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UNFINISHED AS A PERSON:
THE COURSE OF ATTACHMENT
IN THE LIFE OF AN EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

A Dissertation Presented

By

ALEXANDER R. JAMES, JR.

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May, 1983

Psychology

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THE COURSE OF ATTACHMENT IN THE

LIFE OF AN EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

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Finally, I wish to express gratitude to my family, especially Rosemary James, for being understanding presences in the background of my work.

ABSTRACT

Unfinished as a Person:
The Course of Attachment in the
Life of an Eighty-Year-Old Woman

May, 1983

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Directed by: Professor Stuart Golann

Unfinished as a Person is the life history of an eighty-year-old woman. In addition to extensive interviews with the subject, the data of the study includes her two semi-autobiographical works of fiction, a journal, and a detailed account of her schizophrenic experience and years of hospitalization. The purpose of the study is to contribute to a bridge between theories which focus on intraphysic organization and those which concentrate on interpersonal process. The similar goals of the life history movement in psychology are noted and the conceptual problems in working with retrospective biographical data--which contributed to the failure of the movement--are discussed. A dialectical perspective on human time is presented, and incorporated in the model of clinical inquiry which is employed in the present study. Concepts from two theoretical systems also based on a dialectical perspective--Piaget's developmental psychology and

Boszormenyi-Nagy's theory of loyalty bonds--are integrated in analyzing the role of attachment in the subject's structuring of her experience over time. Concepts from Epstein, Sullivan, Erikson, and Freud's clinical theory are also used to articulate the model of personality development which is presented in this study. Support for the model is offered in its ability to account for four major problems in the subject's life: her schizophrenic break, her vulnerability to experiencing depersonalization, her perception of abstract danger in interpersonal relationships, and the repetition of strikingly similar situations of difficulty in her life.

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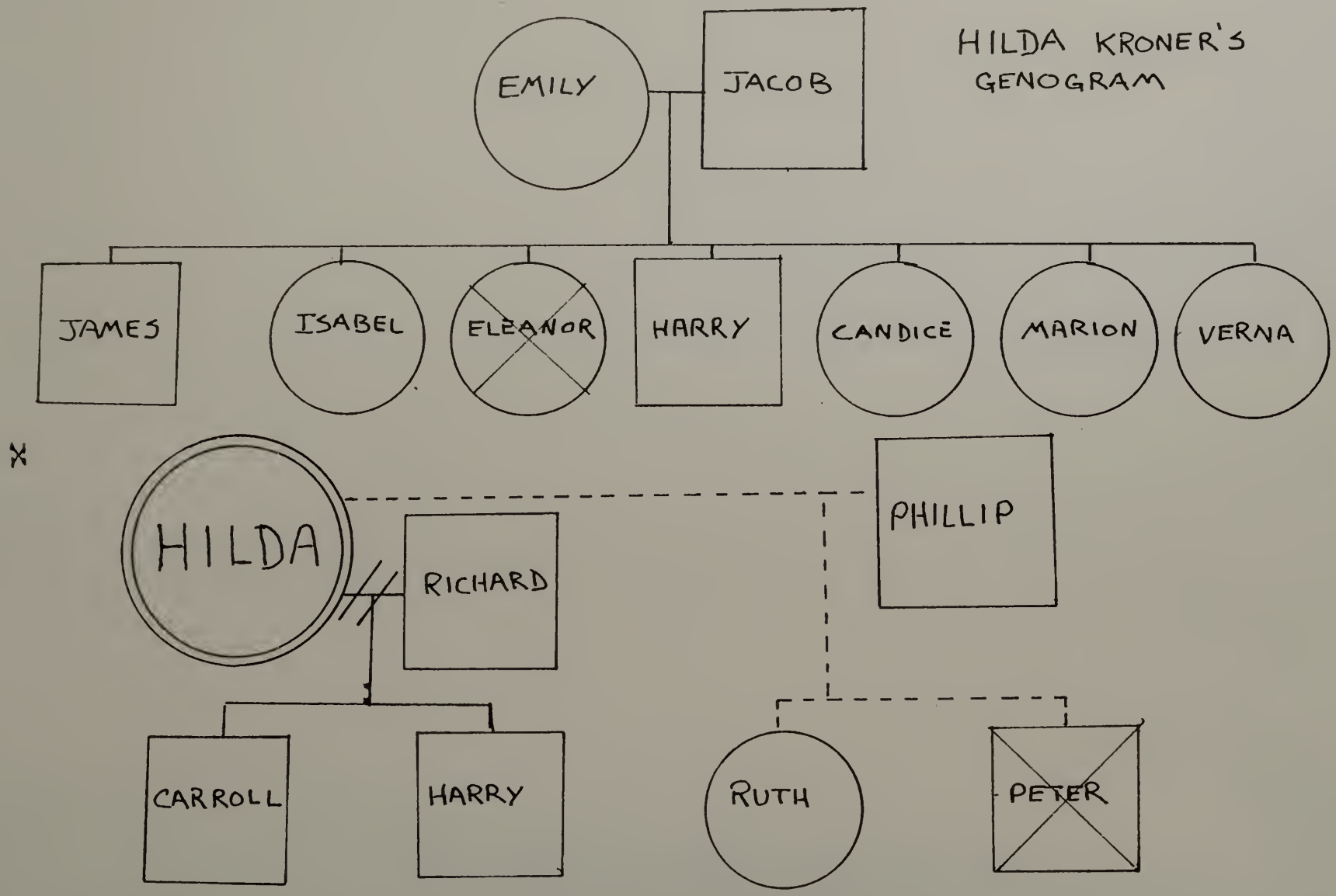
HILDA KRONER'S
GENOGRAM
EMILY
JACOB
JAMES
ISABEL
ELEANOR
HARRY
CANDICE
MARION
VERNA
HILDA
RICHARD
PHILLIP
CARROLL
HARRY
RUTH
PETER

C H A P T E R I

LIFE HISTORY RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Man is a race curious to know the lives of others.
St. Augustine (The Confessions)

Crude biographical accounts, found in the tombs of the early Egyptian kings, are among the first of man's written documents. The apparent purpose of these initial efforts at life history was to recommend the deceased to the gods (Garraty, 1957). By the time that Augustine noted the human urge "to know the lives of others" (ca. 420), the purpose of biography had shifted substantially from glorification of the subject to examination--a transition to which Augustine himself contributed.

Psychology would seem to be the natural heir to this latter, investigative tradition in biography. Modern thought on human nature has, in fact, been significantly affected by two specialized approaches to the study of individual life histories: existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Karl Jaspers, a pioneer of phenomenological biography, sought to identify "the forms of inner experience" through an "inward understanding" of the events of a person's life--an approach which reshaped European psychiatry (Havens, 1973). In Freud's hands, the historical reconstruction of individual lives became both the data base and the primary mode of investigation in

psychoanalysis--an approach which reshaped man's view of man. But, despite the impact of psychoanalysis and existential psychiatry, the status of the individual life as a focus of research has remained persistently ambiguous within the social sciences in general.

During the period roughly between 1920 and 1950, life history research had a number of enthusiastic proponents spread throughout the social sciences. They shared a common set of concerns over the direction that research in the social sciences was taking and, above all, the belief that adopting the individual life as a basic unit of analysis might redirect attention to the central issues of social life--the basic principle of what can be called the "life history movement." The movement included, at least temporarily, a number of the best minds of the pre-World War II generation of social scientists, e.g., Allport (1942), Dollard (1935), Park (1929), Murray (1938), and White (1952). The spirit of the movement was best expressed by two of its first members, Thomas and Znaniecki:

> We are safe in saying that personal life-records constitute the perfect type of sociological material, and that if social science has to use other materials at all, it is only because of the practical difficulty of obtaining at the moment a sufficient number of such records to cover the totality of sociological problems [1918, in 1927, p. 132 f.n., original emphasis].

Although their enthusiasm was widely shared, Thomas and Znaniecki were alone in their estimate of safety; a sense

of methodological insecurity surrounds the literature produced by the life history movement. Although clear on their goals, life history researchers never fully articulated the means to achieve them. They frequently expressed confusion over the role of the investigator, the nature and place of interpretation, and how, in general, to structure a life history. They tended also to accept standards of evaluation, such as the need to demonstrate deterministic causality, which could never be met. Critics, while acknowledging the goals of life history research as laudable, remained unconvinced that analysis of a single life could ever provide an adequate basis for scientific statements. In particular, Blumer's monograph (1939) summarizing the findings of the Committee for Appraisal of Research of the Social Science Research Council--the major critique of the movement--found life history research as inherently unable: (1) to show what the data was representative of, (2) to establish the reliability and validity of interpretations, and (3) to make adequate generalizations. Although monographs were written in defense of life history research (e.g., Allport, 1942, Gottschalk, et al., 1945)--a defense based largely on the necessity of its goals for the social sciences--major work in this mode of investigation ceased within a decade of Blumer's (1939) report. The proponents failed to convince even themselves that their work was feasible.

The research which I am presenting here is a life history, a collaborative reconstruction of the development of an eighty-year-old, once schizophrenic woman, Hilda Kroner.* Because I share the broad goals espoused by the life history movement--as well as intimate familiarity with the methodological problems which it encountered--I would like to introduce my own goals and methods by outlining what my predecessors attempted, and suggesting why they foundered.

Three central ideas informed the life history movement. The first was the need for a unified social science. Many of the proponents of life history research expressed concern over the trend toward increasingly disparate fields of endeavor. Several were influential in the attempt to integrate personality theory, social psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology within a single department at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago. They felt that the individual life, taken as a discrete unit of analysis, might serve as a basic building block or point of integration in a unified science of "culture and personality":

> One of our most urgent needs . . . is that for a workable psychology . . . from the standpoint of systematic cultural knowledge. This psychology seems most likely to emerge from the continuous refinement of our observation on the individual life and especially from treating this life as a unit event [Dollard, 1937, p. 288].

*All names of people and places are, of course, disguised for the sake of anonymity.

Psychology was asked to contribute what Dollard (1935, p. 1) called "a significant concept of the person" toward this integration of culture and personality--the second goal widely recognized within the movement. Two aspects were seen as especially important: a longitudinal perspective on personality, and a holistic view of the person. White (1952, p. 22) emphasized the need for the "long view." He spoke of: "a gap at the center of our knowledge about personality. The neglected area can be identified as continuous development over periods of time amid natural circumstances." Allport (1942, p. 17) additionally stressed the need to view personality as an organismic whole: "The essential and significant unities in personality cannot be determined by cross-sectioning; they must be studied longitudinally as the life process of the individual." Murray (1938, p. 36), in a characteristically comprehensive sweep, expressed the need in terms of a concept of the person as a: "motile, discriminating, valuating, assimilating, adapting, integrating, differentiating, and reproducing temporal unity within a changing environmental matrix."

The third motive behind the life history movement was reminiscent of Jasper's phenomenological goals of "inward understanding" and "living into the subject's experience," what Thomas and Znaniecki (1929) referred to as the need "to secure the subjective factor." The goal was for a more "direct" understanding of the "concrete particulars" of individual

experience. Kluckholm (1945, p. 134) saw in the life history "the closest picture of cultural structure as actually experienced." Park (1929, p. 47) emphasized the "direct" nature of life historical data which "nearly always illuminate some aspect of social or moral life which we have known hitherto only indirectly."

These were ambitious goals to attach to what is in one sense the most modest of research vehicles, the single case study. The problem was not, however, that the goals were inappropriate for the vehicle--the life history is, in fact, uniquely suited to accomplish all three tasks of integrating disparate theoretical perspectives, expanding holistic and developmental concepts of personality, and introducing the compelling quality of a first person perspective on psychological phenomena. Nor were the well recognized problems of representativeness and generalizeability necessarily crippling. Both critics and supporters of the life history movement devoted far too much attention to questioning the adequacy of the single life for science, rather than reversing their focus and questioning whether the model of science which they were applying was appropriate for the life history. Their search for ways to eliminate sources of subject and investigator bias, for example, was misdirected. A person's history is not "out there" waiting to be recorded in the same sense that an event in the physical environment can be seen as existing independent of the observer. A retrospective life

history is always a reconstruction, the creation of something new--especially in the case where the reconstruction is a collaborative effort between the investigator and subject. It is important to understand the perspectives of both parties, but quixotic to attempt to separate them from the data. The perspective of both parties is an integral aspect of the data itself. The life history movement was unable to differentiate such distinctive features of their research from the context of a conventional experiment. Although acutely aware of the unique potential of the life history, they failed to develop a conceptual framework which could meet the special requirements of their research--and this is the real point on which they foundered.

The absence of an adequate conceptual framework is reflected in a number of ways in the life histories which came out of the movement. One of the primary symptoms is confusion over the relationship between subject and investigator--Freedman and Krantz (1980) consider neglect of this issue as the flaw which continues to plague life history research. On one extreme, a number of researchers attempt to give the illusion that they have no real involvement in the subject's narrative. They present their work, as Freedman and Krantz (Ibid., p. 10) put it, "as if the investigator were an invisible cloud hovering over an event." Analysis in these works tends to be sharply separated from the narrative, either appearing at the end of the narrative, as a sort of elaborate

afterthought, or presented in footnotes to the ongoing story, as if the presence of the investigator were an embarrassment to be minimized. On the other extreme, the subject's narrative is overwhelmed by the analysis in quite a few works. This occurs either through simultaneous discussion of a number of histories, which turns the work into a kind of impressionistic cross sampling, or through using a single case exclusively for the purpose of illustrating a theoretical perspective, a use which obscures all the features of the subject's life which do not neatly exemplify the investigator's theory.

Neither extreme is research in the sense of an actual investigation of the fit between theory and data. Just as being extremely reticent and monopolizing a conversation are alternate ways to avoid engaging in interaction, both approaches minimize the dialogue between theory and data which is at the core of life history research. The tendency to swing between these two extremes was noted as a problem within the movement (e.g., Allport, 1942), but it could not be corrected in the absence of an interpretive perspective distinct from the framework of a conventional experiment.

The second major conceptual problem in the output of the life history movement is more subtle, but equally serious. It shows up in White's (1952) Lives in Progress, one of the best works from the era. White's analysis of his subjects' histories alternates between three deterministic models of explanation: social, biological, and psychodynamic. Each

somewhat contradicts the other and, more significantly, all three put a strong bias on the analysis--a problem recognized by White [Ibid., pp. 24-25]: "current interpretations of behavior put selective emphasis on determination by drives of external shaping forces." White deftly mitigates the bias in his own interpretations, but true correction lies beyond the ken of a mechanistic model of determination.

Alternative concepts exist. Levinson (1978), for example, speaks of an "interpenetration of self and the world." Pascal (1960, p. 181) describes the self as "not a property but a trust," that is, a product of participation in the social world. Boszormenyi-Nagy (1965) refers to an "interdependence" between self and other which defines personality. None of these concepts can be reduced to a sequence of direct cause and effect; they rely, instead, on what dialectical theorists refer to as "reciprocal causality" (Meacham, 1977). Without such a construct, the joint goals of articulating a "significant concept of the person" and an integrated theory of "culture and personality"--
that is, the goal of understanding how the person can simultaneously structure and be structured by his participation in the world--remain unattainable.

My own goals in undertaking Hilda Kroner's life history--attempting to integrate concepts from intrapsychic personality theory with the perspective of an interpersonal systems theory--are hardly less ambitious than those of the

earlier life history researchers. I also follow tradition to the extent of falling considerably short of achieving a full integration. Put in a favorable light, what I am presenting here is a picture of work in process--my progress in grappling, on the filed of Hilda's history, with several of the major conceptual problems in clinical psychology. Freedman and Krantz (1980, p. 11) say that "life histories . . . require an expansion rather than a contraction complexity in order to explain the phenomena." This is one requirement which I meet in addressing Hilda's life, albeit sometimes at the expense of clarity.

My work on Hilda's history is also an effort at defining an appropriate framework for studying the individual life. Again, this is an exploration in progress--I have not discovered any shortcut to realizing the unfulfilled promise of life history research. I do, however, have a clear understanding of the methodological and conceptual difficulties, and a partial understanding of how to amelicrate them. In the following pages I present a statement of the goals of my research, identify the model of science which is most problematic for the life history in psychology, and offer a set of methodological and constituitive assumptions which begin to define a model of inquiry more friendly to life history research. In the latter half of the chapter, I turn to the specifics of my research, introducing Hilda Kroner and

describing our collaborative effort in reconstructing her history.

METHODS AND GOALS

Statement of purpose.

My broadest ambition in this work is to contribute to a bridge between intrapsychic concepts of personality and the interpersonal systems perspective on functioning. I approach this problem by examining a parallel gap in psychoanalytic theory: the disparity between Freud's clinical theory and the underlying metapsychology.

My interest in these two problems of divergent levels of explanation arises from my own clinical work. Like many recently trained clinicians, I have grown accustomed to shifting between different theoretical perspectives in my work. On the one hand systems theory provides a clear framework for analyzing things which occur between people, e.g., communications, states of relationships, and modes of interaction. It offers an enormously useful array of what McKinney (1976) calls "mini-theory," i.e., a conceptual framework for a circumscribe class of person-situation interactions, such as scapegoating or triangulation. On the other hand, like many other clinicians, I find a need for the "grand theory" which has evolved from Freud's work. It offers a framework for interpreting the meaning of an extensive range of thought, feeling, and behavior and presents a comprehensive picture of the person as, in

Murray's (1938) words a "discriminating, integrating, differentiating . . . adapting temporaral unity." Clinicians who describe themselves a eclectic often mean that they have come to live with the need to shift between a systems perspective and some psychodynamic outgrowth of Freud's model.

Faced with a steady stream of different problems, logical consistency and theoretical integration are secondary concerns for the clinician. Eclecticism is feasible. Consistency and integration become primary concerns, however, when the clinician turns theoretician. At this point, subscribing to divergent levels of analysis becomes a problem. So long as the clinician remains within the framework of Freud's clinical theory--the language which Freud developed for describing psychologically meaningful action, e.g., identification, ego defense, and oedipal rivalry--the problem is not acute. Systems theory and intrapsychic concepts of this sort can be seen as alternate perspectives on an event, competing with but not necessarily negating each other. When the clinician moves on to abstract explanation, however, the problem becomes serious. It becomes necessary to invoke an inner world of conflicting propulsive forces and substantive entities--Freud's metapsychology--which cause the person's action. At this level of analysis, systems perspectives and intrapsychic theory do negate each other; behavior cannot be at once dependent upon its context and wholly determined from within. Even worse, the psychodynamic model of explanation

relegates many of the descriptive concepts, such as defense and identification, which seem most compatible with a systems perspective to a status of marginal reality, defining them as the superficial manifestations of an underlying interplay of energies. Eclecticism becomes untenable.

One measure of Freud's genius is his success in developing two such contradictory models of analysis: a clinical theory which adds meaning to behavior by focusing on the complexities of purposive adaption and socialization and a metapsychology which is meant to render the clinical descriptions scientific by reducing them, ultimately, to a pyhsio-chemical process.

The distinction between the two models is subtle in Freud's work--he saw them as one. In the hands of his followers, both sides of the theory have become more elaborate. The divergence has become sharp. It appears, for instance, in the frequent use of a double language of description in psychoanalytic writing, sometimes within the space of a single sentence:

> It has been fascinating to observe how the prototype of outward-directed attention cathexis evolves--how the normal infant's differentiation process is guided by the pattern of 'checking back' to the mother (Mahler, 1968, p. 17).

Ironically, it is the clinical theory which now seems more scientific. This problem has been receiving increasing attention within the psychoanalytic community (G. Klein, 1965; Home, 1966, Rycroft, 1966; Holt, 1972; and Schafer, 1976).

While these authors differ in the solutions they propose, they are in broad agreement in their analysis of the problem: the metapsychology inhibits psychoanalysis from accounting for adaptive striving and the person's active role in structuring his experience, and it interferes with understanding how the person's ongoing participation in the social world shapes his experience--very similar problems to the ones the life history movement sought to address.

Klein (1976) suggests that the best course for dealing with the problems of the metapsychology is, for the time being, to put aside the idea of abstract explanation in favor of refining and expanding the body of clinical insights. He proposes a number of improvements in the methods of observation, such as video-taping analytic sessions or opening them to third party observers, in line with this goal. Klein's solution is similar to an approach which Allport (1962) recommends for dealing with the problem of generalization in life history research: developing "ideographic" measures (anchored in the individual) for studying the "morphogenic" dimension (unique features) of personality. Abstracted as a general approach, these proposals are the solution of naive empiricism. It is an attractive approach, but it has one serious flaw.

In order to see data as meaningful, you have to impose a construct upon it. Kuhn (1970) shows that a construct must, in turn, be related to a general paradigm, an overall model of the relevant universe. To work explicitly outside one

paradigm--as Klein suggests in terms of the metapsychology--means moving implicitly inside another.

The prevailing paradigm acts as a zeitgeist, a constant influence on inquiry embedded in the language and implicit assumptions of a field. As the experience of the life history movement shows, the zeitgeist cannot safely be ignored. Making a person's life, rather than a trait or a learning curve, the focus of inquiry is not in itself sufficient. Adopting an alternative technology of observation, no matter how sophisticated, is not enough. It is necessary first to identify the barrier in the current model of inquiry, and then to replace it with an alternative set of assumptions. In the next pages I attempt these two steps, first giving a negative definition of life history research and then outlining the alternative assumptions which guide my reconstruction of Hilda Kroner's life.

Troublesome assumptions.

Life history research is not part of the role which Hebb (1949) ascribes to the psychologist:

> The role of the psychologist (is) to reduce the vagaries of thought to a mechanical process of cause and effect . . . Modern psychology takes completely for granted that behavior and neural function are perfectly correlated, that one is completely caused by the other. There is not a separate soul or life force to stick a finger in the brain now and then . . . there is no room for a mysterious agent that is defined as not physical and yet has physical effects.

Hebb expresses, in bald terms, the modern evolution of Cartesian thought as it applies to psychology. Yankelovitch and Barrett (1970), two authors who have made a major effort at untangling the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalysis, trace the problem of Freud's metapsychology in psychoanalytic theory to Descartes' dualism of mind and matter. Because the modern elaboration of Cartesian thought, scientific materialism, is sometimes taken as the only basis for psychology, I will briefly summarize their analysis of Cartesianism to show where it is inappropriate for clinical inquiry.

Prior to Descartes, physical objects had been invested with vital forces, such as purpose and becoming. Descartes redefined the physical world as abstract matter extended in space. He reserved the vital forces for the mind, a non-material entity which Ryle (1949) terms "the ghost in the machine." In Cartesian thought, certainty and precision derive from the operations of the mind. Descartes sought a monolothic ideal of knowledge and found it in mathematics. He initiated the doctrine of "clear and distinct ideas," i.e., that knowledge is achieved by reducing a complex state to its simplest, ideally quantitative, components, which can then be subjected to analysis. Through Newtonian physics this cosmology evolved into scientific materialism, which views the universe as the sum of elementary particles of matter and energy located in space and interrelated through a few

immutable laws. In this viewpoint, Descartes' immaterial mind is no longer necessary. Knowledge derives from the reductive analysis of a complex whole into its additive components, which register on the senses or measuring device of the observer and act in accordance with their lawful regulation.

A great many phenomena admit to reductive analysis, to the extent that it is often equated with "scientific" analysis. It contains, however, an opportunity to engage in two logical fallacies, which Whitehead (1925) terms "misplaced concreteness" and "simple location." Whitehead defines the former as "neglecting the degree of abstraction involved when an actual entity is considered merely insofar as it exemplifies certain categories of thought" (in Korzybski, 1958, p. 369). Yankelovitch and Barrett (1970, p. 230) describe the latter fallacy as "the attempt to circumscribe the place of any phenomenon in an oversimple and absolute way."

In applying materialistic assumptions to psychological phenomena, the potential to engage in these companion fallacies is strong. Both are exemplified in the above quote from Hebb; thought and behavior are reified as mechanical processes which can be traced ultimately to events which occur in the synapse between neurons.

Few contemporary psychologists in social or personality research would "take completely for granted" the materialistic assumptions expressed in Hebb's statement. On the other hand, many would find it hard to envision functioning

without the subjective sense of security which comes in working from Cartesian-Newtonian assumptions, i.e., from reducing phenomena to a framework of "clear and distinct" abstractions which admit to precise, ideally quantifiable, measurement. So long as the abstractions are sufficiently clear and the appropriate calculations are applied, any single investigation in this model can deliver an immediate sense of certainty, e.g., that the investigator has significant grounds for rejecting his null-hypothesis. At the same time, the cost of basing inquiry exclusively on this model is that it creates irresolvable uncertainty over the existence of phenomena which do not admit to clear measurement. This problem can be seen in the continuing debate over the question of scientific study of the "self" (see Mischel, 1977), and in the fact that this debate is often conducted solely in terms of the devices constructed for measuring the "self."

The impact of the materialistic model is also reflected in the fragmented output of current research in social and personality psychology, and the virtual disappearance of work on "grand theory" (McKinney, 1976). A new generation of critics decries the same gaps in knowledge first noted by the life history movement, what Sanford (1965) calls the growth of a "psychology-without-a-person." Critics, in fact, have become so numerous that one can wonder who is left to criticize. Carlson (1973), however, makes it clear that the vast majority of researchers opt for the immediate

security of the Cartesian-Newtonian model of inquiry, at a great cost to integration of theory. In a detailed analysis of the research published over the course of a year in two leading journals of social and personality psychology, Carlson finds that: "not a single published study attempted even minimal inquiry into the organization of personality variables within the individual" (Ibid., p. 209, original emphasis).

In physics, discovery of the bewildering world of interrelated processes which constitute an atom has redefined the idea of "location" as a high abstraction and the notion of deterministic causality as a convenient fiction. It seems unlikely that a similar discovery in psychology could reorient the field. In borrowing its basic assumptions from a distant field of inquiry, psychology may have cut itself off from the tendency toward self-correction and revision normally built into a model. The immediate sense of certainty which comes from manipulating "clear and distinct" abstractions ironically supports an attitude of blind faith in reductive analysis. Hebb, for example, can take his materialistic assumptions "completely for granted" because he has such a potent ally in the unknown--the gap between thought and neural process is so wide, both logically and empirically, that he might always be able to cite insufficient current knowledge to account for the failure to show a causal linkage between phenomena on two disparate levels of abstraction.

If we start by abandoning the larger issues of personality as unscientific, it is unlikely that we will ever come around to a scientific understanding of them. I have built up to this point at such length in order to show that, regardless of whether the assumptions I propose are adequate, some alternative set--which relates specifically to the problems psychology seeks to address--is sorely needed.

If the Cartesian-Newtonian model of inquiry can be taken to represent an extreme position on one end of a continuum, the extreme of reliance on preconceived abstractions, phenomonolgy and naive empiricism would occupy points at the opposite extreme. Husserl's "to the things themselves" and Wittgenstein's "don't think, look!" both imply an extreme confidence in the possibility that, once he has "bracketed" his preconceptions, the investigator can "see" the phenomena under study in some true form. Certainty, in this model, is "out there" to be discovered in, as Barker (1964, pp. 5-6) puts it, "phenomena as they exist unarranged by the investigator and without input from the methods used to reveal them."

The model of research which I am proposing for the life history occupies a middle ground between the extremes of confidence in preconceived abstractions and faith in the ability to see "the things themselves." In this middle position knowledge is conceived as a product of the interaction between the investigator, who imposed preconceived theoretical

constructions on the data, and the subject, who can provide new data to confirm, contradict, redefine, or otherwise alter the investigator's constructions. Because there is no logical end point to this transaction, no single investigation can establish findings with the certainty that, say, hypothetico-deductive procedures convey. Because the investigator employs a conceptual framework which, from the start, defines and places the relevant data within a preconceived context, no claims to "discovery," of the sort advanced by the radical empiricists can be made. Certainty and discovery are themselves transactional concepts in this model, defined through correction and elaboration of an investigator's work within a community of social scientists--which occurs, in any case, whenever an experimenter attempts to generalize beyond his immediate data.

Clinical inquiry as a dialectical process.

One curious feature of psychoanalysis is that a number of Freud's major clinical concepts are now accepted as established facts, while the way in which he established them remains obscure. Unconscious motivation, oedipal rivalries, and intrapsychic conflict, for example, are recognized as commonplace truths, even by many who would not credit Freud with employing a valid mode of research. Most of the members of the life history movement, unfortunately, fell into the latter group. Had they been able to regard, as Murray (1938,

p. 33) put it, "the deep, significant . . . and questionable speculations of psycho-analysis" with a less ambivalent attitude, they might have begun to refine a model of interpretive reconstruction from the example presented by Freud. Part of the problem was that Freud's understanding of his own technique developed gradually; his belief in the uncovering of a literal past and his notion of manipulating psychic energies obscured his understanding of the give-and-take between patient and therapist which is at the core of psychoanalytic exploration. Even outside of psychoanalysis, all but the most manipulative or dogmatically here-and-now oriented models of psychotherapy rely on a dialogue between patient and therapist to construct a picture of the patient's relevant history. I will refer to this process of collaborative exploration as clinical inquiry and use the term interchangeably with life history research.

The psychological life history has been revitalized in recent years within the emerging field of adult development (e.g. Maas and Kuypers, 1974; Vaillant, 1977). Levinson (1978), who has made a particularly significant contribution to this revitalization, employs several of the main principles of the model of clinical inquiry which I am attempting to define.

Rather than restrict himself to the focus on a discrete stage of development in occupational or family career, Levinson attempts to construct a picture of the entire course of adult development from biographical data collected through

interviews with forty male subjects. In addition to regarding the individual life as his basic unit of analysis, Levinson shares another of the central ideas of the life history movement: "we need to encompass both self and society . . . to take seriously the idea that the self exists in the world and its evolution is intimately bound together with that world" (1978, p. 47). He approaches this goal by analyzing what he calls the "life structure" of each of his subject:

> . . . the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time . . . Through it we may examine the interrelations of self and world--to see how the self is in the world, and the world is in the self [Ibid., pp. 41-42].

Levinson includes three broad features in his definition of a life structure: (1) the individual's sociocultural context, (2) the conscious and unconscious aspects of self as described in the psychodynamic model of personality, and (3) the individual's "participation in te world . . . [the] transactions between self and world" (Ibid., pp. 42-43). He examines the latter and most important component of a life structure by focusing on the individual's "choices." To make a choice, as Levinson uses the term, means to establish a conscious or unconscious relationship to something: "The relationship becomes the vehicle for living out certain aspects of the self and for engaging in certain modes of participation in the world" (Ibid., p. 44). Levinson, in other words, uses the concepts of "choice" and "life structure" as a way of viewing inner experience and outer

behavior as interdependent, mutually entailing aspects of a person's involvement in social life, thus eliminating the hard distinctions between subjective and object or personality and social structure which plagued earlier life history research. He also differs from his predecessors in that he comfortably accepts the interpretive role of the investigator:

> We began by immersing ourselves in the interview material and working toward an intuitive understanding of the man and his life. Gradually we tried more interpretive formulations and, going back and forth between the interviews and the analysis, came to a construction of the life course [Ibid., p. 16].

Although Levinson never uses the term, what he describes is a model of dialectical inquiry. Rather late in my own work on Hilda's life, I came to recognize that the dialectical perspective provides a useful framework for describing the approach which I had adopted.

It is difficult to give a concise definition of dialectical inquiry. Sennet (1977, p. 6), who takes a dialectical approach in his analysis of change in attitudes toward public life, states that: "A dialectical inquiry means that the argument is complete only when the book comes to an end"--the whole of what he has to say about his use of dialectics. I will be somewhat less cavalier and promise that what I mean by a dialectical perspective should be clear by the end of chapter three, outlining here only points which apply directly to data gathering and analysis.

A principal assumption in the dialectical perspective is that the relevant universe is a totality of interrelated elements, as opposed to an arrangement of fixed entities. No element can be understood when detached from its relations, each defines and is defined by the others (Meacham, 1977). Applied to psychology, this perspective focuses inquiry on the person's modes of relating to, or ways of integrating himself within his world--as encompassed in Levinson's concept of a "life structure." In directing attention to how the person simultaneously structures and is structured by his world, a dialectical perspective assigns an equal status to inner experience and outer behavior. Rather than seeking to reduce one to the other, dialectical inquiry attempts to establish the relationship between the private and public aspects of an event, to determine how one implies the other--Levinson's "choice" is an example of a concept which can refer simultaneously to both aspects. The inquiry in the therapy situation is frequently directed toward exactly these goals, i.e., toward building a contextual understanding of the patient and seeking to connect his thought and feeling with the events in his life.

Knowledge, in the dialectical view, is an active construction, rather than a record of static facts. It derives from a dialectical interplay between theory and data--the "back and forth" activity which Levinson describes in relation to his interpretive formulations and interview records. Although the

goal of this interaction is synthesis, or what Becker (1970) calls "grounded theory," it is often achieved by seeking out and highlighting contradiction--another close parallel to the process of exploration in psychotherapy.

In life history research, the process of resolving contradictions belongs more to the stage of analysis than interviewing, both because the contract to interpret and confront implicit in the therapy situation is missing in the life history interview and because the investigator is in a position to attempt a synthesis of the entire range of material. During the interview stage, the investigator's task is more a matter of facilitating contradiction, that is, it is desirable to keep the interviews sufficiently unstructured so as to maximize the subject's opportunity to present material which contradicts the investigator's preconceived formulations.

In presenting Hilda's history, I have attempted to preserve this quality of dialectical tension in several ways. In order to give the reader an impression of my role in the unfolding of Hilda's story, I present a number of the excerpts from our interviews intact, with my questions and comments included. I move back and forth between Hilda's narrative and my analysis throughout the presentation. In the early chapters, these separate passages are in large blocks. Chapter two is largely a presentation of excerpts from our interviews, with my contribution directed toward highlighting the problems for synthesis. Chapter three, a discussion of theoretical

concepts, refers back to Hilda's account, but contains few direct quotes. In the succeeding chapters I intermix analysis and narrative more freely, to the point where, ideally, Hilda's account and my theory unfold hand in hand.

Clinical inquiry as history.

Clinical inquiry relies extensively on the subject's ability to reconstruct the past. It must therefore start with a clear understanding of (a) the nature of memory and (b) the process of historical reconstruction. In chapters two and three I discuss these issues in detail, focusing first on the particular qualities of Hilda's reconstruction and then turning to general theoretical considerations. I will preface this discussion with a few basic points.

Several studies have documented the unreliability of the person's memory of an event as a source of literal data (Yarrow, 1970; Lieberman, 1971). The fact that what people remember of the past may not correspond closely with what actually happened only presents a problem, however, when it is not recognized. Freud's discovery that some of what his patients remembered was shaped by fears and wishes considerably advanced, rather than invalidated, his clinical theory. Freud moved closer to an understanding of what Muller describes as the essence of historical inquiry:

> Historians can more nearly approach the detachment of the physicist when they realize that the historical "reality" is symbolic, not physical, and that they are giving as well as finding meanings. The

> important meanings of history are not simply there, lined up, waiting to be discovered . . . The progress in historical knowledge has not been a steady advance toward absolute truth . . . [but] a progressive clarification, a fuller consciousness of what happened and how and why [1952, pp. 32-33].

Wyatt draws on a similar understanding of history in analyzing the role of the therapist in a patient's reconstruction of his past:

> Interpretation is . . . a very general name for a variety of therapeutic actions which have in common only that the therapist "intervenes" by establishing a relationship between the various statements the patient has previously produced. In doing so the therapist arrives at a proposal of a meaning . . . Far from pretending certainty, [interpretations] are devises to search out and arrive at a plausible construction [1963, p. 316, original emphasis].

The therapist and historian, in other words, both deal with data which cannot be understood in isolation fromits context. Both give meaning to their data by reconstructing the context, "establishing a relationship between various statements." Defining clinical inquiry as an historical investigation is another way to state the dialectical principle of focusing on interrelationship.

The need for a theory of reasons.

Causality is a slippery concept in psychology. Ryle (1949) draws an important distinction between causes and reasons. He uses the example of a stone breaking a sheet of glass to illustrate the distinction. There are two senses in which the event can be explained: "because the stone hit it," or "because the glass was brittle." The first draws a direct

cause and effect relationship between the stone and the broken glass; the second describes a property of the glass, its brittleness, and serves as a conditional statement, if struck it would break. Ryle considers the latter a reason and not a cause.

Schafer (1976, pp. 228-232) draws out several of the implications of Ryle's distinction for psychology. He argues that the goal of the clinical theory which developed in tandem with Freud's metapsychology is the explication of reasons. He points out that how a person acts in a given situation is an expression of his personal definition of the situation, and notes that this definition implies a psychic reality: "In order to take into account psychic reality or the world as experienced, which is the world of meaning and private activity, one must shift to explanation in terms of reasons rather than causes or conditions." Clinical inquiry, in other words, is less concerned with determining the proximate cause of behavior than with understanding why people do what they do.

The reasons which a person can give to account for his actions are necessary but not sufficient for a full "explanation in terms of reasons." On top of the potential complexity of factors which enter into a situation, there are what Schafer calls "all those additional difficulties introduced by one's intricate and consequential reasons for not faithfully recognizing or acknowledging all of one's reasons to oneself as well as to others." Part of the role of the

clinical investigator is to refine and expand upon the reasons which the subject supplies by drawing on a general theory of the problems people have with reasons, e.g., the theory of defense in psychoanalysis.

Schafer's definition of psychic reality is close to the dialectical view that the separate aspects of a totality mutually define each other. He argues that the terms reason, meaning, action, and situation all "co-constitute" or co-define each other as psychological concepts. What he means by "co-constitution" is that to give a reason for an action is to define its meaning in a given situation. If you include thought and emotional reaction in the term action, as Schafer does, the person's situation is, in turn, co-defined by his action in it. Schafer sees this conglomerate construction of psychic reality as saved from chaotic relativism by a fundamental assumption that "whenever one sees oneself as being in the same situation, one will react the same way"--his rephrasing of Freud's concept of repetition compulsion. In other words, clinical inquiry becomes a matter of interpreting the reasons a person acts in the particular way he does through recurring significant situations in his life.

I would add two other factors which can prevent analysis of reasons from becoming a chaotic approach to inquiry. The first is that the investigator can employ a systematic model of meaning, such as the models of relationship in psychoanalytic or family systems theory, to aid both in

selecting which actions to focus on and in integrating a person's particular reasons within a framework of general meanings. The second factor is that, if you expand the term situation to include developmental stages and broad adaptive tasks, general theory can again provide a useful context in which to anchor the actions of a particular person.

Explanation as redescription.

Defining explanation in clinical inquiry as a form of redescription is a way to summarize the preceding points: achieving synthesis between data and theory, interpreting the meaning of events by reconstructing their context, and abstracting the reasons for a person's actions from an analysis of their situation are all redescriptive explanation. The main implication of this overlap between description and explanation in life history research is that rigorous attention must be paid to the language used in both the narrative and analytic sections of the finished work. In preparing Hilda's history I have tried to follow three general rules:

(1) To narrow the gap between my explanatory language and Hilda's terms of description insofar as possible. This rule can be justified in a number of ways. It follows, for example, from the idea of grounded theory; in order to remain anchored in the data, the theory must be expressed on at least remotely similar terms. Put abstractly, a true synthesis must transform the original elements without destroying them.

(2) To describe Hilda as an active agent in her psychological life. Of the several proposals for correcting the problems imposed by the metapsychology in psychoanalytic theory, Schafer's (1976) is the most radical: excise any suggestion of internal physical entities, personified agents, drives, mechanisms, or forces by adhering stringently to the rules of an action language. Schafer's fundamental rule is that:

> One shall regard every psychological process, event, experience, response, or other item of behavior as an action, and one shall designate it by an active verb and, when appropriate and useful, by an adverbial locution that states the mode of this action [Ibid., p. 363].

The intent of Schafer's rule is to avoid the reification of emotion and misattribution of responsibility for behavior which is implicit in everyday, as well as psychoanalytic, language. It is a rule which I honored more in its breach, that is, it helped me to recognize the issues of locus of responsibility and "doing v. undergoing" in both Hilda's and my own descriptions of her experience. It was particularly helpful in alerting me to expressions of dissociation. But I found it often too constricting--many experiences are best described as undergone and require the use of metaphor.

(3) To use theoretical terms which imply interrelationship. Some actions entail a mutual structuring or interpenetration of subject and object. These are often

difficult to describe in a single term. Levinson's concepts of "choice" and "life structure" are examples of terms designed for this purpose. The ones which I have adopted in reconstructing Hilda's life are Piaget's concepts of "schema" and "accommodation," and Boszormenyi-Nagy's "loyalty bonds."

The use of the collaborative relationship.

The product of the collaboration between investigator and subject in life history research is a two person personal document; each invests significant aspects of self in the work. The intimate relationship which naturally develops is a uniquely valuable and difficult source of information. It provides *in vivo* evidence of the subject in interaction with a significant other. It gives the investigator a live picture of the general expectations and issues which the subject carries into a close relationship. How the subject handles the comings and goings of the investigator, the requirement of self-revelation, and the inevitable frustrations in the work, for example, are all important considerations.

Equally important, the subject has an impact on the investigator--an experience which serves as a substrate to the entire work. Knowledge of how it feels to work closely with the subject gives the investigator a valuable perspective on the entire range of the subject's descriptions of interactions and opens the way for empathic identification, a response which both facilitates the interview process and deepens the

investigator's understanding of the subject's experience. It also introduces the problems of projection and countertransference. Clinical training and experience in analyzing the ways in which he selectively perceives and affects others can lessen, but never entirely eliminate, the distorting effect of the investigator's projections--he can never be an entirely veridical "clinical instrument." LeBarre suggests that "field ethnography . . . may be a species of autobiography" (quoted in Freeman and Krantz, 1980, p. 5). He has a valid point, but takes it too far; the investigator unavoidably sees some of himself in the subject, but he does not invent the other person. Accurate empathy, which is essential to the work, is on a continuum with projection. The investigator must concentrate on determining where one shades into the other, but it is not a line which he can draw entirely on his own. This is another respect in which certainty is external to the work, dependent upon the judgment of colleagues and readers--and another good reason to include a substantial body of excerpts from the interviews in the finished work.

To summarize, my primary methodological assumption is that the notion of direct causality which obtains in the physical sciences cannot be used to account for psychological functioning through major and complex life situations. It is necessary, instead, to approach explanations through reconstructing the meaning of a person's actions within their life

situation as they define it. Explanation occurs when the person's reasons are interpreted within the framework of a general theory which states why people behave similarly in similarly defined situations. The activity which this model prescribes for the investigator follows the pattern which Levinson (1978) describes, i.e., going back and forth between the interview data and progressively refined interpretive formulations. The end product is what Becker (1970) refers to as "grounded theory," a plausible theoretical construction which preserves the content of events as experienced. While certainty is unobtainable in this model, plausibility can be established through the following steps: (1) specifying initial theoretical assumptions; (2) following a clear approach to the selection and descriptive interpretation of events and, above all (3) presenting sufficient interview data so that the value of the theory as an integrative construction can be judged in relation to a broad range of events as described by the subject.

Theoretical Background

None of the theoretical concepts which I employ in analyzing Hilda's life are original. I draw liberally on ideas from several theoretical perspectives, in part because my goal is to synthesize theory and, equally, because the adequate psychological treatment of a life requires an expansive, rather than a reductive analysis. Although I am responsible for the

particular form that my synthesis takes, I follow lines of integration suggested by a number of other writers. What clarity I have, both in my view of Hilda's life and in seeing the points of convergence in the field, is achieved by standing on a good many shoulders. In order to acknowledge my debts at the outset, I would like to mention a few of the theorists who have influenced my thinking, but do not appear prominently in my theoretical discussion in chapter three.

A number of theorists in recent years have been seeking to connect the two schools of thought which developed in parallel from Freud's original clinical theory: ego psychology, which focuses on the processes of establishing and maintaining intrapsychic organization; and object relations theory, which addresses itself to the strong tendency toward interpersonal attachment. Several theorists with roots in the latter school (e.g. Jacobson, 1964; Mahler, 1968) stress the influence of interpersonal attachment on cognitive development. Mahler's (1975) work on symbiosis and individuation, in particular, is a strong background influence on my thinking. Loevinger (1969) and Breger (1974) somewhat reverse the emphasis, focusing on the way in which cognitive development facilitates integration in the interpersonal world. Both of these theorists connect Piagetian concepts with traditional ego theory. Although my use of Piaget differs from theirs, they provide my model--especially Breger who contributes sub-

stantially to my understanding of the cognitive aspect of dissociation.

The idea that Boszormenyi-Nagy's interpersonal theory opens the possibility of an integration between intrapsychic and relational theory has been suggested by several of my colleagues (Baker, 1974: Karpel, 1976: and Starker, 1980). Stierlin (1969) shows the value of a dialectical perspective in undertaking such an integration--another important part of the background of my thinking, particularly on the issue of schizophrenia.

Finally, I owe my view of the self as an organization of experience--as well as my interest in first person accounts of schizophrenia as a focus of research--to Epstein. His theory of personality as a hierarchical structure of "major postulate systems for the nature of the world, the nature of the self, and their interaction" (Epstein, 1972, p. 11) was my first introduction to the idea that the insights of ego psychology and object relations theory could be freed of their accompanying baggage of metaphysical energies and reified entities. It also showed me that the structuring of experience could be viewed as a motivational force--two ideas which are at the heart of my attempt to integrate intrapsychic and relational theory.

Hilda Kroner

Hilda is a short, sturdily built woman, in her early eighties. A red complexion and high level of activity give her an appearance of health. Her mental acuity and stamina seem little impaired by age. She has considerable nervous energy.

Hilda has a number of attributes which make her an ideal subject for my project. The most significant is that she is a highly self-reflective/self-absorbed person. She has devoted a considerable portion of her life energy to what she terms "figuring out" her past experience and relationships. She is also gifted with an acute mind and can be remarkably--though often idiosyncratically--expressive in describing her emotional experience and interpersonal relationships.

Hilda's chronology.

Hilda was born at the turn of the century. She was the first daughter and second of eight children in the Mendahl family. Her father, Jacob, was a Ph.D. chemist who spent most of his career in private industry. Emily, her mother, ran the household, participated in a woman's literary group, and was active in the PTA.

Hilda was ill frequently during her earliest years. The Mendahls also moved several times in this period. They settled, when Hilda was six, in Hudson, a medium-sized city several hours up river from New York. The first signs of emotional disturbance in Hilda's life appear during her mid-

childhood: she suffered periodic depressions, pervasive feelings of being "not worth it," and thoughts of suicide. She felt she was regarded as "continually bad" in the home, particularly in the eyes of her mother.

Adolescence was a brighter period. Hilda became a member of a clique of young women in her church, dated several men, and became engaged to a classmate, Richard, just prior to leaving for college.

Her first year of college was a jolting experience. She was beset by fears that she would be forced into a homosexual relationship, and the humiliating experience of initiation into a sorority precipitated her first breakdown, a recurring experience of intense and uncontrollable screaming.

She returned home and married Richard.

Hilda and Richard lived together for six years, moving several times between his parent's home and various apartments in a nearby state. During this time Hilda had a miscarriage and two successful deliveries, both sons. The marriage, never stable, was increasingly stressed by the needs of child rearing. During the last year or so of this period Hilda wrote her first book, Fire of Spring.

Hilda left Richard and moved into the house of a friend in Altamont, an artists' community near Hudson, where she became involved in a triangular relationship with an artist, Phillip, and his wife Susan. For the next six years Hilda lived with Phillip and Susan, worked as a cook and

teacher in a progressive school which they jointly ran, and had a daughter, Ruth, by Phillip. During this time her mother became overtly psychotic and had to be kept under close watch by the family--several of whom moved home for the purpose. After three years of confinement at home, she committed suicide. These events prompted Hilda to write her second book, Beauty, I Wonder, which she describes as an attempt at "rectifying the image of my mother in my mind." Her approach was to reconstruct her own and her mother's experience of childhood and marriage fused into the life of a single protagonist.

After her mother's death, Hilda entered a period of gradually mounting crisis. She began to experience her triangular relationship as oppressive.

She wrote a third book, Ishtar, which, in contrast to the explicitly personal content of her previous two works, was a synthesis of Persian and Judaic mythical themes of femininity and fertility. Initial difficulties in negotiation for publication upset her, and she angrily withdrew the book from consideration. She experienced the birth of a second child by Phillip, Peter, as a severe trauma. Shortly following Peter's birth, she had her first prolonged psychotic break, attempted to drown her daughter Ann by "baptizing" her in the brook which runs through the Altamont property, and was removed to Boxborough State Hospital.

Hilda spent the next year and a half at Boxborough, immersed in vivid sensory hallucinations, delusions of world catastrophy, rituals of birthgiving and salvation through dancing and string unravelling, and in the constant company of inner voices. Following a near fatal infectious fever, she enjoyed a rapid remission and was released from the hospital.

Hilda was reluctantly accepted back into her family's home. An unhappy year followed in which she became increasingly withdrawn, finally experiencing a full recrudesence of her psychotic symptoms.

She returned to the hospital and spent the next seven years on a ward for chronically psychotic women. This ward was administered under a rigid "rule of silence"; the patients were not allowed to talk. Signs of hallucination or listening to voices were punished by beating. Hilda remembers being beaten often.

Because Hilda was at a higher level of functioning than the other women, she was given considerable responsibility for cleaning and housekeeping duties on the ward. At the end of this period a change in administrative personnel brought her to the attention of a new psychiatrist, who eventually assisted in her obtaining a discharge.

By now Hilda was in her early forties. She had been effectively removed from society for a decade, missed the Depression and most of World War II, and felt lost with regard to such relatively simple matters as appropriate dress. She

did not wish to return to Richard, her family would not take her back, and she saw no place to go--a dilemma which she resolved by choosing to remain at the hospital as a member of the ward staff. Hilda moved into a nurses' dormitory and resumed contact with the outside world in sparsely measured doses.

For the next twenty-four years Hilda continued to work at Boxborough State Hospital. She slowly advanced from the position of attendant to practical nurse and, eventually, to being given responsibility in administering a ward. She carefully saved enough money over these years so that she could give each of her children the equivalent of the current cost of four years of college. She also bought, together with her daughter Ruth, a portion of the Altamont property.

Phillip went insane in this period, became a patient at Boxborough, and died. After twenty-six years of legal marriage, Richard obtained a divorce from Hilda. Fifteen years after her discharge, Hilda wrote a 100-page manuscript on her psychotic experience. Several years later she started Journal at Sixty, which focuses on her feelings of isolation in approaching old age.

A period of serious illness, including an operation for cancer, followed. On reading Hilda's journal, her daughter Ruth insisted that it was time for her to retire and move back to the Altamont property.

Since retirement, Hilda has been living in a studio adjoining Ruth's house. Until recently, Susan, Phillip's wife, also maintained her house on the property. Richard died a short time before the first summer of our interviews.

The Data

Background of our involvement.

My initial contact with Hilda came through her manuscript on her psychotic experience. A colleague, who was also interested in first person accounts of schizophrenia, had obtained the manuscript through a friend related to Hilda. Impressed by the vivid detail in Hilda's account, I contacted her and enlisted her participation in a series of biographical interviews over the course of a summer.

My original conception of research on Hilda's life was to provide the phenomological equivalent of Barker's (1954) "specimen records" of uninterpreted behavioral descriptions of a segment of a subject's life, i.e., to organize all the "concrete details" of her experience into a body of "raw data" uncontaminated by preconceived theoretical notions. The product of this effort (James, 1977) persuaded me that it is easier to be naive than empirical.

Through subsequent clinical work with schizophrenics, I became increasingly aware of the force and complexity of attachment in psychological functioning. I also came to see that Hilda had focused much of her account of the past on her

attachments. I recontinued interviews with her two summers after our first contact for the purpose of this project.

Our interviews.

I met with Hilda for a total of ten days of interviewing, seven in the first summer, three in the second. This represents about 55 hours of formal interviewing, 32 of which have been tape recorded and transcribed (two days were lost due to equipment and operator failure).

Our interviews were relatively unstructured. For our first several meetings, I prepared a number of questions regarding points in her writings which I asked her to amplify. My original rationale for this approach was to avoid imposing my own structure on Hilda's story--in retrospect, it was a way to lessen the anxiety of facing the vast expanse of a stranger's lifetime experience. Discussion of points from her writing remained the nominal structure for about half of our meetings. But even from the start, Hilda readily followed the train of her own associations--a tendency which I encouraged. She was a very active informant. She thought a great deal about the project during the weeks between interviews, and often presented new areas she wished to cover. Hilda was respectful of my role as investigator, but rarely let inopportune questioning interfere with her pursuit of a subject--structure, in short, was substantially in her hands.

The second summer of interviewing had a different quality; it was more casual, and I engaged more actively in discussion of Hilda's experience. I directed the interviews toward filling gaps in her history, particularly during later adulthood, and discussing her important relationships, especially with her mother.

Her writing.

I use four of Hilda's writings in reconstructing her history: two published semi-autobiographical fictions, Beauty, I Wonder (1929) and Fire of Spring (1928) and two autobiographical accounts, her manuscript on schizophrenia and her Journal at Sixty.

Beauty, I Wonder follows the experience of a young woman from mid-childhood to early adulthood. Significant experiences include: a troubled relationship with her mother, a barren marriage, and eventual involvement in a triangular love affair.

Fire of Spring describes the experience of a teenage girl on a summer's visit to her father's relatives. The girl becomes intensely engaged with evangelical religious meetings, falls into a romance with her visions of Christ, and ultimately rejects Christ for a human lover.

Both of these books include numerous subplots viewed from the eyes of characters other than the protagonist. Sometimes these subplots and multiple perspectives integrate, often

they remain unrelated. The writing style, described on one of the jackets as "stream of consciousness," is occasionally disjointed or elliptical, but the stories all follow a definite plot structure as far as the main character is concerned.

As psychological evidence, I regard both of these books as, to use Hilda's terms, attempts at "rectifying images" of significant others in her mind, that is, as an effort at mastery of difficult emotional situations by recreating them in fantasy. I will introduce passages from her fiction--clearly labelled as such--at the points which seem appropriate in reconstructing her history.

Her non-fiction autobiography tends to be straightforward reporting, particularly her account of schizophrenic experience. The only area in which her autobiographical writing consistently fails to communicate a sense of authenticity is in the way people will mistreat her for no apparent reason. She was able to suggest some motivations in discussing incidents during our interviews, but in general this is a gap in her understanding.

The main criticism which has been levelled against her writing in general is that she writes about relatively few life incidents and rarely transcends her own concerns. Whether or not these qualities are literary flaws, they make the writing particularly attractive as psychological evidence.

Her memory.

Hilda appears to have a superb memory in the conventional sense of the word. She can recall scenes and events from the past in minute detail, giving, for example, an elaborate description of the styling on a prom dress worn over half a century ago. Her descriptions of a situation, when repeated in different interviews, tend to be very consistent. In fact, her reliability across the 32 hours of transcribed tape is striking, particularly when you consider the likelihood of self-contradiction over such a period interviewing.

Reliability, however, is separate from validity, and validity has to be defined. Ruling out what Wyatt (1963) calls the "chimera of a literal reconstruction of the past," the question of what it is that Hilda reproduces so reliably becomes rather large. I devote a large portion of chapters two and three to examining this question.

Our relationship.

Hilda is a person acutely aware of the risks to self in a relationship.

Hilda: I don't think of myself as a whole person. But when I react to people, I think I am--well I do think of myself as an entity, that way . . . I don't analyze myself, exactly. I analyze my reactions to other people, and their's to me . . . It's like an interplay that's very dangerous, and very hard to manage, and sometimes very delightful.

In reconstructing her history, I have attempted to exercise a similar level of vigilance in analyzing my reactions

to her. To the extent that I am accurately aware of it, Hilda's impact on me is uniquely valuable evidence of her personality. I have had ample opportunity to gather such evidence. My work on her life has spanned a five year period. We correspond intermittently and I attended her eightieth birthday party--we have become participants in each other's lives. For the most part, this level of participation has had a beneficial influence on my work as a piece of research. I have gained, for example, an in-depth understanding of the danger she describes experiencing in her interactions. I have come to understand her sense of vulnerability at an intellectual and empathic level, and also experienced it as a disruptive influence and occasional barrier to exploration in our interviews. As I mentioned above, this sort of information is the foundation for an interpretive reconstruction of her experience. Insofar as I can communicate it in the finished work--perhaps more implicitly than explicitly--it is what brings the compelling quality to a life history.

To say that I have an empathic understanding of important aspects of Hilda's experience is not, of course, to claim an undistorted view of her as a whole person--if such a perception is even possible. I have been able to recognize several areas of distortion. In the initial stages of our contact, these tended to be problems of distancing. I undertook the project with the notion that I would be studying a schizophrenic in her natural setting. I also subscribed to a

romanticized idea that special wisdom follows from experiencing an unusual degree of suffering in life. Both of these somewhat contradictory objectifications were eroded as I came to know Hilda as a person. At moments of frustration in our interviews, however, I tended to reintroduce them. When Hilda was persistently ambiguous in describing an experience, for example, I tended to perceive her resistance to being understood--or perhaps my own resistance to understanding--as either an example of the remnants of pathology or an attempt to express the ineffable. Both views served to protect me from confronting our mutual limitations as informant and interviewer.

The ongoing collaboration of our interviews worked to correct the distortions of distance, but introduced more subtle and potent problems of closeness. Erikson (1969), in the context of discussing his personal reasons for undertaking a biography of Gandhi, points out that unconscious motivation inevitably influences the investigator's work on a life history, from the stage of selecting a subject onward. The chief dangers in having an unconscious investment in the work are, of course, the risks of seeing myself in Hilda, working out issues from my own life on the material of hers. There are good grounds for me to be apprehensive of these risks. As an associate once observed, several features of Hilda's life parallel aspects of my own. We correspond rather closely in several of the abstract qualities of family background. We

each grew up in a family which was somewhat isolated from its community, dislocated in the general class structure, and in the habit of communicating strong values and ideas of specialness among its members. We have both experienced the dilemma of feeling simultaneously angry at and protective toward a parent who has difficulty coping with the requirements of adult life. In addition to these similarities of background, we share several personal characteristics: a tendency to ruminate and place a high value on our thoughts and perceptions; an appreciation for irony; and, when stressed, the habit of adopting a stance of cautious participation with others, based in part on a heightened perception of the risks to self in interaction. All of these similarities are a strong invitation to see myself in Hilda.

Yet at the same time, projective identification is not simply a risk but a requirement of life history research. A moment of sharing an appreciation for Hilda's particular sense of irony, for instance, might raise the level of intimacy in the interviews a notch--rendering the possibility of being understood slightly more real to Hilda. At the level of analysis, the parallels in our lives put me in a far better--albeit more problematic--position to interpret her experience than, say, the average psychologist off the street. The identification brings the empathy which is required to construct a reasonably full picture of a person.

Hornstein (1976) describes empathy as a process of "I" and "them" becoming a bond of "we." Boszormenyi-Nagy (1973) holds that all bonds between self and other are maintained by what he calls "invisible loyalties"--a factor which adds considerable difficulty to the task of analyzing the countertransference in this research. One component of what Nagy defines as a loyalty bond is an implicit commitment not to violate the boundaries of the relationship, not to transcend the other person's definition of self in the relationship. This is a commitment which I have felt acutely in relation to Hilda, and it has had an inhibiting effect on my analysis of her life. In my first effort at presenting her life, it led me consistently to avoid offering any explicit interpretation which might threaten what Pascal (1960) calls the subject's "life illusions." During this period, I took a comment which Murray (1938, p. 17) makes in relation to the analysis of a life history far too literally: "It must necessarily do violence to human feelings . . . it is the substitution of heartless, denotative, referential symbols for the moving immediacy of living."

Like projection, a sense of loyalty to the subject is a double-edged sword; it can have important positive as well as negative implications for the work. For one thing, it makes the investigator's ethical responsibility to the subject an emotional as well intellectual commitment. My responsibility to Hilda, as her life historian, is great. She has handed over

to me what is in a sense her life work--reconstructing her past for the purpose of understanding herself. To the extent that she felt a commitment from me over the course of the interviews, it no doubt enriched the data gathering. In the analysis, my feelings of responsibility to her probably carry me through a number of points where I might otherwise lapse from responsible interpretation in favor of a tempting theoretical speculation.

In terms of the construction of theory, it is interesting to consider how different psychology might be if all investigators were required to deliver their theoretical analysis directly to their subjects. Theory would probably be constructed along the lines which interpretation in psychotherapy naturally takes, i.e., phrased in terms comprehensible to the average person; free of reified internal objects, metaphysical causal agents, and far-fetched speculation; and, at its best, combining sharp discrimination of details with cognizance of a broader context. The investigator's immediate responsibility to the subject in a life history can militate, as an internal control in the research, in favor of these qualities. In pursuing my other commitment to an adequate theoretical analysis of Hilda's life, I have tried to ensure that my feelings of loyalty to her result in interpretations which Hilda can recognize, on some level, as valid.

Organization and Presentation

I have reconstructed Hilda's history out of a wealth of material. The practical demands for organization have been great. I have employed four devices for this purpose:

(1) Throughout the interviews, and particularly in our early meeting, one of my main interventions was to ask Hilda to locate events which she was describing within the general sequence of her life--often a minor concern in her own presentation. I have abstracted the result into a chronology, presented in a condensed form earlier in this section.

(2) I have made a brief outline of the main topics covered on each half-hour tape. This enables me to look at the overall sequence of topics in our interviews, and to locate any lengthy discussion of a particular topic.

(3) I have keyed specific passages in her autobiographical manuscripts with the corresponding points in our interviews. Because I was never able, in the interviews, to obtain a clear sense of the relationship between events described in her fictional works and her actual experience, I abandoned efforts at a detailed analysis of these works.

(4) My main organizational tool is a box of cards which index our interviews and Hilda's autobiographical writing. Each card concerns a specific topic and contains references, usually with a condensed quote, to the points in the data where Hilda touches on it (references relevant to more

than one topic are duplicated on separate cards). I am not sure how many cards I have in all--the stack is slightly over six inches deep when compressed. They are organized into twelve major categories--e.g., Family Experience, Self in Interaction, Work, Marriage, and Our Relationship--most contain a number of subdivisions. I selected the categories largely on an _apriori_ basis, but a number of subdivisions emerged from the data. For example, instances of irrational cruelty on the part of others toward Hilda proved to merit a separate subsection in Self in Interaction. The final shape of the index also changed my conceptualization of the data somewhat. I was surprised to find, for example, that the category of Self (e.g., self descriptions, feelings about herself, statements of interests, talents, etc.) was only a fraction of the size of references to Self in Interaction with others.

I intersperse sections from Hilda's writing and, especially, passages from the interviews throughout my presentation of her history. I try to keep the transitions between my narrative and her's clear by presenting all interview passages over four lines long as a block quote, identifying Hilda and myself when we both speak in a quote. Whenever I combine excerpts drawn from different points in the interviews I mark the transition with a dash at the beginning of the next paragraph. Hilda's intoxication in describing her experiences is sometimes very expressive. I have tried to

preserve some of this quality by underlining words she particularly emphasizes.

Four Questions

In closing this introduction, I would like to raise the four main issues which pose a challenge for a psychological understanding of Hilda's life.

(1) What makes interpersonal interaction uniquely "dangerous and difficult to manage" for Hilda.

(2) What accounts for the striking repetition of certain painful dyadic and triangular relationships which characterize Hilda's life--what she at one point describes as the "dragon" she has to do battle with in her relationships.

(3) What happened, at a psychological level, in her breakdown and recovery from schizophrenia.

(4) How to account for Hilda's persistently fragile sense of being "located" the world, her vulnerability to feelings of depersonalization.

Hilda: . . . And I say [to my daughter] "I can't see myself, Ruth!"

"Well, you could if you wanted to," she says--This is not true, though.

C.J.: Could you say more about that?

Hilda: Just as in the same way I can't even believe this is happening. I can't honestly believe I'm sitting here alive, talking to you. And I've never been able to accomplish that, readily.

C.J.: How do you mean? In what way has it been hard to accomplish?

Hilda: Well, I say: "This is actually happening, I'm here, Cartney's there, I live here, that's Ruth, my daughter"--But I say to myself, "You're kidding. No that's really true, that's happening."

C.J.: As we sit here?

Hilda: Anytime I stop to figure it out . . . I don't know how other people are located that way . . . I have to <u>insist</u> to myself that it is real, otherwise it doesn't come to me as real, it can't be--it can't <u>be</u> that I'm alive, you see?

C H A P T E R II

EARLY FAMILY LIFE

Hilda and the Family Past

Hilda's parents, Jacob and Emily, met at the University of Minnesota. Jacob Mendahl, the son of German-American farmers, was an assistant professor of chemical engineering. Emily Hamilton, a scion of Philadelphia gentry, was a "student of languages." They married, set up housekeeping in Cold Water, a town near the University, and bore their first two children, James and Hilda. Around the time of Hilda's birth, Jacob discovered a catalytic agent which perfected the formula for an alloy of steel soon to become important in large scale construction. He was rewarded for this discovery with stock and a position in a major steel company. Jacob embarked, with the family in tow, on a series of moves to mining towns and camps across the mid-Atlantic states, where he supervised the construction of plants which employed the process he had helped develop. In the course of these relocations a third child, Isabel, was added to the family, and a fourth, Eleanor, was born only to die in infancy.

During Hilda's sixth year, the Mendahls settled in Hudson, a medium sized city in the Catskill region of New York. This last move constituted the family's "arrival": They occupied a large home in a comfortable middle-class

neighborhood, servants were added to the household, Jacob began to establish himself in the business world of New York City, and Emily became active in several social/education groups. The Mendahls settled into a routine of family life which held for the remainder of Hilda's youth. Apart from her few group involvements, Mrs. Mendahl devoted herself to managing the household and Mr. Mendahl spent the week working in Manhattan, returning to Hudson--a long commute even by today's standards--on weekends. Sundays were the "family day." The Mendahls would attend Presbyterian church and return to a large family dinner, after which Emily would retire "with a headache" and Jacob would take the children for a long walk. These weekend parental contacts gradually produced four additional members to round out the roster of Hilda's siblings at a full seven.

