of hermeneutics, and builds primarily upon the work of Gadamer (1976), who conceives of hermeneutics as the ontology and phenomenology of understanding.

(One) is not so much a knower as an experiencer; the encounter is not a conceptual grasping of something but an event in which a world opens itself up to (one). Insofar as each interpreter stands in a new horizon, the event that comes to language in the hermeneutical experience is something new that emerges, something that did not exist before. In this event, grounded in linguisticity and made possible by the dialectical encounter with the meaning of the transmitted text, the hermeneutical experience finds its fulfillment. (Palmer, 1969, p. 209)

In these few words, Palmer (1969) captures the essence of the hermeneutical encounter. In the following pages his words are discussed in more detail.

Hermeneutics, as elaborated by Gadamer (1976) stands in opposition on key issues to a positivist-based, empirical science approach to knowledge. It assumes the interface between the event of one's research, one's questioning and the world in which one lives as researcher, as questioner. Correspondingly, it disallows the separateness of the questioner and, therefore, the claim to a universally valid truth. Its purpose, in understanding, is participation and openness as opposed to prediction and control. Similarly, understanding is conceived of having to do with experience rather than knowledge, dialectics rather than methodology. It invites the transformation of one's horizons, the risking of one's assumptions in contrast to the validation of one's firmly held hypotheses. Hermeneutics assumes the surrender to, rather than the manipulation of an event.

Gadamer proposes the concept of a game as the model which best reveals his dialectical hermeneutics. The notion of the game provides a model of a structure which has its own autonomy and yet is open to the viewer. Our participation in the game brings it into being and yet the game has its own movement independent of its players. It comes into being through dialectical interaction, through common immersion in a world, the creation of which extends beyond the horizons of its individual participants.

The game has its own special spirit. The player chooses which game he will give himself to, but once he chooses he enters a closed world in which the game comes to take place in and through the players. In a sense the game has its own momentum and pushes itself forward; it wills to be played out.

(Palmer, 1969, p. 172)

A game is experienced or understood differently depending upon one's standpoint in time and space. Gadamer stresses the historicity of understanding. That is, he argues that understanding is intrinsically temporal, it is always a seeing of the world from our particular immersion in tradition, from our situatedness in our past, our present, and our future. Because we bring our individual history to the process of understanding, understanding is always "in terms of," "in relation to," and "within the context of." Thus, there is a recognition that meaning is not a changeless property of an event, but is always

"for us" -- meaning for someone in a particular time and place

Because we are immersed in tradition, because we cannot stand outside the relativity of history, there is no possibility for objectively valid knowledge. There is no possibility for presuppositionless interpretation. In fact, because tradition is the very fabric of our relations, the horizon within which we do our thinking, it is neither possible nor desirable to suspend it, to stand outside prejudgements, the preunderstandings which are part of it. It is, in fact, our historicity, our prejudgements that allow us the possibility of understanding.

Here we see some of the dialectical nature of understanding, that process of interaction between the self-understanding of the questioner and her horizon with what is encountered. This process is known as the "hermeneutical circle." One must have an assumed understanding, a preunderstanding in order to have the knowledge of not knowing, in order to form a question. Similarly, one must preunderstand a subject or situation in order to enter the horizon of its meaning. Yet when one takes an attitude of not knowing all into an encounter with another horizon, this invites an alteration in the original understanding. A transformation in the preunderstanding, a change in the questioner's horizons completes the hermeneutical circle and touches the very kernel of hermeneutical experience.

Coming to an understanding is not a matter of reconstructing the world of the other. Nor is it a matter of abandoning one's own world. Rather, it is a process of allowing a text, an individual history, a tradition to address one in one's present world.

"Understanding is a participation in a stream of tradition, in a moment which mixes past and present" (Palmer, 1969, p. 185). The questioner's participation is characterized by an authentic openness to the "thou." Her attitude is one of expectancy, one of not knowing all, one of allowing something to be said to her. It is the kind of openness that wills to hear rather than to master. Accordingly, it invites the possibility of personal change through its encounter with the other.

Palmer (1969, p. 191) speaks of the hermeneutical encounter as "bringing what is essential in the past into our personal present, our self-understanding, or more accurately our experience of being." The interpreter risks her own position through the fusion of horizons that characterizes the hermeneutical experience. In authentic understanding, the

interpreter allows herself to be questioned by her interaction with the other, such that the horizons of her own world, her self understandings are broadened, she sees in a different way, adopts a fresh view of life, in such a way as to become more fully present to herself. Thus, while a question is addressed to a text, an event, a "thou," in a deeper sense the "thou" in turn questions her interpreter. Accordingly, Gadamer claims that the dialectical structure of experience generally, and of hermeneutical experience in particular, reflects itself in the question-answer structure of all true dialogue.

Underlying the hermeneutical encounter is the experience of negativity, the experience of knowing that one does not know, of sensing that something is other than we had once assumed. Thus, the significance of the question. To question genuinely, says Gadamer, is to "place in the open" because the answer is as yet undetermined. A question, however, is never truly open but always contains some direction such that the answer has meaning only in terms of the question. This raises the problem of knowing what constitutes the right question. Gadamer suggests that it is not so much a question of right or wrong, but rather relevant or irrelevant. An irrelevant question is one for which there is no answer, it yields no true knowledge, it does not address the participant's experience. According to Gadamer, the appropriate way to generate relevant questions is through immersion in the subject at hand. A common immersion in the matter under discussion moves the inter-viewing encounter in unforeseen directions.

Ultimately it is because of our immersion in language that the hermeneutical experience becomes at all possible. Just as we belong to a certain group or a certain country, so too do we belong to language and history. We participate in them. Language is the medium in which tradition and experience both conceal and reveal themselves. It provides the common ground through which two individual horizons can meet, transcend their individuality and create a shared world. It is because we exist in language that language has the power to disclose and reveal. Such is the power of language that it can lay open a world different from our own and yet allow us an understanding of that world.

It is the nature of language also, that yields yet another aspect of hermeneutical understanding. A bringing to linguistic expression provides a unity of the said and the unsaid. Behind all that is said, hangs a backdrop of the unsaid. "Everything that is said is really ordered by a larger direction of meaning in the ungraspable" (Palmer, 1969, p. 210).

Thus, Gadamer argues, interpretation is necessarily speculative. It means hearing not just what is said, but also listening to the unsaid as it speaks from its silence. In fact, what is said can only be understood in relation to what is not said, what perhaps could not be said. Thus, the interpreter moves into a horizon within which other answers are possible.

Hermeneutics is typically applied to the interpretation of texts that date in origin years or centuries ago, whether they be Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Plato's dialogues, or the Pauline letters, for example. In psychology, however, the hermeneutical encounter brings the interpreter together not with an historical text, but with another person, a *thou*, with her own individual history and horizons. The coming together of two human horizons without the element of temporal distance offers both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the other horizon is more immediately available; it speaks to us with the richness of the living word, and the question that sparked the encounter addresses the participants in its immediacy, catching them up in the momentum of its world. However, while temporal distance does allow certain prejudgements peculiar to the nature of the subject to vanish, it also enables those more essential to a true understanding to emerge. Gadamer asserts that it is only with the passage of time that historical significance clearly comes into being.

This thesis cannot begin to address the historical significance of these hermeneutical conversations. It can, however, bring to expression the being of a particular situation, being feminist and living with a man, in the way in which it discloses itself to me, the interpreter, in terms of my being-in-the-world at this time and in this place.

B. The Conversationalists

Advertisements placed within feminist newsletters and organizations and word of mouth information about the study generated the participating conversationalists. From twenty-three volunteers, seven women were chosen with a view to including as much biographical variability as possible within the study's parameters of "being feminist." Of the seven participants, two came to the experience through their friendship with the writer, three came via word of mouth information, and two responded to written advertisements.

For the purposes of this encounter, "being feminist" embodied three major components. Firstly, each participant identified herself and spoke of herself as a feminist.

Being a feminist was an important--actually, in five cases, *the* important--aspect of self definition. Three of the women saw themselves as "radical feminists," the "radical" having to do with the nature and the extent of the changes they wished for the world. Four of the women did not define themselves as "radical feminists," because for them "radical" meant to be lesbian, or to be separatist, to wear certain clothes or to look and act in a certain way that was very different from their personal style. However, each of the women participating in this study would be classified as a radical feminist according to Bardwick's (1979) definition of radical feminists as those who wish to change the basic structure and institutions of society. Thus, an understanding of patriarchy and a shared language, a similarity in articulation, was apparent across these seven conversations. The third aspect of "being feminist" relative to this study was the fact that all women were currently involved with feminist organizations and actions. Amongst these seven participants, a wide variety of feminist contexts were touched--a women's employment centre, a battered women's shelter, an action against a sexual harassment group, a sexual assault centre, a pornography action group, a women against violence group. The other commonality amongst participants was that each of them was currently living within a heterosexual relationship, sharing a house with their male partner, cohabiting within a domestic space.

The conversationalists ranged in age from 26 to 59 years with a mean age of 39.5 years. The length of time women had been living with their partners ranged from 10 months to 30 years, the mean length of time being 13.5 years. Four of the women were married at the time of the conversation, two for the second time. One woman was divorced and cohabiting and two were single and cohabiting. In terms of ethnicity, six of the participants were Caucasian and one was Metis. Two of the conversationalists were Canadian born, one was American born, three came from other Commonwealth countries (Britain and South Africa), and one was European born (W. Germany). Three of the women had a Grade 12 education, two, a Bachelor of Arts, one, a College Diploma and one, a Masters in Social Work. All women were employed and had some measure of financial independence. Four had children, and one woman, a grandchild.

The precise number of participants was not determined prior to embarking upon these conversations. One participant yields a case study. Two participants yield the possibility of dichotomy, of picturing the resulting information in polar, either / or terms.

Three conversationalists are the minimum number of participants required to yield the possibility of a continuum of integrating information along connecting themes. Thus at the outset of this experience there was an expectation of at least three conversationalists

There comes a sense of when to stop the dialogues, that is difficult to articulate. It is preceded by the feeling of personal transformation, by the knowledge that the conversations have altered the way one sees things. It embodies the sense of having already heard the essence of what is being said, although the individual details may differ radically. It was accompanied, for me, by a feeling of being filled to overflowing, of knowing that it was enough of longing to just be with the conversations, wade through them and wait for that feeling of beginning to see, to emerge from the sensory to the linguistic, so that I could begin to speak it. For me, this occurred around the completion of the fifth conversation. With five participants, my interpretation of the experience of being feminist and living with a man would not have differed significantly from that which is presented with seven participants. However, my individual history, part of what I brought to this experience, is a tendency to err on the side of too much rather than too little. Thus, there are seven conversationalists. After seven I truly knew it was enough.

C. The Conversations

The question of what it means to be a feminist and affectionally and sexually linked with a man was explored by means of the hermeneutic dialogue. Conversations were conducted in participants' homes, except on a couple of occasions when they took place in the writer's office. The context was that of a relaxed and uninterrupted shared time, during which partners and children were not present.

The prelude to each conversation varied in pace with individual participants, but typically involved a cup of tea or coffee and informal dialogue. This was time during which a comfortable connection and consensus around the context of this connection was established. In all cases this happened quickly and easily. Prior to the formal beginning of the conversation, the question with which I entered the encounter was simply stated for each participant. I further explained that my interest in the experience of being feminist and with a man arose from my own being-in-the-world and from a sense of not knowing how the experience was for other women. Confidentiality was stressed and participants

were assured that they were free to answer or not answer questions as they wished. A "Consent to Participate" form was also completed at this time (see Appendix A).

Participants knew that I shared with them the experience of living with a man, and the experience of being feminist, which implies amongst other things, a common language. Sharing a common language, a common being-in-the-world can create tremendous trust, and did so, without exception, through the course of these dialogues. It can also, however, seduce the listener into assuming an understanding, into bringing what is revealed under the umbrella of her own horizons rather than truly opening her individual meanings to meet those expressed. Thus, the participants in this study were informed that the writer would frequently take a position of non-understanding in the face of an articulation whose meaning seemed obvious, that the listener would again and again ask for specific examples, for clarification in order that the participants' world would be more truly revealed. This anticipated the possibility of irritation and diminishing trust on the part of the speaker. It contextualized the possibility of her feeling non-understood, while allowing a true hermeneutic understanding to emerge for both participants.

This essential precaution was one of a number of clarifications to emerge from an earlier "pilot" conversation. This preliminary dialogue was important in providing insight as to the nature and quantity of data that might be expected in relation to length of time spent in dialogue. It allowed me to bring my preunderstandings, my assumptions about the nature of this experience, into contact with the living articulations of another woman as she spoke of her immersion in the world of being feminist and with a man. That is, it gave me a sense of whether or not my questions were relevant. The preliminary conversation also allowed me an awareness and greater refinement of the hermeneutic encounter. It brought to awareness for me some of the differences between effort and flow, between trying or directing the conversation and allowing it its own momentum; it highlighted that fine line between being too close to see and too far to feel. The hermeneutic encounter requires that one hover around that line, move back and forth between living the experience and reflecting upon it. It underlined how important it is for the questioner to use the language of the participant and thereby not introduce a different conceptualization of the participant's experience. It clarified the importance of consistently asking for examples, of moving from the general to the specific, so as to avoid the experience of thinking one

has understood, only to realize later that one has not truly opened to the other's experience, but rather, understood only in terms of one's own horizons. Inevitably of course, this did happen at times. Thus, with a few participants there was some follow-up contact in order to clarify material.

Each conversation formally opened with the question, "Can you tell me what it's like for you to be in this relationship?" and then proceeded to unfold in its own unique way through a discussion of the following issues:

- * the meaning of being feminist
- * valued/enjoyed aspects of the relationship
- * disliked/resented aspects of the relationship
- * household task division
- * work force participation
- * sexuality
- * resolution of conflict
- * relationships with other women
- * relationships with other men
- * being feminist and heterosexual

These issues represent the interpreter's pre-understandings of significance in being feminist and living with a man. They form the specific questions about the experience that hang as the backdrop in the hermeneutical encounter.

Conversations abounded with abstractions, generalizations, and feminist ideology. The questioner's task was primarily that of opening a conversational direction, of eliciting clarification and expansion, of moving the dialogue towards specific experiential examples and thereby away from theoretical generalizations. The questioner leads in terms of her decisions about significance, that is, in choosing certain areas of expression to pursue, while ignoring others. She does not, however, direct the specific content. Individual meanings, experiences, and connections are provided by the women themselves.

The conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed. The quotations embodied in the following chapter will attest to the harmony, the openness of these conversations. All participants risked revealing their worlds as they experienced them. The feeling of a shared rhythm, of a consensual flow dominated each conversation and any

moments of initial awkwardness and self consciousness soon disappeared. The conversations were enjoyable. There was laughter, a sense of two people liking each other and enjoying their shared dialogue. As the participants became immersed in the expression of their world, they typically forgot the tape recorder and certainly held little feeling that this was 'research.' In an attempt to capture the atmosphere of the hermeneutic encounter within the written word, I include some of the women's comments on the process.

You were easy to talk to--I had the feeling you were listening from both genuine and academic interest. Your questions were well timed and often helped me clarify or express an idea that was previously confusing and difficult to talk about. I also appreciated your sense of humour and the relaxed pace of the interview. This added to the overall sense of fun and mutual exploration.

I enjoyed myself immensely. It felt as though we were having an intimate conversation instead of my being interviewed. I felt at ease, natural and as though I was being "heard"; that all I had to say was important, valid, and interesting. I found I became aware, articulate, and creative in my manner of expression.

Initially I was nervous, a bit guarded, and perhaps feared that I'd learn, from speaking about my life, things about myself / ourselves that I wasn't prepared to acknowledge. . . . speaking about disagreements and heated arguments was difficult, it seemed to bring the very issues talked about into the foreground again. By the time we began the second interview I was at ease. . . . Did I think I would discover some dark truth? . . . It was good to speak about the frustrations in my relationship--as well as the joy.

Throughout the conversations I felt that I was involved in a co-operative project. I did not feel like an object being poked and prodded. It is so easy for interviewers (whether researchers or journalists) to start regarding their subjects as objects--as mines / minds to be mined, as fields to be harvested. In comparison you were respectful and supportive.

In all but one case, two conversations were completed with each participant. With the two conversations combined, the length of dialogue with participants varied from two to six hours. The second conversation afforded the time to go over the first and pursue that which was inadequately explored on the previous occasion. It also built upon the comfort of the first conversation and often allowed for an even greater openness. More private issues, such as sexuality, tended to be discussed during the second conversation. At the completion of the first meeting, participants frequently directed questions to the writer regarding her experiences. Bringing expression to some of her being-in-the-world appeared to facilitate the openness of the second conversation. At the completion of the conversations, demographic forms were filled out and participants chose the names they and their partners are called by in this study (See Appendix B). Some time afterwards, a Conversational Questionnaire was administered in order that participants might comment upon the process (See Appendix C).

In the hermeneutic encounter, where language is at the heart of expression, there is a coming to know through the process of speaking. Being in language is a coming to know one's experience. It is in language, that two distinct horizons meet and mutually transform. Thus, the conversations themselves contain many examples of a bringing to consciousness through the expression of one's being-in-the-world, a movement from unawareness to awareness. That this process can begin even before entering the formal conversation is illustrated in this quotation from Helen. She says:

After your phone call I told him about your opening words, and I said, you know, I've never really declared myself as a feminist. I sit on the fringes. But I have been aware probably for the last four or five years that I am a feminist. Aware, but somehow I hadn't really stood up and said, yes, I'm a feminist, hadn't really identified myself. Until four or five years ago I just thought I was different from other women. And he said, well, you are different from other women. You are different from most of the women I've known. And I said, well, what did you like when we decided to get married. And we had talked about it then, but when you're 63 you view things a little differently. And he said, the one thing I knew about you is that you were independent and I liked that...

Even in a brief, initial contact with a participant, the process of reflection and coming to know is already stimulated. In this instance, Helen comes to know and identify herself as a feminist in a new way, there is a seeing differently as an indistinct image becomes illuminated. Subsequently, throughout the conversations, Helen clearly refers to herself as a feminist. Furthermore, the phone call precipitated a conversation with her husband and a new understanding of his initial appreciation of her.

Throughout the conversations many instances of coming to know through language are apparent. Two examples are cited here to briefly illustrate this phenomenon. In the first example, Toni is speaking of a recurrent pattern of interactions between her and her partner, Sam. She says

It's really a funny thing. When I feel I haven't done something O.K. and I say to him, oh gosh, I didn't handle this properly, then he's right into, don't be so hard on yourself, what else could you have done, you're doing an excellent job. But if I say to him, oh, I did a speech that was so good, I said this and that, then he seems to want to bring me down, you know, were you prepared, what was the audience like, why did you say that that way. . . you know, that's funny, I've sort of known that, but I've not really seen it so clearly before. But, yea, when I'm insecure he's very supportive, but if I'm very confident then he comes with all his questions and ideas. . .

Through the expression of this experience Toni comes to newly recognize a pattern within her recurrent interactions with Sam. A previously half articulated sense comes clearly and fully to consciousness. In the second example, Manon has been speaking about her repeated attempts to resolve a long standing argument with her partner, Alain, an argument which, at the time of conversation had been resolved. In her speaking she comes to an awareness of the ineffectiveness of her repeated strategy for solution. She says:

You know, I've never realized that before, but it's true, no matter how many different arguments, suggestions, reasons I presented him with, it didn't make any difference. I kept thinking I hadn't found the right argument yet, so I'd always bring it up again and try a different tack. . . hmmm. . . but now I think about it, it certainly didn't seem to work. I mean it had no impact on our finally coming to an agreement and that is why I'm not sure what happened to change

it and so I sometimes wonder how permanent the change is

While it is common, within the hermeneutic process, for the speaker to come to insight through the immediate expression of her experience, it is also common for reflection and transformation to occur after the conversations. Administration of the Conversational Questionnaire some time after the completion of the conversations gave participants a chance to comment upon this process. This is what some of the women had to say

The conversations were a very positive experience for me. They prompted a deeper reflection on issues and choices. I thought about aspects of what we had talked about for some time afterwards. In some areas I had been challenged and I did some further reflecting. I remember thinking especially about the nature of friendships in general--about what makes for a committed, caring friendship.

I finished with a very good feeling. It was a nice experience to reflect on the relationship and see it in its entirety by being interviewed. It gave me a deeper appreciation for what we have and our future goals. It pointed out again that we are truly equal and committed.

I got a sense of perspective on my relationship--this being the first opportunity I'd had to talk extensively and in depth to someone there "just for me." As I verbalized, I had many "AHA" experiences. The picture that emerged was both familiar and surprising--I became aware of patterns and power dynamics I'd previously suspected but not taken the time to look at. . . . In retrospect I see the interview as one of a series of events in my life that illustrated for me where my relationship was at and how unbalanced it was. Somehow, stating my conflicts and the defenses I've built to mask them was a step towards facing and transforming them.

In the hermeneutic encounter one comes to the other in respect and openness. Therefore, what one does with the process and with the content of the dialogue is important. The conversational questionnaires provided feedback concerning participants' experience of the process. Feedback concerning content, how the conversational material was used and interpreted, was elicited by having women read an initial draft of this

discourse. I learned a lot by way of this interaction. With the exception of one woman, participants enjoyed the dissertation and endorsed my interpretation of their being-in-the-world. I knew I had truly spoken to their lives when I was met with comments like, "You mean, you can really say these things at University," or "I was surprised, it was great to read and I couldn't put it down."

However, the different reactions from Helen deserve comment because I believe they illustrate some crucial considerations. At the time of the interview, Helen, like the other participants, became immersed in the conversation and quite forgot the research purpose of the engagement. As we ended the conversation she emerged looking somewhat surprised and vulnerable. As a woman who is not often very open about her life, she was, in stepping out of the conversations, a little shocked at the ease with and extent to which she had revealed her being-in-the-world. This, of course, precipitated concerns regarding confidentiality which were discussed at that time. Reading the dissertation later was a distressing involvement for her. Seeing aspects of one's life in print is more stark and more permanent than the fleeting revelation of the living word. Helen did not feel that her confidentiality was ensured. She felt that her family and her friends would recognize her. Because we live in betweenness Helen had inevitably touched upon some private aspects of her husband's and children's lives and it was the inclusion of some of this material in the text that caused her primary concern. She speaks of her experience in this way.

The conversations were relaxed and easy--almost too much so. The implications of my openness did not hit me until after the discussions. I was surprised at my own lack of caution in revealing information about myself, particularly in relation to my husband and children--a naïvete about how the information might be used and might cause distress for them. My lack of sensitivity toward their need for confidentiality still amazes me. . . for me, the conversation was like a catharsis. I seldom talk about myself at any great length with anyone. However, I would not again reveal information of a confidential nature regarding family without obtaining consent first. The anxiety about upset to family is not worth the catharsis.

It seems to me that Helen's comments touch the very kernel of the hermeneutic process in a number of ways. The hermeneutic engagement invites a coming to see through speaking such that one might articulate an insight for the first time. In Helen's case this happened on a number of occasions. This inevitably entails some risk. Her words are a poignant and beautiful reminder that the hermeneutic encounter has to do with people and not unalive objects. Accordingly, her concerns were taken seriously and the text has been changed. In an exploration of this nature, the research can only be second to an authentic respect for participants' humanness.

The dialectic nature of the hermeneutic encounter invites transformation not only in the speaker, but also in the questioner. The impact of these conversations for the interpreter is discussed not in this chapter, but in chapter VI, the Epilogue. The dialectic nature of the hermeneutic encounter also means that the process of creating meaning brings the world of the interpreter into contact with the world of the conversationalists, such that an understanding of a question emerges from the coming together, the blending of individual horizons. Understanding is always in relation to. The meaning of being feminist and heterosexual portrayed in this dissertation, is meaning as it emerged for me, in relation to my lived experience in this particular time and place. This necessitates some description of the interpreter's being-in-the-world.

D. An Autobiographical Reflection

Eight years ago, at the age of twenty-two, I came to Canada from New Zealand in order to attend graduate school. At that time I was probably what Bardwick (1979) calls a reformist feminist. Soon after arriving in Canada I began to volunteer with the local Rape Crisis Centre, answering crisis calls, counselling, and giving public speaks. Being at the

⁵Giorgi (1975), in speaking generally of a qualitative approach to research, comments that the process of creating meaning and the non-universality of the resulting meaning, is often considered problematic because it is highly dependent upon the researcher's perspective. However, this is, in fact, a false difficulty, created by judging one approach from the assumptions inherent in another (the empirical) approach. Giorgi says, "The control of the data comes from the researcher's context or perspective of the data. Once the context and intention becomes known, the divergence is usually intelligible to all even if not universally agreeable. Thus, the chief point to be remembered with this type of research is not so much whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted (this point is granted beforehand), but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it. That is the key criterion for qualitative research."

Centre. I came to be involved with the currently non-existent Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (C.A.S.A.C.), which was dominated by a radical group of B.C. feminists. Very quickly my position and that of several other women at the Centre became radicalized in both analysis and action, and a group of us split from the Centre to form Women Against Violence Against Women (W.A.V.A.W.). W.A.V.A.W. embraced the tenets of radical therapy. We immersed ourselves in action, frequently co-operating with a number of other radical organizations that existed in the city at that time--organizing marches, feminist conferences, leafleting at sexist movies, spray-painting, sticking pornography, and the like. The demise of the group left me with many questions concerning effective strategies to work for change. My focus then moved more into feminist therapy where a considerable portion of my work was with incest and other sexual assault victim/survivors.

I met my husband, Paul, not long after arriving in Canada. We were married four and a half years ago. He has been with me for eight years, enjoying and suffering my feminism. When I reflect upon our relationship within the context of feminism, a number of distinct periods seem apparent. I see a brief summary of these different stages as the best way to portray the recent history of my being-in-the-world at the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality. Such is the horizon I bring to the process of creating meaning from these conversations.

Setting out: She tells him she is a feminist. He acknowledges his support of feminism. They're both excited and optimistic about the new relationship. They'll try new things, create a model relationship, the relationship of the future.