The preceding sketch of the Mendahl family history is abstracted from the wealth of recollected events, practices, and relationships which serves as a main focus for the considerable energy which Hilda devotes to reviewing and reworking her past. These early experiences of family life have remained distinctly "alive" for her. Much of the writing which she has produced over the course of her life is an effort at depicting or imaginatively reshaping aspects of her early family context. In her current reconstruction of the past, she presents the circumstances of her early family situation with

such a sense of immediacy that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the intrusive siblings she describes are now gray haired grandparents, the parents with whom she can take issue so vigorously are some three generations in their grave, and the principal actor--Hilda--is, herself, at the far end of her life cycle.

Hilda's active involvement with the past gives her the position of oral historian within her present day family circle, a role which she pursues with a sense of mission.

Hilda: I now can enjoy [my siblings] as people, but I don't expect to discuss myself, my inner . . . soul, so to speak, to any of them. But I have been very jolly friends since I . . . retired--especially when we have get-togethers, family parties now in groups. And they always say to me, "Now Hilda, you remember better than any of us, things which occurred way back in Minnesota, all the things that happened at home, when we were children. Now tell us this and tell us that."--And I've become a great storyteller . . . sort of. And I don't--I tell it as I remember it. This--we're very happy to be together at big dinners, you know, big Thanksgivings, and Christmasses, and Easters.

C.J.: So in some ways you've become the one that knows the family best?

Hilda: Yes I do--[my daughter] Ruth says I do too. Because I don't--there's no--there's nothing that ever happened in any case, to any one of us, that would keep me from being with them, in some way, you know--and having the others realize who this person is, you know. And I have really kept up with all of them that way . . . and more or less let the others realize this, that this is a very distinct person--"Don't miss it!"

As the above passage suggests, there is an element of confrontation in her family storytelling. When she speaks of

making the others "realize who this person is," she does not mean simply fighting against some abstract risk of fading in the collective memory. She fears, for reasons which should become clear as her history progresses, that without her vigilant effort at keeping them "alive," significant events and people--herself included--might be "written out" of the ongoing family story. Her overall picture of the original family circle can, in fact, differ so radically from that held by her junior siblings that she has come to adopt the notion of "two families"--a theory of separate family realities coexisting within a single household--as a partial explanation for the conflicting versions of the past. In this view, James, Hilda, and Isabel are the children of the first family, the four younger siblings comprise the second, with the short-lived Eleanor acting as a punctuation mark between the two. Hilda's campaign to keep her own images of the early family in front of the present day group--"Don't miss it!"--is an expression of loyalty to the members of the first family and the reality of family experience which she feels they shared.

Just as her family storytelling involves more than placid recollection of fond memories, there are elements of conflict in Hilda's internal discourse with her family past. On the one hand, she holds deep respect for her parents and the other members of her family background. She continues to strive toward a sympathetic understanding of their situation, and shows, in the very prominence she affords them in her

ongoing mental life, a certain tenacious devotion. On the other hand, much of her examination of the past is directed toward identifying what was amiss. She can be sharply critical of shortcomings in the values, practices, and basic outlook of her early family--what she refers to as "that narrow attitude at home." And yet, at the same time, she encounters the very attitude which she finds so limiting and objectionable firmly ingrained in her own perspective on life, an ever present filter on her perception of her self and others.

Hilda: I think my immediate family was short changed just as I am. I don't think they had the mature . . . scope that they should have had in life--at all. We had a very narrow attitude. We lived within a certain relegated form of position: education was important, money was important, grades were important, appearance was important--we didn't have a creative beauty of an artist's mind--at all. And when I found a thing similar to that [as a young adult], I thought, "Boy, that is something you can have if you'll work at it. You can discover an artist's mind. And if you had industry enough in your . . . performance, you could reach way, way, way off, up there, and find truths, and evaluate life, and see all of this.

C.J.: And you had these feelings of transcending your background?

Hilda: Yah--you could really get way, way up there.

C.J.: But at times you would feel that whole thing, that endeavor was ugly, that it was wrong.

Hilda: Well according to their view it was wrong, and therefore I could see it as wrong. Just as when you put the wrong kind of cooking on the table, it's not done right because it doesn't taste right. According to them it didn't taste right and therefore it was wrong.

C.J.: And so sometimes it would taste wrong to you?

Hilda: Much . . . But if I had stopped to think, let me say, if I had stopped to think, I would say: "No you're wrong to say that; and they're wrong to think that; it isn't wrong even to do that--it's right to proceed and to accomplish, no matter what the . . . implement. No matter if it is a little house like [mine], or a few dollars, or your whole life. You've gotten this far and you wouldn't exchange it for another life.

Hilda is presenting here an idealized picture of the sense of validity she has been able to achieve through a long and conflicted process of self-appraisal. Her description of the conflict, in which her early family is represented as an internalized opponent, is presented from the vantage point of full maturity. Her conclusion--"that it is right to proceed"--summarizes a number of small victories in a battle whose tide ran against her over much of its course. Hilda indicates by her repeated emphasis on the conditional--"if I had stopped to think"--that such reflective clarity was seldom available in her ongoing experience of her self in the world. Her analogy of the cooking "tasting wrong" communicates what may be taken as her far more typical experience of the early family life as it entered into her present situation, i.e., as a strongly felt, visceral reaction which can elude conscious awareness or rational analysis. Most of the times at which Hilda links aspects of her current situation to her early family life are, in fact, instances of catching herself inexplicably living-out patterns from her family background which run counter to her own consciously held values or goals.

At these times, Hilda tends to describe the impact of her family background as a rigid ceiling on her development, an externally imposed limitation on her ability to engage actively in life and, even, to function as a full-fledged person.

Hilda: [My daughter] Ruth sees me as very . . . unfinished as a person--and I know I am--I know I must be.

C.J.: Where would you say you're "unfinished as a person"?

Hilda: Well I think my experiences stopped at the wrong time. My experiences stopped when I was a child because of . . . withheld expression at home. And I didn't have enough education, as [my brother] James would say, "class-wise." I wasn't investigating other classes of thinking people. I wasn't investigating the Jewish, the Negroes, the Catholics as I should have . . . the Polish, the Italians--we were all a bit snobbish in those days, you see. Mr. America was a person who had a certain salary and lived a certain life, and these other people were still almost classed as "the immigrant group." I think that that was a very bad thing for my education.

C.J.: That you accepted that?

Hilda: Well I think--I don't know if I accepted it, but I think I was affected by it. When Aunt Eleanor said she was working among the poor, she was really working among those who I classed as "the immigrant group." And then when [my husband] Richard went out to Newburgh, New Jersey with this job for father, these people were all Polish, I believe, and I thought "Oh Polish!". And then when [as a young girl] I was down in Yorktown this baby died--I told you that I saw?--and it was a Polish family, I thought "Polish."

Ruth says she can feel that in me very, very much--she accuses me of being a very serious snob.

Well Richard and I were alike in that way. I would say to Richard, "that's an Italian." "Oh no," he'd say, "that person has Spanish in him." We'd go on like that at great length--now there's something

wrong with people who do that a lot. That should not be. There's not time for that kind of thing.

To live fully, you should be able to get up in the morning and look at what happens every day, and go out and meet a few people--somehow--I don't know how. Go up and down the road and knock on houses--we know no one on this road, mind you.

C.J.: Well they're mostly GE people.

Hilda: "They're only GEers!"

I have one old Presbyterian Sunday School friend up the line here. She studies dietetics and her birthday falls on [mine]. And she comes back from California and we chew the fat with each other, read books together, read our horoscope together and all that . . . silly stuff. We have somewhat the same taste, in a way. But in all events, a very . . . frugal experience. Do you see?

In this last excerpt, Hilda touches on several features of what can be considered her deepest complaint with her early family. At the heart of much of what she identifies as amiss in her family background, she sees a pattern of failure in establishing a viable network of interpersonal and social connections. The unwanted legacy of snobbism which she describes above is both more and less than a discrete body of racial and class prejudices. She shows this in jumping directly from her discussion of her stance toward the "immigrant group" to her present day isolation within her neighborhood--a group of families who would seem to fit the picture of "Mr. America" perfectly. She is depicting an experience of the family, carried from childhood, as a small island of "us" in a sea of generalized "them." There is a

diffusely xenophobic stance implicit in what she terms her "frugal" social experience. These qualities of the family as an encapsulated group within a vaguely alien social environment run throughout her account of their troubled efforts at engaging either in their immediate community or in a broader world of "thinking people." This stance is one component of the "withheld expression" which made her "experiences stop as a child," an ingredient which made her later involvement in an artistic community "taste wrong."

There is a second meaning in Hilda's use of "withheld expression" which applies to failures of interpersonal connection within the Mendahl household. "Withheld expression" is one of several condensed terms which she uses to label the impressions of scattered energy and attention, sparse mutual concern and involvement, and undeveloped relationships which characterize her memories of early home life. Hilda writes, in her Journal at Sixty, that "birth had placed her in a position of fragmented acceptance." At other points she speaks of her family not being "related in factual events" and comments that she "holds it against them that they weren't more interested in each other as people." Hilda frequently brings up the lack of nurturance and support in her early home. Sometimes she speaks of the deficiencies quite concretely, in terms of the money allotted and food put on the table. At other times, she moves into a description of the family as an abstractly enervating medium, failing to support its members' development as

integrated individuals and dissipating their potential to be fully functional agents in the world.

In the following excerpt, Hilda draws a number of these strains of family unrelatedness into an observation that the Mendahls never really coalesced into an integrated, outwardly expanding social entity, that, in a sense, there is no family there.

C.J.: It's a very . . . complicated family that you had.

Hilda: Isn't it--well there isn't any unit left of it either--yet we all think a lot of each other. I'm sure we do. In fact, my brother-in-law Robert says, "I never knew such a family as you Mendahls, you all are so interested in each other," he said, "and it doesn't seem to me you're interested in other people."

I guess we all feel responsible for each other, in a peculiar way.

C.J.: When you say "no unit," you mean your family now, or your--

Hilda: I mean the whole thing is not a unit.

C.J.: The Mendahls?

Hilda: Not the--when you think of Family, and to read the old Russian novels, the Norwegian novels, or even the French, you think of a family as a kind of a group thing, with a piece of property that they're living on, with their established properties, and all of this--and their relationships. And it seems to me we never got that done--I don't think we ever will; life is too fast.

C.J.: The Mendahls as well as your own--

Hilda: I think so. I think none of us ever really got that far. For one thing I think--I'm trying to think of that word, when people don't really mature. It's called something like "stopped in their tracks."

We grew up to a certain point, each one of us, and then past that we didn't. I think each of us is like that, very immature . . . adults. In some ways quite perceptive and understanding and so on, but as adults, I don't think any of us really made it.

C.J.: All your brothers and sisters? What about your parents?

Hilda: No, I don't think they did either . . . Not as anything that an adult should be--when I read really important thinking . . . I imagine these people meeting in a . . . in a salon or the--having--you know, discussing politics and . . . having the right kind of behavior: beautiful social people.

As [my brother] Jim said, "We'll all be declasse'. Never forget it."

C.J.: Was that something you grew up with or is that a feeling you've come to late in life?

Hilda: I don't know--I think I always kept hoping that we would be . . . people. But I don't think we ever became people.

C.J.: How about that perception of your parents . . . that they fell short of--

Hilda: Well I'm sure I always felt that way. I'd look at other people and I'd say, "well they know how to have dinner parties, and they know how to meet together and be friendly and still be--and be on the surface and still be loyal at the same time"--There is a kind of surface conversation which people were able to employ. I was never able to do it, my father and my mother were never able to do it--none of us were.

You may have noted several apparent inconsistencies in the excerpts above. Similar contradictions appear throughout Hilda's account of herself in the family and point toward a basic paradox in her experience of family relatedness. In the first excerpt, for example, where she describes the

"jolly friendship" she enjoys with the surviving members of current family gatherings, she opens by stating that she does not expect to open her "inner soul" to the group. Despite her campaign to include the identities of the early family within the ongoing group--to keep her images of herself and the other members of the first family alive as "distinct people" in the consciousness of the present day family circle--she needs to keep some aspect of self, which she experiences as central to her identity, outside of the group, segregated from interaction with the family.

In the excerpt immediately above, the context of our conversation is the dearth of vital relationships within the family, which Hilda summarizes as a failure of the family to develop as a coherent unit. Yet she opens this passage with her brother-in-law's observation that the members are remarkably preoccupied with each other and adds her own comment on the feelings of "peculiar" responsibility they share. Elsewhere she speaks of this pull toward each other in the family as "something that binds us together as people."

While it might seem that Hilda would experience these ties that bind the family together as a welcomed counterforce against the trend toward dispersion and unrelatedness, her response is hardly so simple. Several of Hilda's most disturbing experiences in life appear to be connected with these ties. She reserves a set of vividly negative images, evoking feelings of entrapment, suffocation, submersion, and

noxious entanglement, to communicate these experiences. A number of these entrapment images appear together in a passage from her Journal at Sixty in which she is reflecting on her reaction to news of her mother's death:

> When the word of death was received in her ear, the buzz of all her beginnings, years of association, grapple of facts, against the relatives and for them, with the blood-web between holding, bleeding, blinding and binding, did not protect her, but rather gripped her and wrung her into exhaustion, thought, body, hear and dulled, dead nerve . . . A death of nerve causing instant suffocation and paralysis. She spoke without spirit and lived unalive until she could at last organize and category [sic] the events of this moment in sequence with the past.

The way in which Hilda presents this aspect of her connection to the family, with her loosely structured tangle of phrases and imagery and her use of an oxymoron--"she lived unalive"--in itself suggests a deeply confusing and paradoxical quality in the experience.

In contrast to her often detailed and analytic attention to the problem of unrelatedness in her original family, Hilda rarely focuses directly on this seemingly opposite problem of over-relatedness. She does not present feelings of an oppressive "blood-web" as part of her overall picture of early family life. The few times she even alludes to such an experience occur in the context of Hilda as an adult either reflecting on the gulf between herself and other family members, as in the above passage, or experiencing difficulty in an attempt at reintegrating herself with the family. In these instances, she tends simply to evoke the experience in a few

strikingly impressionistic terms, rather than describe it with the kind of clear exposition which she can give to other areas of her experience. Notwithstanding her concluding comment in the passage above, she does not "organize these moments in a sequence with the past"; they tend, rather, to jump out from the rest of the story. This group of entrapment experiences was one of the several areas in our interviews where attempts at exploration seldom progress beyond a rephrasing of the initial imagery.

Despite the scant information Hilda offers on this experience of being gripped in the family blood-web, several factors make it important to include in any account of her history. In addition to the puzzling nature of the situation--deadly entanglement in a web of family ties which otherwise seem so frail--the dramatic language she uses in her few references to it compels attention. The terms she uses to convey this state are also remarkably similar to her description of a number of recurrent psychopathological and dream experiences. For example, one dream which she has had repeatedly over the years involves Hilda running through a maze of "choices," in which a wrong turn would result in being pulled into a "slimy pit of naked grappelling characters, all writhing in a heap." Another experience, which she reports occurring both as a waking perception during her psychotic period and as a dream in recent years, consists of "attacking and being attacked by an incubus" which she describes as: "a

peculiar membraneous thing, sort of gelatinous, but it has a suffocating quality to it, and it has a kind of odor--a definite fragrance [like] death and funerals and things like that, that kind of fragrance of a corpse." Many of her descriptions of other states of abnormal perception are built around similar images, e.g., feeling "entrapped by filaments which keep [her] from being," experiencing "a mass of encasing jelly" clinging to her, or feeling herself "engulfed and drowning in the thick pressure of a warm black [atmosphere]." Finally, Hilda remains vulnerable to disturbing experiences of this sort within her contempory family--one of only a few situations which make her question her present grip on sanity.

Hilda: I think I'm trying to determine my own feeling about why I always want to back away after I've been there.

C.J.: Do you ever--at times like the ones you're describing, of getting back together with your family, Do you ever feel "submerged"?

Hilda: Well in a way--but I won't permit it to happen--but it is, it's a very . . . a very pressing, suffocating effect.

C.J.: Your words, like "encasing," they suggest that.

Hilda: Yah right, I mean I do feel terribly suffocated in atmospheres--for instance [my son] Carroll has the most beautiful home, and he loves me to come down there for two or three weeks. "This time you're staying <u>three</u> weeks," he'll say. And I <u>suffer</u> . . . I can hardly bear it; minute by minute by minute I suffer, day and night.

C.J.: That's the "encased" feeling?

Hilda: Being suffocated by the atmosphere. Every <u>sound</u>, and every <u>word</u>, and every <u>movement</u>. I think,

"I cannot take it, I've got to get back out of here." So this is the way I'm still crazy, or something--or unused to life.

C.J.: Well it's a difficulty you have with people.

Hilda: Very much so.

As Hilda agrees, her longstanding vulnerability to experience "suffocation by the atmosphere" within her family is somehow at the heart of her problems with interpersonal involvement in general. I am not, however, raising this or any of the several dimensions of unresolved conflict in her stance toward the family past for the purpose of drawing a causal link between her early family experience and her present functioning. Instead, I preface her account of early family life with these examples of unsettled issues as a first step toward placing her reconstruction of the past within a psychologically accurate context. I am trying to suggest both how significant the past continues to be in Hilda's present life and how complicated the relationship is between the two. Past and present are intimately connected, but not in ways which admit to drawing neat lines which show one development leading directly to the next. Even in the few examples already given, the degree and manner of connection between past and present situations in Hilda's life vary markedly: some aspects of her experience of the past are smoothly integrated in the present and with full awareness on Hilda's part, other aspects are simply incorporated in her behavior with only partial

awareness, and still others appear to intrude directly from the past without any comprehensible connection to the present. To further complicate the picture, the significant contradictions and the active confrontation which characterize Hilda's relationship to the past imply the possibility of resolution, i.e., the potential for Hilda to achieve entirely new integrations of past and present. Perhaps most frustrating of all in terms of the wish to draw neat lines of development, it is very difficult to sort out evidence of the past from the context of her present; all of Hilda's recollection is delivered from the perspective of the present and remains embedded in her contemporary situation. This last point proved very troublesome in much of my early work on analyzing Hilda's life history--which, in turn, suffered from my tendency to deny its significance.

In quoting Hilda's own account of the past as frequently as I do, it would be difficult entirely to suppress the context of the present person. Hilda constantly frames events within her present perspective, communicates her current emotional reactions, and fuses past and present situations. On the other hand, it is tempting to stop at the traditional view of these aspects of recollection as simply components of the "subjective bias" which a person imposes on the objective events of their past, i.e., to conceive of past experience as stored in some way separate from the person, who can retrieve it, like an imperfect tape recorder, with varying degrees of

clarity or distortion. During the initial stages of my work with Hilda, I incorporated this misconception in my view of the project. I tended to picture our collaboration as a sort of archeological exploration through the layers of past experience buried under her present situation. Hilda's ability to recall sometimes minute details of past scenes and her habit of reproducing snatches of dialogue in her descriptions tended to reinforce the illusion of a static, embalmed past.

I saw my role in this archeological view of our project as a matter of fractioning out the remembered past from its surrounding present perspective and arranging the resulting samples of Hilda's original experience in a developmental sequence. I came, through a number of instances like our above discussion of the family as a unit, gradually to see this idea of "fractioning out" as an untenable fiction. When Hilda observes that there is "no unit," she is synthesizing at least four generations of family experience, and speaking of family as a kind of timeless entity. She works around my attempts to date the observation or relate the experience to a particular generation because my questions are unanswerable; I try to draw artificial distinctions. Although her observation is delivered from the perspective of late adulthood and addresses--perhaps for the first time--a current problem in her experience of family relatedness, it is by no means entirely new. She draws on a sense of disconnection which pervaded her childhood--captured for her by her brother James' labelling of

the family as declasse'--and incorporates views of family and social interaction which were acquired--e.g. from reading novels--at some point between early childhood and late adulthood. To pursue the archeological analogy, it is as if the culture under study lived on a ground of frost heaves and sink holes, through which artifacts continually resurfaced, became modified for present purposes, were lost again, and eventually rediscovered. The analogy would be complete if this reshaping of artifacts were central to present inhabitants' definition of themselves as a culture, just as Hilda's dialogue with the family past affects her identity as a social person.

Neither recognition of the significance of Hilda's present situation as the context of her reconstruction of the past, nor an appreciation of the degree of active resynthesis potentially involved in the process negate the importance of the past in explaining the present. This understanding of the interpenetration of past and present does, however, rule out statements of a direct causal link between early experience and subsequent functioning. It becomes untenable to say, for example, that the Nordahls' isolation from their community caused Hilda's later difficulty in establishing her own network of social relationships. A more accurate starting point for an explanation would be that Hilda's acute awareness of her current isolation causes her to focus on the pattern of dissociation from community within her early family. Through this distinction, the relevant questions shift away from the

publicly observable events of the past--ill represented by a single person's account--toward examination of the relationships which the person privately maintains from the past and seeks to integrate in the present--the stuff of intimate recollection. The issue of whether the Mendahls were, in fact, disconnected from their community becomes secondary to the question of why Hilda "holds it against them." Her basis for attributing her difficulties in social integration to her early family experience can be taken as real in the sense that interpersonal relationships have an internal reality. Given this assumption, her statement that none of her family could be "on the surface and still be loyal" becomes an important piece of evidence, e.g., in what sense might her avoidance of social involvement be an act of loyalty, and to whom?

A second line of support for the explanatory power of the past comes from the fact that some experiences are less integrated within the present context than others. The contrast between Hilda's reconstruction of her family's failure at relatedness and her feelings of entrapment are a dramatic example of this disparity. Whereas Hilda sees her current isolation as of a piece of her family's pattern, the feelings of entrapment can erupt with no apparent connection to contemporary family situations, even to Hilda--"the way I'm still crazy or something."

Hilda's comment that she "did not accept but was affected by" her family's attitude expresses a more subtle

level of durability of the past in the face of efforts at resynthesis with the present. The divergence in this case occurs at different levels of organization; Hilda's current values and adult perspective on social life may be incompatible with her basic definition of social situations. Longstanding behavioral expectations of others or basic habits of social perception may contradict her present values and undermine Hilda's ability put her beliefs into action. In other words, the statements which a person constructs about living can be relatively fluid, changing, for instance, with an altered social climate or growth in their own intellectual perspective, whereas a person's vocabulary remains relatively fixed.

Finally, we can assume that there are general principles which govern the ways in which past experience enters into the person's present situation, and circumscribe the person's ability to restructure the past in accordance with present circumstances. Virtually every school of psychology, short of the most dogmatically "here and now" oriented systems theories, offers some statement on the relationship between past and present. In the next chapter, I draw on points from several schools in order to present a general statement of how the past functions in the present, laying the conceptual groundwork for explaining Hilda's four major life problems in terms of her history. Before moving further into abstraction, however, it is worth filling in the picture of early family life, already sketched through the quotes from Hilda, with more

of the concrete details of her account of the Mendahl household. Starting with an introduction to the main characters, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to an outline of the Mendahl family values, practices, and social relationships. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of how the Mendahls compare with other families of their class and time.

The Fabric of the Mendahl Family Life

A little cock rooster of a man.

Jacob's contact with the family was measured out in weekends, and structured in a ritualized pattern of family dinners and church going. Hilda's account of her father centers on descriptions of him presiding over the family as it lived out the weekend routine. She rarely describes a direct interaction with him. The picture of Hilda which comes across in her account is that of a fascinated, slightly skeptical daughter watching from a respectful distance. This close attention to a narrow range of behavior and the lack of details on personal interaction give Hilda's overall picture of him the quality of a caricature, a firm-willed Victorian pater laying down the law of the family.

> Hilda: He was small, about 140 I would say, bald, mustached, goateed, always dressed very neatly, clean shirts and business suits--a stalwart little guy, stood straight, spoke loud and clear. He laughed quite readily at the children . . . he loved [my sister] Isabel terrifically. He had her on his lap most of

the time when he was home. He was always polite to mother.

--Father was very clean.

--He was very proud he produced all these kids, like a little rooster, proud of us as results of himself.

--He was a regular little cock rooster in [the Sunday school classes he taught to a group of women]. He enjoyed tearing down all the Christian discussion, re-evaluating all the people's Christian thoughts. I could hear him, very loud, intimidating the poor women. They were always wrong--I thought it was cruel treatment.

--When father was there, of course, nothing was said at all [at the dinner table]. The house was always cleaned beforehand. We all dressed for dinner, then went to church and Sunday school. Then mother always had a terrible headache. Father would say: all of us must leave mother alone to sleep this afternoon. This was peculiar, mother never slept in the afternoon except after these Saturday nights.

--He chose his people always in conversation, very seldom the females in the family . . . of course he was always disappointed, always wanted boys instead of girls.

A hard working woman.

It is difficult to abstract a clear picture of Emily Mendahl from the wealth of information Hilda gives on her experience of her mother. Where her picture of father is like a sharp lined sketch from a remote perspective, her images of her mother are like an impressionistic painting viewed too close, a welter of unmixed and contrasting elements filled with strong emotional nuance but lacking a well-defined form. Since early adulthood, Hilda has recognized a need to gain better perspective on her mother. Her main purpose in writing Beauty,

I Wonder was "to rectify her image in my mind." She recognized late in the first summer of our interviews that she had been accomplishing a similar purpose in our reconstruction of her history. Hilda continues to use family gatherings as an opportunity to compare recollections of Emily. The contrast between Hilda's images and her younger siblings' perceptions of their mother is the main point of discrepancy which prompted Hilda to adopt the theory of two families.

Hilda: They see her as a hard working, happy, willing, loving mother. I see her as a hard working, distressed, anguished, infuriated woman.

Although it is her emphasis on their mother's shortcomings and emotional distress which differentiates Hilda's view from the picture of a competent, loving mother held by the children of the second family, her descriptions generally include aspects of both perspectives. Throughout her account, Hilda communicates a sense of close participation in her mother's emotional experience, which ranges--not infrequently within the space of a single observation--from sympathetic recognition to deep frustration over her inability to cope.

Hilda: Mother had a strong concept of style. She was certain that it was terribly important to be stylishly dressed, and she went to great lengths to have very good dressmakers . . . plan our clothes, cut our clothes, fit them. We'd go through that in great detail--much more than most of the children in Hudson. And she herself was very interested in her clothing--for the most part we had to have materials which came from [a wealthy cousin's] house: satins, and velvets, and laces--things not really in style.

But mother was creative that way. She was able to make them into very fine looking clothes--with the dressmakers.

--Mother had the old-fashioned way of cleaning in those days: they swept, covered everything with dust sheets, covered yourself with dust caps and aprons up to your ears--and the dust rolled . . . and you never got the house clean in those days.

C.J.: Was she a meticulous housekeeper?

Hilda: No she was not. She had a method of cleaning which was supposed to be all right.

C.J.: Was that the method that everybody else used then?

Hilda: I don't believe so--I don't know about other people. I think mother was so skimpy about how much hot water she would use and how much muscle she'd put on her broom . . . it just had to do with her equipment and her decision about how much she was willing to accomplish.

--She would never accept a social engagement. We had a life very separate from any of the community, any of the church women. When mother had her literary society there, it was all very quiet. Mother had prepared a paper that she had to read, some of the other women had papers. It was just like a little school group, each gave their little literary remark. And then we had a person in the kitchen who would prepare these wonderful sandwiches--mother hadn't the confidence in her cooking, to do a thing like that. She didn't have the courage of her convictions as a social woman.

C.J.: She never had any group of friends?

Hilda: None. Well, she was president of the Parent-Teachers Association . . . considered a very smart woman in that way, she prepared papers for them, she went into educational study. And some of these women would come to her and give her their problems with their youngsters. The teachers all had a great deal of respect for mother. They thought of her as a very intelligent woman, educationally. She did not have personal relations with any of these people. She never had telephone conversations. She never attended any of their group meetings, or card

> playing, and teas; all those things that women did in those days.
>
> --She had a frame and pattern she lived by, and within and I don't think she coped.
>
> --If she was angry, I think she was so well behaved that it was well covered. She could be crying, really, and laughing very loudly. But you felt mother was weeping. We would aggravate mother, suddenly decide to race around the table, catch each other by the hair, make one awful shambles of the dining room . . . She would say, "children, children, children," and we would just go further and further into--and then she would get to laughing so hard you knew she was really weeping. It was almost more than she could cope with.

This selection of quotes, although representative of Hilda's general observations on her mother's functioning in the household, may give a false impression of Emily's ability to extend her influence in the family. Hilda mentions at one point that her parents were each "dictators in their own way." Most of what Hilda experienced as within her mother's power to dictate is rather abstract, and bound up in the intricacies of their problematic mother-daughter relationship--which I will turn to in a later chapter. Occasional examples of Emily exercising an unusual degree of control over details of daily life, however, crop up in Hilda's account of the early family. As part of her attention to dress, Emily selected a color which each child was to wear, in Hilda's case until graduation from high school. Hilda was assigned red in the winter--"she decided it matched my hair; she called me a brunette"--and light blue in the summer. She adds: "Later I was allowed to

wear laverder, which I never liked . . . we had some leeway in hats."

Making the grade.

The theme of "getting up there in the world" enters repeatedly in Hilda's account of the Mendahl family life. The family attitude toward intellectual accomplishment, money, and social involvement, their views on character and self expression, their practice of religion, response to adversity, relationships with the extended family, and definition of status within the nuclear family were all connected to a pre-eminent stress on advancing in the world. The emphasis, as transmitted to Hilda, was not so much on striving toward a discrete goal or particular level of achievement but, rather, on the sheer need to ascend--as Hilda puts it, "it was important to be important." By Hilda's charts, this was an ascent over heady terrain, with peaks distant and lofty--"way, way, way up there"--and deep crevasses always palpably near.

Standing among the siblings was structured in a steep hierachy similar to that envisioned in the larger social world. Birth order, gender, and success in school were key determinants. Hilda's older brother James, who had a lock on the first two categories, excelled in school. He stood on a level wholly his own in the sibling hierarchy, the "Bright Mind" of the family. Both parents, especially Jacob, had great

expectations for him. Hilda, who shared their high regard for him, used James as her mentor on a number of matters.

Hilda: I feel [our standing] had always been a matter of seniority. The older ones in the family were supposed to be the more intelligent ones because they had lived longer--And so if in any way you fell down on that . . . and didn't really make the grade, in our younger brothers' and sisters' feelings about us, that was a sorry remark . . . a sorry remark.

You had to be sort of . . . idolized--I idolized James.

--I give [my family] a lot of credit for believing that education is more important than almost anything--no matter if it's done poorly, it's important . . . the all important effort.

And I do think it's important to reach a certain spot in society where you can say that no one can criticize you because you have reached a high enough level that you can consort with kings, queens, emperors, politicians . . . easily. I think that's an ideal. I believe we all have a right to it, I'm not saying I think we'll all get there. But I don't believe in being in a stratified class situation, [that is], "because you are down here, you don't get up there." I believe you should always wish way up there--just as James told me I should never become intimate with anyone unless I admired him much more than myself.

Money was an important ingredient in the formula for family ascent; it fueled their progress into a world of expanding promise.

C.J.: You were aware of your financial status very early?

Hilda: We were made aware of it. Father impressed us with the idea--we all had different kinds of clothing [when we moved to Hudson], this beautiful house--it was really an elegant spot, you know--two servants instead of one . . . It didn't last too long, because the people from whom we were supposedly going to buy the house decided they weren't going to sell it.

The sense of promise did, however, last:

> --We were more or less determining our future on the fact that we would be so well off. Father used to repeat again and again, "You're never going to have to work for a living." And many of the family, Isabel, James, Henry, possibly the little girls, all believed that the day would come with time on their hands and choices to make.

It was not leisure or freedom from need which the family valued so highly, but the idea of being well established in the world. With regard to the future of the male children, for example, financial success had a sort of sacrosanctity. When World War I came, the family was strongly against sending a son, not for moral reasons nor, as Hilda saw it, for fear of the physical risk involved, but because it would "interrupt his progress in the business world."

At a later point in the family history, two of the female members incorporated delusions about money as central themes in their psychotic ideation. Hilda's sister Isabel, who has had recurrent psychotic episodes since early adulthood, will sometimes return to the idea that she is immensely wealthy. When Hilda's mother went insane, she dwelt on the idea that the family was financially ruined (this was prior to the 1928 market crash, when they did lose their wealth). The idea was so distressing to her that Jacob once asked Hilda if she thought it would help for him to present Emily with a chest full of currency.

Although Hilda feels that the Mendahls elevated money to an unrealistic level of abstract significance--what she

refers to as "the utopian decision in there"--she also holds on to the sense of promise which was associated with it:

> --I believe if we'd had the money father expected . . . we might have had one very interesting life among some of the better minds who were young people in that day and age, a more fulfilling expression. This is where I lost out.

Another central element in the family ideology of success is something which could be labelled force of character, i.e., a view which emphasized the power of will, rationality, and the person as agent of the events of his life. Hilda never focuses directly on this aspect of her family's value system. It is, instead, communicated in her personal idiom, i.e., there is a distinct model of the person in the world implicit in the expressive but slightly idiosynchratic figures of speech which she uses repeatedly, especially in the context of her family experience. Living, in this view, is a job to be done. How you undertake it defines who you are: when Jacob drew a parallel between Hilda's temperament and interests and those of an artistic and insane aunt, "he likened me to my Aunt Eleanor's esoteric approach." One's level of achievement is a statement of self: it could be a "sorry remark" or one might "achieve a more fulfilling expression." One's performance is continuously measured and the results are entered in a ledger of interpersonal liquidity: he can be "given credit for" something, have it "held against" him, "fall

short" in some area, or worst of all, be struck entirely from the ledger, be deemed "not worth it."

Acts of will and conscious decisions are ascribed a potent role in the family's view of the course of one's life. Events which are customarily conceived of as experiences undergone are described in terms of willful acts: Hilda speaks of her family seeing her as "deliberately falling in love" and her first psychotic break as a form of "deliberate misbehavior." It seems that the individual was held responsible for whatever setbacks he suffered, as if his life itself were a vehicle for progress in the world, and keeping it on a straight course the prerequisite for inclusion in the family circle.

C.J.: In your family, in general, did adversity tend to bring you closer together or apart?

Hilda: No, I think it separated us. Because when we suffered hardships of any variety . . . they would turn their backs on this, you see, as though you were not behaving as you should, you weren't living up to what was expected of you, having these things occur. Just as we were always very grade conscious in school. Unless we received a grade of ninety or over we were not considered . . . worth the family group. We were supposed to get high grades, you see--not that we particularly cared for school--but that was <u>expected</u>.

C.J.: Who expected it?

Hilda: Mother and father both . . . expected very high grades. In a way, that tension went back through childhood.

Rifts in the Fabric

Dissociation from the parents' background.

Hilda felt a sense of close involvement in her parents' relationships with their own families of origin. Both of her fictional works incorporate extensive material from her parents' background. *Fire of Spring* is set in the Minnesota farming community where her father grew up and many of the characters are based on his relatives. *Beauty, I Wonder* deals with a complex mixture of features from the background of both parents together with her own; a main subplot traces the youth and coming of age of a character modelled closely on Jacob and the main plot follows the development of the protagonist through a series of events which fuse aspects of Emily's and Hilda's own family situation.

Hilda's interest in her parents' families of origin was due in part to the fact that each side represented aspects of family life wished for in her own, but arose, to a greater extent, from the way she was affected by several schisms which existed between the Mendahls and their extended family--there were sides to take.

Jacob's split from his family background was clear and decisive.

> Hilda: Our relatives [on my father's side] were farm people, they believed in a Baptist life, a farmer's experience. They discussed the crops, drought, the church, the lives and deaths of the community--They were very understanding of each other, a close-knit group.

My father was looked on as a renegade--he left the place. He had dared to get out and become educated. They held this against him, felt he was too big for his britches, and that my mother considered herself "a lady from Philadelphia"--they set themselves apart from us, entirely. They were willing to look at us and get to know us, but they held quite a disdain for us, because our values were not the actual values of country living--they believed that country living values are the ones that life should be determined on, and I was willing to go along to a point. In fact, I could see [one cousin] as a very beautiful result of country living--he accomplished life in a peculiarly beautiful way.

Elsewhere, Hilda quotes this cousin, who stuttered:

--"It's too b-bad, that man got too b-big for his b-b-britches."

C.J.: Was his break from the family as hard as you portrayed it in [Beauty, I Wonder]?

Hilda: Oh yes, he broke away from all of them--it was still felt when we returned to Minnesota [on a visit]. He had taken his future in his own hands and turned against them as farm people--what they were living for, striving for. He paid little or no mind to the true religion or their development as farmers, as a family group.

As with the general picture of Hilda's mother, the strained relations between Emily and her family were more complicated and diffuse. One aspect, which Hilda felt strongly, was not even recognized by Emily. In the first excerpt below, we are discussing a scene in Beauty, I Wonder in which the Hilda/Emily character has her hair cropped short by her mother.

Hilda: This really happened [to Emily]. Her mother thought she was going to be too pretty so she deliberately had her head cut [Hilda laughs] her hair cut--I'm saying horrible things. I'm very Freudian today, I'll have to watch out.

C.J.: Do you think her mother really felt that Emily's hair was taking her strength away [as in the story]?

Hilda: She said that--I never met my grandmother, only through my mother's mind--she thought of her as a saint, although she never worked--a very lackadaisical southern lady--Mother felt very bitter about [the haircut]. It was one of the things she couldn't understand about her mother, a real blow--She didn't realize there was a terrific jealousy in there--Although I did immediately, but I'm sure I never mentioned it.

C.J.: Whose yearning [on the part of the daughter toward mother] were you writing about?

Hilda: I was imagining [Emily] loving her mother, very much--I wished I'd had the same terrific love she claimed she had for her mother.

Emily's family appears to have been rife with disputed claims, mostly financial. These stemmed from the dealings between her father, John Hamilton, and his half brother, W.T. Grafton--a surname which he adopted because, as a stepchild, he had been grafted onto the family. The Hamiltons owned a small manufacturing concern. W.T. bought out John's share, changed the company name to his adopted name, and made it a household word, amassing a large fortune in the process. John, who remained as an employee, was left to pass on a legacy of resentment.

Hilda: John came out on the short end of the stick. W.T. had him sell the business and then only gave him fifteen dollars a week for the rest of his working days. This curdled in his thinking, continually. He became a cruel character as a result.

--That was another thing that affected my mother, the wealth of W.T. Grafton. There was envy there, tremendous covetousness, "that amount of money in the

family and we would never get it"--and why should mother have expected it?

The issue of resentment over division of property repeated itself in Emily's generation. Hilda remembers a dispute over the execution of John's will starting immediately after his death. Emily felt strongly that her brother Jack was usurping an unfair proportion. Jack later committed suicide, which the Mendahls attributed to his guilt over the division of the estate.

Hilda: Uncle Jack shot himself on the same date that mother killed herself, only seven years before. He shot himself because the money was not divided equally, he took more than his share of my grandfather's estate.

C.J.: Do you think there was a connection between--

Hilda: I've always thought so. I've always thought so.

C.J.: Were they close?

Hilda: Well I think mother felt badly about both her sister and her brother. I believe she felt they weren't as successful as they should have been, and she might have held it against herself that they weren't.

Each of Hilda's parents took pains to distance themselves from certain aspects of their spouse's family background. In Emily's case, it was the religious affiliation and social standing of Jacob's parents, and in Jacob's case it, it was the insanity which ran through Emily's line.

The family and insanity.

All of the close relatives whom Hilda knew on her mother's side were either markedly eccentric or insane. In

addition to shooting himself, Emily's brother Frank never held steady employment and was institutionalized at least once. Her other sibling, Harriet, spent time in and out of mental hospitals and, during a long stay in the Mendahl household, was the author of several scary scenes in Hilda's childhood. Hilda remembers little from her few contacts with Emily's father, John, but there is at least a strong suggestion of eccentricity in what she does remember.

Hilda: Mother said, "Now when Grampa Hamilton comes to visit you [children] are not to comment, any of you, in any way. Be polite and do not comment." He was a very silent, taciturn gentleman. He sat at tables--always well dressed, impeccable--and he put salt and pepper on <u>everything</u>: he put it in his tea; he put it on his cereal; he put it on his bread--we couldn't help but have our eyes wobble at this.

Familiarity with insanity did little to reduce its horror in the eyes of the Mendahl family. The potential for insanity, so thoroughly actualized in the Hamiltons, was felt as a never too distant danger in Hilda's family circle, a particularly deep crevasse always close at hand. Hilda says, in describing her exposure to insanity in childhood, "I was fearful that such a thing could be." In <u>Journal at Sixty</u> she writes that "my reaction to the abnormal was a concept of death."

Jacob did what he could to distance himself and the family from this threat. Early in Hilda's development, he condemned what he perceived as nascient signs of disturbance by "[likening] me to my Aunt Harriet's esoteric approach." Later

in their history, when insanity actually appeared in several of his children, he reacted strongly by, alternately: denying it; discouraging any mention of it; labelling it as willful perversity; assaulting it with rational argument; punishing the offender; blaming their environment; and, when these measures failed, cutting off the offending member. The consistent thread in these otherwise contradictory responses is the message that insanity is not of me and mine.

C.J.: Can you say more about what you mean [when you write] "Insanity was a reversal of the family unit, a naughtiness not to be easily forgiven"?

Hilda: Any peculiar mental . . . explosion that occurred in life was a sort of mental misdemeanor.

In fact, when I had my breakdown in college father insisted that I hadn't had one. And when Isabel had one in college, he was very unremitting about it.

C.J.: How do you mean?

Hilda: Well they put her in a very difficult spot. She was majoring in music at Swathmore. And she dropped out of school and she was put in a girls' school, a reform school, unwed mothers--tough . . . people. They were tough in those days.

C.J.: Was she an unwed mother?

Hilda: No, no. She was just a person who had majored in music.

--[The idea was that] if you conform it won't happen; it's your own lack of discipline that's making it happen.

C.J.: Did you accept that view?

Hilda: Oh no! I thought father was ridiculous. He had read Freud and thought he was nonsense. I said "Well maybe he is nonsense, but on the other hand, there is such a thing as nervous disorders." Father said "Not on my side of the family!"

C.J.: So if you did have a nervous disorder you weren't his child?

Hilda: [laughs] "You should have enough of me in you that it doesn't have to happen." He'd scold us, seriously like that--in those days parents were odd balls anyway. He was actually scared out of his wits about it.

--If only I had felt it as fear rather than condemnation.

Religious practice.

The question of church affiliation, and the associated issue of subscribing to a particular world-view, intermittently troubled Hilda up to the time of her second and major psychotic break--when she resolved it in a paralogical fashion. At its earliest stage, Hilda's conflict over belonging to a church was a conflict which she saw in her family.

The Mendahls were Presbyterians, a choice dictated, at least in part, by social considerations. Emily was embarrassed by Jacob's humble origins, and wished to dissociate their own family from the signs which marked him as humble. When Jacob's parents came east for a visit, this dissociation from signs became a turning away from people. Hilda, a child of eight or nine at the time, was distressed by the conflict which ensued between her parents and grandparents. The scene, which she described below, remains a significant event in her memory of childhood, a reference point in her reconstruction of the early family life.

Hilda: Now here's an inkling: father decided that he was going to have his father and mother come from Minnesota and have a little spell with us. "Because," he said, "I've never had them come here to see how we live; how the family is." So he paid for the fare and my grandparents came.

Well when mother knew they were coming from Minnesota, mother wept. And father said, "Why are you doing that, Emily?"

"Well," she said, "You know how funny your mother dresses. She wears her hair back in a little bun, and a silly little hat, and a shawl around her shoulders."

"Why Edith!," father said, "that's mother's way of dressing."

"I know," she said, "but you know your father has such a funny mustache, and he wears that hat, and walks with a cane."

"Well," father said, "that's my father."

Mother said, "The people of the church won't understand."

So, my father's feelings were hurt but nevertheless my grandparents came. They attended church with us and sat in the pew--my grandfather was the most social minded person ever. He got to know everyone there [she laughs], most of the congregation. He had a great time.

So, in a way, it was quite successful, except that mother never agreed to grandmother's dress--"how was she going to explain grandmother to the wash lady," you know.

I would say, "Grandma, I'm sorry about this." And she would say "Don't let it bother you, Hilda, don't let it bother you. Your mother thinks she's a lady, that's all."

So then father and Grampa had a terrible religious argument one night. And my grandfather was--he believed in the Bible, and believed in the old Baptist religion, and he argued with my father. My father was furious--at him, because he didn't think

> that my grandfather had seen the light; he thought he was ahead of grandpa.
>
> I was ashamed . . . that this argument had developed. And, I think, father was also.
>
> --I think it wasn't too long after this that Grampa and Grandma both passed away, within five days of each other. They were very devoted.

The clash of family values was not the only discordant note, for Hilda, in the family's approach to religion. As Emily's concern suggests, church was the major point of integration between the family and community. It was the only consistent opportunity for Hilda to observe her parents interact with peers. Their interaction--or, more precisely, Jacob's action toward the congregation--made her uneasy.

Hilda remembers confronting her father about the way he intimidated his Sunday School class, "tearing down all the Christian discussion":

> I would say, "I don't know why those ladies like to be students of yours in Sunday School, you're never pleasant with them or friendly."
>
> "Why that's friendliness, Hilda. Repartee and discussion is good friendship."
>
> "Well," I would say, "to my way of feeling, I feel sorry for them. I think you try to throttle and persecute every one of them."
>
> He said, "Hilda, what is a protestant, what is the word protestant?"
>
> I said, "protestant? . . . protestant?"
>
> He said, "it's protest-ant. I'm protesting this religion"--this was his attitude--proud of himself.

Alongside of Jacob's protest, Emily's social concern, and the family clash over religion, there is an indication that they did not take the actual content of religious observation seriously. Hilda mentions that they brought books with them to read through the slow parts of the service. Had they taken it seriously, it would have been difficult to reconcile the near omnipotent role of will in the family world view with a basically fatalistic religion. This is a point which Hilda ran up against:

> I asked [mother], "what on earth is predestination?"
>
> "Well," she said, " that means that long before you were ever here, the plan was laid. No matter what you do it's all been made. You cannot change it."
>
> Now that was a very serious remark to me. I dwelt with that, and I didn't like it, and didn't want to believe it, and yet I wondered if it were so, that predestination was a fact--I said to Jim, "this predestination has got me really floored because"--even when I was very young--"because no matter what you do, it's already been decided."
>
> "Oh," Jim said, "rot, tommy rot! Don't believe any of that stuff." You know, this is the way he nailed me . . . to the truth, quite a bit.

Hilda's problem with the idea of predestination was not philosophical; she was afraid of the concrete implications it might have for her life. As she described negotiating this problem with her mentor, James, you can see both the assertion of the preeminence of will and the clash of loyalties in relation to religion being recapitulated between the siblings:

> I finally said [to mother], "I don't know what to do about this"--mother said, "what"? "I don't know how

to be good. No matter how I am working at living and working and studying, you continually say I'm not good. I don't understand it." And I said, "Do you suppose if I join the church I would be good?"

So I joined the church when I was eleven. That meant that you got up in front of the minister and you repeated the Apostles' Creed. Which I did.

And when I got back from the ceremony my brother James took me in the back yard and he really wailed me. He said, "You are a liar, and you lied deliberately just to get in the good graces of mother and father."

C.J.: What lie did he react so strongly to?

Hilda: My beliefs, to say that I believed in Father, Son, Holy Ghost, and the Resurrection of the Dead--sometimes I think that when I went into this insanity and all this came, the resurrection of the dead, you know, I wonder if it went further back--my subconscious somehow--the fact that he wailed me so on that remark.

C.J.: Did you believe?

Hilda: Well, I tried to believe, everything I was told on it--you know how you do this.

--The fact that I dared to do this Apostles' Creed with my own remark made Jim really dislike me terribly.

C.J.: James wasn't religious?

Hilda: He was very scientific. I don't know whether he was religious or not, I never questioned him--once I asked him if he believed in God, and he said, "Why should I believe in God when I am myself?" . . . He was very young, you know.

He seemed to think that he had an actual decision about everything. He'd say, "How can you prove that you aren't dreaming about me, and how can I prove that I'm not dreaming about you?" He would tell me--say these things a great deal of the time.

Being declasse'.

I have already introduced many of the components of the Mendahls' stance toward their social environment, e.g.: their fierce commitment to "making the grade"; Fmily's concern with appearances; the family view of a steep social hierarchy; and the prejudices, as toward the "immigrant group," which have stuck with Hilda as ego-dystonic habits of perception. Despite their strong emphasis on social status, and their well articulated views on what comprised it, the Mendahls were not well oriented within any social structure. Their value system failed to cohere into a workable approach to social life. I would like briefly to show how this failure was registered by the children.

Hilda's account of Mendahl family life is like the Old Testament in that the events in the life of the main characters are sharply detailed against a misty background. A main character will occasionally step outside the family circle to act on the social environment, e.g., her father in church, or members of the outside will sometimes step briefly into the household, e.g., her mother's literary group, but the social context of events in her youth generally remains a distant, relatively blank screen--and even in the exceptions cited, the outsiders are more like props for the family action rather than developed characters.

Assuming that the absence of a picture of community or broader social setting in Hilda's reconstruction of her

family situation reflects something of her original experience, it follows that she would have had difficulty placing her family within the social structure; she lacked a solid frame of reference. In different spots, she mentions her family being viewed as "grand people," comments that they were not part of the "upper crust" of the town, and describes catching a glimpse of how the privileged "other half" lived. Resolving this confusion was important to her because the idea of being socially established was central to the Mendahls' identity as a family--it was as if the rules of the game had been firmly impressed on her but failed to match up with an available playing board.

The need to have a workable sense of her family's place in the social order became pressing to Hilda in adolescence. As she approached entrance into a society in which, as her family construed it, having a well established position was crucial, Hilda had to know where she was starting from. It was at this time that her brother James introduced her to the idea of the family as declasse', i.e., that their place was outside the framework. Hilda experienced this as an insight which enabled her to understand much of the incongruity in her childhood experience of the family in relation to the community.

Hilda: Another thing [James] said to me: "You know, you're never going to get anywhere, even being a housekeeper, or an excellent family person, because <u>our</u> family amounts to nothing."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "We are not of the upper class or the lower class."

"Well, what are we," I said.

He said, "We are declasse'."

"What does that mean?"

"Of no class," he said. "We will never amount to anything in society, as people."

And, you know, he convinced me of this. I thought about it, "why that's the truth: mother has no friends, father has no friends, we only have childhood friends--it's a fact, we have no situation in the community."

"In this case," he said, "the only way you can obtain a personal relationship with your community and the country is to become an important person."

"How?" I said.

"Be a writer, be a painter . . ."

I thought we were important, you see, until he put it in that situation of imagining that we weren't.

In addition to the problems of fit between family and social structure, Hilda also perceived something askew in the symbols of class within the family. With any family in the process of moving along the social scale, it is natural to show a certain amount of discrepancy in the signs of social status, to have a better wardrobe, for example, than one's residence might suggest. The Mendahls, however, tended to take such discrepancies to the point of, as Hilda puts it, "not coping with a realist's idea of the situation."

Hilda: We were all supposed to be moving into better days. Father was supposed to have gotten into money. He and mother came home with motor outfits, veils, and goggles, the whole deal--no car, mind you! That's the way they were.

--I think the people who worked for mother, the hired girls felt that it was all a little bit ridiculous.

C.J.: Your family?

Hilda: Yah . . . the politeness, and insisting on certain things being done. Of course, I never heard the hired girls question mother's authority when she was disciplining us, which she did in her own way. They never said, "Oh, don't pay any attention to your mother" and so on. They were well behaved that way.

C.J.: It was something more subtle?

Hilda: Yes. It was just as if, "Well, what is all this going to amount to in the end?" It's because she wanted you to become a person in her <u>status</u>--whatever <u>that</u> was.

They were poor and lived from hand to mouth. If they made enough money that day to buy potatoes, that's what they'd eat . . . We didn't have much better than that, but still we would always put on a linen table cloth and set the table, and have the table crumbed between the main course and dessert--things like that. A hired girl would bring in the platter of whatever mother had decided we were having. I think they felt it was all a bit ridiculous.

Of course, that's the way it was done in those days, although I felt they were ridiculous too--I thought, "I'll be damed if I'd go work for somebody--bring in a platter of corned beef on toast and set it down as if it were a turkey or something." "Bring on another platter of beans!"

Hilda's dinner table scene introduces an area of discrepancy in the Mendahls' social ambitions which had a concrete impact on the children; there is an implication that what Hilda at one point refers to as their "semblance of

property" was being financed, in part, out of the household budget.

Short supplies.

Memories of the household diet color Hilda's whole reconstruction of early family life. She always shows a reaction in describing their limited menu, which ranges, over the various tellings, from restrained indignation to a bemused shaking of her head.

Hilda: [Mother] was very skimpy with her food. [My husband] Richard said, "the trouble with you Mendahls is that you were all undernourished. Your mother was a wonderful woman but she didn't know how to feed a family." And he certainly had something there.

For instance, she would give us cream sauces for potatoes, but it was mostly water and flour and a little snitch of oleo--she began using oleo long before oleo was the proper thing. She would buy eggs in water glass [a preservative solution]. I didn't know what a fresh egg was.

--Forever there were fried potatoes! Fried in rancid fat . . . pale tomatoes with three slices as skinny as your little finger, that was a salad . . . peculiar food.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, food is a concrete example of a whole class of necessities which Hilda experienced as missing or withheld in her upbringing. She condenses these areas of short supply within her eliptical term "being related in factual events." This relatedness would include, in addition to physical nurture, exposure to accurate information, development of firm ties to a social reality, and interpersonal qualities of recognition,

caring, and secure acceptance. In the following passage, Hilda summarizes her parents' problems in these areas, and brings this outline of her family situation back to its starting point in the present day gathering with the surviving members.

C.J.: You said "withheld expression at home," could you give me an example of that?

Hilda: Well, when you're born into a family, and mother and father have figured out how to spend just so much money and no more . . . and mother had her day figured out in hours and minutes, how these are to be spent in just this way and no other way . . . I believe that families should be related in factual events, in order that the mind of a child develop as a sort of a sustained factor. How else can a plant grow, and how else can a child become, you know?

C.J.: Factual events? What do you mean by that?

Hilda: Well how can you become a fact if you aren't in some way nourished, you see, from all sides. Because certain things are necessary to be . . . a human. We aren't born free and clear, you know, of sustenance. You need it from so many directions--and meanwhile, mother, as I say, was frugal and withheld, and all of that. Just enough to keep us barely alive, and at the same time inquisitive, and with poor judgment here and there, and dissatisfied. I feel we were very dissatisfied--Although I can look back on it and be with my family--brothers and sisters--over the usual Thanksgiving dinner--the same darned thing. I can hardly swallow it . . . But I go every Thanksgiving. And we can have an uproariously gay time, remembering the whole thing. So there's something that binds us as people--but all of that is incorrect, though.

C.J.: All of?

Hilda: All of that kind of a reaction to the past, the fact that the past was like that, the fact that we get together over a Thanksgiving meal every year, every year. And meantime Isabel isn't invited, Marion [another sister who had a breakdown] isn't invited, James wouldn't have been invited were he alive--you see?

C.J.: I guess you were left out during--

Hilda: I was left out a long time, yes.

Stepping outside the pale.

This final rift in the Mendahl social fabric, outright exclusion of members from the group, did not become manifest until late in the development of the family. The precursors, however, were felt early by Hilda in what she describes as "the tension of making the grade" and the risk of not being "worth the family group." If "withheld expression" could be considered the passive dimension of risk to the person in "becoming a fact" in the family, this is the active dimension. Hilda alternately labels it as the family turning "thumbs down" on the person, "deciding they're a nobody," or putting them "outside the pale." When it happened to her, Hilda felt "unsatisfactory as an entity" in the eyes of her family.

All three children of the first family elicited this "thumbs down" response as they moved into adulthood. Jim's case is the most dramatic. Although both parents had idolized him as the "Bright Mind," and had favored him greatly as a child, Hilda feels they "never loved him as he was." This became plain when his development as an adult deviated sharply from their expectations. Instead of using his ivy league education to enter the business world, Jim became an artist, and adopted a bohemian lifestyle and leftist political views.

Hilda: Father's reaction to James always upset me. I felt that Jim had more brilliance than father would admit. When father decided that Jim was not a brilliant person and thumbs down on him as a man, politically and intellectually and . . . person-ably, I felt very sad. After all, father had given of himself so strenuously to James all of those years, and all through Yale, and to suddenly decide that James was just a nobody, and to, in fact, delegate the same idea to all the family--I'd start talking about James at one of these dinner occasions, and they'd say, "Oh no. Not James . . . Let's not mention James." And they still do it.

This is very wrong, sorting people out and deciding--actually I do a certain amount of it myself, because, you see, I objected to my father and he probably had every right to be the way he was. And I'm not saying this from Christian goodheartedness, I'm just trying to be fair and square about it.

The Family in Context

It is important, in giving the Mendahls a fair and square assessment, to consider their times. As narrow and distorted as some of their values may seem by today's standards, they were in many respects consistent with the mainstream of turn of the century American culture. The Mendahls' rigid definition of "Mr. America" and their recoil from "the immigrant group," for example, were part of a national perception of a society under assault. In the first decade of Hilda's life, immigration reached an all-time crest, averaging over a million people per year. By the time she was ten, nearly an eighth of the population had arrived in this wave. Whereas earlier immigrants had been largely northern European, this wave came predominantly from southern and

eastern Europe. In addition to the real problems of assimilation which this more "foreign" group of immigrants presented, they served as a convenient scapegoat for the problems of an increasingly complex society, including growing crime rates, loosening of traditional moral codes, and political unrest. Nativism and a national obsession with the need to defend the virtues of "one hundred percent Americanism" grew in virulence over the first three decades of the century (see Higham, 1955). There was a widespread impulse to, as Hilda describes it in her own family, "lawd the brave and the true and step on everyone else." By the early twenties, one hundred percent Americans were stepping hard. Major barriers to immigration were erected and steps were taken to purge America of the dangerous foreign element within. In 1920, a young J. Edgar Hoover launched his career in the justice department by coordinating the roundup of six thousand politically active aliens for deportation--what Bernstein and Matusow (1972, p. 137) call "the most massive violation of civil liberties in American history."

The uneasy mix of secular and Christian beliefs which troubled Hilda also goes far beyond her immediate family. Commanger (1950) considers simultaneous adherence to a highly optimistic view of man's ability to shape his life alongside a basically fatalistic protestantism to be a fundamental paradox in American thought. Wishy (1968), in his analysis of the literature on childrearing from the time of the revolution to

the early twentieth century, The Child and the Republic, states the basic conflict in American family life in very similar terms, i.e., between a pious commitment to Christian values and "a second and entirely different model and code of behavior [which] was inevitably set for the child, one that urged him not to brake his will but to use it to the utmost on the world" [p. 20]. Wishy traces attempts at reconciling these conflicting demands as the underlying theme in much of what was written on childrearing in America. Like Hilda, he also sees this as a dangerous conflict inadequately addressed:

> If Americans combined a fierce will for success and an impetuous Christian conscience that right prevail, their nurture writings did not face the possibility that such conflicting traits were likely to lead to personal or national disaster. Instead, they outlined idealistic reconciliations of will and conscience.

In its earliest and most harsh form, the model of childrearing presented by the religious side of the conflict was the Calvinist doctrine of infant damnation--the idea that there is no minimum age for going to Hell. Excessive will on the part of the child was seen, in this model, as evidence of innate depravity. It was the parents' responsibility to remain vigilant in suppressing such expressions of will, in order to channel the child's behavior onto the path of righteousness. While the specific threat of damnation was slowly dropped from the literature on childrearing, the stress on parental control was maintained into the late nineteenth century as part of general movement toward perfectionism and achievement in the

secular world. Wishy cites experts who advised fathers to exercise absolute authority in the home--as did Jacob at the Mendahl dinner table--one going so far as to caution that "fathers should try to control the child diligently by the age of four months and were to continue until the child was twenty-one" [p. 20]. Mothers, also, were encouraged to supervise closely all the details of the child's daily life--as Emily did in dictating Hilda's choice of clothing through high school. Even well into the twentieth century, this same Calvinistic model of parenting can be found, rephrased in scientific jargon, in the influential advice of the behaviorist Watson (1928, quoted in Kesson, 1965 pp. 243-244) turned childrearing expert. He urged parents to "let your behavior always be objective and kindly firm." He cautioned, at length, against the "over conditioning of love" and warned that "coddling is a dangerous experiment [which risks] robbing the child of its opportunity for conquering the world."

The risks presented to Hilda in the concept of predestination may have been a relatively undiluted version of childhood damnation. The Presbyterian church was the most conservative major Protestant sect in America at the time and, according to Wishy, only began to revise their doctrine of innate depravity in 1902. Apart from their choice of church affiliation, however, the Mendahls expressed very contemporary values. Their attitude toward churchgoing--suggested in their habit of bringing books and Jacob's use of Sunday School as a

forum for debate--seems a well-developed example of the shift to regarding spiritual values as subservient to secular goals which Wishy describes as gaining momentum in the late nineteenth century; churchgoing became a practice of moral and intellectual discipline, rather than spiritual. The Mendahl's tendency to imbue financial success, and money itself, with an aura of sanctity are further examples of this transition in values. Wishy cites Horatio Algier's Bound to Rise (1873) as an early expression of and stimulant to the increasingly popular belief that boundless rewards were available in this world to those with sufficient strength of character and will. From another side, Andrew Carnegie's (1903) Gospel of Wealth preached the idea of an obligation to society which came with money, and the implicit notion of a natural aristocracy revealed through the acquisition of wealth.

A number of other aspects of Hilda's early family were part of a broader social pattern. Gordon (1978) describes the removal of the family from the arena of daily commerce, frequent absence of the father, dissociation from parental background, and an insecure preoccupation with distinctions of class as newly prominent features of upward mobility during the Mendahls' era. In terms of class distinctions, he observes that servants acquired a new importance in middle class families. In addition to their obvious function of symbolizing wealth, they served as a sort of hired reference group, giving the employer at least one group in whose eyes he could be on an

upper level of society. This latter role both prescribed a newly self-conscious distance between employer and servant and conferred an implicit power on the servant to disqualify the employer. Emily's concern--"what will the washer woman think?"--may have been more normal than it would seem at first glance.

Finally, Sennett (1970) sees the historical trend toward isolation of the family from the workplace and the transition from extended to nuclear families as part of a widespread pathology in modern life. He feels that there is a "brutalizing" quality inherent in nuclear family life which creates an inability to identify with outsiders. Sennett (1977) sees the modern "ideology of privacy" as a rationalization of man's atrophied capacity for participating in the rich give-and-take of public life, and the consequent loss of any real community. He concludes that these trends lead to "retribalization," i.e., clustering into homogenous groups of the "right people" who reflect one's own values and position in society, and a concommittent widespread "narcissism." Presumably, he would see the Mendahls as in the avante garde of the movement away from public life and therefore early sufferers of the malaise he sees sweeping western civilization.

Pointing out that the Mendahls shared fully in the values and lived within the social patterns of their time is not to say that their practices were those of an average

family. It is hard to assess what the latter would be. The daily life of ordinary families is seldom recorded. Most social history follows what was said rather than what was done. Wishy's (1968) study, for example, does not examine how the advice on childrearing was ever put into practice. There are, however, several characteristics of the Mendahls' approach to family life which can reasonably be taken as unique to the culture of their family, and which would seem to have presented the children with an exceptional degree of difficulty in integrating themselves within the broader culture.

First, without accepting Sennett's (1970, 1977) global weltschmertz or his notion of a universal drift towards narcissism, his terms can be used to characterize a cluster of qualities which were especially problematic in the Mendahls' particular nuclear arrangement. Hilda's family was self-contained with a vengence. Her parents' dissociation from the extended family was less a matter of surpassing their origins than an attempt at severing their connection with dangerous roots; they weren't drifting away but fleeing. The barrier between the family and community was less a wall of privacy than a gulf of estrangement. There is a tribal quality in what Hilda conveys of their stance toward the social world. The way she uses the terms "people" and "person" in this connection is suggestive of how, in some American Indian cultures, the term of human being is limited to designating tribe members. Hilda speaks of her family failing to "become people" or quotes Jim

observing that "the family has no situation in the community, as people." When the family turns "thumbs down on" a member and excludes him from the horde, he loses his status as a person, becomes "a nobody." The picture Hilda gives of how the family viewed themselves as a social unit does also have a narcissistic quality to it. Their grandoise visions were built on a hollow core and given to sudden deflation. As Hilda experienced it, you had to be special, "idolized," to be part of the group, but could be deemed suddenly "not worth it." Hilda preserves a sense of promise that their natural place was within a rarified group of "the great minds alive at the time" alongside memories of the servants viewing her family's social behavior as ridiculous, a sense that there was something pathetic in their attempts at establishing themselves. The choice that Jim posed for Hilda at the end of her childhood--be great or face being nothing--is the narcissistic dilemma.

Second, Hilda's family was dislocated in the course of social mobility to an unusual extent, and her parents, especially Emily, placed exceptional importance on the symbols of being established. Their pursuit of these symbols seems, at times, ruthless; they made what would appear to be inordinant sacrifices in order to perserve appearances. As Hilda saw it, Emily was willing to cut the family off from Jacob's parents so as not to jeopardize their image at church. There was at least a de facto decision to place money--whether it was saved or spent on other things--above ensuring that the children had a

healthy diet. The Mendahls were, at times, willing even to sacrifice congruence with reality for the sake of appearance, e.g.: coming home with driving outfits and no car, setting a formal table for a subsistence menu, and pressuring children to agree that they had not experienced a breakdown when they so clearly had.

The third area which set the Mendahls apart from more ordinary, less troubled families of the time is the pattern of relationships within the family. While much of what Hilda would include under "withheld expression" may have been fully in keeping with the conventional wisdom on childrearing, there was some additional quality in the Mendahls' parenting which made it inordinately difficult for the children of the first family to enter adult life--something that "stopped them in their tracks." If Wishy's (1968) well-documented thesis is right, the children of a great many conscientious middle class families would have confronted the contradictory secular and religious models of "goodness" which Hilda ran up against, and yet--Wishy's comment on "national disaster" notwithstanding--these families did not produce an epidemic of schizophrenic offspring. Even the men who made a practice of delving into this problem were able to proceed unperturbed in their business of instructing parents. Why Hilda was hit so hard--literally and figuratively--in confronting the issue deserves explanation. I believe she is correct in sensing a connection between this problem and her subsequent emotional disturbance,

and that it can be understood in the context of her relationships within the family.