The First Landslide: He is shocked to discover that this new consciousness really does pertain to housework. She is shocked to discover that he has just discovered this.

The "I'm Keen" Surge Ahead: He pitches in and Tries Hard. He reinvents new ways of doing everything so as (1) to escape the humiliation of taking instruction from her, (2) to give the job a jolt of creativity, and (3) to escape the mere doing of it. She acts (and sort of feels) grateful, and has spasms of guilt that he is doing even the little he is doing.

 *I borrow from Robin Morgan (1984) throughout this description. In charting the course of her relationship, her experience is, at times, so identical to mine that I feel I lose nothing in accuracy by borrowing some of her descriptions. I do this, and resort to the third person, primarily to provide myself with a little distance from the portrayal, without which I fear it would read like gushy romanticism.

He feels she is being fair and understanding. She is irritated at herself for thanking him for doing what he should have been doing all along anyway. She's proud of being fair but wonders if she's being a wimpy coward. Also she is irked at no longer being able to find (1) the rice, (2) the vacuum cleaner, and (3) her socks.

An Individual Excursion: He joins a men's group. He begins relating to men going out for tea and having intense, intimate conversations. He discovers that he really can talk to men. He makes male friends. She's glad he's no longer depending on women for all his nurturing. After all, it was her that encouraged him to join the men's group. Secretly she wonders (and worries) what he's saying about her, and unsuccessfully searches the other men's faces for a clue. Somehow, it seemed O.K. for her to talk about him to her women friends, but she's not so sure she wants to extend the privilege.

The Feminist Prince: He begins buying and avidly reading feminist literature. He reads the newest feminist publications before she does and proceeds to explain to her how great this woman's ideas are, and how she really must read this collection of feminist theory. He wins approval from her feminist friends. They tell her how lucky she is and eye him approvingly as the Feminist Prince. She reminds them they don't have to live with him. He is proud of How Far He Has Come, and she thinks he's getting arrogant, acting more-feminist-than-thou. She reminds him that he can never really understand what it is to be a woman in the world. Yet, she reminds herself, didn't she want him to be supportive to read the works of feminists, to be as committed to feminism as she. They quarrel over what she calls his grandstanding and what he calls her defensive possessiveness.

A Feminist Awards Dinner: Her friends award her first prize for having made it, for creating a feminist prince and a feminist castle. She hopes they're right, but doubts it. She knows it looks pretty but feels the seams are rather fragile. But then she thinks, well, maybe. . . . After all, they do still like each other and most of the other relationships she sees are total disasters. In public, they smile together, proud of being at the forefront of creating the New Relationship. In secret she sometimes panics at not having the slightest idea about what they're doing. Yet, it does seem to work.

The Second Landslide (more appropriately termed The Great Avalanche): He discovers that feminism pertains to their sexuality. She discovers that he really and truly has just discovered this. Chaos reigns. Nothing is straightforward anymore. Who initiates?

and how the presence/absence of approach to their foreplay, their individual and mutual passiveness, assertiveness, joy, and boredom, genital versus non genital sexuality, sexuality versus sensuality, fantasies, nonmonogamy, bisexuality, the fear of Doing Something Wrong, the self-consciousness of Doing Something Right. She doesn't know what she wants anymore. He doesn't know what she wants anymore. What happened to the good old days of spontaneity and fun?

The Third Landslide (or the Lesser Avalanche): He discovers that feminism pertains to their marriage. She discovers that he really and truly has just discovered this. They say they're getting married for purposes of immigration. They'd never be so "incorrect" out of choice. They write a very proper ceremony that is O.K'd by her feminist friends. He is questioned by her feminist group (to whom she is accountable), concerning his real motives for this marriage. He speaks. He cries. Her mother hovers upstairs, commenting, "Don't you think you're taking this a little too seriously, dear?" They detect some unhealthy romanticism in his attitudes toward marriage. (He loves her. That means attachment, possession.) She has been cleared--just. Many of them decide they will not attend the wedding.

The Edge of a Crevasse: He leaves to work in another city. She works and plays with women, her lone male friend gone. They see each other on some weekends. He begins to feel alien to her, like a member of a different species. He starts to panic and pursues her. She withdraws. They pretend it's not happening. They talk about it intensely. They're both overwhelmed by the vastness of this terrain, the possibility that it will not be chartered in their lifetimes. They come close to losing heart, giving up, dropping over the edge.

He Totters: He despairs. Nothing he's done--at cost to his pride, his dignity, his self-respect--has worked. Nothing's really changed. He's still a Man. He still believes in the "truth" of feminism, in its justice, in its capacity for changing people. He alternates between feeling martyrish, embracing the sins of all men, and feeling sorry for himself, feeling unfairly blamed when he's a Good Man who Tries Hard. He begins to sleep a lot. He's obedient, obsequious to her, given in, given over. His self-contempt grows. He can't return to his old self, but can't seem to manage a new self to the satisfaction of either of them. Life is joyless.

She Totters: She knows he's angry, although he doesn't know it yet. He's being too obedient to feel it. She feels guilty. She's destroyed him. She feels guilty at feeling guilty. He needed to be destroyed. She feels angry. Nothing she's done--at the cost to her pride, her dignity, her self-respect--has worked. Nothing's really changed. It's an impossible combination: men and feminism, she'll switch to women. Where is the problem anyway? Men? Him? Feminism? Her? She becomes suspicious of her own motives. Maybe she's gone power mad. Maybe she's trying to please coldhearted, cynical feminists. Maybe she's been demanding too much of him, too fast. He has a good heart. He was such fun. They had such fun before it got complicated. Life is joyless.

The Eruption: He revolts. He is angry. He has Had Enough--with being an obsequious wimp, a doormat, a feminist prince astride a white dustmop. He's tired of feeling guilty and making reparations for Mankind, for just happening to be born one of Them. He's going to be a Person too, just like her. Since she doesn't feel she's A Person yet in this relationship, his pronouncements infuriate, hurt, and terrify her. She says she never asked for obsequiousness anyway, merely sharing, she wants them both to be Persons, she is not interested in having power over him, but in doing away with it between them entirely. To herself, she wonders if this is true, feels at fault, feels enraged for feeling at fault again, meditates on whether it is really possible for two human beings to live together for their whole lives. (He is working in the city again, they're living together.)

The Catharsis: He yells. She yells. They yell together. He cries. She cries. They cry together. They cry a lot. They talk to each other and they listen. They laugh, tentatively at first, then they roar. They decide they do love one another and besides, who said this would be easy anyway? She admits she prefers him alive than dead, even if he is less obedient.

Peaceful Waters: They decide they do enjoy living together. They decide it's O.K. to have some fun and some compassion in their being themselves, together. She doesn't want some other person to live with, she wants him with his heart and his idealism. He doesn't want some other person to live with, he wants her with her playfulness and her energy. There's some minor scars but more humour, more excitement, more challenge. This space bubbles with beads of sensation. The terrain ahead has a different hue, somehow, more gentle but certainly not any more familiar, and they move again towards

the Beginning.

Setting Out

Such is the context I bring to the task of creating meaning from these conversations.

E. Creating Meaning: interpreting the conversations

The process of creating a coherent fabric, that is, of giving meaning to a group of conversations, is not an easy one to describe.

The initial step involves being with the conversations, reading them, listening to them, opening to them, living them. This entails entering the world of the speaker, just as one might with a movie or a novel, living and creating that world through the filter of one's own history. In the process of coming to live each conversation, it seemed important, for me, to move back and forth between reading the transcripts and listening to the tapes. A written transcript provides the advantages of permanence and convenience but the written word is an alienation of language from its living power. Living sound offers the richness of pitch, emphasis, nuance and attitude, silence and expression. It provides a richness of expression capable of completely transforming the written word. It also facilitates a penetration of the silences, bringing meaning to what is not said.

In the hermeneutic process of interpretation, what is not said is as important as what is said. The listener must open herself to the speaker's silences, to the gaps between the words, to that which is inferred but not stated, to the meaning that hangs suspended, that hovers just beyond what is verbally expressed. The aliveness of the spoken word, with its expression and nuance, with its inseparable connection to a speaker and her gestures, is fertile ground for hearing and understanding the un-said. Here is an illustration from Manon's conversation.

He's made plans and has been saving money to move to the maritimes and he's bought a piece of land there and he intends to move there within the next year. And his plan is quite immoveable. It's fixed. And while I'm very welcome to come, and I feel welcome to come, I also know that if I had great objections, which I sometimes do. . . I don't like the way it's fixed. Part of what he says is that his life plan has to be important to him and he can't always ameliorate it to please those people around him, where sometimes I feel, maybe, he should. I

would. He should.

This is one of the many passages in which much of the meaning is lost in the transcription from spoken to written language. These words were said with intense feeling and expression--resentment and anger that Alain's plans are more important to him than his relationship with Manon; conflict about whether or not she will follow him; helplessness in the face of not being able to impact his plans in any way. Throughout this quotation there hangs a sense of Manon's perceptions of herself as secondary. The pictured future is not one shared or created together, but rather one in which she is invited to fit, more as an accessory than as an integral partner. And that hurts Manon. She speaks of being welcome to come, such as a visitor might be--a pleasant, added touch to the plan, but not essential. There hovers a sense of uncertainty in relation to the future. There is a strong inference that she does not, in fact, feel as free, as independent and as equal as she initially expressed. Manon also implies that, in contrast to Alain, she fits her plans around her relationships, that she would never give a plan more importance than an intimate relationship.

In speculating about the unsaid, one looks beyond the mere words of a passage and touches its silences. At the same time, one locates the passage within the greater context of the whole conversation, allowing the silences of the whole to speak and illuminate the expression of the part. Here is a second, perhaps more simple example, a quotation from Jan as she speaks about her experience of being feminist and heterosexual. She says

It's very difficult. I especially feel sorry for those women who are now becoming aware and are involved with men. They have got an incredible struggle. I have been fortunate in my relationship with David, it's so wonderful because we see things so similarly. . . . It's hard, a very hard thing to be a feminist today and have a positive relationship with a man.

What hangs beyond words in this very straightforward passage? For me, there is an inference that Jan sees her relationship with David as exceptional, that she considers it unusual to find such harmony in intimate contact with a man. There is a sense that Jan sees her partner as different, as exceptional in relation to other men and there is the implication that she locates the source of disharmony within feminist, heterosexual relationships, in

men's different ways of seeing the world.

Thus, the initial step of making sense of these conversations is simply opening oneself to them, to their words and to their silences. In the second step, the conversations were divided according to topic. This involved bringing the writer's pre-understandings of significant issues together with the conversationalists' experience of significance in their life-worlds, such that eleven topics of conversation were identified. For every participant, the substance of each topic was then summarized. This process is illustrated in Table 1 which comprises part of Jean's discussion of those aspects of her relationship that she values and enjoys. This topic was ultimately called "Affirmation." The role of the questioner as she opens up a direction and asks for specific experiences, is also apparent in this example.

7

Table 1 Summarizing a Conversational Transcript Topic - Affirmation

Conversation	Summary Statements
<p>J Well, I read somewhere about 51% relationships and I would say, we probably have an even more uneven balance of power <u>than</u> that. I'd say it's probably about a 59%.</p>	<p>J. feels she has the majority of the power in the relationship.</p>
<p>H. Meaning?</p>	
<p>J That I have 59% of the power and he gets the remainder.</p>	
<p>H O.K. So that's one of the things you like about your relationship.</p>	
<p>J That's important to me.</p>	
<p>H O.K.</p>	<p>Important in allowing her to feel safe.</p>
<p>J That's part of what makes me feel safe in it.</p>	
<p>H Can you give me an example, a specific example, of where something like that might work?</p>	
<p>J Where the power would be obvious?</p>	<p>She has more say in setting priorities, future plans.</p>
<p>H Yes.</p>	
<p>J: I think in terms of priorities for our life together or the plans we have for the future, that I would set more of the tone and that I would probably have the final say in terms of priorities. If he wanted to do something and I didn't want to, that would probably rock the boat in my favor.</p>	
<p>H O.K. Can you give me an example?</p>	

J In terms of travel, if I have an interest in learning something or in doing something that is available in a certain country and he has a different interest, he would compromise before I would. I can't see myself compromising and going with him. It has come into play, for example, when I've got a job in another city, when I've wanted to travel to a certain country. We go where I want to go.

H And you know that?

J We both know that.

H What else do you like about the relationship?

• What is enjoyable in it?

J I think that we have a lot in common. We have a lot of common interests.

For example, travelling, moving to another city, they go where J. wants to go.

Enjoy common interests, shared activities.

H Can you give me...

J Sure, sure. Recreational interests. Going to folk festivals, the same kind of dances, the same kind of social occasions. I can drag him along to an art gallery or two. But for the most part, our idea of spending a Saturday together would be compatible. Our idea of what we want to do with that Saturday. We like, you know, going to flea markets or spending time with the same people. We're lucky we have friends in common. So that makes it easier to spend time together. We also have the same kinds of ideas about what a relationship should entail and it's not spending our lives in each other's pocket and not having separate interests. We have

Friends in common

Consensus about amount of time spent separately, spent together

separate interests and then we do things together as well.

H Can you give me an example of that?

J Well, for example, he's far more physical than I am so he'll play squash or go mountain climbing or whatever and that will be his thing. And the art gallery is maybe an example for me where I'll find friends to visit those kinds of exhibitions because he's not particularly interested.

H O.K.

J So that... I mean, I appreciate that, that we have the same kinds of interests and also the same interest in keeping separate lives as well as our life together.

H Anything else that you appreciate about the relationship, value about it?

J Well, just the type of person he is, as a man, the type of man he is. He is gentle. He is open to hearing from women. I think I recognized very early that he had a good attitude of a safe attitude towards other women.

H Can you explain that more?

J Well, he's in no way flirtatious. He likes women, I'd say probably about the same amount as he likes men, which isn't... he's... I wouldn't say he's a loner but I'd say he's more independent of people than most people that I know. So he doesn't feel this dreadful need for company or for closeness either from men or from women.

Enjoy's M's gentleness

He's open to women's
experiencing

He has a safe attitude toward
women

- doesn't flirt

- likes women

- independent

- no obsessive need for
intimacy

But he has the same healthy needs. I would think most people have for intimacy but not. He's not obsessive about it and I think a lot of men are. So I think he's safe to women in that way and he's certainly safe to me. And he's done a lot of learning and has been open to learning about feminism and about issues that hadn't even touched his life before this. There's a certain, I don't know if it's innocence or naivete but he has that about him and it makes him open. It makes him less defensive, or even, I would say, totally non-defensive.

Open to learning about feminism

Non defensive regarding a feminist view of the world

H Can you give me an example?

J Well, just about anything we could bring up. Pornography is one example. He never thought about it. It had never touched his life. He'd never read it but he was open to learning about why it was dangerous and accepting of the reasons, you know, I and other people could give him. Sexual assault. . . anything that I or people close to us have been involved with. Language. Sexist language. Therapy. Things like that. They weren't things that had ever concerned him. He had lived a very, a rural basic type life. And he had been busy with other issues. So this was totally new for him and it wasn't even a basic interest of his but he was open to becoming involved because it was important to me.

Feminist concerns new to him

Opens himself to a feminist point of view because it's important to J.

H: O.K. Anything else?

J: He's very supportive of me. I think, of all people, he's probably most supportive of me. He doesn't have... he doesn't seem to have a jealous bone in his body. Like it almost seems like he would rather I do well in the world than he does. Like, he's quite content to be a good person and I can go out and be great. So he's very supportive in that way. He's very confident of my abilities. But he doesn't push me. When I go through times when I can't do anything, he seems to be sad about that. But not to feel that I'm copping out or that I'm holding back. And so I think a big part of it for me is that he is... well I have used the word, insurance policy but that's a bit cold... like I think, I rely on his support, on his sort of 24-hour, non-conditional support in a way that I can't rely on from people that I don't live with. Although I'm sure they would come and live with me if it was necessary. They obviously couldn't live with me forever.

H: How does he do that? Can you talk a bit more about what he does that's supportive, how he supports you.

J: In bad times?

H: Good and bad.

J: Well, in good times I don't really need that much support. I need more like positive reinforcement or ego strokes or something like that. Like, he's proud of me.

H: How does he do that?

J: He's proud of me and I need that.

Most supportive person J knows

Seems more important to him that I do well than he does

Confident of my abilities

Supportive, not pushy when J. unable to do anything

J. relies on his 24-hr. non-conditional support

Proud of me and tells me

H How does he show that?

J He tells me. Like, he gets really excited when I feel I've achieved something or I've done something. You know, say I get a letter printed in the newspaper. He gets really excited. Or if I do some artwork that I think is good, he'll be really excited about it. He'll give me feedback inasmuch as he feels he can criticize and stuff. So I get that kind of support in good times. And in bad times, he'll give me whatever is needed. Sort of 24-hour care, you know.

H Such as...

J Such as taking me around with him because I don't want to be alone. Speaking to people, explaining things to people that I don't feel that I can explain things to. Getting other help for me when I don't feel I can go out and get it on my own.

H Anything else?

J About support? About what I like?

H Yeah.

J Probably his value system is the most similar to mine that I've ever seen in a man around... the way we would like to see the world, around the issues we think are important.

H Can you give me some examples of that too?

Excited about J's accomplishments

Will give critical feedback in a supportive way

In bad times M. will give whatever is asked, needed

Similar value systems, world view

J O.K. Maybe pacifist issues or the kinds of things we like to see in a friendship, what we think relationships should have, like how we should relate to other friends, how ... his perception of how women relate to one another in contrast with how men relate to one another and how he sees it as something to aspire to ... that men should be so lucky as to be able to speak to each other the way women do. So those kinds of values which I ... you know, I couldn't live ... I'm a very intolerant person. I know it's hard to believe. But I certainly couldn't live with someone who would disagree with me widely on those things. I don't have energy or time or patience to change people and those are very basic kind of beliefs.

Could not live with someone whose basic value system was very different

The next step in the process of bringing meaning to these conversations, requires clustering similar summary statements together into essential, non-redundant themes. It is the purpose of the themes to capture and illustrate all important summary statements, without neglecting any, while at the same time revealing without repetition, the very kernel of the experience. In Table 1 a conversational transcript was condensed into a number of summary statements. Table 2 illustrates the clustering of these summary statements into unifying themes: From this example it is already apparent that three themes are beginning to emerge for the topic of Affirmation as it is brought to expression by Jean.

Table 2 Clustering Summary Statements into Themes Topic - Affirmation

Summary Statements	Themes
J has majority of power.	I Nurturing
Power allows her to feel safe	
J has dominant say in decision making	
M validates her world view--is open to feminism and women's experience of the world	
M is supportive in good and bad times	
M is confident of J's abilities.	
M is proud of J's accomplishments	II Sharing
Share similar interests, activities	
Friends in common	
Consensus regarding time together and time apart	
Share similar value systems	III. Freedom
J is free to pursue her own interests.	

This procedure was followed for each participant, each conversation. Participants were then compared in order to locate, firstly, those themes that were common across their distinct being-in-the-world and secondly, those themes that were unique to their particular experience. When a theme was found to be unique to one or two participants, it was considered in light of their particular experience, the idiosyncratic aspects of their historical, personal, and material attributes. Chapter IV presents the themes, as they spoke to me, from hermeneutical conversations with seven women who described their experience of being feminist and living with a man.



IV. THE THEMES

Chapter IV presents a portrait of being feminist and intimate with a man in a descriptive, phenomenological manner. It describes an experience of being-in-the-world at the confluence of feminism and heterosexuality. The lived experience of these women emerges through the presentation of eleven conversational topics within which common and idiosyncratic themes are considered.

A. Affirmation

The first conversational topic to be considered is that of the affirming and supportive aspects of these women's relationships as perceived by the women themselves. In looking at this topic it becomes apparent that it embodies the realm of consensus within the partnership, that it spans the shared togetherness of these women in relation in interaction with their male partners. This topic covers all those aspects that are perceived as being nurturing, supportive, loving, agreed upon. While women speak in different ways of their experiences in this respect, what is not said but what emerges throughout this topic, is that this is the area of connection, of moving in rhythm, of non-effort. The commonality inherent within these women's experiences of affirmation in their relationships, is captured by four themes: nurturing, sharing, freedom, and challenge. A fifth theme, growing old, which was idiosyncratic to two women, is also discussed.

Nurturing

This first theme revolves around these women's experiences of being nurtured and supported within their relationships, experiences that were articulated by all seven women in their individual way. It abounds with words such as safety, trust, understanding, encouragement, support, and solidness. It embodies that which they can count on, lean on, that which is brought to their being together and seems to ask nothing in return. It appears to capture the haven in the relating, the foundation around which other interactions revolve. Nurturing represents that into which the women may melt when they need succour and that with which they may celebrate when they've achieved. It has to do with feeling loved and cared for, with knowing that one is valued and desired.

This theme comprised a number of different expressions. Firstly, these women spoke of feeling safe and protected, of being able to shelter here from some of the agonies of the outside world. There is a sense of finding solace in coming together with their partners, of knowing they will provide comfort and serenity. These are Jan's words:

After a horrific day he can just put his arms around me, he's got long arms, you get a real hug from this man and you know, you just feel safe. Enveloped and safe. A port in the storm. It's beautiful.

The women expressed a sense of shared support, such that when one falters the other does also. They spoke of feeling truly valued and appreciated by their partners, of knowing that they are loved. These are women who know that they are very important to their partners, who feel esteemed and treasured by them. Toni says:

I value his support tremendously. It's almost as though we're like Kahlil Gibran describes as two pillars holding up a roof and if one is weakened, so the other weakens...he values me. He values me as a person. He values my opinions. I know I'm a very important part of his life.

Their conversations abound with references to their experience of trust in these relationships, their sense of solidness and security, their faith in a relationship not easily fractured. They perceive that their relationships will weather the storms of time together, will stand the stress of individual change. A richness of giving and caring is implied. Rachel describes it in this way:

Trustworthiness. A sense of nonfracturability. There's a lot of peacefulness too that comes from the trustworthiness...I've never experienced such bottomless support, such giving and caring.

These women also spoke of their partners as being verbally loving, encouraging, and proud of them. The men speak their caring. They beam their pride. They are confident of the participants' abilities and excited when they succeed. Helen says:

He has the capacity more than I have to say, 'I really care about you, I love you.'

Toni says:

I actually find it embarrassing that in company he'll say she's wonderful. He's so proud of me you know.

and Jean speaks of her experience:

He's very supportive of me. He doesn't seem to have a jealous bone in his body. Like it almost seems he would rather I do well in the world than he does. He's very confident of my abilities and he gets really excited when I feel I've achieved something important. He shows he's really proud of me.

A final aspect of this theme was the fact that these women felt supported in their feminism by their partners. On the whole, their world view was nurtured rather than criticized. Their experience in the world was listened to and acknowledged and their partners were open to learning about and understanding their being-in-the-world. A feminist definition of reality was considered rather than dismissed, accepted rather than rejected. Jan relates

Most of our bones of contention with the world come from my sexual politics or his racial politics. And they're so damn parallel, that he can talk about his experience and get really upset at the injustice of it all and I can be right there. And the same with me, I can just shake with all the injustice experienced by women, and maybe because he's black he can really understand so we're rarely at loggerheads with each other. It's one of the nicest things about this relationship, I've never experienced it with a man before.

Jean had this to say

He's open to learning about feminism and about issues that have never touched his life before. In fact, there's a certain innocence or naivete about him that makes him totally non-defensive about these issues.

Sharing.

The second theme to emerge from the topic of affirmation is captured by the term sharing. This theme covers the many different threads of connection, of togetherness, the world created and shared in relation. As is apparent from the quotations, this theme revolves around the "we" and the "our," the being together of two individual persons, such that the focus on the "I" dissolves and the focus on the "we" emerges. All participants articulated experiences of sharing within their relationships. Some of these experiences were common, in a general sense, to all conversationalists. Others were quite individual

One common experience of sharing to be expressed by each of these women was that of doing things together with their partners, sharing activities, interests, and a sense of values. That the men had similar value systems to them was important to all seven women although, with the exception of feminist issues, there was little similarity in articulation about exactly what was shared. Similarly, the activities and interests that these couples shared were as diverse as the personalities. They did, however, all share doing things, in common. For example, Jan says:

We're both members of Citizens Against Racism and Apartheid. And we're both involved in the anti-pornography group. . . . We both have an interest in spiritual issues, in learning more about things like inner peace. . . . sometimes we'll sit down and spend an evening reading a feminist book and then talk about the ideas, like we read Men's Liberation not so long ago.

And Marion speaks of her experience in this way:

We mainly agree with each other's point of view, especially on issues that are important to us, like choices about our lifestyle, living in the country, growing our food, and the like. . . . I think we have a great sense of humour together and I like the way we can act the fool. . . . I always enjoy walking with him, camping, canoeing, that sort of thing.

A second commonly expressed experience of sharing was that of being able to talk together. These women unanimously articulated good dialogue, good communication as one of the positive aspects of their relationships. There was a sense of understanding each other, listening to each other, and being able to resolve difficulties without too much trouble; a sense that these couples could say what they needed to say and generally trust that it would be received with some openness. Maria had this to say:

I guess one of the most positive things is that we're still here ten years later and we are friends. There's really good communication and dialogue within the relationship. Everything's talked out. We know where people are at. . . . we have--we used to have them more regularly but we found out it wasn't necessary--we have about every two months now, especially if a crisis arises--we have what we call family council. And everybody gets to sit down and talk about where they're at and what they're afraid of, and what they want.

and how they feel about everything that's happening to them as peoples' lives progress around them. . .

Toni put it this way .

The thing I value most of all is that we can have a disagreement and we never end up not talking to each other, that Sam can always say, 'I'm sorry, I see what you're saying' or that I can say to him, 'You know I'm sorry about that.'