To conclude this portion of Hilda's reconstruction of the past, there was much amiss in her early family; it presented her with a dangerous immediate social environment surrounded by an alien and, in places, incomprehensible broader social world. On the other hand, many of the disturbing characteristics of the Mendahl family may have been relatively normal attributes of a turn of the century upwardly mobil middle class family. Even the most striking aspects of Mendahl family life--e.g.: the risk of taking a sudden plunge in the collective esteem; the degree of estrangement from community; or the desperate edge to their attempts at establishing social status, with the tendency to lose sight of realistic priorities in the process--were probably present in other families whose children did not experience psychotic breakdowns in entering adulthood. The separate elements of the Mendahl family milieu cannot, in short, be taken as causing schizophrenia. Taken as a whole, instead, they represent a general context of high risk, i.e., the separate factors interconnect in a potentially synergistic fashion to constitute an overall situation of grave difficulty for the developing child, Hilda. The family's estrangement from the community might be considered, for example, to carry "x" level of difficulty for the child's social development. Insecure membership in the family might, in turn, present "y" level of difficulty. But when both

situations occur together, the child is left with no secure arena for developing social relatedness, an overall problem significantly greater than the sum of "x" difficulty and "y" difficulty. As I will attempt to show in reconstructing Hilda's childhood, the nature of the child's primary relationships within the family--through which all the basic issues of interpersonal relatedness are first defined--is the factor which can give this synergism its full pathogenic punch. Before moving on to Hilda's early relationships, however, it is worth considering how the past can influence the present in the first place, which is the topic of the next chapter.

C H A P T E R III

CONCEPTUAL GROUNDWORK

A Perspective on the Data

> These things do I within, in that vast court of my memory. . . There I meet with myself. . . Out of the same store do I with the past continually combine fresh and fresh likenesses of things which I have expereienced. . . and thence again infer future actions, events and hopes, and all these again I reflect on, as present.
>
> St. Augustine (Confessions ca. 420)

This chapter is meant to set the stage for a psychological understanding of Hilda's life. In the first section I outline a general framework for viewing the data of a psychological life history. In the second half, I introduce basic concepts from several theoretical systems which I attempt later to integrate in my analysis of Hilda's early development.

I have deferred these tasks up to this point in order first to give a feel for Hilda's background and, particularly, to show the complex texture of the past in her present. Murray (1938, pp. 17-18) refers to information of this sort as "sensuous" data, evidence which communicates "the moving immediacy of living." He sees the role of the psychologist in a life history as providing the "heartless, denotative,

referential symbols" which translate a sensuous understanding into discursive knowledge. As a transition into outlining the "heartless referential symbols" which I see as best suited to a conceptual formulation of Hilda's life, I would like to abstract several points from Pascal's (1960) Truth and Design in Autobiography, a critical analysis of the "sensuous" knowledge that can be communicated in a person's account of their life.

Pascal seeks to define the "structure of truth," or the qualities that give the feel of authentic discovery in autobiographical writing. The most common impediment to authenticity, in Pascal's view, is for the writer to adopt the pretense of recapturing early events as they were originally experienced. In that presenting events from the standpoint of a much younger person tends to disguise the present perspective of the writer, Pascal feels that it creates an inherently false picture. On the other hand, he sees many autobiographies as suffering from the opposite problem, reworking the past to make it fit neatly with the writer's present purposes: "the retrospective vision here blots out the real relationships." (Ibid., p. 82). Works in this mode tend to present an overly rationalized sequence of events linked in a deterministic chain to the present. He finds that both problems of conception can be overcome, however, when the writer concentrates on recounting his interaction with the world, particularly

interpersonal interaction.

> The ostensible form and intention come to serve a different and truly autobiographic intention, since all these objective identities, these other people become forces within the writer . . . whom their impact shapes and who develops in subtle response to them. (Ibid, p. 8)

While an autobiographer lacks the perspective to be a good source on the external facts of his development, or to deliver unimpeachable self-analysis, he is uniquely qualified to report on how he experienced and consciously organized his encounters with the world. Pascal sees this interactional information, the picture of the person grounded in his relationships, as the core of truth in autobiography. He feels that this truth is best approached when the writer drops the illusion of giving an objective explanation of his development, frankly acknowledges "the intimate collusion of past and present," and accepts the "realistic level of indeterminancy" which comes with focusing on interaction. When these steps are successfully accomplished:

> One can . . . assert that autobiography now becomes an instrument for understanding life . . . It seeks for the law of the individual soul and the law of its interaction with the outer world [Ibid., p. 51].
>
> It is inspired by a reverence for the self, tender yet severe, that sees the self not as a property, but a trust . . . Hence it seeks to trace its historical identity, in all its particularity (Ibid., p. 181).

Although Pascal's goal is sensuous knowledge--"understanding the feel of a life"--his analysis highlights the main concerns for a conceptual understanding. The central

importance which he places on interpersonal encounters fits with Hilda's reconstruction of her past. In a quote at the end of the first chapter, she mentions that she sees herself clearly only in analyzing her reaction to others. Much of her account of the past is a record of these interactions. Even in the long period when Hilda was isolated as a mental patient, her life revolved around a community of imaginary others. A psychological understanding of her life, in short, hinges on the ability to conceptualize the central role of interpersonal relationships in structuring a personality. At the end of this chapter, I draw together points from two theories of interpersonal functioning, Bowlby's and Boszormenyi-Nagy's, which will be the basis for my theory of Hilda's development.

The value of the evidence in autobiography is not just that it conveys the impact of others in a person's life, but also that it shows how he organizes his experience. As Pascal (1960, p. 1) puts it: "Autobiography offers an unparalleled insight into the mode of consciousness of other men." It shows how one maintains the sense of a "continuous I" through his encounters with the world, how he structures an identity out of his past. Issues of integration and continuity stand out in Hilda's reconstruction of her history. She has experienced periods of radical change in her internal organization--her schizophrenic break and recovery--and continues to have difficulty in "locating" herself in her

surroundings. There have been times when she felt that she "lived unalive" until she could reintegrate the events of her past. A psychological theory of her life needs to account for this process of structuring her expereince, and I draw on Piaget's model of cognitive development for this purpose.

Pascal's requirement of conveying the "intimate collusion between past and present" is well met in Hilda's reconstruction of her life. While in an autobiography it is sufficient simply to evoke a "realistic level indeterminancy," a psychological life history must offer some general conception of how past and present intermix. In discussing Hilda's present stance toward early family life, I tried to draw out the main problems in conceptualizing the relationship between past and present. Hilda's active process of recollection, for example, introduces a constant potential for resynthesis. On the other hand, her sense of control over her links to the past varies markedly. She consciously maintains some aspects of her early family life, such as the value on education, whereas she inadvertantly replicates others, such as the family pattern of isolation from the community. She wants to keep her memories of the past alive in the present, and yet at times she experiences her connection to the early family as overwhelming, like a "suffocating bloodweb" that reaches out from the past. Most confusing of all, Hilda finds herself reenacting a few strikingly similar situations of difficulty throughout her

life--she describes one of these as a "dragon" which she continually reencounters. Most of her life crises occur in the context of these repeating situations. Understanding this apparent compulsion to relive the past is key to understanding Hilda's problems in living.

Psychoanalytic theory offers a comprehensive explanation of the role of the past in the present. It would account for many of the confusing aspects of Hilda's relationship to the past, e.g.: the wide variation in her conscious control over recollection, the degree of conflict, the unwanted eruptions of early experience, and, particularly, the problem of repetition. A full psychoanalytic explanation, however, would bring in Freud's metaphychology. The metapsychology would reduce the "intimate collusion" between Hilda's past and present to a mechancial interplay of memory traces and energic impulses, thus negating one of the chief qualities which gives her account of her history the "feel" of truth. Most other phycholcgical models of memory are similarly mechanistic. A number of theorists in adult development are beginning to define a dialectical perspective on human time which is more compatible with life history research (see Datan and Reese, 1977). It offers an alternative to the concept of absolute time--appropriate to physical objects--which the mechanistic models employ. Kvale (1977) contrasts the two perspectives in a discussion of models of memory, and I use his

analysis to introduce the dialectical view.

The dialectical perspective on memory.

Korzybski (1921) defined man as the "time-binding" organism, endowed with a unique ability to incorporate an experience of the past and anticipation of the future within the present moment. Although this quality of "time-binding" has been recognized for centuries, psychology has had great difficulty developing a conceptual model which can encompass it. The problem is reflected in current research. Gergen (1973) sees a strong a-historical bias throughout social psychology. Carlson (1973), in his broad survey of personality research finds that 78% of the studies were limited to a single session contact and virtually none spanned "significant periods of time."

Kvale (1977) attributes the a-historical bias in psychology to the two traditionally dominant models of memory. In order to suggest a relationship between the activity of the researcher and his conceptual framework, he labels them the "assembly-line model" and the "beaucratic model." In the former, memory is conceived as a single repository which stores atomistic traces of experience. The model seeks to derive the few basic laws by which traces are fixed in their container. The concept of memory in Freud's metapsychology is a three dimensional variation on this model--the psychic energy which

attaches to a trace of experience determines how deeply it is stored in memory.

The "assembly-line" model has begun to lose its preeminent position and is being replaced by the "beaucratic" or information processing model of memory. Instead of a single repository of memory traces, theories in this mode picture a mental storage apparatus composed of numerous boxes, systems, or departments, each with a specialized function. Formal lines of communication organize the various units within an overall hierarchy of control functions--the computer. Peterfreund (1971) and Bowlby (1981) have each proposed a revision of the psychoanalytic model of memory along these information processing lines.

Although computer inspired theories offer a realistically complex model of remembering and allow for qualitative differences in memory functions, they share what Kvale sees as the basic problems in the assembly-line model. Both set up an artificial dichotomy between an internal world of mental storage facilities and an external world of manifest behavior. Memory is reified as a collection of permanently fixed traces of the outer world and seen as existing in isolation from the active rememberer. It is hard to tell the degree of metaphor intended in descriptions of the phychic apparatus. Bowlby (1981), for example, speaks of psychic subsystems which become "aware" of each other, "interpret

reports" from other subsystems, "sever communications," or even engage in "self-perception."

Kvale sees dialectical analysis as a way of overcoming the false distinctions imposed mechanistic models of memory. He abandons the idea of a hard line between the rememberer and his memories, and with it the notion that past experience must be located, like a physical object, in some internal space. Instead, Kvale views recollection as process of simultaneously structuring and being structured by the past: "Dialectics concieves of remembering as a relation of a subject to a world, the subject affecting and being affected by this interaction"(1977, p. 180, Kvale's emphasis). A person's past and present are, in other words, interrelated aspects of his total situation. Past experience shapes his understanding of the present and changes in his present circumstances can give events of the past new meaning. This fluid relationship between past and present thus creates a constant potential for resynthesis.

Meacham gives a more radical statement of the dialectical perspective in his "transactional" definition of remembering: "Both memories and the individual rememberer are changeable events, derived from a more basic process of transaction, communication, or exchange. Not only are the memories constructed, but the indivudal in turn depends upon the memories" (1977, p.277, Meacham's emphasis). Transaction,

as Meacham uses it, is a term for the dialectical state of interdependence, wherein the separate aspects of a total situation mutually define and exclude each other--just as ground defines figure and figure excludes ground in a perceptual gestalt. At an interpersonal level, the relationship between buyer and seller or master and slave are examples of transactional dependence; each party is defined in relation to its counterpart, neither "exists" without the other.

Meacham puts remembering in terms of interpersonal exchange in order to stress the social nature of memory. He regards the person's social context as a constituent aspect of his relationship to his personal history--a third party in the transaction between past and present. Just as the meaning of a person's past experience and present situation are mutually defined, his synthesis of past and present shapes and is shaped by his social context.

> The relationship between the individual, the memories, and the social context is one of reciprocal causality...The memories, as products of the transaction, act upon the individual and the nature of the individual's motor actions, cognitions, and personality...whenever a new remembering ability is presented, the relationship of the individual to the social context is changed, and the potential for further change in the individual exists [Meacham, 1977, p. 278].

The dialectical perspective is a very general framework for viewing psychological phenomena, something both more and less than a specific theory. A number of theories

incorporate dialectical concepts. Both Kvale and Meacham cite Bartlett's (1932) contexual model of memory as an example of an implicitly dialectical theory.

Bartlett (1932) saw the idea of literal reproduction of past experience as speculative, a theoretical possibility with limited significance. He focused, instead, on memory as an active search for meaning, an attempt to draw on past experience in order to master the requirements of functioning in a changing biological and social environment. He referred to this process as "meaning retroaction," whereby the indivudal constructs "schemas," or cognitive maps of his life situation, which integrate aspects of his past with his perception of the present and anticipation of the future. As the context of remembering changes, an individual may need periodically to reorganize his schemas, giving elements of the past new meaning. Following a religious conversion, for example, the individual tends to reinterpret much of his past as leading up to the event--and it is interesting to note that the opening quote on Augustine's view on memory as a creative process of constructing "fresh and fresh likenesses" was taken from his account conversion.

Within the psychoanalytic tradition, Schachtel (1947) extends the concept of repression in a similar direction. In his analysis of the universal phenomenon of childhood amnesia, he sees a basic antagonism between reviving the intense sensory/perceptual experiences of early childhood and

maintaining active participation in the adult world. Socialization, and especially the development of linguistic abilities, inevitably replaces the concrete modes of childhood experience with the conventional categories or "schemata" of adult experience. These adult schemata are not "suitable vehicles" for the unique and intense qualities typical of childhood experience. Through his evolving participation in the world, a new relationship--functional, but robbed of much of its richness--is created between the individual and his history: "The capacity to see and feel what is there gives way to the tendency to see and feel what one expects to see and feel, which, in turn,is what one is expected to see and feel because everybody else does" (Ibid, p.9).

In addition to developing the concept of "schema" into its fullest form, Piaget elaborates an entire theory of development based implicitly on a dialectical perspective. It is his version of schematization which I use to conceptualize "the intimate collusion between past and present" in Hilda's life.

The chief advantage of employing the concept of schema, in particular, and the dialectical perspective, in general, is that it frees me from the impossible task of separating a true "signal" of Hilda's past from the surrounding "noise" of her present situation--each becomes significant in relation to the other. More than simply marking Hilda's reconstruction as an authentic autobiographical effort, the

numerous examples of collusion between past and present can be seen as meaningful phychological data, evidence of a personality developing through time. It provides a basis for viewing Hilda in light of her childhood, without, at the same time, having to see the mature person as essentially childish.

There are some aspects of Hilda's integration of past and present which do not appear to fit the model of an active transaction. In some of the situations which seem most strongly connected to her past, Hilda's sense of agency is very limited. She experiences the "message" of the past as a command--"suffocated in the family atmosphere"--and feels forced to flee the reminders of the past. In other instances, such as her repeating triangular relationships, Hilda finds herself reliving the past with an unwanted degree of precision--as if the past were a fixed template which constrained the present person from changing. These situations seem to fit better with a mechanistic model of memory traces charged with energy--the metapsychology--and the challenge is to translate Freud's insights on the subterranean life of the past in the present into terms consistent with a dialectical perspective.

Components of a Model

In the remainder of this chapter I outline the basic concepts from Piaget, Bowlby, and Boszurmenyi-Nagy which I use to analyze Hilda's development. A reader familiar with these

theorists may wish to skip ahead to the next chapter, Hilda's childhood, where I begin my integration of their concepts.

The two Freuds.

In constructing his metapsychology, Freud followd the dictates of his intellectual superego--the Helmoltz school, which sought to reduce biology to the principles of Newtonian physics. Because he saw psychoanalysis's claim to science as resting on its underlying model of mechanistic explanation, he paid close attention to clarifying its basic principles. His clinical theory, on the other hand, developed more or less inadvertently out of a combination of factors: Freud's genius as a clinical observer and the fact that his research focused on historical reconstruction in the context of a prolonged, intimate encounter between patient and analyst. The concepts which emerged from this situation were based frequently on principles of meaning, purpose, and adaptive striving. Because these principles ran deeply counter to the dictates of his intellectual superego, Freud had reason not to examine the underlying perspective in his clinical theory. Rather than spell out an alternate model, he worked to maintain his clinical concepts, like a complex suspension of oil in water, within his mechanistic model of explanation. There are a number of different ways to define the underlying framework of the non-mechistic side of psychoanalysis (Loevinger, 1969); one

is to regard the clinical theory as based on a dialectical perspective

The dialectical perspective is represented most strongly in the concept of ego which emerged from Freud's clinical work. Although in the metapsychology ego has a very minor status--"We like to think of ego as powerless against the id" (Freud, 1926, p.18)--Freud gave it a major adaptive role in his clinical theory: the ongoing synthesis of the deeply conflicting forces of unstructured libido and unyielding external reality. The ego's power to synthesize diametrically opposed forces is reflected in two of it's major accomplishments: sublimation and symptom formation. In the former, the demands of society and the anti-social impulses of id are converted into constructive activity. Although neurotic symptoms have an opposite effect, from the standpoint of adaption, they arise from a similarly creative synthesis of opposing forces.

> The symptom comes into being as a. . .cleverly chosen ambiguity with two completely contradictory significations. [Freud, 1920, p. 315]

> [Neurotic symptoms] achieve satisfaction by means of . . . a reversion to earlier phases in the [psychic] organization. [The Neurotic] looks back on his life-story seeking some such period of satisfaction . . . even if he must go back to the time when he was a suckling infant to find it according to his recollection or his imagination of it under later influences. In some way the symptom reproduces that early infantile way of satisfaction, disguised though it is. . . and mingled with elements drawn from the experiences leading up to the outbreak of illness [ibid. p. 319]

The creative process of reintegrating past and present which Freud saw in symptom formation is very close to Bartlett's idea of "meaning retroaction," the difference being the relative weight they assign to past and present experience. Freud gradually defined his therapy as an attempt to reverse the predominance of past experience. He came to rely on the patient to bring up memories which could then be reintegrated within the structure of his mature ego--a redefinition of his therapy which Freud (1914) saw as the "true beginning" of psychoanalysis. In his later writings he began to speak of "constructions" in analytic therapy (Ekstein and Rangell, 1959),implying that the analyst and patient were not simply uncovering buried facts, but creating new meanings which alter the patient's relationship to his past.

In relying on the patient to direct the course of therapy, Freud positioned himself to add a greatly expanded meaning to his early concept of transference. He discovered that intrapsychic structure can shape interpersonal relationship--an interconnection which Loevinger (1966) considers one of the two basic principles in psychoanalysis. Freud (1914) began to speak of the patient as imposing a "template," "imago," or "prototype" from early relationships onto his current relationship with the therapist. He refocused therapy on the transference relationship, adopting the view that altering the patient's ways of relating to the therapist would lead to a change in his ways of relating to the world:

> The person who has become normal and free from the influence of repressed instinctive tendencies in his relationship to the physician remains so in his own life when the physician has again been removed from it (1920, p. 386).

In focusing on the transference, Freud also extended the meaning of resistence from a purely intrapsychic concept--the process of blocking from awareness memory traces which are associated with dangerous libidinal impulses--to become an interpersonal process--the use of the therapeutic relationship as a defense against self-recognition, a way for the patient to thwart the therapist's efforts at effecting change. Freud further narrowed the focus of the therapist onto interpretation of the transference resistence: "Experience shows. . . that when the patient's free associations fail the obstacle can be removed every time by an assurance that he is now possessed by a thought which concerns the person of the physician" (1912, p. 314).

Further experience showed, however, that the obstacle could not always be removed, that is, in concentrating on the transference Freud came to see a new and far less tractable dimension of resistance. He found that, rather than reintegrate the past through reflection, some patients seemed determined to reconstruct it in action. Interpretation seemed only to abet such cases, as if they chose to confirm the interpretation by living it out all the more clearly. Freud came to see this "compulsion to repeat" as part of a deadly force of inertia in psychological life which ran counter to the

adaptive striving for resynthesis of past and present through recollection.

> We soon perceive that the transference is itself only a bit of repetition. . . We must be prepared to find, therefore, that the patient abandons himself to the compulsion to repeat, which is now replacing the impulse to remember, and not only in his relation to the analyst but in all other matters occupying and interesting him at the time (1914, p. 370).

The discovery of compulsive repetition was disturbing on both fronts of psychoanalysis. In terms of the clinical theory, it represented a severe limitation on the power of insight--and Freud (1923) eventually concluded that there was a large group of neurotics whose "need to suffer" put them beyond the reach of analytic therapy. In terms of the metapsychology, compulsive repetition appeared to be a "deamonic fate" theme which violated one of the central tenets of the model, the Pleasure Principle:

> Patients repeat all of these unwanted situations and painful emotions and revive them with the greatest ingenuity. . . They contrive once more to feel themselves scorned. . . they discover appropriate objects for their jealousy. . . None of these things can have produced pleasure in the past. . . but no lesson has been learnt from the old experience of these activities having led. . . only to unpleasure [1920, p. 15]

Freud (1920) resolved this mystery--or at least rephrased it in terms compatible with the metapsychology--in his last major revision of the instinct theory, Beyond the Pleasure Principle. He elevated the Nirvana principle to the central position in his mechanistic model:

> The pleasure principle, then, is a tendency operating service of . . . the most universal endeavor of all living substance--namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world (Ibid p. 58).

As Yankelovich and Barrett (1970) point out, the death instinct--the return to quiescence--was implicit in the Nirvana Principle from the start. In spelling it out, Freud was simply reaffirming his basis in Newtonian thermodynamics.

In presenting the death instinct, Freud toyed with the idea of revising his instinct theory in an entirely different direction. In addition to the self-destructive repetition shown by his patients, Freud looked briefly at several other forms of repetitions behavior: the tendency to "relive" a traumatic experience, reoccurrent nightmares, and the tendency of children to repeat unpleasant experiences in play. It was in the latter context that Freud offered an alternative to the idea of a death instinct: an "instinct for mastery."

He observed that his eighteen-month-old grandson constantly repeated a game in which he made objects disappear and return. He would toss a small toy connected to a string over the curtained edge of his crib, uttering a drawn out approximation of "gone." He would then pull it back in, greeting it with a joyful "there!" Freud also noted that, although "greatly attached to his mother," the infant did not show the degree of distress at her departure which would be expected at his age. He suggested that the infant might

somehow be making himself "master of the situation" through symbolic re-enactment of his mother's departure in play:

> At the outset he was in a passive situation--he was overpowered by the experience [of his mother's disappearance]; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an active part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery was in itself pleasurable or not. [1920, p. 10, original emphasis]

The adaptive shift of position which Freud observed in his grandson's play could never fully reduce to a mechanical interplay of energies. Viewing the ability to restructure his relationship to the world as a basic property of the child would have required a radical revision of the metapsychology. The role of mastery was far too substantial to hand over to the "impotent" ego of the metapsychology, the "submissive salve" of the id.

Although Loevinger (1966) feels that, more than simply marking a road not taken, Freud was presenting a second basic principle of psychoanalysis in his observations on his grandson's play, Freud (1920, p. 8) had a far less sanguine view of the idea of mastery: "We are left in doubt as to whether the impulse to work over in the mind some overpowering experience so as to make oneself master of it can find expression as a primary event." Reasoning that it would be a contradiction of the Nirvana principle if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained, he concluded that the idea of mastery must be considered a "benevolent illusion:"

> Seen in this light, the theoretical importance of the instincts of self-preservation and mastery greatly diminishes. They are component instincts whose function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death. . . (Ibid. pp.32-33)

This passage captures the tragic limitation in Freud's work, that the man who devoted his intellectual life to revealing the biological context of human nature should ultimately entrap himself in such a distorted picture of organic development. In his loyal adherence to the principles of an inorganic science, Freud abandoned the opportunity to articulate a set of basic principles appropriate for his clinical theory--in particular, he turned away from clarification of the adaptive process of structuring and being structured by the world which he relied on in his daily clinical work.

Both sides of Freud, especially in the form which they ultimately took in confronting the problem of repetition, are relevant to Hilda's life. If all the forces which led to pathology in Hilda's life became suddenly clear, how she was able to recover from the depths of schizophrenia--and at a time when treatment consisted of being locked day and night in a few rooms full of other regressed psychotics--would remain a mystery. Some basic principle of mastery is definitely in order. On the other hand, in shifting to a model which emphasizes integration and adaption, there is a risk of losing the insights of Freud's dark view of psychological life. This issue is far from academic in Hilda's case. Starting in

childhood, she has had several long periods of active flirtation with suicide. The split between Hilda's conscious intention and the destructive impact of her actions has sometimes reached dramatic proportions, as when she nearly drowned her daughter. Her repetition of painful situations has often had self-destructive consequences. An adequate model must, then, include a construct which has the explanatory power of the death instinct without its biological mystecism. I address this two-sided problem by attempting to integrate an implicity dialectical theory of development--Piaget's--with an explicitly dialectical theory of interpersonal relationship--Boszormenyi-Nagy's.

Integration in the physical world.

Piaget and Freud seem to chart two different worlds of psychology. Freud lets issues of mastery and active adaption recede in order to concentrate on conflicting drives, irrational motivation, and the deeply emotional aspects of life. Piaget, as if in a reversal of figure and ground, focuses on rational organization and adaptive integration of experience to the point of ignoring any conflict, emotion, or motivation which does not relate directly to an overall striving for cognitive mastery. Both systems, however, share certain basic similarities: each is based on a model of clinical observation in which the investigator attempts to understand events from the perspective of the subject; the

intent in both cases is to place human behavior in a biological context; and, most important, both see the internal structuring--albeit along very different lines--of past experience as a key feature of development. A further similarity is that Piaget's system approaches Freud's in complexity. My purpose here is simply to draw out several basic concepts in Piaget's theory which offer a different perspective on the problems of repetition, transference, and mastery.

The most fundamental difference between Piaget and Freud is in their concept of biology. In Piaget's view, progressive organization, rather than tension reduction, is the essential process in organic life. Instead of arising out of conflict, psychological life is an extension of biological adaption:

> The creation of intelligent structures is related to the elaboration of forms which characterize life as a whole [1936, p. 371].
>
> At a certain level life organization and mental organization only constitute, in effect, one and the same thing [Ibid. p. 46].

Although Piaget speaks of mechanisms and equilibrium, his implicit model of organic adaption is dialectical, not mechanistic. Life is a process of change, not a return to stasis. Even at its most primitive level, psychological functioning always builds on, incorporates, and, above all, contains the potential to transmute prior forms of adaptedness:

> The sequential manifestations of a reflex such as sucking are not comparable to the periodic starting up of a motor used intermittently, but constitute an historical development so that each episode depends on preceding episodes and conditions that follow in a truly organic evolution [Ibid., p. 46].

The person relates to his world through schemas, a concept which Piaget uses so broadly that concise definition is difficult. Roughly, a schema is an internally organized structure of mental or physical actions (Beard, 1969). A schema determines the way in which the person perceives and acts toward some aspect of his environment. Organization exists between, as well as within, schemas. The totality of a person's schemas grounds him in the world--the basis for Piaget's (1936, p. 43) seemingly mystical statement that "the universe is embodied in the activity of the subject." In that a schema is always constructed from the person's past experience, it likewise grounds him in his own history: "a schema embodies the past and so always consists in an active organization of the experience lived" [Ibid., p. 381]--a view close to Bartlett's (1932) concept of "meaning retroaction" and consistent with the dialectical notion of the person actively resynthesizing past and present.

Schemas develop through assimilation and accommodation, the two basic processes of change which characterize mental life. Assimilation, a primary conceptual link between Piaget's psychology and biology, occurs whenever the person incorporates an experience of the environment into a

pre-existing schema. Just as it is impossible to determine the exact point where inanimate matter becomes living matter when an organism ingests physical substances like air or water, assimilation significantly blurs the line between person and environment: "The existence of an organized totality which is preserved while assimilating the external world raises, in effect, the whole problem of life itself" (Piaget 1936, p. 46). Assimilation represents a constant interpenetration of person and environment. In contrast to the rigidly fixed external reality of Freud's model, the concepts of assimilation and schema mark Piaget's view of reality as transactional. Internal and external reality are relationally defined, mutually dependent entities.

> [An] object only exists . . . in its relations with the subject and, if the mind always advances more toward the conquest of things, this is because it organizes experience more and more actively, instead of mimicking . . . a ready-made reality. The object is not a "known quantity" but the result of a construction [Ibid. p. 375].

The external world is not, of course, infinitely maleable; there are natural limits on assimilation. Unfamiliar situations, novel stimuli, and unanticipated consequences all tend to shake up, or in Piaget's term, lead to "disequilibration" of an existing schema. When the person modifies a schema so as to improve its fit with reality, he engages in accommodation. This process is comparable to assimilation in that the person "accommodates" a broader range of experience, but differs in that he does so from an entirely

new perspective. Because schemata are interrelated, modification of a central schema can lead to a radical restructuring of the entire organization. Major accommodations of this sort are a basic feature of normal development, characterizing the transition from one stage to the next. The development of symbolic thought, for example:

> . . . is much more than a matter of formulating or following up work already started; it is necessary from the start to reconstruct everything on a new plane. Perception and overt responses by themselves will continue to function in the same way, except for being charged with new meanings and integrated into new systems. [1950, quoted in Kessen, 1965, p. 276]

Piaget compares these internal Copernican revolutions to the abrupt restructuring of perception described in Gestalt theory, but draws an important distinction. In contrast to the recrystalization that occurs in a Gestalt shift, accommodation can result in "a kind of thawing out of [existing] structures" [1936, p. 288]. That is, every shift in perspective tends to loosen the connection between a schema and the specific situation in which it was constructed. The person's action becomes less stimulus or situation bound, and more like a portable tool which can be employed in a variety of unfamiliar situations. Piaget [Ibid., p. 288] refers to this result of accommodation as the "mobility" of schemata: "mobility . . . animates and coordinates configurations that were hitherto more or less rigid despite their progressive articulation [through assimilation]."

As a more flexible and integrated structure becomes consolidated, assimilation recontinues on a higher level of generality. All psychological development is, in this sense, the progressive balancing of assimilation and accommodation. Piaget calls this state of balance "mobil equilibrium"--a simultaneous achievement of stability (assimilating more of the environment) and change (accommodating more fully to reality).

In order to illustrate these concepts, and introduce an additional principle, objectification, it is helpful to follow the course of change in a simple schema.

Psychological life starts with certain innate reflexes, e.g., sucking, grasping, and visual scanning. The infant assimilates the environment in an initially stable fashion: objects which enter his visual field are seen and things which touch his hand or mouth are grasped or sucked. When, in the course of repeating these reflexes, the infant happens to grasp objects seen or suck objects grasped, a destabilization occurs: the once distinct line between the class of visible objects and the class of suckable objects begins to blur. As the stable link between object and action loosens, "graspability" and "visibility" come to be experienced as properties of the object. The infant begins to differentiate things in his environment from his own reflexive functioning; he begins to invest them with a measure of independent existence--the beginnings of what Piaget calls "objectification" and "object permanence":

> When an object can be simultaneously grasped and sucked or grasped, looked at and sucked, it becomes external to the subject quite differently than if it could only be grasped. In the latter case . . . the subject only attempts to grasp through the need to grasp. [Through objectification] the object acquires an ensemble of meanings and consequently a consistency [1936, p. 121].

This first step toward objectification is a major accommodation, opening the way for the infant to reorganize his rudimentary schemas into a more finely adapted and coordinated sequence of actions. The infant then attempts to assimilate as much of the environment as possible through his new schema, that is, he tries to grasp everything he can see and stick it into his mouth. This tendency toward over inclusion, a universal characteristic of newly established schemata, propels the infant toward further objectification and new levels of accommodation. As the infant explores his world through seeing-grasping-sucking he experiences the limits of his new schema: the wide range of suitability-for-sucking in objects and the fact that some things simply cannot be grasped or fit into his mouth. He may also discover that his own schematically determined actions can affect the environment in unexpected ways, that he can cause a rattle, for example, to make noise en route to his mouth. These experiences destabilize the new seeing-grasping-sucking schema, introducing a new disequilibrium in the infant's relationship to the environment. Piaget sees a natural tendency to repeat and exaggerate these destabilizing experiences, to escalate

assimilation in the area of disequilibrium--as if every schema contained the seeds of its own destruction:

> Each distortion, when carried to an extreme, involves the re-emergence of the relations previously ignored. Each relation established favours the possibility of a reversal (quote in Kessen, 1965, p. 287].

New levels of coordination and mobility evolve out of these distortions. The infant learns, for example, that two hands can raise a heavy object to the mouth or that grasping can be employed to rattle an object as well as to suck it. These discoveries enhance objectification. The infant begins to apprehend general laws of the environment, like gravity, and unique properties of objects, like the noise a rattle makes. Objects become increasingly anchored in the external world. This process of "decentralization" accompanies every step of the person's progress toward "mobil equilibrium": "in proportion as the action becomes complicated through coordination of schemata, the universe becomes objectified and is detached from the self" [Piaget, 1936, p. 211]--the dialectical contradiction of his statement that the "universe is embodied in the action of the subject."

I use a sensory-motor schema to illustrate Piaget's basic concepts because it highlights the unconscious aspect of schematization. Although Piaget accounts for the development of logical thought--with numbing complexity--the basic processes of assimilation and accommodation, mobility and objectification, remain at the heart of every advance in

cognitive functioning. The schemas of rational thought simply crown a massive pyramid of sensory-perceptual and intuitive schemas, the great bulk of which remains well outside the person's conscious awareness. It is as if each person unconsciously reconstructs the laws of physics, and re-capitulates the Ptolemaic and Copernican revolutions, as an inner framework for logical thought.

This view is a significant alternative to Freud's model of a dynamic unconscious. Both Freud and Piaget see the unconscious integration of early experience as a potent force in adult functioning, but Piaget's system does not require a separate language of physical energies. Like Freud, he sees a terrific, inertia in psychological life, but only in the abstract sense of inertia which applies to stable biological adaption or the functioning of an implicit world view.

The solutions which Piaget's system offers to the problems of mastery, repetition, and transference may already be apparent. The striving for mastery, of course, becomes a fundamental aspect of life, not a derivative of any particular instinct or conflict. Repetition becomes part of a universal process of adaption, seeking equilibrium through disequilibrium. Piaget's view of repetition accounts for the need for a period of "working through" which Freud observed in his patients but never fully rationalized in theoretical terms. It also makes the tendency of some patients to exaggerate maladaptive patterns which have been pointed out to them seem

far less perverse, no longer requiring the diabolical intervention of a death instinct to account for it. These patients can be seen as striving for mobility through an increasingly rigid repetition of the dysfunctional pattern.

Just as Piaget's model anchors the loose concept of "working through," it provides a theoretical context for the images which Freud uses to describe transference in his clinical writings. Freud's "prototype,"imago," "template," and "cliche" all translate directly into Piaget's "schema."

Despite the potential for translating Freud's clinical concepts into Piaget's model, and the greater clarity offered by the latter, Piaget has had only minor impact in clinical psychology. One strong reason for this lack of impact is the fact that concepts like schema, assimilation, and objectification seem so remote from the emotional experience of everyday life. The psychodynamic model of the person as a vehicle of conflicting drives, defenses, and compulsions seems to fit the world of emotions--especially in its disordered aspects--far better than Piaget's emphasis on cognitive organization. The gap, in fact, seems huge.

One approach toward bridging it to abandon the traditional habit of viewing thought and emotion as separate categories. This is a stance which Bowlby (1969) advocates. Just as Piaget sees cognition as one aspect of a physiological process of adaption, Bowlby links emotional experience with both. Drawing on Langer's (1967) philosophical attack on the

Cartesian split between mind and body, he argues that feelings are one "phase" of a physiological process, an integral part of the process rather than a separate product or causal agent. He cites Langer's analogy between emotions and the redness of heated iron to illustrate this point: "When iron is heated to a critical degree it becomes red; yet its redness is not an entity which must have gone somewhere else when it is no longer in the iron" [1969, p. 108].

Like Piaget, Bowlby sees the person's cognitive organization of the environment as an extension of organic adaption. Emotional experience is one mode of registering this process of integration with the environment: "the very process of categorizing a person or object or situation as one fit to elicit one or another class of behaviour is itself experienced emotionally" [Ibid., p. 113].

Madison (1969), in company with a number of other psychologists, also argues for the need to see cognition and emotion as related aspects of a single process. He refers to this process as "reintegration," which he defines as "the tendency of past experience to enter into the present so as to restore a former state of affairs." [Ibid., p. 236]. He argues that any perception can be placed along a broad continuum ranging from purely "stimulus-constrained," e.g., "objective" perception of a well defined figure viewed under bright light and at reading distance, to, at the other extreme, "hallucinatory reintegration," i.e., "extremely convincing

imagery strongly determined by past learnings but experienced by the subject as a perception." [Ibid., p. 239]. Most perception falls within the midrange of "reintegrative fill-in": "in which the general framework of the percept is stimulus determined but details are supplied reintegratively without the subject's being aware of such past influence." This process of reintegrative fill-in is generally accompanied by a motivational and/or emotional component. The person experiences himself as "seized" by the emotion. Therefore, although thought and feelings are both components of a single process, the cognitive aspect of emotion is poorly reflected in awareness.

Madison introduces the concept of "reintegrative resonation" to account for the motivational and emotional aspects of the linkage between past and present. He feels that the person organizes significant past experience into "resonating systems," a term which he defines through analogy with a sound chamber:

> An incoming stimulus . . . can be conceived as . . . a whisper entering a cavern full of echo chambers. Some chambers are shaped just right for a wave of [a] particular amplitude and their resonating effect strongly amplifies the incoming sound . . . What enters as a whisper comes out as a roar [1969, p. 244].

There is a good example of reintegrative resonation in the preceding chapter where Hilda was discussing her family's stance toward "other classes of people." She mentioned that she did not accept, but was affected by their

snobbish attitude, and went on to describe how isolated she is in her present neighborhood. With the intention of softening her self-indictment, I pointed out that her neighbors are mostly "GE people"--a corporation known for its policy of encouraging a sense of tight-knit community among its employees. Hilda responded: "They're only GEers!"--as if my mild excuse had resounded in an echo chamber to come out as a harsh accusation.

Another area in which Piaget's system can be brought closer to the world in which Freud works is in the concept of motivation. The source of motivation in Piaget's model is remote and monolithic: the force toward organization found in all organic life. Other theorists posit a similar basic motivation, equally monolithic but phrased on a more human scale. The striving for "self-actualization" described by Goldstein (1938), Maslow (1954), and Rogers (1959) is an example. Lecky's (1945) concept of an overall striving for "self-consistency" and Kelly's (1955) theory of personality as a system of "constructs" directed toward prediction of events in the environment are built on a similarly monolithic motive. Epstein (1973) improves on these monolithic conceptions of a basic organizing principle by incorporating the need to assimilate and organize the data of experience as one of three basic motive systems, the other two being the need to maintain a favorable level of self esteem and maximization of the balance of pleasure over pain. The advantage of such a

pluralistic theory of motivation is that it enables Epstein (e.g. 1981) to account for conflict between, as well as within, systems, say, for example, when an effective assessment of reality might be damaging to self esteem--an alternate approach to explaining the occurrence of repression and dissociation. Epstein, in other words, offers a model of motivation which connects the cognitive emphasis on mastery and organization with the psychodynamic emphasis on conflict.

White (1960, 1963) presents a forceful argument for a revision of the psychoanalytic model of motivation along similar lines, that is, to include an innate striving for "effectance" alongside the traditional drives of sex and aggression. He argues that this addition would introduce a modern principle of biological adaption to psychoanalytic theory and integrate the concepts of psychic structure and energy:

> Effectance . . . refers to the active tendency to put forth effort to influence the environment . . . [It is] conceived to be just as basic as the instincts . . . This conception of independent ego energies tends to reduce the sharp metaphorical distinction between energy and structure. If we conceive of structure as competence, we are giving it the dynamic character of patterns of readiness for future action [1963, pp. 185-186].

White notes that his revision of psychoanalytic motivation eliminates the need for a cumbersome principle of neutralization. He, in fact, separates the development of "competence" from the process of cathexis altogether:

> The [individual's representation of an] objective stable world is thus best conceived of as a construction based on action . . . There is no need to assume that cathexis plays any necessary part at all in knowledge of reality [Ibid., p. 188].

As White points out, this reconceptualization of ego development brings ego psychology close to Piaget's model of cognitive development. White stops short of actual synthesis in that he maintains the psychoanalytic notion of energies--or, more accurately, White moves the separate worlds of Piaget and Freud inside the psyche. He posits the coexistence of a potentially conflict-free sphere of ego functioning powered by energies which seek structure (competence) and an inherently conflictual sphere of sexual and aggressive drives which push toward discharge. White sees affectional ties as falling into the latter sphere of energy, and reserves the concept of cathexis "for describing a loving interest in objects." This sphere is also responsible for psychological development taking an abnormal course; its energies can "obstruct" or "flood" growing ego structures, diverting their adaptive energies from developing competence to erecting defensive structures, such as repression and denial, which distort reality. White, in short, accepts a confusing psychic world of dual energies--and sacrifices the chance for a full integration of Freud's and Piaget's concepts of structure--so that he can maintain a focus on abnormal development and continue to place it in an interpersonal context.

The confusing system of energies which White accepts points to a problem in adapting Piaget's model to Freud's clinical theory which no amount of tinkering with philosophical assumptions can solve: it is missing an important dimension of psychological life. Peterfreund (1971, p. 377) puts his finger on this missing dimension: "Piaget has been interested in how we organize the world vis-a-vis inanimate objects. Psychoanalysis has been interested in how we organize the world primarily vis-a-vis animate objects." This gap is especially apparent in clinical work; people with serious problems in living are often quite successful in relating to things, whereas their relationships with people are almost invariably disturbed. Piaget illuminates the gyroscopic nature of development--that, as our focus expands outward to incorporate more of the environment, we become increasingly stable through mobility--but neglects the fact that we at the same time develop as satellites of other moving bodies. Our lives revolve around other people, a situation which shapes our perspective at least as forcefully as the need to accommodate to the physical world. A full psychological account of a life must focus on this interpersonal dimension.

To summarize this section, Piaget's view of the underlying process of development as a progressive structuring of relationships is a valuable alternative to Freud's metapsychology, avoiding several of the main problems which stem from attempting to reduce organic growth to a process of

tension reduction. It fits with the dialectical perspective implicit in Freud's clinical theory and offers specific terms, such as assimilation, accommodation, and objectification, for conceptualizing changing modes of relationship. The impression of an over-emphasis on rationality in Piaget's system can be reduced somewhat by regarding thought and feeling as related aspects of a general process of registering and integrating experience.

Piaget's model does, on the other hand, de-emphasize internal conflict, a problem which can be approached by treating the need to integrate oneself in the physical world as one of two basic sources of motivation. White's term for this motive, "effectance," has the advantages of referring directly to something that can be experienced--feelings of competence--and insofar as White separates effectance from psychoanalytic energies, he offers a link between the concepts of structure in Freud's and Piaget's systems. I will be using White's term, abstracted entirely from the notion of energies, to refer to this motive system in Hilda's life.

Leaving psychic energies behind, however, highlights the need for an alternative conception of how other people act as a force in one's life. In order to fill this gap, I draw on two major contributions to an understanding of the interpersonal dimension of psychological life: Bowlby's (1969, 1973) theory of an instinctive need for attachment and Boszormenyi-Nagy's (1965, 1973) theory of invisible loyalties.

Because my integration of these two theories will be a prime focus in understanding Hilda's life, elaborated throughout the remainder of her history, I will at this point give simply a bare outline of the main concepts, and what I see as the common ground in Bowlby's and Boszormenyi-Nagy's models.

Attachment to the interpersonal world.

> The person may engage with others as objects to dominate or instruments to use or because he depends on them for some particular purpose. But fundamentally he depends on them, as they on him, simply because they are other than him. It may not be in the best of taste to use the word love, which just now seems to belong largely to certain fields of applied zoology: but some word is needed to point to that quality of the person's essentially human engagement with others.
>
> Paul Lafitte (1957, p. 51)

Most of the leading theories on the origins of attachment, prior to Bowlby (1958), are encompassed by the first sentence in the above quote from Lafitte. The development of a bond between the infant and its caretaker is traditionally seen as deriving from some other more basic process, primarily the satisfaction of physiological needs and especially the need for food. This is the view in social learning theory (Dollard and Miller, 1950) as well as the standard position in psychoanalysis: "The reason why the infant in arms wants to perceive the presence of its mother is only because it already knows by experience that she satisfies

all its needs without delay" (Freud, 1926, p. 137). Theories in this mold are based largely on principles drawn from other areas of observation, in psychoanalysis, for example, on retrospective inference from adult functioning. The most prominent revision of this view, the object relations theory of attachment mentioned in the introductory chapter, was advanced by clinicians who, in contrast, had considerable first-hand experience with children. Significantly, their view of attachment as the product of a primary "object seeking" drive comes very close to Bowlby's theory. Bowlby, however, takes two major additional steps: (1) he attempts to base his theory entirely on direct observation of human infants and immature animals in relation to their mothering figures; and (2) he views attachment as a basic, "instinctive" need, an inborn propensity not reducible to any more primitive drive, process, or source of motivation.

Attachment may have escaped direct attention because, like oxygen, it is so much a part of life that its importance becomes clear only in its absence. Bowlby's focus on attachment, in any case, arose out of his work with children who had been separated from their parents. He discovered that children undergo a predictable and potentially catastrophic pattern of responses when separated from their primary attachment figures (Bowlby, 1953). He was unable to account for this observation within the psychoanalytic energy model and turned, instead, to ethology.

Bowlby found a close parallel between the mounting evidence on the damaging impact of institutionalization on human infants and studies of maternal deprivation in non-human primates (e.g., Harlow, 1961, 1962). Both show that, even given adequate physical care, an infant deprived of its mother enters a state of general crisis; prolonged deprivation leads to a loss of the "will to live"--possibly even death--and serious maladjustment in later functioning. Ethological studies also provided Bowlby with strong counter evidence to the theory that attachment results from physical needs being met: infant monkeys cling to a non-nutritive surrogate which resembles an adult monkey in preference to one that feeds them, puppies attach more strongly to an investigator who takes time out to beat them than to one merely delivering routine care, and frightened monkeys will cling to a surrogate even when the object itself instigates the fear, e.g., by delivering a shock or a loud blast.

In the first two of his three volume work on attachment and separation, Bowlby (1969, 1973) marshalls a rich body of evidence from primate studies, cross cultural and naturalistic studies of early human development to support his thesis of a universal, inborn tendency to form strong affectional bonds. The main points, abstracted from a summary in the opening of his third volume (Bowlby, 1980, pp. 39-41) include:

(1) Bowlby defines the goal of attachment behavior as maintaining proximity to a specific figure:

> [It] is conceived as any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual.

(2) This goal has an important biological function:

> Attachment behaviour has become a characteristic of many species during the course of their evolution because it contributes to the individual's survival by keeping him in touch with his caregiver(s).

(3) Strong feelings are associated with attachment, to the extent that the psychology of emotions is largely a psychology of affectional bonds:

> Many of the most intense emotions arise during the formation, the maintenance, the disruption and the renewal of attachment relationships. The formation of a bond is described as falling in love, maintaining a bond as loving someone . . . Threat of loss arouses anxiety and actual loss gives rise to sorrow; while each of these situations is likely to arouse anger. The unchallenged maintenance of a bond is experienced as a source of security and the renewal of a bond as a source of joy.

(4) Although most obvious in early childhood, the need for attachment remains a potent factor in adulthood:

> During the course of healthy development attachment behaviour leads to the development of affectional bonds . . . The forms of behaviour and the bonds to which they lead remain active throughout the life cycle.
>
> On the way in which an individual's attachment behaviour becomes organized within his personality turns the pattern of affectional bonds he makes during his life.

Most of Bowlby's evidence is amassed in support of the first three points above, the functional and emotional

significance of attachment in early life. Bowlby's organizing concept for this stage is the "behavioural system," a term borrowed from ethology. A behavioral system is an interrelated set of propensities for assessing the environment and acting so as to achieve a predictable outcome or "set-goal," such as maintaining proximity to an attachment figure. The system is "activated" by the individual's appraisal of changes in his internal or external environment, and "terminated" by his appraisal of achieving the set-goal.

Up to this point, Bowlby's conception of the internal structure which mediates between organism and environment is very similar to the reflexive and action oriented schemata described by Piaget. Bowlby's model of primitive organization is slightly more mechanistic than Piaget's, lacking, for instance any equivalent to Piaget's "accommodation," but has the important advantages of: (1) drawing an explicit link between cognition and emotion, i.e., by regarding feelings as an aspect of appraisal; and (2) shifting the focus of integration to the interpersonal sphere with the addition of a distinctly social dimension of basic motivation.

It is in making the huge leap from infancy to adulthood--the fourth point in the outline above--that Bowlby diverges from Piaget. In his first two volumes, Bowlby (1969, 1973) gives relatively little attention to the development of higher level organization or the individual's overall integration of his discrete systems of attachment behavior. In

his second volume (1973, pp. 203-210) he suggests that an individual's attachment behavior becomes increasingly mediated by "forecasts" based on his "working models" of self and other, that is, on an appraisal of:

> (a) Whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection and (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way. [Ibid., p. 204].

The concept of a working model is compatible with the Piagetian notion of schemata so long as it is regarded as an abstract construction of social reality, a mode of relating to a changeable social world. If, on the other hand, a model is seen as the literal representation of a fixed reality, such as a computer could be programmed to produce from a body of predefined data, it means something entirely different. Bowlby (1980), unfortunately, takes this latter route in the final volume of his work on attachment:

> Once cognition and action have been automated, they are not readily accessible to conscious processing and so are difficult to change. . . [But] provided these representational models and programmes are well adapted [to reality], the fact that they are drawn on automatically and without awareness is a great advantage [Ibid., p. 55].

Bowlby shifts fully into an information processing model in order to trace the roots of adult psychopathology to early childhood attachments, the focus of his third volume. The model is well suited to this purpose; maladapted programs and distorted representational models account for the tenacious

repetition of dysfunctional and self-limiting behavior without requiring a concept of psychic energy or a death instinct. This reified picture of cognitive organization, however, irreconcilably separates Bowlby's system from Piaget's. Development becomes largely a process of quantitative change, a cumulative assimilation of data through the continuous enlargement of the person's systems of processing. Although modification of the processing systems and reintegration of data can occur, there is no equivalent to the major qualitative changes in the person's relationship to the environment which Piaget conceptualizes in terms of accommodation, mobility, and objectification. Bowlby stops at an interactive perspective rather than the fully transactional view that Piaget employs. To labor the satellite analogy, it is as if Bowlby places the bodies in the correct relationship but limits himself to a two dimensional perspective, allowing only for linear movement.

This is where Boszormenyi-Nagy's theory becomes important. Starting from a point similar to Bowlby's central assertion of a need for attachment, he introduces an essential dimension of reciprocity and interdependence to the concept of relationship, adding a new level of mobility to Bowlby's model.

The problems in integrating Boszormenyi-Nagy's concepts with any of the preceding models are great. Unlike the other theorists, his primary unit of analysis is the interpersonal system, rather than intrapsychic organization. He also bases his concepts on explicit philosophical

assumptions to an extent that is generally unacceptable in academic psychology--invoking ontological needs or ethical and obligational motivations which seem alien to psychology. On the other hand, Nagy's dialectical perspective can be seen as an extension of the same principles of contexual determination and change which are implicit in Piaget and Freud, as well as in a number of other more traditional models of psychic functioning. In contrast to most other systems theorists, Nagy maintains a strong emphasis on history. He preserves a focus on durable patterns of individual behavior and recognizes the importance of an individual's organization of his experience as a partial determination of interpersonal events. Nagy, in fact, sees his systems theory as supplementing, rather than supplanting, intrapsychic theory. By placing interpersonal relationship in the context of an abstract transaction, Nagy adds a new dimension of meaning to many of the substantive concepts of psychoanalytic and object-relations theory--in the same way that Piagetian psychology redefines information processing as an abstract construction.

The dialectical concept of transaction is the heart of Boszormenyi-Nagy's (1965, 1973) view of social relations. Social behavior is always defined by its context, never fully separable from the overall organization or "system" of actions in which it occurs. Interpersonal relations are organized on the lines of a negotiation, in which the position of one party defines and excludes the position of the other:

> Each real, or anticipated, transaction creates or contributes to a symbolic delineation of both entities: the one . . . who acts (subject) and the one who . . . [is] acted upon (object). The structure of any transaction implies a figure-ground-like polarity of relating, and each transaction redefines personality boundaries. [1965, pp. 35-36].

The conventional terms and categories of intrapsychic psychology take a new meaning in light to this emphasis on transaction. The concept of ego, for example, always implies an alter ego. Neither can be understood fully in isolation from the other. Both are interpendent aspects of an integrated system: "the other ego may . . . be considered a constitutive agent rather than a mere segment of an indifferent social reality" [Ibid., p. 35]. This view does not negate the fact of internal organization or the experience of personal continuity, but it regards these phenomena as dependent upon a context:

> The experience of Selfhood depends on the existence and intactness of a boundary, formed through the polar division of the person's relational agents into two symbolic regions: a proximal region of Self-referent and a distal region of Not-Self-reverent agents. Agents of the proximal region are all experienced as constituents of either a singular or plural Selfhood (I or we), whereas agents of the distal region make up the spectrum of Others [Ibid., p. 42, original emphasis].

The idea of a transaction at the core of personality, in other words, extends the meaning of Freud's (1923, p. 36) definition of the ego as a "precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes" and adds significance to his (Ibid., p. 48) comment that "to the ego, living means the same as being loved." It also introduces an interpersonal equivalent to Piaget's concept

of "objectification": every refinement in one's understanding of his significant others results in a further differentiation and integration of self. The establishment of object permanence and a stable sense of self are, for example, mutually entailing processes.

The primary assumption in Boszormenyi-Nagy's theory is the existential concept of ontic dependence--the idea of an inherent interdependence between self and other. Nagy's analysis of ontic relatedness, or the person's existential need for others, is on a different plane from Bowlby's examination of functional relatedness, or the person's biological and instinctive need for others. The two perspectives are not, however, mutually exclusive; each has aspects which enhance the other. Regarding Bowlby's "primary need for attachment" as an alternate perspective on ontic dependence, for example, links Nagy's psychology with the life sciences and provides a solid foundation of empirical evidence for the idea of an inherent interdependence between people. Nagy suggests the possibility of such a linkage in his concept of the "relational need template," a synthesis of physiological needs and early interpersonal experience which results in an enduring affinity for a set of complementary others:

> Need templates . . . are largely unconscious amalgamations between inherited, phylogenetic patterns and past learning (imprinting) from formative encounters with significant Others [Ibid., p. 52].

Boszormenyi-Nagy's concept of complementarity--"the figure-ground-like polarity of relating"--in turn enriches Bowlby's basic definition of attachment behavior. There are two components to Bowlby's definition: proximity maintenance and specificity. Bowlby concentrates mainly on the former, and his concept of the behavioral system offers a good account of the mechanics of remaining related in physical space. Although Bowlby (1980) posits a basic principle of complementarity in attachment, he devotes little attention to it--specificity seems to be part of his definition of attachment behavior mainly because it is such a strong empirical observation. Nagy's emphasis on the importance of self-other demarcations makes it clear why the preferred figure would be as essential to attachment behavior as the aspect of physical proximity.

More than most systems theorists, Nagy is concerned with describing how the individual internally structures his experience--or, to put it in transactional terms, how he unconsciously carries his relational context into new encounters. The "need template" is one of several terms which he uses to identify this level of motivational structure. He also speaks of: "introjection of familial transactional networks" (1962); "intrapsychic relational configurations" or the "internalized structure of self-other situations" at the core of personality (1965); and the "affective programatic structuring" which occurs in early relationships and contains the "blueprints of the person's future actions" (1973). None

of these terms are convenient for describing clinical phenomena--they are all too abstract and awkward for regular use. Given Nagy's deeply contexual perspective, however, an alternative term has to meet a number of conflicting requirements: it must be something which can be subjectively experienced as well as objectively observed; it needs to encompass aspects of unconscious motivation, affective experience, and perceptual structuring; and it should imply an aspect of intrapsychic integration and self delineation at the same time that it refers to interpersonal organization and group definition. Nagy (1973) develops the concept of "invisible loyalties" to meet this need for a synthetic concept.

Loyalty, as Nagy (1973) uses it, is a multi-dimensional term--and he makes no promise of being able to define it fully or operationalize it at this point. At the level of interpersonal system, loyalties refer to the set of expectations, injunctions, myths, and values which define group membership. Nagy describes loyalty bonds as: "the deeper relational structuring of families and other social groups . . . the sustaining principles of membership . . . and the invisible but strong fibers that hold together complex pieces of relationship behavior . . . the substance of group survival" [Ibid., pp. 38-41]. Loyalty commitments define the individual as well as the group, that is, at the level of individual behavior:

> Loyalty . . . encompass identification with the group, genuine object relatedness with other members, trust, reliability, dutiful commitment, and staunch devotion . . . Internalization of expectations and injunctions in the loyal individual provide structural psychological forces which can coerce the individual just as much as external enforcement within the group [Ibid., p. 42].

Loyalties can be conscious or unconscious and vary broadly in the degree to which they are maintained through coercive or cooperative devices. Taken as a whole, they make up what Nagy calls the "obligational system of motivation" which regulates the homeostasis of group functioning. Within the individual, obligation behavior is regulated on the positive side by feelings of love, trust, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging; on the negative side, by guilt, shame, and fear of exclusion.

Nagy makes heavy use of the metaphor of "accounting" in referring to how the individual experiences his position within a particular obligational system: "each person maintains a bookkeeping of his perception of the balances of past, present, and future give-and-take" [1973, p. 39]. A person's accounting of loyalty commitments is, in other words, his historic record of the impact of his significant self-other encounters. Carrying a positive balance means experiencing a sense of indebtedness and holding expectations of cooperation. Carrying a negative balance means harboring resentment and an expectation of coersive and exploitive encounters. In this sense, the accounts that a person carries forward from his

initial attachments have the same potent affective and motivational influence on future relationships that psychoanalytic theory attributes to internalized object relations. As Nagy puts it, "the accounting of acts of loyalty is the key determinant of relationship structures and ultimately individual behavior" [Ibid., p. 25].

Summary

I started this chapter with an outline of Pascal's (1960) analysis of the qualities in autobiography which have the "feel" of true evidence of a personality: a focus on interpersonal relationships, examples of how the writer organizes his experience and maintains a sense of personal continuity, and a general acceptance of the "intimate collusion" between past and present. I noted that these qualities are well represented in Hilda's reconstruction of her history, and that they fit with my broad theoretical goal--the integration of intrapsychic and interpersonal concepts. I also discussed the difficulty that psychology has in conceptualizing how a person incorporates the past in the present and compared two broad paradigms: the mechanistic model and the dialectical perspective. I then outlined the components of the model which I will be using in analyzing Hilda's development. As a first step toward integrating these concepts, I will look briefly at how they add to a theoretical understanding of the points which

Pascal identifies as central to communicating the "feel" of a life.

1) The complex relationship between past and present.

The mechanistic model, which conceptualizes the past as a permanently fixed aspect of the present, has the advantages of accounting for conflict and being able to portray the person's history as a strong determinant of his present functioning. In particular, Freud's concept of the dynamic unconscious--that traces of past experience link with instinctual impulses to act as a constant force in the present--offers an account of the potent influence of the past which any alternative theory has to attempt to match. Freud's metapsychology, however, exemplifies the problems inherent to a mechanistic model: the reification of experence and an inability to encompass the qualitative changes of organic development--Freud reduces growth to a round about process of tension reduction.

The dialectical perspective is well suited to conceptualizing qualitative change and the active nature of a person's reintegration of past and present. Piaget's view of the person as assimilating the present through structures derived from past experience is a step toward an alternate account of the determinative force of the past. The tendency to de-emphasize conflict in Piaget's system can be corrected by

adding an instinctive "need for attachment" (Bowlby) alongside his monolithic striving for organization or mastery.

Nagy's interpersonal theory incorporates the advantages of a dialectical perspective while moving still closer to the explanatory power of the mechanistic. His emphasis on the role of others as constituents of self implies that some degree of repetition would be inherent in all relationships. His concept of a "relational need template" also implies a degree of dynamic tension between past and present. "Loyalty accounting" subsumes both concepts and, in a sense, re-defines id as the sum of the person's relational needs which are unmet in his present situation.

2) The internal organization of experience and continuity over time.

Freud's clinical theory opens all the central issues in this problem: the emphasis on ego integration which leads to a principle of mastery, his insight into the fact that even maladaptive behavior shows active organization and creative synthesis, and his discovery of the interconnection between intrapsychic organization and interpersonal relations.

Piaget shifts the analysis of organization into a more appropriate biological frame of reference. He redefines psychic structure as a mode of relating to, or schiematizing, the environment and adds a number of important concepts for describing dialectical change in relation to the physical world.

Nagy applies the same transactional perspective in relation to the interpersonal world, bringing the role of interpersonal relationship in intrapsychic organization into sharp focus. His emphasis on the importance of others as a constituent of self brings phenomena that Freud explained through the death instict back into the realm of integrative and adaptive striving.

3) The role of others as a force in one's life--Pascal's idea of the self as "not a property but a trust."

Bowlby's work on attachment provides an empirical basis for Nagy's philosophical assumption of "ontic dependence" between self and other. In addition to placing interpersonal relations at the center of psychological life, Nagy opens the way for an integration of intrapsychic and interpersonal concepts. His concept of an "internal configuration of self-and-other," for example, captures the insight of object relations theory without reference to psychic energies or things that are not things--factors which negate an interpersonal focus.

Nagy's theory has an historical dimension but it is not specifically developmental. The fact that he and Piaget both work from a dialectical perspective suggests the potential for cross fertilization: Nagy could add the central dimension of interpersonal relations to Piaget's framework and Piaget could place Nagy's concepts within a developmental context, adding a language for describing change--e.g., assimilation and

accomodation. A comprehensive developmental theory might emerge from the synthesis.

As I mentioned above, I begin in the next chapter to integrate the concepts which I have outlined here. I separate this integration from my presentation of the theoretical background in order to start with a brief look at Hilda's memories of early childhood--and to remind the reader that this is still her story.

C H A P T E R IV

CHILDHOOD

Early Childhood

Hilda's first years.

The dialectical perspective on memory as an ongoing transaction between past and present applies most strongly to recollections of early childhood. Like most people, Hilda remembers only a few isolated scenes from her first years of life. What she does remember falls into three overlapping groups: images which evoke a strong feeling-tone; events which punctuate long passages of family life, such as deaths, births, and moves; and experiences which Hilda has reconstructed--and perhaps entirely reshaped--in conversation with other family members. Schachtel's (1947) analysis of childhood amnesia--that the schemata of adult experience inevitably blot cut the memories of childhood--offers a good explanation for the extremely eliptical quality of Hilda's early memories. Adult schemata provide an unsuitable vehicle for early impressions of the world and serve to refashion those experiences of childhood which do get carried forward.

Once again, recognizing the dialectical nature of memory means abandoning the idea of a literal reconstruction of early childhood: it is impossible to put the events Hilda describes into an exact developmental sequence, the perspective

she communicates is not necessarily that of a young child, and her understanding of relationships, in particular, may be more the product of adult reinterpretation than a reflection of childhood experience. Given these qualifications, however, Hilda's recollections of early childhood can be taken as evidence of her psychological development in at least two senses. First, Hilda's account of childhood scenes often communicates an overall feeling tone or emotional gestalt which can reasonably be attributed to the original experience, particularly when these feelings remain relatively unanalyzed and disconnected from adult experience. Second, there are several life issues or themes, such as physical illness, which appear very early in Hilda's story. Although Hilda's understanding of an issue may have changed markedly over time, the fact it occurs prominently in her early memories suggests that it had significant meaning to her at the time--it shows that the issue itself has been a durable feature of her psychological life.

Hilda's knowledge of her infancy is supplied mainly by her mother.

Hilda: [Mother told me] "We almost didn't bring you back several times, Hilda--You were a very sick child. We were unable to get food that you could digest. We finally found something you could eat: oatmeal [still a staple of her diet]. We had just gotten you well when you had something happen which could be called an appendicitis; you ate some grapes and were prostrated with pain. Then we almost got you well again, and you came down with a whooping cough. You were so violently ill that you forgot how to walk.

Hilda's own memories of early childhood also center on illness and pain. Perhaps her earliest memory, which she dates to the first or second year of her life when the Mendahls still lived in Minnesota, is a distinct recollection of "sitting on a curb, vomiting into the curb."

During Jacob's early career in the steel industry, the Mendahls were relocated several times. Hilda remembers these years (roughly age three to six) as a period of "almost constant discomfort." One particularly vivid image from early in this period involves both pain and pleasure:

> I remember falling down stairs and cutting my head open and mother holding me--and I thought, "Oh this is wonderful, being held by mother"-- Bleeding into her lovely, clean, white shirtwaist.

Births and deaths stand out in Hilda's recollection of early childhood. When Hilda was three, both events came in rapid succession in the case of her sister Eleanor. During Emily's lying-in Hilda recalls "having to eat potatoes I didn't want to . . . some kind of servant there. I didn't want to be in her presence, not being allowed to see mother and all." Eleanor, "a bleeder," lived only a few weeks.

C.J.: You were aware of Eleanor's death?

Hilda: Oh yes . . . I can remember going with the casket to the cemetery, in a little cab--Now I may have invented this memory of Eleanor's corpse, but I saw the casket for certain, because I remember sitting in the cab with father and the casket was sort of across my lap and James' and father's.

C.J.: Do you remember what feelings you had?

Hilda: That it was a rainy day . . . and that there was this dead infant in the box, and that father said she never would have survived anyway, you know, "Better that she died"--that sort of thing.

C.J.: How did you feel, can you remember?

Hilda: Oh . . . I think I was feeling for my mother, because I can remember, somehow, a distant weeping thing happening in the house--although I don't know if I actually remember seeing mother weeping about it.