These participants commonly expressed appreciation for a further aspect of the shared world they created and recreated together in their coupling, that is, consensus around being together and being apart, joining and separating, interacting with each other and interacting without each other. These women valued their time with their partners but also saw it as important to spend time by themselves, with their friends, immersed in their particular interests. One of the things they liked about their relationships was the agreement around spending time together and time apart. To quote Jean:

We have the same ideas about what a relationship should entail in regard to having separate interests and doing things together as well. We share similar needs for separateness and togetherness.

Toni put it similarly:

There's very much a togetherness and yet there's not the encroachment of space. Like, I know that I'm my own person. I don't have to be interested in everything he's interested in and he doesn't have to enjoy or participate in all the things I like.

These couples shared, of course, a mutual attraction. They shared liking each other, being drawn to the other, feeling that the other was special to them. As an aspect of having been together over time, the women spoke of the importance to them of a sense of shared history. Some of the women articulated this specifically. Others did not, but it hung clearly as a backdrop, as the unsaid illuminating the said. Maria used these words:

The history to me is really important, the history of the relationship, how much time has been put into it, the ups and the downs, the changes---the memories that you shared together, the raising of children, it's all the little treasures, the nostalgia of sitting down and saying, oh man, do you remember when. . .

While being attracted to the other was a unanimously expressed aspect of sharing, two women, Jan and Rachel, spoke of the togetherness they shared with their partner in a very particular way. They talked of a strong nonverbal connection, an intense feeling of being in rhythm, or in sync, the feeling of familiarity upon first meeting, a "natural" feeling of harmony in being with the other. For example, Jan says:

Although the relationship is new, there's a strong feeling. . . this may sound weird to you but we believe we've been together before. . . whether we're talking or not talking there's such a feeling of being in sync. We're in rhythm together, somehow.

Rachel put it this way

He is a man, but our connection feels like a soul sisterhood.

For five of the seven women, a shared sexuality was a valuable part of their being together with their partners. This was another context in which their individualness, their ~~separateness melted into the~~ background and their togetherness, their union emerged as the foreground focus. Manon says:

We have great sex. It's fun and it's intense--some of our nicest times together are sexual.

Freedom

The third universally experienced theme to emerge from this topic is that sense the women had of being free to be, free to express themselves and expand their being-in-the-world. Put negatively, this theme refers to the absence of restriction or suffocation within their relationships. Although not articulated in so many words, the theme portrays a sense of flexible boundaries, movement and adaptability as opposed to rigidity; room for change, for trying things differently. Implied, is the sense that women have a feeling of power in terms of choices and decisions, a freedom to define themselves, their being, as they like, within a context of respect and appreciation.

These conversationalists speak unanimously of feeling free just to be themselves with all their particular idiosyncracies. They feel little pressure to "be like other women." Rather, they feel free to define themselves in a manner of their own choosing; they feel free to express their individuality in all of its richness, to say and do what feels true to

their hearts. For example, Helen says

What I value about our relationship is the right to be whoever I am and not have to be like other women of his experience or from his own background and culture. . . . So that opportunity just to be me, in my very own way, with no pressure to be different at all.

Manon puts it simply

I feel independent. . . I'm able to say what I want in the relationship and do what I want.

An aspect of feeling free for these women lay in knowing that someone had seen them at their worst and still loved and respected them, the freedom of not having to be perfect, of being able to be oneself complete with all of one's imperfections. This provides the room for honesty, for not having to pretend, a freedom from ill-fitting masks. Maria speaks of her experience in this manner:

A friend is a person you can unload with, they care about you in spite of yourself, they don't just love you because of what they want you to be. . . and in my relationship, I believe there's a lot of that, that we both say, well this is who you are, this is who I am, and I like you, in spite of when you fall down, when you look stupid, when you bug me. . .

Jean muses:

There's certainly a lot of comfort in knowing that he knows me well, that he has seen me at my best and at my worst. I enjoy his respect because he has seen me at my best and I also enjoy the honesty of knowing that he has seen me at my worst and he still thinks I'm pretty hot shit.

A more idiosyncratic aspect of this theme was expressed by one of the older participants, Helen. Helen's husband had had some difficulties with his health. She expressed relief and appreciation that he had taken care of himself, such that she was not ultimately bound to relinquish her freedom and become his caretaker. In taking responsibility for his health, Brian allowed Helen to maintain her freedom of movement with respect to their relationship. She says:

I anticipate all the problems that will come out of that and selfishly feel I'll be waiting on him hand and foot and there's no way I wanna do that. . . . I've said I'm

not going to destroy myself to keep you going, to look after you, because you haven't looked after yourself...and that's a part of our relationship I guess I value...that he respects that too...and he's in very good shape...

Challenge

A fourth component of the affirmation topic was the expression, by participants, of feeling challenged and stimulated within their relationship, an acknowledgement and appreciation that they learn from being in interaction with their partners. The specifics of what was learned differed for each woman, but they commonly saw their being in partnership as providing a context for stimulating personal changes, for facilitating differences in themselves that they perceived as desirable. It seems that these women chose partners with skills and attributes that they valued and frequently, that they wished to acquire. Thus, their coming together offers, for them, challenge, stimulation, and the opportunity for change.

While there was little consistency amongst the particulars of what women felt they were learning within the context of being coupled with their male partners, there was an unexpected (for me) expression of exploring, for the first time, qualities that have been traditionally characterized as feminine. Thus, in speaking about being challenged by their partners, most women spoke of learning, not about fixing the car or how to canoe, but rather, spirituality, playfulness, patience, tolerance, and gentleness, for example. Certainly, the majority of these conversationalists were with partners whom they described as very gentle, as embodying typically female attributes. Accordingly, the learning they valued most appeared to be stimulated by the femaleness in these men. These are Rachel's words:

I'm learning gentleness in this relationship. Ron has taught me how to resolve differences in a non-fight way. He's taught me how to solve a disagreement gently, with a full understanding that there's a lot of commitment here. . . .as a result I think I'm much less interested in conflict, or competitive politics. . . .I'm much more interested in cooperating, in solving difficulties by establishing a common ground.

Jan speaks of learning a spirituality, a peace and softness, a fearlessness from David.

I'm learning from him on the spiritual side. I'm learning a softness. You know, like, how inner peace is so important when you wanna deal with this shit that we have to deal with. He's just about got it. I haven't. So I wanna learn from that. . . and I watch him and I see he is almost fearless. For me, one of the biggest things is to become fearless. So, that's one thing that I'm trying to work on.

Jean describes her experience in this way

I learn not so much from listening to him, . . . but more from watching him, just from seeing how he copes with day to day life and certainly, daily crises. It's not so much how to fix something or how to get into the house when you're locked out, it's how he does it. Like, if I was locked out of the house I would scream. Then I'd work out who to blame. Then I'd complain a lot about how cold it is. The last thing I'd do is probably work on getting into the house. If he was locked out of the house he would find some tools, take the window out, whatever. But he would do it with such a . . . a softness, I guess, with seemingly endless patience. . . and although I don't think I've learned that yet, I'd certainly like to.

Another thread to run through the experience of challenge as it was articulated by these women, was that of consciously choosing men with qualities they admired, choosing partners whom they thought would stimulate personal change in themselves. For example, Helen speaks of deliberately considering what she might learn from Brian before they were married, of realizing that he would balance her serious nature and sedentary tendencies; of seeing that he would encourage her to play and to try new activities. She says:

The fun things the kids would say they did with their Dad. He's the one who wants to go skiing, hiking, buy cars. He has served that function in our relationship. I remember even when I was thinking about marriage, I thought, here's someone who will push me into fun things. And that's good for me because it's easier for me to stay at home and read a book.

Jean recalls deciding to pursue her relationship with Mike:

I have used the word insurance policy, but that's a bit cold. . . I chose him

because of his stability, his solidness. . . he's totally dependable, reliable, never in a flap. . . me, I'm always in a flap. I'm just the opposite. I'm either exuberant or freaking out. I knew he would balance me. I hoped I'd learn to be more like him in that respect and I knew that if I didn't, I could depend on his stability when I was feeling chaotic.

Growing older

The first four themes capture the commonality inherent in these women's experiences of affirmation within their relationships with their male partners. The fifth theme, growing older, is idiosyncratic to the two older participants in the study. It was not evident for the younger women and, therefore, appears to be related to increasing age. Helen and Toni were both in their middle to late fifties. Hand in hand with their articulations about valuing the affirmation extant in their relationships, came a concern for how things might be different should one of them die. An appreciation of their togetherness brought a contemplation of possible aloneness. The two seemed intricately intertwined.

Helen comments that concern about being left alone is expressed primarily by her partner. In considering being on her own, she feels she is sufficiently independent to manage. Yet in speaking of the pleasure she experiences in her relationship, she inevitably comes to reflect upon the termination of significant relationships, and the consequences. She says:

My parents have died in the last ten years so we've gone through significant relationships terminating and Brian says frequently, I really care about you. I don't know what I would do if you go before me. My answer is, you'll manage.

And for me, I think, I'll manage. I'm independent and I can live without a man.

Toni, on the other hand, speaks of a growing dependence on her partner for some of the more practical aspects of their being together. An appreciation of Sam's support inevitably leads to a musing about how she would cope were she ever left without that support. She says:

We feel very much for each other, we still enjoy being together and sometimes I get scared, what would happen, you know, if he does die. Even in terms of practical things. He's made life easy for me and I've become more

dependent on him recently--you know, medicare, taxes, forms, etc. I never worry about them. He does them and leaves me time to do my things

B. Ambivalence

The second conversational topic to be considered is that of ambivalence. This might be summed up by the phrase, "there's two sides to every coin." It encompasses those aspects of the relationship that are at times loved and at times hated. It appears to turn on the hub of difference between the two partners, and to revolve around the boundaries of the relationship, covering that grey area of movement between consensus and nonconsensus. Four common themes cover these participants' experience of ambivalence in their relationships: maleness, challenge / support, complement / balance, and for those who were mothers, children.

Maleness

These women commonly expressed their ambivalence about some of those things that are intrinsically male, the masculine being-in-the-world. Maleness, on the one hand, drew them, attracted them, interested them, offered a promise of exploration, learning, being intrigued. Yet, on the other hand, there was always the knowledge that this difference might present its other face, the possibility of disconnection, separateness, seeing a stranger where once there was a friend. Maleness embodies the very essence of difference. As such, it holds at one and the same time, the two unpredictable possibilities of being drawn to and being repelled from. One can never be quite sure which face will present itself. Manon speaks of her experience:

I feel betrayed or separate from him sometimes; he feels distant, like one of them and then I feel angry. Sometimes it's just the way he looks, you know, his size, his voice. Other times I love that maleness, the same size, the same voice, it's very exciting.

Maria articulates her feelings with these words:

Here's the twinness again. I love them and I resent them. I love and resent their assurance, their lack of fear, the way, you know, they'll sit with their legs crossed and be in command of a room and laugh too loud. . . . I love and resent

how they're not tormented by their biology, the way life seems so simple for them, the way they hang on to being young and goofy and silly so that it makes you want to box their ears.

A specific aspect of maleness, that these conversationalists unanimously expressed their ambivalence towards, was men's perceptions of the world and the way they expressed them in conversation. At times women were intrigued by and learnt from these different expressions of being-in-the-world. At other times they were merely left with a sense of frustration, irrelevancy and disconnection. Jean elaborates

Our language is different. Men just don't communicate verbally the same way women do. The men I know don't seem to have the flights of fancy that women do, the crazy humour, outlandish conversations about dreams and hopes and paranoias... they seem to have different ways of dealing with the abstract. It's like they're so academic whereas women will just go at it without much reserve or self-consciousness. Sometimes I'm fascinated by the way men speak of the world and I do learn things. Then there's the times when everything they say is full of irrelevancies, red herrings.

And Helen had this to say

At times we'll be discussing an issue and he brings in irrelevancies from my perspective--they aren't for him, but I can't make the connection. And it drives me up the wall. I just shake my head and say what's this got to do with it... then at other times, I love the way he sees the world; it brings something new for me.

Complement/Balance

This second theme captures the conversationalists' articulations about some of their partners' personal qualities that they both love and hate. These are often characteristics that first attracted the women to their partners, characteristics that represent the complement of their own personal style. Again, the notion of difference is strongly implied. The ambivalence is captured in the coming together, on the one hand, of the promise of learning something new, the promise of becoming like, the enjoyment of difference, and on the other hand, the sense of being unlike, the reality of being out of

step, moving to different rhythms, that clash of difference in style. While this was a theme universally expressed by all participants, the particular form of its expression was completely idiosyncratic. Here are three examples.

Helen speaks of her and Brian's different approaches to money. He is easy with it and she is careful with it. While his style annoys her at times, she also knows that at other times it serves as a catalyst in allowing herself an occasional economic indulgence. She says

You know, with every positive there's a negative. Brian enjoys spending money. I'm a spendthrift. I was going to say I dislike the way he spends money and I do, but I also know it gives me permission to spend money to enjoy money that I would just hoard, to go on a vacation, buy a dress, whatever. He's easy come, easy go with money. I'm too practical and he balances that.