An epidemic of diptheria almost claimed Hilda's second sister, Isabel, and a subsequent outbreak of smallpox did claim a servant, "taken away in a sheet on one of those 'pest wagons'--all of this seemed like so much illness."

Births and deaths were accompanied by Hilda's Aunt Jen, Jacob's family's self-styled nurse--"always there to bring them in and see them out." Aunt Jen was an austere presence in Hilda's eyes: "a major domo, figuring the whole thing out, sending us this way and that."

The second intermittent member of the early family circle, Hilda's psychotic Aunt Eleanor, left an even stronger impression: "I was always being frightened by Aunt Eleanor, in the halls of that house, frightened of being whipped by her." Hilda remembers sharing the fear of Eleanor with her older brother James, and how his fear served to intensify hers: "When James was frightened, I thought, that's the end--there's really something to be frightened about!"

At age five, Hilda was sent to kindergarten--a progressive movement in education at the turn of the century (Wishy, 1968). She recalls this initial foray into the outside

world as a distressing experience, "because Isabel and I were taken away from the home . . . [to a place with] cold spots and funny little women, and these funny, vacant rooms." She cried a great deal and remembers a teacher telling her "every tear is a pearl."

Hilda's kindergarten career ended early in May of 1906. Her teachers had clothed the children in paper costumes and had them dance around a maypole. It rained. Hilda contracted a cold, followed by an ear infection. Her ear remained absessed through the rest of her sixth year--"pain, pain, pain."

The psychological tasks of early childhood.

Any theory of the phenomenology of early childhood faces a major obstacle: the inaccessibility of infantile experience to adult modes of understanding creates the need for a high degree of empathic projection on the part of a theorist. One theorist's empathc projection is another's wild speculation. Debates, which would seem arcane to an outsider, rage back and forth within the various schools of thought on such issues as the nature of early identification, the existence of primary narcissism, and the order of precedence between differentiation of self and integration with others. Many of these issues are unresolvable; by the time the child can verbally communicate his experience, his "inner world" is no longer in the universe of infancy. On the other hand, there

is growing consensus among clinical observers around the main points which I attempted to develop in the preceding chapter: (1) that the development of interpersonal relationships is a central feature of early life; (2) the need to organize and integrate experience is equally fundamental; and (3) that these two processes of integration in the physical and social world are interconnected.

Integration in the social world.

Two types of inheritance converge at birth: the child enters the world with a set of built-in physiological needs and reflexes and he immediately occupies a niche in the family which has been extensively prestructured by the needs, expectations, and projections of the other members, particularly the mother who has had the direct experience of pregnancy and can anticipate being the primary caretaker. As Borzormenyi-Nagy might put it, the infant's "need template" exists from the start in relation to a matching social context. The degree of complementarity between these two structures has life and death significance to the newborn. As Bowlby (1969) argues, a number of the infant's most basic reflexes are geared toward ensuring a complementary bond with the mother: sucking, clinging, crying, smiling, and visual tracking--all of which are normally shown within the first several months of life. In accordance with Piaget's model of development, the infant gradually coordinates these reflexes into a schema of the

mother. This initial mother-schema is, of course, primarily sensorimotor. It is a pattern of tactile and kinesthetic actions through which the infant assimilates the mother. Mahler (1965) refers to this period in life (at about six months) when reflexes become coordinated into a specific pattern of attachment as psychological "hatching"--the infant remains "centered" on his own fleeting sensations but, like breaking out of a shell, begins to direct his attention outward to absorb a major portion of his environment, his mother. Nagy (1965) suggests that the infant's experience of this event may be comparable to an animal's sense of territory, that is, a primal sense of situation or an experience of being "at home" in the world. Erikson (1950) refers to the positive outcome of the infant's first steps toward mutuality as the development of "basic trust," a deep, "almost somatic conviction" that the infant's behavior has meaning and continuity in the social world. Erikson sees this development as the basis for all future psychosocial growth, leading "toward a final integration of the individual life cycle with some wider belongingness" (Ibid., p. 249).

Returning to Piaget's more prosaic terms, the mother-schema which an infant establishes at this stage serves as a prototype which the child uses to assimilate, or relate himself to, other people. Vestiges of this first interpersonal schema remain a component of all future physically intimate

relationships, for example, in the hugging, kissing, and meaningful eye contact between lovers.

Psychodynamic theories of development often focus on the infant's experience of an imaginary omnipotence. Rheingold (1969) takes the unusual approach of analyzing the actual power that an infant has over his parents. She points out that the infant directs parental behavior through his expressions of pleasure and displeasure. The overall effect of the parents' efforts at "habit training" (e.g., feeding and sleeping schedules) are, in Rheingold's analysis, far less significant than the infant's socialization of the parents. In addition to shaping parental behavior, the infant has a strong emotional impact on his caretakers; he becomes a central figure in their emotional life, especially for the mother. Benedek (1956) coined the term "emotional symbiosis" to describe this aspect of mutuality in the attachment between mother and child. The term has become popular in recent psychoanalytic theory. Mahler (1968, 1975), for example, uses the concept of a mandatory stage of symbiotic attachment as the centerpiece of her theory of early development.

Psychoanalytically oriented theories generally account for the mother's bond to the infant in terms of projective identification: the infant reawakens the mother's needs in relation to her early objects. Satisfaction of his needs becomes satisfaction of her own. Bowlby (1969) suggests an alternate explanation: that innate behavioral systems of

caregiving within the mother are activated by the infant's attachment seeking behavior. Boszormenyi-Nagy (1965) sees the infant's power over the mother as a basic aspect of ontic dependence: the mother's existence as a mother depends on the child receiving her care. Each theory, in other words, employs a different model of explanation, but all three are based on an observation of deep mutuality in the attachment between mother and child. Each also sees the infant as having a significant hand in regulating the relationship.

There is reason to believe that the mutuality between Hilda and her mother went awry at this early stage, and that Hilda's difficulties with relationships may stem from a disturbance of her initial "symbiotic" bond. Based on what Hilda knows of her infancy, she was a very difficult child to mother. A sick child tends to disqualify the efforts of a caregiver, she may continue to show distress no matter what the mother does. Even worse, Hilda's illness was digestive. The normal avenue of nurturant contact between mother and child was disrupted. Emily--who "lived within a narrow frame" and "lacked the courage of her convictions as a social woman"--may have been unable to cope with the level of frustration and disconfirmation that the infant Hilda subjected her to. Hilda would have escalated her attempts at regulating the relationship, making nurturant contact all the more difficult for Emily and setting a negative feedback loop into effect.

Approached from Hilda's perspective, the complementarity of physiological needs and environmental response, which Nagy sees as providing the infant with a basic grounding in the world, would have been uncertain. Or, to use Erikson's language, Hilda's nascent sense of continuity with her social world would have been prone to disruption; she would not have been in the position to experience her inner states as consistently meaningful to the outside world. Her digestive troubles interfered with her ability to develop a sense of "basic trust." Somatic, psychological, and interpersonal disturbance were all one at this point in Hilda's life.

In saying that Hilda's chronic difficulties with people stem from a disruption in her earliest attachment, I do not mean to imply that she suffered an irreversible trauma. The processes leading to healthy development are naturally resilient. Given different family circumstances, Hilda and Emily might have corrected their false start as soon as Hilda's digestive problems cleared up. But Hilda has already mentioned a number of events which would have made Emily physically or emotionally unavailable, e.g., the stress of frequent moves, three more births during Hilda's first four years, Eleanor's death, Isabel's near death, and the reasonable possibility that Emily suffered periods of depression after any of the latter. This continuing stress on the mother-child relationship created the conditions for what Bowlby (1969) calls "anxious attachment," the major problem in Hilda's development.

The social role of anxiety.

Ernest Jones maintains that "anxiety is the Alfa and Omega of psychiatry . . . on the way in which any individual deals with the primordial anxiety of infancy more depends than on anything else in development" (quoted in Guntrip, 1971, p. 130). Perhaps because it is such a pervasive factor in early development, psychology has had trouble defining the basic nature of anxiety. Freud's progress in defining a theory of anxiety, for example, spanned the better part of his career. At the start (1895), he saw it as simply the experience of undischarged energy, the unpleasure of tension welling up inside the person. Freud gradually redefined anxiety as the signal of an impending threat of unpleasure, rather than the unpleasure itself. In his final work (1926) on anxiety, he focused on the infant's experience of separation from its mother as the prototype of all later anxiety. Although, at the level of the metapsychology, Freud still explained primordial anxiety in terms of a disturbance of the infant's internal economy--reducing the infant's need for its mother to the need for external regulation of its homeostasis--what he describes is an interpersonal phenomenon:

> Only a few instances of the expression of anxiety in infancy are intelligible to us . . . being left alone, being in the dark, and finding a strange person in place of the one in whom the child has confidence. [These] are all reducible to a single situation, that of feeling the loss of the loved person [1926, pp. 75-76].

Even at a later stage of development, when anxiety can become entirely a matter of communication between internal agencies, it remains, in the final version of Freud's theory, basically interpersonal:

> The formula "separation, exclusion from the horde" applies only to that more lately developed portion of the superego which was patterned after social models, not the nucleus thereof which corresponds to the introjected parental authority. Expressed in more general terms, it is the anger . . . of the superego, the loss of its love, which the ego apprehends as a danger and to which it responds with the signal of anxiety. [Ibid., p. 79].

Bowlby (1973) arrives at a very similar account of basic anxiety through his functional analysis of attachment behavior. He reasons that, given the high survival value of sticking together, it is natural for attachment behavior to be regulated by strong negative as well as positive emotions: "Anxiety is a primary response not reducible to other terms and due simply to the rupture of a child's attachment to his mother" (Ibid., p. 376). A number of other situations also excite alarm in young children, e.g., sudden changes in stimulation, looming objects, excessive novelty, strangers, and darkness, but in each case the response is greatly magnified by the absence of an attachment figure.

In addition to being a primary source of distress, separation is also a predisposing condition for further intense fear. In both cases, the infant's anxiety motivates him to attempt to re-establish contact with his mother--in Bowlby's terms, it activates his behavioral systems of attachment

seeking. As the child matures, the necessity of physical proximity falls away; his feelings of security and anxiety come to be based more on his appraisal of his mother's whereabouts and the conditions of her availability. While the child's definition of attachment becomes increasingly symbolic, anxiety acts as a strong motivator for him to remain related to the central figures in his environment. In this sense, anxiety serves to maintain homeostasis between, rather than within, people: "the regulatory systems that maintain a steady relationship between an individual and his environment can be regarded as an 'outer-ring' of life maintaining systems complementary to the 'inner-ring' of systems that maintain physiological homeostasis" (Bowlby, 1973, p. 150).

The regulation of anxiety between mother and child can go askew, leading to what Bowlby calls "anxious attachment." When the availability of an attachment figure is uncertain, fear is easily aroused in the child and he tends to show extreme forms of attachment seeking, e.g., constant crying or panicked clinging. If, for any number of reasons--such as the mother's inability to cope with the child's heightened attachment seeking--the uncertainty becomes chronic, anxiety remains a pervasive element of the relationship.

Bowlby's (1960) main research is with mothers and children who have been separated by hospitalization. Even a brief separation tends to disorganize the child, leading, for instance, to unfocused protest or aimless searching. Once

reunited with the mother, the child tends to regress in terms of his attachment behavior, e.g., relying more strongly on physical proximity than he had prior to the separation. Under conditions of prolonged separation, some children show a general regression, losing sensori-motor or language skills which they had acquired earlier. Separation does not necessarily have to be physical; Bowlby (1973) examines a number of other conditions which promote anxious attachment, e.g.: threats of abandonment, emotional unavailability or abnormal fearfulness on the part of the mother, and hypersensitivity to arousal in the infant.

Hilda's recurrent illnesses fit this model of preconditions for anxious attachment. Physical distress heightens an infant's need for the comfort of its mother. This need may have been impossible for Emily to satisfy, both in terms of the constant attention Hilda would have demanded and because her distress may have, at times, been beyond comfort. The experience of caring for Hilda would have been alternately frustrating and anxiety provoking. It would be natural for Emily to become inconsistent in her caregiving, swinging between strenuous efforts at comforting Hilda and periods of withdrawal. Hilda's attempts at regulating the relationship might have caused further disequilibrium--the negative feedback loop mentioned above. The fact that Hilda mentions losing the ability to walk following her bout with whooping cough suggests that the variability in their attachment may have reached

extreme proportions, having the developmental impact of a prolonged separation.

Anxious attachment tends to develop into ambivalent attachment. Separation frequently arouses anger as well as anxiety. Bowlby (1973) draws on a large body of evidence to show that this connection between anger and anxiety holds true in a variety of situations where humans are parted, as well as in instances of separation between non-human primates. He concludes that, like anxiety, anger serves the adaptive function of maintaining the steady state of an attachment: "it may assist in overcoming such obstacles as there may be to reunion [and] it may discourage the loved person from going away again" (Ibid., p. 247).

Just as anxiety can become dysfunctional in regulating an attachment, anger can also distort the relationship. In a chronically anxious attachment, another vicious cycle tends to arise: as the uncertainty of the relationship escalates, each partner becomes increasingly likely to experience intense anger in relation to the other. Viewed from the perspective of the child, yearning, anxiety, and anger all come to focus on the same person. This ambivalence, I believe, took hold early in Hilda's relationship to her mother. It is the root of the antagonism which Hilda describes as plaguing her later development: "I had such a resentment for mother all my growing years . . . if I couldn't

have seen her belatedly as a good human being, I would have slain her--let alone that she slew herself."

Differentiation and integration.

If the need for attachment were the sole source of motivation in infancy, integration would occur along the lines of the amoeba. In order to give an accurately complex account of personality development, it is necessary to balance the centrifugal force of attachment with an equally basic, centripebal motive for autonomy. This is where White's theory of a set of minute motives toward "competence" fits.

Since White (1960) first published his theory of competence, evidence has accumulated in support of his idea of an inborn tendency to explore and master the environment. McCall and Kagan (1967) find that infants, within the first several months of life, show a preference for complex stimuli. A moderate degree of novelty is intrinsicly rewarding: "stimuli that are optionally discrepant from established schemas are [most] likely to attract and maintain attention" (quoted in Mussen, et al., 1969, p. 164). Loevinger discusses the same phenomenon in terms of developmental "pacers," objects or tasks which lie just beyond the infant's established ability to deal with complexity. Pacers remain a significant stimulus to growth throughout the life-cycle: "As the person maintains contact with and thus masters a pacer, his own level of complexity grows and he is ready for a new, more complex pacer"

(1969, p. 118)--Piaget's principle of seeking equilibrium through disequilibrium.

The second fundamental motive, the need for mastery over the environment, is in at least one important sense ambithetical to the need for attachment: it draws the infant away from its mother. The same stimuli which, under slightly different circumstances, arouse anxiety and attachment seeking can also lead the infant to separate and explore the environment. Progress towards effectance and mastery inevitably violates the boundaries, or disrupts the steady state, of a secure attachment.

The development of competence and interpersonal relatedness are not, however, independent, competing processes. Each builds on and transmutes the other in the manner of a dialectical progression.

At the behavioral level, the child's exploration of the environment and his attachment behavior have an interdependent, as well as an antagonistic, relationship. In a study of fifty infants placed in a novel environment, Ainsworth and Bell (1968) observe a balance between exploratory behavior and proximity-seeking. When the mother is present, the balance shifts significantly in the direction of exploration. Conversely, when she is absent, exploration tends to cease and is replaced by proximity-seeking. In a more detailed clinical analysis of a smaller sample of infants and mothers, Mahler

(1975) finds the same relationship. She observes that the mother acts as a "beacon for the child, a secure base from which his investigation radiates outward." Mahler also describes several patterns of behavior which children use to mediate between attachment and separation: "checking back," in which the child re-establishes visual contact with the mother; "emotional refueling," interrupting exploration with interludes of physical contact; and "shadowing and darting," whereby the child alternates between maintaining constant visual contact and making sudden forays away from the mother--as if playing with the dynamics of the mother-and-child homeostasis. Mahler points out that all of these patterns of behavior enhance the specificity of the child's attachment; they provide practice, initially, in discriminating mother from environment, and later, in differentiating mother from others. At the same time, they serve to expand the radius of secure exploration, bringing more of the world into the circumference of mother-child proximity.

The connection between attachment and mastery of the physical world is likewise strong in the most significant symbolic task of early development: establishing a viable sense of self. In reaching this milestone, the child draws deeply on progress from both spheres of functioning and achieves a new level of synthesis between the polarities of separateness and relatedness. As Jacobson puts it, the child becomes:

> a differentiated but organized entity which is separate and distinct from [the] environment, an entity which has continuity and direction . . . and the capacity to remain the same in the midst of change [1964, p. 23].

This development is, in a sense, the beginning of personality. Stierlin (1969) refers to it as "the dawn of knowing individuation" and Mahler (1975) describes it as "psychological birth."

The infant's growing competence in the environment lays the ground work for this transition into selfhood. Exploration, supported by a secure base of attachment, leads to objectification. Recall that there are two aspects to Piaget's view of objectification, the first major accommodation of early childhood: the "decentering" or separation of self from the object, and the increased mobility and coordination of the infant's schema of the object. The child is able to perceive the unique qualities of the object and, for the first time, relate to it as something apart from himself. It becomes "real" to him:

> The infant gives the impression . . . of really exploring the object's potentialities . . . of really subordinating his actions to an object seen as a thing apart, something "out there" [Flavell, 1963, p. 114].

Object permanence opens the way for person permanence. The interconnection between these two developments is neatly illustrated by a footnote which Freud adds to the anecdote on his grandson's attempt to master the situation of being left alone:

> One day the child's mother had been away for several hours and on her return was met with the words, "Baby gone!" . . . During this long period of solitude the child had found a method of making himself disappear. He had discovered his reflection in a full-length mirror . . . by crouching down he could make his mirror-image "gone." [1920, p. 9, f.n.]

The boy's game obviously requires a certain level of objectification--in order to see himself, he has to have a "decentered" schema of the mirror. But he is using this competence with objects to master an interpersonal situation, the temporary loss of his mother. Prior to this stage of development, the infant experiences the mother as real only insofar as he can assimilate her through his sensori-perceptual schemas. Self-schema and mother-schema are one and the same, a "dual unity" as Mahler calls it. When she leaves him, he loses the secure sense of being which attaches to his mother schema--the precursor of a sense of self. Freud's grandson is discovering a self separate from his mother-schema. This differentiation introduces a new level of relatedness. He can begin to perceive a continuity in his mother which, like the toy on its string or his own image in the mirror, remains durable despite temporary absence. His attachment becomes mobile. The relationship between self and mother can now extend out in space and time, far beyond his immediate proximity and sensory perceptions. Once decentered from his own actions, self, mother, and the connection between the two all begin to take on a more permanent reality. As Freud

correctly perceived, the child, in turn, makes a major advance in mastering the anxiety of separation.

This dialectical transition to a newly abstract level of relatedness through differentiation represents the child's first step in developing the emotional capacity to be alone. Success at this stage results in what Winnicott calls "ego-relatedness":

> The capacity to be alone is a paradox; it is the experience of being alone while someone else is reliably present. Here is implied a rather special type of relationship, that between the infant or small child who is alone, and the mother who is, in fact, reliably present . . . Ego-relatedness refers to the relationship between two people, one of whom at any rate is alone; perhaps both are alone yet the presence of each is important to the other [1965, p. 129].

The first steps toward differentiation and ego-relatedness can be considered a sudden revolution in the child's mode of integrating himself in the world. The elaboration of these companion processes, however, remains an ongoing task, extending throughout the life cycle. Even the first stage of this developmental process, the negativism of the "terrible twos," seems interminable to most parents. The child, following the universal tendency to over assimilate through a new schema, applies his new construction of self-as-different-from-other with a vengence. Everything becomes negatible. A battle of wills ensues between parent and child. The child attempts constantly to expand the boundaries of his negatively defined self, forcing the parent to affirm the

limits of other. The child's development of competence and consolidation of his differentiated sense of relatedness remain closely linked in this new transaction:

> One of Piaget's firmest beliefs, repeated over and over again in scores of publications is that thought becomes aware of itself . . . and in general able to adhere to logical-social norms of noncontradiction, coherence, etc. . . . only from repeated interpersonal interactions in which the child is actually forced again and again to take cognizance of the role of the other. It is social interaction which gives the ultimate coup de grace to [cognitive] egocentrism [Flavell, 1963, pp. 156-157].

Accommodation must be mutual in order for this stage to have a successful outcome--the parent must offer defeat with honor. The child who vigorously opposes his mother counts on her continued support to the same degree that the infant who engages in "shadowing and darting" relies on the mother's action--rather than his own anxiety--to re-establish the homeostasis of their attachment. Failure at the earlier stage of exploration, e.g., injury in the environment or a fearful response from the mother, forces the infant to accommodate more on the basis of anxiety. He might, for example, adapt by clinging and learning to rely increasingly on covert forms of exploration, such as visual scanning. Defeat at this later stage of differentiation has a similar effect. If the child experiences his differentiation as endangering his basic grounding in the interpersonal world, accommodation will, again, be strongly influenced by anxiety. The opportunity to experience himself as at once whole and part of a larger

totality recedes. He comes to see significant aspects of himself as inimical to participation in the social world; shame and anxiety become part of his structuring of self. Through the covert processes of fantasy and dissociation, he may learn to retreat behind what Winnicott (1965) calls a "false self on a conformity basis."

There is a good deal of evidence in Hilda's history that she and her mother were unsuccessful in negotiating this stage of parent-child opposition. Hilda mentions that Emily used to tell her that "The first words I uttered were 'I don't want to.'" Conflict around the issue of being "satisfactory as a person" was a central theme of her childhood. As Hilda stepped out into the world, she suffered acute crises of shame and social anxiety. Experiences of depersonalization and fears of "being seen" have remained a painful feature of Hilda's adult functioning. The process of dissociation is implicated in all of these disturbances. To complete the framework for understanding Hilda's early development, a brief outline of this alternative to integration is in order.

Dissociation.

When a person employs dissociation, he excludes unacceptable aspects of himself from his conscious awareness; he comes to regard them as "not-me" (Sullivan, 1953). In transactional terms, dissociation is a mode of relating to self as a non-self object. Dissociation is motivated by the need to

remain grounded in the social world. It requires the ability to imagine the perspective of one's reference group turned back on oneself. The aspects of self which, if seen, might put one "beyond the pale" of the group are those most likely to be dissociated. They are often connected with the experience of shame:

> Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at . . . He who is ashamed would like to force the world not to look at him, not to notice his exposure. He would like to destroy the eyes of the world. Instead he must wish for his own invisibility [Erikson, 1950, pp. 252-253].

Dissociation achieves this wish for invisibility; the person does not "see" the source of shame as part of himself.

Dissociation is part of normal development. Some dissociations, those attaching, for example, to the products of bodily functions, are shared throughout the culture. Dissociation becomes problematic when the person experiences many of his own wishes, impulses, and emotions as unacceptable in a vital relationship and, therefore, seeks to dissociate major, constituent aspects of himself.

Breger (1974, pp. 210-219) draws an important link between the use of fantasy and dissociation: "The essence of pretense is that one actively does something and, at the same time actively denies doing it." Dissociative fantasy is like a pretense maintained toward oneself:

> When the child moves into the world of fantasy as a way to resolve conflict, he is pretending in two ways. Outwardly, he pretends to feel other than he does--he ceases to be angry, demanding, or selfish.

> Inwardly, he pretends things are other than they are--he creates fantasies in which his anger can be expressed or his demands gratified [Ibid., p. 213].

Breger also focuses on the deeply passive nature of dissociation. The child becomes passive in relation to the parents by accepting their will as his, becoming the object in relation to their subjectivity. He withdraws into a private sphere, intentionally cut-off from active participation in public give-and-take. He also adopts a passive position in regard to his own feelings and actions, experiencing them as things which happen to him--moving toward the passive end of what Stierlin (1969) calls the dimension of "doing vs. undergoing."

If the parents are persistently unable to support the child's individuation or have an overriding need for him to be a particular way, his dissociative solution can stabilize: he erects a false, public self split-off from a private world of shameful feelings and gratifying fantasies. This solution has two seriously negative implications for future development. First, as Breger points out, the child who relates to the world extensively through fantasy can assimilate without accommodating; instead of promoting active mastery, ongoing experience tends to reinforce his passive solution. Second, and more relevant to Hilda's life, the act of relating through a false self tends to divorce the person from the corrective influence of engaging with others. He always knows, at some level, that his transaction is based on a false currency. His

sense of false self insidiously disqualifies whatever security others might offer. Doubt--which Erikson calls "the brother of shame"--comes to pervade his interpersonal experience. These negative developments begin to appear prominently in Hilda's recollections of mid-childhood.

Mid-Childhood

The family's move to Hudson stands out as a bright spot in Hilda's memory. In contrast to the dark, industrial atmosphere which she associates with the homes of her earliest years, Hudson seemed full of "growth, skies, hills, woods--all this beautiful out of doors." Hilda regards her family's arrival in Hudson as a potential turning point in her life; she describes it at several points in her journals and had an hallucinatory vision of it during her psychosis. It was a moment of expanding promise for Hilda and the family: they were settling into their first permanent home, Jacob was becoming established in the business world, and a secure position in society seemed close at hand.

Several sources of satisfaction did materialize for Hilda during her years in Hudson: she discovered books, an art teacher introduced her to painting, she and her brother James became close, and she formed a lasting friendship with another girl in the community. But, for the most part, her life took a dark course through childhood. She became absorbed in fears of darkness and "bogies," periodic depressions, thoughts of

suicide, conflict with her siblings, and, above all, a painfully antagonistic relationship with her mother. Home became a trap:

> It was really a form of discouragement. Many times in my life I've thought, "What's the use. I don't try hard enough, I'm not that bright, I'm not that fullfledged a person." A lot of my childhood I was terribly, terribly bored at home--if only I had gotten away--the same food, the same bed, same fights, same talk . . .
>
> --This sounds like such a sad story--"fun on the farm."

Darkness and strange creatures.

The most common sources of fear in infancy--darkness and strangeness--remained potent for Hilda throughout her youth. They became a fixture of her private world:

Hilda: I had a terrible fear of the dark--even when I grew to be a much older person. I could go up the stairway and make a sound and all these horrible creatures would come out, you know, from the dark. I called them bogies.

C.J.: Were they something you would actually see?

Hilda: Yes, I'd see them.

C.J.: What would they look like?

Hilda: Oh, they were something like these fluxing creatures. Either black or with these horrible faces coming toward me. I'd have to rush from them--something like that awful woman I had encouraged to chase me, down town.

The woman that Hilda refers to was a deranged bag lady who wandered around Hudson. She was one of several aberrant characters who struck Hilda's imagination.

Hilda: There was also an awful boy, Danny Natchis. He was the wrong kind of a birth, you know, a great big gruesome man-sized thing. He made a terrible noise . . . Every time I saw him I thought, "Oh my god, I'll die if I have to see that thing again."

And I'd say to mother, "Why don't they put Danny Natchis someplace like we did Aunt Eleanor?"

Aunt Eleanor was, of course, the earliest and most immediate member of this group of scary figures: "When I was very little she would get us in the corner and frighten us terribly. She had a very frightening way about her--and she was frightened herself."

Hilda gives an occasional hint of feeling, in addition to terror and fascination, a sense of fellowship with the abnormal people in her childhood. In dancing school, for instance, she often chose a very withdrawn boy as her partner. Hilda believes that she was the first to discover that his problem was deafness, and brought it to the attention of the adults.

The suggestion of an identification with abnormality is strong in the case of Aunt Eleanor. Emily's sister was the only adult in the early household who had strong interests in art and religion, two of Hilda's main interests. She remembers her father more than once noting the connection:

> If father didn't like my remark or look he would liken it to Aunt Eleanor's 'esoteric approach'--she was very interested in religions. Very often I would come out with something suggestive of spirituality. He would say, "Just like Eleanor"--as if that were a very sad thing. I would ask, "What's wrong with being like Aunt Eleanor?" and he would respond, "Well, she went insane"--maybe he gave me the idea.

This is not to say that Hilda consciously modeled herself after Aunt Eleanor--she resisted the idea at the time, and still feels her father's comparison unfair. Hilda may have felt a connection with Aunt Eleanor, but shared her family's sense of horror with regard to her insanity. In reflecting on her childhood terrors and fascination with abnormality Hilda comments:

Hilda: These are things that I consider bad maladjustments.

C.J.: Back then, as a child, did you see yourself that way?

Hilda: No, no, I just felt life had awful things in it.

Hilda as the bad child.

To recall points from Chapter 2, two of the main features in Hilda's experience of the family atmosphere were a shortage of supplies and failure to cohere as an integrated unit. Within the subsystem of Hilda and her siblings, these qualities have their counterpart in memories of an unequal distribution of parental affection, dual standards of justice, jealousy and resentment between siblings, and children out of control.

Hilda felt the family resources overtaxed at a simple quantitative level--the additions were too frequent:

> I think I held [my mother's fecundity] in disdain. James called me aside once and said, "Now this has got to stop. Mother and father are doing this all the time and having children all the time! Something has got to be done!" [Hilda laughs] I thought it was awfully bad too.

Hilda also remembers the children being out of control at the level of group action. She and her siblings would get caught up in frenetic teasing and rough housing as if infected by some outside force--being "full of the very dickens." Emily's protests--"children, children, children"--would seem to push them "further and further into it." Hilda describes experiencing "the dickens" in herself as a "kind of motherhood thing":

> I liked to tease [my younger siblings], a great deal. It was kind of a motherhood thing in me, thinking they were cute, fun to annoy, and so on. I was very fond of [the youngest boy] Harry. Harry would chase me out of the third story window on the slate roof around the house, lickety-cut, with just this gutter to control me from falling down three stories . . . The neighbors would call mother and say, "Harry is chasing Hilda around the gutters on the third floor again." And mother would say [with resignation] "I know it, I know it."

Hilda feels that what control Emily did exert was very unevenly distributed, that she was subjected to an entirely different standard of discipline than the other children.

Hilda: My brother, both of my brothers punished me too--punishment seemed part of life in those days, and on and on until I began living alone.

C.J.: James would punish you?

Hilda: Very often, yes. At the table, I would look at him in sort of a penetrating way. He would make a remark and I would try to make some cute rejoinder. He would say, "If you don't stop looking at me and speaking when I speak, I'm going to come around and punish you. I'm going to give you a very mean fist right in the middle of the back." So I would go ahead and do it again and he would walk slowly around

the table and give me a terrible bang right in the back.

C.J.: How would your parents react?

Hilda: I think mother would say something like, "Hilda, you shouldn't be such a tease. You're always teasing"-- It was called teasing when I did it . . . when they did it it was called "discipline." The males disciplined the females.

C.J.: Could you do it, I mean what if you "disciplined" a younger child?

Hilda: I would get a spanking at the end of the week [when father came home]. When I disciplined Isabel it was called "teasing."

C.J.: Did you resent it.

Hilda: I did.

While Hilda may have felt that her parents' standards were grossly unfair, she still questions whether she was really bad. Following the pattern of the "two families," her younger siblings respond: "Hilda, you know you were a very naughty child," and Isabel tells her, "Of course you weren't." As a child, Hilda was especially hurt when her father subscribed to what she now sees as the perspective of the "second family."

C.J.: Would you go to your father--as a young girl--with problems?

Hilda: Well the problem was always that I had been bad that week, and had to have a spanking from him, every Sunday. And that was it. No explanation at all, from him or myself . . . Of course I could always think back to sometime when I had been teasing the heck out of Isabel or something. But she would begin it, she knew she could get me angry. I'd scratch or pull her hair, then she'd go screeching to mother, then I'd be reported to father, you see? Isabel knows that to this day.

C.J.: Could you ever turn to either parent to talk over problems?

Hilda: Not really, the reason being that either you were in the right or you're wrong--all the time, you see. And I don't think the thing really balanced; I think I was in the wrong more than I was ever in the right--This is my <u>feeling</u>, today even. And I don't know how this occurred, except that I was really a tease . . . I would bring on these situations through my teasing.

Parental affection was, in Hilda's eyes, equally misapportioned. She remembers feeling intense jealousy in relation to both parents. Everything the other children received highlighted what she was missing. She was particularly jealous of her father's affection for Isabel, who was "always" sitting on his lap:

> My father used to say, "Hilda, you have a very unpleasant expression."
>
> He had a picture of us that he'd show me. Isabel had a "charming little girl look" and I had a gloomy expression. Perhaps he called this out in me, though. Maybe if father and mother were--I thought the two of them were awfully stern creatures--Maybe I was gripping myself together--I felt their disapproval a great deal of the time.

Hilda remembers accusing her parents of not loving her. They explained that Isabel had "double the love" because little Eleanor had died (Isabel was immediately before Eleanor in the birth order).

Her mother's "withheld expression" hurt Hilda most deeply:

> We were not demonstrative. Mother used to say [imperiously], "No demonstration is necessary." But meanwhile I was terribly jealous of the fact that she would <u>demonstrate</u> with Isabel and Harry and James--

> and even with father, she would demonstrate a goodbye and hello kiss.

Childhood depression.

From late childhood until early adolescence, Hilda experienced periodic depression, which would come on "like having a dream, and then it would be suddenly over." For several years, Hilda also entertained ideas of suicide during her black spells:

> Father used to have muriatic [hydrochloric] acid around the house. He thought it aided his digestion. I would try a little now and then--Once I took enough to have my stomach feel as if it were rusting inside.
>
> I also wanted to throw myself on the railroad tracks . . . I would lie in bed at night and hear the train, and wish either to get on and go, or to be standing in the middle of the tracks.

Hilda's train-death fantasy ceased when Johnnie Polaski, their housekeeper Mary's retarded son, did actually get run over by a train. Hilda feared that her thoughts of suicide had somehow been communicated to Johnnie, perhaps through her mother's conversations with Mary, and resolved to put such dangerous thoughts aside.

Hilda does not recollect the experience of depression itself with any detail. She describes it simply as global "discouragement," a deep sense of being "not worth it," or feelings of being "trapped at home."

She has several theories on the origin of her depressions. She speculates that, given the regularity of onset and the fact that she had a constant headache for a year

prior to menarche, they might have been in some way a precursor of menstruation. Hilda suggests that this connection might have been the hidden wisdom in her mother's customary advice: "Just wait awhile and maybe you will stop wanting to kill yourself."

Most often, she connects her depressions directly to her relationship with her parents, especially Emily. In the following excerpt, Hilda gives an excellent example of two central qualities of dissociation: (a) the experience of one's own emotions as alien--she describes her feelings in the passive voice, as something undergone; and (b) the link between disowned emotion and the disruption of a vital interpersonal relationship--her anger is like an internal subversive force which works to sabotage her relationship with Emily.

Hilda: These things were usually triggered by a remark of some kind from mother. Feelings would be hurt, anger aroused--I've told you my anger has betrayed me many times into very unhappy outcomes.

Hilda draws this connection between anger at her mother and depression at several other points in our interviews. In the next excerpt, she describes an instance where communicating these feelings actually led to physical isolation through the intervention of a third party, her father:

Hilda: I think I decided I hated my mother. And my father came home one weekend and said, "I understand you told your mother you hated her? You go up to the spare room and you <u>stay</u> in that room until I tell you to come out."

So I had to go up in that spare room and stay there, I don't know how many hours . . . These moments of isolation are peculiar in my memory . . .

C.J.: You remember it well?

Hilda: Yes I do. I stood at the door, at the crack of that door, and I can remember seeing that paint, and smelling the matting in the room, and the whole--the flux of sunshine in there--the whole thing. And thinking: "I wonder if he means this?"

I can't remember when he let me out, but I remember standing up to him: "Now do you think you accomplished anything with that?"

C.J.: What caused you to hate your mother?

Hilda: I can't remember why I decided . . . I think I had a lot of hatred for my mother. But it was bound up in jealousy, you see, and anger and all of that. I was really jealous of her attention to others in the family--And it seemed to me that no matter how hard I tried to do the various things she asked me to do--even though I would be lax in getting at it at the very moment of the remark . . .

I never could really satisfy her, I think that was the point. I felt, "Gee I never will . . . be a satisfactory person as far as she is concerned."

C.J.: Did you know what you'd have to do to satisfy her?

Hilda: Well, I suppose I should have stepped on it and worked happily, singing at the top of my voice, asking her if there wasn't one more thing I could do besides all the other little duties she'd imposed upon us--I call it "imposed," you know, but that's the way it felt.

Hilda and Emily.

In Chapter 2 I commented on the difficulty of abstracting a clear picture of Emily from Hilda's rich account of the early family. It is even more difficult to organize Hilda's reconstruction of their relationship. In addition to

the sheer volume of material--most of Hilda's descriptions of events in her youth refer back to her mother at some point--there is Hilda's own problem in organizing her experience of their relationship. She mentions once that her daughter Ruth is "at least ten people to me," an estimate that can apply to Emily as well--I have tried to narrow them down to three overlapping aspects.

Hilda has also put a good deal of work into sorting out her relationship with Emily. The impossibility of separating the childhood memories from the adult rememberer is especially apparent in this area of her life. In fact, some aspects of her early relationship with Emily only become clear in light of Hilda's much later experience--seeing Ruth as ten people might be an example. I include several of these latter day connections to Emily with Hilda's descriptions of their early relationship.

To continue with a theme introduced in the last excerpt, much of Hilda's account of her childhood experience of Emily describes a servant/master relationship. The theme of oppressive servitude is strong in Hilda's adult life. She writes, in Journal at Sixty, of observing the servants in the Mendahl household closely, and wondering:

> Wherever did these women wash their bodies (certainly not in the family bathroom). And wherever did they eliminate. Did mother force them to sponge bathe secretly in the iron tubs of the dark laundry? And must they use that poor toilet seat . . . near the coal bin?

. . . Hilda, herself, worked as a servant three times; twice for outsiders and once, following her first hospitalization, "in my father's house." In each case she felt alienated and exploited. As she puts it, she resented "working for somebody else's result."

Her feelings of oppression were extreme in the case of her return to the family after hospitalization. In describing this period she stops herself to interject: "This is like a Dickens novel, poor little creature," [she laughs]. "It's unbelievable."

It was only late in the second summer of our interviews that Hilda and I recognized this aspect of being a servant in relation to her mother. Hilda had been describing how her mother had cared for her during several illnesses of mid-childhood, how surprised she was at Emily's kindness:

Hilda: I didn't exactly know what to make of it. I think I demeaned myself in mother's--in my own mind about how mother felt about me--always.

And if she had been good, say, to one of the servants, if a servant had been ill, and she was good to the servant I would think, "Why are you doing that?" She was--sometimes when I had a terrible earache, she'd talk over the phone, "Well Hilda has had this earache for so many days."

And I'd think, "She really doesn't like that." It surprised me.

C.J.: What could she like about it?

Hilda: [Laughs] I don't know. But this was my reaction in my mind.

C.J.: When she paid attention to the servants that surprised you too?

Hilda: When she was kindly to them and understanding, yes that surprised me.

C.J.: And you felt the same way about yourself?

Hilda: Yes, much. I think I really did liken myself to them, a great deal. I felt very badly for the servants, very badly.

. . . maybe I decided I wasn't worth liking.

C.J.: She must have done things to make you feel that way?

Hilda: I don't know.

C.J.: Where would a little girl get that.

Hilda: I don't know, but where would a grown person have it all of her life, in the same way, the same feeling? Where does it come from?

C.J.: I think someone has to give it to you.

Hilda: I don't . . . know. I can't remember anybody that put me there and said, "There, that's all you are."

C.J.: There must have been some reason you were surprised when she did show you some affection when you were ill.

Hilda: I was always surprised when she was kindly toward me.

It's just like when you have a cruel boss--it might have been a form of discipline in her voice--you know when you have a boss on a job, and he suddenly turns around and says 'You did a good job that time.' You're so surprised that he even considers you did any kind of a job. It was something like that.

I think that mother and father were both dictators in their own way, no matter if she were gentle or harsh, I can't remember. I know later, after my death [sic], I'd hear her voice as plain as could be, and recognizing it, and there was nothing about it that was dictatorial or reprimanding, but it could have been that I took it that way [as a child].

So I was surprised whenever they'd say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," in any respect at all.

In this view of their affectional bond as bondage, Hilda emphasizes one aspect of her experience of the relationship, her feelings of uncertain worth in the eyes of her mother. She often focuses on this dimension of their relationship. Hilda speaks of: yearning for the "terrific love that mother claimed she had with her mother"; "never being the person I could have been to her"; and being hesitant to share things with Emily because she feared her offerings would be deemed "not worth it." Hilda's need for recognition and affection from Emily was clearly a central dynamic of their relationship, but it was by no means a simple matter of presence or absence. Recognition had its own very real dangers to Hilda:

> My mother was a clever woman . . . She could make remarks which would really cut you--she could see you, you'd be behaving in a certain way, and she could see you, and she would make a remark. Somehow it was the fact that she could see what I was doing, I suppose, that I was in some way thinking I was getting this over well--whatever it was I was thinking or saying--and her criticism was usually very acute, very apt, but it would throw me into an awful despondency--Now my sisters say I'm exactly the same kind of person, that no one in the family is as likely to do that as often and as happily and as carefreely as I will--that I can put my finger on certain things about them, mention it, hurt their feelings, and go right along in the midst of my speech--and I don't even know that I've done it . . . There's something in us that doesn't want to be found.
>
> --I have a vague remembrance of relating things about my friends--many things I would decide, sort of insights. I would give to [mother]. She was very patient, but every now and then she could disagree so totally that it wiped the slate clean--it would take away my own concept.

Having her "slate wiped clean" or being "seen" by her mother were two components of a deadly antagonism that Hilda experienced in their relationship: "my mother could have fought me any day of her life." Again, this is a perception which Hilda develops in looking back through her years of adult experience. In the context of describing a triangular relationship which Hilda entered into during early adulthood, she mentions that she felt "stymied" by the other woman, "she made me feel that I had to fight for who I was being." Hilda recognizes this perception of someone else "standing in the way of my freedom" as part of a life-long pattern:

> It seems that I have always put myself in that position, dramatically, in my life--there must be a clear expression of love or value, or permission for myself to be enjoyed by someone else, or to enjoy someone else. And I always say, "If that were not there I could . . ." Quite often it's a woman. My mother-in-law seemed to do that with me, and even my mother--you know it might have gone back originally to my mother.

In Hilda's experience of the antagonism with her mother, anger took on frightening proportions. Hilda is highly sensitive to interpersonal conflict in general. She often describes hurt feelings in terms of physical damage. For example, she describes her husband as "coming back with these god-awful remarks that had a personal thrust--if it were combat, it was really murder--as if he enjoyed mentally murdering the opponent." Hilda uses this imagery of deadly struggle in describing the impact of her conflict with Emily. Earlier in the chapter, I quoted her statement that, if Emily

had not committed suicide, "I really would have slain her myself."

C.J.: Slain her?

Hilda: Because I had deliberately done this in my relationship with her as a youngster: not being understanding enough, not giving her credit for who she was or what she was enduring. When you are cruel to anyone--and I was, I guess, cruel to her, and I guess she was to me, in her own peculiar way, you kill yourself and your people and your relationships, in that way. Cruelty is a thing which destroys, totally.

Hilda has experienced a similarly destructive cruelty in other recurring antagonistic relationships in her life, especially in relation to women who have actual power over her. Some of these people can strike Hilda as so incomprehensibly cruel that she has been tempted to view them as possessed--"that would be an easy way of coping with it, just call them 'possessed'." Coming under the influence of such inexplicable cruelty has, in fact, been a sort of demonic fate theme in Hilda's adult life. The most extreme example of this relationship occurred in the later years of Hilda's hospitalization. She was placed in a ward supervised by a woman whom Hilda saw as virtually enslaving her, subjecting her to constant mental and physical abuse and forbidding any contact with the staff doctors which could have led to her release. In the following passage, Hilda is responding to my comment that her writings on this period portray the woman as so irrationally cruel that it is hard to believe in her as a real character:

> Indeed, I have met some awful people in my day. Argh . . . Most of it, in my thinking, is women who would contrive in any way to be in a position, socially or politically--they would use themselves, and what they had of personality, to hurt, to trammel--this is mostly mental, let me tell you. I saw it in the hospital, nurses, people who had seniority over you . . . there was almost no end to which they'd go to try to destroy you in some way, disturb you and destroy you, and others too--and delight in doing it.

There are strong overtones of sadism in Hilda's account of these antagonistic relationships; she almost always describes the other person as taking pleasure in their hurtful action. A co-worker at the mental hospital once told Hilda, "you leave yourself wide open to this kind of thing," and accused her of being a masochist. There is truth in this observation. Hilda's chief mode of resistance in these enormously threatening antagonisms is to absorb abuse more successfully than her counterpart can dole it out, resisting domination through submission. Just as the others "use themselves to trammel," Hilda uses herself as a vast buffer zone, offering a "wide open" territory to absorb their advance. She gives a clear statement of this Russian tactic of defense in relation to the abusive ward supervisor.

C.J.: Weren't you ever tempted to rebel?

Hilda: Never, throughout the whole of my hospitalization--She used to say, "If you'd only fight back, Hilda, then I could put you on a worse ward." "Ha!," I'd think, "I'm clever not to fight back, and I will remain so if I die in the attempt."

Hilda never explicitly labels any of her oppressors, including Emily, as sadistic. She does, however, outline the

blueprints of a masochistic defensive position in her descriptions of their mother-daughter antagonism. Her idea of the best approach to dealing with the excessive demands which Emily "imposed" upon her--"I should have stepped on it and worked happily, singing at the top of my voice"--is a statement of the false self solution. It would involve separating her private feelings from her public face, withdrawing behind the boundary of an outwardly cheerful, compliant self, accepting defeat, but leaving the conqueror with nothing real to subsist on. Hilda's counter attack from this defensive position is likewise self-destructive. In her strongest statement on their mother-daughter antagonism, Hilda's "cruel" actions toward Emily--"not being understanding enough, not giving her credit for who she was"--entail withholding from Emily the same recognition and affection which Hilda is so acutely aware of needing. Hilda, in effect, dissociates herself from the positive aspects of her affective bond with Emily, resorting to a scorched earth policy toward her own most vital feelings--"You kill yourself and your people and your relationships, in that way."

The fact that Hilda can articulate the essential features of this defensive position does not mean that she was consciously aware of employing it in her daily interactions with Emily, nor that she often adopted it in a pure form. More likely, her usual mode of relating to Emily would have been a

more complex compromise between active resistance and compliance, achieved without Hilda's conscious awareness.

Hilda: . . . At home, when I was a child, and I was asked to work, I just had a feeling of rebellion every time--mother said the first word I said was "I don't want to"--And I think that almost every request that was ever made of me, I would remark in my mind, "I don't want to," and later relent and want to. As if one were a dual creature . . . I won't want to and then I have to, all the time . . . It's a habit of behavior, compulsiveness--they called it compulsiveness in my insistence on work as a hospital attendant.

C.J.: It feels that way to you, like a compulsion.

Hilda: Yes it does, it does.

Another approach to regulating the balance of their relationship is for Hilda to become like Emily. Frustrated in her attempt to become one-and-different, she may fall back on being one-and-the-same. There is considerable evidence that Hilda also employs this mode of adapting to the dangerous antagonism between mother and daughter. She wrote her second book, Beauty, I Wonder, shortly after Emily's death. Hilda's intent was "to rectify" her image of her mother, "to see her . . . belatedly as a good, interesting human." She accomplished this by fusing events and relationships from both of their lives into the character of a single protagonist:

> This clarifies her for me, for some reason. Even though it is all mixed up in characters--first it's myself, then it's herself--nevertheless, I can remember her when I read it . . . I was so afraid I might forget her, because I had such an antagonism for her all my growing years.

Hilda has already mentioned that family members today see her as "exactly the same kind of person" with respect to

making cutting remarks "so often and so carefreely." In an earlier quote, she describes teasing--the childhood equivalent--as "a kind of a motherhood thing in me." In contrast to the solution of adopting a false self, this mode of adapting to the mother-daughter conflict through identification puts Hilda in an active position. Incorporating Emily's "safe" ways of expressing anger enables Hilda to move from a posture of pure undergoing to one mixed with doing. It provides her with a means of asserting herself in relation to Emily.

C.J.: As a child, were you particularly rebellious?

Hilda: Well, I would instigate . . . trouble. I knew how to tease Isabel or Harry or Jim until they reacted. I was rebellious in that way.

In addition to the obvious function of balancing her relational accounts on the less dangerous heads of her siblings--oppression flows downward--Hilda's skill at teasing serves to redress the original inbalance in the mother-daughter relationship. Hilda's siblings become inadvertent allies, a force that she can turn against Emily--"children, children, children." Like the solution of adopting a false self, this strategy of self defense based on identification dissociates Hilda from her own anger--first, by allowing her to disown it as play and, second, by diffusing responsibility across the sibling group--but it does so in far less destructive ways. Her aggression takes place in the public world of interpersonal action, rather than in the potentially more dangerous private world of fantasy, emotional bonds, and self delineation.

Paradoxically, Hilda's identification with Emily in this area of disowned aggression enhances differentiation in several ways. First, Hilda's gain in interpersonal competence brings her new power to regulate the relationship. Hilda's new ability to have any active effect on Emily reopens the possibility of becoming one-and-different. Second, the process of identification itself involves a "decentering" of attention. In order to model herself on her mother, Hilda must focus not just on how Emily makes her feel but also on what she actually does to affect Hilda. This shift in focus advances Hilda's "objectification" of Emily and enables her to acquire a newly mobile way of relating--teasing--which she can apply in other situations. Third, the specific skill which Hilda acquires from Emily--"seeing" people, honing in on their emotional vulnerabilities--further enhances her opportunities for objectification. As she exercises and refines this skill, Hilda would become increasingly aware of at least one facet of the other person's unique properties.

On the other hand, this last benefit carries a substantial cost for Hilda: becoming more sensitive to the vulnerability of others would heighten Hilda's appreciation of the dangers of the interpersonal world in general. In relation to her mother, in particular, becoming increasingly fluent in Emily's ways of penetrating another person's defenses--"cutting" them with remarks that have a "personal

thrust"--might bring the danger of having her true self "seen" all the closer, thus reinforcing Hilda's need for a false self.

The dangers of "seeing" and being "seen" remain potent to Hilda in her adult life. In her Journal at Sixty she writes: "How fearful it would be if our souls like rivers . . . could flow into the open, revealed actually, and combining. What horror!"

C.J.: Can you say more about what you mean here [in your Journal]?

Hilda: Well, I was very conscious of my loneliness at this time. But I thought, "Much better this way than . . . if we were being revealed and combining and understanding and seeing--like a Dante's Inferno, everybody all writhing in a heap of tragedy and death and fear and horror."

In her closest current relationships, Hilda also remains sensitive to the risk of being the object of the other's disowned anger:

C.J.: Do you worry much these days?

Hilda: I have moments of being awfully angry. Then I trace it back to something that was said . . . Suddenly something is said that feels as if it's a vital blow, that that person's remark affects me in that way.

And then I can think "Well, now you're taking that rather seriously," later on.

Immediately, I can be very angry, have the anger be active--[my daughter] Ruth says, "My, you're feisty!"

And I'd say "Ruth, I don't think--Ruth, do you know me at all? Why do you deliberately say a thing like that to me?"

And later on she'll say "Now Hilda, you saw that in an entirely different way than I intended it to be said"--sometimes she "teases," you know, but that isn't teasing, that isn't a teasing moment--of course

> I don't feel I do it, but Ruth says there are times I'm so <u>difficult</u> I'm as bad as she is, [Hilda laughs] or worse.

As Ruth suggests, Hilda continues to incorporate seeing/teasing in her predominant ways of relating to the family. Although Hilda would never be intentionally sadistic, and is sensitive to the pain of others, she has also incorporated some of the feelings of pleasure which she attributes to the hurtful counterpart in her antagonisms.

> I remember that I was very easily hurt. On the other hand, mother told me that I knew how to tease people and that I was hurting them. I said I didn't intend to, and I think I didn't--Except that I like to excite people and see them cringe when I point out certain facts about them, as <u>people</u>.
>
> And my sisters said, "Hilda, you don't realize how you can <u>understand</u> people. And you can come out with a remark that's <u>very</u> hurtful."
>
> I said, "Really?"
>
> "Oh, yes!," they said. "You'll nab onto some little thing about us, that no one else would think of."
>
> I said, "Well perhaps I'm too analytical."
>
> "That you are!" they said.
>
> "Well I like analyzing people, I enjoy that . . . unless you can figure out why people say and do what they do . . . how are you going to latch onto the way things go?"

Hilda's identification with Emily's ways of seeing/hurting introduces a third major aspect of their mother daughter relationship: along side of her experience of oppressive servitude and deadly antagonism, Hilda felt a deep sense of participation in her mother's emotional experience.

Although she fought Emily more strenuously than any of her other siblings, Hilda may also have been the closest to her in the sense of emphatic recognition. Again, this is not a view of their relationship which comes immediately to Hilda:

> We were almost like sisters in a way. I did not take her advice readily, but I would talk along with her--much more than I realized until afterwards, until now, talking to you.

The picture of Hilda "talking along" with her mother emerges more from between than in the lines of her descriptions of early family life. For example, Hilda can give a detailed accounting of Emily's household budget and how it was apportioned. She also gives occasional examples of taking the role of an older sister toward Emily, e.g., Hilda describes introducing improvements in the household diet, like salads, which she observed in a friend's home or urging her mother to shampoo more often and to abandon a fashionable hairstyle because "you just don't have the manual dexterity for it."

In addition to following Emily's activities, Hilda was a close observer of her mother's inner state. She saw the "veiled anger" and distress behind her mother's public behavior:

> If she was angry . . . she was so well behaved that it was well covered. She could be crying, really . . . and laughing very loudly. But you felt mother was weeping.

Hilda's perception of Emily's hidden distress is the main point which differentiates her perspective from that of the "second family":

> They see mother as a hard working, happy, willing, loving mother. I see her as a hardworking, distressed, anguished, infuriated woman.

Despite Hilda's frustration with her mother's shortcomings in coping with daily life, she was also acutely sensitive to Emily's vulnerability in the eyes of the world. She uses the phrase "cold mockery," or "world of cold mockery" several times in her first two books. In response to my request for elaboration, Hilda connects the image to Emily:

> It's what I mean when I say I don't really get into people . . . Instead, they're just sort of saying: "Oh well, you--that's just you saying that. That has nothing to do with the real situation. Why don't you cope with the really important characteristics of living."
>
> Probably it's a form of realizing that my mother was similar because she didn't cope with the realist's idea either.

Hilda's sympathetic concern over Emily's treatment at the hands of others focused most strongly on her father:

> I'd feel very sad when her feelings were hurt, when things weren't going as they should--Father almost was gruff with her, I'd feel badly for her--I did have feelings for her.

Hilda, Emily, and Jacob

> I think I never found in father the person I hoped I might, a companion, someone who would understand me. I used to think if we would see more of him, he would know us and we would know him. Somehow this never happened.
>
> --I don't think I was ever able to accept other people's attachments for each other. I think when I see any attachment . . . I have a serious jealousy--or something.

There is a causal relationship between Hilda's above two statements. That is, Jacob's sparse and ritualized weekend contact with the family made it difficult for Hilda to get to know her father, but the real barrier arose from the fact that Jacob and Emily's relationship was painfully unacceptable to Hilda. It was impossible for Hilda, in turn, to separate her parents' relationship from her own intricate and troubled relationship with Emily.

Looking first at the problems which Hilda perceived within her parents' relationship, she identifies the main shortcoming as a lack of "emotional interplay".

> There was no emotional interplay. When I began reading about love in poetry and literature, I would say to mother, "You and father don't know a thing about that!"
>
> They were so hidden, gave so little of themselves, otherwise we could have been more understanding . . . In those days it was not "polite."

She saw the lack as occurring on both sides; neither partner gave the other the necessary credit and support.

> Almost entirely, mother didn't appreciate father for the person he was, as a mind, a hard working person getting up there in the business world, through his own error and attempt . . . He would always talk about money and stocks. Mother couldn't believe any of it, it meant nothing to her.

Hilda's picture of Jacob's shortcomings in offering Emily emotional support is more mixed. On the one hand, "He admired her, he used to say, 'Your mother is a beautiful little person.'" He was also "a good skate" about her lapses in housekeeping, overlooking "whatever he found in the corners."

On the other hand, Hilda feels Emily got "very little credit from father" for all the hard work she did. In terms of material support, however, Jacob was unambiguously deficient:

> I don't know how he ever expected her to get by on what little he gave her.
>
> Perhaps I got used to the idea of coping without a male protector. If there had been a loving relationship between my parents, it might have been different.

The one area in which Hilda did see an active interplay between her parents, their sexual relationship, was most disturbing to her. Recall from the second chapter that, as part of the weekend ritual, Emily always retired with a headache after the family dinner. "This was peculiar because mother never slept in the afternoon except after these Sunday nights." At some point in mid-childhood, Hilda solved this mystery by observing her parents in bed through a crack in their door. She came away with a picture of sex as a brutal, destructive act, particularly in terms of its impact on Emily.

> I just <u>hated</u> him having intercourse with her . . . I despised that . . . thought that was dreadful.
>
> --I think intercourse <u>queered</u> mother, it <u>floored</u> her. She invariably had those violent headaches.
>
> --I objected to them having intercourse--it was an unfeeling gesture on my father's part, for his satisfaction and nobody else's.
>
> --I believed that it was probably one of the most sorrowful points about marriage, the fact that that was expected of one.
>
> --Probably father felt the same way, that it was her "obligation"--things were based on rather peculiar fundamental practices in those days: going to bed

> once a week, giving birth to a child every year or two--what did it amount to, as a relationship?

Hilda saw the long range impact of sex on Emily, pregnancy and childbearing, as its most insidiously destructive aspect.

> I compare myself to mother, and she suffered more in her relationship with father and childbearing than I did in mine. Even though I was not well adjusted to marriage, I think mother was less adjusted.
>
> --I think all insanity, most insanity--Margaret Sanger would have said, "Well Hilda, I told you"--had she lived to see me go insane through my problems of intimacy, marriage, love, and childbirth--The doctors said, when I was first brought to the hospital, "How many times was this woman pregnant . . . No wonder she is insane!"
>
> I don't know if this is physically true or not . . . [but] I was concerned that I had never told you this part of my insanity; that I was not a clever woman in that way, in controlling pregnancies--nor was mother.

Her anguished perception of Jacob imposing himself on Emily's body represents only one side of the feelings which her parents' sexual bond aroused in Hilda. Earlier, Hilda mentioned being jealous of the fact that her mother "even demonstrated a goodbye and hello kiss to father." Her parents' intercourse was a far more thorough demonstration--Emily giving her body to Jacob. Hilda qualifies her statement on being unable to accept other people's attachments, quoted at the head of this section, by adding that:

> My attachment for my own friend Teressa is so secure that no matter what she did or what I did, we feel this way; we're as close as two people who grew up almost flesh to flesh, although our lives were so different.

Hilda lacked any secure "flesh to flesh" contact with her mother; the only times she remembers having it are when she was ill--"Oh this is wonderful, being held by mother, bleeding into her . . . shirtwaist." Jacob had it on a regular basis--flesh to flesh contact was, in fact, the only source of an emotional bond between her parents which Hilda could see. She had cause to be deeply jealous of her father.

In addition to being an overwhelming competitor, Jacob also had the potential to be a significant alternative to Hilda's attachment with Emily. He could have represented an escape from the weekly conflict with her mother and siblings, someone who could balance the injustices she felt so acutely, an important person who might recognize and support her as "good." Instead, Jacob acted as the arm of Emily's justice--"with no explanation at all, from him or myself." Emily, in Hilda's eyes, had an unassailable hold over Jacob--perhaps again through the bond in flesh to flesh contact. Hilda was blocked from forming a separate alliance. Even in the lesser sphere of competition with Isabel for their father's affection, Emily, as the prime contributor to Hilda's "continually gloomy expression," handicapped Hilda, giving Isabel, with her "charming little girl look," a permanent inside track.

Hilda has found herself caught up in a painful triangular relationship a number of times in her life. Intense jealousy, sometimes complex and two sided, is always a factor.

In the final hour of our first summer of interviewing, Hilda sums up her experience of this situation.

Hilda: I think I was courting that jealousy--I always did, in any connection. I had a very possessive feeling even about [my husband] Richard. I was courting the jealousy I felt for his connection with his parents.

C.J.: You sought out the situation?

Hilda: Almost as if I were battling it as a dragon. First we kill that dragon then we get to you.

It seemed like I had to slay that jealousy in order to get to see him. And yet I courted it. Just as I used to court those darned bogies--"Come on! Here I am. Come on, get me and I'll get you--if I dare."

. . . In fact, that's what I was told about my relationships with people by [my friend] Ellen.. "Well you make it happen!," she'd say--and probably it's true. She said, "You're very clever, you bring things out in people no one else will."

. . . I think I know I'm doing it, in a way. But it's also--it's just like if I want a relationship I'll bring something out [in the other person], but I don't think I do it much anymore--Maybe I'm not the person who could anymore. Maybe that's the thing I miss in [my] unitarian group. Maybe if I could do that--bring out the things I want to do battle with--I'd be satisfied.

C.J.: It seems that it would certainly make your life easier not to have to do that.

Hilda: I know. Bad taste! It's in poor taste.

Understanding Hilda's Childhood

Because Hilda's adult relationships are often strikingly isomorphic with her childhood attachments, a psychological understanding of her life turns, to a large extent, on the interpretation of her childhood experience. The

repetition of early dilemmas--"the dragon"--in her later relationships highlights the importance of one's internal structuring of experience. At the same time, Hilda's childhood is also important, from a theoretical standpoint, because it was the period of her most full participation in a family system. The abortive outcome of her own efforts at establishing a family, and the carefully measured social life--the "frugal experience"--of her later years, make Hilda's early family, in effect, the one ongoing system in her life. If the idea of integrating concepts of intrapsychic development and systems theory were not already in circulation, it would have to be invented for Hilda's life. The fact that an integration is called for does not, however, make the task any the less complicated. In order to avoid bogging down in this undertaking, I will attempt to simplify--perhaps oversimplify--it to a bare outline: first suggesting how a systems perspective might fit with Hilda's experience; then, through Boszormenyi-Nagy's reinterpretation of super-ego theory, looking at her membership in her first three person system; and, finally, adding the concept of loyalty to the basic framework presented in the first part of the chapter in order to discuss Hilda's first signs of maladaption.

The general system.

Scapegoating--an analogy to the Yom Kippur ritual in which the sins of the tribe are symbolically placed on the head

of a goat which is then sent into the wilderness--may be the most widely used concept in systems theory. The Mendahls, who responded to "any adversity" in the family by locating it within a single member and turning "thumbs down" on him, appear to have relied extensively on scapegoating. Hilda gives a clear description of being in the position of a scapegoat--"it didn't balance, I was always in the wrong." Another basic systems concept, "reflexive triangulation"--"a reactive process wherein no two people deal with each other" (Bowen, 1972)--also fits well with Hilda's account. The alliance between Emily and Jacob which resulted in Hilda's punishment was a fixed part of the ritual of Jacob's weekends with the family. Hilda's unresolved conflict with Emily brought her parents together, giving her one of the few opportunities to see them acting in unison.

Both of these processes are explained through the principle of group homeostasis (Baker, 1974), that is, the system supports the cohesive functioning of the whole at the expense of one of its members. There is good evidence that such a dynamic exists. For example, Minnchin (1974) shows that physiological measures of stress drop in parents who are engaged in triangling a child, while they rise in the child.

It appears that Hilda's parents relied heavily on the children to support their cohesive functioning; Emily became overtly psychotic when the youngest child reached adolescence, and the need to care for her brought most of the children back

into the home. This systems level of analysis clarifies Hilda's experience of her family, but it precludes an understanding of how she, as an individual member, actively structures the experience. Hilda's scapegoat behavior becomes comprehensible when she is regarded as a component of her family system, but it is hard to see what motivates her as a separate person to remain bound in such a costly transaction. This is a point where Nagy's concept of loyalties becomes most helpful.

Loyalties in the oedipal situation.

Many consider the oedipal situation Freud's greatest discovery. Loevinger (1969), Guntrip (1971), and Nagy (1973) all see it is the point at which psychoanalysis becomes an interpersonal theory--Freud's discovery of the principle of external relationships becoming internal relationships. Freud's explanation of the oedipal situation, however, did not transcend his metapsychology: the child, out of fear of retaliation (castration) from the father, divests his libidinal energy from the mother and his aggressive energy from his father, and reinvests both onto internal object representations of his parents, which become his ego-ideal and superego. A number of critics have found serious flaws in these mechanics:

> (1) The child is an artificially closed system in this formulation. The parents are interchangeable units, relevant only as the object of the child's drives. Bloch (1978) points out that Freud significantly omits the first part of the Oedipal

myth, that his parents intended to kill the child by abandoning him on a hillside.

(2) The emphasis on castration leaves female development--as Freud acknowledged--mysterious; and the formula focuses too strongly on paternal authority, while ignoring maternal authority (Dinnerstein, 1977).

(3) The dimension of power is over represented in Freud's explanation at the expense of other considerations such as justice or esteem (Nagy, 1973).

(4) The process of identification is too narrowly confined to the oedipal period (Breger, 1974), and Freud attributes everything which follows from resolution of the oedipal conflict--e.g., conscience, sublimation, and mature ego functioning--to negative actions--e.g., renounciation, repression, and reaction formation. He does not provide terms to describe the affirmative aspect of these developments (Schafer, 1976).

Although Nagy (1974) is not directly concerned with development, and only occasionally mentions the oedipal situation, his theory of loyalties is, in essence, a systems approach to superego theory. Nagy shifts the analysis of internalized self-other relationships from the psychoanalytic framework of power to a basis in reciprocal justice and obligation--a shift which substantially addresses all four of the above criticisms of Freud's theory of oedipal relations:

> Monothetical power accounting represents a much more superficial aspect of social structuring than the accounting of obligations. An irresponsible loosening of the hierarchy of loyalties is more detrimental to the survival of societies than is seemingly excess authority [Ibid., p. 27].
>
> Beyond the subjective antithesis between I and you, each close relationship has a bookkeeping of merits as a synthetic, quasiquantitative, quasiobjective system characteristic . . . We use the term merit to

> describe the balance between intrinsically exploitive versus mutually enhancing aspects of any relationship . . . Dynamic psychology has neglected to account for the justice and injustice in the human world of close relationships [Ibid., p. 34].
>
> Justice is an historically formed ledger, recording the balance of mutuality of give and take [Ibid., p. 66].