Jean provides a second example. Part of her initial attraction to Michael was his involvement in recreational activity in the face of her feeling that she was destined to be permanently uncoordinated. His ability in an area in which she feels very unable creates some strongly ambivalent feelings for her--noticeably admiration and resentment. She speaks

I've always been attracted to his grace, his outdoorishness, the fact that he knows about camping and hiking and cross-country skiing. . . often, I think, this is a great opportunity for me to learn. . . other times, I won't do anything with him, I feel totally incapable, like he's always waiting, and how can he really want me along. . . and at those times I totally resent his ability, I don't enjoy it at all.

Jan speaks to this theme in a slightly different way. As a woman who is constantly confronted with the pain of other women's situations, she has learned to control her emotional involvement; she has learned not to feel too much. Part of what she loves about her partner, David, is his capacity to feel, a quality that she has rarely found in other men. On the other hand, the intensity of his affective reactions cause her distress. She explains her ambivalence about his sensitivity in contrast to her greater control.

Sometimes I wish I could change, a little bit, his sensitivity. Not too much, because I love it too. It's very special. But sometimes, like if we see a film

that's really painful. I can see the hurt in his eyes. I mean, I shouldn't say too sensitive, but it bothers me. He's gotta learn to control the emotional involvement. You've gotta learn that for survival. Sometimes I just think his heart will break, his pain is so intense.

Challenge/Support

The third area to create ambivalence within these relationships was that of the balance between challenging and supporting. Participants were divided amongst those who appreciated the support and nurturance they received from their partners, but wished at times for more challenge, and then those who loved the challenge but yearned at times for silence, or unquestioning support. That is, sometimes they enjoyed the challenge or the support, other times they wished their partners would act differently. Ambivalence arises on a second account within this theme. It is located in difference in the sense that the women whose style is predominantly challenging tended to be with men who are supportive and non-confrontive. These women appeared to react to their partners' differing style with both appreciation and irritation. On the other hand, the women whose style is predominantly supportive and non-confrontive seemed to be partnered with more challenging men. These women appeared to react to their partners' challenging with a mixture of appreciation and frustration. Challenge/support was a theme articulated by five of the seven participants.

The ambivalence inherent in the theme was most clearly expressed by Maria and Jean who consciously chose their partners for the safety and support they offered, the unchanging calmness and solidity. Both women have had a deep appreciation for this aspect of their relationships. They chose a context of security which allowed them to make the changes they wanted. However, over time they began to yearn for more than support in their relationships, to seek challenge and stimulation. At the time of these conversations they spoke of valuing the support but desiring more of a challenge from their partners. These are Maria's words:

When I met Peter, I had come out of a marriage where I was battered, from a childhood where I was abused and Peter was really safe and calm, a place that provided a lot of gentleness, comfort, and all those things where I could be

safe and finally grow a little bit... and then I was doing all the changing--bringing information home, brow beating, initiating change, putting out all the emotional energy, taking all the risks. He doesn't bring a new object, idea, anything in. And sometimes it's like, boring, where I think, come in with something. People say I have this wonderful guy and I'm falling asleep because he's... what's he doing? He's bouncing off me. He's taking all his direction from me.

Rachel came to her relationship through what she describes as a "soul sisterhood" connection with her partner. While far from bored within her partnership, she also feels that Ron is generally too accepting, not sufficiently challenging with her. She acknowledges that his support has been instrumental in facilitating important changes for her, but sometimes feels that a little more constructive criticism would do her no harm. She comments:

What you gain in mutual support, you lose in self-examination. He's too tolerant towards me. And while I really, really appreciate the support, what isn't there is the questioning, the challenging.

For two of the other participants, the focus was on the opposite end of the spectrum. While appreciating the challenges their partners provide, they longed at times for a little less challenge and a little more support. Manon and Toni acknowledge learning from their partners' questioning, debating, putting forth alternate ideas. Sometimes, however, they yearn for an unquestioning acceptance of what they have to communicate. They wish their partners would react differently. Manon had this to say:

He loves arguing, questioning. He just finds it fun, he learns some, and I feel like I've been reduced to rubble... certainly, sometimes I learn things, but it's rarely playful, a game for me.

In speaking of her experience, Toni says:

When I say to him, look I handled this really well, he'll come back with well, maybe you should have talked to this person, or written a letter or made a diagram to make it even better. Sometimes that's great. I get a bunch of new ideas. At other times I just want to be left alone and have him say, that's great.

Children

The fourth common area of ambivalence for these women was their partner's interactions with their children. Of the four women who had children, three--Maria, Toni, and Helen--were both appreciative and critical of the men as fathers. At times they approved of their interactions with the children, at other times they disapproved. The women enjoyed their partners' interactions with their daughters and sons when the men were nurturing, and gentle--when they exhibited those qualities typically attributed to the good mother. However, there was also an awareness that the men interacted differently with their children than they did, that the men provided experiences that they did not provide. This was viewed in both a positive and a negative light. On the positive side, their partners introduced their children to rewarding opportunities that would not have been available in their absence. On the other hand, the men sometimes related to the children in ways that these women did not like. For example, at one point in our conversation, Maria praised her husband's fathering.

I value his relationship with the children, how he sees himself as a nurturing person, that he believes that women aren't the only nurturers... and that he accepts the challenge, really of being a single parent a lot of the time because I'm away a lot.

While at another point in the conversation, these were her words.

Sometimes I don't like the way he acts with the kids. I don't think he's as empathetic as he could be, although that's my judgement... I would take time to find out where that reaction's coming from. And he orders them, and they don't say well... and he won't hear.

A second example comes from Helen who relates her experience in this way:

He's been a good father. The fun things the kids would say they did with their dad... (but) I remember there were times when I didn't like the way he was dealing with the kids. He would let them walk all over him then all of a sudden blow up. Or make value statements about, that was a dumb thing to do...

Jan was the exception amongst these mothers. Unlike the others, she was wholly supportive of her partner's interactions with her teenage daughter, constantly describing him as caring, gentle, and understanding with her child.

C. Difficulty

This conversational topic embodies those aspects of the relationship around which there was some struggle--those areas of difficulty or nonconsensus within the interrelating. The specific content of nonconsensus was of course somewhat different within each relationship. However, women articulated their feelings, their reactions to the discord in a very similar manner. Whether the particular realm was sexuality or a difference in values, nonconsensus resulted in strong feelings of disconnection, separation, and distinction for these women, a sense of being alienated and out of harmony with their partners. An accompanying sense was that of restriction and immoveable boundaries. These were the areas in which change appeared difficult or impossible to implement, areas in which there was a persistent return to an ineffective solution, or a resignation, a "putting up with things." The solution unanimously introduced by each of these conversationalists was that of discussion, an articulation of their perspective and an attempt to initiate their partners into their perspective so that the difficulty dissolved. Typically, of course, the attempted solution was unsuccessful and so the issue in question becomes entrenched as a difficulty in the relationship. When compared to other topics, the particulars of this topic appear more idiosyncratic to each relationship. However, three commonly shared areas of discord did emerge with some strength--values, affective expression, and sexuality.

Values

The first refrain to be expressed by these women in terms of difficulties within their relationships was that of differing values. When their partners differed from themselves in attitudes or priorities, the women again experienced feelings of disconnection and separateness in their relationships. This was true for each of the conversationalists, although there was little commonality in regard to the actual differences which precipitated these feelings. The range was as diverse as aesthetic taste to the value of the relationship.

It was Toni who bemoaned the fact that she and her husband did not share similar taste in clothes, furniture, painting, and the like. What she described as his lack of aesthetic appreciation, conjured up realms of separateness for her, in their relationship.

She does not like not being able to share the joy of a new dress or a new painting with him. She ponders:

I cannot say, look what I've bought and ~~have~~ him enjoy it with me. . . eventually he might notice and remark, oh that's new, where I might have worn it six times. . . we can't share that sort of thing. We couldn't buy a painting, furniture together. Our tastes differ. And if he saw something half price, even if he didn't like it, he would buy it.

A second example is provided from Maria and Peter's being together. For them, a repeated discussion of their differing spiritual values is guaranteed to lock them into an area of nonconsensus. Typically, this is a discussion that is precipitated by the presence of Peter's parents, and it has as much to do with Peter's interactions with his parents around religious issues as it has to do with differences in the couple's actual beliefs. Maria speaks of her experience.

Unresolved issues. . . it's the spiritual. . . it has to do with his coming from fundamentalist Christianity while my spirituality leans far more to what you could call paganism. . . it usually comes up when his parents are around, like, his mother would say things like, gee I wish your kids would go to church on Sunday, and she'd have big weeps about her children and grandchildren going to hell. . . Peter would be quiet, not say anything, so I'd be the one who would have to put myself on the line and say what I thought. . . he'd never support me, it was as if he was just apathetic. . . it comes and it goes. . . I get angry, or I used to more, but it doesn't seem to change.

For Manon, her and her partner's differing values about the relative importance of the relationship precipitates her feeling apart from, alienated from Alain. Her greatest sense of restriction and lack of harmony come from her perception that for Alain, his life plans take precedence over their relationship, while for Manon, the relationship stands first. She says:

Alain has made plans for himself and, while I feel part of the plans, I don't feel that I'm really an integral part. I feel secondary. . . part of what he says is that, his life plan has to be important to him and he can't always ameliorate it to please those people around him, where sometimes I feel maybe he should. I

would for him. He should for me.

Once again, for the two older women, there was expression of a shared experience not articulated by the other participants. Both Helen and Toni spoke about the recurrent teasing of their partners in social situations, a teasing which they perceive as a discomfort with their feminism and a desire to be "one of the boys," on the part of their husbands. The teasing frequently took the form of dissenting attitudes or unexpressed complaints, a differing of values that was rarely apparent in their private being together. This behaviour on the part of the men left the women feeling different emotions, but always disconnected, out of sync with their husbands. Toni described it with these words

The times that I can recall when I just land up hating him is when he takes an attitude in company of being insensitive and righteous, disagreeing with me and everybody. . . he would embarrass me a lot, with these women and these feminists, they don't know what they're talking about. . . or, don't tell anybody, because the guys will gang up against me, you know, stupid things like that, and I just hate him then.

Helen relates her experience in this way:

Sometimes he'll make playful kinds of jokes in the presence of other people I don't like one bit. And although we've talked about it again and again, it comes up periodically. . . . For example, we were talking about changing roles and Brian's becoming the cook and the cleaner upper. And he said, the one thing that bothers me is when she cleans up after I've cleaned up. It isn't good enough. And he joked about, you know, my wife the perfectionist. . . . I don't like being viewed as the bitch in the presence of other people. If he wants to tell me in private, that's fine. For me, it's that, I see it often, with men who make jokes about their wives and are constantly putting them down. And it's part of my old concern about, no man's gonna treat me like that. So that bothers me.

Affective expression

The second commonly articulated area of difficulty within these women's relationships, was their experience, at times, of their partners' emotional expression or

lack thereof. This was a theme that was important for five of the seven participants. The difficulty is created in each case because the participants wish their partners would behave differently, express themselves in another way, and yet, despite discussing their feelings, no change appears to be forthcoming.

For Toni and Manon it was the men's expression of anger and aggression that created tension for them. Toni is very uncomfortable when Sam is upset or hurt and voices his anger about the situation in her presence, when he captures her as an audience in the release of his anger. Manon has difficulty with her partner, Alain's, affective expression in relation to his style of arguing. She frequently finds, what he might call a discussion, aggressive, dogmatic, and upsetting for her. Toni speaks of her experience in this way.

I find it very, very difficult to deal with hate. And when he's really getting into periods where he can't stand something, or one of our friends, or he's been really hurt, the hate and the venom that comes out of him is just something I can't deal with. . . I'll walk away, you know, and he'll talk and talk, and I won't listen to him anymore. . . or I'll walk into the kitchen or somewhere where I can still hear him, but don't have to look at him and I'll pull faces and tongues--I get out a lot of feelings that way. . . you know, I feel like I've been stabbed when he's like that. I can't bear to hear it. I want to run away. There's so much anger, so much venom. The sarcasm, it makes me shiver.

Manon had this to say:

I feel most powerless when Alain is loud, when he argues loudly and angrily, when he interrupts and doesn't listen and is just loud.

For Jan, difficulty arose from her partner's sudden changes in mood, which she found unpredictable and disconnecting. It was disconcerting for her to feel together with her partner one minute, and then separate because of his withdrawal, the next minute. She says:

The only thing I would like to change is that I wish he could tell me that his moods were coming on. . . it's just so awful when you're out of sync. . . one minute we're just flowing along, and then the next minute he's quiet and withdrawn. . . it just throws me for a loop, and if he could say, well, it's

coming, so that I could be forewarned.

It was not the way in which their partners expressed their feelings that caused difficulty for Maria and Jean. Rather, it was the men's lack of affective response in the face of the women's emotional expression, that created for them feelings of disconnection and resentment. Both women felt that they could cry, scream, and throw a tantrum without eliciting much emotional response on the part of their husbands. The men remained endlessly cool, calm, and passive, a fact which was sometimes a source of severe discontent. Maria describes her feelings

I suddenly saw that women did a lot of emotional living for men. And it made me angry. I thought, man, if I sit down and explain four times, he doesn't even have to ask. If I scream and yell and weep, he doesn't have to weep. If I get incredibly upset about whether or not the relationship is coming or going or dying, then it's all been taken care of. He can just sit there and listen and then go away and say, boy, women are loud, anxious creatures.

Sexuality

Sexuality had created, or was creating some difficulty for four of the seven participants in this study. For Toni and Helen, the two older conversationalists, sexuality was at times a difficult aspect of their relationship during the initial years of being with their partners. Although in the last few years, they have both developed a new comfort with, and appreciation of, their shared sexuality, this had been an area of some discord for much of their married lives. Helen speaks of her experience:

Brian's a very physical person. I have never been. I was not involved sexually before I was married. Even in my day I think that was unique. My needs were often, the children are awake, the children will hear us. Brian couldn't care less. I was very private and very modest and very shy as a young person. I'm slower to be aroused also. So that I remember, early on at times in our marriage thinking, well, more of the same. Men get the rewards. And we women continue to accommodate. And feeling some resentment. . . . It has changed over the years. Brian can't perform the way he used to, his needs aren't so great. We're more compatible in our needs now.

Both Helen and Toni saw themselves as sexually shy for the first years of their marriages. Sex tended to be experienced as a pressure rather than a pleasure. There was an element of demand around sexuality, simply because their husbands desired to be sexual more frequently than they did. It was that desire and the feeling that they were expected to comply, that created difficulty for these women. Toni reminisces

At first, what Sam regarded as marriage was that you could have sex whenever you wanted it. This was, for me, difficult because this is what I also thought should happen and yet I used to feel that this was a demand on me and that there was something wrong with me. . . I used to go to bed before, thinking, oh my God, is he going to want it, should I delay going to bed and hope he falls asleep. All that sort of thing. . . What I like about it now, is that his sexual drive has died down a bit. . . we're both much more relaxed about sexuality.

For two of the younger women, Jean and Maria, sexuality was currently a difficult aspect of their relating. Jean and her partner, Mike, rarely have sexual intercourse. Jean has little sexual attraction for Mike and sexual intimacy is a matter of despair, and surviving the encounter. She says

I have this negative feeling about being sexual with him, like I have to get over this hump. I kind of have to switch off and grit my teeth until we're right into it and hope that something physical will take over. And even if it does I still know that I've blocked out something. We rarely have intercourse. I just don't feel open to him sexually.

Jean enjoys her relationship except for its sexuality. Maria, on the other hand, is bored with her partner, and feels that her lack of sexual interest in Peter reflects her general lack of stimulation in their relationship. She comments:

The sexual part of it ain't great. . . if I'm turned on mentally and spiritually, all those things, then sexuality just falls in tow. . . but I'm bored here. We both have our own rooms. We're sexual together once in a blue moon.

D. Task Division

One theme captures the common experience of these women in relation to the division of household tasks and chores between them and their partners. There was considerable uniformity amongst the participants' experiences within this realm

Unstructured

For all women but one, the division of household tasks was largely unstructured. These women trusted their partners to share equally in the chores and there was little routinization of task division. Either one of the couple might complete any task and there was a faith that the men would firstly see that something needed to be done, and secondly, take responsibility for doing it. Alternately, there was the knowledge that if the men did not notice that something needed to be done, they would certainly respond when it was brought to their attention. However, these women perceived that their partners shared equally in household tasks largely as a result of the men's own initiative. Maria had this to say:

It seems to me, most of the time to be very fair and there isn't a stringent agenda. But Peter is the type of person who will, if he sees something needs to be done, or hears something needs to be done, he doesn't have any problem jumping up and doing it. . . he's just sensitive to these things.

Apart from being equally shared, the division of household chores was spontaneous and flexible. A task was undertaken when it was apparent it needed doing. On the whole, there seemed to be consensus within couples about just when it became "apparent" that a chore needed completion. If any structure was to be gleaned, it was a structure loosely based on preference and individual differences in attention. The women tended to complete the tasks they preferred while the men undertook the chores they enjoyed (or tolerated). Similarly, the women tended to clean where they noticed dirt (and were annoyed by it), while the men cleaned where their attention was drawn. Jan comments:

I'd rather do dishes than cook. But that's about the only structure we have.

Insofar as laundry and stuff like that, when the basket gets full, then someone does it, you know, so a lot of stuff around here is when the spirit moves you.

Whatever needs to be done, whoever's closest does it.

Flexibility, differences in attention, and a sense of equality are also evident in Toni's words.

If he notices anything he'll do it and it's really funny how there's certain things that he will notice and certain things I will notice. So I clean up the things that upset me and he cleans up the things that upset him. And it balances out.

The division of household tasks was not experienced as an area of difficulty for any of these women, except Manon. For the other women, there was an assumption that tasks would be shared equally and that their partners would participate, so that the whole issue rarely captured much of their attention. However, Manon's experience differed. Domestic tasks were carefully structured in her household in an attempt to generate equality in that area. However, even with (or maybe, because of) rigid attempts to organize the division of chores, Manon felt that she was inevitably left with the bulk of the work. She speaks of her experience in this way.

The one thing that was hardest to sort out for us was the dishes. . . one of the things we tried was that we would clean up after ourselves after each meal but what would happen is that he would clean his knife, his fork and his plate but if I had made the supper the rest of the dishes would be there and it would be assumed that it was my task to do all that other stuff. . . there just didn't seem to be any resolution for ages.

With the exception of Manon, it was apparent that these conversationalists experienced consensus in terms of their shared task division. This was an area of flexibility and little difficulty. The inherent flexibility was especially obvious when participants spoke about some of the changes in their lives. The relative division of household chores was very responsive to external changes in individual's lives, so that as the demands of work and school, for example, fluctuate, so too does the division of tasks. At one time one partner may carry the majority of the load; at another time, it may be the other partner's turn. For example, Rachel says:

Things have changed because of my being in school now. . . in fact, I think Ron does more of the housework than I do, especially now. He will often fix dinner, do the dishes, and clean the house while I'm studying.

This fluctuation was certainly evident within the experiences of the older participants.

While most of the women entered their relationships with an assumption that tasks would be shared, this was not true for Helen and Toni. When first married, about thirty years ago, these two women were primarily responsible for the house, but over their years of being together with their partners, they have also moved to a shared and unstructured division of household tasks. To quote Helen at some length

Soon I'd had enough of little people and just had to go back to work for my own survival. He said, well, that's fine but I don't want anything to change for me. . . you know, don't expect me to come home and do the cooking, etc., etc. And I said, fine, I'll only work part-time to begin with and see how it works. . . I'm well organized so I did all the cooking the night before and for a long time things didn't change very much. But before long Brian was rushing around helping me make the beds etc., . . he's a reasonable human being, when he saw the load was heavy, he just pitched in and helped. . . Now that I'm still working and Brian's retired, our roles are really changing. Right now, he is doing the grocery shopping and much of the cooking and cleaning and organizing our recreational activity and I used to do all of those things. My share at the moment is, I shop together with Brian on the weekends if I want to; if I don't want to, I don't. I houseclean, change beds, etc., if I want to. If I don't want to, I don't.

Women have often been heard to remark that they may as well vacuum the rug or clean the bathroom themselves. When their male partners do it, they merely have to redo the task. As an interesting aside, within this theme, about half the women commented that their partners clean and generally attend to household chores as carefully as they do. For example, Jan says:

He does a thorough job when he's cleaning. You know (often, you'd say, well geez, I wish my partner'd help me out and when he does you wanna go round and do it again because it hasn't been done the right way. . . the first time I watched him, he was doing the kitchen and if I hadn't known that he'd done it I would have thought I had. The guy's a perfectionist. He cleans as well as I do.

The other women comment, however, that their partners generally don't clean as thoroughly as they do, but that they've come to accept, or at least, adapt to that. It no

longer represents a serious problem for them. Helen elaborates

We do have different standards but I've become much more tolerant. He does a pretty good job, but every now and then I will vacuum, for example, and then I know it's done the way I want it done. Like, you know how dust collects along the baseboards unless once in a while you go after that particular area. He doesn't see that. He runs the vacuum cleaner over the carpet. So every now and then I will do it. And that's O.K.

E. Economics

As with the previous topic, this issue revealed a great deal of similarity amongst participants' experience. The essence of a consideration of economics is captured in one theme, economic independence.

Economic Independence

All of the women in this study, but one, were financially independent of their partners. Manon had some financial independence but did rely on her partner to help with the rent and other expenses. All women, but Helen, had their own, separate bank accounts. Helen and her partner shared joint accounts. Apart from their individual bank accounts, most women shared joint accounts with their partners, to which they contributed equally or according to income when there was a significant difference in earnings. These accounts tended to exist for specific purposes such as household expenses or a holiday. Jan describes her and her partner's arrangement:

We have our own separate savings accounts. I have a chequing account. He has a chequing account. We just opened a joint savings account not too long ago. We're going to Trinidad so...

A couple of women, Toni and Maria, actually had signing power on their husbands' accounts, while their husbands have no access to their accounts. In both cases there was some difference in income between the women and their partners, and the women used their money primarily for their own pleasures. Toni relates:

He always considered what I earned to be my money and I could do with it what I wanted. The money he earned was our money and he was going to see

to our future and see to our immediate expenses and that sort of thing. So with my money I would often buy clothes or furniture or presents. I've got signing power on all his accounts. He hasn't on mine. It just worked out that way... and I've always earned less than he has.

All participants in this study contributed to rent, groceries, utilities, entertainment, holidays, and the like, either equally or according to income. That is, they shared their joint expenses. Sometimes this was a loose and flexible arrangement dependent on each person's affective assessment of whether or not they are contributing their fair share. More often it entailed a carefully organized system to ensure that individuals contributed according to the agreed upon arrangements. Rachel says

We have a joint household account and each week we contribute according to income. We split the rent equally. With food, it's according to income, so each week we pay 10% into the fund. And then we have our separate accounts as well.

The importance of work and accompanying economic independence was one of the strongest themes to emerge through the course of these conversations. All participants spoke of the importance of work as being an integral foundation for many of the positive aspects of their relationship--feeling safe, equal and free, having a balance of togetherness and separateness. A job provides money which in turn provides the possibility of choice. Choice entails notions of freedom, of personal power and personal control, the ability to create one's life-world.

Having a job gives me money to do what I want, to have a car and be mobile, to feel independent, to give me the choice of leaving if things aren't going well. I feel safer and can be more open in the relationship when I know I don't need it for my survival.

This theme contains an inherent negativity. The importance of economic independence is articulated most strongly by women who have experienced periods of economic dependence. Out of the negative the positive is illuminated. Out of the experience of dependence, the experience of economic independence can be seen more clearly. All women in this study currently had some measure of economic independence. This was least true for Manon and accordingly, some of her experiences, particularly

within the realm of task sharing, differed somewhat from those of the other participants. While for other couples, even those with some difference in income, the sharing of expenses was conceptualized as being "according to income," Manon perceived her contributions as being subsidized by those of her partner, and she certainly perceived her partner as seeing things this way--providing a subsidy that entailed a certain cost. Thus, Manon's differing experience in task division appears to be related to the fact that her economic situation differed, or at least was conceptualized differently from that of the other women in this study. Because she was "dependent" upon her partner to pay some of her basic living expenses, he in turn expected that she would be responsible for the majority of their housework. There was pressure on Manon to unquestioningly do their domestic chores. The experience for her was one of conflict, resentment, and restricted freedom. She says:

The hardest thing for us was the dishes. I think a lot of it had to do with the circumstances when I moved into the house: because my rent was really cheap, and in a way he was helping me at a time when I was financially troubled, so I moved in and didn't pay much money and did what I considered was my share of duties as it were, and all the dishes just wasn't one of these and we would often let dishes just pile and pile. . . he said that if it were he that was living under my circumstances for \$50 a month rent that I was paying, that he would be hard pressed not to do the dishes, in gratitude for the good things that were happening to him. . . I would fight about doing them because that really felt like being tied underfoot, almost.

In the past, many of the women in this study had experienced periods of economic dependence due to the birth of a child or, in one case, the onset of depression. At these times they experienced feeling more restricted, more powerless. For them there was increased stress within the relationship, and there were more arguments at these times. The women also perceived more expectations on the part of their partners, more control as to what they could do and what they could not do. Certainly a more traditional and rigid task division resulted. Toni relates her experiences at some length:

When I gave birth to (my daughter) and I wasn't earning, money became an issue with us. . . I didn't like to be in the position where I put my hand out and

asked for money. I felt it was very unfair that he could just put his hand in his pocket and pull out a wad of notes and decide how much to dole out to me. If I needed anything, he would ask me, well, how much does it cost, and he would decide whether he thought I needed it or not. We value money differently. Being surrounded by beautiful things was important to me, but not to him. It was a constant battle. And I think that was one of the main reasons I went back to work earlier than I would have normally.

Fighting about money was an unpleasant but very real aspect of Toni's experience of economic dependence upon her partner. Increased feelings of pressure and anger and a more isolated and restrained way of dealing with them formed a part of Helen's experience of being without money. She seems to relinquish the right to a public expression of discontent. She describes that time

It seemed as if there were more pressures, and my way of dealing with the pressures. I wanted to deal with it alone generally. Now when I'm upset or angry, I'll blow up and it's finished. I remember those times when I was not working and didn't have my own money. I really believe that money is power and as long as I'm contributing I have certain rights. Not that raising kids was not contributing. You know the old business. Feeling things like, men have the control. My mother was right. And there's no way I'm gonna let anybody control me. Feeling angry a lot. Frustrated. But feeling I had to deal with that on my own, alone and silently, somehow.