Nagy's term "ledger of merit" is, in other words, a metaphor for the motivational properties of a loyalty bond. He uses it to describe the way in which the structuring of a loyalty contains a prescription for relational behavior. To somewhat over-simplify Nagy's view, loyalty derives its motivational force from two basic sources: (1) the fundamental interdependence between self and other as transactionally defined entities--"ontic dependence"--which, in the case of the child is also an existential dependence in terms of physical needs and (2) what Nagy assumes to be a universal principal of balance or homeostasis within any multipersonal system, with a relationally defined state of "equitable reciprocity as its ideal goal" [1974, p. 67].

Nagy preserves an intrapsychic dimension of loyalty motivation in extending the psychoanalytic meaning of internalization. Nagy (1965) sees the "object" of internalization as a "relational pattern" or "self-other configuration." Whereas Freud emphasized the defensive role of the internalized object, which serves as an aid to the ego's efforts at impulse control, Nagy considers it also an "active agent," representing the needs of the internalized other. This view follows from

Nagy's assumption that the other in a close relationship becomes a constituent of self; the other's needs become self-needs. These internalized needs of other enter into the individual's accounting of merit in a relationship. Accounts from an early relationship can be carried forward into the "bookkeeping" of a current relationship, as if "converting" them into a foreign currency:

> It is through the bookkeeping of merits that the unity between internal (psychological) and external (interpersonal) relational events can be restored . . . seemingly interpersonal interactions can be exploited to settle issues with the internal agents. For all practical (dynamic) purposes the internalized other is an active participant of the bookkeeping system [1974, p. 172].

If the person carries a great sense of indebtedness from his early relationships his ongoing accounting will be generous. If he carries a legacy of exploitation he will tend to seek retributive justice. This is the meaning of a statement which Nagy repeats in a number of ways: "We regard the internalization of object relationships as one of the key indicators of the justice of one's human world." [1974, p. 25].

Nagy's emphasis on justice may appear to imply a high level of ethical, and thus cognitive, development. Apart from a passing reference to Piaget's observation that a strong sense of reciprocity develops early in childhood, Nagy does little to dispel this impression--his primary concern is with adult functioning. Much of the early negotiation between mother and

child, however, can be described as a developing loyalty bond. In order to set that stage for the conflict of loyalties which occurs in the oedipal situation, I will take a brief glance at the development of identification in early attachment.

In the first part of this chapter I focused on the deeply mutual regulation which occurs from the onset of the mother-child relationship, at first defining the boundaries solely in terms of sensory contact and physical proximity and later, with the child's acquisition of object permanence, extending them much further into space and time. Because, in the case of the mother, the object is a sentient presence, the child's "objectification" of her opens the possibility of taking her perspective. He learns not just <u>that</u> she sees him, but <u>how</u> she sees him. In particular, he learns that his action can invoke a strong emotional reaction in her. One of Sullivan's major contributions is in pointing out that this learning starts at a very early, preconceptual stage:

> Empathy is the term that we use to refer to the peculiar emotional linkage that subtends the relationship of the infant with other significant people . . . Long before there are signs of any understanding of emotional expression, there is evidence of this emotional contagion or communication [1953, p. 17].

Because the child's dependence on his bond with the mother is total at this stage of life, her needs in the relationship become, through empathic communication, his deeply felt needs. Identification, in other words, is an ongoing process which starts with the earliest give-and-take between

mother and child--rather than the sudden event depicted in the traditional view of the oedipal situation.

Projective identification, the ability to take the perspective of an other, remains a potent factor in regulating interpersonal relationships throughout the life cycle. Hornstein (1976), in an insightful review of the literature on altruism and aggression, identifies the capacity for empathy as the key variable in determining whether people behave cooperatively or aggressively across a wide range of experimental situations. He argues that empathic identification creates a "we-group," within which altruism naturally flourishes, as distinct from a "them-group," who are unlikely to elicit cooperation and, if sufficiently distant from the us-group, may even become the brunt of unthinkable cruelty.

> The capacity for empathy [is] the necessary prerequisite for developing an effective cooperative social organization. It is the capacity that allows human beings to experience the bonds of we and the barriers of they; and it is this capacity that regulates the occurrence of altruism and aggression [1976, p. 59].

The child's cognitive development during the pre-oedipal years (1 1/2-4) greatly enhances his ability to internalize the conditions for maintaining the bond of "us." With the advent of what Piaget calls "imitative accommodation," the child becomes able to act out the role of the mother toward himself, priasing and scolding himself for his own actions. More significantly, symbolic representation--the capacity to

imagine actions rather than simply to perform them--enters the picture:

> With the beginning of representative thought and especially with the growth of imitative thought, intelligence becomes capable of invoking absent objects, and consequently of being applied to invisible realities on the past and partly even in the future . . . Imitative thought thus provides a map of reality [Piaget, 1950, quoted in Kesson, 1965, p. 294].

The child is now able to map the symbolic boundaries of the mother-child relationship. He constructs an imitative working model of the give-and-take in their bond. He comes to anticipate which actions might flood the relationship with anger and anxiety, those which could place him "beyond the pale," and those which preserve the mutually satisfying continuity of good child and loving mother. The child's internal structure of the bond takes on the same motivational force of the patterns of emotional expression earlier in the relationship, while no longer requiring the actual presence of the mother. This internal structure is, I believe, exactly what Nagy means in the term invisible loyalty.

Viewing conscience as the outgrowth of a loyalty bond preserves Freud's insight into the role of identification and internalization of an emotionally significant relationship, but alters the psychoanalytic model in two important ways: first, by dating the first major internalization of social standards to the pre-oedipal era; and second, by shifting the emphasis

from paternal to maternal authority--a point which Dinnerstein expresses eloquently:

> The first "you," in addition to its other vital functions, is the original well spring of pooled, stored, communicable experience upon which each child draws for its fundamental orientation to communally tested and communally created human reality, for its fundamental leap into civilization [1977, pp. 172-173].

The oedipal triangle is the first major test of the child's bond of loyalty to his mother. It represents his first opportunity to branch out from his original dyad and establish a broader "us" in the adult world, as well as his first real temptation to be disloyal--the first crisis of conscience.

Power in this triangle is complexly lopsided. On the one hand, the father has, from the child's perspective, awesome power in the world; he functions outside the family, exercises authority within it, and, especially, exerts a strong influence over the mother. On the other hand, the mother has awesome power over the child. She is associated with the child's deepest experiences of shame and anxiety. She still has an eery power to see his most private aspects of self; his awareness and her's are still, from his point of view, highly permeable--as Dinnerstein [1977, p. 168] puts it," In confronting her the child faces an old, devastatingly knowledgeable witness."

Unless the father is unusually remote or tyrannical, he holds a strong attraction for children of both sexes. In contrast to the mother, he is a refreshingly separate authority

figure, a more clearly defined model for identification and a safer person to differentiate from:

> His presence is apt to be relatively peripheral until after we have started . . . to recognize that a creature can have multiple aspects, shifting moods and still be a permanent, unitary individual. For this reason he is perceived from the very beginning . . . as a more human being than the mother, more like an adult version of oneself, less engulfing, less nebulously overwhelming [Dinnerstein, 1977, p. 175].

Lacan (1968) speaks of the father as representing "The Law." This is another aspect of his attraction which would have been especially important to Hilda: the father holds the promise of recourse to a more rational, objective standard of relational merit and obligations. He represents the justice of the adult world and, with the comforting limits on his knowledge of one's past humiliations and private sources of shame, a fresh start for the child. This is one reason why Jacob's inflexible stance of subscribing to Emily's view of justice endures so as a source of pain and disappointment for Hilda.

As Freud first saw, the child's ability to renounce, or break away from, the mother is mandatory for a successful outcome of the oedipal situation. Being a distinctly separate person, the father cannot be assimilated within the child's existing structure of self and other. A new attachment to the father requires a major accommodation of self, which, in turn, calls for a new level of differentiation from the mother. If there is a sufficiently loving relationship between the

parents, the child may base his accommodation on the esteemed aspects of the same sex parent. A boy will form an imitative identification with the esteemed and powerful aspects of his father. With a girl, the accommodation is somewhat more subtle: in order to draw closer to the father, she must base her identification on the esteemed and powerful aspects of her mother as seen from his newly recognized perspective. In both cases, the child's accommodation serves to restore the original loyalty with the mother on a new level of merit--another instance of integration through differentiation.

Hilda's chance of a successful resolution of the oedipal situation was severely limited on two fronts. First, Hilda saw very little "emotional interplay" between her parents. Their union, instead, was hurtful, especially to Hilda. In an impoverished economy of merit, competition and feelings of jealousy tend to be maximized; new alignments of relational bonds become power plays. Put another way, any new coalition in a reactive triangle, such as Hilda experienced with her parents, is an alliance against the third party, an act of betrayal (Bowen, 1972).

The second major factor which crippled Hilda in the oedipal situation is closely related to the first: there was minimal latitude for differentation in Hilda's relationship with her mother. Emily--a woman who restricted each child to two colors of clothing into their adolescence--appears to have had very limited tolerance for differentiation. Hilda was

acutely aware of Emily's authority as a "devastating witness." She experienced her mother as ruthless in the exercise of her power to "see" into Hilda, someone prepared to "take away my own concepts," "wipe the slate clean." Nagy (1965) holds that a loyalty bond maintained on such a coercive basis comes to play the role of a "counter-autonomous superego"; any attempt at establishing a new relationship--and even the process of maturation itself--comes to be seen as an act of deep disloyalty.

If Hilda's loyalty to Emily had been based solely on coercion, she might have been able eventually to differentiate from her mother, formidable as she was. Oppression, however, was only one aspect of Hilda's experience of their relationship. She was also closely attuned to Emily's suffering. Hilda identified what others missed: "a hard working, distressed, anguished, infuriated woman." Her well developed capacity for empathy made the sanction against pushing away from Emily doubly binding; the altruistic motivation inherent in identifying as "us" merged with Hilda's fears of evoking aggression in moving toward "them." It is in describing this sort of complex mixture of interpersonal motives that Nagy's concept of loyalty accounting--or, specifically, "double accounting"--adds an important new dimension to superego theory:

> Exploitive parents can simultaneously appear martyrlike, suffering, and unhappy. The resulting ambiguity through its subtle and unresolvable

> indebtedness may set up an ethical injunction against any revenge on the parents [1973, p. 173].

Hilda's adult repetition of triangular relationships can be seen as an attempt to balance the accounts carried forward from her oedipal situation. But, due to the unresolvable conflict in her loyal attachment to Emily, what Nagy (1973) calls "relational stagnation" occurred. Hilda structured her adult heterosexual relationships along relatively fixed lines, in effect assimilating them into the pattern of her oedipal situation. Accommodation was blocked from two directions: her ongoing loyalty to Emily continued to make differentiation treason; and the heavy imposition of past accounts on her relationships obscured the current transaction--as Hilda puts it, her need to fight the "dragon" kept her from "seeing" her mate. This unresolvable conflict set the stage for Hilda's attempt to achieve a meta-solution through insanity.

Signs of distress.

Hilda's adaption had clearly begun to go awry by mid-childhood. To review the main points in my discussion of her early childhood, her problems stemmed from a disturbance of the mother-child bond. Due to her illnesses and Emily's circumstances, Hilda's first attachment may have been highly anxious. Chronic anger and an unusual vulnerability to feelings of shame would have been natural outgrowths of her anxious attachment, factors predisposing her to overemploy dissociation as a mode

of coping with emotional distress. Added to an understanding of Hilda's loyalties, this framework makes her first symptoms of emotional disturbance reasonably comprehensible.

It is interesting to note that there is a rough parallel between the stages of response to prolonged separation whic Bowlby (1960) first identified--anxious protest, despondency, and detachment--and the pattern of Hilda's childhood disturbance. The difference, of course, is that Hilda was dealing with a highly abstract form of separation. But the similarity highlights the role of anxious attachment in the problems that run through her childhood.

Looking first at her absorption with "bogies," psychoanalytic theory traditionally explains such experiences in terms of projection, i.e., the child defends himself from his own unacceptable and dangerous impulses by experiencing them as emanating from the environment. Bloch (1978) interestingly reverses this interpretation: the child, in response to a universal fear of infanticide, defends himself from perceiving the aggressive impulses in his parents by misattributing the danger to the outside environment. My interpretation of Hilda's experience of bogies falls between these two positions. Because Hilda's illnesses made nurturance a deeply frustrating experience for both parties, anger was a pervasive quality within the mother-child relationship. When Hilda located the danger outside the relationship, she was defending the integrity of her bond with Emily--an act of

loyalty. Her projections served the adaptive purpose of motivating her to draw closer to Emily, while temporarily freeing the relationship of its antagonistic quality.

At the same time, the chronically high level of anxiety in the mother-child bond would retard Hilda's progress in mastering the dangers normally perceived in the environment, e.g., novelty and strangeness. The normal anxiety provoking situations of early childhood, such as being alone in the dark, would have kept many of their, to use Madison's (1969) term, "resonating" properties. Hilda's hallucinations are an example of "reintegrative fill-in," a case of pure assimilation into an dissociated schema under conditions of high arousal.

Hilda's fascination with bogie-like people is somewhat more complex. On the one hand, it served the obvious function of recapturing the ground of earlier rebuffs, i.e., re-exploring the fearful aspects of her environment, probably in the supportive company of others. But there is also a suggestion of identification in her stance toward aberrant people. This may represent movement toward what Erikson calls a "negative identity." Hilda felt far removed from the encapsulated "us" of her family. Her need "to be someone" may have moved her to explore a group which was distinctly "them." Hilda's thoughts of suicide also fit with this interpretation. Hilda, who was shown that Isabel had "double the love" by virtue of her proximity to the short-lived Eleanor, may have adopted "the conviction that to be sick or dead is a better

assurance of being 'recognized' than to be healthy and about" [Erikson, 1959, p. 141].

Depression, perhaps because it is more than one disorder, is not well understood. Two interconnected factors, however, are widely observed: the experience of loss and low self-esteem. The breakup of a relationship, loss of employment or social status, and the death of a loved one all frequently precipitate depression. What these forms of loss all have in common is that they serve to loosen the person's grounding in the interpersonal world. The adult expression of grief in these situations is closely analogous to the despondency which Bowlby (1960) observes in children suffering prolonged separation. He maintains that grief has the adaptive function of promoting attachment--that it is a physiological call for help. Hilda's call for help does seem to have involved her whole body--e.g., her constant headaches--and she had a history of attachment in pain which would add meaning to this communication. The loss that Hilda was dealing with falls between the physical abandonment of early childhood and the more abstract forms of damage to self-esteem seen in adulthood.

Self-esteem, an intuitively obvious concept, is difficult to grasp in theoretical terms. It inhabits a nebulous border zone between intrapsychic and interpersonal events. White clearly identifies the dual nature of self-esteem:

> There can be no doubt that self-esteem is tremendously affected by the income of esteem that is received from others . . . It is a mistake, nevertheless, to suppose that self-esteem is wholely a matter of esteem income--that no coin can ever be minted within [White and Watt, 1973, pp. 142-143].

The problem is how to understand the individual's active contribution to self-esteem, how he mints his own currency. As Epstein (1981) points out, the child's internalization of his parents' values plays a major role. But the child has an important hand in regulating the flow even in his formative interactions with his parents:

> Children cannot be fooled by empty praise . . . They may have to accept artificial bolstering of their self-esteem in lieu of something better, but their ego identity gains real strength only from wholehearted and consistent recognition of real accomplishment [Erikson, 1950, p. 208].

It seems that the child's development of competence in the physical world and attachment in the interpersonal must converge in order for him to have an integrated, "real" basis of self-esteem. Without examining how this convergence would occur in normal circumstances, it is clear that it did not in Hilda's case. The heart of the problem was Hilda's need to accommodate to her mother through a false self. From Hilda's perspective, her accomplishments were always dictated from outside--acts of submission not personal mastery. She felt compelled to meet her obligations to Emily in the counterfeit notes of compliance and was repaid in a foreign currency of merit belonging to someone not quite herself. Because her "true self" remained quarantined from the transaction, Hilda

was blocked from acquiring any reserve of merit sufficient to protect her from exposure to the devastating shame of early childhood. So long as her income of esteem was in a foreign currency, doubt accompanied it; Hilda was constantly vulnerable to a sudden devaluation--a significant factor in her eventual breakdown.

As to the last stage in Bowlby's (1960) sequence of responses to separation, Hilda's adoption of a false self in one sense avoided detachment. Her false self was a compromise between turning away from and outright submission to Emily, a compromise which was preserved in the constantly repeated ritual of first ignoring and then complying with Emily's demands--becoming Emily's loyal opposition. Again, the divorce between the public expression and her private experience significantly undermined Hilda's ability to benefit from her loyalty to Emily. Her feelings of being an abandoned child were on a separate plane from her daily engagement with Emily; the ongoing attachment was between Emily and someone not quite Hilda. Her primary grounding in the interpersonal world was therefore also vulnerable to exposure and abrupt collapse. As the events of the next chapter show, such a collapse did finally occur.

C H A P T E R V

BECOMING AN ADULT

This chapter of Hilda's history covers a great deal of material. Starting with her early search for alternatives to the troubled bond with Emily, it moves through her first steps toward sexual intimacy, an initial breakdown, marriage, early motherhood, becoming a writer, and entrance into a complex triangular relationship, to end as her adjustment takes a rapidly downward slide toward schizophrenia. Events are in the saddle during this twenty-year period of Hilda's life (from about age ten into her early thirties).

When Hilda and I first sat down to reconstruct her history, she focused on the later portion of this period, from her marriage onward. I experienced this first day of interviewing as a numbing overload of information. In my first presentation of Hilda's history I believe I replicated this effect for the reader, devoting over one hundred and seventy pages--with minimal analysis on my part--to cover what is condensed here into the second half of a single chapter. I still try to include the most salient details of this eventful stage of Hilda's life, while focusing on those which exemplify the aspects of dissociation and integration in her efforts at meeting the tests of loyalty in an expanding sphere of attachments.

Alternative Attachments

James and Teressa.

Hilda and her brother James were close throughout her late childhood and adolescence. He was her first successful attachment at least partially outside the dangerous arena of her relationship with Emily. James was her mentor, and although he occasionally "disciplined" Hilda or "nailed her to the truth," he was by and large a supportive mentor. She shared her childhood fears with him, and it was James who helped her to understand that she was not responsible for the death of Johnie Skibiski, the servant's son who was killed by a train. He was also allied with Hilda in viewing the frequent additions to the family as "a very serious problem," and James gave Hilda her eventual understanding of the family's isolation as a function of being declasse'. He was also the one to give her the final encouragement to be "somebody," a writer or a painter.

James could understand Hilda, see her private thoughts and feelings, without presenting her with the enormous risks that being "seen" by Emily carried. For example, James used to take advantage of the fact that Hilda frequently spoke in her sleep; he was able to interrogate her in her sleep so that she would divulge her secrets, such as where she hid his stamp collection. Hilda remembers being perturbed, but not devastated, by this violation of her boundaries. James, in

other words, could take away particular secrets but not, as Emily could, Hilda's very "concepts." As an opponent, he was on an altogether more manageable level.

In one sense, Hilda's attachment to her older brother was a healthy partial resolution of her oedipal dilemma--accomplished in the lesser world of her sibling system. James was the "bright mind" of the family, "worshipped" by both parents. In her fond attachment to James, Hilda converted a formidable rival for Emily's affection into a cohort. She remained loyal to Emily in mirroring her esteem for James and, because both parents were unified in their high regard for James, she did not risk taking a side against either--in fact, it was a way to join their side of the triangle in relation to James. By aligning herself with James, Hilda also opened the possibility of receiving whatever affection might deflect off of him--just as the child who identifies with the primary parent's loved partner positions himself to be loved more fully by the primary parent. Hilda was very active in making herself "us" with James; she took his advice, incorporated his views, spirited off his possessions, and became, for a few years in mid-childhood, a "tomboy."

The adaptive aspect of her attachment to James becomes apparent in comparing the relational configuration with her bond to Emily. The apparently small step from her master/servant relationship with Emily to her master/student relationship with James opened a whole new vista of mutual exchange and

growth. Although the student owes homage to the master, it is the homage of a potential peer. Unlike the servant, the student's steps toward equality, and even differentiation, do not threaten but fulfill the relationship. Accepting James' influence, in comparison to Emily's, was for Hilda like moving from a totalitarian state to an authoritarian system.

The second fond attachment from her childhood which has had lifelong importance to Hilda was with a girl in her neighborhood, Teressa. Their first meeting stands out as a bright moment in Hilda's memory of childhood:

> I was taking a walk in Hudson and I was very lonely. I saw this child swinging in a lilac bush--a very romantic setting. In those days everyone wore rompers when they were little, [but] here she was an eight year old child in rompers, pink . . .
>
> And that was exciting to me because I had never seen a pair of pink rompers. She had pink hair ribbon and curls and enormous--She spoke to me first, I was so delighted. Behind her I could see the studio window and I wondered what that great big window was--"Mother's an artist, she paints there."

Hilda and Teressa petitioned Teressa's mother to allow them to become friends. After interviewing Mrs. Mendahl, she ascented. Over "long, long walks," painting and reading together, and mutual assistance with homework, the girls became a solid "we." They established what Hilda calls "a pact against reality," each opposing those seen to transgress against the other, and joining against a common threat: adolescence, boys, and the ineluctable "physiology of marriage and birth."

> I felt her mother was so domineering she didn't allow her to be the full fledged person she might have been. But she couldn't stop her from reading . . . I had a feeling of her being a very poetic person with insights she had accomplished alone and would share with me, a lot of it . . . and we were competetive in drawing. She did better than I, invariably.
>
> --We also used to study the dead. In those days you could, just go into the houses with the dead--I don't know how many young people do that but we did . . . I had an idea the images of the dead Christ and the dead were very similar. I loved looking at them.
>
> --We would kiss each other, I didn't know what it meant except as a sign of affection . . . she always smelled wonderful. The nearer I got the more excited I would get, as if Teressa were some wonderful glowing thing.

It seems that at least some of Teressa's glow was a reflection of her home and mother. Teressa's household excelled in several of the areas in which Hilda's fell short: there was an atmosphere of opulence; meals were well prepared and ample--"chocolate cakes and fresh foods and spinach, oh, it was wonderful"; and the family was securely positioned in "high society." More important, Teressa had a mother whom Hilda respected as an artist and woman of the world. Although Hilda disapproved of her overprotective attitude toward Teressa--her "Baby Bawena"--she recognized an expansive love missing in her relationship with Emily: "I could see a lot of that, so called, 'real love' between mother and daughter--Teressa's mother loved her immensely. I was jealous."

Hilda's attachment with Teressa was a boon to her development in several respects. For one thing, Teressa

brought Hilda out into the world. In providing secure companionship, she greatly facilitated Hilda's exploration of the environment, widening the range of possibilities to include places that would be far too anxiety provoking to venture into alone. By introducing Hilda to another family system, she created a bridge for Hilda to cross from the insular "us" of the Mendahl household toward the remote "them" of the community. She gave Hilda a new perspective both on the Mendahl household and on the social world at large--which must have looked very different from the vantage point of Teressa's family.

Teressa, even more than James, introduced a new level of freedom for Hilda to disagree. In competing with Teressa, even if she lost, Hilda was entertaining the possibility of prevailing--as opposed to reaffirming her inferior position. Hilda was forced to recognize Teressa's views, but in a newly discriminating and differentiated fashion--not as a law which she was forced either to accept or risk stepping "outside the pale." If her attachment to James was an advance from totalitarianism to an authoritarian system, with Teressa, Hilda established a pact of democratic give-and-take.

One of Sullivan's major contributions to psychoanalytic clinical theory is his insight into the significance of a same-sex "chum" for preadolescent development. In describing the "chum" relationship, Sullivan focuses on the same three relational qualities which Bowlby sees as defining an

attachment--specificity, mutual regulation of proximity, and the development of a strong affectional bond--but he views them as rising to a new plane of action: proximity evolves into "intimacy," regulation becomes a more complex "collaboration," and the affectional bond between chums is, for Sullivan, the advent of "love."

> This new interest in the preadolescent era is not as general as . . . the need of similar people was in the juvenile era. Instead, it is a specific new type of interest in a <u>particular</u> member of the same sex who becomes a chum . . . This change represents the beginning of something very like full-blown, psychiatrically defined <u>love</u> . . . The other fellow takes on a perfectly novel relationship with the person concerned: he becomes of practically equal importance in all fields of value . . . [The] child begins to develop a real sensitivity to what matters to another person . . .
>
> Thus the developmental epoch of preadolescence is marked by the coming of the integrating tendencies which, when they are completely developed, we call love, [that is] the manifestation of the need for interpersonal intimacy . . . Intimacy is that type of situation involving two people which permits validation of all components of personal worth and requires a type of relationship which I call collaboration . . . clearly formulated adjustments of one's behavior to the expressed needs of the other person in pursuit of increasingly identical--that is, more and more nearly mutual--satisfactions . . . and security operations [1953, pp. 245-246, Sullivan's emphasis].

The qualities which Sullivan describes as heralded in by the chum relationship are what Boszormenyi-Nagy calls dialogue, the mature stage of relating. Nagy's dialogue is the interpersonal equivalent of Piaget's concept of accommodation, an implicit compact for reciprocal modification of self and other. Just as accommodation introduces new levels of mobility

and coordination, a dialogic relationship is characterized by a higher order of differentiation and interdependence. For the person who first enters a relational dialogue, the interpersonal world becomes at once a more secure home and a less rigidly predictable place--two developments which Hilda needed desperately.

> [Dialogue] amounts primarily to helping the Other to be delineated as a subject opposite to oneself as an object to the Other's needs . . . The trust, i.e., the anticipated reciprocation on the part of the Other, removes the emotional flavor of being used or taken advantage of. The atmosphere of trust changes the economy of "giving emotionally" [1965, pp. 56-57, Boszormenyi-Nagy's emphasis].

> As the "dialogue of needs" becomes established, it becomes one of the greatest sources of relational security and trust. [And it is a new form of trust] . . . The structure of dialogue is not based on a constant complementation of needs. Instead, it is a contract for the free exchange of both partners' non-complementary need assertions, based on their reliance on the overall mutuality of each other's object availability [Ibid., p. 77].

In making his point that the major experiences which shape personality do not all occur in early childhood, Sullivan may focus too narrowly on the single chum relationship. For one thing, the kind of discriminating sensitivity to the specific needs of the partner and the high level reciprocity--particularly as elaborated in Nagy's concept of dialogue--which Sullivan attributes to the years of the chum relationship (around eight and one half to twelve) require the full freedom from egocentric thought which only becomes available in adolescence.

Sullivan's data base was also skewed in a direction which might accentuate the importance of a chum. He worked primarily with schizophrenics, who tended to have a history of early family relationships which were exceptionally bleak and coercive. In these circumstances, the chum relationship would naturally take on an aura of salvation. But if Sullivan's model is unbalanced, it is slanted in the same direction in which Hilda's early life was askew. The consolidation of her "pact" with Teressa gave Hilda a new experience of mutually regulated security in a relationship which--because Hilda is a "time-binding animal"--could never be entirely cancelled by anything which she experienced before or afterwards. It may well have had the impact which Sullivan (1956, p. 313) observed in the lives of some of his patients: "if the person has experienced the need for, and novel returns from, intimacy with another person, a chum . . . then the eventuality of schizophrenic disaster will not bring so swift a regressive divestment of the later acquisitions of personality."

Hilda, herself, recognizes the existence of Teressa in her life as an enduring alternative to the most problematic aspects of her family relationships. The context of the following excerpt is a discussion of how Hilda can still experience the "atmosphere of marriage, of parenthood" among her present day relatives as dangerous and "painful." I have already presented parts of the same discussion: her vulnerability to "suffocation in the atmosphere" and her

"serious problem with jealousy." In differentiating her relationship with Teressa from these dangers, Hilda describes the qualities of secure object availability and the freedom to be "one-and-different" which Boszormenyi-Nagy sees as the core of a dialogic relationship.

Hilda: I thought I would enjoy it much more than I did, getting into my former environments, you know, with my sisters and my children. And it is true that . . . when I was with them I would sort of be them, see them, you know, and be them because of what they were.

C.J.: Would that be anything like the "rivers flowing together?"

Hilda: In a way, but not exactly because we weren't really exchanging to that extent. I wouldn't exchange, I would sort of be there, be in this environment--I was always sort of withheld in my remarks . . . I don't think they know me at all--Ruth thinks she knows me better than I know myself, I can feel that. And yet I think I know them fairly well . . .

I had an idea I was reading them correctly. I would think: "Now this situation isn't the way it is, this atmosphere of marriage, of parenthood--and it would be painful because I really wouldn't want it.

C.J.: What would be painful? What was the pain?

Hilda: I don't think I was ever able to accept other people's attachments for each other.

C.J.: So that when you get reinvolved with your family, it would be the other attachments that--

Hilda: I think whenever I see any attachment, I have a serious jealousy, or something. Now my attachment for my own friend Teressa is so secure that no matter what she did, or what I did, we feel this way--We're as close as a couple of people who grew up almost flesh to flesh--although our lives were so different. No matter how many times she goes to Europe and comes back, we always feel that. We're so close that we can in no possible way feel any jealousy at all.

The alternatives of fantasy.

Fantasy, like so many other psychological processes, is in itself neither healthy nor pathological. On the one hand, fantasy is the tool which enables a child to transcend the here and now, that is, to step back from the problem at hand and envision solutions which have never before existed. On the other hand, it is a seductive mode of problem solving which can lead to, as Erikson (1950, pp. 217-218) puts it, "an increasing tendency on the child's part to take life experiences into a solitary corner and to rectify them in fantasy, and only in fantasy." Breger (1974, pp. 211-219) adds that this latter use of fantasy runs counter to the process of accommodation in the real world, and thus fuels any tendencies toward a dissociative adjustment.

Hilda appears to have relied heavily on literature as a source of satisfaction in her childhood. She spent so much of her time "off somewhere with a book" that the Mendahls "limited" her to "six books a week." Although she and I never discussed her recollections of childhood reading in any detail, the two titles which she mentions have such similar themes--and parallels with events in her own life--that it is worth speculating on what they meant to her.

Mark Twain's "Recollections of Joan of Arc" (published anonymously as a serial in Harpers, 1895) was Hilda's favorite story:

I was very interested in Joan of Arc. I read the

> book over many times, Mark Twain's version. When she heard voices and became a leader, I simply adored her. I would weep over it . . . a marvelous miraculous happening. I wanted to be her.

Joan of Arc, according to the legend, was a peasant girl who came of age at the time when France was divided between the houses of Valois and Burgundy. The Burgundians, in alliance with British invaders, repeatedly tyrannized her home province. The legitimate Valois king was too hesitant to commit his forces in defense of the realm. Joan, under divine instructions, cropped her hair, dressed as a man, and led the populace in an ultimately successful resistance. In the process, she was captured, tried as a heretic, and burnt at the stake. Twain's version idealizes the legend into a sort of Cinderella story. His Joan is a wise, iron willed, chaste, and bold child prodigy who, once touched by divine revelation, leads a charmed existence. She is the only person able to calm an ax-wielding mad man, for example. In the end she sacrifices herself in order to bring justice to France by reconciling the houses of Burgundy and Valois (Rakman, 1971).

Twain's story would have offered Hilda a model of transcendent solution to several of the problems which carried forward from her oedipal situation. Warner (1981) points out that Joan is unique among idealized female figures in that she performs no traditional feminine role, such as being a mother, queen, great beauty, or courtesan. She is also a heroine uniquely suited to the requirements of Hilda's oedipal drama.

Like Hilda, Joan grew up in a land dangerously divided and lacking in justice. Her king, being too disengaged to impose his legitimate authority, left the land open to whatever depredations the collusive Burgundians wished to commit. With the aid of a higher Father, she takes matters into her own hands, stirring her king to action by force of her example.

Fantastic solutions still have to conform with the main strictures of the child's reality--a point which Erikson stresses--and Joan's androgeny was also a transcendent solution to this aspect of Hilda's oedipal dilemma. Joan, on the verge of becoming a woman, adopts the dress and actions of a man, in effect, stopping time and preserving her chastity forever. Joan consummates this manuever in martyrdom, an act which brings the rulers of her land together and unites her with her heavenly Father--a perfect solution to Hilda's unresolvable conflict between remaining loyal to Emily and seeking Jacob.

The Scarlet Letter, the other story which captured Hilda's imagination, served as a model of the darker outcome which Hilda anticipated in moving into the heterosexual world.

Hilda: This situation always attracted me in stories--The Scarlet Letter. I could never figure out why women who really became wholehearted females, you know, passionate women, why they were destroyed. That always made me--I wondered about it. And it was a . . . tease to me. I thought: "well it would be fun to be a passionate woman and be destroyed"--I really think that occurred to me, quite often.

C.J.: There was something even in the destruction that was attractive to you?

Hilda: Yes. Which is what I, what happened to me up here [years later], it was as near as I could come to being a passionate woman and being destroyed. It happened.

Hawthorne's heroine, Hester Prynne, is a good deal more complex than Twain's Joan of Arc, but there are basic similarities in the outlines of the two stories. Hester, trapped by an unsatisfying marriage and constricting society, also attempts to transcend her situation. Her lover, like Joan's king, is an ineffectual man. Hester's refusal to betray him is what occasions the harshest persecution from the community: being branded with the scarlet letter. At first humiliated, Hester gradually comes to see her adultry as a noble cause, the assertion of her free will in the face of an unjust and oppressive society. She becomes possessed with a sense of mission, and her scarlet letter takes on an hallucinatory brilliance. At the same time, Hester, as Wishy (1968, p. 8) puts it, "rejects womanliness and reconciliation with her fate and instead serves a destructive, abstract, and masculine rationality." Although Hester eventually comes to terms with her womanliness and re-enters the community, it is the first part of the story which stands out for Hilda.

The fact that the themes of transcendence and destruction are much more complicated in The Scarlet Letter suggests that Hilda's fascination with the story developed at a later stage--when, for example, her denial of "the physiology of marriage" was breaking down--but Hester can be seen as an

extension of Joan into a more real world. Both heroines invite destruction by: (a) remaining loyal to their inner convictions, and (b) reaching out into the male world. For Joan the convictions are first transmitted from the outside; she has armour, and remains pure in defeat. Hester's desires for sexual intimacy and self expression come from within; she has only a cap in which to hide her long hair, and her defeat is mixed with issues of guilt.

Neither does battle with a discrete female villain. Both, instead, are in the clutches of a treacherous or harshly punitive community. For Joan it is a battle of action and absolute justice. Hester faces a more purely social and lonely form of persecution.

Finally, both characters embrace their own destruction. Joan's reasons are clear: it brings her closer to God. Hester's--and Hilda's--are less so. It may be that The Scarlet Letter allowed Hilda to envision a situation in which her need for a male attachment was simultaneously satisfied and punished--the standard psychoanalytic interpretation. On the other hand, Hester's destruction may still have been an extension of Joan's, that is, Hilda might still have entertained fantasies of a male savior in her personal use of Hawthorne's story. Both interpretations could be true. In either case, her preoccupation with these themes was an attempt to solve relational problems in isolation. As she became better at finding imaginary satisfactions and

consolidated her picture of a benevolent male presence waiting to embrace her, Hilda would have less reason to face the dangers and frustrations of seeking real heterosexual intimacy.

At the same time, Hilda's projection of herself into these stories would have been the mental acting out of social roles so common in preadolescent fantasy (Breger, 1974). Looked at in this light, Hilda's fascination with the theme of a "scarlet woman" was an attempt to find a group with whom she belonged. She was able to identify herself in Hester Prynne, to experience a sense of fellowship. But mental practice of a role, especially such a negative one, can be dangerous: it creates a potential for the role to be realized in action--"it happened."

Religious search.

Hilda: This is not something you speak of often. There's something too important about it, as any intimate disclosure is.

Psychologists tend to trod heavily in analyzing a person's religious experience; they often attempt to take away, rather than add meanings. The search for a sense of belonging to a church, and discovery of Christ, which occupied much of Hilda's preadolescent attention was more than one thing. My effort is not to reduce it to a single dimension, but to clarify one significant aspect: Hilda's use of religious imagery as a way to integrate herself in the interpersonal world.

Wishy (1968, p. 10) regards Hester Prynne's struggle as a metaphor for two deeply conflicting aspects of American life: "the claims of the free individual . . . and the contrary demands of an inherited, inflexible code of Christian character and republican social faith." Adding Hilda's strivings for growth and sexual intimacy to the "claims of the free individual," and substituting her binding loyalties to Emily and the family for "social faith," Hilda's search for Christ can be seen as an attempt to resolve a very similar conflict. If Hester Prynne offered a negative resolution, the model of moving beyond the pale, attachment to Christ offered a positive solution: the possibility of achieving simultaneous expression and validation of her inner self through an act of transcendent conformity.

In accordance with Hilda's dual goals in pursuing Christianity--expression of her needs and recognition of her worth--there were two sides to her preadolescent religious experience. The first concerned the outer display of religious faith. As shown in chapter two, Hilda's earliest personal involvement with the church was an attempt to remake herself in Emily's eyes, to escape from being "a continually unpleasant person in the home," and to transform herself into someone suddenly good.

Recall that Hilda was very disturbed by Emily's interpretation of predestination--"long before you were ever here the plan was laid; no matter what you do it's all been

made"--and asked her to offer a solution from the church as well:

> "No matter how I am working at living and working and studying, you continually say I'm not good . . . Do you suppose if I joined the church . . .?
>
> "Well," mother said, "Do you want to be a Christian?"
>
> "No, I don't understand that at all, but I want to be <u>good</u>."

Hilda's confirmation in her family's church was, to use Boszormenyi-Nagy's metaphor, an attempt to "convert" her accounts with Emily onto a new plane of merit. It was the beginning of an exploration of a number of churches, which included at least two other instances of Hilda publicly accepting salvation. Although she initiated her search in hope of achieving a more satisfactory attachment to Emily, even from the start Hilda ran into conflict with other family loyalties--James "nailed her to the truth" and labelled her conversion a lie "to get in the good graces of mother and father." Isabel, who was witness to Hilda's second conversion, "thought it was peculiar, not at all in keeping with our life. [That] I was being over-emotional, deliberately misbehaving." Jacob likened the intensity of Hilda's interest in the whole matter to "Aunt Eleanor's esoteric approach."

The conflict in Hilda's religious search was internal as well as external. As her involvement became more emotional, she turned the same harsh standards of honesty onto herself. She moved in and out of seeing other people's religious

expression as real, and entertained constant doubt about the "truth" of her own feelings.

Hilda: I enjoyed choir a lot . . . And I enjoyed the enthusiasm of tabernacle singing, although I felt guilty about it. There was something exciting about it, the fact that it stimulated the congregation so. I worked myself up into thinking it was a kind of a beat, which could control everyone.

C.J.: Guilty?

Hilda: It wasn't truthful . . . I felt you shouldn't use religion in this way, it wasn't finished enough, full out--and it wasn't really savage enough either. When I saw the blacks go through their exhortations, and sing and be baptized, that was very real. I could sense that it was true, their Bible reading and their droning and their prayers . . . but when white people deliberately threw themselves into a frenzy . . . It didn't seem honest--I could sense Catholics being very honest in their rituals and singing, and I enjoyed their sound, awfully, and the smell of their meeting house. I didn't see how they accomplished it. I couldn't understand how they could do that, read those Latin words, and those prayers, respond to the altar and all that. But I thought it was real.

--I tried to imagine how they attained Christ in this set up. You could see it happen; even if it was deliberate, they were prostrated with emotion.

--[My conversion was] an attempt, a deliberate--a deceit in a way . . . I think it was a deceit even [the second time]. I don't believe I actually--you know how you can make yourself faint or suffer if you decide to? I think I allowed myself a hysterical reaction to it . . . I sort of wanted it to be like that. I had a self-despise about it.

There was also a very private side to Hilda's religious search, a wish for a direct, personal relationship with Christ.

I wanted to love Christ as much as those people loved Christ, but as my concept of him not theirs.

--When I decided to become a Christian, because I wanted to be "good," I began having tentacles out to this idea, feeling for the idea of Christ, trying to envision him as the Godhead he apparently was to other people.

--I didn't let anyone realize that I was bringing up this vision of Christ, this was my own.

When Hilda was thirteen, she spent a summer with Jacob's relatives in Minnesota. Two main events occurred in this visit: She attended and was "saved" at a revival meeting; and she developed her first crush on an older cousin, Phillip. Both events served to stimulate her efforts at "bringing up the vision of Christ."

In reconstructing this period with Hilda, I devoted a lot of attention to determining how exactly she "envisioned" Christ--to questioning what mode of perception her tentacles represented. I met with little success, or at least contradictory results. Sometimes Hilda seemed to describe a direct visual perception, at other times she was clear in stating that what she experienced was mental imagery, or fantasized contact with Christ. The following description of "seeing" Christ contains both sides.

Hilda: I really did conjure up Christ in my thinking. I conjured Him, I saw Him in the body, His flesh, every night [that summer] . . . I could almost see him up here [waves in front of forehead].

C.J.: Almost? Was it like an hallucination, you were really seeing something?

Hilda: It was not like a miracle, a miraculous vision of Christ, not like a dream with Christ appearing. No, I decided I really wanted to see Christ and I could <u>see</u> Him.

> I could see His sorrow, and thought, 'Now how did Christ suffer when he was crucified?' and it seemed to me when I thought this I could see Him suffer . . . [I used to wonder] "how could they say that because Christ was crucified, murdered, that He is repaying the debt which we created, died for our sins. How could this be true?" I did my best to realize this and I just about did.
>
> But I worked to do it, it was a deliberate attempt . . . I was trying to realize Him, as a wonderful Godhead . . . Once I could see it, and feel it, and conjure it and imagine it, with the singing and the exhaustion of the audience, I really believed it because I wanted to, I think.

C.J.: What did he look like?

Hilda: Oh, larger than life, and beautiful, as the paintings and sculpture of him are . . . In the flesh, white fleshed, and you would see him with--his eyes were opened, he wasn't dead.

C.J.: What was his posture?

Hilda: Sorrow and a sort of beseeching, and sometimes I would see him with his arms out, and so on.

I gradually recognized that Hilda had no interest in distinguishing between a vivid mental representation of Christ and a visual perception. To draw too fine a line might take away from the fact that, through whatever mode she experienced it, her contact with Christ was real to her. It was a contact which she deeply needed at the time.

Hilda: I had a great desire for love. I wanted to love Christ and him to love me and to love Phillip and Phillip to love me.

C.J.: They were connected.

Hilda: Yes, very closely.

It might seem paradoxical that these two interests should be interconnected for Hilda, that her pursuit of an other worldly relationship should intensify in the same moment that she experiences a newly heightened interest in the world of real people. But, given the requirements of Hilda's binding loyalty to Emily, one interest balanced the other. Out of her oedipal situation, Hilda had grown to experience her desire to be united with a man as a dangerous foreign influence--part of the "dragon" which lurked in all of her future heterosexual relationships. To actualize her desire would be a form of betrayal so deep as to stretch the imagination. It would endanger her vital grounding in the interpersonal world. In order to preserve these ties, Hilda needed to redirect her desire toward a relationship which required an equal stretch of the imagination in the opposite direction, that is, only by fantasizing a relationship on an incomprehensible level of merit could Hilda balance the ruinous debt which she was incurring in her desire for Phillip. The search which had started as a conscious effort to please her mother--and was so public that James saw it immediately--had by now become deeply private and unconsciously motivated, but remained embedded in Hilda's relationship with Emily.

On the Verge of Sexual Intimacy

Diana Beale and the Presbyterian girls.

Hilda's first involvement with a cohesive peer group

occurred with what she calls "the Presbyterian girls," a clique of young women whom she met through her church. The group centered around Diana Beale and her lover, Rachel. One indication of the lasting significance of her involvement with the Presbyterian girls is that Hilda keeps a photo album of them in her small collection of memorabilia. Two large studio portraits of Diana--an attractive woman with an imposing, military bearing--and Rachel occupy facing pages, and a half dozen smaller portraits of stylishly dressed women fill out the remainder.

> Things get sort of . . . ah . . . complicated. Complicated, you see, because a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was falling for these women. Diana--and there was a Justine D'Ascoin who was a contralto who sang for us in church. She trained me in voice and she was a marvelous singer. And she was great, beautiful, woman, you know. And I would be able to feast my mind and eyes on these women. I more or less felt that was not the way it should be, and yet I was enjoying it, plenty. They're very attractive to me, those two women--[musingly] I don't know that I can remember any more.

Hilda does not speak easily about her relationship with these women, partly for fear of being misunderstood, and partly because she does not fully understand it herself. Her memories of Diana Beale, in particular, intermix feelings of sexual attraction, awe, concern, friendship, danger, and loss of control.

C.J.: That's one thing I haven't been clear on, how sexual was your attraction to Diana Beale?

Hilda: Yah . . . well, she is a very handsome woman. She had a beautiful voice. She drove her uncle's car--he was a doctor. And I am sure she was addicted to

some drug. Because so much of the time she seemed to be in a peculiar frame of consciousness. I was so sure she was under the influence of drugs . . .

Sometimes I would go down to her uncle's office after choir practice--he lived downtown in lower Hudson, a poor section of town--and I would think that her car was down there and I would have kind of an ESP sense of the fact that she would be there in his office. It was a very dark hallway . . . and I would climb this dark hall, stairway, and stand outside of his apartment, which was a poor, poor spot. I would listen at the door, listen and listen and hear her groaning and groaning, and then his voice and then groaning and groaning. And sometimes I would stand there, it would seem to me about an hour, and I would think, 'well she's in no condition to drive her car.'

And then she would come out of his apartment and she would be half conscious, as if she were drunk. And she would say, "well, little brother"--she called me "little brother" and I called her "big brother"--"can you steer if I determine the amount of gas?" And I would steer her all the way up town . . . then walk home, which was about another mile or two. And this went on often.

C.J.: Were you frightened, by the . . . ah--

Hilda: Well I thought [lowers her voice] I thought he was abusing her. I could picture him sexually abusing her--and I think probably he did have some kind of a . . . ugh . . . of a feeling of terribly deep love for her, as a woman and he a man. But he was--he looked like the kind of person that you would picture--who was the person who controlled Trilby? I thought of Trilby and--don't you know? Trilby was that great, beautiful woman who was controlled through hypnosis . . . He was a Jewish person, with a long mean face . . .

But I would see her to her own home . . . she had her own rooms and own bath. And she would say, "Little brother, can you come up and read poetry to me or stay with me a while?"

And she would be lying on the bed--beautiful, white pulsing flesh, it seemed--it always seemed to me I could just imagine it, this <u>pulsing</u>. Because she was so <u>beautiful</u>, had such a lovely fragrance--well now that fragrance might have been the addiction, but she

did smoke, too, and I hadn't known many women who did, and she had a lovely fragrance of tobacco, too.

I would say, "Are you in pain?" and I would kneel beside her. I would touch her.

And she would say, "Well, may I kiss you?"

And I said, "You don't want to kiss me."

"Yes I do," she said, "I'll pretend you're Rachel."

And she would give me this great big beautiful, full, lovely, lip--soft lovely, beautiful kiss . . .

I would think, "Oh, Rachel, aren't you lucky? To have that mouth kiss as much--kiss you as much as you want."

That's as much as it amounted to.

Hilda communicates the impact of her experience of Diana in the way she recounts her story. Between the brackets of "Yah . . ." and "That's as much as it amounted to," her voice rises and falls abruptly; she becomes momentarily exultant in describing her attraction to Diana, and hushed and abstracted in musing over the sinister connection between Diana and her uncle. The picture of the "little brother" Hilda straining to control the steering wheel, while an intoxicated "big brother" Diana "determines the gas," comes across clearly.

Ranking it after her crush on Phillip, Hilda refers to her infatuation with Diana Beale as "my second powerful sexual experience." It was the first to involve mutual engagement and physical contact. The question of why Hilda chose a woman as the object of her first active infatuation can be approached through a number of lines. Hilda opens several:

C.J.: Did you ever have any period of--you were considered rebellious, but those aren't really actively rebellious things, not doing something--

Hilda: Any really outstanding rebellion you mean?

> Well I think I was very rebellious when I fell in love with this Diana Beale . . . deliberately falling in love with a woman . . . [But my parents] took it as part of becoming an adult--they were wrong there. I think I could have gone on enjoying that kind of personable relationship, that is, admiring and adoring and loving and watching and thinking--you see, a woman doesn't think exactly as a man--I know this. When two women love one another they can see each other better than when a man and a woman love one another . . .
>
> I really think that men have different kinds of minds. I admire them more, always have. But on the other hand it is easier to understand and love and be close to a woman.

In addition to experiencing her attraction to a woman as rebellious, Hilda remembers considering it as evidence of "a serious maladjustment" at the time. This combination of rebellion and morbid self image is the hallmark of Erikson's (1959, p. 141) "negative identity": "an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which . . . had been presented to the individual as most undesirable and dangerous, and yet also as most real." Hilda's flirtation with lesbianism was, on one level, a natural extension of being "a continually bad person in the home." The fact that she made little effort to hide her sexual attraction to Diana, and seems instead to have gone out of her way to confront her parents with it, supports this interpretation. In contrast to what became a very private infatuation with her images of Christ,

Hilda presented her relationship with Diana as part of her public self. She used it as a way to maintain her continuity in the family, to remain real at home while she was actualizing a life in the outside world.

Hilda's comments on women being more comprehensible, more accessible as love objects, introduces a second line of explanation. She had been bitterly disappointed by Jacob, who, on any number of critical occasions, had taken Emily's side against her. Morecver, the picture which she had developed of her parents sexual relationship--"for his pleasure and nobody else's"--was most unattractive. These reasons for turning away from men may have had an additional message to Jacob similar to what Freud (1920, p. 217) reads in the homosexuality of a young female patient: "Since you have betrayed me, you have to put up with my betraying you."

Another line of explanation begins with the recognition that Hilda's sexual choice was a move in relation to Emily as well as Jacob. Freud (1920, pp. 214-216) offers two additional interpretations of his patient's homosexuality which have clear relevance to Hilda and Emily: "retiring in favor of the mother," i.e., avoiding rivalry with her by renouncing men; and "a yearning from the beginning for a kinder mother" which can lead to a "search for a substitute to whom she could become passionately attached."

Each of these interpretations can be understood as an aspect of the loyalty bonds which Hilda solidified in her

oedipal situation. In other words, the particular negative identity which Hilda was experimenting with was a vehicle for expressing anger at her parents, a strategy for seeking alternate sources of satisfaction, and above all, a way to remain true to Emily in relation to Jacob.

To put Hilda's adolescent sexual strivings in the context of her relational needs is not a way to deny her burgeoning sexuality. What this perspective does deny is the idea that the sexual yearnings which become so strong in this stage are in some way separate from the adolescent person, forces which come from somewhere outside of Hilda and drove her to act in certain ways. Viewing Hilda's sexual urges in the context of her family relationships, in fact, helps to clarify, rather than obscure, the specific pleasures which she found in Diana Beale.

All of the pleasures which Hilda describes enjoying in the "kind of relationship" which she had with Diana Beale--"admiring and adoring and loving and watching and thinking"--are the pleasures of a passive participant, an observer. The first thing which Hilda describes when I ask her how sexual her attraction was is her observational position: standing outside the door listening to Diana and her uncle--a striking repetition of the childhood scene at the door of her parents' bedroom. In order to understand the pleasurable aspect of this scene, it is necessary to consider two factors: the

impact of dissociation and the sexual quality of Hilda and Emily's relationship.

Because a person who relies heavily on dissociation tends to experience their own most dangerous impulses as "not-me," the world becomes, as Hilda puts it, "full of awful things." One tends also to see others as engaging in deeply illicit satisfaction of one's own dissociated urges. As noted in the last chapter, there was a pervasive quality of sado-masochism in Emily and Hilda's relationship. Sadism and masochism are not specific instincts or sex drives, but ways of relating, modes of integrating sexuality into a relationship. They were a significant aspect of the self-other configuration which Hilda knew as intimacy. The important point here is that they were an aspect particularly prone to dissociation. Hilda and Emily both had a strong investment in viewing Emily's hurtful use of intimacy as inadvertent--Hilda attributes sadistic pleasure to the antagonistic other only in her later relationships with women in authority. Although Hilda can now recognize she sometimes finds similar pleasure in exploiting intimate knowledge--"it's exciting to see people cringe"--at the time, she needed to picture a third party experiencing deep sexual pleasure in abusing, dominating, and enslaving the object of her love.

The scene which Hilda envisioned between Diana and her uncle differs from the original scene behind her parents'

door in two important respects. First, in contrast to the situation with Jacob, Hilda's fantasies were not constrained by any loyalty to Diana's uncle. He was a stranger, not part of Hilda's "us"--and his "them-ness" was accentuated by his "long mean Jewish face." Hilda's fantasies of sexual abuse and exploitive bondage could take on a more full-blown expression to encompass the intensified yearnings of an adolescent. Second, Hilda moved toward a more active participation in this repetition of her parents' bedroom scene. The "ESP sense" which led Hilda to wait outside Diana's uncle's office was a rescue fantasy of the sort which Freud (1920) notes as common in early heterosexual as well as homosexual infatuations. Hilda was stepping in to deliver her love from the abusive impulses which took on such strength when she pictured them as part of the uncle's "deep love."

There is a second, more tender side to the feelings of love which Hilda attached to Diana. Hilda's description of her experience of actual closeness with Diana--the fragrances, pulsing flesh, and the "lip-soft lovely beautiful kiss"--are by far her most rhapsodic descriptions of physical attraction. The only near approximation is the wonderful "glowing thing" which she experienced in Teressa. The fact that these passionate feelings focus on women can also be connected with Hilda's early relationship with Emily, but the connection requires a somewhat more speculative leap. Schactel (1948) points out that odors are often the most strongly evocative

aspect of a long forgotten scene. He explains this observation by reasoning that an infant's sensual experience of the world is heavily olfactory. Oral satisfactions and experiencing the mother as a source of light (Mahler, 1975) are also characteristic pleasures of infancy.

Guntrip (1971, p. 152) defines the private self which remains after a public "false self" is established as: "the regressed ego, a part of the infantile libidinal ego . . . put into cold storage with a secret hope of rebirth." He refers to the "tiny naked baby" in one of his patient's dreams as the perfect image of this dissociated "secret self." In relational terms, this "inner self" can be regarded as an infantile mode of attachment or "need template" which has been split off from, and therefore not transmuted by, ongoing participation in the world. The possibility of intimacy with a woman may have revitalized Hilda's hopes of finding a matching context for her true self--an interpretation which would account for the intensity, and the particular qualities of emotion which her female love objects aroused in her.

Approaching heterosexual intimacy.

Hilda's transition from women to men is an event passed over in our reconstruction of her history. The picture which emerges from the interviews is that one moment she was engrossed in "feasting her eyes and mind" on women then, following a brief interlude of awkward dating, was suddenly

engaged to be married. It is as if she had followed a course which had been determined with little question of choice on her part. She is only remotely in touch with being attracted to Richard, her eventual husband, and the few instances in which she recalls these feelings are extreme situations: at his deathbed and during a reunion of Teressa, Richard, and Hilda after years of separation. In the latter case, the feelings were triggered by Teressa embracing Richard and saying, "You always were such a handsome person."

C.J.: You still felt possessive of Richard, back then, a few years ago?

Hilda: Well, you see, here is what would happen with Richard, in certain situations: I could see ourselves as these high school kids, you see. Because Teressa, Richard, and I all went to high school at the same time, went with the same group. So it kind of went, kind of resulted again; it was sort of reborn, that sort of a . . . high school frenzy . . . of . . . whatever it was that first excited me with Richard.

What does stand out in Hilda's memory of this period is her interaction with her parents. She has strong feelings about how they "coped with the problem of dating" and sexuality. Almost all of her descriptions show an unresolved mixture of feelings: she expresses anger over her parents' failure to guide her in this stage and criticizes their narrow views, while at the same showing a sympathetic appreciation for their position and expressing some of the same views herself.

C.J.: It sounds . . . between the lines, like you had a sense that [your mother] could be embarrassing.

Hilda: Well she was embarrassing in that she didn't agree that there was such a thing as . . . a relationship between the sexes that was important--and she didn't expect it to happen, excepting in a very conventional way: meet a boy, kiss a boy, be engaged, get married, and the father and the mother approve of the arrangement, and so forth. That was it. That was all it amounted to . . .

As far as dating was concerned, one didn't start dating until way along in those days . . . high-school. Now--and there's where we fell short--where mother fell short, in bringing us up.

C.J.: How do you mean?

Hilda: Well she never encouraged dating, and she never arranged that we would have a social life with boys, in our home--and she had five girls, you know. And she never arranged that the boys would meet girls. For instance, when James and that one girl, ah . . . Eileen O'Donovan, out of Massachusetts, that he wanted to marry--a lovely little girl--because she is a Catholic: 'thumbs down', you know. And that's the thing that broke Jim's spirit, as far as a happy relationship with the female is concerned . . . And that's where mother and father fell very short . . .

But I . . . I don't think it was necessarily their fault. I believe that they didn't understand the importance of life in that--from that angle.

Father was working at it a little bit, you know, reading Freud and thinking that was a nasty, perverted, ah . . . thing.

Mother, meanwhile, thought that all of the sexual life was really the motherhood of it, I guess. That was as much as her energy could cope with . . . there was so much expected of people in those days, in one day's stand.

Although Hilda feels strongly that her parents, particularly Emily, let her down in this area, it is not immediately clear what she needed from them. The points which she identifies in the preceding excerpt--sex education and

arranging contact in the home--are the very things which Hilda describes as objectionable in the following passage.

C.J.: A while ago, you were talking about your mother and her attitudes about dating. Did your mother and you ever talk about sex, did she ever explain--

Hilda: No, she never explained anything to me about sex until after I became engaged . . . And anyway, her way of explaining it was, you know [somber voice], "I have to tell you, Hilda, that there is one responsibility the wife has for"--

I said, "Listen, mother, please don't say another word! I know what you're going to say and I don't want to hear it!"

"Well!" she said--and she was really quite taken aback, you know, she turned red as fire . . .

"I know," I said--I knew what she was going to say. But I said . . . Augh, "why are you telling me this? I should think you would allow me to find this out some other way!"--This was my feeling, that she shouldn't have told me.

C.J.: She shouldn't have?

Hilda: No. Because she didn't know anything about it herself; and I could see it. And I said, "I hope," now I said, "I hope that this--if this is the case, if this is 'woman's duty,' as you call it, that it happens no more than once a year." Because I had that already straight in my mind . . .

C.J.: So it seemed something very unpleasant?

Hilda: Totally. Painful, difficult--very bad.

And I agreed that it probably was, from her--in fact my own experience was not too good up to that point you know. And I believed that it was probably one of the most sorrowful points about marriage, the fact that that was expected of one.

But I did believe, then, that I cared enough for Richard, that in spite of that I would go along with the idea of marriage.

> But now when Richard and I dated, he came all the way from Mount Marion, which is eight miles out of Hudson. He'd come in by bicycle . . . And mother would sit with us, darning socks, in the living room, while he and I had a bit a reparte' until ten o'clock. Then she'd say, 'Now Richard, it's bed time. You must go and Hilda has to go to bed'--That was my dating with Richard. Mind you!

C.J.: And that was at your mother's insistence?

Hilda: Mmgh? Yes. That was mother's way of coping with the problem of . . . having a date.

Hilda, in short, experienced Emily as at once too disengaged--"that's where she fell short"--and overly intrusive in this stage of her development--"I should think you would allow me to find this out some other way." This contradiction resolves itself when you consider that what Hilda needed in this transition was not really specific advice or matchmaking but permission to step away from the family, Emily's blessing for Hilda to move forward with a man. I arrived at this understanding through a roundabout process. One of Hilda's most vivid memories from this period concerns the dress she chose for high school graduation--the first time she was allowed to deviate from the color scheme which Emily chose for each child. I was initially struck by the elaborate attention which Hilda devoted to describing her dress, but puzzled by its significance. Much later, I realized that this choice of dress was Hilda's first opportunity to shape her own boundary in the concrete domain of physical appearance. Like a bird which changes it plummage at sexual maturity, she would need some

assurance that she was still recognized by the flock. Hilda never received such assurance.

When I asked Hilda what breaking away from her mother's uniform meant between Emily and herself, she addressed the question at first on a concrete level, going into detail on Emily's exacting standards in dress, particularly with respect to modesty.

C.J.: Was that the style then, or was that part of your mother?

Hilda: I think my mother decided that . . . there should be no sign of a figure. You should be something, either corsetted or contained . . . Of course many women were in that hang up about the effect of their body. Their bodies had to be in total control so that they never walked, you know, feeling yourself swing at the hip--that was totally wrong, because you were trying to be attractive to the opposite sex. Mother was very much in that nature: never do anything to be attractive to the opposite sex.

C.J.: That must have made it very hard when you were a teenager, when that's really on your mind.

Hilda: Well, I don't think that it was on my mind. I don't think I had allowed it to enter. I don't think it had developed. In fact, I think that was one of the downfalls of my marriage. I had no idea that females could be so attractive--I had never developed it in myself . . . Mother really queered us in that way . . . [one of my sisters] is still in that awful bind of behavior. Some people hold it forever.

On the verge of leaving for college, Hilda became engaged to Richard. Hilda's childhood "pact" with Teressa, already stained by her infatuation with Diana Beale and the Presbyterian girls, was at this point fully broken:

> And when I told her about Richard she said, "Oh, but he is so handsome--and then I've lost you!" . . .

--I'm sure Teressa had already broken from my loyalty--"the only one and one relationship"--and Carlo [her husband to be] was probably in the picture already.

--It broke us, broke us apart--totally. I mean our childhood was over then.

College and an Initial Breakdown

Like her dating and engagement to Richard, Hilda presents her college experience as something which happened to her. James chose the university, Berkely, "because he decided it was cheap and wanted me to go to a radical school." Jacob chose Hilda's specialization, dietetics, for reasons never entirely clear to her.

Hilda does not describe having strong feelings--one way or the other--about moving so far away from home, but she begins the following account of her college experience in response to my question on whether or not Jacob came through in times of crisis.

Hilda: Well, I don't think we very often presented him with our crises . . . When I asked him if I might go to college out in California because Jim decided that was a good school to go to, he said, "All right"--but he wanted to decide what courses I would take. He decided I was to be a dietician--which heaven forbid, I didn't care to be--but inasmuch as he was willing to pay my way, I said, "okay, I'll take the courses."

He said, "You know, you love to cook. You can be a dietician."

C.J.: Why did he pick dietician when you didn't want to do it?

Hilda: You've got me . . . I guess he thought I was smart enough to cope with the science--and matter of fact,

> I did pass all the science courses--But you know you have nothing but science, all of the 'ologies that there are, almost. And you never see a cookbook . . . until you've been there five or six years . . . I'm just as glad I didn't.
>
> I filled up all of my terms with--all the . . . English I could, you know, and poetry--and decided I liked writing . . . That's what I really wanted, the most. I don't really know what I would have become, had I become anything . . . I wasn't serious about it, I guess.

Hilda is oddly self-deprecating in her last comment--"had I become anything." Actually, she had success in several careers: she was published twice and supported her family for a period with her writing; she taught at and had a hand in running a progressive school; and she rose to a position of responsibility, and was certified as an L.P.N. through her hospital work. Even in college, one of her professors recognized her potential as a writer and encouraged her to take her work seriously. Rather than an objective assessment, her comment reflects two factors which shape Hilda's sense of her own competence in the world: the all-or-none definition of "making the grade" which Hilda acquired from her family--and the role of dietician would seem to fall short of the requirements for being a "Somebody" in the first place--; and Hilda's feeling that, like Emily, she has never learned "to cope with the realist's idea of the situation," that is, that there is some standard of legitimate participation in the world which she and her mother never mastered. Hilda's college career, which was aborted by a "very serious

tailspin of a nervous breakdown," confirmed both sides of this negative view of her competence.

The main event in her breakdown was an attack of uncontrolled screaming, identical to a later experience which she underwent shortly after her mother's death.

> In college when it happened, it lasted about, oh . . . over an hour. That was when I was initiated [to a sorority], the first time I screamed. And then the next day I went to the library [mumbles] . . . I was telling a very close friend of mine about the initiation, and I suddenly had this smothering sensation again--they always started with that horrible smothering sensation. And I threw myself back--right there in the library, you know, in the university and I began to scream, you know, then. And I was carried out, and, ah . . . screamed and screamed--and my eyes were shut during this; I wouldn't be able to open my eyes.

C.J.: Do you remember what you thought about, what would be going through your mind?

Hilda: Just that I wanted to--I wanted to empty everything I had in me. I just wanted to close my eyes and scream . . . until all of me was gone . . . And I almost felt as if that were happening.

C.J.: As if?

Hilda: As if all of me, my personality, my self, were gone--were forgotten.

The initiation which brought on her screaming was a hazing ritual in which the members of the sorority paraded Hilda, clad in a bathing suit, past the men's fraternity houses. Hilda experienced the men's attention as intensely humiliating. What Hilda felt she was being initiated into, however, was equally disturbing. Hilda, with the help of the doctor who attended her through this period, traced her break-

down to her fears of being pulled into the "very full lesbian expression" which she perceived in her sorority house.

> Then when I was in college, of course, there were a great many girls, it just was taken as a matter of course . . . that you found a mate, slept with a mate, and went ahead having, really, a sexual experience with a mate in college--which I did not do. I was dead set against it then. And I guess that I told her--the doctor--I told the doctor this was a problem for me, about having had an experience with Diana--a mental, emotional experience with Diana--And I was terribly afraid that these women in college were going to <u>insist</u>. In fact, I woke up once or twice with some of them more or less attacking me, you know, and "God! I can't do this and study," you know. And I was engaged to Richard anyway.
>
> And that's when [Dr. Robin] said to me, "How much have you had to do with men? You should really begin having relations with men, in some way"--And I thought that was a very peculiar diagnosis. But still I should have--probably she was very right, you see. She was ahead of herself, in that day.
>
> And I said, "How do you go about that?"--because I could see no way of going about that--it didn't come to my mind how to go about it, you see.