F. Sexuality

With the exception of one woman, Maria, all participants in this study were currently monogamous and had generally been so through the course of their relationships. Maria shares a home, children, and a history with her husband and has had an intimate relationship of one year with another man. A second woman, Jean, has had a couple of relatively brief affairs with other men. The topic of sexuality was introduced spontaneously into the conversation by all participants. While individual experiences differed dramatically amongst these women, they came together in three clear, connecting themes: the power of sexuality, the impact of feminism, and the freedom to say yes or

no

The Power of Sexuality

All women spoke of the intensity and power of sexuality in their lives and within their partnerships. It was in this arena that they experienced great joy and/or great despair. They experienced their shared sexuality as having the power to connect them deeply with, or separate them completely from their partners. It was a realm within which they might feel very scared and very vulnerable or very strong and very powerful. Whether the sexual aspect of the relationship was very good or very bad, in all cases it carried great impact.

For five of the women in this study, a shared sexuality with their partners was currently a joyful experience. It holds the possibility of great pleasure, it represents the sharing within which they feel closest to their partners, it gives great joy and allows for the transcendence of the 'I,' a creation of the 'we.' It moves beyond a mere physical sharing to a touching on many different levels. These are Jan's words:

Our sexuality is quite wonderful. We love touching each other and it's a time we can feel completely in rhythm, in a deep way. It's a profound sharing that brings us so close, boundaries disappear. That is wonderful and at times scary. Maria, in speaking of the intimate relationship she maintains outside her marriage, gives voice to her experience of the power of sexuality in her life.

I spent a lot of time loathing men's physicalness, loathing penises. Allowing you to penetrate me is a privilege. It was a nice revelation for me to find out that I could really dig a man, to feel happy and safe with his physicalness. I have a glorious sex life now, as glorious as it was once terrible. . . you hear about things, like meeting your twin, your soul mate--with this man it has felt like that. There's a melting that is tremendously powerful. Somehow our bodies dissolve and our souls connect.

Sexuality was powerful for these women both in its glory and in its terribleness. For two of the women, sexuality within the context of their marriages, veered more towards the terrible than the glorious. Maria talks of the terribleness of boredom, the vast depth of just being disinterested. It is apparent through her words, that her boredom

hangs as a backdrop in her marriage forming and being formed by all the other interactions. Jean speaks of the sadness her shared sexuality brings, the experience of being repulsed by her partner's penis, of feeling smothered through intercourse, of despairing of ever being able to change her reactions. These are Maria's words:

I know it has to do with the rest of the relationship, but the sexual part generally bores me to death. I have my room. He has his room. We're sexual once in a blue moon. . . sometimes I get lonely and initiate, he waits for me to initiate, but I feel like I'm taking and not really giving very much. And that bothers me. Because what I feel I'm taking is sexual relief at the moment because he can provide it. But there's no great joy in it. And I'm not responsive at all to what he needs. . . the problem is, the guy really adores me, you see. So for him, there's great pleasure in just being there. I guess. For me, there's primarily boredom. It's like a thick fog, sometimes it makes it difficult to breathe properly.

Jean describes her experience in this way:

We rarely have sex. . . his penis seems something foreign to me, like I don't even want to touch it. . . I ostensibly love him and he loves me and we have a good relationship, but the sex. . . there's a sort of claustrophobia that is connected with sex for me now. Like, I feel smothered. . . I try really hard, probably harder than I should. . . it's a reasonable experience physically because I can orgasm. But as Germaine Greer says, the cat can make you orgasm. . . I'm left with such a sadness. I always feel like crying.

Sexuality was important or powerful in other ways also. Many women spoke about their sexuality/sensuality as having given them an appreciation and enjoyment of their bodies, as having brought a new comfort in and delight with their female physicalness. Sharing sexually facilitated a connection, for them, with their essential womanness. Being accepted sexually, being free to express themselves sexually brought a sense of being "O.K.," a sense of self-liking and self-confidence. Helen says:

It was an important component of our marriage. It was important to me, I think, because I felt accepted as I was and appreciated as a sexual being. . .

Manon had this to say:

this was a time of intense confusion and some despair. The combination of feminism and heterosexuality had become an uneasy one and the two commitments were beginning to feel as if they embodied irreconcilable distinctions. On the whole, I experienced maleness suspiciously, an unequivocal perception of difference that allowed for little appreciation of the unique. Inevitably, I was curious about other feminists' committed and intimate relationships with men. How did they do it? What was it like for them? Was it in fact possible? Certainly, feminist theory suggested that it most likely was not possible at this time, and if I then held a bias towards one direction or the other, it was probably towards the impossibility of the combination. The solution to my dilemma appeared to be either the abandonment of my feminism or an abandonment of my attraction for men, neither of which seemed very fulfilling. Being somewhat greedy, I felt there must be a way to satisfy both desires, although I could not yet see how. This, then, was the context of not knowing from which I embarked upon this exploration.

Almost three years later I stand differently on the same ground, some of this difference inevitably having to do with my immersion in this discourse. Much of what has happened in between is difficult to articulate. However, some of it has to do with drawing new distinctions, with allowing a flexibility of distinction, with finding a new language to bring to words half spoken experience and with reaffirming a commitment to my personal knowledge and expression in the world. I am still a feminist. I still live with the same man. And I've come to enjoy them both. The combination has transformed to a lively I-Thou meeting, allowing for both the confrontation and confirmation of our mutual uniqueness.

In many ways I am a coward. When my experiencing finds little articulation in the world, especially in a world which provides me with essential confirmation, I have rarely had the courage to assert the "truth" of my experiencing. What this exploration gave to me, was essentially an opportunity to speak with other women who shared some similar experiences to me, but whose experiencing had been given little forum for voice. Speaking with these women brought the words (distinctions) for me with which to describe, acknowledge, and value my being-in-the-world. The conversations inevitably prompted intricate reflection and the searching for a language that might best bring them to life and fit their richness. This led me to hermeneutics, to Maturana and to Buber and Friedman. I've come away from my interaction with these theorists with a clearer

appreciation of the notion that in any given moment each one of us is behaving "perfectly"--that is, in accord with the dictates of our structure, our history, and our experience in the world. In any situation we do the best we can. Such a distinction not only allows me appreciation of other's uniqueness, it also gives me more courage to be, to nurture and trust my personal expression in the world.

The dissertation process has also triggered a reflection of and change in my conceptualization of responsibility. The other side of behaving "perfectly" at any given time is our responsibility for our perceptions and our reactions. In an "objective" world we can contribute blame to "objective" circumstances. In a constructivist world we carry the "burdensome gift" of choosing our reality. I like Friedman's words: "Responsibility means to respond, and genuine response is the response of the whole person. In every situation we are asked to respond in a unique way. . . this means we must have that courage to address and that courage to respond which rests on, embodies, and makes manifest existential trust" (1983, p. 40). To be creative in the world is necessarily to be responsible in the world. This speaks to the intrinsic agency and creative resources of the individual, to the budding of a many-textured definition, expansion, and becoming that is our possibility.

I would like, also, to say something about anger. I know that some of the differences between where this exploration started and where it finished for me, has something to do with the expression of my anger. I would say that it is impossible to adopt a feminist construction of reality and not get very angry. When the world is viewed in terms of feminist distinctions there is a reason in every nuance for outrage. It is neither very easy nor very pleasant to live with feeling predominantly angry. Yet anger has been the primary driving energy behind feminism and I suspect, all non-spiritual attempts at revolution. Some time ago I began to see that maintaining my anger was my protection, my shield in this world. Being angry provided me the comfort of feeling self righteous and throwing barbs. To transform my anger would be to invite peace and forgiveness, removing my protection and opening me to the other--a horrifying thought, full of risk and the possibility of hurt. For me, confronting and transforming my anger was a process initially filled with fear, yet it was a process that yielded rich rewards, and a process in which immersion in this discourse played a part. As a result I am less mean to men. Perhaps, in some people's eyes, that will make me less of a feminist. However, I am also

much less mean to myself. I feel less victimized and more creative, less danger and more pleasure, less restriction and more expansion. Sometimes I feel there is an unspoken correlating in feminism between the more angry, the more radical. I now believe our energy must encompass more varied expression if we truly want the changes we say we want.

I have lived and do live in the world at the juncture of many varied distinctions. The togetherness of some, at times, seem a rather unusual blend. My life has frequently turned an unexpected (for others and for myself) corner in the road. I have come to see this less as a difficulty and more as a commitment to the expression of my uniqueness.

To return curiosity not only to life in general but to a research exploration in particular has entirely changed the nature of this engagement for me. Creating this discourse, this story happened on the whole, without effort, without much "doing," and with a lot of ease and a lot of fun. Not only the conversations, but also the writing occurred within a context of "not knowing." Writing this dissertation has been a vivid demonstration of a further aspect of the hermeneutical for me. Most often I would put pen to paper without knowing what I wanted to say. Like speaking, writing with curiosity immerses one in a dialogue such that writing represents a "coming to know." Frequently my writing surprised me. I had written something before I knew I knew it; the expression of an idea on paper was most often my first awareness of that idea. There is a flow in such writing that has little to do with the separation of thinking then writing. In contrast, there is a bringing forth to consciousness that is replete with surprises. Many times the process has reminded me of Mary Daly's words in her reclamation of the term "Spinster" as a "woman whose occupation is to spin." She says:

There is no reason to limit the meaning of this rich and cosmic verb. A woman whose occupation is to spin participates in the whirling movement of creation. She who has chosen her Self, who defines her Self, by choice, neither in relation to children, nor to men, who is self-identified, is a Spinster, a whirling dervish, spinning in new time / space (1978, p. 4).

I know I will never pursue a traditionally academic research task and writing again. The opportunity to spin this dissertation a little differently, within the context of a genuine curiosity has ensured that. Personally, I think a little interweaving of responsible curiosity

would enhance the web of psychology.

To abandon a belief in objectivity is to lose certainty. It is to lose the comfort and confinement of knowing, to let go of the pleasant box and wrappings of consensual distinctions. On the other hand, it is to return to a fundamental not-knowing, to embrace again the element of curiosity. With a lack of certainty there is a freshness in this very moment. Curiosity brings aliveness, the movement of distinctions, a living and dynamic recurrency that holds the possibility for change. And this is a planet sorely in need of change.

In tribute to curiosity and the not-knowing, the aliveness it entails, I cannot resist leaving this exploration with one of my favourite stories:

While sitting on the banks of the P'u River, Chuang-tse was approached by two representatives of the Prince of Ch'u, who offered him a position at court. Chuang-tse watched the water flowing by as if he had not heard. Finally, he remarked, "I am told that the Prince has a sacred tortoise, over two thousand years old, which is kept in a box, wrapped in silk and brocade." "That is true," the officials replied. "If the tortoise had been given a choice," Chuang-tse continued, "which do you think he would have liked better--to have been alive in the mud, or dead within the palace?" "To have been alive in the mud, of course," the men answered. "I too prefer the mud," said Chuang-tse.

(from The Tao of Pooh: Benjamin Hoff, 1982, p. 41).

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Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I, _____ voluntarily consent to participate in an interview with Heather Bain, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. The purpose of the study has been explained to me, and I understand that the information given by me will be used solely for research purposes and published in the form of a thesis or otherwise. I further understand that every effort will be made to remove all identifying information. I agree to allow the interview to be tape recorded with the understanding that the tapes will be erased when the research project is complete.

Date _____

Signed _____

Witness _____

Appendix B

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name

Address

Telephone

Place of Birth

Nationality

Ethnic Background

Religion

Financial Resources

Residential History

Educational History

Occupational History

Feminist History: (organizational membership / activities / volunteer work)

About how long have you been a feminist?

About how long have you been a radical feminist?

Marital / partnership status:

single()

married()

separated()

divorced()

widowed()

remarried()

cohabiting()

other()

How long have you been involved in your current partnership?

Shared residential history (do / did you live together? for how long?)

Children: (sex, age, residence)

Grandchildren (sex, age, residence)

Husband / partner

age,

place of birth,

nationality,

ethnic background,

education,

occupation,

financial resources,

religion,

Mother:

age;

place of birth;

nationality;

ethnic background;

education;

occupation;

religion;

Father:

age;

place of birth;

nationality;

ethnic background

education;

occupation;

religion;

Siblings: (sex, age domicile)

What name would you like to be called by in this study?

What name would you like your partner to be called in this study?

Appendix C

CONVERSATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME:

DATE:

1. What was it like for you to speak with me about your experiences?

2. What impact, if any, did the conversation have on you? (e.g., on your thoughts, feelings, ways of looking at things, attitudes, new realizations, behaviour etc.). Please be specific.

3. Do you think you've felt, said, or done anything differently as a result, or partly as a result of our conversation? Please explain.

4. If you were telling a friend about our conversation, would you recommend that she participate? Why or why not?

5. Have you any other comments or suggestions regarding the conversation in light of your experience?