The doctor who attended Hilda, Anne Robin, took her into her own home for several weeks, where she offered Hilda a treatment of silence and solitaire.

Hilda: Dr. Anne Robin . . . allowed me not to speak for the entire visit . . . she would order me about setting the table and gave a . . . a <u>job</u> of learning to play solitaire . . . I was to occupy myself in this <u>continually</u>, which I did--Everything she told me to do I <u>did</u>. It was almost as though I had been hypnotized by her. And so--

C.J.: Was that helpful?

Hilda: Well I can't say, one way or the other . . .

> Finally, after two or three weeks, she said, "Now today you can get in your college clothes and walk

> over to the campus, and then go to the class that you would be attending at this hour."
>
> And I knew that it would take about a half hour walk over to Berkely, to the University, and the class was chemistry. And it was an enormous room, with thousands in it. And I remembered my seat--I surprised myself in this way, that I had found my seat, thought of my seat. But, when I saw these thousands of students, I began screaming again. But instead of fainting or falling, I ran to the infirmary and beat on the door--or the windows, they were shut at the moment--and said that I had to come in I was having a nervous breakdown. And I was put to bed there.

Hilda recovered quickly from this third incident to finish out the remainder of her term at Berkely and return home.

Understanding Hilda's crisis.

Hilda's emotional "tailspin" fits the classic pattern of a homosexual panic. But the standard psychoanalytic interpretation--that Hilda was defending herself against her own impulses by projecting them onto, and then fleeing from, the objects of her desire--sheds light on only one aspect of Hilda's crisis, leaving others, such as her feelings of intense shame, the "horrible smothering sensation," and her anxiety in the classroom, obscure. These latter aspects of her college crisis all become comprehensible when put in the context of Hilda's broader relational needs at this stage.

Blos (1979) regards adolescence as the "second individuation stage" in development. Erikson (1959), who refers to adolescence as the stage of "identity versus identity

diffusion," points out that successful passage through this stage requires a renegotiation of oedipal conflicts. Hilda, it may be recalled, entered her oedipal situation before she and Emily had achieved a successful resolution to her first stage of individuation, and, in particular, the negativism entailed in this stage. The normal pushing away and coming together which occurs in this period remained, for Hilda, abnormally fraught with separation anxiety and the risks of shame. Hilda's flirtation with homosexuality, in addition to being a way to forestall a renegotiation of her oedipal situation, was a recapitulation of her first stage of negativism. Because her call for a counter response from her parents fell on deaf ears, Hilda took matters into her own hands, turning abruptly from her experiment with a negative identity into a premature commitment to heterosexual intimacy--accepting engagement with Richard, as she puts it, on the basis of "a few dates and a goodbye kiss."

College presented a second opportunity for individuation. Assuming that Hilda had a hand in choosing Berkely, she attempted to take maximum advantage of this opportunity, separating herself from her family by the width of a continent. Although Hilda does not recall her feelings about the move itself, it is reasonable to assume that they were highly ambivalent. On the one hand, she was for the first time escaping the continual "sameness" of home and, on the other

hand, she was entering an altogether new level of exposure to separation anxiety and the attendant risks of shame.

Once at college, Hilda sought membership in a sorority, following what Erikson (1959, p. 154) calls "a universal trend [in adolescence] toward some form of uniformity through which incomplete self-certainty can hide, for a time, in group certainty." The ritual shaming which is frequently a requirement for admission into such group certainty was overwhelming to Hilda. It actualized her worst fears of being exposed in the world--an experience which Erikson compares to that of a naked child standing in the judgmental gaze of much larger adults. Being paraded semi-naked past the fraternity houses was an experience of excruciating self-consciousness for Hilda. Perceiving her most private aspects of self as cast suddenly in a hostile spotlight, she attempted to eliminate self-consciousness--to force her eyes shut and scream "until all of me was gone."

A "horrible smothering sensation," rather the fear of attack, is what stands out in Hilda's memory of anxieties of this period. In order to understand this sensation, it is helpful to look back at two similar experiences which Hilda describes: "suffocation in the family atmosphere," and her recurrent dream of being engulfed by a "libido thing." Her feelings of suffocation in the family center on the experience of a rigidly static self-other complementarity, the feeling

that her own existence is defined by her state of relationship to the family:

> When I was with them I would sort of be them, see them . . . and be them because of what they were . . . I wouldn't exchange, I would sort of be there, be in this environment.

Hilda's dreams of her "libido thing" also describe a state of self being forced into a matching context of Other, but at a more sensual, viceral level of experience. In addition, it sounds very close to her recollection of waking up with her dorm mates "more or less attacking" her:

> I was trying to remember the terrific sexual dream I had [recently]. You know, this libido thing . . . I would sometimes wake up with it when I was insane. With this creature on top of me, I called it my libido.
>
> It was really attacking me sexually, and I was attacking it sexually . . . this libido situation . . .

C.J.: Is it a pleasant dream?

Hilda: Enjoyment? I don't know, it just has to do with a real sexual expression.

C.J.: Is it frightening?

Hilda: I wouldn't say it was--it's not the best and not the worst, but sexual, totally.

C.J.: You describe it as an attack going on.

Hilda: Yah, that happens . . . I always think of a relationship--in life or your imagination or whatever--that it's your ego seeking an alter-ego, you see--this I firmly believe. This [libido] was an alter-ego that's searching for me, as much as I was searching for it.

C.J.: Does the figure ever remind you of anybody in particular?

Hilda: No, it's kind of a peculiar membraneous thing, sort of gelatinous. But it has a suffocating quality to it, and it has a definite fragrance . . . I think of it as death and funerals and things like that, that kind of a fragrance of a corpse . . .

And sometimes I have a shot that goes right up the center of my body, that kind of a sexy thing that women, I suppose, get when they are excited sexually . . .

C.J.: It sounds like a very consuming dream.

Hilda: Well sometimes I think, "Well boy now, was that satisfactory?"--I'll say when I wake up [laughs], "Would you sell your birthright for that?" I'd say to myself, "No, I don't think so."

College, and especially sorority life, presented Hilda with an opportunity to find a matching context for the self which she had never been able to express at home. Her relationship with Diana Beale had made her recently aware of the strongly sensual aspect of her search for an "alter-ego"; she was newly sensitive to the sexual nature of the unmet relational needs which she held as part of her private self. To say that she projected these needs onto her dorm mates is accurate, but covers only part of the picture. As Freud (1922, p. 236) points out, people do not "project into the sky." They, instead, "displace to the unconscious minds of others the attention which they have withdrawn from their own." Hilda's heightened awareness of her own needs for attachment and intimacy made her acutely aware of the search for "mates" which was going on all around her--it led her to focus on the centripedal force between people, but as if under a microscope. Whether or not Hilda was accurate in perceiving a homosexual

undercurrent in the attraction between her dorm mates is irrelevant to the main point, which is that Hilda was unable to experience herself as an active party in the search for intimacy. To do so would have been to sacrifice her "birth right," that is, had Hilda expressed the relational needs which she kept so carefully hidden within her family, she would have violated the binding loyalties which grounded her in the interpersonal world and acted as a "counter-autonomous superego." Because it would be dangerous to acknowledge her own yearning for intimacy, Hilda was forced to experience interpersonal attraction as pursuit--as if she were a stationary piece of iron with magnets moving toward it from all directions. While the relationships differed markedly from those of her family, Hilda's experience of being coercively defined by her environment, and the accompanying sensation of suffocation, were the same.

The role of counter-autonomous anxiety is clear in Hilda's third incident of screaming. When she entered the chemistry classroom, she was struck by the "thousands" of students. She was also surprised at finding her own seat, that "the thought of my seat" could even enter her mind. Rather than giving her comfort, recognition that she had a place in such a vast world of strangers appears to be what triggered her anxiety reaction. Her schema of self could not accommodate the experience of being at home among strangers. As Hilda defined her loyalties within the family, there was no freedom to be

one-and-different--to be part of "them" would mean sacrificing her identity as one of "us." Hilda's sudden recognition of her place in the context of the classroom thus aroused the anxiety of separation. Hilda responded by attempting "to empty" herself of the offending awareness.

Hilda's third anxiety attack differed from the preceding two in that she had a bridge between the isolation of autonomy and the security of enmeshment in the person of Dr. Robin. "Instead of fainting or falling" she was able to take action and run for the infirmary. Although her advice about men had mystified Hilda, Dr. Robin had been able to provide exactly what Hilda needed to control her anxiety at the time: a maternal authority figure who could limit her self-expression--"allow me not to talk"--and impose the rigid structure for Hilda to relate, "as if hypnotized," through a false self on a conformity basis.

Finally, viewed at the level of the family system, Hilda's nascent autonomy and success as a student threatened to disqualify her from the role of scapegoat. Hilda's loyal return to the role, through her breakdown, was met with an immediate gesture of reinduction. Rather than seeing her as distressed or in need of help, Hilda remembers her father as quick to define her breakdown as a form of misbehavior, a mental misdemeanor which reinforced her debt to the family.

> My father was totally uninterested in it. He said it was a deliberate attempt at calling attention to myself, and he refused to pay the [requested

> charitable contribution]--Well he sent twenty-five dollars, I think, to Dr. Anne Robin.

A moritorium in the family.

Hilda returned home to spend one of the happiest six months of her life. She enrolled in Columbia Teachers College and moved into an apartment in Greenwich Village with James and their father. Hilda was responsible for preparing meals and managing the household budget, a task with which James both aided and hindered her:

> He used to say, "Now you have to learn to live, no matter what situation you find yourself in--I'm going to bring you to New York, and show you how you can buy furniture, furnish a flat, cook, on a very little bit of money, and find the most beautiful and interesting things in New York." And he said, "I'll show you how that can be done--and you can do it anywhere in the world if you decide to."
>
> And so, when we went to New York, sure enough, father gave me fifteen dollars a week to run the apartment we lived in. And Jim would say, "we don't need that much, I'll take seven and a half, and you may have seven and a half. I need seven and a half for spending money" . . . so on seven and a half dollars, I fed the three of us.

Hilda was pleased with the opportunity to enter partially into James' world, and she dates much of the advice and outlook which she adopted from him to this period. Their apartment became a meeting place for a circle of "advanced thinkers," including several literary figures and social advocates prominent at the time. Hilda fondly remembers evenings of dancing, drinking tea from a samovar, and passing time among exciting company.

She and Richard maintained a regular correspondence which they had started while Hilda was at Berkely. He would make the long trip from his college in upstate New York to spend occasional weekends with her. Jacob often subsidized his fare.

The high point in this respite from Hilda's gradually mounting crises of adulthood occurred when she engineered an elopement between Teressa and her lover Carlo--perhaps the only instance of Hilda becoming triangled into a relationship with a happy conclusion.

Because Carlo, as an artist and an Italian, was unacceptable to Teressa's family, they had been carrying on a secret affair. Hilda, initially shocked, felt compelled to act in their behalf. She approached Emily:

> And mother said, "Now calm down, I'll show you how we'll cope with this."
>
> She said, "I'll have him over here," and she invited Carlo for the weekend, to our home. Because she felt she would investigate Carlo herself.

She "blurted out the fact" to Teressa's father at an inopportune moment:

> So he was furious at both of us. And he took Teressa under his wing, had her in the apartment in New York City, and did not even <u>allow</u> her any social life at all.

And Hilda became directly involved:

> By the time I got to New York, I decided I would have to find out what was going on, because Carlo was visiting <u>me</u> . . . and he said, "I'm going to either kill [Teressa's father] or kill myself--I'm an Italian, you know, this can't go on! She's my sweetheart and I must have her."

And I was frightened--I believed him.

Hilda and Carlo went to Teressa's home, where Hilda convinced her aunts to allow her out for a moment.

Hilda: And we got into a cab and rode all over New York City. And he tried to make her promise she would marry him, and she would say, "Yes! No! Yes, no, no . . ."

C.J.: And you were--

Hilda: I was there--yes--"And like I say, you love him and he loves you--Now what does that mean? That means you should be married."

So finally she agreed, and he took us to an Italian restaurant, way down in the village. And we had a wonderful meal and he bought red roses for both of us, and he said, "Now we must get married tonight!"

So we went to the editor of The Mentor, Guy Jones . . . Guy answered the door--he's a very charming person, he liked my writing--that's why he's charming!--So he opened the door and said, "What's this Carlo?"

Carlo said, "I'm getting married?"

Guy said "To which one?" [laughs]--I was very pleased that he said that--although I wouldn't have wanted marriage--but I had a very soft spot in my heart for him.

Hilda, Teressa, and Carlo spent the night with their friend and arranged a wedding the following day.

And when I finally came back to the apartment, Jim was there. He said, "Where have you been?"

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Father's been telephoning the police and Teressa's father's been telephoning the police--we want to know where you've been!"

"Oh," I said, "I eloped with Teressa."

Marriage.

Hilda: I will say that I lost my memories of Richard, and all of that, when I went insane. That part of my life I lost--was lost.

C.J.: But you regained it?

Hilda: Some of it I began to regain, yah. But if I try to remember Richard, it's a very difficult thing. I sometimes can remember him in [our sons] Carroll or Harry, or sometimes those photographs I have of him . . . make me remember him . . . a little.

I told you, told you at the last time--looking at him while he was dying, I could remember him.

But the memory isn't exactly intimate. It isn't even as intimate as my relationship, say, with Teressa, and with my sisters, and with my mother--it's disconnected. It's as though I were intruding on his life.

C.J.: What do you mean by "disconnected?"

Hilda: Now and then I could try to remember my life with Richard and I could remember some of it, and then my mind would let it go. You know, it wouldn't go consecutively on in my thinking, as much of my memories do go right consecutively on, from one to the other--you know this.

Erikson (1959, p. 134) observes that "often only an attempt to engage in . . . sexual intimacy fully reveals the latent weakness of identity." Sullivan (1956, p. 152) speaks of a malevolent transformation that the person may undergo in attempting intimacy, "the profound discouragement in the pursuit of affection that culminates in schizophrenic break." Although Hilda's schizophrenic break did not occur until she was in her early thirties, the mother of four, and had been separated from Richard for several years, I believe that this connection between intimacy and schizophrenia holds true in her

life. One reason for the prolonged latency is that Hilda's writing was a great resource. At times of crisis, she was able to turn to an imaginative reconstruction of problematic events in her life--a creative skill which significantly eased her passage through these years. Also, the engagement between Richard and Hilda was persistently tentative; their marriage always had an "as if" quality. Neither partner accomplished what Erikson calls the "efficient repudiation," the differentiation of self from family, which is a prerequisite for engaging in a fully intimate relationship.

Both families resisted the idea of Hilda and Richard's marriage. James was the most supportive:

Hilda: Jim felt that Richard was an unusual person. He agreed that Richard was worth it, worth a try as a friend and a companion--although he didn't think that marriage [itself] was worth it . . .

C.J.: Did he actively oppose your marrying Richard?

Hilda: Well I think everyone in the family did--Richard's family, my family, all opposed it. And my father, and Richard's father, wanted it to be a . . . form of expression, a "trial marriage" is what they called it.

Emily's response was the most problematic for Hilda:

When I told her--mother--that I was going to get married, she said, "Then you can get a job and get money for your announcements and wedding dress. Because you have no dowry.

C.J.: She didn't think of it as a good marriage?

Hilda: She didn't think of it as a marriage at all, I don't believe. And yet she wanted me not to give up on working at it.

--Well my mother was romantically inclined toward Richard, but she was not connected with Richard's family . . .

I know he felt the same toward her. Even after her death he would say, "you had the most beautiful little mother . . ."

You know when you see two people standing together, the way they look at each other. She would look up at him and I would think, "For God's sake, mother!"

And he would look down at her with a kind of Lochinvar look, and I'd think, "Richard, for pete's sake."

C.J.: How did you feel about it?

Hilda: I felt ashamed for her--I didn't for Richard because I just thought he was a great big son of . . . his father--His father couldn't help but go for any woman who showed any sign of a soft eyed look. And mother was really giving him a soft eyed look.

The picture that Hilda gives of married life contains numerous scenes of intense and engulfing emotional involvement drawn against a background of isolation and loneliness. Other people, particularly her mother and mother-in-law, enter constantly into the marriage, sometimes dictating their entire life style. Hilda, caught, as she puts it, "in the throes of production and reproduction," becomes vulnerable even to feelings of loss of control over her own body. Richard's actions often have a very painful impact on Hilda, but he never emerges as a "full determinant" in her life: "He never really came into my life nor I in his."

Hilda gives a clear description in her Journal at Sixty of her sense of isolation in marriage:

> And being married was, in memory, a concept of being alone, for she sensed now her continuous, air-hung, draft blown self "married," forever waiting for its mate to return: from work, from sleep, from its silence in eating or reading . . . [She] waited for some frail accompaniment, which so seldom occurred.

The other, overly enmeshed, side of Hilda's marital experience began when the couple moved to Richard's parents' farm immediately after their wedding. Hilda felt that her life, under the controlling hand of Mr. and Mrs. Kroner, became unending servitude. She also describes this aspect of their marriage in her journal:

> Life was disposed and arranged by his parents.
>
> Daylight, darkness, morning, noon and night, were followed according to their placement of continual effort. To them, loving and breathing and doing went a certain way. The sound of churning, fire-stoking, water-slopping from pump to pail, feet stomping the snow off in the shed, the hungry cries of many creatures, cat, chick, cow and hog, all were material phenomena to time the next effort. The clean, hot odor of fire and food and the sudsed soft-soap, washed dishes and clothing, the cold stomp of wet soles from constant water, when sound subjected all to effort and hours were filled with it.

At the same time that Hilda was coming to see her marriage as a form of indenture to the Kroner family, she was also discovering that she had, to some extent, "invented" the Richard of her love. Intimacy with the real person presented problems far more severe than she had anticipated, especially in the area of establishing a sex life.

C.J.: The first time we talked about [your youth] you referred to yourself as "sexually repressed" . . . what did you mean by that?

Hilda: Well, I don't believe I had a normal relationship with anyone, that is, I never had a protector in the male--and most women expect to be married, don't they? They expect to have someone with them every night, right?

C.J.: I suppose, yuh.

Hilda: And this never happened to me, you see; I never had such a thing.

And, therefore, I think--[my daughter] Ruth believes this, and I think she's right: sex has to be learned . . . that it isn't a magic happening, exactly, that it is a desirous development, and you can accomplish it like dancing, or good food, good singing, good culture of any type--it can be accomplished . . . And that was something which I never accomplished.

--I really loved Richard, but it was entirely mental, I'm sure, my love for Richard--I loved to watch him and look at him, see and be near him, and sleeping with him, and so forth. But as far as the sexual life was concerned, I knew nothing about what sexual life was with Richard. He was not the type of person--in fact, I can't understand how anyone ever understood him in that way.

The most important aspect of her sexual life with Richard was, to use the phrase which she applies to Emily, "the motherhood of it." From the start, Hilda's experience of bearing a child was surrounded by conflict. In each instance she felt an undercurrent of deadly opposition from the maternal authority figures in her life. Most of the grave shortcomings which Hilda perceived in Richard as her "protector in the male" center on the issue of pregnancy. The overall impact of her pregnancies was so traumatic for Hilda that at several points in our interviews she suggests that there must be a connection with her eventual insanity.

Hilda's first pregnancy came in the early months of her marriage.

C.J.: Do you remember your reaction to finding out you were pregnant?

Hilda: Yes, I was quite happy.

Of course, by then another self seemed to have been developed. And anyhow, I believe that the minute you are pregnant your motherhood is immediately developed.

C.J.: How do you mean "another self"?

Hilda: Well, a person who--a mother. I lost my own selfish person and I was now a mother, the minute I knew I was pregnant.

I don't know when I told Richard . . . He probably paid it no attention because [I can't remember him] making any kind of a to do about it.

I went down to Hudson to tell my mother and she was very happy about it--unbelievably because they had decided I shouldn't have children and hoped I wouldn't. But you know her motherhood, her grandmotherhood, whatever, was developed at that moment also.

--Finally Mrs. Kroner began to suspect something and questioned me. She questioned Richard and she questioned Richard's sister and [concluded], "I think Hilda's pregnant and we are not going to have this!"

C.J.: What was her objection?

Hilda: She had absolutely decided we were not going to have children. Absolutely.

C.J.: Why?

Hilda: I . . . don't know. She hadn't wanted her own children. She didn't believe in putting people in the world, procreation.

So she was awfully hard to get along with and although I had worked awfully hard for Mrs. Kroner

previously, now she gave me jobs that were outlandish: lugging, pushing and pulling jobs.

C.J.: You thought that she was trying to abort the baby?

Hilda: I know that she was. And so I began losing the child you see. I had a night of cramps, just like it was labor, and I told Richard about it and he said, "well you better stay in bed the next morning." Naturally he told his mother about me having probably a miscarriage and she said, "good, have her get up and get to work." I had to get up and work.

C.J.: Richard wouldn't intervene?

Hilda: No. He was a very undeveloped male, you know. So I got up and worked. Then I began suffering so, and having a hemorrhage and I was afraid. So I told her, I told Richard that I was going to go to Hudson. I got into Hudson and my mother put me into bed and she took care of me. She was furious but I lost the little fetus. I felt so sad about that I wept all day. This is the way it was every time I got pregnant.

Following Hilda's first miscarriage, Jacob pushed for Hilda and Richard to separate. Because Hilda wished to remain with Richard, he settled on relocating them from the Kroners' farm. Jacob found a job for Richard in one of his company's plants in New Jersey and the couple moved to an apartment in Newark. Hilda soon became pregnant again.

I hated to tell Richard because his mother had raised such a furor about the first pregnancy. I was fearful he would let her know . . .

When I did tell him, Richard told me, "Now you've really taken me by surprise! Not only do I have to support you, but a child . . . you're going to lose this one too."

So he made me walk all night with it--two or three nights--all around Newark. But I didn't lose it and I'm glad. He's my oldest boy, Carroll, the pride of my life and a marvelous person.

> Inasmuch as I didn't lose the baby, Richard came home and said, "I'll fix you, I've quit the job. Now we have no money."

Hilda got a job as a substitute teacher and was able to work daily until she became visibly pregnant. Near the time of her delivery, she made arrangements with a doctor to attend her in a home birth. When she went into labor she attempted to remain silent because the landlord did not allow children in his apartment. The doctor was summoned, but she feels that Richard blocked his passage on the stairway. She still cannot understand what his motivation would be:

> . . . perhaps a deep seated fear of anyone giving birth. He might not have believed the fact that I was <u>going</u> to give birth. Another thing, he could have just suddenly decided, "No you're not going to have that much help. If you want to give birth go ahead and do it without any help." We never really discussed it.

The delivery was successful and Richard, now reconciled to having a child, found employment. For the next several years the new family moved between apartments in the Newark area and temporary residence in the country near their parents. Because Richard changed jobs frequently, Hilda never had a sense of financial security. Richard began to be increasingly absent from the home, especially when he became a well driller during the latter stage of this period. Hilda felt isolated and desparately lonely. Her brother James stepped into the void, offering her company and counsel--"decide whether you want to be a 'good wife' for the rest of your life or to be Somebody"--and spending long

stretches of time as a member of the household. James arranged Hilda's first professional contacts with publishers. He also connected her with a doctor who performed several abortions for her, a traumatic experience in each case--"When you become pregnant your motherhood develops fast, when you lose it [the feelings are] still there."

The tensions of this period came to a head while Hilda was carrying her second son, Harry. Unsure of Richard's support, Hilda had chosen not to have a second child. Richard, in contrast to past instances, insisted that Hilda bring this pregnancy to full term--a stance which Hilda sees as motivated by his wish to entrap her in the marriage.

Harry's birth was traumatic for Hilda. About six weeks beforehand, Richard's arm became seriously infected from a drilling accident. Hilda rushed him to her parents' home where the family doctor treated him.

> Dr. Bannister said [to mother], "feed him, just feed him continuously." Richard was a great eater, he didn't mind in the least. He ate all the stew, crying, weeping, and moaning. And I said, "Oh my God, if he loses his arm . . ." And suddenly I went into labor.
>
> Mother said, "Just contain yourself, because I have to take care of Richard."
>
> So I tried to contain myself, but I had quite a false labor . . . I usually did have a false labor, every time.

When Richard recovered sufficiently to move, he went to his family's home, taking their son Carroll with him. Hilda stayed on, awaiting Harry's birth. When the time finally came:

> I thought, "now this time I'm going to shriek my lungs out" . . . So I did, I raised the roof . . . I fully enjoyed shrieking. I could have torn down the house with my yelling.

C.J.: Was that shrieking in any way similar to your screaming [in college]?

Hilda: That's what I wonder . . .

Because Harry was a breech birth, Dr. Bannister had Richard and Emily assist him in forcing the delivery--"it was like a mountain bearing down on my abdomen, a terrible feeling." Emily's role was to administer the anesthetic, choloform, on a handkerchief. From Hilda's perspective, she overdid it, almost fatally. As Emily held the cloth over Hilda's face, she felt herself suffocating and struggled on the verge of passing out. Dr. Bannister intervened, later commenting: "we almost lost her there mother--he called my mother 'mother'."

C.J.: Why do you think your mother did that--I know I've asked you before?

Hilda: I think she lost--I feel that my mother was a little peculiar about whether she was jealous of me having a child by Richard. She was jealous of the fact that we were husband and wife, you know.

C.J.: She just couldn't accept it?

Hilda: I really believe it.

C.J.: And that would be enough for her to--do you think she was aware of what she was doing, with the cholorform?

Hilda: I don't know. But my sister Isabel, who went off her rocker quite a bit after college, was also jealous of the fact that I was married to Richard . . .

> Mother said to the doctor, "I think it would be good for Isabel to watch this birth because I think she has the makings of a good nurse in her."
>
> Dr. Bannister said, "Why mother, that is not a good idea at all."
>
> I was glad the doctor said that . . . it might have been the worst thing in the world for Isabel, actually.

Hilda now felt like a guest at home, "and a guest was a hard thing for mother," so she left as soon as she could travel with the baby. Arriving home late at night, she found that Richard and her younger brother had turned the house into a shambles: "in bed with their shoes on, mud all over the blankets, mud in the carpets, dirty dishes everywhere." She threw herself into cleaning in anticipation of Mrs. Kroner's arrival with Carroll the next day.

> I had the house in perfect shape . . . Mrs. Kroner came in with Carroll and she sat right down with him by the stove.
>
> And I said, "Don't you want something to eat?"
>
> She said, "No, I'm not going to let go of this boy" . . . She did not want to relinquish Carroll. She said, "You have the other one, I'm going to keep this boy."
>
> Why I was . . . angry, and ready to fight furiously. My feelings were terribly hurt. And I said, "You can't say a thing like that, Mrs. Kroner, that's my child" . . .
>
> I had a kind of a dread. I knew then somehow that the Kroners would take Carroll over into their lives--which really has happened. He has really become a Kroner . . . I really had this idea that I wanted him devoted to <u>me</u> and not to the Kroners . . .
>
> [Several years later] Carroll and Harry would both come back, after a week or two with the Kroners, fat,

> awfully fat and dressed in all kinds of funny outfits. I liked Harry's hair to be curled and I let it get long and shaggy with a big bang--he looked beautiful. They would come back with crew cuts . . . stockings over their legs and shoes that laced up, when I had them running barefoot all the time.

What it meant for Hilda to become a mother.

The most striking feature of Hilda's account of pregnancy and childbirth is the intense opposition which she experienced. Whether or not Emily's heavy handedness with the choloform had murderous intent, or Mrs. Kroner's chores were meant purposefully to overload Hilda, her psychic reality was peopled with maternal authorities ready to use deadly force in blocking Hilda from motherhood. The suggestions of oedipal conflict are obvious in these perceptions, and consistent with Hilda's strong sense of competition with Emily over Richard. There is also a more subtle level, however, to Hilda's perpetuation of her oedipal situation. She remained steadfastly loyal to the definitions of legitimacy within her first oedipal triangle. She accepted the view of her relationship with Richard as "trial marriage," and it became more so with time--as Hilda puts it, "I was never my real self in our marriage." She was subject to false labors, as if her pregnancy were an assumed role, not an organic process. Most distressingly, she felt that her offspring could be expropriated, as if the rights of motherhood were never fully hers. Given these definitions of her situation, pregnancy becomes visible evidence of Hilda's trespass--comparable to Hester's sin in The Scarlet Letter.

She projected her feelings of condemnation onto everyone around her.

The deadlines of the opposition which Hilda experienced becomes understandable in light of her positive feelings in pregnancy: "Another self seemed to have been developed . . . I lost my own selfish person and was now a mother." In a rigidly complementary relationship, such as Emily and Hilda's, a good self always requires a matching context of bad other. Hilda had an acute intuitive awareness of Emily's global need to relate to a bad child. There was no dialogue, no room for give-and-take, in their relationship. In explaining Emily's behavior during the trauma of Harry's birth, Hilda states that:

> As a rule, mother never took account of any other person's feelings, seeing the overall effect--you have to think of the ultimate good, not the individual target.

As the customary target, Hilda had a deep sense of her negative role in preserving the "ultimate good." Individual change, in this context, would be perceived as destructive. The specific changes which Hilda was envisioning--becoming a fully adult woman, taking on the goodness of motherhood--would have been perceived as directly destructive to Emily's position in their relationship--"You kill yourself and your people . . . in that way."

As in her college experience, change was being forced upon Hilda, although in this case from within. The child which

Hilda bore may have represented the deeply private combination of goodness and badness which she knew as her inner self. This last aspect of the meaning of pregnancy would account for her abandoned shrieking in labor and the dramatic struggle against suffocation in giving birth.

Hilda's Writing

For the next several years after Harry's birth, Richard and Hilda maintained their residence in the country. Richard was absent for large portions of this time, leaving Hilda in the company of her two infant sons. Hilda, now in her mid-twenties, used this solitude to begin to exploit her talent as a writer.

Writing served several important purposes for Hilda: it was a way to re-enter the exciting world which she had experienced in her interlude with her father and brother in Greenwich Village; it provided the basis for an identity outside the deeply conflictual sphere of motherhood; and, above all, it was a means of attempting mastery over the troubling issues of her life. Hilda became more than normally engaged in this latter aspect of the creative process. She attempted to live into the events which she was constructing, to incorporate them into her daily reality. For example, she says of her first book, Fire of Spring: "As I wrote it, I became so involved, seeing Christ, hearing Christ, it was almost as if I

had. It was very real to me . . . I had a great desire to see Him."

It is this degree of personal involvement in her fictional works that makes them valuable as evidence of her psychological past. Her books do not provide new information on her life, but they highlight several of the issues most disturbing to her at the time and, especially, show the outcomes which she wished to achieve.

In Fire of Spring, Hilda reconstructs the events of her summer with Jacob's relatives, including her first crush, but as she puts it, "takes them further." The main issue which she addresses in the book is the passage into sexual intimacy. It is framed by the relationship of the main character to her mother. The book starts with their separation and ends with their reunion.

One of the advantages of a fantasy solution is that it enables one to split off the problematic aspects of a situation and deal with each separately. There are two young girls who confront the problems of sexual intimacy in Fire of Spring. Alma, the main character, becomes enraptured with her visions of Christ--and in this sense represents an extension of the Joan of Arc theme in Hilda's earlier fantasy life--but turns, by the end of the story, to a platonic and uplifting affair with her cousin Phillip. Lizzie, the central figure of a subplot, becomes pregnant through an illicit affair, has the scorn and abuse of the community heaped upon her, and is forced to

wander around the countryside dressed in black--representing, of course, the scarlet letter theme.

Hilda divides maternal authority in Fire of Spring into three parts. Alma's mother is globally understanding and beneficient. Aunt Jen, the mother of the household, encourages Alma's religious involvement and attempts to use Alma to advance her own standing in the community. Aunt Jen also spearheads the persecution of Lizzie. Phillip's wife, Alma's potential rival, is developed as a character so narcissistically involved that she fails to notice what is occurring with her husband.

Both Lizzie and Alma deal with experiences of intense shame. For Lizzie, the shame is imposed from without, as in a scene where the preacher at a revival meeting orchestrates her public confession.

> The leader was sweating at the collar and, with tears streaming down his face, was pleading for Lizzie's soul . . . He threatened hell fire and eternal damnation. Then he changed his method again and beckoned for soft singing . . . He knew that he might, through this wretched pretended sympathy, break down the strongest will.
>
> He was afraid of the blood in the faces of the people. He was not anxious for murder. And so he changed the wind . . . The choir on the platform fairly melted with its sadness . . . "Come, come lay your sins on Jesus." "Why not now?" "Jesus is tenderly calling to-day." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."
>
> Lizzie's head drooped lower and lower . . . she thought, Oh, will my baby grow to hate me too. Will he think I'm a sinner too?

> . . . She felt a sudden rush of nausea caused by the child within her . . . She cried wimperly, "Momma, momma!" to the woman on her left.
>
> And before she knew it, she had been helped out into the aisle and up to the platform with her mother on one hand and with her father on the other supporting her. She felt dreadfully ill and she kept saying, "Oh! Momma! Momma!" (pp. 157-159).

Alma's shame is a far more private experience. In the following passage Hilda describes Alma's reaction to her first kiss--and uses imagery strikingly close to Erikson's prototype of shame as the experience of a naked child painfully aware of being observed.

> How little she felt and how frightened! But she did not want them all to know that she was afraid and so she whispered the words, "What are you doing?"
>
> "Come on." The boy's mouth was so near to hers that she swallowed his warm breath which his words made. "It's fun to be naughty, little angel-face, ain't you found that out yet?" Without waiting for her to reply, he placed his lips upon hers and kissed her as she had never imagined kissing could be done. She felt utterly naked again and she believed that she was unclean, never again to be cleansed . . . She saw his eyes enjoying the wickedness of his lips.
>
> [She resolved] she would not be dragged down into that pit of hopeless darkness . . . she would not cry either. "Let's see. Just let's see," she whispered savagely to the stars. "Let's figure this out." And just as she nearly caught the truth and was going to see it clear and perfect before her, that kiss would come back to her again, flinging her into the pit of vileness and disgust.

Alma's fascination with Christ starts as a form of romantic love:

> He was as majestic as a Prince . . . smiling gravely at her from beneath his ruby crown, his flesh as hard as pale ivory against the yet sterner glow of gems

> . . . Are you then to be my little Queen? he questioned with those curved lips as red as the gems. She longed to have him kiss her, to be enfolded within his arms, to be comforted by him.

As the story progresses, it becomes increasingly a bondage in suffering; Alma adopts an anti-life orientation:

> She understood now, she decided, the black garbed nuns who walked into the glaring beauty of the world with their faces mutely blind to all about them, their black mitted hands clasped before them, their eyes downcast and their cheeks colorless.

Alma begins gradually to rebel against the burden of her attachment to Christ:

> But what have you done, Alma, inquired her curious common sense, that interfering friend, what have you possibly done to make Jesus die? Be still! her heart answered . . . Hasn't it been proven to you enough that you've done something? You can't know everything at once!

Her budding love for cousin Phillip reinforces Alma's resistance to Christ. Phillip's recognition of her attractiveness awakens feelings of self-appreciation and an acceptance of her own impulses. Alma's new self-awareness directly conflicts with her attachment to Christ, who causes her to feel shame for her body. The conflict comes to a head when Alma realizes that Christ is connected to the persecution of Lizzie. She confronts him with Lizzie's suffering:

> "But she wronged me, child," he went on with a melancholy voice" . . . You have wronged me, too, and once promised me, you are proving faithless."
>
> "Look!" he said, and before her he thrust his long pale hands. She saw the raw wounds at the center of his palms. "Listen!" he cried with his face nobly bearing the pain and she could see two drops splash down upon the sheet which covered her body . . . She

> wanted to tell him that she had begun to find truths in her heart. She wanted to say, I know about babies now, Christ. But even as she thought of the sentence she felt shame mount her breast and clothe her in burning blushes . . .
>
> "Kiss me, little wife," he said, transfigured now into the jewel crowned prince.
>
> "I don't want to, thank you, if you please," she said fretfully, turning away from him and holding it against him that she experienced that miserable unaccountable shame.
>
> "You are faithless then. You do not love me!" he accused her.
>
> "Sweet lord! . . . I can't help loving you when you are hurt." And then she felt his lips upon hers, cool, steady, then growing warmer and warmer until she felt her mouth scorched and at the same time she was aware of her gown open at the neck exposing her small rounded breasts . . . Oh! It wasn't fair to make her feel so horrid and shameful . . .
>
> And when, after a long breathless silence during which time she longed for another kiss, at the same time feeling repulsed by the desire, she knew that he had gone.
>
> Heavens! how detestable to feel this way! It made everything smutty and undesirable.

Alma ultimately arrives at a "miraculous vision of understanding": "deciding to make an act wicked it is made so."

> Christ was gone now not to return. She saw in this moment of clear understanding that he had been of [the community's] manufacture . . . No one, thought Alma, knows what poor Christ was really like. And for her part, she was willing to forget him for a while, his ill-conceived shadow had caused her so much unnecessary misery.

She turns from her visions of Christ to embrace Phillip:

> Could she have analyzed the sudden rebirth of her heart's life after her decision against Christ, Alma

> would have heard it beat out its gratitude in this way: I was blinded in Christ, but I am open-eyed with Phillip for my love.
>
> [With Christ] I could see nothing else, surrounding him was sorrow and evil, mockery and tears! . . . But with Phillip to love, I see life about him. Rather than look into his eyes I see through them, with my sight added to him.
>
> She had forgotten Jesus and her recent initiation into morbid pleasure. She was, in truth, too normal and wholesome to endure the nurturing which warped minds would have forced upon her.
>
> The bent stem of her life which might so easily have been twisted and broken stood upright again . . . She was growing up.

The story concludes with Alma and her sister returning home to their mother, who recognizes and approves of their new maturity. The final sentence of the book reads:

> And mamma would murmur looking at her two daughters and kissing them each on the foreheads, "How you have grown."

In discussing the theme of Lizzie in Fire of Spring, I asked Hilda why the community reacted so harshly to her illegitimate pregnancy. Her response was: "You see these people were sort of . . . ambivalent. They wanted to be Christians and yet they could be that cruel to a person who was in their midst." She, in other words, meant to portray a group which maintains its cohesion in merit by scapegoating a member. While Lizzie is the external image of a scapegoat, Alma gives the internal picture. Alma's feelings toward Christ are analogous to the ambivalent and binding loyalties which Boszormenyi-Nagy describes in cases where the parent is both martyred and

exploitive. Alma grows to hate Christ for immersing her in shame and yet she feels devoted to him and responsible for his suffering--"I can't help loving you when you are hurt."

Hilda's creative process in Fire of Spring is a good example of what Kris (1955) calls "regression in service of the ego." On the one hand, Hilda reverts to her childhood mode of solving problems through fantasy at a time when her adult life has come to a standstill. She re-engages in a fantasized union with a perfect other--and it is this regressive aspect of writing, rather than the insights, that Hilda remembers most strongly, that is, how real Christ became to her. On the other hand, Hilda's insights are substantial in Fire of Spring. She steps back from her ongoing crises of adulthood and, through the character of Alma, confronts her own "counter-autonomous superego." She explores the emotional ties of the scapegoat, and achieves intellectual mastery over the feelings of deep shame which accompany her steps into womanhood. Hilda recognizes, through Alma, that rather than being a reflection of absolute goodness or badness, her feelings are a product of the relationships which she maintains. Alma turns away from a relationship which would suppress the "truths in her heart" and define her desires as evil, and seeks, instead, a heterosexual intimacy which would support her growth. She puts aside the self-limiting gratifications of a fantasy work in favor of engaging with real people.

Coming to Altamont

Hilda followed the course which she outlined for Alma.

From the early days of their marriage in New Jersey, Hilda had entertained doubts about Richard's faithfulness. She once confronted him and she acknowledged that he was seeing another woman.

> I got very upset then and I said, "I don't know why you have to have someone else as a lover."
>
> Richard said, "Because you aren't satisfactory."

In her distress, Hilda turned to her one friend in the area, Alice.

> She said, "Well tut, tut. It's a common thing for men to want women and women to want men, why can't you understand it?
>
> "Oh Alice," I said, "I really wish it were you, if I knew it was you I could take it--then I found out later that it was she, just like that, that time I really went off my rocker.

Hilda was able to mute the impact of Richard's confession by keeping her picture of her rival abstract. She imagined a large red-headed woman, just the opposite of Alice, a petite woman with black hair.

In the isolation of her days in the country, Hilda's jealousy grew:

> A searching vine intruded on the rock of her faith, a questing serpent seeking her heart's core [Journal at Sixty].

Jealousy, however, seemed far from Hilda's mind at the time of her completion of Fire of Spring. Despite resistance from Richard, and his lack of financial support, she had managed to save enough to meet the expenses of submitting it for publication. Her manuscript was accepted in its first draft. Hilda was elated. A whirlwind of meetings with her publisher, social introductions, and photography sessions followed. She was suddenly recognized as a writer--"I couldn't believe it was happening."

She was staying with Alice, who now lived in the city. It was at this point that Alice told Hilda that she had been having an affair with Richard for years--a confession which Hilda feels was motivated by envy of her sudden success.

Hilda flew into a fit of despair. She cried all that night and left New York abruptly the next day. On the train home she ran into an acquaintance, Claire, who was familiar with Richard and Alice. Claire offered Hilda cold comfort:

> "Well," she said, "the sooner you grow up, the better for you girl."
>
> Claire kept trying to be the adult: admonishing me and teaching me, and telling me--and I felt: "if I can just escape this woman. I'll go out on the platform and throw myself off the platform [into a train]."
>
> I did get to the platform two or three times. She came after me--I guess she more or less accepted that I was really in a frame of mind.

Hilda describes meeting with similar responses when she turned alternately to her mother and Mrs. Kroner--so

similar, in fact, that she comments as an aside to her account of the interactions, "this sounds like one of those fair stories, with everything repeating over and over." She remembers Emily's response as especially unsympathetic: "I don't want to hear a word of it. I'm not going to have a divorce in my family."

Although Richard and Hilda were not legally divorced until some twenty years later, she resolved never to sleep with him again, nor accept any further support from him.

Claire owned a country home in Altamont, a nearby community long popular as a retreat for artists from New York. She had offered to take Hilda in as a housekeeper. Hilda, now without a home for her children, accepted.

Hilda's move to Altamont is a dividing point in her life. In leaving Richard, she actively severed a tie with her family--a new experience of differentiation for her.

> I had sized Richard up in my own mind concerning his worth, as a father . . . a mate, when I found out that he had a mistress, someone he loved other than me.
>
> And that cut me off from Richard, at that point, and I expected them to feel similarly . . . I resented the loyalty my family [maintained] for him.

Hilda made Altamont her emotional home for the rest of her life. Soon after arriving, she entered into a <u>menage 'a trois</u> with two artists who shared the property with Claire, Phillip and Susan. In doing so, Hilda feels that she permanently discredited herself within the Mendahl family,

becoming a "fallen woman"--"I murdered my place in American society." On the other hand, Hilda felt a new level of freedom to be herself in the relationships which she established in her early days at Altamont, an experience which she describes coming back to her when she returned, years later, to make the property her final home:

> I was looking out at the brook and realizing this whole place [again]: Phillip, and the sense of freedom and understanding, and whatever he had--I don't know if it was love. There was some terrific drive he had as an artist. It seemed to permeate the whole atmosphere. Also Susan had a terrific drive as a person and an artist.
>
> I felt when I [first] stood at the window that I could actually become myself on this property, somehow, that I had not been myself through all my years of marriage. It was when I had just decided that I was going to <u>really</u> get rid of my marriage that I had this feeling of terrible love for this property.

The early stage of Hilda's triangular relationship with Phillip and Susan was surprisingly free of conflict. It began almost as a reenactment of the happy ending which Hilda wrote into <u>Fire of Spring</u>.

> As Phillip leaned against the refrigerator, he said, "My wife and I have never had a sexual life--you know I think you would make a very beautiful nude. I would like to do a painting of you."
>
> I said, "My goodness, all of this at once, and here I'm only a servant, you know."
>
> "No," he said, "Don't think that way. I just think that you need someone to <u>show</u> you what it really is to love you. And I can show you this."
>
> He said it in such a way that I wasn't shocked, I didn't blame myself--It's just as if . . . an angel, or God or someone stood there saying this to me.

Like Alma's rival in Fire of Spring, Susan was, at first, a remote competitor.

> In the fall [before I arrived] Susan had an eighteen month old boy. When the fall floods came, Susan was sitting in the living room absorbed in her painting and paid no attention to what was happening to her little son. He fell into the brook . . . and drowned.
>
> So she was suffering from deep grief and terrible blame, as though it had been her fault . . . She had become very difficult as a person, very soured.

Susan was away consulting a "religious woman who was training her not to believe in death" when Hilda and Phillip first became lovers. On her return, Phillip called a meeting between the three of them.

> He said to Susan: "I have decided that Hilda is going to be my nude model and my sweetheart. But first we want to ask you if it is agreeable to you.
>
> She agreed to it, that we'd be lovers, because he and she couldn't enjoy sex together.
>
> She said to me, "Better you than to have him going off here and there bringing in someone else"--and especially I'd begun doing the housework . . . and she hated housework.

Hilda moved into Susan and Phillip's side of the house and for the next six years maintained a communal life-style with them. The only source of friction which Hilda remembers from the beginning of their relationship was the distribution of work. As the relationship progressed, the division of labor and financial arrangements grew more complex. On Phillip's initiative, they began taking in children for the summer. The property evolved into a sort of artist's retreat

and progressive school. Hilda's roles eventually included: looking after a cottage with six children, in addition to her sons; teaching classes; and preparing the meals, often for large numbers of people.

Several photographs that Hilda has saved from this period give the impression of a diverse group of people in a setting of rustic conviviality. One of Hilda shows a very attractive, long-haired, sun-tanned young woman dressed in a coarse frock--she could easily pass for a flower child of her grandchildren's generation.

Losing Emily

Not long after Hilda moved to Altamont, her mother became overtly psychotic. Her break seemed sudden at the time, but in retrospect Hilda recognizes a number of signs of incipient deterioration: Emily's meals became more than usually spartan, serving a dinner of three types of beans, for example; in applying the chloroform at Harry's birth, her face had "a very insane expression"; when Hilda was breaking away from Richard, Emily became irrationally insistent that the couple sleep in the same room. But when she did finally become psychotic, the change was clear:

Hilda: She was the wildest beast--I never saw as insane a creature in my life at the asylum--She was wild. She would even begin to gnaw food, she'd eat the garbage, all of it.

C.J.: What was it like for you, to see your own mother--

Hilda: Oh! . . . I got to thinking it was funny, because every now and then if you paid no attention to her, she'd put on a skit.

She'd say, "well now I'm going to commit suicide." And she'd put some boxes around and try to hang herself from the chandelier, or something. She would make a little Shakespearian remark, she would orate.

I would think that was the funniest thing ever--but sometimes I would wake up and she would be over me with a knife.

C.J.: Just you? Or your other sisters too, that she'd do this to?

Hilda: I don't know, I never compared notes.

Two other symptoms stand out in Hilda's recollection of her mother's insanity. Emily would recite a litany of her children's shortcomings and failures, e.g., "Jim's no good, he . . ., Isabel's a failure, she . . .," etc. Hilda would be omitted when she was present--"you're a success, you've written a book"--but suspects she was included once she was gone. Emily was also obsessed with the idea that the family had lost all its money.

The family at first attempted to minimize Emily's symptoms, and then turned to a search for a panacea. Jacob contemplated presenting his wife with a chestful of hundred dollar bills. He entertained several theories of a physiological dysfunction, and arranged a thyroidectomy. Eventually, they moved closer to New York so that Jacob could be home in the evening. The task of supervising Emily fell to Isabel. Marion, the next oldest daughter at home, became the "mother" of the family.

In the third year of Emily's insanity, Jacob came for a weekend in Altamont. At breakfast on the morning of his visit they were interrupted by a telegram:

> It was a telegram saying that mother had died.
>
> And father acted staggered on the stairs. I thought, "Is he showing off?" Little did I realize that poor father really was taken aback by the news.

Emily had taken advantage of a few unsupervised hours to make methodical preparations for gassing herself. Hilda does not entirely understand the connection, but Emily's suicide was on the same date that her brother had killed himself some years earlier.

The family, who knew few of the neighbors in their new community, had a simple funeral. All of the children--now adults--spent the night before the service in the attic, talking until morning. The next day the minister, a stranger, delivered a long eulogy. As the family grew restless, he threatened to continue until he saw "at least one tear in this place." Hilda thought:

> God, it behooves me to make a tear, somehow. So I looked at the coffin and could just barely see mother's nose. I thought, "mother was the only one in the family that had a beautiful little nose." That caused a few tears . . . and so the minister brought it to an end.

Hilda's substitute for mourning.

Emily's insanity and death occurred at a most inopportune moment in Hilda's life. Hilda had just begun to differentiate in earnest. Together with the rest of the

family, she experienced her move to Altamont as a real separation in a way that her "trial marriage" to Richard had never been. It provided her with her first base of intimate relationships which did not start in and compulsively return to the family home. Under other circumstances, Hilda's concurrent success as a writer and loving relationship with Phillip might have changed the all important economy of her relationship with her mother. Merit which she accumulated outside of her relationship with Emily might have strengthened Hilda's position as an active subject within it. Even if their subsequent realignment fell short of the ideal of a full reintegration based on mutual give-and-take, Hilda might have established, at least, a clear picture of when Emily's needs differed from her own. Her mother's insanity, instead, eliminated the opportunity for intimacy. Emily lost the capacity for an adult negotiation of the roles of subject and object. She became alternately a pure subject, obsessively scapegoating the children and expressing hostility toward Hilda in ways which precluded a realistic assessment of responsibility, or an unknowing object, a "wild creature" that had to be watched and cared for. Put in slightly different terms, at the very moment that Hilda was attempting to integrate her private self within the social world, Emily's insanity turned the public sphere into a farce.

Hilda's divorce from feelings of grief is striking--even her father's reaction to Emily's death seemed unreal to

her. Part of the problem was, of course, that by the time of Emily's death the full person had long since departed through insanity. But even in our current discussion of Emily's insanity, feelings other than shock and amusement remain inaccessible to Hilda.

The only expression of grief which Hilda recalls from the time of her mother's death was a prolonged screaming incident--similar to her "tailspin" in college--which she experienced on returning to Altamont--"I wanted to get out of my body." Becoming aware of her emotional reaction to the loss of Emily was an overwhelming experience for Hilda, the experience of being flooded by anxiety. It is as if she were a child at the stage of shadowing and darting who turns to discover that the mother has disappeared. Hilda lacked the early experience of reliable continuity in the interpersonal world--Winnicott's "ego relatedness"--which enables one to confront permanent separation from a loved one.

Hilda, in short, was cut off from the normal process of mourning in two central respects. First, full recognition of the loss of her mother, and thus grief, was too anxiety provoking for Hilda. Second, because Hilda's recent efforts at differentiation had been thoroughly clouded by Emily's insanity, her image of her mother remained embedded in the feelings of intense anger and shame which Hilda had experienced as a child in their relationship. She was unable to engage in the process of gradually reincorporating the deceased as a symbolic

presence in one's life which normally brings mourning to an end. Hilda was forced, instead, to turn to the solutions of dissociation and magical identification offered in fantasy. She threw herself into writing a second book.

The product, Beauty, I Wonder, is a reconstruction of the events of Hilda and Emily's lives fused into the character of a single protagonist. She takes her protagonist through some of the best and worst experiences from each of their childhoods, gives her Emily and Jacob's early marriage, and concludes by placing her in Hilda's triangular relationship with Phillip and Susan--in a sense, dealing with the crisis of her separation from Emily by rewriting history to show that one or the other of them had never existed, merging them into an eternal oneness.

Hilda's account of writing Beauty, I Wonder gives a clear picture of the problems which she was addressing at the time and suggests how her creative process substituted for mourning.

Hilda: The story is of my mother, but I am all bound up in it too . . .

C.J.: Some of the things you describe, say the "burning bush", it's never clear to me whether it's an actual, visual--

Hilda: Yes I saw a bush when I decided to write . . . [there was] a sort of halo thing about it, a brilliant halo to it, tremulous, as if you could touch it, feel it . . .

C.J.: You have it as really a central piece of Emily's character, she repeatedly refers back to it.

Hilda: When I first started writing this book, it was seeing this thing that really started me . . . all of a sudden this whole book began coming to me.

C.J.: What made you think of bringing that into your mother?

Hilda: I was very desirous at the time to write about my mother so I decided that this was the person who was seeing it.

--I wanted to have [mother] in my mind, you know. This book clarifies her for me, for some reason. Even though it is all mixed up in characters, first it is myself, then it is herself . . . Nevertheless, I can remember her when I read it, and I really did it with that in mind.

I was so afraid I might forget her. I had such an antagonism, all my growing years--if I couldn't see her belatedly as a good, interesting human, I really would have slain her myself, let alone the fact that she slew herself.

C H A P T E R VI

SCHIZOPHRENIA

> This life appears unbearable. Another unattainable. One is no longer ashamed of wanting to die; one asks to be moved from the old cell which one hates to a new one which one will in time come to hate. In this there is also a residue of belief that during the move the master will chance to come along the corridor look at the prisoner and say, "This man is not to be locked up again. He is to come with me." Kafka (as quoted in Hilda's Journal at Sixty)

Downward Spiral

It is difficult, and perhaps a mistake, to draw a sharp line where Hilda's psychotic experience begins. To be able to hang the onset of her schizophrenia on the peg of a single precipitating event--and the three years between Emily's death and Hilda's hospitalization present several good candidates--would simplify the narrative, but distort the picture of a gradual loss of control over her life which culminated in Hilda's schizophrenic break. Hilda begins her written account of her psychotic experience--which I excerpt extensively in this chapter--with the events immediately preceding her hospitalization. She omits the antecedents to her break, in part, because of the difficulty of determining where her break actually occurred, that is, exactly when she lost touch with reality. As she puts it, "I can't be certain except that I reinterpreted things a lot--I created my own atmosphere . . . almost courting a form of insanity, deliberately wishing for a

maturity which would allow me to be that much of a passionate soul."

At the beginning of this period of adaptive struggle Hilda experienced herself as having an active hand in creating her atmosphere; she sought out heightened perceptions, such as her vision of the "burning bush," and used them to support her functioning as a writer. By the end she experienced herself as totally controlled by her atmosphere; her heightened perceptions seriously interfered with functioning and virtually precluded communication. There were three major turning points in this transition, not exactly causal factors, but events which determined the timing of Hilda's loss of control over what was, to start with, an untenable life situation.

The malevolent transformation of her triangle.

Hilda needed another woman in order to experience a fully emotional involvement--intimate love--with a man. It was only when Hilda knew of Alice's involvement that her relationship with Richard became passionate, and at the same time unbearable.

Phillip's wife, Susan, never really fits together as a whole person in Hilda's descriptions of their interaction. In Hilda's account of the early days of their triangle, she is strangely remote and placid in her acceptance of the situation. At some point in their six years together Susan became Hilda's

enemy, and the relationship took on dangerous hostile and competitive overtones.

> I always thought that she was someone I had to vie against. I had to say, "Well now Susan, you are more of a person than I am, and I'm going to prove that I'm as good as you"--so on and so forth.
>
> --Susan was always a person who stymied me. She was a danger to me . . . She made me feel I had to fight for who I was being. And probably I've always put myself in that position, unconsciously . . . I always accuse the other person--I accused Susan of standing in my way, of freedom here . . . I won't give myself a clear expression of love or value, or permission for myself to be enjoyed by someone else.

There are no lines of transition in Hilda's reconstruction of their triangle between the Susan of the early days--who "accepted it more than anyone, even more than Phillip really"--and the dangerous antagonist in the later days of the relationship. Two events, however, seem to mark the beginning of the bad days: Emily's death, and the birth of Phillip and Hilda's daughter, Ruth. Both events occurred in the third year of Hilda's relationship with Phillip and Susan. Although Hilda does not relate either directly to the change in the climate of the relationship, she is clear in locating the troubles in the last three years of their time together. She came to experience the relationship as increasingly coercive and entrapping. The division of work and money, always an irritant, became a major issue. Hilda was given an allowance for each child she housed in her cottage and required to pay rent for herself and her own children, as well as paying for produce from the farm.

She felt deeply exploited--"I couldn't understand why I had to work so hard, continually harder, but nothing came of it."

It was the change which she perceived in the emotional economy of the triangle which made Hilda's sense of financial exploitation so oppressive. She began to feel negated as a person:

> It finally bore in on me very badly . . . Phillip was beginning to show that he was fond of Susan--But it was true. Susan was more intelligent than I. She was a Cornell graduate, I had not graduated from college . . . You see in my family, whoever was tops got all the credit. And I felt, you see, that they were much ahead of me, as artists and as people.
>
> --This is something I don't understand about the menage a' trois: one person in the group of three is always discredited, the other two are not discredited . . . I was the one who was always given the real, critical "thumbs down" reaction--by everyone.

In an attempt to escape "the work and the burden of not knowing if Phillip really loved me," Hilda became romantically involved with her publisher--who was also married to a woman whom Hilda respected. It was in "playing with" this possibility of escape that Hilda felt her relationship with Susan and Phillip close in upon her as a trap. Both partners urged her to stay. Phillip acted: "He took me by the hair of the head and slung me on the floor and said, 'now you want a child, I'll give you a child.' And he forced me."

Hilda became pregnant with her fourth child, Peter. In addition to ensuring her physical dependence on their arrangement, Hilda felt that this incident confirmed the grossly uneven distribution of all the positive aspects of

heterosexual intimacy in their three-way relationship. Hilda now saw Susan as having exclusive claim to Phillip's respect and loving interest, and herself as in danger of becoming simply a degraded sexual object.

> Phillip had an old-fashioned attitude about us in his own mind. Just as men criticize the women they will take off base--go out and take a woman--I think Phillip did that to some extent in his relationship with me, even though I wouldn't admit it. Just at the last, when I came back from having been with [my publisher]--the way he threw me on the floor and nearly knocked my brains out, made me know that he really didn't have the respect for me that I had hoped he would.

The collapse of her identity as a writer.

Hilda's second book, Beauty, I Wonder was more ambitious, in both a literary and a psychological sense, than her first. She drew on material directly related to her current life situation and, although she gave the book a coherent plot line, she was experimenting with a more eliptical "stream of consciousness" style, alternating between the perspectives of several of the characters in her narrative--a progressive idea for the time. The book met with success on both fronts: it enabled Hilda to feel that she had "clarified" the image of her mother; and, like Fire of Spring, it was immediately accepted for publication. At the same time, however, it marked the beginning of Hilda's rapid loss of grounding in her sense of herself as a writer.

On the level of public recognition, Hilda's affair with her publisher, which began at this time, to some extent

disqualified publication as a measure of merit. Because her publisher had influence in the literary world, Hilda's sense of uncertainty carried over to reviews as well. Being more esoteric than her first book, it made considerably less money for Hilda; her doubts over literary recognition were not offset by commercial success.

On the level of Hilda's private experience of writing, Beauty, I Wonder represents a loss of her sense of control over her own creative process. She describes the inspiration as entering her from some external source, "all of a sudden this whole book began coming to me." She mentions that she "felt in some way singled out to write" when she undertook the work, and looked for signs like the "burning brush" to direct her through it. She was surprised by the "vocabulary" she used, and still wonders where some of her words came from. Even if the book had met with an unmixed positive reception, the credit, at this private level of experience, would never have been entirely Hilda's--she lacked the sense of active manipulation necessary to cement feelings of competence.

Both trends reached a peak in Hilda's third book, Ishtar, a loose narrative based on themes of fertility in Persian myths and the biblical story of Esther. In sharp contrast to her two prior books, this work bore no apparent connection to her life. Although she felt a strong need to write about womanhood and fertility, she still finds her interest mysterious. Whereas in Beauty, I Wonder Hilda had ex-

perienced herself as reaching out to make contact with the ideas which inspired her writing, the very content of Ishtar just seemed to flow into her:

> That whole book seemed to me a mystique of a myth. In fact, it came out so readily and entirely that I do not know that I did much thinking about it.

Hilda had come to experience herself as dissociated from her own creative process.

Publishers expressed weak interest in Ishtar and Hilda angrily withdrew it from consideration. She began to lose this aspect of her identity--"thinking much less of myself as a writer"--and the enterprise no longer seemed like a viable route of escape from her worsening interpersonal situation.

Motherhood becomes untenable.

Unlike Hilda's first two deliveries, giving birth to Ruth, her daughter by Phillip, went easily for her. She did not experience intense conflict in the situation surrounding her birth, she had no false labor, and the delivery itself was relatively painless.

In carrying her last child, Peter, the traumatic pattern of Hilda's pregnancies reasserted itself with a vengence. Legitimacy became once again a major issue. She felt compelled to make the outside world believe that Richard was the father of her child: "Lying like that was very tough for me . . . I could try to lie, but mostly I acted the lie."

Looking back on this time in her Journal at Sixty, Hilda describes what she was attempting to guard against with her pretense:

> She feared disgrace terribly, expecting this mark of the devil to show in anyone of her blood, who in turn would disgrace her. Trembling at the imagined experience of her daughter, her brother, her son . . . the anguish and anxiety, suffering on the cross of her own disgrace . . . She saw in the mirror of these other minds a different image of herself which she could not always hold dear . . . an ugly thing she really shunned and contrived against.

Hilda's false labor in Peter's case was especially pronounced:

> It was peculiar. I thought I was having him born and called the doctor in. I was going through these peculiar contortions, and screaming as if I were in labor--and now if you ask me, "were you in labor, were you in pain?", it seems to me that I wasn't. It seems to me that I was trying to get Peter born . . .
>
> And so when I finally did go into labor and they called the doctor, he said, "Oh, I don't believe it, she is just putting on an act."

At some point around the time of Peter's birth--and Hilda's memory of the order of events in this period is confused--she met a young couple, Joe and Rose, and found herself suddenly enmeshed in yet another triangle:

> I disliked her immediately and I liked Joe immediately. I could see that he was a sensitive, wonderful person . . . a very beautiful male, sexually . . . Something like that other affair with [cousin] Phillip and his wife. I could not understand why these very sensitive, lovely people would be with these great big hedonish women.

Rose happened to be nearby when Hilda went into actual labor with Peter. She ended up playing a central role in Hilda's final crossing of the threshold into insanity.

> I was alone in that room with Peter about to pop out, and I called, "Rose, Rose, Rose." She came into the room, and Rose knew nothing about helping a woman have a child. She bore down on my shoulders and my throat. I was thrashing around and being held down at the shoulders and it was awful, an awful birth agony . . . Rose choked me almost.
>
> --She was over me, bearing down on me while I was giving birth to Peter. She frightened me badly. Nothing I could say would have her let up . . . And she was so delighted at helping give birth [whispers] it was awful, an awful moment.
>
> --The first sensation that I liken to the incubus was when Rose was helping me deliver Peter. She became larger and larger and awfully peculiar--like a bogie.

Confronted with her newborn, Hilda found herself suddenly at a loss as a mother. She was unable to remember how to perform simple acts of care, and feared that whatever she did might destroy her child.

> I would look at Peter and think, "I can't give him a bath, I'm not able to do it, I don't know how."
>
> Phillip would come in and say, "Isn't it time to feed him?"
>
> I would say, "I can't feed him . . . I can't give him a bath."--I would be afraid of dropping him.

Hilda latched onto the idea that Rose's husband Joe would "save" her. She became obsessed with a wish to be near him. Phillip, hoping that a change of scene might bring her around, arranged for Joe and Rose to take her for a visit. Hilda's reconstruction of the trip has the "fairy tale" quality

of a repeating line--in this case, "Hilda, I'm married to Rose"--which she noted in her account of leaving Richard.

> I had suddenly gotten a feeling about Joe. I thought, "He is beautiful, just like Jesus. I love him that much."
>
> --I just kept thinking that he was so much like Jesus that he could save me . . . "If only he would tell me he loved me" . . . "You have to kiss me now, you have to kiss me now. I'm lost, we're lost" . . . "Joe, I want to go away with you."
>
> He said, "Hilda, Hilda, I'm married to Rose, you know that"--But he was very kind and tender through it all.
>
> --Joe realized that I was going off my rocker and he said, "I think Rose and I will take Hilda up to this spot in the Catskills where Jewish people gather . . . All that ride with Joe the landscape spread out and we sped through soundless areas, very rapidly. I could see Joe and I felt him, very close to me, as if he and [my publisher] were sort of interchangeable in my thinking.
>
> When we got up to this place, Rose became this great big incubus--of course I had Peter with me, and I forgot to feed Peter, I didn't know whether I had him on a safe spot. And I kept wanting to get back to Joe. And there was always Rose there, interfering.
>
> --[That night] I was lying down on the bed, with Peter beside me, and feeling a little jealous . . . So in the middle of the night I went into the room where Joe and Rose were sleeping and asked Joe to come back with me.
>
> He said No Hilda, I'm married to Rose. You forgot and left Peter.
>
> The next morning he said we should go back to the farm. Rose had wrapped herself in a blanket. She looked just like my idea of a bogie--I thought, "this is terrible, I'm afraid of her."
>
> --I thought perhaps I was going to be murdered then and there. I decided, "No, this wasn't going to happen, I was going to murder instead."

> --It was a very peculiar trip back in the car. It seemed that instead of being on land, I was going through the air . . . It was something like a dream of death, going through the world so rapidly that I couldn't see any of the land. I had Peter in my arms and Joe beside me. I kept thinking, "If Joe doesn't tell me now that he loves me, the end is coming."
>
> When we got back, he explained to me how we landed on the farm, how suddenly there was ever earth again--I was going insane so fast. I had that peculiar feeling of something bearing down on me that night, it was just like Rose, that incubus, that enormous thing bearing down on me and suffocating me.
>
> When I escaped from that incubus and went over to Phillip and Susan's house and told Phillip I was going to murder Susan, Joe was still there. And I had a feeling [even after being hospitalized] that Joe was going to save me. Of course Joe did not save me.

The next morning Hilda took her daughter Ruth to the brook where Susan's son had drowned. She is not clear on the exact sequence of events, but she attempted two drownings: clutching a stone to her chest, she threw herself in the water; and, with the thought of "baptizing" her daughter, she held Ruth under water. She was stopped by Phillip and hospitalized shortly thereafter.

Understanding the precursors of Hilda's insanity.

Hilda's entrance into the triangular relationship with Phillip and Susan was the central event in setting the stage for her schizophrenic break. It was the first experience of heterosexual intimacy which was fully real to her. The three-party relationship is what she knew as sexual attachment. It fit her schema of intimacy, in the sense of schema as a

structure of thought and action with strong motivational and affective properties.

As in any major adaption, Hilda was attempting to balance strong conservative and progressive trends--to strike an equilibrium between the processes of assimilation and accommodation--in her triangular relationship. On the one hand, she was attempting to accommodate her relational needs within the structure of an adult heterosexual attachment, to love a man and make him love her. In doing so, Hilda was taking the, for her, radical step of exposing her "true self" in an interpersonal transaction; she was experimenting with expressing the powerfully ambivalent mixture of anger and love which she had for so long dissociated from her actual engagement with significant others. On the conservative side, Hilda was protecting herself from too radical a change by assimilating her new relationships into the pattern of her oedipal situation. So long as she remained an interloper, rather than a partner, in a marriage, she: maintained the security of experiencing herself as structured by a familiar environment; remained loyal to the definitions of relationship in her oedipal situation; and could, at least partially, disqualify the dangerous progress which she was making toward differentiation.

The woman in Hilda's triangles--Susan, Rose, or her publisher's wife--was always the central figure. Hilda related to her also in progressive and conservative ways. Because

Hilda's efforts at resolving her original oedipal conflict had foundered on her binding attachment to Emily, she continued to require another woman as part of the context of heterosexual intimacy--or, to use Freud's (1920) term, as a "condition of love." In order to move toward a man, Hilda had to push away from a woman. As a substitute for Emily, Susan opened new possibilities of growth for Hilda: she was on a far more equal footing with Hilda than, say, Richard's mother had been; being unprotected by the loyalties which bound Hilda to Emily, she was a fair target for aggressive competition. Because Hilda could experience her anger toward Susan in a less dissociated way, she was able to take an active role in "vying against her." This last point has a conservative aspect as well, that is, Susan presented Hilda with the opportunity to displace anger from her relationship with Emily, to seek revenge in effigy, without betraying her primary loyalty to Emily.

Although Hilda focuses most strongly on her need to resist Susan in their triangle--"she made me feel I had to fight for who I was being"--there is an implicit wish for closeness in many of her descriptions of their relationship. Susan's recognition was very important to Hilda--"I'm going to prove that I'm as good as you." The fact that she could prevent Hilda from "giving myself a clear expression of love or value" suggests that Susan held the key to these qualities. The strong affective needs and sensual urges that Hilda became aware of in her infatuation with other women must have been

operative, at least on an unconscious level, in relation to Susan. Sharing a love object can be an unconscious way to seek closeness--and it is this aspect of their triangle which remains most alive for Hilda in late adulthood:

> My association with [my favorite] walk has to do with Phillip and Susan. I always wondered what she thought of when she went over in there. I was sort of stealing her walk. I thought, "Well she's thinking of Phillip" . . . And I still like to go in through there to think, "Now if I think hard enough I will know what she was thinking, what part of Phillip she knew that I didn't know."

Hilda's wish for intimacy with Susan may have been her deepest goal in the triangular relationship, but it was in direct conflict with her other important goals of heterosexual intimacy and self expression. The model of an interpersonal triangle which Hilda carried from her oedipal situation required a scapegoat--"one person in the group of three is always discredited." As Hilda experienced it in relation to Emily, the goodness of one party required a complementary badness in the other. Even worse, the complementarity was rigidly fixed: to draw closer to the other women would mean becoming entrapped in the position of bad self; to push strongly away, and to assert one's goodness, would be experienced as a deeply destructive act. Without redefining the terms of intimacy--the meaning of self in relation to significant others--this dilemma was irresolvable.

There are several reasons why Hilda's dilemma may have taken on deadly overtones around the time of Emily's

death. Developmental victories cannot be won by default. Hilda's loss of her original antagonist could have served only to confirm her worst fears of the dangers of differentiation. Because she was at the same time losing her primary attachment figure, her unconscious need for closeness with a substitute would also have been intensified. Both sides of her dilemma in the triangular relationship would, in other words, have been magnified.

Hilda's work at "clarifying" the image of her mother in Beauty, I Wonder suggests just how serious the dilemma would have been at this point. In order to see her mother "belatedly as good," she had to dissociate all of her dangerous emotions--her feelings of intense anger over the exploitation and cruelty which she experienced in their live relationship--from the image of her dead mother. This was not, to use Boszormenyi-Nagy's metaphor, a rebalancing of accounts, but the transfer of liabilities. It is as if Hilda had freed all the badness from her relationship with Emily only to have it re-enter her ongoing triangle and lodge either on herself or the other woman. Hilda's imaginative solution of writing her separateness out of their mutual history--there was no room for both to occupy a position of goodness in a world "filled with awful things"--was unavailable in reality. Because she could not affect a similar merger with Susan, Hilda was left deeply uncertain of her viability as a separate entity--the doubt which she carried into her schizophrenic break.

The role of Ruth's birth in Hilda's progression toward insanity is unclear. Paradoxically, this first child born out of wedlock was the only one which did not raise immediate issues of legitimacy for Hilda. It may be that Hilda felt sufficiently secure in Phillip's love to experience herself as temporarily owning the goodness of motherhood--her imaginitive fusion of the images of Emily and herself at the time may also have supported her sense of motherhood. The fact of having a child in the triangular relationship, however, would still have been problematic for Hilda. Becoming the actual mother in the unit would have aroused Hilda's fears of destroying or cutting herself off from Susan. At the same time, raising a child in a communal situation would seem, unavoidably, to invite feelings of competition--a highly dangerous competition, in light of Hilda's fragile sense of herself as a mother.

By the time of Peter's birth, Hilda's dilemma had taken on fatal proportions. She had re-established the full complementarity between herself and Emily in her relationship with Susan, assimilating all of the surplus badness in the system into herself and projecting all merit onto Susan. The complementarity had become totally rigid. Because they could not both be viably good people, any assertion of merit or independence on Hilda's part would be either murderous or suicidal. Whatever Phillip's feelings for Hilda were at this point, his love was now unavailable to her. She experienced his

desire, and the act of impregnating her, as collusion in her entrapment--she saw him as forcing her to live out a deadly lie. She reverted to dissociating herself from the organic process of pregnancy and, once Peter was born, "forgot" even the most basic aspects of her by now well practiced role as mother.

Hilda was overwhelmed by the enormity of her crime in attempting motherhood again. She could not accept the murderous implications of the act as part of herself. She needed, instead, to project them onto an outside party, Rose. Being unencumbered by any knowledge of or loyalty to the real person, Hilda was able to invest Rose with the entirety of her own fantasized evil; Rose became a grotesque monster.

Hilda, at the same time, kept alive the wish to escape her suffocating trap. She turned to Rose's husband for the justice--the release from her badness and affirmation on a higher plane of goodness--which Jacob had originally denied her. Because Joe had to provide a level of merit commensurate with Hilda's sense of transgression, he became Jesus. Joe remained steadfast in his loyalty to Rose, and their transcendent escape never got far off the ground.

Having attempted escape, Hilda panicked upon her return to earth and re-immersion in the triangular relationship. She became obsessed with the need to murder Susan and made a gesture toward suicide. She also came close to drowning Ruth in her impulsive "baptism"--an act in which

Hilda was attempting simultaneously to: cleanse Ruth of "the mark of the devil," break the chain of mother-daughter suffering, and destroy the evidence of her own transgression. Hilda was now relating to her most significant others primarily on a symbolic level, abandoning accommodation and assimilating them into the schemas of her early childhood. Her schizophrenic break had begun in earnest.

Psychosis

The course of onset.

Hilda spent the next year and a half in Boxborough State Hospital, immersed in a world of her own creation. During a long period of remission, she was released into her father's custody and eventually moved from home to work as a live-in housekeeper. She suffered a relapse and was returned to Boxborough. Although she recovered her functioning fairly quickly, Hilda remained on a back ward for the next seven years. Fifteen years later, while working at Boxborough as a resident staff member, Hilda wrote her account of the years as a patient. I use passages from her manuscript to carry the narrative through the remainder of this chapter.

Hilda's main purpose in writing her account is to give a faithful picture of her psychotic experience. She does, however, make a few significant omissions. For example, she never mentions Peter, who died several months after Hilda was hospitalized, and refers to Ruth as her youngest child. She

also changes occasional minor details for aesthetic effect, giving events a slightly more upbeat or idealized tone than her corresponding descriptions in our interviews. For the most part, however, the two pictures are closely parallel. I include occasional excerpts from the interviews, bracketted as a separate paragraph, where Hilda adds an important elaboration to her written account.

Her account.

Hilda's account starts on the evening of her return from the trip with Joe. She writes in the third person:

> It was as if Hilda stood centered in a dream. The thick but transparent walls of this wove stickily about her a room's depth . . . clinging to her as the mass of egg matter surrounds the uncracked chick. She could hear her speech and hear the speech of the others she had known yesterday . . . but to reach them, to make them hear through this mass of encasing jell of dream was impossible.
>
> Earlier this evening she had awakened in a nightmare of darkness. The black room engulfed her, and drowning in this thick pressure of warm black she arose to make her way through its heaviness to the door and down the stairs . . . into the living room of the Big House where Phillip and Susan and the others were, sitting around the table in the false light of the red-shaded electric bulb.
>
> "I have come to murder Susan," Hilda said, fully intending to do just this.
>
> They lifted their heads and looked at her slowly, and Phillip said, "Never mind, Hilda, I'll do it for you." He picked Susan up in his arms and carried her out through the kitchen screen door to drown her in the brook . . .
>
> --The next morning was very bright . . . The morning light was intense. Each sensation was keen. The water from the opposite faucets was very hot and very

cold. The air from the open door struck strong as wind, but there was no wind.

Susan's ghost looked very clean and very clear, but smaller than Susan herself had been; and Hilda, knowing that this must not be, that Susan could not be, that she must be murdered and done with, grasped at the red sash which held Susan's white dress, and darting toward Susan plucked at her, crying, "You must not be, even as a ghost."

--How had she again returned to her room?

The atmosphere of it appeared surcharged with an almost liquid black, and she had rushed to the small screened window for light.

She could see the sun glaring red through the black haze of air and space. It was as if some giant fungus had been puffed, exploded and now left its billions of smoky spores filling the world.

Hilda groped through this weight and threw open the screen, leaning far out over the sill. She screamed toward the main road and woods. She screamed as though these words were pent-up vomit which must now be emitted.

Her throat and mouth were filled with them and they issued once her lips were parted. She screamed against Phillip and Susan, against the hours she had spent working for them and the rent and milk bills she had paid. She screamed against the price the corner country store had charged her for bacon and oranges.

--Her youngest was squatted near the brook. Hilda's dress must have been blue, for as she gathered up the full skirt and bent and carried her child to the water, sinking the body below it, she noticed the blue deepening water stain on her skirt. Breathless, she was whispering, "You must be baptized."

Her child's cry brought Phillip and at the same time there was the confusion of a car's motor sounding in the drive.

Phillip set the child on its feet and wrung its curls dry with his fingers. "Ma was only fooling" he consoled; and the little one promptly commenced sucking its fingertips for comfort, as was its wont.

Holding Hilda by the arm, Phillip spoke. She could hear him through this depth of tumbling, thronging noise, water pouring over the stones. "There are some doctors here. They want to see you."

--Now she lay on a bed in a small ward . . . The drone of a thousand bees, blurred forms on the beds around her and one smiling, lowered face above, an attendant in blue.

"Hello, Hilda. What did you do? Why are you here, Hilda?"

Unknown! Suddenly fury rose again. Hilda screamed.

"I murdered! I am murdered! Look at the blood in my hair!" And she lifted her head shaking her long hair about her.

She was drowning in the sound of her own shrieks, the black smoked atmosphere and the odor of blood. Strong hands held her arms, carried her. She was blind and struggling. She was half thrown to a bare floor in a dark, cubicled room. The key turned in the lock. "Alone, until you can behave!"

--Awakening in a silenced room. A locked cubicle, a floor, a blanket. Daylight, time dissolved. Hilda's body felt light and free, naked within the blanket.

"Who am I?" she whispered.

"You are our little girl, our Hilda." she heard her mother and her father say. And staring out of the window she saw them all descending from the street-car steps to the sidewalk, at the bottom of the hill of the street on which they were going to live . . .

How well remembered, each shadowed, varnished, wooded room! "Where we shall live forever, away from Pittsburgh's smoke."

Yes! "I know who I am, I am little Hilda." she thought happily.

Terrific happiness, the elusive stuff one never experiences, but imagines, reads of in poetry, and glimpses at in rare moments, hears in snatches of music; this was hers now--forever.

--As consciousness or unconsciousness assailed Hilda, the impressions were one dissolving into the other

. . . It was one long awful moment without beginning or end.

She found herself "here." "Here" was the cubicle and the light dim and perfumed and dusting, brushing, sounding, like a molten moth's wing. She danced.

Hilda danced to her blanket as though it was a personality, as though it were her own tired self.

"Lie there" she said to it as she placed it on the bare boards of the bed. "You are tired and cold and wet."

As she danced she thought, she conjured; atmosphere of sound warmth, peace. Conjuring thus she felt impowered. She felt the blanket breathe as she folded it in her arms. And within its cornucopia of wool she felt a hundred little souls, birthed, breathing, their little bodies winged and filled with warm blooded breath like beating, throbbing doves. Like a conjuror she flowered wide the folds of the blanket and she heard, felt them fly forth. "You have given, borne these souls" she told herself.

[I thought I was escaping my body at this time . . . some mythical, religious idea of transubstantiation. It was a wonderful feeling . . . I did a lot of birth giving . . . In this stage of the game, I began to talk about all the pregnancies I'd had, and think of each and every child I had not given birth to--and they would come to me as little souls with names.]

--In the corner of the room she saw reflected the gleam of light from a pool on the floor, dim but penetrating. She brought it to her lips . . . but it was urine. Barely at all, she wondered if it were hers. She washed her cheeks, forehead and hair in it . . . She had been alone so many hours now it seemed like a friend to her. She bent over and kissed the wet spot on the floor.

--The vision of street-lamp, tree, walk and hedge, swirling, slimily, retreating and returning, like the pattern of an enormous serpent's back and belly as it slowly coiled and uncoiled; retreating and returning.

Horrified, Hilda wanted nothing more than to be freed of this sight. Terrified but fascinated, she could do no more than cling to the sill and stare and listen and smell . . .

Thus she watched and saw the ground heave wide slowly and graves yarn with the earth trough binding, and the ghosts of murdered Susan and her mother, dead now three years, swang crazily toward her and away from her; their little faces mocking, tragic.

--The heat of the room encased her. There was a prolonged silence. She knew the world would end, and she would be left alone, sealed in this yellow-painted, sweet-odored room.

She heard and felt the long, enormous, muffled roar of the world as it exploded, dissolved. She knew that its vapors, cancerous, sweet-decaying and liquifying, were rolling wild, and dissolving into the eternity of distance. That none lived and man . . . left naked, alone, to fly or cringe, hating, hoping for re-embodiment.

Hilda's mouth unsealed. "Father!" she screamed.

[I couldn't see out because the windows had a sort of film over them . . . but I felt that if the window was ever opened, that the whole world would have been gone . . . But I did talk to God and we decided that we would do a thing called--be elevated, transcend this world . . . and chose who would be born and who would not be . . . And I did call for my own father, I had God and my father sort of confused in there. I also still hoped that Joe might save me and I was calling for him too.]

--It was as she stirred in the water, almost asleep, that she heard the Voice whispering. He spoke from above, from within one wall. "Listen to me, Hilda. No one else can hear. I am your Mind. I have left you but you are there and I am here. Do not be frightened. Call for me when you want me."

Her mouth was sealed again, but rapid as the clocking, printing of a typewriter, the keys of her thinking tapped words. "Am I here? Is this Heaven? Can You hear Me?"

"I can hear you" laughed the Voice. "This may be Heaven. You are either dead or insane, I have not decided which. But do not be afraid" . . .

Hilda lay immersed in the tub of water for a long time. Her brain continued to tick out sentences like a typewriter, word after word heard clearly by her, answering the Voice which claimed to be her Mind. "Are You God?" "I am Mind."

[I had a great deal of faith in this voice. I think it was the first time I began believing in God . . . I don't think that before I ever believed in God as an entity you could cope with--Mother had always said all intelligence is God. I have believed in God ever since this time--it was so actually true, and went on for so long, that I really think I was talking to God, still. Maybe it's only my super-ego, the super-ego does funny things, I'm aware of that.]

--And she felt a clean blanket holding her, warming her. She lay naked and as she thought, dead, within its shadowed folds, dissolving into the shadows herself, liquifying into the shadow, to become only a shadow.

The light blazed, diffused through the opaque paint of window panes, and as Hilda awoke, for the first time having slept, the Voice spoke to her.

"Christ gave up His body that man should be reborn" the Voice said. "Die now, Hilda, a thousand deaths in the semblance of Christ and each death will re-create."

This game Hilda commenced. She lay on the blanket straight, and imagined her life gone, her soul freed. She arose in the shadow, invisible without the form of herself, stretched on the bed; and she and God talked and conjured, and she saw fresh, new-born images of the recreated . . .

This game of conjuring occupied her for many hours. She lay on the blanket, "Died," arose in the spirit, leaving the corpse of herself.

At times her soul entered her body again and she arose, young as a child herself, strutting, dancing, singing in a brassy but melodious strong voice:

"I died to save the World again in Heaven Oh! Joy!

To give and save and love, and love.
When'e'er I hear Your voice I give and suffer
For I am dead and You alive above!
Oh! Love, Oh! Shame! Oh! Die! and Oh! Repentance!"

The course of the acute stage.

After spending her first weeks at Boxborough mostly in isolation, Hilda was placed on a ward for acutely psychotic women. Her private world of voices and souls continued to be the main focus of her attention for the next year or so, but it became an increasingly differentiated world. In addition to the Voice of Mind, Hilda came to identify her auditory hallucinations with a number of the significant people in her life. She could also experience, at will, a clear vision of her own "soul." She protected and nurtured this soul through increasingly elaborate rituals of dying and rebirth. Apart from an occasional vision of the attendants as "angels" or "my children," Hilda was at first aware of others only insofar as they physically impinged upon her.

As her awareness of her public world gradually returned, she began to make her rituals more covert and secretive. She also directed attention toward resisting the ministrations of the staff, especially in the area of food--"in those early days I was attempting to be free of all substance, anything that had to do with substance." Wet packs--a frequent occurrance in the early stages of Hilda's hospitalization--gave

her the reassuring sense of having something solid to resist. She also came to experience the fixed routine of ward life as supportive of her inner structure. By the end of her first year in Boxborough the outside world still seemed remote and unreal to Hilda, but she was beginning to have moments of sharp longing to return.

The following is a small sample of her reconstruction of the events of this acute stage. I present the excerpts in the order in which they appear in her account. In the first passage, she describes the moment of discovering her "soul," and places it in the context of her first recognition of her social surroundings.

> "You are here" said the Voice, "You must stay here."
>
> "Are these the living-dead?" she would ask.
>
> "No, they are the Mad" answered the Voice. "Watch them. Do not become filthy and unkempt, as they are . . ."
>
> "Where are their souls?" Hilda asked, "Oh! God! Tell me, where are their souls?"
>
> "They have lost their souls," God answered her.
>
> "Where is my soul?"
>
> "Watch it, guard it" answered the Voice, "Close your eyes, Look at your third eye."
>
> So it was that she was taught by the Voice to shut her eyes, to look at her third eye. Central, within her forehead, she could see it and as she waited, concentrating, she saw her soul, a living figure of herself, younger than her thirty-two years, its countenance serene, its behavior wise but guileless. She believed that if she did not find it each little while, cherish it, watch it, it would flee, leaving her as naked and mad as the others.

--"I'll never eat again," she told them in a happy voice. "The food is poison. The milk is poison, too, but I'll drink that for you. Don't you know that I die again and again, just as Jesus died, so that you may be born again, and live?"

--The water rushed at her full force and was a shock, but in a few seconds its violence seemed good, as if an inner tortured self could fight it.

--She had the continual awareness of a trapped wild thing. She believed that at any moment she would be grasped, her arms twisted, her hair reining her head forward or backward. She watched and waited, whispering mutely to the image which was clear and shining within her "third eye."

Hilda sunk her head down within the neck of her dress, closed her eyes and waited until she could see the image of her soul, flockering, moving. "Stay with me, Soul." she told it, "Don't leave, don't be frightened. I shan't let these creatures harm you."

--As she had conjured, danced, and died into her blanket weeks earlier, she now performed the same rite secretly, unravelling her shirt . . . winding the thread into a ball . . .

Hiding within the folds of her dress, whispering to her soul . . . she ravelled and whispered feverishly, believing that as she did so she wove her very own body into the thread . . .

Thus she "died," and waited mutely until she heard the Voice speaking clearer than any sound, commanding that she "live" again.

She handed the wound ball to the Attendant.

"There! See there!" they laughed together. "She's unravelled a whole shirt again. Trying to make the State poor, Hey, Hilda? Sometimes she makes Holy Chains with Crosses at the ends. She always gives the whole mess up each night."

[Previously I don't think I would have called it a rite, but at this point I had an idea that it was some magical strength . . . I believed my connection with God was making me someone important.]

--She existed in her own immediate experience of Voices, and the conversations that her brain contrived continually, answering them. She became extremely careful about her cleanliness . . .

She became cautious about touching furniture or sills or floors and performed hand-washing rites over and over again throughout the day . . .

Space, time, existence, seemed to be here and here alone, within these large bare, linoleum floored rooms, with their tiers of shining windows and the little sky which held and rounded the limit of the horizon without, seemed the limit of distance, the All of the World.

[I think I was really in despair about ever getting back to . . . a normal life again . . . Pinpricks though, that's what it amounted to. I was really very absorbed in my insanity.]

--Now her Mother had been dead these last three years. But, Hilda heard her, recognized her voice, answered her, conversed with her, her heart leaping with tender joy, to listen again to the familiar, long-loved voice of her Mother . . . She even imagined she could see her Mother, wavering in one spot which shone irridescent . . . where floor of dormitory met the base-board.

[Something had to be rectified in our relationship--and then I was so happy when she came to me in my insanity, the same good, interesting little mother she'd been at her best. Day after day I was with her.]

According to the records, she was improving; for she was dressed now, in a sheath-like, black, little dress. She wore shoes, and her hair was braided and bound with a shoestring.

She walked upright, and sat properly on a bench in another Day-Room, where other patients of her own category, sat . . .

But if the World had begun whirling, monotonous and ordinarily again, and if things and incidents were again to take their place and conform to natural laws of cause and effect, much of Hilda's own life was still far off, so dimly felt, so distant, like a

> drowning little craft, far out on the horizon of her consciousness . . .
>
> Meanwhile the sound of her Mother's voice, and now added to that, the voices of her Father, her youngest sister, and her publisher, whom she had adored . . . talked to her, chided her, encouraged her. She was gay or sorrowful according to the trend their speeches took.
>
> [Their repartee had a lot to do with my feelings. I knew them as people so well, and they behaved as themselves so perfectly, that I responded accordingly. For example, quite often my father was staring and he took a staring attitude there. Then there was my brother Harry, I would be furious at him and throw my shoes. He just chided me and told me there was no need for my being there, and so on, much as he would have. They were perfectly in character.
>
> --It was the way you imagine yourself as the finished creature you want to be, living among the advanced mentalities you would like to live among. I gave myself all kinds of credit for having these long, intelligent discussions--if only people knew what brilliant thoughts.
>
> --It upset me a bit because I didn't quite know what to do with it all. It was like having a whole doll house, a living doll house. My life was peopled, you see. And you have a responsibility toward anyone you know. Here I had all this responsibility and hardly knew what to do with it.]

The Nature of Hilda's Schizophrenic Break

A number of psychologists regard acute schizophrenic disorganization as a potentially adaptive response to a developmental impasse. Systems theorists often see psychotic behavior as an in some sense appropriate attempt to overcome an insane family situation (Laing and Esterson, 1971; Bateson, et al. 1956). At the intrapsychic level of analysis, Sullivan

(1957, p. 316) considers schizophrenia a reversion to infantile modes of thinking which opens the possibility of reintegrating dissociated "systems of motives" within the mature self--"a cosmic drama which struggles to find the solution to life problems in the same way that a nightmare does." Stierlin (1969) speaks of a "reintegration at the base" which can be achieved when the schizophrenia successfully renegotiates central conflicts of early development. Erikson (1959, p. 143) observes "a human proclivity to a 'totalistic' reorientation when . . . reintegration into a relative wholeness seems impossible." He considers the schizophrenic break an extreme expression of this tendency: "a radical search for rock bottom--i.e., both the ultimate limit of regression and the only firm foundation for a renewed progression."

Epstein (1979, 1981) offers what may be the most parsimonious and logically consistent theory of the adaptive aspect of schizophrenic disorganization. He argues that, given man's rich endowment with natural systems for recovery from physical illness, "it would be strange, indeed, if a similar developmental process did not apply to disorders of the mind" (Epstein, 1979, p. 313). He views the schizophrenic break as an extreme example of the natural tendency toward self-correction, an "emergency reaction" to a seriously maladaptive conceptual system. This view is based on Epstein's (1981, p. 2) assumption that: "In order to exist in a complex social world, it is necessary for human beings to have an [implicit]

theory of reality that includes subdivisions of a self-theory and a world-theory." Like any theory, the person's cognitive structuring of his experience is hierarchically integrated, with the basic postulates of his self-theory as "the nucleus of the individual's more extensive theory of reality."

Epstein (1979, p. 315) reasons that, "if an overall conceptual organization exists, it is possible for a total collapse of that system to occur." Such a catastrophe can be brought on, in Epstein's view, when the individual is confronted with serious failure in one of the three basic functions of a personal theory of reality: (1) to maintain a favorable pleasure-pain balance, (2) to assimilate the data of experience into a coherent conceptual system, and (3) to maintain self-esteem. When collapse occurs, fundamental perceptual and psychophysiological processes, no longer integrated within an overall conceptual system, can go deeply askew. The individual is then assailed by "raw" sensory data and dissociated memories of past experience. Although disastrous at the time, this involuntary dismantling of the individual's psychic organization can provide an opportunity for reconstruction of a more flexible conceptual system and reintegration of dissociated past experience.

There are a number of advantages to Epstein's model of schizophrenia. As an outgrowth of his research on the mastery of anxiety (e.g., Epstein, 1967, 1976)--in which he demonstrates a strong connection between the individual's

cognitive structuring of a situation and his ability to inhibit anxiety--Epstein's model provides a clear psychological explanation for the most seemingly physiological symptoms of schizophrenia, the bizarre disturbances of sensation and perception: "When sensory experience is not organized into concepts, it is experienced with heightened intensity" (Epstein, 1979, p. 318). By viewing schizophrenia as a revolution in the individual's conceptual integration, Epstein provides a basis for analyzing the disorder in terms of other models of non-incremental change presented in development theory, such as Piaget's or Werner's. He also opens new possibilities for operationalizing the more abstract and metaphorical conceptions of schizophrenia as a radical "regression in service of the ego" (Kris, 1955), "search for rock bottom" (Erikson, 1956), or "reintegration at the base" (Stierlin, 1969). Finally, Epstein's theory of personality, which holds the maintenance of self-esteem to be a task of central importance, accounts for what a number of observers (e.g., White and Watt, 1973; Grinker and Holzman, 1973) consider the most common precipitant of an acute break: a severe blow to the individual's self-esteem.

I base my interpretation of Hilda's psychotic experience on Epstein's model of schizophrenia as the collapse of the person's maladaptive integration of himself in the world. In accordance with the synthesis of intrapsychic and interpersonal theory which I have been developing, however, I add

two main extensions to Epstein's basic framework: (1) beyond the failure to assimilate emotionally significant experience, a prime reason for the person's schizophrenic break is that he is unable to engage in what Piaget conceives of as accommodation; and (2) the blow to self-esteem can take on such destructive force because it endangers the person's basic attachment in the interpersonal world, as represented in the ongoing "credit balance" of his primary loyalties. These extensions add room in an intrapsychic model for concepts from a systems perspective, in particular, they accommodate the double bind hypothesis of etiology (Bateson, et al., 1956).

The double bind hypothesis is the most widely recognized contribution toward a systems perspective on schizophrenia. It provides a clear picture of how ways of relating can become ways of thinking. The basic elements of a double bind include: (1) repeated exposure to contradictory or mutually disqualifying injunctions communicated in (2) an important interpersonal relationship which contains (3) a tertiary injunction against "escaping from the field," i.e. against commenting on the communications, or "metacommunicating," in order to clarify or resolve the contradictions. The assumption is that schizophrenics are people who have been exposed to such levels of contradiction in their early relationships that they remain abnormally cautious in their approach to defining all future relationships. They learn to rely on a defensive tactic of shifting the level of abstraction

in messages, reading literal meanings into metaphoric expressions and taking literal communications on a metaphoric level--as Hilda puts it, "I reinterpreted things a lot." The psychotic break occurs, in this view, when the person can no longer maintain this juggling of meanings and attempts to flee the situation on a metaphorical level--"to shift and become somebody else or shift and insist that he is somewhere else" (Bateson, et al., 1956, p. 137).

The chief criticism of the double bind hypothesis is that it lacks specificity--we are all exposed to some level of ambiguous and contradictory messages in our formative relationships. There is, however, a very specific quality of relatedness implicit in the pathogenic effect which Bateson et al. attribute to the double bind situation: the tertiary injunction against transcending the relationships could have such destructive force only so long as the victim maintains the kind of binding loyalty--or sense of rigid complentarity of self and other--which evolves from a deeply anxious attachment. Hilda's anxious attachment to Emily and her subsequent loyalty to the definitions of her oedipal situation is a good example of the evolution of this binding quality of relatedness.

In another respect, the double bind hypothesis is overly specific as a general model of schizophrenic etiology. The prohibition against "metacommunication" is just one example of the severe restrictions on mutual regulation--or the absence of what Boszormenyi-Nagy calls dialogue--which one experiences

in a relationship based on coercively binding loyalties. Put in Piaget's terms, the dilemma of the double bind is that the victim feels compelled to assimilate all significant transactions between self and other within the existing structure of meanings presented in his early relationships. Because any challenge to the standing definitions of self and other could be perceived as a betrayal, the person experiences himself as barred from accommodation--a prohibition which can extend to the process of maturation and independent functioning itself. In Hilda's life, this prohibition is what I have used Boszormenyi-Nagy's term "counter-autonomous super-ego" to describe. It is also manifested in her repeated experience of being uncontrollably defined by her interpersonal context, e.g., her fears of being forced into a homosexual relationship in college, her persistent vulnerability to "suffocation in the family atmosphere" and, of course, her experience of intimacy as a form of entrapment.

To look again at the situation which precipitated Hilda's psychotic break, she was confronted with major problems of assimilation: she felt totally "discredited" in the triangle, but experienced her own wish for differentiation as unacceptable; she felt locked in a desperate fight with Susan for "who I was being," yearning to replace Susan as the full person and good mother of the relationship, and yet experienced these urges as abhorently destructive; she desperately needed to maintain her tie as the daughter of a good mother, but was

constantly confronted by the fact of her own motherhood. Without accommodation, that is, in the absence of any major redefinition of her position in the real world of her relationships, these problems were irresolvable--and the situation a double bind which she could neither live in nor escape. Barred from altering her real circumstances, Hilda turned to the solutions of dissociative thought. She attempted to escape first through an imaginary transcendence of the world with Joe, and then by departing from "her own tired self"--constantly relating to herself through the shifts between highly abstract and overly concrete modes of representation which Bateson et al. (1956) describe.

In this dissociative escape from her life situation, Hilda, always acutely aware of the others' need for her to be a certain way, experienced herself as destroying her most significant attachment figures, and thus her own interpersonal grounding in the world--"I murdered, I am murdered." She lost her sense of integration within a secure configuration of boundaries between self and other. Without any clear delineation of self, Hilda had no stable reference point from which to organize the data of her experience. Her systems of conceptual integration underwent the process of rapid collapse which Epstein outlines. As Hilda lost many of the schemata which formerly enabled her to structure her perceptions, she was bombarded by intense and chaotic stimuli. The physical

world, as well as the interpersonal, became overwhelming to her.

Under great stress, Hilda intensified her efforts at finding a dissociative solution, attempting to reintegrate herself entirely within a world of her own creation. This movement toward pure assimilation is an extreme example of Piaget's principle of seeking equilibrium through disequilibrium--another way to make Epstein's point that the schizophrenic break introduces the opportunity for psychic reorganization on a new level of adaption.

In reverting to the modes of relating carried forward from her early childhood, Hilda opened the possibility of reintegrating long problematic and dissociated aspects of her self--she moved into the position to reincorporate major portions of what Sullivan (1953) calls the "system of not-me" within the structure of her mature self. In turning away from participation in the public world, and restricting herself to symbolic interaction with her internal representations of significant others, Hilda provided herself with a new basis of security--albeit divorced from reality--which enabled her to take the gradual steps of differentiation and integration leading ultimately to renewed participation and accommodation in the world of real people.

This composite model of acute schizophrenia as an adaptive struggle makes a number of the otherwise bewildering aspects of Hilda's psychotic experience comprehensible. For

the sake of clarity I examine these aspects one at a time, but they should be understood, of course, as concurrent and interdependent phenomena.

The altered experience of self.

Many of the elements of Hilda's psychotic experience are like neurotic symptoms in that they represent a creative synthesis of diametrically opposed needs. But while neurotic symptoms tend to be circumscribed to a particular sphere of functioning or object of desire, psychotic symptoms, unbound by any strictures of conventional logic, can enable global contradictions to coexist. Hilda's psychotic perceptions of herself are a good example of such a global synthesis of mutually exclusive strivings.

On the other hand, she achieved her escape from an untenable life situation through an extreme form of alienation from her familiar self. She moved beyond the long standing dangers of shame by "dissolving into the shadows herself, liquifying into the shadow," and could look back at herself as a distant and pathetic stranger, "left naked, alone, to fly or cringe." She simultaneously reaffirmed her escape and punished herself for such a forbidden act through her compulsive rituals of dying. She even experienced her own body--an ever present reminder of her old self--as concretely dead:

> Her flesh appeared emaciated, blackened. Catching sight of herself in the mirror, she saw . . . a little dead body, standing upright. "I have truly died and decayed," she thought.

On the other hand, Hilda was realizing aspects of herself which had always seemed out of reach. She could express joy in her body through her naked cavortings, and even became "friends" with her own urine--taking the reacceptance of aspects of "not-me" to an extreme. She could actually see her "true self," and recognized it as good. Other aspects of long sought goodness also became suddenly available to her. Hilda began to experience herself as Christ and the embodiment of pure motherhood. As her psychosis progressed, she began to fuse these roles and organized them into her rite of dying and rebirth--simultaneously acting out and punishing her wish for transcendence. Still later in this first stage of her insanity, Hilda came to experience herself as the "finished creature," able to engage in witty intellectual exchange, which she had always wished to be--thus solving, at the wholly fantastic level of interaction with her voices, the family problem of "being on the surface and still being loyal at the same time."

The divergent emotions which accompanied Hilda's altered perceptions of herself were equally extreme. At moments she experienced ecstatic release--"freedom from personality"--and a sense of eternal well-being: "Terrific happiness . . . was hers now--forever." These feelings of immense euphoria were balanced by an urgent dread that she might lose her "soul" and become entrapped in a world of unstable impressions each "dissolving into the other . . . [in]

one long awful moment without beginning or end." Hilda presents these opposite emotions close together in her account, with little or no transition, as if one side merged into the other. Sullivan (1956, p. 318) considers this fluid eruption of terror one of the central features of schizophrenic experience. He feels that frenetic activity, such as Hilda showed in the early period of her onset, is a defense against "an almost unceasing fear of becoming an exceedingly unpleasant form of nothingness by collapse of the self."

Sensory and perceptual disturbances.

Most of Hilda's alter sensory perceptions fall into one of three classes:

> Normal perceptions registered with unusual intensity, e.g., "the air from the open door struck strong as wind," "the light was dim but penetrating."
>
> The experience of stimuli impinging upon her, sometimes flooding over into other channels of perception, e.g., "suddenly in confusion faces forced close, enlarged, darkened, blurred; a roaring filled her ears."
>
> The perception of objects with bizarre properties and things not there, e.g., "street lamps staggered, swaying . . . tree trunks moved eerily," "the ghosts of murdered Susan and her mother swang crazily toward her and away."

In accordance with Epstein's (1979) model of schizophrenic disorganization, each of the three groups of disturbance can be understood as a stage in the collapse of Hilda's system of conceptual integration. In order to appreciate the logic of Epstein's model, it is necessary to look

briefly at its background in his work on the mastery of anxiety. In a number of studies on anxiety in sport parachutists, Epstein (1967, pp. 2-3) discovered a highly reliable phenomena: "With increasing experience, there is a progressive shift from monotonic gradients [of arousal] to inverted V-shaped curves, the peaks of which are increasingly displaced along the stimulus dimension [toward earlier and less prominent threat-relevant cues]." He concluded that the individual develops a gradient of inhibition which is steeper than his gradient of excitation: "The inhibition is apparently highly selective and discriminating, and intimately related to the development of expectancies, or a cognitive model of the stimulus situation" (Ibid., p. 14). In other words, as the individual structures his situation, he ceases to react strongly to predictable stimuli and becomes able to direct his attention toward increasingly remote stimuli. This progressive inhibition of arousal has obvious adaptive value: "As a result, the organism is able to function at efficient levels of excitation while expanding its range of awareness" (Ibid., p. 36).

In a schizophrenic break, this process of inhibition is reversed. When the schizophrenic's conceptual organization begins to disintegrate, sensory perceptions take on the heightened intensity which Hilda experienced in the initial stage of her onset. As the collapse of the person's higher level cognitive structures progresses, he loses the ability to

"screen out" irrelevant stimuli, intense sensory perceptions force themselves upon his attention. The loss of the capacity for selective attention and anticipation is, in itself, anxiety provoking--the experience of constant exposure to excessive novelty. Because stress, beyond a certain level, can impair cognitive functioning, a negative feed back loop may be set in motion: heightened anxiety leads to further disorganization resulting in a flood of unmodulated stimuli. The second group of Hilda's perceptual disturbances, in which she experiences her environment as overwhelmingly intrusive, represents this stage of events.

Flooded by intense stimuli, the schizophrenic may undertake extreme, and necessarily crude, defensive measures. He can attempt either to avoid and block out stimulation or to erect an emergency construction of his experience. These operations, and the concommitant instability of perceptions, are comparable to normal activity in the hypnagogic state between full awakefulness and sleep: loud stimuli, such as an alarm clock, can be assimilated into a dream as a muffled and remote signal, whereas very mild stimuli can elicit a startle reaction. The normal response to situations of extreme stress provides an additional comparison: perceptions at the moment of a serious accident often take on dream-like distortions; victims of assault can misperceive major elements of their situation, seeing weapons where there are none or blocking out dangers which are there.

Because Hilda's stressful situation was continuous--"one long awful moment"--she was forced (1) to take radical measures of withdrawal from external stimuli, spending whole days huddled within her dress, and (2) to assimilate her perceptions into schemata which had little basis in conventional reality. As she reverted to developmentally primitive schemata, objects in the environment lost their stable "ensemble of meanings" and Hilda began to confuse her internal representations with external reality, i.e. to hallucinate.

Two of Hilda's delusional perceptions require additional explanation: the feeling of being encased by the atmosphere, and her delusion of the world ending. The former is closely related to her experience of "suffocation in the atmosphere" of her family, that is, to her feelings of being coercively defined by her context. At the time of her onset, Hilda, having just returned from an abortive attempt at transcendence with Joe, was suddenly oppressed by the mere fact of perceiving a world of substantial objects. She experienced the familiar stimuli of her environment as noxiously adhesive, fusing her to an untenable situation. Her experience of being encased by the atmosphere is also very similar to her dream of being engulfed by a gelatinous "incubus" or alter-ego. This recurrent dream highlights a second factor which was operative at the moment of her onset: Hilda was suddenly aware of her own deeply unacceptable and dissociated impulses, and

experienced them as part of the trap which was locking her into the unliveably discredited position in her triangle. Internal and external stimuli fused into a dense impediment to change, "clinging to her as the mass of egg matter surrounds the unborn chick."

Hilda's delusion of the world ending may have been several things at once. On one level, it was a way of placing a construct on the mounting cycle of anxiety, perceptual flooding, and cognitive disorganization which Hilda was experiencing. The construct, however, seems extreme, even in light of the intense visual, auditory, and olfactory perceptions which Hilda was attempting to organize. On the other hand, the delusion of a global catastrophe was a natural extension of Hilda's idea that she had destroyed her grounding in the interpersonal world--"I murdered, I am murdered." Given this internally real event, Hilda's situation would have been analogous to that of an infant who, upon encountering excessively novel stimuli, turns to seek his mother, discovers her gone, and becomes overwhelmed by anxiety--a number of clinical observers (e.g., Mahler, 1968; Bowlby, 1973) equate the infant's experience of intense separation anxiety with the fear of total annihilation. At the same time, the psychoanalytic assumption of an affinity between a fear and a wish seems to hold in this case. Death had always held a certain attraction in Hilda's eyes--it was responsible for Isabel receiving "double the love" from her parents. Hilda's perception of the

world ending moved her immediately to call out for her father and, very shortly, to make contact with God, a connection which freed her, at last, to be Somebody Important.

One final sensory disturbance deserves note: Hilda's indifference to the normal physical pleasures and pain. Although she knows that she was often in a state of harsh privation during the early weeks of her hospitalization, "instances of bodily stress apparently left no mark or memory." Even the exceptions, as when a fellow patient gave her a severe bite on the thumb, were registered as strangely muted sensations: "the sharp sting of the teeth sinking into flesh and bone made a little ache tug at her heart." It was only in the late weeks of her onset that "sensations of cleanliness, appeasement of hunger and thirst, warmth of clothing, were again realized by Hilda."

Deficient perception of pleasure and pain is a classic symptom of schizophrenia. Heath (1960) considers it the fundamental disorder from which all other symptoms arise. He argues that, due to an inherited metabolic defect--the inability metabolize a protein, Taraxein, which is released during stress and assumed to interfere with functions of the central nervous system--"schizotypical" people are unable to "feel" as other people do. As a result, they become alienated and uncertain of their own identity. When exposed to stress which relates specifically to issues of identity, their

marginal integration may collapse, and the full symptoms of schizophrenia will become manifest.

Epstein's theory spans a middle ground between the poles of "biological" and purely psychological explanation of schizophrenic anhedonia. Although he suggests that pre-schizophrenic individuals may well have a physiological vulnerability to over arousal, which would lead to a crudely modulated inhibitory system (Epstein, 1967), he holds that the collapse of the individual's "self-theory" is, in itself, sufficient to account for the loss of normal perceptions of pleasure and pain.

Boszormenyi-Nagy would take a position entirely the inverse of Heath's:

> Individuation through the formation of subject-object boundaries probably precedes any other "psychological" motivation. Being the source of the experience of Selfhood, Self-Not-Self discrimination is a prerequisite of the pleasure principle. [1965, p. 39].

The issue is not resolvable in a retrospective life history. At least some aspects of Hilda's failure to register physical needs seem, however, to be an expression of the more basic need for self-delineation which Nagy posits. Hilda's loss of hunger and avoidance of food, for example, was intimately connected with her delusion of the world ending--"Do the dead have to be fed?" In dying she had escaped her encasing atmosphere and established a new, global self-delineation--she was not-of-this-world. In order to preserve this

nascent boundary, it was necessary to "avoid all substance." Food, because it represents an historically potent medium of interpersonal exchange, struck her as especially dangerous--"poison"--and she renounced her desire for it.

Altered cognitive structuring.

The collapse of Hilda's adult organization of herself in the world was not simply a loss of cognitive integration but the substitution of earlier modes of structuring for her adult representations. Freud was the first to note this aspect of a return to past forms of thought in psychotic disorganization:

> In a psychosis the remodelling of reality is affected by means of the residues in the mind of former relations with reality; that is, it concerns . . . ideas and judgments which have previously been formed about reality and by which reality was represented in the life of the mind [1924, p. 280].

This substitution is not a literal regression, but the partial return of an adult person to developmentally primitive ways of relating, as Sullivan (1953, p. 327) puts it," a dissociated system which has broken cover in this way can only very briefly continue to be free from being greatly complicated by what remains of the [mature] self-system." Keeping this qualification in mind, it is still remarkable how closely the cognitive structuring which Hilda describes corresponds to the features which Piaget attributes to sensorimotor and intuitive thought.

In addition to the primacy of assimilation over accommodation and the loss of many of the relations which charac-

terize operational thought--e.g., stable concepts of time, spatial relationships, and causality--Hilda describes a striking reassertion of egocentricity in the psychotic organization of her experience. In her delusion of the world ending, she universalized an internal crisis. Because she could not see the outside world, due to the film over the window, it was no longer there. Even in the later stage of this period, when "the world had begun whirling, monotonous and ordinarily again," Hilda's immediate surroundings remained the boundary of her reality: "Space, time, existence, seemed to be here and here alone . . . the limit of distance, the All of the World."

Hilda's loss of object permanence was accompanied by a loss of self permanence--"She existed in her own immediate experience of Voices." In the early stage of her break she feared that a loss of contact with her "soul" or God's Voice would mean annihilation of self--a reinstitution of the total dependence in infancy between mother-schema and self-schema. Even in the later stage, Hilda's emotional experience of self remained labile and dependent upon her representations of others, i.e., her Voices: "She was gay or sorrowful according to the trend their speeches took."

In addition to these major structural similarities with the cognition of early childhood, Hilda describes several more subtle characteristics of sensori-motor intelligence. For example, many of the sensory experiences in her account seem to lack the coordination of discrete perceptions which begin to

appear as the child "decenters" objects in the physical world. It is as if stimuli registered through undifferentiated, kaliedescopic, modes of perception and took on properties arbitrarily dictated by her own sensations. The darkness had a "dense mass" and "heaviness"; she felt herself "drowning in its thick pressure of arm black." The light in her cubicle was "dim and perfumed and dusting, brushing, sounding, like a molten moth's wing." Sunlight "felt like heavy pollen into her eyes. She felt her lashes beat like frantic butterflies on her eyeballs, and her pupils resounded like red bells against the lids."

These perceptions lack what Piaget terms mobility, i.e., they show a highly stimulus bound quality and an equating of self state with object state. The loss of cognitive mobility is the direct link which Hilda made between thought and action. She experienced her wish to eliminate Susan as an act of murder. She constantly acted out her fantasies, and her ritualistic behavior enabled her to think of herself as the things she wished to be. When a disturbing thought entered awareness, as when an attendant asked about her children, Hilda would feel compelled to act:

> Her children! She pictured them at this moment . . . Had she remembered to save them?
>
> She lept to the center of the floor, tore the dress from herself, lay naked writhing on her back.
>
> "I must die again for each of them!" she screamed. "Don't interrupt me! . . . God, where are You? Voice, answer!"

Hilda's regression to such early modes of organization was adaptive in several respects. For one thing, given the collapse of her adult systems of integration, her reinstitution of primitive schemata provided Hilda with at least some means of structuring her experience--it kept her mentally alive. The particular stage which she reinstated, the dawn of cognitive differentiation, corresponded with her central task at the time of her psychosis, self-delineation. She threw herself into this task with a sense of mission, spending whole days unravelling her dress--"believing that she wove her very own body into the threads"--seeking to establish a basis for rebirth--a perfect exemplification of Erikson's notion of a radical search for the "rock-bottom foundation for a renewed progression."

Reconstituted others.

Hilda's hallucinatory others were crucial presences in her schizophrenic break. They provided security at moments of overwhelming anxiety and held the key to her self delineation throughout. Her first hallucination, the scene of her family moving to Hudson, answered her desperate question, "Who am I," and expressed her longstanding wish for secure integration with her parents--to be forever "our Hilda" at the best moment of family life. As this solution faded, Hilda was thrown into a symbolic reenactment of the central issues on which her actual attempt at reconstructing her oedipal triangle

had foundered. First she became a fecund mother, then she experienced global disaster. The Voice of Mind--Emily's idea of the embodiment of goodness--presented Hilda, for the first time, with a clear route for loving union with her parents: die like Christ.

The solution of messianic identification is uniquely suited to the dilemma of binding loyalties and unanswerable injunctions faced by many schizophrenics. Christ is the archetypical scapegoat. His suffering at the hands of his community radically altered their economy of merit. He absorbed all sins and opened the way for a permanent bond in goodness. At the same time, their persecution enabled Him to transcend a dark world and reunite with His heavenly family.

Hilda's "semblance of Christ" was likewise multipurpose. It was an act of universal atonement and a way to meet all responsibilities to her loyalty figures, particularly the responsibility to be a scapegoat. Her rites of death and suffering also held promise to rebalance all accounts of merit and, above all, to enable Hilda to be one with her primary loyalty figures at their best--the blissful union which she first hallucinated.

As Hilda's "dying" strengthened her connection with the Voice of Mind, she established a basis for reconstituting her sense of self. The Voice became what Boszormenyi-Nagy (1965) calls "a Self-delineating intrapsychic object representation." It "taught" Hilda to see her "soul" and encouraged

her to "guard it," to reconstruct her boundaries. It enabled her to begin to restore the sense of meaning and continuity in the interpersonal world which Erikson calls "basic trust."

With further progress in self-delineation, Hilda was able to differentiate specific others from the global fusion of good parental authority represented by the Voice of Mind. Emily came to her as the "good little mother she'd been at her best," and Hilda was able to re-immerse herself in the "rectification" of their relationship which she had begun in writing Beauty, I Wonder. Gradually she introduced representations of a number of other family members and friends, constructing what Cameron (1959) calls a "pseudo-community" around herself. She placed herself in the position to re-experience a variety of self-other configurations and to attempt to reintegrate them into a coherent self. Hilda was, in effect, re-socializing herself and repaving the way for a return to transaction with real others.

To conclude this discussion of Hilda's psychotic experience, I would like to quote briefly from a remarkable book by Boisen (1936), a chaplain at Worcester State Hospital who brings a background in sociology and psychology, as well as first-hand experience of schizophrenia, to his study of mental disorder. In constructing his theory of schizophrenia, Boisen draws on a similarly catholic assortment of material: statistical data from a large sample of mental patients, detailed

histories of several cases, biographies of historical figures, accounts of religious conversion, and his own psychotic experience. The theory which he develops anticipates several of the main ideas--in particular, Boszormenyi-Nagy's central concept of loyalty--which I have brought together in analyzing Hilda's psychotic experience.

Boisen (1936, pp. 59-60) assumes that: "certain types of mental disorder are not in themselves evils but problem-solving experiences . . . even in definitely psychotic cases, emotional disturbances may be purposive and constructive . . . setting an individual free from what has been blocking his development." He supports this hypothesis with a number of examples of recovery from a schizophrenic break being followed by a higher level of functioning. Boisen (passim) observes in these cases: "a reconstruction of the patient's world view from the bottom up," "a reorganization of personality" . . . "enabling the patient to incorporate disowned or 'repressed' tendencies into the structure of the self."

Like Boszormenyi-Nagy, Boisen (1936, p. 176) places central emphasis on super-ego relations in his view of personality: "Just as truly as the child receives from his parents a physical structure, so also does he take over from his early environment a mental structure which is organized around his primary loyalties." The schizophrenic break, as he sees it, often results from a crisis in this "realm of personal

relationship" which arouses fears of "isolation and destruction" and may lead to a "dissolution of personality."

> The psychotic individual is characteristically one who, accepting the standards and ideals planted by his early guides, has found within himself such marked deviation that he has been unable to face the inner bar of judgment except at the cost of severe emotional disturbance [Ibid., p. 60].

Boisen (Ibid., pp. 174-180) sees the schizophrenic's concern with cosmic affairs as an attempt to "find the basis for an ultimate synthesis of conflicting loyalties and divergent standards." The schizophrenic, in other words, is striving simultaneously to re-establish a sense of continuity with "those to whom he owes allegiance and with whom he wishes to be identified" and to "assimilate" previously disowned aspects of himself.

Either Boisen had great insight into the schizophrenic process or else we share--in company with Epstein, Nagy, Sullivan, and Erikson--very similar misreadings of meaning in the interplay of bad chemicals, metabolic defects, and malfunctioning neurons.

Remission

When Hilda was several months into her second year of hospitalization, she contracted erysipelas, an infectious disease associated with intense fever. Following what she understands was an almost fatal bout with this disease, she enjoyed rapid improvement in her general functioning, becoming

"self-contained" to the point that she was offered a "trial release" from the hospital.

> She experienced the tremendous heat and itch of edematons, inflamed flesh on face, lips, and eyelids [but] she was far too engrossed in her conversations with God, Mother, and all those other visitants . . . to pay much attention.
>
> She was placed in a camisole to safeguard the bandages, and her bed was rolled into a room, which was locked. For days she was left there, with pitcher and glass beside her on a table. Fluids were given her, but no food.
>
> She became still and semi-conscious. She dreamed that she had died, risen through the glass of window and frozen February night to an embankment of clouded Heaven.
>
> She felt the beat and strength of wings, lifting her, caressing her and the playing, chorded voices of those already dead and come to Heaven, asking her to choose, to join, to remain.

As the fever lifted, she recognized that:

> Her body, indeed, had become a thing apart from herself . . . She would receive it back to her consciousness at times now, like a cringing, abused animal, condoning with its hard cruel luck.
>
> [I think at that time I began to feel sorry for myself. I realized how long this had gone on, these various effects, abuses, and I was sort of mothering myself . . . And I did begin to be clearer and more normal in my thinking.]
>
> She was busy and well-behaved now assisting with bed-making in the dormitories and helping set up the breakfast tables early in the mornings. She was working at a second piece of embroidery.

Hilds suggests that her fever had the therapeutic effect of a shock treatment. In terms of its symbolic meaning, the disease was a culmination of her rituals of suffering and dying. Just as physical illness in Hilda's childhood had been

the only reliable way to achieve contact with Emily as the good mother, it now enabled Hilda to feel embraced by a benevolent presence, transported into a blissful environment. At the same time, it was now safe for Hilda to renew her association with her body--formerly so unclean and full of dangerous impulses, but now cauterized by the fever. It is as if Hilda had stepped into her representation of the good mothering other and employed it as a "observing ego," guiding herself through the bed-making, setting of tables, and embroidery projects which earned her release.

Reentering the family.

Hilda was discharged on the condition that Jacob take custody of her. She moved in with her four sisters and younger brother who had remained with their father in New Jersey. The family had lost their wealth in the market crash and, now in the midst of the depression, were hardpressed to make ends meet. Although Jacob no longer worked, he continued to commute regularly to New York, maintaining "a pretext" of activity. He also distributed a homemade elixir, "Dr. Mendahl's Oratone," to "a few out of the way places." Hilda, in viewing these activities, lost respect for her father--"attempting to be Mr. Somebody and telling a lie to do it."

Hilda experienced her reentry to family life as extremely jarring. She felt herself thrust back onto the position of a bad self. Her feelings of abstract culpability revived as soon as she stepped into the house. The

problem of experiencing a gulf between her public life and private world--a remote concern in the hospital--became increasingly acute at home. Here family became strangers to her. Reenmeshed in their atmosphere--"as if it were in a form of purgatory peopled by my own sisters"--she felt cut off from the good aspects of her public self: writing and motherhood. Hilda's private world of voices became an important refuge. But even relations with these internal others became problematic; they mocked her efforts at participation in the world and encouraged her to commit suicide.

> The family! We are sprung into it . . . We accept each member as an interpretive force on our perceptions. Yielding, acknowledging their egos and edgy criticisms . . . we depend to a degree, until we are one of them, colored, tempoed, molded to them. What our own influence has been, we seldom presume to observe . . .
>
> --She had been left out of the book entirely, like a torn page . . . to be forgotten, the rest of the story reading well without her . . .
>
> [On first entering the house] she caught a quick glance at her reflection in the hall mirror.
>
> "I am yet I." she reminded herself swiftly. But her limbs trembled within her black skirts and her hands turned cold. These were hesitatingly taken by the hands of her four Sisters.
>
> Until now there had been no fear of the opinion or attitude of others.
>
> But here, with the familiar countenances of her Sisters, Brother, Father, with their voices, gestures, inuendos of being, of herself born, her flesh of them, her individuality broken from this tree; she was suddenly assailed with the sharp sword of guilt, of shame, of self-consciousness. It's thrust pained her almost to fainting. She felt a

traitor to their good behavior, their solemn family union.

Her body stiffened and she felt sweat at her temples and arm-pits. She wanted to apologize . . . How she longed that her nature would be . . . a part still of their nature, her conceptions . . . as simple, pure and well-founded as theirs.

--They did not know, that was the point. The fact that the family had a history of mental illness, instead of facilitating their awareness, blocked their conception of it. It had become a reversal of the "family unit," "family conformity," a naughtiness not to be easily forgiven.

--The attic was quiet, somewhat dusty . . . Fitted into two cleared corners were Isabel's and her own cots . . .

"I miss mother's motherhood. She took such good, watchful care of us. I can feel her presence. Can't you Isabel? . . ."

For that brief moment her old self had appeared again and spoken, but suddenly Hilda felt extremely tired. The attic's swathed atmosphere, the dim light at the window. Isabel's pale and worried countenance. She wanted to cry out, "I cannot talk, I am too ill. You'll never understand." And she heard her Voices, her Mother, her Publisher, clamoring for attention, "Don't worry, Hilda! We are here. Stay with us. Speak to us."

--Her Voices, their insistent, tender remarks, their closely personal themeings, made her desire to sink into the dream again . . . flee in her imagination, to forget this trammelling outside experience of petty effort for petty return.

--She knew, however, with a sharp pang of self criticism, that unless she associated now, in this atmosphere with her Family as one of it's integral parts, all would be lost . . .

"Ah!" Hilda remarked silently to God to Mind, "You do not want me sane!"

"But we do!" they clamored together, the Voices, Soul and her Mind. "Be brave, Hilda! Conform! Accept what is given you!"

--Oddly enough, the home itself, made her feel a victim of claustrophobia: It's shut and locked policy of behavior, the Sisters conforming to the day's duties of performing the household tasks, their even, quiet way of mingling and meeting over the chores . . .

But their talk, once this was over, their chattering and eating, the clatter of silver and china, the polite offering and acceptance of food. Like magpies, like birds flocked in the limbs of one tree. What were they talking about?

--It was not that Hilda did not attempt to listen, to absorb the conversations of the others. For verily she did. While they talked to one another or even spoke to her, she would knit her brows and feel for that intimate understanding which communication involved. But instead of a response, she found herself resisting their mood, contending against the meaning of their phrases. Their words like rapid birds swooped, darted, dipped into the lake of her consciousness . . .

To begin with, the subject of her experience at the Hospital was closed. Once or twice she had attempted mentioning . . . but they would check her with a kind hand laid to the shoulder, a sisterly kiss to her cheek . . .

And likewise the subject of her sorrow concerning Richard . . . Her life with Phillip and Susan was not a subject received with grace, for it was not correct for . . . the home's conventional attitude. Least said, soonest mended.

Nor would they sanction her worry concerning her children. She longed to talk of them at times, to think of them, to worry about their welfare. But the family seemed to consider that this, too, was no longer hers to discuss.

--Ah! That was it! She must not expect them to understand, to know at all, to have even an inkling.

--So now began Hilda's new game of deceit. For such it really must be called at this point. She dared not let them know at all, what was her state of mind.

She msut cunning-wise seem one of them . . . Now instead of Hilda's turn to be the patient, it seemed

it must be theirs, for she felt she must guard them, protect them all from the sight and sound of her mental illness . . .

It was not easy . . . her deceit of attempting normal behavior was exhausting.

Her sisters . . . without pall of worry, so bright, so sure compared to Hilda's creeping, crawling little self . . . She must stand erect, face them, admit nothing.

Her words sounded blunt, received by them like little spoonfuls of distasteful food. Their own interested phrases . . . tumbling like brilliant brooks . . . into the pool of their combined sisterly communication.

She was fast becoming a submerged entity.

[I was hoping that in some way I would be more normal toward them or they to me. In fact, it really fast became worse. I had to hide myself, to be a person who did not in any way allow herself to be seen . . . People can do this to you . . . especially if you are not living on really honest terms with them. They can make you feel very imprisoned.]

--Still there was that Inner Soul, that thrusting Mind, plus . . . her publisher, her dead Mother, all patiently waiting near her. She could almost sense their pulse and respiration. She . . . longed to play, to be with them as one of them . . . It seemed more desirous to be absorbed by them than by the outer world.

To tell the truth, she was frantic lest she lose them altogether.

--She had moments of almost normal interest. She would lift a book, turn its pages and find a lucid sentence . . . stung again by the little wasp of wanting to be a writer . . . She would imagine a sentence, a paragraph, a page, a whole book again!

"But," the voices would laugh, "What are you up to Hilda? Don't lie to yourself, Hilda. You can't do it."

She imagined the pleasure of no longer having to strive . . . the relief of springing safe, no longer

> burdened by her groping self, from life and its cellar-like imprisonment to death's sweet Heavenly freedom.
>
> Her voices were telling her now that sleep would be good, a long uninterrupted rest. "You may even meet me somewhere." her Mother whispered. She thought, she argued and reargued the case of herself and a possible reason for continuation of existing, here where she felt unloved, unneeded, hampered and dumbed by her Insanity.
>
> There was a small phial of carbolic acid, pinkish and heavy-like syrup, on her father's shelves in the basement . . . She smuggled it up to her bed and day after day she practiced tipping the uncorked bottle toward her open lips.
>
> "As if paralyzed, my arm and wrist will not bend enough to permit the drops to fall," she thought . . . She was smartly surprised when several drops . . . flowed over her lips . . . The stuff was rapidly burning, thickening, swelling her lips, her tongue, the lining of her mouth.
>
> She thought quickly and contrived the following "out" to her dilemma. "Girls!" she cried, shouting down the cellar stairs, "I've broken out with erysipelas again. It's swelling my lips and my hand. Don't come near me. It's very contagious."

Like her actual bout with erysipelas, Hilda's suicidal gesture brought on a rapid improvement in her state of mind: "All of Hilda's desire to eliminate herself was gone . . . She forgave herself and the others, facing the fact that she was crippled and hampered by her lack of contact." Prior to this reacceptance of her role as a patient, Hilda had been betraying her binding loyalty to Emily, that is, the commitment to support a perfect other by being a defective self. She, in fact, had been covertly replacing Emily, reversing her role and viewing the rest of the family as her "patients"--"Now instead

of Hilda's turn it seemed it must be theirs." The more effective Hilda's deception, and the more of her self that she put into the role, the deeper her betrayal. Her Voices became an active mouthpiece for her counter-autonomous superego, exhorting her to "conform," sabatoging her independence, and undermining her participation in the family. The flirtation with suicide offered temporary appeasement, and perhaps also served as an impetus to remove herself from the home.

Hilda began to look seriously for a live-in job, "a chance to become my own person again." She found a position teaching in a progressive boarding school, but, after a brief stay, was put off by the bohemian atmosphere and "the lesbian expression" which she sensed among the staff. Her next position, as a housekeeper for a young couple with a four-year old daughter, was initially more successful.

> The second month was well advanced when Hilda's voices began to torment her again. But she continued conversing as need be with Mr. and Mrs. Maurer, and caring for the child without this becoming evident.
>
> She took to eating very little, boiling little quantities of coffee many times during her working hours, chewing on a heel of or slice of rye bread, as she performed her tasks. She neglected none of the work, nor the child at all, indeed, the child seemed dearer to her than ever.
>
> But the Voices talked to her continually. "Hospital! Hilda!" they would say, "You must return. You are not going to make a go of it."
>
> The crux of the situation occurred one morning when she discovered the child perched in the window-sill of the bedroom, leaning thoughtfully over the sheer drop of six stories, gazing into the court below.

> Hilda approached slowly, without allowing herself to panic; she lifted the child in her arms and bolted the screen and held the child in her arms until Mr. and Mrs. Maurer returned . . .
>
> The next day, Hilda was suddenly panicked. She explained to Mrs. Maurer that her head ached badly. She was excused from the day's effort and Mrs. Maurer stayed at home with the child.
>
> The following day Hilda awoke at noon and she heard herself screaming. She was screaming for her own children. She could not stop.

Apart from her overall sense of panic, Hilda does not remember her thoughts in this situation. It is possible that she misread the threat to the child as her own impulse--a misattribution which would be consistent with her deep sense of danger in mothering and, perhaps, encouraged by her Voices.

Hilda was sent home on the second day after the window incident. On leaving the Maurers, during the elevator ride down, she began to enter the land of the dead: "She heard no sound and moved in a miracle of space, unfeeling." This reentry was more terrifying than her initial delusion in the hospital: "I was so lost in it . . . I was outdoors, there were no attendants. I was totally alone." Hilda managed the train ride back to the city where her family lived, but then became totally disoriented. She wandered helplessly amongst the "risen dead . . . their mocking, death-pale faces weaving past her like shimmering visions."

A policeman took her home and her family returned her to the hospital.

Rehospitalization

Hilda at first had a sense of homecoming in returning to her ward:

> She was proud to show them the way up the steps, through the halls and doors to the second floor . . . the same familiar faces of the patients she had left months before.

She was shocked, however, to find that she was meant to stay for more than a few days.

> The attendants said, "There's an old saying, 'Second admission means life.'"
>
> She was suddenly protected by a lethargy which permitted little entrance from the outside . . . cottoned against the world of impression, essaying no sentence and receiving none.
>
> Like a mist, the past with its people . . . were swept from her . . . She no longer condemned, blamed, nor repented.
>
> Drifting on the tide of days, she arose with surge of other patients, maneuvered her limbs into her clothing, moved with them into meals, and returned with them.

Hilda moved next into what she calls a "lethargy of automatized activity." She applied herself to whatever routine task was available on the ward, working past the point where her knees became painful or her back stiff and aching. She began gradually to experience emotions again.

> How many pails of water had it taken to do this task? It seemed twenty, at least. She congratulated herself, a small thrust of self-pride was laid like a little token in the receptacle of her stupified ego.
>
> She felt, dumbly, that somehow by continual, willing effort she might atone for her guilt.

> Exactly of what this guilt consisted at this point, she barely imagined. But for some reason, she knew that now the cards had been laid on the table . . . She believed they had all read somewhere in the charted records of her disillusionment and failure in marriage and as a mother. She felt there was no more to be said between herself and them . . . The verdict, "Guilty," had condemned her to this.

The trial of the back ward years.

Some months after her readmission, Hilda was transferred to a ward for chronic patients where she spent the remainder of her ten years of hospitalization. The ward was supervised by a Mrs. Destin and her "cohort," Mag Reardon. As Hilda saw it, they ran their domain like a harsh penal colony, not allowing the patients to speak unless spoken to and exacting constant labor from the able bodied. From the moment of entering this ward, Hilda felt herself thrust into a new and suddenly external arena of conflict.

> Whereas, previously she had been a subject to study and help, now she was considered one of the regressed types, to be used to best advantage and to be forgotten.
>
> Aware at once of the change of attitude, her wits revived and her lethargy was dropped like a cloak.
>
> No one need tell her that this was at last actual imprisonment. She sensed it. She knew not how to fight, but fight she would.

Hilda devotes a good portion of her manuscript to recounting the Dickensian exploitation and abuses which she underwent during these years. This is the part of her manuscript which differs most from her interview account. She has

a very hard time gaining perspective on this period--a problem which she implicitly acknowledges in her introduction to this section: "How can this be told without exaggeration?"

The basis of her problem with perspective is that Mrs. Destin and, especially, Mag Reardon, embody the antagonist in the internal drama of self/other conflict which Hilda carried forward from childhood. They brought to life old configurations--e.g., oppressed servant to harsh master and victimized self to sadistic other--in their most polarized and rigidly complementary form. Because Hilda's experience of undergoing these relationships was so strong, she has trouble seeing her own doing, i.e., in appreciating her active contribution to defining and perpetuating the relationships. From the moment of entering the ward, for example, she had a strong sense of opposing an oppressor, but her serious fight occurred almost entirely on an abstract emotional level. Hilda's actions, in contrast, tended to be compliant and highly supportive of the relationship. She avoided several opportunities to seek release from the ward and even returned as an employee after her final discharge.

Hilda, in short, needed these women. Their relationship provided her with a battleground in which she could fight against the counter-autonomous and exploitive forces in her life--a deeply self-delineating experience which led ultimately to Hilda's recovery from schizophrenia, albeit at the cost of colluding in her oppression for so many years.

To begin with, Hilda was transferred to the region where entrenched insanity was assumed a certainty.

"On this ward," said Mrs. Destin, "We have those patients listed under senile insanity, Hilda, which means that this is their final home."

"But, don't list me so!" said Hilda politely, bringing forth a laugh.

"There is such a thing, as you with your education, must know, Hilda. We'll get it straight from the start, then you need never ask the question again. You are the victim of what is termed, 'premature menopause,' which will naturally trend into senility at an early age."

[I never allowed anyone to know I was having a period. I saw women beaten to a flounder if they had so much as a stain on their clothing. So I developed a method of packing so that there would be no sign . . . So they thought I never had one. I really fooled them that way.]

"You are well educated, aren't you? Some college, a good home, a lady, I believe. We expect the best from you. This is a good home, too."

Ah! stated so! but the insight of the caught, the trapped, the imprisoned, is canny. And singing, like a reverbrating nerve, Hilda sensed the undercurrent of these words. Gone, gone, your home, your opportunity! Self destroyed, you may remain here with us and pay dearly for your errored ways!

"Not that it's easy to understand," went on Mrs. Destin, "How a young woman with such advantages could take it upon herself to leave her good husband. But you'll do as we order, and later perhaps, you'll explain to us more about yourself."

"Why, Mrs. Destin!" answered Hilda quickly, "My life is none of your business. Don't question me!"

Like a large pigeon puffing at breast and feather and chortling at throat, calling its mate, Mrs. Destin was joined by her second in charge, Mag Reardon.

The blow was so practiced, so studied and without ire, [it] implied that the future was not to be bandied with.

Hilda was quickly inducted into what she calls "the enmeshment of imposed order and silence" on the ward. She was also quick to feel a strong connection between Mag Reardon and herself.

> Each move of Mag's she watched. Not a moment throughout the day did she lose track of her. She accorded with her moods, performing each task swiftly and willingly, and jumped, as if shot, if Mag let out a low roar at a patient.
>
> These were the characteristics of Hilda which Mag learned to love. She batted [her pet cat] Buster and Hilda equally, and in turn fondled and yearned over them.
>
> --It was the sudden joyful knowledge . . . that here was a strong enough, young enough physical body to work, tame, and train that prompted Mag to attack Hilda, like a bounding, dangerous dog, pawing, batting, confusing her, with the threatening spark of worse to come in her eye, but . . . almost caressing her, like the lick of a great beast.
>
> [Her attack had a certain amount of humor in it . . . She didn't have a cruel expression, she had kind of a gay, joyful, "here I come, take it" look. And then she'd get excited and become involved in almost <u>trying</u> to be angry.
>
> She was discovering discipline, she didn't know how to, really. This was her form, <u>ahead</u> of the behavior that she wanted from me--also it was sadistic--but she thought if she beat me ahead of the day's effort, that I would put forth a better day's effort.
>
> So she would beat me first thing in the morning, when she first came on duty. I'd already have gotten a lot of the work out of the way . . . but I <u>never</u> let her know that I was proud of my effort, I'd get it double.]

Hilda's main avenue of defense against Mag was the balance of merit in their relationship, that is, she gained a

sense of revenge in allowing Mag to accumulate a staggering backlog of transgressions against Hilda.

> For many was the time that Mag in the heat of her demonstration would purr huskily, "Aye! Hilda! Why won't ye strike back? So's I'll have reason for reporting you to the Doctor and then you'll be transferred to the Violent Ward!"
>
> At least Hilda had the poise and the strength of spirit to make verbal return to this one. "Never, never will I strike back!" she stated, knowing in her heart that in this way was Mag more fully paid. "You'll have it all on your own conscience." thought Hilda. So far at least, she could retalliate.

Hilda: [When you have a state of mind like that, you're thinking "Well now you've done it again, that's another count against you, another count"--I think the other person realizes this, you know. It adds up. It was my <u>silent</u>, <u>cruel</u>, treatment of her, you see.]

C.J.: That didn't stop her at all.

Hilda: Well finally (late in this period) I did stop her when I said, "Murder me."

I was really becoming tired of it all, and I thought, "how can I discipline her without doing anything violent, and yet really discipline her" . . . So I decided the way to make her sorry was to make her say she <u>wanted</u> to murder me, <u>make</u> her do it, try to do it.

So I said, "You'd like to murder me"--just casually--"Well do it . . . Go get the broom, beat me, murder me."

"You bet your life I will," she said.

And she did, she started <u>beating</u> me, beating and beating me.

I'd look up and say, "I'm not dead. Go on."

I made her go on until she finally broke down and wept.

C.J.: Weren't you frightened?

Hilda: No, I wasn't. She was sort of beside herself. She didn't have her full strength behind it--it wasn't as bad as some times, when I had such welts and bruises I had to bathe separately.

Finally she just put her arms around me and said "Hilda, I hate you and love you more than any patient I ever had." And that broke her spirit--It's a terrible thing to do to anyone, make them bend to your attitude, but I decided to do it to her because she was just wearing me out.

Hilda's decision not to seek help from hospital staff or family members was complex. In accounting for it, she focuses mainly on coercive aspects of her relationship with Mag and Mrs. Destin. This situation replicated the binding effect that Hilda had experienced as a child with Emily. Just as, when caught in the throes of their mother-daughter antagonism, Hilda had experienced Emily as blocking her from seeking redress with Jacob, she believed that these women cut her off from outside justice and turned the doctors against her.

When she asked if she might speak with the Doctor, she was slapped smartly by Mag.

"Speak to him!" cried Mag, "And you'll suffer for it!"

She requested the right to send letters home.

"Dare write!" stated Mrs. Destin, "Your letters will be intercepted!"

--Now, never did she see the Doctors. For if they passed through the Ward at a time when she was within sight of them, she could note Mrs. Destin's nod and remark, which Hilda could sense without hearing.

She felt certain that the picture, Mrs. Destin presented was distorted. And once, when the Doctor approached her, laid his hand on her shoulder, she started and ducked as though fearful of a harsh note.

Hilda acknowledges that she accepted the situation and passed up any number of opportunities to make her treatment public. She explains this choice mainly in terms of her feelings of shame, that is, that the ward, for all its oppression, was, in fact, her rightful home. She felt it would have been humiliating for outsiders to be made aware of her treatment. Alongside her description of these feelings of shame, however, Hilda's account suggests that constant oppression from without enabled her to experience a sense of goodness within. Enduring the persecution of ward life gave her a sense of inner purity reminiscent of her childhood identification with Joan of Arc, and her silent martyrdom enabled her to feel "the mother in herself," protecting her children from harmful knowledge.

> --Strong set against divorce or separation, these women were the law extreme as construed by her own family.
>
> --It could have also been that the sense of shame with which Hilda was assailed, could have been a barrier to her attempt at doing something about the situation.
>
> --So, she knew well enough that the wrong picture had been given the doctor, nor did she worry too much about it, for the future was undone entirely now, and each hour was a small, contrived battle, either mental or physical or spiritual against the enemy. For so she now placed them in her mind's category, Mrs. Destin, the officer and Mag, the entire army, while she herself, poor little knight, fought valiently and silently alone.
>
> Perhaps it was the mother in Hilda which prompted her to not cry out for help in her new imprisonment. She protected those she loved and knew from her dilemma.

> [It was very degrading, very. Suppose you knew that this was being done to your mother, it would hurt you so terribly. It would spoil your picture of her . . . It's a matter of losing face, their estimation of me would have perhaps been altered altogether.]

Hilda's delusional community of others remained with her through these years, but it underwent several changes. Her voices regained the qualities of loving interest and unconditional acceptance which she had enjoyed in the days prior to her first release.

> At night, when she lay exhausted in her bed, the darkness carrying waves of velvet lassitude, face down, with her head in her arms, she would hear them again, even so, "You are ours, Hilda." they would whisper . . . through their ever-loving approach and kind interest, she was able to contrive her attitude to the next day's situation of effort, silence and now and then the bout with Mág.

Because Hilda was beaten when she showed any sign of conversing with her voices, she became secretive, restricting herself mainly to times when she was in bed. She began gradually to separate her delusional intercourse with others from her wakeful participation in the world, placing the people of her voices within what she calls the "ever-recurring excitement of the Dream."

> At these times, when she drifted into dreams, she felt the whirr of Angels' giant wings, swooping down to her, lifting her. She felt herself held to the bosom of the visitant. The peace that she experienced at such a time seemed eternal . . .
>
> She would find herself . . . rushing through peace-instilled air . . . the fast escaping land beneath her journey . . . She would be rushed over the border of Life into the country of Death, which . . . was at last her Home.

> Free now from fear . . . she would approach her dearest friends and closest loves, held safe now in Death's Valley.
>
> It was more actual than the experience of wakefulness. It penetrated her consciousness with a reality which satisfied all of her questions and doubts, fears and discouragements.

It is unclear exactly where in the dichotomy between sleep and waking experience Hilda located the Dream. Her written account seems to place it entirely in sleep, whereas in the interviews, she describes the Dream as more a matter of conscious prolongation of a hypnogagic state. What is clear, however, is that Hilda again recognized the distinction as meaningful and that she began to experience a large degree of control over her fantasy life.

C.J.: At this point, your experience with the Angel, the Dream, this was a sleeping thing?

Hilda: I must have been asleep, though I can remember when almost asleep and almost having it happen, thinking "Oh that's beautiful--"

C.J.: Is it hard to tell the difference, looking back at this time?

Hilda: Excepting that when you are half asleep it doesn't continue because you awake into awareness of what's around you. When you are asleep you can make it go on, wish that it continue and continue and continue. Even wake up and go back to sleep and make it go on again.

C.J.: And you could do this?

Hilda: Oh yes.

Hilda went on hearing voices for several years, but far less frequently. The voice of God was the first to drop away, reappearing only at moments of great stress. At these

times he took on the characteristics of a stern teacher, encouraging her to analyze her situation and rise above it--a vague replication of the student/mentor relationship with her brother James.

> She would hear His Voice and His stern reminder that there was some reason for all of this, and His command that she "think it out."
>
> "You must be objective, Hilda." God would demand. "Put yourself outside of your own hatred. Patience is a virtue, only up to a certain point. If you do not become more clever, you shall be out-witted by the ignorant."

Sometime in her second year on the ward, Richard began a series of annual visits to Hilda. They exchanged little intimacy--"He did not question her stay at the hospital, nor did she vouchsafe any information to alter his opinion of her good care there"--but she felt that the fact of the visits altered her situation on the ward in two ways. Mag and Mrs. Destin "pressed her to the yoke of work even more strenuously" but, at the same time, began to allow her to accompany the other patients on brief walks around the grounds. Hilda saw the latter privilege as part of a studied campaign to keep her in control.

> Mag had it well in mind how to break Hilda . . . she would slowly relieve her bound spirit, letting out one bit of bondage at a time, always certain that she had stern grip at the leash, that at any moment it might be drawn tighter, firmer, should the need be.
>
> --Thus she was held here, year in year out with little or no hope. Richard's visits becoming a traditional event, and her once-yearly interviews with the Ward Doctor still monosyllabic, miserable representations of her real self.

> She believed that no one would ever again know her. That her individuality would forever be closeted, hidden from all perception, by the stern imprisonment of Mag and Mrs. Destin.

A breakthrough occurred in Hilda's sixth year on the ward. Mrs. Destin gave her a separate bedroom--reasoning, as Hilda saw it, that "if we allow her to rest quietly at night, we'll get more work out of her." Instead of using this seclusion as an opportunity to become reengrossed in her Voices, she "decided to actually pray for her sanity and release."

> She was permitted privacy from six in the evening until six in the morning. Here, within the stillness of the four small walls . . . she determined to commune faithfully and regularly with her Heavenly Father.
>
> She determined to never again desire anything other than complete soundness of mind, to never again utter against any of the petty allotments given or withheld from her, but instead to concentrate steadily on one idea only: her complete recovery.
>
> Evening after evening, stretched small and silent on her neat bed, she prayed to her Heavenly Father. The voices of her Insanity clamored for attention, but she answered them not.
>
> She believed that at last she had found the answer to her problem. She believed that a miracle was possible. And she held real faith in her Heavenly Father, with the knowledge that should He decide that she be freed from imprisonment, that so it would be.

Hilda was able to make this transition because she had established a firm, albeit painful, connection in the interpersonal world. Her inner self, although still closeted and bound, was now viably good--it had been tempered and purified in the crucible of her relationship with a relentlessly persecutory other. Through her constant effort and

punishment, Hilda had reestablished a tenable balance of credits in her primary loyalty bonds. She was no longer dependent on the delusional affirmation of her voices, and could steel herself against the seductive gratifications of a fantasy life. Because she had prevailed, internally, in her long struggle with the maternal authority figures on her ward--and had not destroyed them in the process--she was able to direct unambivalent attention to seeking recognition from a higher father--no longer the entirely personal figure of her Voice of Mind, but a representation of ultimate loyalty which reconnected her with the broader fabric of social life.

Late in the year, she was informed by her unit doctor that, barring a relapse, she could be released in six months.

> Hilda's heart gave silent groan and cry, her nerves shrieked and tore in hungry joy. She believed that she shuddered badly, but bore on her clasped fists in her lap and replied with steadfast calm . . .
>
> Hilda, breathless, happy, with nonsensical poor judgment, rushed beaming toward Mag, her jailer and defender.
>
> "He said no such thing!" roared Mag, rising like a threatening wave of angry sea, sweeping upon Hilda, pinning her body to the wall, twisting her fingers, the snap of bone in the forefinger of the left hand could be heard.

At the end of the six months, Hilda approached the doctor on his rounds and reminded him of the promise:

> Now at this point occurred one of the great disappointments of her entire commitment. The Doctor stared at her unremittingly. He gave her no answer. He explained nothing to Mrs. Destin. Where now was the good of the past six months' trial?

Mrs. Destin gave the doctor a distorted report on Hilda and, after he left, Mag took her into a back room and beat her severely for "lying."

Hilda's miracle did finally occur. A change in the upper level administration brought her to the attention of a new "Boss Doctor."

> When the Boss Doctor sat opposite her in the office, and spoke to her quietly, it seemed as though the miracle was after all the reasonable result of her years of misery and loneliness.
>
> "Hilda," said he, "You were always hidden on this Ward. I never came face to face with you before. Obviously you are quite well . . . But you are on your own. Now what are your plans?"
>
> "Merely, to work for a living," said she, "and I'd like to earn enough to help my children."
>
> "We'll talk it over and look into it at once," he answered.
>
> Now the repercussion to all of this was a sudden physical collapse.
>
> Hilda awoke the following morning with a weakness of limb and faintness of breath, a heated brow and shaking ague, which exhausted her totally. She was found in a swoon of sorts, thrown across her bed. Mag and Mrs. Destin tended her, bathed her forehead and called in the Doctor.
>
> --They thought of their days in the future without her there to cajole and to temper, to depend on her unceasing effort.
>
> "We honestly don't know how we'll manage without you, Hilda, you've been such a worker."
>
> It was, no doubt, this remark that planted the seed.

Weeks later, after Hilda had fully recovered, the Boss Doctor made another inspection of the ward. Hilda ap-

proached him with the idea of hiring her as an attendant under Mrs. Destin's supervision. He asked Mrs. Destin's opinion:

> "Heaven be praised" stated Mrs. Destin, and she turned as red as a beet. "It's got to be said. She does as much work as several of them put together. I'd love to have her here as my own. We hardly know how we'll manage without her here."
>
> Thus was the miracle accomplished.

C H A P T E R VII

SUMMING UP

Hilda's Life

The second half.

Hilda remained at Boxborough State Hospital, living in a nurses' dormitory on the grounds and working the evening shift for the next 25 years. She earned a measure of distinction in her hospital work, progressing to the position of L.P.N. and eventually taking charge of a ward of 90 women during her shift. The hospital once nominated her for the statewide award of "attendant of the year"--she came in a close second.

The decision to remain at the hospital, and to return to her ward as an employee, greatly eased Hilda's reentry into normal life, but it was still a difficult transition. For one thing, society had changed. Hilda had essentially missed the depression and the coming of the New Deal, and emerged into a country in the midst of World War II. She was struck by the sight of "all the boys [in uniform] going down the street, just like we used to see sheep on the streets in Hudson, going to the slaughter house." The larger world seemed to have gone askew while she was restoring her own.

Hilda's family had also changed markedly. Jacob had died during the latter period of her stay on Mrs. Destin's ward--news which she had received without strong reaction at the time. Her siblings had dispersed to get on with their own lives. Hilda's children, whom she had seen but once in her years on the back ward--and then only to exchange a few words--were fast becoming adults. Although Hilda had a strong sense of maternal obligation to all three, she hardly knew them as people. Carroll and Harry had been raised by Richard and his parents, Ruth by Susan and Phillip--they seemed like children of other families.

Hilda felt protected from the flux of life by the walls of the mental hospital--virtually a self-contained environment in those days. Institutional life relieved her from grappling with many of the changes in life-style, fashion, and the "jargon of the day" which she witnessed in her brief excursions beyond the walls. She was particularly thankful not to have to choose her own clothing--a choice always invested with surplus meanings from the time that Emily assigned her a "uniform" through the days of unravelling and reweaving her "self" into the fabric of her hospital gown.

She maximized the insular quality of her life in the early years of "getting out." She maintained a policy, initiated in her latter days as a patient, of restricting herself from participation in social activities, creating what

she calls an "atmosphere of safekeeping" around herself.

Hilda: I was staying [on the ward] to save energy. I wanted my mental and emotional energy for getting out. I didn't want to be involved in all this expression of movies and dances and fun life--you have to make choices about what your energy is going to go to . . . Well I never was sociable even after getting out. I worked evenings so there was no question of a social life.

From her Journal: She was 64 now . . . down to a mere $5 a week for extras, coffee and such, but keeping the thing going on a nice basis, she could still help out her daughter Ruth and her sons, paying for their childrens' birthday gifts, a very little . . . Her board and insurance and dues removed automatically from the check. Practically nothing spent, plenty earned. Practically nothing used, a sort of atmosphere of safekeeping.

Hilda's "meager arrangement" of life as a hospital worker was not devoid of satisfactions. She describes several in her Journal:

> The mornings in her room, the needs, the meals in the eating place, provided. The attempt to parcel out her life here with the luxury it provides: time to elapse, rest to ride on, thinking like waves of sleep. Any waking with the evaluations and visions which only moments of secure self and adjustment can provide.

In one sense, Hilda never fully recontinued the life which she had left through insanity. She came to see her long sojourn in the "Land of the Dead" as a sharp punctuation in her development. It is as if, in the struggle to reconstitute her world, she had bracketed all the most private and "real" aspects of herself, allowing only her new public self to appear in her ongoing participation in social life.

> I often think that my life really stopped when I went insane . . . that I was living up to that point--and the fact that I was dreaming of dying, that the world had gone, been taken away, people reborn--that, in a way, actually happened in my mind . . . I never actually realized people again, my associations never again happened . . .
>
> You know when you are born into a situation, and you grow up, go to high school, go to college, and you're there, you feel that you're a part of everyone else . . . But in [my life at the hospital] that didn't happen at all. In this place, I was there, I had a job, I was paid, I performed, I walked, I sat down, I ate, I read, I took my bath every day--kept a nice look on my face, kept a solid expression that I never waivered from--it's a form of the living dead, really. I still thought of them at times as the living dead.
>
> Ruth thought she could bring me out of it [at retirement], that she would bring me up here, where I could kick up my heels, meet a few old gentlemen that I'd fall for, all of that jazz. And it never will again happen, that's all.

Hilda, in other words, adopted a stable schizoid position in her return to normal life. A number of the passages in her Journal at Sixty are vivid descriptions of the schizoid problem: the experience of a well-defined, conforming, outer self divorced from an inchoate and vulnerable, but far more real inner self.

> Impressions were received: lessons learned, how to talk, and to conform, how to accept and follow all rules of deportment off and on the job.
>
> --But she had no reality in her surroundings, no placement in a group . . . A social security number and an L.P.N. Her cap, shoes, and uniform signified her only identity.
>
> --It is as if you meet yourself . . . only in book, on the screen, listening to your radio. No alter-ego.

> --She was eternally alone . . . Others were ever exchanging in love or companionship, each experience being coupled rather than singly seen. However, she had become so used to viewing life alone . . . that their fantastic dance of two or more struck her as overdone, not actually realized, premeditated.

Hilda: It seemed to be almost painful to watch it . . . I suppose I had a sort of longing for love. I would see these people put out their feelers for each other . . . And I would think, "Oh, that's terribly frightening," and it would hurt me. I would think, "They're attempting to get out of where they are into some other spot."

> --I felt very safe in there because nothing could determine my life differently than the way it was being determined by the fact that I was doing these things.

As the years progressed, Hilda grew increasingly dissatisfied with her "meager arrangement": "The whole thing had levelled into a desert of loneliness, the pace she had prayed for." She turned again to writing as a way to express her real self. In contrast to the ecstatic and free flowing creative process in her early works, this reentry into writing was very difficult for Hilda. For one thing, she had to learn "to think" again, to articulate her private feelings, to define herself in an, at least potentially, public forum. She approached this task with trepidation. The youthful wish for recognition had left her, and the thought of others reading--and misreading--her work was now unsettling. Hilda, in fact, kept her current efforts, and her former identity as a writer, secret from most of her co-workers for fear that they would think she was "trying to be Somebody"--"that's just that odd

little old one, that licensed practical trying to think again."

> It had not been a pleasure to learn to think again. Previous to her insanity, her little books had seemed to write themselves. Whether you could call this thinking is a [moot] point. During her insanity . . . vacuity plus voice had filled in where thought process had been . . .
>
> Later, when cleared of this, she stood on a knoll of nervous reasonableness, and was accepted as an employee.
>
> Now she should learn to think again . . . Finally she felt she could realize that she was here, that an "I" existed, with all else outside of it.
>
> --It must be kept a very dark secret held in the shadows of everyday living . . . Keep it from all of them that you are thinking and creating, wanting your own memoirs to bespeak your ego.

Hilda turned to explicit autobiography in these later writings, first recounting her experience of psychosis, and then producing, over a five-year period, her Journal at Sixty, a melange of current thoughts, reconstructed scenes from the past, correspondence, and quotes from books which moved her.

Although her Journal covers the most salient features of her experience at the time--the problem of an outer life split-off from her inner self, and her concomittant feelings of isolation--simply quoting from it gives an overly sharp picture. The divorce between the work life and her emotional life was by no means absolute.

Hilda took pride in the quality of her work, and was constantly "competing with herself" to do better--an attitude which caused friction with her co-workers. She also felt a

sense of commitment to her former community of patients, quietly advocating a number of improvements in their living conditions, such as compensation for work, occupational therapy, and appropriate diet, which came to pass in her years at the hospital. She could be moved by her patients' turmoil and was very disturbed by the first death on her ward. Because she feared that such an emotional reaction would interfere with her functioning, she worked to establish an "objective attitude" toward her charges. She felt most at home in caring for the geriatric patients, "who were so old they were like babies."

Although Hilda felt estranged from the rest of the staff for many years--"the sane seemed unforgivably unimaginative"--and was happiest when working alone, she was by no means totally disengaged. She had one close friend, a woman named Ellen, who acted as a confidante in her later years. Despite the fact that Hilda and Ellen held opposite views on most matters--"we altercated on everything we did"--they both respected each other. Ellen often encouraged Hilda not to take herself so seriously--advice which Hilda recognized as appropriate but found impossible to follow.

Outside of her relationship with Ellen, Hilda experienced the exchange of personal information with coworkers as fraught with difficulty. She had a very hard time communicating the significance which she attached to past ex-

perience--"as though I were speaking in a foreign tongue."

> [Another nurse] encouraged me to go into the whole story of Phillip and Susan and how it had knocked me out, the consequences of living an unconventional life.
>
> And then she said, "But why do you <u>insist</u> that you were wicked?
>
> I said, "I wasn't really insisting, it was the family that was insisting it . . . Therefore I've taken that viewpoint myself. And I'm afraid of telling people."
>
> "Well, for God's sake," she said, "grow up!" [Hilda laughs]--here I was 60.

Hilda's other main area of difficulty was with women in authority; she felt highly vulnerable to being undermined by them. Both spheres of difficulty coincided in the person of a nurse, Rhoda, who became Hilda's supervisor in the last few years of her employment. Rhoda took over some of the administrative responsibilities which Hilda had enjoyed handling and encouraged her to spend more time becoming personally involved with the patients. Worse still, Hilda felt pressured by Rhoda to share intimacies. With the addition of this pull for intimacy, their relationship reactivated the experience of lethal antagonism which had been dormant for Hilda through her long years of safekeeping. She brings forth imagery from her distant past to describe the distress which she felt in relation to Rhoda: "I had a terrible naked feeling with her"; "Rhoda knew how to touch off certain areas in my personality"; "Suddenly she would be after me like a bogie in the night."

In her last year at the hospital a new worker was

added to their shift and Hilda felt herself suddenly thrust into the dangerous position in a triangle. Life on the ward became unbearable for her and she retired from the staff.

Hilda: I always had respect for Ellen and she had respect for me, because no matter how we battled or disagreed, we wouldn't begin to flounder on each other . . .

But Rhoda would abuse me and mistreat me with her fondness--Do you see what I mean?

C.J.: Not exactly. Can you explain it a little more?

Hilda: I don't expect anybody to step outside of their own personality, to offer me their emotional selves, when there is no real reason for it.

C.J.: And you felt that's what Rhoda did?

Hilda: Yes, and also [the other nurse]. She was trying to excuse herself that way. And Rhoda too was trying to excuse her mistreatment of me. They didn't have respect for their own attitude toward me . . . And I would turn on them that way too, I'd say, "You know I had such terrible treatment [as a patient] here from attendants that nothing you can do can ever hurt me."

C.J.: And what is it they would do that would hurt you?

Hilda: Well they weren't giving me my due as a person, seeing me as I was, as a person. They were taking their status as something they could kick me around with, because of where they were . . . It was a kind of hell.

Hilda's most difficult readjustment was with her family. These were the years in which she crystalized her perception of the dual risks in relating to her family: the danger of being "written out" of their history, and the possibility of being reenmeshed in the "blood-web." Because she could move so quickly from feeling herself an intruder in the lives of her siblings to becoming "suffocated in the

atmosphere," Hilda was very circumspect in re-establishing contact, adopting a policy of limiting herself to brief visits with a well defined plan of departure. Within this structure, she was able to experience some pleasure in renewing old relationships.

It was painful for Hilda to reconnect with her children. She felt a deep sense of responsibility for them and longed to be involved in their lives. One of the main goals in her life of safekeeping was to provide each child with a sum equivalent to the cost of a college education--a major feat on her small salary. Hilda could experience the positive aspects of her bond in reviewing a cherished collection of photographs which she kept by her bed. Live interactions, however, were often difficult for her to manage. She could be deeply hurt in seeing her children's attachment to their surrogate mothers. With the boys, she feared that Richard had "changed the story,: putting her "outside the pale"--"When a person contrives to lie about you it can get pretty deep." With Ruth, who had grown to regard Susan as "mother," old feelings of jealousy and exclusion from the Phillip/Susan triangle were reactivated. Because all three children were progressing through adolescence--a stage which mystified and disturbed Hilda--even contact apart from their family settings was often unsettling for her.

Ruth's adolescence was especially stormy. She went through a period of conflict with Susan and Phillip, in which she pleaded with Hilda to take her in. Hilda felt torn. She

sympathized deeply with Ruth, but regarded any change in her own lifestyle as impossible. To accommodate Ruth's wish, Hilda would have been forced to leave the confines of the hospital before she felt ready, and to abandon the spartan program of accumulating savings which she was pursuing--"really my main effort in life at the time." Ruth eventually ran away from home and was lost to Hilda for a time.

Hilda was shaken by the prospect of retirement. She feared that, in losing the security of the hospital life, she might undergo a recrudescense of her psychotic symptoms:

> I was so panicked that I could sit for hours just staring. And I did begin to see things that weren't there . . . an invisible line holding the horizon together . . . trees just staying in one position, not a leaf stirring, the whole thing immobile.

Hilda also suffered several serious physical ailments at the end of her hospital career and underwent surgery twice--events which she kept from her family--"I felt so terribly alone."

Ruth, now back in Hilda's life, learned of her distress--in part through reading her Journal--and encouraged Hilda to leave the hospital and come live with her. Because, with a husband and children, Ruth had no intention of using Hilda's fund for college, she convinced Hilda to apply it toward joint purchases of a portion of Phillip and Susan's Altamont property. Ruth built a new home on the land and Hilda moved into a two-room studio adjacent to it.

The long journey through insanity and hospital life had come full cycle. With the return to Altamont, she embarked on her final life effort: recapturing the past.

> I am warned. This could be the last of summer . . . No one will disturb the ghosts I see here. Slim white dressed sighing girl and avid boy entwined in full length embrace . . . Don't go. Stay here. The warning may be quieted.

Hilda now.

Altamont has changed greatly since the days when Hilda first joined Susan and Phillip. The area is still favored by artists and writers, with a few surviving from Hilda's early days, but the current generation has made it the rural outpost for a counterculture which strikes Hilda as bizarre and perhaps dangerous. The landscape has also changed markedly. The several large corporations headquartered in the area have stimulated a sprawl of acre-lot development, leaving only islands of forest in what was once open farm land. Hilda lives on one of these islands.

Her studio is tiny, but well suited to Hilda's needs. Her bathroom, bedroom, and kitchen are compressed into the ground floor. A booklined stair well connects to her main living space, a sparsely furnished room decorated with a few carefully chosen paintings and pieces of memorabilia. The brook in which Hilda once attempted to baptize Ruth runs behind the studio and a bed of intermixed flowers and vegetables borders the front. Hilda's quaint home is somewhat incongruous

next to Ruth's contemporary house and the swimming pool, camping trailer, and assortment of cars and motorcycles which surround it--an island within an island.

Hilda feels finally at home in the setting that she has constructed:

> This is here, this is mine, I move in it and I love it.
>
> When I first come back to it from being in town, I can think, "Oh my god, what a crummy place." Then I change all the furniture around, change the color, try to take a few pieces of jim-crack stuff out.
>
> But then I get used to it. I get up in the morning and I'm happy it's here. I come in from outdoors and I'm so embracing of it--very embracing of my life here.
>
> --I need a safe place to be. I feel that I have a right here, a life right. I paid out enough money for it and I also gave enough of real devotion to the situation--one way or the other, either belligerently or friendly [she laughs].

Most of Hilda's current activities are solitary. Long walks--such as the one which she "stole" from Susan, attempting to recapture her thoughts about Phillip--were a regular part of her day when I first met Hilda but, since then, have been curtailed by her deteriorating health. In recent years, she has focused her efforts at revitalizing the past in writing again, embarking on two projects: a history of her early family and an imaginative reconstruction of Ruth's early life. She has also begun to paint again, producing quite a number of water color still lifes in the past three years.

Hilda has a "conscientious feeling about staying in touch with the world"; her radio, and especially television, give her a sense of contact. She has a set of soap operas which she follows, and watches the full two hours of news each evening. She has occasional strong feelings in her one way relationship with television personalities, e.g., "I can't stomach Barbara Walters, the way she is always beleaguering us with her eyes."

Hilda's sense of herself as a mother has gradually solidified over the years. Her success in putting aside an endowment for each child was a major contributing factor: "that's the sad story of my motherhood--or the good story, I do give myself all kinds of credit for saving that much." although she often feels overwhelmed by the complexity of her children's lives--"I came into this nest of grown up kids and their problems"--she has developed a pervasive sense of responsibility for them--"I take everything that happens to anyone of them personally"--coupled with a sometimes fierce loyalty--"I remind myself of [the dragon] Grendel, ready to kill for her offspring." At the same time, she has a growing recognition of her children's independence: "Perhaps I expect too much [of myself]. After all, everyone is himself. Just being a mother in the situation isn't enough to totally control it's outcome."

While embracing her life, Hilda is by no means completely at peace. Her feelings of integration in the inter-

personal world remain fragile--the life issue on which she has the least sense of closure:

Hilda: I love my radio--the good music. I love my soap operas. Now and then I find a book I like.

But that's about the only relatedness I have, you see? And yet I get very lonely.

I do a great deal of long distance telephoning.

C.J.: Is it easier for you to talk on the phone?

Hilda: Oh yes . . . I'll call Carroll and have a few things on my mind and say them as fast as lickety-cut. He'll give me a few words--a wonderful thing, voice--I don't have to be with people actually--Your voice, for instance, boy that warms my soul . . .

If, when I died, I could telephone back, I'd be all right [laughs]. It's enough. I suppose other people feel they need more than that . . .

I think all of it is actually the fact that I haven't got a person I can say, "I coupled my life with this person."

"Are you really obtaining or losing?", this is an argument I go through. If you were a great enough soul and a creative enough individual, you could accomplish more in total abstinence from sex or relationship. Just according yourself the thought, finding the reading you think is right, finding in people the points that you particularly want to find . . . making out of that the <u>real</u> life that you think you should have lived.

It's a very time consuming thing, finding it. So much time is spent--"Come out in the sun and watch me diving," [my young friend] Madeline says. Well I can take just so much of that, and then I have to go back in and listen to my music and read a line or two.

You see I don't get the enjoyment out of life other people do.

The strongest and most problematic attachment in Hilda's current life is with Ruth. Hilda has from the start

been most readily in touch with her love for this child:

> I had a more emotional love for her than the two boys, in some ways . . . I sometimes thought I was inventing this love for her, every minute I was with her I delighted so in her presence. She has always been very close to me as a person.

When Hilda first returned to Altamont with Ruth, they moved quickly into the kind of "altercating" relationship which she had had with her co-worker and friend Ellen. Hilda found herself in conflict with Ruth over many of the details of daily life. She kept trying, for example, to apply work habits which she had developed as an attendant to Ruth's house--efforts which brought a very negative reaction from her daughter: "If you can't keep your cottin-pickin' scrub water off my floors . . ." Although conflicts over the mundane details of housekeeping have been long since resolved, many of Hilda's most distressing emotions still occur in relation to Ruth.

Hilda: I try to follow a mental hygiene remark given to me by a doctor back in the hospital: you should give yourself 20 minutes to worry in, and worry violently. And if you can't get it all done in that time, stop.

C.J.: Do you worry much these days?

Hilda: I have moments of being awfully angry. Then I trace it back to something that was said . . . suddenly something is said that feels as if it's a vital blow. That that person's remark affects me in that way.

Immediately I can be very angry--Ruth says, "My, you're feisty."

And I said, "Well Ruth, I don't think so. Ruth, do you know me at all? Why do you deliberately say a thing like that?"

And she'll say, "You saw that in an entirely different way than I intended it . . ."

C.J.: Does it help to trace it back, to reinterpret the thing?

Hilda: Yes, it does.

> The way I work it out is this: "I took that remark to mean I'm not contributing enough"--very often it comes down to this, not contributing enough effort, expenses, so forth--I think, "Well, I could put it down on paper."
>
> And I say, "But I'm so good to you, Ruth, I'm so good to you."
>
> Ruth says, "But I'm glad you are" [Hilda laughs].
>
> --But I think it's true she feels these things. I'll say to her, "You tell me I'm misreading you, but I don't think I really am. Someday I'll write a book about you. I don't know how many people you are."
>
> At times, I think she's at least ten different people really, in her loyalties, her choices, her tastes, her vocal behavior--I even hear her differently.

In addition to the eruptions of anger, feelings of not contributing enough, and perception of multiple "people" in Ruth, there are several other aspects of Hilda's experience of their relationship which replicate--with distressing precision--qualities from her early relationship with Emily. Hilda feels, for example, that Ruth can disconfirm her own perceptions in exactly the same way that Emily used to "wipe the slate clean."

> Many times I'll give my insights to Ruth and she will disagree so totally that it wipes the slate clean. Then I have to wait a long time before I get it back again. I mean she can take away my own concepts, very often.

The most deeply distressing aspect of Hilda's current situation is her uncertain place in Ruth's life. She fears, in

particular, that her daughter's attachment to her husband, Bud, will cut Hilda off--the final problematic triangle in her life. When Hilda meets with rebuff in her attempts at becoming more involved in their lives, she feels herself isolated, discredited and, ultimately, vulnerable to disqualification as a person--the risk of dissolving into an abhorent nothingness.

Hilda: I think I am excluded from Ruth's marriage to Bud, totally.

She once said to me, "Now I would like to know how it stands. Who am I supposed to be loyal to, my mother or my husband?"

--I had an idea that I was going to be part of the family, but Ruth said, "You know, you like your privacy and we want ours."

She called it an invasion of privacy if you walked into their house, you see. That's absolutely not to be forgiven, I don't do it . . .

I tried to explain it to Ruth and she said, "All of my life I have tried to have a private life and was never able to . . . but Bud and I are going to have our private life"--This is the way she talks a great deal, whatever it means, "a private life."

And Bud said, "Yes, I am going to Alaska and I am tired of being responsible for you . . ."

C.J.: Do you get angry at a time like that?

Hilda: It's like a shot. It's like being stabbed in the heart, a terrible, terrible feeling . . . I get so furious and at the same time frightened . . . I took it as being a traitor to the situation. They were taking me on as part of their life, and glad to do it, and I always returned as much as I could.

--C.J.: When you were depressed and having thoughts of suicide [last winter] what brought it on?

Hilda: Well it was just the kind of dissolving feeling of not having a feeling of any kind of relationship that was that important.

I'd counted on a relationship with Ruth and, after all, I had no right to ask for that, because she was married to Bud and so dead in earnest about it. And I thought, "well maybe you are just a third wheel."

Hilda still feels that her symptoms of emotional disturbance are close at hand. In addition to suffering occasional period of depression, she often hears a ringing in her ears.

Hilda: Time is too short to get everything thought out and written out that I would like to--I won't . . .

I hope I don't sound too awfully bitter about anything. I'm quite as satisfied as the average person, probably. I think really the way it is I'm in a quandry much of the time.

C.J.: Over what?

Hilda: Over my life and the way that things turned out--I won't say that I would have done any different, under any circumstances, in any of the choices I made.

--You accumulate, you don't lose any of it really. It's all part of me.

--The one point that stands out when I go through all of this is that I didn't get my friendships, and my relationships, and my social expression materialized.

--Quite often [my feelings of entrapment] are a matter of some kind of loneliness, a fearful situation that has gotten into a very bad bind. And I have been very much alone in order for this to happen. If I had a lot of friendship, people to say "tell us about it," maybe it would all be talked away from me. Maybe I wouldn't even have gotten into this form of relationship with the way my life seems.

--But don't you think it's surprising the way the world turns out, the way life turns out--you can be a person in the world and you can be so totally alone.

C.J.: Does the fear of "flowing together" keep you from getting closer to people?

Hilda: I think it always has . . . Whenever I meet someone I like a lot . . . For instance, [my friend] Madeline asks me hundreds of questions about my life but I would never think of asking her about herself and her affairs.

C.J.: What stops you?

Hilda: I just think we deserve that. We're put in this world, and we have that right to be alone.

--I was deprived in my own thinking--depriving myself of all communication, wanting to have something occur and yet it didn't.

C.J.: And you felt guilty about it?

Hilda: Oh I always feel guilty when I'm not really a full expression of myself. I feel that I'm short-shrifting others as well as myself--Don't you think it is a selfish way of being?

C.J.: I'm not sure. It seems odd that you felt guilty when really you're the one who suffers.

Hilda: Well I always do. In fact, it's a way of making myself suffer, kind of a masochistic tendency: suffering because I can't communicate and not communicating because I'm suffering.

--You're a certain person and you're caught in your own trap, your own personality. Whether you're ever going to escape it and . . . see yourself as you would see someone else--someone else could see it so plainly, just like a play--and you think of yourself [as if] in a dramatic situation, saying: "You put yourself there. You arranged it this way. You manipulated that situation . . ."

But there must be some power that really does get you in its control, really has you there, and you cannot escape it . . . Perhaps if I went out and searched for the right friendship I could have the strength . . . I don't know.

Our Relationship

C.J.: Do you feel there is anything important I haven't covered, anything missing that I'd need, to go out and describe you as a full person?

Hilda: What can I say . . . One could talk interminably, keep coming up with another memory, "Oh look!"

To describe a person who thinks she's that important to talk to Cartney this long . . . I hang my head.

C.J.: You belittle yourself.

Hilda: Perhaps I'm partially oriental: miserable me honorable you . . .

Actually I think I've held up pretty well. The way I've done it is to clear the decks each week, not to read, or think, or take seriously anything else so that I won't be prejudiced--when we do this together this is it. In some ways almost as creative an effort as writing, at least the way I write.

C.J.: Perhaps that's why you've always answered my questions before they're asked?

Hilda: I'm sure its made the work better . . .

Meanwhile one forcive thing is that the family is not in the least bit interested.

Ruth is a little bit. She says, "You seem so much better since Cartney has been coming . . . Don't you think unburdening yourself has done a great deal of good? Your painting is so much better than it has been for years--or ever."

C.J.: What do you think?

Hilda: I think it has improved.

And she said, "I think it's done a great deal for you."

I said, "Who knows?"

I never was psychoanalyzed, perhaps its a form of it . . . And not really being directed--you were very good that way. You didn't direct me along this line or that line. I was very grateful.

There are several reasons why our work has been a therapeutic event in Hilda's life. For one thing, my arrival onto the scene provided her with an impetus, in what may be the

last years of her life, to integrate her past and present. As Hilda puts it: "I can really see it again and create it again and make it better, I mean make it happen again in a clarified way." Our collaborative reconstruction of her history was also a way for Hilda to relate herself to the future, to record and finalize her story for posterity.

But perhaps the main factor in rendering our work therapeutic for Hilda was the collaborative relationship itself. The most significant difference between our interviews and Hilda's autobiographical writing is that I acted as a far more immediate and supportive audience than her internalized image of her reader could ever be. With me, she was able to explore aspects of herself which she had always considered too private even to attempt to communicate. Because I worked constantly to give her the feeling--if not always the fact--of being understood, I indirectly encouraged her to continue pushing into areas of experience which she had kept dissociated or otherwise hidden. At its best moments, our relationship provided her with a novel experience of recognition--being "seen" without having her "slate wiped clean." This new level of recognition, in turn, expanded the circumference of her self-acceptance, enabling her to assimilate a wider range of experience as part of herself.

As can be seen in the preceding excerpt, Hilda idealized me. By investing me with attributes which she prizes--e.g., intelligence, education, importance in the

world--Hilda enhanced the value of the recognition which I was offering. She gave me surplus credit which could, in turn, flow back onto her. This income of reflected merit subtly altered Hilda's relationship to many, perhaps all, of the figures in her history. It gave her a sense of basic justification which enabled her to reexamine past situations in a new light. As the specter of diffuse culpability lifted, Hilda began to take a more realistic look at her own hand in shaping the course of her relationships.

Although at the end of our first summer of interviews Hilda still spoke from the position of her transferential relationship to me, she was able to make a joke of it--"perhaps I'm partially oriental: miserable me, honorable you." In doing so, she was inviting me to step aside from our ongoing interaction and look back at the configuration of self and other which she had constructed. The implicit premise of the joke--what makes it funny--is that, despite the appearance of great difference, we are actually very similar. This joke is a small example of a major shift in Hilda's internal structuring of our relationship which was at the core of her beneficial change: the experience of being one and the same within the overall context of being one and different. Put in alternate terms, the most therapeutic aspect of our collaboration was that it afforded Hilda an opportunity to experience a sense of identification with me--and especially with the attributes of merit which she projected onto me--within a relationship

focused primarily on her own self-delineation. I believe it is this opportunity which Hilda was really thanking me for in the above quote. In any case, it is the gift which she chose to pass on:

> I say to [my friend] Nora, "tell me a little bit about your childhood."
>
> And she says, "Hilda I can't remember a thing about it."
>
> "Ridiculous," I say, "Of course you can."
>
> Well since I have done this with her she has begun to remember--it's very interesting . . . She is awfully crippled . . . very, very ill. But she is an interesting, smart woman.

There was a reciprocal exchange in our relationship. Hilda entrusted me with material--her recollections--which she has long considered vital, and a task--defining herself as a person--which has always caused her great anxiety. In the opening pages of her Journal at Sixty she writes:

> When we state the truth, we relieve ourselves of a hidden treasure. Once aired, it takes on frightening proportions; another now handles our gift.

The fact that I was an immediate audience and active participant in Hilda's current reconstruction of her life accentuated her experience of giving up something vital. After the last of our first series of interviews, Hilda came down with a severe case of shingles. She later interpreted the affliction as a form of mourning:

> Just like after you and I talked for that summer and I went into the shingles, it was an expression, a physical expression--you had really torn out of me a great deal that was emotionally disturbing for me,

without my realizing it. As Ruth said, "That's a way of weeping."

In the first chapter I discuss, in the abstract, the problems of identification and counter-transference inherent in this work. I mention that the investigator's role as a participant observer in the subject's life, and the bond which consequently develops, have positive as well as negative implications. Because, in viewing the final product, it is the latter which most impress me, I would like to focus briefly on the inhibiting aspect of my feelings of identification with Hilda.

As I now see it, the chief problem in this work stems from my unconscious acceptance of Hilda's view of the fragility of the material which she handed over to me, and of the potential for causing grave damage in handling it. This unconscious adoption of Hilda's viewpoint tended to make the task of analysis take on overwhelming proportions. Although I was well aware of the need to approach the material through an adequate theoretical framework--the lesson of my first attempt at writing her history--I elevated the standards of adequacy beyond any practical limit. In an effort to do justice to Hilda's material, I reversed the problem in my earlier work and pursued an over-inclusive theoretical framework, attempting to integrate concepts from a number of systems which in themselves are forbiddingly complex. My pursuit of this quixotic goal repeatedly pulled me away from the actual task at hand, the

theoretical reworking of Hilda's material--and my theoretical chapter in its first draft was a full 90-page digression from Hilda's life.

My inhibition against aggressive handling of Hilda's material applied on the level of the narrative as well. I had an awfully hard time abstracting the flow of events in her life, separating essential from non-essential details.

In preparing my manuscript, I did a great deal of cutting and pasting of passages from xeroxes of Hilda's writing and transcripts of our interviews. This activity now stands out for me as concretizing my vague, and mostly unconscious, feeling that in imposing definition on Hilda's life I was being somehow destructive. This problem with definition was compounded by the fact that Hilda and I share some similarities in cognitive style, most notably a tendency toward obsessional thought. Hilda presents at least two sides to her feelings on practically every major issue in her life, providing me with ample opportunity to bog down in weighing the alternatives. As I would attempt to isolate quotes which express her real feelings on an issue, a mound of interview transcripts, cut up excerpts, and well-thumbed index cards would spread across my desk each day. The job of choosing representative quotes fast became oppressive. Through my identification with her, I appropriated Hilda's own problems with self-definition. I believe that I may have dealt with this burden in spots by passing in on to the reader, that is, by presenting an over-

abundance of quotes. In the name of preserving the context of Hilda's views on her life, I may have presented too much of the confusion as well.

In sum, the extent of my personal involvement in Hilda's life magnified the difficulties in what was, to start with, a problematic undertaking. It also makes it very hard for me to evaluate the final product.. The one requirement which I know I have met is what Freeman and Krantz call the need, in a psychological life history, for an "expansion of complexity." In the process, I have produced a work that is cumbersomely long. My fear is that, in doing so, I may have failed to communicate both the clear picture which I have of Hilda as a person and the conceptual understanding of her life, which I have developed with an equally strong subjective sense of clarity. As a last effort at avoiding the latter possibility, I will give a thumb-nail sketch of my theoretical framework and apply it to the four questions on Hilda's life which I introduced in the first chapter.

The Theory in a Nutshell

The theoretical framework which I use to interpret Hilda's development employs a broad range of concepts drawn from cognitive, psycho-dynamic, and family systems theory. It is built, however, upon two basic assumptions about human motivation: (1) that there is an innate need for interpersonal

attachment and (2) that the individual must organize the data of his experience in service of mastery over the environment.

The need for attachment is primary. Without a secure sense of grounding in the interpersonal world, an infant becomes vulnerable to overwhelming anxiety. Under conditions of prolonged separation, developmental progress may cease or even be reversed. When a secure attachment is in force, the infant begins immediately to explore his environment. Exploration leads to schematization, i.e., the progressive structuring of the individual's modes of relating to the environment. Schematization advances through two basic processes: assimilation, whereby new experience is incorporated within an existing structure; and accommodation, in which an existing structure is altered in order to integrate an expanded range of experience.

The two spheres of basic motivation are antagonistic in that the need for a secure base of attachment competes with the pursuit of mastery over the environment. At the same time, however, they are deeply interdependent; progress in one sphere builds upon and facilitates progress in the other. As the child begins to "decenter" from objects in his environment, i.e., to conceive of them as having stable properties independent of his immediate relations with them, he becomes able to see people as durable entities. As he begins to acquire "objectified" concepts of space and time, his sense of attachment becomes, at once, increasingly stable and newly mobile. The ability to maintain internal representations of his

interpersonal bonds begins to supplant the need for physical proximity to his attachment figures. Stable representations of attachment progress, through the self-delineating negativism of early childhood, into internalized configurations of self-and-other.

Because the child's internal structure of self and other grounds him in the interpersonal world, it takes on the motivational force which Boszormenyi-Nagy calls an invisible loyalty, that is, the need for attachment becomes a need to adhere to the conditions and definitions of relatedness as communicated by the child's primary others. Success in meeting the requirements of a loyalty bond is accompanied by feelings of interpersonal worth or "merit." Loyalty bonds develop through constant transaction and each party maintains an internal record of his merit in the relationship.

Because the individual's ongoing "ledger of merit" reflects his continuity in the interpersonal world, and ultimately his sense of grounding in the world as a whole, it is essential that he maintain a certain minimal level of merit in relation to his primary attachment figures.

Healthy development leads to a state which Piaget terms "mobile equilibrium." The individual is able to locate himself in a familiar world, i.e., to assimilate the bulk of his experience of the environment within his pre-established schemata, while at the same time maintaining sufficient flexibility to accommodate, to reorganize a schema, when he

encounters novel or contradictory phenomena. This quality of balance between integration and differentiation is paralleled in his relations to the interpersonal world. A well adapted individual maintains a sufficiently broad construction of loyalties which enable him to encompass most of the people he encounters. He feels continuity with, or a sense of being "at home" among, a wide range of others. At the same time, he remains sufficiently flexible to recognize the unique needs and qualities of an other, and to adapt himself in order to accommodate them--to engage in what Boszormenyi-Nagy defines as dialogue.

The maladaptive development which can lead to a psychotic break of the sort Hilda suffered begins in anxious attachment. When, for any number of reasons, the mother is consistently unable to meet the child's need for attachment, the normal patterns of homeostatic regulation in their relationship become seriously distorted. Anger and fear of separation become abnormally strong for the child. If the mother's own feelings of worth are tenuous, she may seek to enforce a rigid complementarity in the relationship, defining her position as good mother in relation to bad child. At the level of the family system, this complementarity sets the stage for the induction of the child into the role of scapegoat. At the intra-psychic level, it greatly exacerbates the dissociations which are a normal part of the early stages of self-delineation. In order to avoid the catastrophic possibility of

alienating his primary attachment figure, the child begins to construct a "false self," split-off from all the dangerous longings, angry impulses, and gratifying fantasies which he comes to regard as his "true self." Because the child strives to keep his "true self" hidden from the world, he loses access to the corrective influence of ongoing interaction. Divorced from the process of accommodation, his "true self" remains an inchoate and dissociated system of infantile modes of relating to the world.

The final precondition for a schizophrenic break falls in place when the child, through identification with the mother, internalizes her needs as his own. The complementarity between mother and child becomes binding. The child grows to experience any serious attempt at moving away from his position in the relationship as deeply disloyal, a vital blow to both self and other. The development of a binding loyalty bars the child from seeking an alternative base of attachment, such as the father. Because maturation itself can be experienced as threatening the complementary bond between mother and child, the child's binding loyalty can take on the force of a "counterautonomous superego," militating against any of the accommodations which enhance differentiation and independent mastery.

A person who learns to relate to the world through a "false self" loses the opportunity to develop the backlog of merit which normally gives one a sense of durable continuity

with his constituent others. Any internal or external event which the person sees as severely discrediting can precipitate a sudden loss of his sense of grounding in the interpersonal world.

In Hilda's case the precipitating situation was complex, involving a series of events which she experienced as deeply discrediting, but it centered on her pregnancy and the birth of her child. Hilda saw herself as suddenly exposed in acting out her wish to supplant her rival in her current triangle and, on a deeper level, attempting to usurp the position of good mother in her rigidly complementary relationship with Emily. She felt that--just as she had always feared--exposure of her true self had destroyed a vital bond: "I murdered. I am murdered."

With the loss of her most basic representations of self-and-other, Hilda's entire system of organizing her experience began to disintegrate--"the world ended." She was beset by overwhelming anxiety and assailed by a kaliedescopic array of unstructured stimuli. Hilda reverted to her dissociated, infantile modes of structuring her experience and began to relate on the basis of pure assimilation.

A schizophrenic break can have the adaptive aspect of opening the way for what Stierlin calls "reintegration at the base." Two processes stand out as central in the gradual reconstruction which enabled Hilda to return to adult functioning. In the early stages of her psychosis, Hilda began

to reconstitute her internal representations of a good other. This repopulation of her psychic reality enabled Hilda to contain her overwhelming anxiety, and prepared the ground for a reconstitution of self. Hilda's subsequent rituals of dying and rebirth can be seen as a process of accommodation--albeit wholly fantastic--which enabled her to reestablish the fundamental bonds with other which serve as a basis for self-delineation.

In her second hospitalization, Hilda directed her efforts at accommodation to the world of real others. She engaged in self-delineating opposition with the authority figures on her ward. Hilda reinstituted the split between a "false self," which related her at first to her voices and eventually to God--her composite image of the aspects of other most worthy of her loyalty and identification.

Although Hilda's recovery represented a return to the schizoid position, she had reconstructed a "false self" which was far more viable--at least within the well structured social world of the hospital--and redefined her private self to the point that she could, in her later years, begin to experiment with making it public through her writing.

This recap of my theoretical analysis answers the first question which I raised in the opening chapter: what happened in Hilda's psychotic break and how did she recover. My answer to the remaining three questions can be summarized briefly.

Looking first at the problem of repetition, Hilda's tendency to reenact the painful dyadic and triangular relationships in her life can be divided into three aspects: regressive, progressive, and static trends. Taking the latter first, the fact that we see and feel what we expect to see and feel has been abundantly documented in psychology. Because Hilda's attention was restricted, throughout her early development, to a relatively narrow range of interpersonal situations, she tended to structure her subsequent relationships along similarly circumscribed lines. The situations were Hilda's template of an emotionally significant situation--the insight in Freud's (1914, p. 370) statement that "transference is itself only a bit of repetition." The pain in these situations was entailed in their regressive aspect. Each repetition reimmersed Hilda in the lethal antagonisms of her early childhood. Alongside the fear which she reexperienced in these situations--the danger of being deeply exploited or eliminated--there was a wish to rebalance past accounts, e.g., to seek revenge, to atone for past transgression, or to usurp a long denied love object. It was the strength of motivations of this sort, together with their potentially destructive outcome, which led Freud to view repetition as the expression of a death instinct. None of Hilda's adult recapitulations involved the degree of existential dependence, nor the deeply binding loyalties, which held in her early relationships. She was therefore less handicapped by ambivalence and able to devote

herself more fully to mastering her re-enacted situations of difficulty--the progressive aspect of repetition. In her relationship to Mag Reardon, for example, Hilda was able to experience a sense of moral victory and achieve a level of differentiation which had never been available in her struggle with her mother.

The two remaining questions--why she has such difficulty experiencing herself as real and what makes her encounters with others such a "dangerous interplay"--are both problems of the schizoid position. In relating to others through a "false self," she cuts herself off from experiencing real interchange with another person. She focuses on conforming to or resisting the demands and expectations of the other. Interactions which cannot be fit into this structure may seem unreal. At the same time, many aspects of her "true self," such as her strong feelings of anger or affection, remain dissociated. She can experience these emotions as not belonging to herself--for instance, her strong jealousy is a "dragon" she encounters or her love for her daughter is "invented."

There are two main forms of danger for Hilda in social interaction: suffocation in the atmosphere and being seen. The latter is the fear of having her "true self" exposed, being subjected to feelings of intense shame and rejection. Her experience of suffocation is somewhat more complex. It is the extreme expression of a daily problem for

Hilda: the experience of being rigidly defined by her context. In Piaget's language, Hilda sees one of the basic laws of social life as "assimilate or be assimilated." Put in Boszormenyi-Nagy's terms, the rigid complementarity between her conforming "false self" and the coercive other cuts Hilda off from experiencing the give-and-take of dialogue, and leaves her vulnerable to experiencing herself as entrapped in being the object to the other's subjectivity. In light of this deep sense of vulnerability, Hilda's willingness to entrust me with defining her life was an act of great courage.

The Work

Assessing the theory.

The first and most important standard for assessing the theory which I have drawn together is how well it fits Hilda's life. The inability to make judgments of this sort was one of the problems which plagued the life history movement. Dollard (1935), in the period when he was a proponent of life history research and an avid freudian, constructed an elaborate set of criteria for evaluating the fit between theory and data. Freud's (1909) study of "little Hans"--a landmark case study but hardly a model of life history--was the only work to score highly on all criteria. Dollard, in other words, inadvertently made the point that, if strongly committed to a viewpoint, you can justify it in any number of quasi-objective ways.

I see Hilda's life very clearly through the framework which I have constructed. It answers the questions which I have framed to my satisfaction. Whether anyone else should find my interpretations satisfactory is very difficult for me to judge.

Part of the problem is my expansive use of theory. I was frequently aware that there was no logical end point to my process of assimilating concepts into the framework I was constructing--that I was building a ramshackle farm house and not a high rise structure. In flounting the law of parsimony, I put the satisfactory feeling of delivering a tightknit, exclusive interpretation out of reach. I was often aware of parallel or competing concepts which could explain an event, perhaps equally well. This problem with exclusivity is, of course, to some extent inherent in taking a whole life as the unit of analysis--a point which Allport (1965) demonstrates by analyzing a woman's history through three different psychological perspectives, each clarifying some aspects of her life and obscuring others.

The area of Hilda's life in which I am most comfortable with the fit between theory and data is her psychotic experience. I see my framework as making sense out of apparent nonsense. Following Epstein's lead, it gives a detailed rationale for the often vague concept of schizophrenia as an attempt at adaptive reorganization. In psychoanalytic terms, it shifts the focus from viewing schizophrenia as primarily a

problem of ego/reality relations to one of ego/superego relations. Although anticipated in Boisen's (1936) obscure work, I believe that this reemphasis may be an original contribution. At the same time that it focuses on the disturbance in internalized self/other relations, it accounts for the bizarre changes in cognition and perception. It also opens up a number of avenues for further research. It would be interesting, for example, to study the relationship of early attachment and the eventual course of the schizophrenic disorganization, e.g., to see whether it is possible to identify qualities of early relationships which differentiate schizophrenics, such as Hilda, who engage in a struggle for adaptive reorganization from those who remain regressed. The theory also suggests that Piaget's clinical experiments might be useful in analyzing the course of the disorganization and in evaluating the effects of treatment. Finally, the theory has direct implications for therapy. It suggests that there is wisdom in the traditional approach of providing the schizophrenic with a rigidly structured milieu, against which he can engage in self-delineating opposition, in combination with an unconditionally supportive therapy relationship, within which he can begin to reestablish his sense of unity with an other and continuity in the interpersonal world.

I see my theory as least adequate in meeting the ambitious goal of integrating intrapsychic and systems theory. In a sense I begged the question by starting with a theory of

family relations, Boszormenyi-Nagy's, which has a foot in both frames of reference. Although I took occasional forays into concepts such as scapegoating and the double-bind hypothesis, for the most part I remained well within the intrapsychic sphere of Nagy's complex model. I think, however, that I did place the problem of integration--assuming that it is even feasible--in the right ballpark. The dialectical perspective in general--i.e., the model of self and other, private experience and public behavior, past and present as mutually entailing aspects of a total situation--and the view of the self as an active organization of experience, in particular, provide the underpinings for an integrated theory of personality and social relations.

But the job is huge. My attempt at taking it on has been a chastening experience. For one thing, the field which I chose--a whole life--was too broad, and my focus on a first person perspective too narrow. Were I to reattempt a synthesis of intrapsychic and systems concepts I would restrict myself to one of each, examining, say, the relationship between differentiation and focus of control. I would also expand my focus to include observation of the subject in public interaction with others, for instance, using family interviews to reconstruct the history of differentiation between Hilda, Ruth, and Ruth's daughter.

On the other hand, the problem of achieving real integration between interpersonal and intrapsychic models of

functioning may be so great that evidence would only confuse matters at this point. It might be necessary, in other words, to devote a good deal more attention than I have given in this work to defining an alternate set of underlying assumptions for psychology--a task which would overwhelm any analysis of data.

The future of life history research.

I am tempted to attribute the problems which I have encountered in writing Hilda's life history to the vehicle itself, and to conclude that future attempts at psychological life history would be simply a reenactment of past failures. I have developed a full appreciation for the difficulties which led the early proponents of life history research to abandon the endeavor. The problem of integrating narrative and analysis looms especially large--and I am more understanding of the awkward attempts at integration in other pieces of life history research. This problem of integration has been a major stumbling block for history in general. Henry Adams, at the end of his nine volume study of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, concluded that historical explanation was impossible. Many of Adams' successors have also turned away from narrative explanation. Recently, however, a number of eminent historians have begun to view it as the antidote to the conceptual deficiencies of the quantitative analytic approach which has been holding sway (Wood, 1982). Contemporary historians appear to be in the process of defining a model

narration which synthesizes description and analysis, deductive and inductive reasoning, evocation and explanation. If they are successful, the model might be applicable in psychology--one reason to hope that the promise of life history research might eventually be fulfilled.

But there are special problems in reconstructing an individual's history. Personal "time-binding"--as discussed in chapters two and three--becomes very complex. It may take a writer of Erikson's stature to produce an adequate life history. I prefer to think that the task requires a special stage of intellectual development. In writing Hilda's history, I found myself repeatedly sifting through my store of psychological concepts, and wished that I had either more or less to scan. Although adequate treatment of a life requires an expansion of complexity, it may need to be anchored in the singleness of vision which comes either from relative ignorance or wisdom. Perhaps more important than any quantitative measure of knowledge, it is necessary to approach the work with a clear sense of the limits--both personal and general--of what can be integrated and coherently expressed.

My chief frustration in writing Hilda's history--the difficulty in giving an integrated presentation of my subjectively clear understanding of her life--is related to my source of satisfaction with the work. On a personal level, the work does fulfill one of the main promises of the life history movement: to provide "a significant concept of the person."

Whether I have made any contribution to general theory or not, the long process of moving back and forth between the events of Hilda's life and various theoretical models has shaped my understanding of psychological development to the extent that I now have a reasonably coherent view of the person as, in Murray's terms, "an assimilating, adapting, integrating, differentiating, and reproducing temporal unity." My success at this personal level of conceptualization suggests that the life history may have its primary value as a learning experience--not a new idea, but one for which I have renewed appreciation. It also suggests that understanding how, in general, one arrives at such knowledge--that is, unravelling the logic of clinical inquiry--may be the most important step in defining a model of psychology which can make effective use of the life history. My work on Hilda's life, despite its limitations and the frustrations which I encountered, has reaffirmed my belief that such a model is essential. The need for what White called "the long view" and Allport termed "the significant and essential unities of the life process" is as great as ever, and it is difficult to see how it could be met while the life history remains unapproachable.

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